Jessica Bauwens-Sugimoto / Felix Giesa
Christina Meyer (Eds.)

Comics | Histories

Texts, Methods, Resources

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COMICS | HISTORIES SERIES

Editors
Jessica Bauwens-Sugimoto, Felix Giesa and Christina Meyer

Volume 1

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Jessica Bauwens-Sugimoto, Felix Giesa, Christina Meyer

Introduction: Comics|Histories – Texts, Methods, Resources

We, the editors, of the newly founded book series, titled *Comics|Histories*, at Rombach publishing house in Germany (Rombach Wissenschaft), are absolutely thrilled to present the first volume in a series of forthcoming projects focusing on comics and histories. To start, we would like to not only explain the structure and content of the present volume. These opening pages are also meant as a preamble to the new series, explaining its purpose and goals as well as serving as an invitation, addressed to you – graduates, post-graduates, early career scholars, adjunct faculty, tenured professors, independent scholars, and non-academics – to submit your future research projects as part of the *Comics|Histories series.* Your submissions can include anything from monographs, anthologies, edited volumes to PhD dissertations and post-doctoral theses).

But first: Why a new book series on comics that focuses on questions revolving 'histories,' and why now?

The international scholarship on the medium of comics has grown extensively, in particular in the past twenty years, in and across different academic disciplines (see, for example, Lent, "The Winding"; cf. also Aldama; Badman; Edlich, Meyer, and Stein; Domsch, Hassler-Forest, and Vanderbeke).[1] Next to literary and cultural studies, film and media studies, or foreign language pedagogy, social-science disciplines like gender studies and queer studies, and, more recently, cognitive and brain research have begun to engage critically with comics and other forms of graphic narratives (in this context see, for instance, Giddens, *Critical*, and Giddens, *Graphic*; see also Hatfield and Beaty; Steirer; Cohn). Publishing houses such as Routledge, Palgrave, De Gruyter, and Bloomsbury, to name but a few, and diverse University Presses, too, have launched book series on comics such as, for instance, *Studies in Comics and Cartoons* (Ohio State Uni-

1 Here, we would also like to highlight two sections in the newly published *The Cambridge Companion to Comics*, edited by Maaheen Ahmed: The "Introduction" provides a short, very useful, overview on the scholarship on the history and evolution of the medium of comics. The "Chronology" in her edited volume offers a helpful timeline of some of the most impactful primary texts since the appearance of William Hogarth's serialized plates titled *A Harlot's Progress* in the early eighteenth century.

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versity Press), or *Comics Culture* (Rutgers University Press). Scholarship on comics is likewise published in peer-reviewed journals such as *Inks*, *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, *Studies in Comics*, *European Comic Art*, or *Manga Kenkyu* (*The Journal of the JSSCC*), as well as the Stockholm Studies in Media Arts Japan, and special issues on comics have been published in a variety of scholarly journals in different fields of research. Online journals like *Comics Grid*, and other open access formats have furthermore contributed to the increasing visibility of Comics Studies. Last but not least, the scholarship on comics sees an increase in MA theses as well as dissertation theses, and post-doctoral projects being made available in print and in digital form. Our new book series *Comics/Histories* positions itself within this growing field of Comics Studies. It distinguishes itself from other journal/book series in four different, yet interconnected, ways:

First, as distinct from the bulk of comics research, which tends to prioritize contemporary productions, our series spotlights *histories and genealogies*, or preconditions of what appears as comics and other forms of graphic narratives and sequential art today.[2] This includes a revision of the wide spectrum of what is now regarded as comics (caricature, cartoons, graphic novel, etc.), and a broadening of view that is important not only retrospectively, but also prospectively, i.e., at a moment in time when modern media identities are dissolving (in this context see, for instance, Thomas). Monographs and edited volumes in the new series should thus offer historicized narratives of the variety of graphic forms of expression and experience from the nineteenth century (the beginning of comics as a mass medium) up until today, the conditions under which specific opti-

2 In this context see, for instance, the two volumes on *The History of the Comic Strip* (1973; 1990) by art historian David Kunzle, a pioneer in comics histories, as well as his essay on "Goethe and Caricature: From Hogarth to Töpffer." Furthermore, see Thierry Smolderen's insightful study on *The Origins of Comics* (2014), Roger Sabin's chapter "The Pioneers" in his *Comics, Comix & Graphic Novels* (1996), or the 1998 volume *Forging a New Medium*, co-edited by Charles Diereck and Pascal Lefèvre. Moreover, see Pramod K. Nayar, on the history of the *Indian Graphic Novel* (2016). An early study on comic book characters and films based on comic books and comic strips is Luis Gasca's (unfortunately long forgotten) *Los comics en pantalla* (1965); on the relationships between painting and comics see also *La Pintura en El Cómic*, co-authored by Gasca an Asier Mensuro (2014). Here, see also Blanchard (1969). See also Deneyer; as well as Groensteen, *M. Töpffer*. For an overview on *Southeast Asian Cartoon Art* see Lent, *Southeast*. For a well-researched overview on manga and the state of its history and study see Shige (CJ) Suzuki (2023) *Manga: A Critical Guide.* Commenting on the historicity of manga are Jaqueline Berndt, "Considering Manga Discourse: Location, Ambiguity, Historicity" (2008), and Go Ito, "Manga History Viewed Through Proto-characteristics (2006).

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ons emerged, and the affordances generated by the respective forms. Tracing/re-examining the processes, technologies, and transnational 'actants' involved in the emergence and evolution of the medium of comics will allow for enhanced knowledge of specific configurations in the past (and what they meant) and a better understanding of the possible reconfigurations in the present moment and their affordances.

Second, the book series *Comics|Histories* welcomes in particular projects that engage with both theories and methods employed in Comics Studies so far, and crucial *disciplinary concerns of history* (as specified in, for example, literary, cultural, media, or art history). While there is already a significant number of publications that foreground representations *of* history in comics, our book series seeks to highlight comics-specific contributions *to* history. This includes consideration of critical issues that are prevalent in research on contemporary comics, namely, intersectionality, postcolonialism, or agency in user cultures, in their relation to the aesthetic and cultural media specificities of comics (here see, for example, Gardner; Mikkonen; Sommerland and Wictorin; see also Einwächter, Ossa, Sina, and Stollfuß; on intersectional perspectives on comics see, for instance, Cox; Quesenberry; Scott and Fawaz; see also the recently published volume *Identity and History in Non-Anglophone Comics*, edited by Harriet E.H. Earle, and Martin Lund; on postcolonialism and/in Comics Studies see, for example, Mehta and Mukheri; Wictorin). Research projects will furthermore tackle theories and methods used for historical analysis, the archives consulted during research (and their availability and accessibility), and the value attributed to (online) resources. In brief, upcoming projects in the series will address the questions of how the history of the medium of comics is researched and how researchers have come to their objects (here see, for instance, Whitted).

Third, and in addition to the two trajectories just outlined, we invite projects that address comics from a *transnational*, while culturally situated, perspective, without privileging national histories of the medium in the narrower sense, i.e., as confined to areas that are regarded as having strong comic cultures, like the North American, Franco-Belgian, or Japanese publication markets and the evolution of the medium of comics up until today.[3] By spotlighting the transnational entanglements of the medium of

3 Studies on transnational comics histories include, for example, Beers Fägersten, Nordenstan, Romu, and Wallin Wictorin; Brienza; Chiu; Denson, Meyer, and Stein; Glaude and Odaert; Groensteen, "Challenges"; Kesper-Biermann and Severin-Barboutie.

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comics (in relation to, for instance, practices of authorship, questions of copyright, aesthetics, publication contexts, channels and modes of distribution) we aim to put in the spotlight those *Comics|Histories* that have so far been under-researched. The increased interconnectedness and digitization of cultures means not just that new forms emerge and others are at risk of being forgotten, but on the contrary, that, for example, through the digitization of library archives, the study of historical resources on comics becomes ever more accessible and will hopefully lead to more insight and original scholarship. In addition, with the incredible amount of digitized material, research using traditional methods is no longer sufficient. Digital working methods and techniques are becoming increasingly important in this context. The same applies in particular to born digital material, which on the one hand has hardly been archived so far and is thus subject to rapid changes that traditional research can hardly keep up with. This raises questions about the possibilities of stronger cooperation between fans, practitioners, researchers and archives - and thus also about new forms of documentation.

Over the past decades there has been a growing research (but also media) interest in Japanese manga and related genres, anime, games, as well as reader, consumer, and fan activity based on these. Suzuki Shige and Ronald Stewart's 2023 *Manga, A Critical Guide* (Bloomsbury Comics Studies) offers the most up to date guide on Japanese manga as a whole. Manga Studies is a well-established field within Japan with its own academic association, the Japan Society for Studies in Cartoons and Comics (JSSCC, est. 2001), and increasingly across the world. In comparison, other East Asian comics, like those of China, Taiwan, and Korea are comparatively under-researched. The same can be said for those of Southeast Asian countries, like Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, and South Asian countries like Nepal, India, and Pakistan. In Japan, the members of the government funded Women's Manga Research Project, under the leadership of Ogi Fusami, have been conducting research on comics (in Japanese referred to as manga as well, in spite of not being Japanese) in other parts of Asia, through the lens of gender studies, resulting in the collection *Women's Manga in Asia and Beyond: Uniting Different Cultures and Identities* (2020, Palgrave Studies in Comics and Graphic Novels), edited by Ogi and her collaborators Kazumi Nagaike and Rebecca Suter, and John A. Lent. Lent too, often in collaboration with Singaporean comics critic Cheng Tju Lim, has frequently published books, papers and articles on comics from areas of Asia not limited to Japan. Prominent archives of manga material like

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Kyoto International Manga Museum and the Yonezawa Yoshihiro Memorial Library of Manga and Subcultures, at Meiji university in Tokyo, are developed their own digital and non-digital archiving methods optimized for materials in the Japanese language, while collaborating with foreign researchers and comic artists on exhibitions featuring comics from outside of Japan in their many forms. Kyoto International Manga Museum organized an exhibition and a series of events featuring comics artist from francophone African countries in the fall of 2023, and in October of the same year, Yonezawa Yoshihiro Memorial Library organized an exhibition on the history of Taiwanese comics. In this series, we hope to make our own contribution and publish more original research that covers under researched areas in comics studies.

Last but not least, we call for papers that put the spotlight on the *historiography* of the expanding field of Comics Studies, in other words, the inter- and transdisciplinary research on comics as an object of analysis in itself. Multidisciplinary assessments of the field and its practices of research and publishing, and author- and editorship promise to produce new insights into processes of knowledge formation, as well as the power relations involved. The series invites monographs and edited volumes by researchers in a variety of disciplines on topics that include but are not limited to: historical comics research (i.e. historiography of comics, including the relation of modern comics to caricature, cartoons, picture books, animation, digital art etc.); critical reflection on theoretical frameworks of historical research in relation to (in its applicability to) comics studies; methods and tools of historical comics research; conditions of historical comics research (i.e. resources, materials, archives and libraries); digital humanities for comics historiography; transnational, transregional, and transcultural comics histories; representative comics historians and their work in context (in this context see, for instance, Robbins). We are hoping that the collection of (ongoing) research projects introduced in this volume will spark readers' curiosity, and ignite ambition to explore the history of comics further and in many-varied ways.

Against this backdrop, the present volume brings together altogether nine chapters, addressing questions relating to practices of canonization, periodization, and digitization, as well as providing historical perspectives on a variety of humor magazines and newspapers, issues of adaptation and remediation in different parts of the world and in different cultures. It is the result of an international conference on Comics|Histories, which took place online (because of the Covid-19 pandemic) in July 2021. In order

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to offer a variety of approaches on comics histories, contributors to the present volume include a number of international experts from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, e.g. literary and cultural studies, media studies, history, children's and youth literature research, computational studies and digital humanities.

The edited volume is divided into four parts. **Part I: Re-Reading *Punch* Magazine** has two chapters, starting with Anu Sugatahn's "The Emergence of Comic Art and Graphic Narratives in India." The chapter unfolds the print history of comic art in India. Although the visual narrative or graphic story-telling tradition in India exists in various forms like petroglyphs, Indian murals, *kalighat* paintings of Bengal, *kalamkari* art of Andhra Pradesh, *patua* picture recitation of Bengal, or *Phad* painting of Rajasthan, the beginning of comic art can be traced back to the nineteenth century colonial India when cartoons and caricatures first appeared in print media. The emergence of cartoons as a cultural commodity of colonial modernity reflects comics medium's historical and cultural patterns associated with the urban space in terms of its readership, content and production. The form of the cartoon was modified and appropriated by Indians (natives) as a reaction against the British rule. It became an agency (which was neither institutional like classical art forms of India nor imitational as a copy of the cultural imports such as cricket, oil painting and English language) that emerged from the interactions and intersections with the Empire which could not be commodified or controlled. The circulation of cartoons and caricatures during colonial times further paved way for the rise of comic strips, comic books and graphic novels in India. The second chapter is Mohit Abrol's "Unpacking the *Punch*: A Genealogical Account of *Punch* Cartoons in Nineteenth-Century India." As the title suggests, the chapter provides a genealogical account of *Punch* cartoons in India in the nineteenth century. Abrol focuses on questions of representation, mimeticism, the subversive potential of cartoons, and cartoons as forms of resistance – in the context of the British rule in nineteenth-century India. By doing so, Abrol aims to offer a critical reflection on "traditional historical accounts based on the binary approaches of the colonizer and the colonized, the Europe and the Other, the center and the periphery, the vocal and the silent leave behind" (###).

The first chapter in **Part II: (Re-)Productions** is by Jean-Matthieu Méon. The basic premise of his paper "Untangling History and Patrimonialization: Woodcut Novel Reprints and Jean Davallon's Model," is that if comics history is established through academic researches, it is also

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largely dependent on other sources. Reprints, reviews and awards (such as Angoulême's *Prix du patrimoine*) all contribute to current conceptions about comics' past. In considering this past, it is thus hard to distinguish between what comes from historical research and what comes from patrimonialization, i.e. the social process of selecting elements of the past to give them a new status in the present. Méon discusses the usefulness of Jean Davallon's communication model of patrimonialization (2006) for comics historiography, illustrating it with one specific example. This is followed by Stéphane Collignon's "The First Studio Productions." With reference to Lawrence Streicher 1967 essay, in which he argued that while caricature, cartoons, comic strips, and animated cartoons appeared historically in that order, they have since existed together and are connected in a series of creations that he describes as 'para-artistic,' Collignon aims to have a closer look at this 'comic-strip connection.' As Collignon observes, animation pioneers never hid their printed roots, on the contrary, it even was a selling point. It was not animated films that the first cinema goers came to see, but 'moving comic strips.' It would take about a decade for early animation to begin to develop its own aesthetic – one that would consider the specificities of the medium. However, upon analysis it is clear that early studio animation always kept its print ancestor's key characteristics at its core. In his chapter, Collignon argues that studying the aesthetics set up at the turn of the 19th and early 20th century by caricature and print cartoon artists, is essential to understand the birth of animated cartoon aesthetics. In a limited context of study on the reception of animated cartoon aesthetics, the author claims that it is possible to forge a theoretical model of animated aesthetics based on the study of caricature and comics, a model that can then be re-injected into a more global understanding of graphic narration.

The next section focuses on "**War** [**in**] **Comics"** (Part III of this volume), which consists of three chapters. Paul Malone opens the section with a chapter entitled "The Forgotten World of Vienna's Interwar Comic Strips." He zooms in on early 20th-century European newspapers which served highly literate, linguistically uniform readerships, paying special attention to comic strips with continuing characters produced by Austrian artists in the Viennese press between the World Wars. These strips appeared in papers spanning the political spectrum; a few appeared daily or weekly for over a decade. Although a couple of these strips, notably Ludwig Kmoch's *Tobias Seicherl*, have been researched, most of them remain unknown, forming a research gap in European comics history, which

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Malone's chapter attempts to fill. This is followed by Anja Lange and her chapter titled "Probing the Limits of Representation: Serhii Zakharov's *Dira*." Lange examines how the graphic novel by the authors and illustrators Serhii Zakharov and Serhii Mazurkevych negotiates the occupied territories of the East of Ukraine, and how it tells their story about being captured in the East of Ukraine. Lange provides a close reading of a variety of artistic devices such as focalization, and addresses questions of metafiction, representations of trauma, autobiography, and issues of memory and testimony. The final chapter in this part is Sylvain Lesage's "How the Algerian War of Independence Gave Birth to the French Graphic Novel: Coral's Journal d'un embastillé, 1962." The starting point for his analysis is that in the histories of French "comic art," the shift to "adult" comics is generally identified around a few key publications such as, for instance, *Astérix* by Goscinny and Uderzo, and *Barbarella* by Jean-Claude Forest. Or these histories would place the shift a bit later, and would focus on Pratt's *Ballade de la mer salée* (1975), Moebius' *Bandard fou* (1974). None of these histories, however, ever mentions the existence of Coral's *Journal d'un suspect*. Published in 1963, just after the independence of Algeria, the book is a graphic memoir of a member of the OAS (Organisation de l'armée secrète), an organization of die-hard French colonialists ready to take the arms against the French army and the "traitors" who abandoned Algeria. Half-series of caricatures, half-graphic memoir, the book offers a recounting of the Algerian independence war. In many ways, it could constitute a solid candidate for the shift to "adult" comics. Understanding why it is systematically forgotten helps us understand the mechanisms of production of a comics canon. In France, the canon was delineated along the pages of a handful of comics magazines, and carried out through the republication in "albums."

The concluding part of this volume is titled **Periodization, Canonization, Digitization**. Mark Hibbett's "Periodizing 'The Marvel Age' Using the Production of Culture Approach" deals with challenges of periodization in Comics Studies, focusing on the genre of the American superhero comics, which has been attempted to be categorized into a system of 'ages.' Hibbett's paper suggests using the term 'The Marvel Age' instead. By using a comics-specific reading of Richard Peterson's *Five Constraints On The Production Of Culture* and particularly the methods described in Casey Brienza's *Cultures Of Comics Work*, Hibbett shows how 'The Marvel Age' can be empirically defined as covering American superhero comics with cover dates between November 1961 and October 1987.

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His chapter also proposes three distinct sub-periods of 'Creation,' 'Chaos' and 'Consolidation,' and gives brief examples of how these definitions can be used as part of a data-driven corpus analysis within the field of comics studies. This is followed by the co-written chapter "On German Comic Traditions: An Explorative Approach to Digital Comics Historiography" by Felix Giesa, Alexander Dunst, and Rita Hartl. Their framing argument is that a recurring topos in the historiography of national comic traditions is the question of the independence of existing styles, even to the point of claiming that comics were invented here or there. However, global distribution channels and transnational collaboration complicate such accounts, which is why we will try to approach this question by using a distant-reading approach. In particular, we plan to focus on publications dating from the end of World War II to the 1970s, which represents the first major development phase of German-language comics. The titles from this era, around 35.000 volumes, consists largely of translations from English and French (including the United States and Belgium), but also of original productions from East and West Germany. The starting point for this study are the holdings of the Frankfurt Comic Archive, where a nearly complete collection of 70,000 German comics is held. In a first step, a sample of approximately 1.700 pages has been digitized with the aim of testing automatic recognition efforts that were developed as part of a BMBF-funded research project based at the universities of Paderborn and Potsdam from 2015-2020. These methods aim at identifying panels, speech balloons, and captions, as well as recognizing the text included in these comics pages. If these efforts are successful, they may allow for computational analysis of large amounts of comics text, tracing the historical evolution of comics layout across several decades, and comparing several national traditions present in Germany in translation. Despite having been developed for a corpus of North American graphic novels, the results of the test sample are encouraging: Panels were recognized correctly in 93,7 per cent and balloons in 90,4 per cent of all cases. The accuracy for captions is lower at 77,7 per cent, which seems to be due to the fact that several comic books included in the sample do not use drawn boundaries to separate captions from the remainder of a panel or page. In this case, existing methods may have to be adapted by training them on the distinct material included in the Frankfurt Comic Archive.

* * *

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This volume would not have been possible without the great support of the editors and copyeditors at Rombach publishing house, our external readers, the patience of our contributors, and, we would like to specifically highlight this, Jaqueline Berndt, for bringing the three editors of this newly founded book series together.

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Part I: Re-Reading *Punch* Magazine

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Anu Sugathan

The Emergence of Comic Art and Graphic Narratives in India

Introduction

Print culture was one of the main practices which emerged during the years of colonial rule in India. The print media in India was started by the British, the first newspaper being *Bengal Gazette* (1780) which was established by James Augustus Hicky. Subsequently, a number of other newspapers followed, like *Indian Gazette*, *The Madras Courier* (1785) and *The Bombay Herald* (1789). Political cartoons began to appear and were published by English-owned and indigenous native-owned newspapers such as *Bengal Hurkaru* (*Bengal Chronicle*), *Indian Gazette*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and *Sulav Samachar* (see also Abrol's chapter in this volume). However, it was the British humor magazine *Punch* (1841) that shaped the cartooning tradition in India as well as in other colonial enclaves in different parts of the world. Although *Punch*-inspired comic magazines and newspapers flourished at a global scale in the nineteenth century with its presence felt in China, Japan, Egypt, Turkey, the Arab nations, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and Australia, the Indian versions of *Punch* and their countless derivatives arose due to its proximity (mostly in the political and the cultural spheres) with the British empire. For these reasons, following the British *Punch*, several vernacular *Punches* and comic newspapers emerged and eventually secured an integral place for cartoons (political/editorial cartoons) in newspaper culture.[1] The cartoons that emerged as cultural commodity and a product of colonial modernity expanded their locus from newspapers, magazines and periodicals to albums, booklets and advertisements. In the course of time, Indian cartoons successfully established a distinctive style and pattern of their own.

The comic strips and comic books can be considered as the by-product of political cartoons and humor magazines. The comics medium's connection to the development of urban societies and the idea of urbanity is

1 Ritu Khanduri (2014) talks about the influence of British *Punch* in the emergence of newspaper cartoons in India (see Khanduri, *Caricaturing Culture in India*). The British *Punch* modelled on *Le Charivari* has its history of counterfeits as a result of centralization of publishing market in Europe (see "The Transnational Circulation," 2014).

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crucial in analyzing the growth of comics. By the late twentieth century, comic books have been a constant presence in the middle class and urban households. Popular comic books by publishers like Indrajal Comics, Amar Chitra Katha, Diamond Comics, Raj Comics, Manoj Comics, and so on were mainly created for the English-educated, urban middle-class children. However, the 1991 economic liberalization resulted in a heightened public interest in comics with India's economic engagement expanding on a global scale. This led to the formation of new companies, new marketing techniques, and eventually an increased online presence and comic conventions which contributed further to elevate the status of comic art in India. A new feature of comic art emerged with the publication of Indian graphic novels which became prominent in the first half of the twenty-first century. The urban cities as the place of comics medium's origin have maintained a deep influence over the content and the production of comic books and graphic novels.[2]

As a matter of fact, the episodes which historically pertain to the production of Indian cartooning shed light on the limited readership, the significance of urban space and the socio-political background associated with the visual-verbal forms of representation. A brief study of the development of comic art in India then can be employed to trace how the cities or urban spaces, which emerged significantly during the colonial period, and the social and political forces that shaped the emergence of comics and graphic novels as a cultural product can question and problematize the idea of modernity and liberalism circulating in India since the colonial times. The aim of this chapter is to trace the print history of comic art in India from cartoons and humorous drawings of newspaper tradition which emerged during the colonial rule in the 1800s to the later postcolonial English language comics and the regional comics of the 1970s and 1990s. The final part of the chapter deals with the Indian graphic novels which became relevant in the 2000s. The humorous drawings, political cartoons, comic strips and books as well as graphic novels have been rallied as a vantage point to understand the socio-cultural practices, political engagements, patterns of globalization, transnational corporations and transnational flow of cultures which have contributed to

2 The use of the term 'graphic novel' is an outcome of a conscious effort by the publishing community to accord it a serious and an elevated status as opposed to comics which are generally assumed to be associated with juvenile themes/contents. For the details on the coinage of the term, see Richard Kyle's 1964 column "The Future of 'Comics.'"

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newer visual forms in India. However, the linguistic and cultural diversity within the Indian subcontinent put certain limitations to this kind of analysis and the chapter does not extend itself to cover all the regional particularities and distinct flavours which can be found in India. By focusing on the print history of comic art in India, I propose to trace broad connections among various visual-verbal narratives – cartoons, caricature, comic strips and books and graphic novels – to provide an understanding of the differences, the similarities and the inter-related patterns which exist between them.

Vernacular *Punches*, Humor Magazines, Cartoons, Comic Strips and Newspaper Culture in India

The origin of visual art and graphic storytelling is often traced back to the ancient cave paintings, tapestries, frescoes, rock art, woodcut forms, lithography and others which have existed as a form of communication and been found as inherently present in the fantastical, political/war, folk and mythological tales. The visual narrative or graphic story telling tradition in India has been in existence in various forms like petroglyphs, Indian murals, the *kalighat* paintings of Bengal, the *madhubani* paintings of Bihar, the *pattachitra* picture scrolls of Orissa, the *kalamkari* art of Andhra Pradesh, the *patua* picture recitation of Bengal, *Pabuji ki Phad* or the *Phad* painting of Rajasthan among others. However, the comic art in India came into being in the nineteenth century when cartoons and caricatures appeared in the print media during the colonial rule. Although some of the earliest cartoons appeared in the 1850s in British-owned newspapers like *Bengal Hurkaru* and *Indian Gazette*, they were not able to establish a big impact in India like the later cartoons and caricatures which appeared in the Indian and Anglo-Indian versions of *Punches* that were modelled on the British cartoon-based weekly named *Punch* (1841).[3] That is to say, the cartooning and comics tradition in India began distinctly in the colonial era with the publication of different indigenous versions of the humor

3 British *Punch* and other English owned newspapers often stereotyped the oriental subject. Cartoons became an artistic and cultural tool used for validating colonial domination through humor. Cartoons like John Tenniel's "The British Lion's Vengeance on the Bengal Tiger," "Justice," "The Indian Juggle," John Leech's "The New Year's Gift," and E T Reeds' "The Delhi Durbar" use visual tropes of animals and deformed bodies that reinforce negative racial and hegemonic stereotypes.

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magazine *Punch.* As a satirical magazine, the British *Punch* introduced the modern meaning of the term "cartoon" as a visual form of wit and humor.[4]

Fig. 1: *The Indian Charivari*. May 16, 1873. Calcutta. Source: Partha Mitter. *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*, 1850-1922: *Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, 140.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the production of several cartoon albums and comic newspapers or periodicals such as The *Delhi Sketch Book* (1850-1857), *Indian Punch* (1859), *The Indian Charivari* (See Fig. 1; Calcutta, 1872-1880) and other vernacular *Punch*-style comic newspapers and magazines such as *Parsi Punch/Hindi Punch* (Bombay, 1854-1930), *Oudh Punch* or *Avadh Punch* (Lucknow, 1877), *Delhi Punch*, *Punjabi Punch*, *Urdu Punch*, *Gujarati Punch*, *Purneah Punch* (Bengal) and

4 The term cartoon was given to a drawing that represents satire, parody or humor by British magazine *Punch* when it published a bunch of drawings under the title "cartoons" and particularly John Leech's "Cartoon, No. 1: Substance and Shadow" (1843). Later the term was also used to refer to animation. The British *Punch* was inspired by the French satirical newspaper *Le Charivari* (1832) and its first issue was titled, *Punch: The London Charivari* (for further details see also Abrol's paper in this volume).

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Basantak (Calcutta, 1874-1876).[5] The circulation of cartoons and caricatures during the colonial times established a lasting relationship with India's print media culture, especially through newspapers. Cartoons since then have always found an important space in newspapers despite them being circulated in the form of albums and booklets.

The introduction of English language and printing culture in the colonial period as part of modernity led to the unification of Indian intelligentsia which diminished and overshadowed different local and regional cultural practices.[6] As Partha Mitter puts it,

> To take the example of Bengal, the *bhadralok*[7] took full advantage of the opportunities offered by this new learning. It gave them access to world literature and Enlightenment values. Bengali, the vernacular language of the region, benefited from colonial culture as it underwent modernisation at this time, with the development of a new simplified script and a unified language, which could be disseminated by means of print technology. *Punch*, which became available in Bengal soon after its inception, could thus be ensured of a ready market in this bilingual milieu. (quoted in Harder and Mittler 50)

Thus, there was a considerable increase in literacy among the elites, the colonial middle class, who were primarily from the urban parts of India. This is due to the processes of urbanization and modernization maintaining close ties with the colonial patterns and attitudes in India. The unequal treatment based on class (and caste, see footnote 7) had led to the arrival of modernity into the limited arena of public spaces that were primarily bourgeois or elitist. However, Mr. Punch who was linked to the European tradition of Pulcinella of the *commedia dell'arte* – a popular puppet show in Britain (Punch and Judy) – was appropriated by the colonial Indian *Punches* which evoked a style familiar to Indian sensibilities and culture. Collectively, the vernacular magazines and newspapers in colonial

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5 The cartooning tradition in India was shaped during the British rule as influenced by the British *Punch* (Mitter 1997; Hasan 2009; Harder and Mittler 2013; Khanduri 2014). Here see also Abrol's chapter in this volume.

6 Institutions associated with academic art were under Raj patronage, however, modern innovations such as print technology flourished independently of the colonial government.

7 The new 'gentleman' or *babu* class of Bengalis mainly from the upper caste segments who acquired English education and administrative positions during the British rule in India and formed a colonial middle class having an elitist social status and a hybrid identity belonging to both the native and the Western world. The British *Punch* mocked English educated Bengali elites particularly through the creation of the character Baboo Jabberjee. For further details on *bhadralok* in colonial times, see Aryendra Chakravartty's "Understanding India: Bhadralok, Modernity and Colonial India" (2018).

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India and the growing readership of English language books, newspapers, and magazines "helped forge a common political vocabulary" (ibid 51). Hence, through the circulation of Indian versions of comic newspapers and magazines, a common national fervour emerged in the colonial India that questioned and ridiculed colonial authority by primarily making use of humor.

In the early 1900s, India was an important market for the then proprietors, William Bradbury and Frederick Mullett Evans, of *Punch*. They knew that the cartoon images needed to be changed to increase the marketability among the readers of the colonies, particularly in India which was considered a market with great potential. In attesting to this approach, a cartoon by Bernard Patridge was produced in 1901 which was titled 'Partners' that shows "Britannia dancing with Colonia." This was a strategically informed business move to gain Indian readership and the attention of local agents which point towards "the collective nature and politics of visual production" (ibid 176). However, the proliferation of the indigenous versions of *Punch* cast doubts on the marketability of single edition of the English *Punch*. So, the British Mr. Punch was adapted by the vernacular press to expose colonial politics in India. As Khanduri notes, "[r]egional in their distribution and produced by Indian proprietors, these vernacular versions in colonial India mark an important moment in which cartoons became integral to political critique in the public sphere" (ibid 179).Various titles such as *Kannauj Punch* (Urdu weekly), *Rafiq Punch* (Urdu weekly), *Etawah Punch* (Urdu daily), *Avadh Akhbar* (Urdu newspaper) and *Avadh Punch* (See Fig. 2; Urdu newspaper) from North-West Provinces produced visual satire in the Urdu language with a circulation from 400 to 700 copies. Outside the North-West Provinces, Gujarati comic newspapers like *Gujarati Punch*, *Gup Shup* and *Hindi Punch* recorded a circulation of 3400, 1400, and 800 copies respectively. Khanduri also claims that the "[c]irculation of the vernacular Punch versions was shaped by government offices, library and individual subscriptions" (ibid 182). The presence of the British *Punch* in India and the proliferation of vernacular versions of the *Punch* in the colonial times reveal the transnational flow of cultures. During this period, graphic satire drew inspirations from across and beyond the cultural and linguistic borders. Thus, the visual language in its interaction with other cultural contexts produced a newer visual vocabulary which served as an amalgamation of European and Indian traditions (enriched further from the folk and local patterns). Indian art under the British rule interacted with Western concepts and, at the

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same time, maintained the search for what would be uniquely an Indian identity. Indian colonial art reflected various responses to the Western influences that questioned "the colonial powers' claims to superiority based on a doctrine of cultural difference" (Mitter 8). Indians, however, also judged Indian colonial art by the same standard employed by European critics. For example, Travancore (present-day Kerala) painter and artist Raja Ravi Varma was often criticized in post-independent India for the use of European realistic techniques in his paintings. Such views did not take into account the cultural context of the Indian artists and, moreover, Indian art was constantly judged in comparison to the European model and standards. For example, Bengali artist Gaganendranath Tagore's paintings were compared to those of Picasso's. This view completely neglects the cultural experience and the meaningful cultural context of the Indian artist that has influenced the creation of his works. In fact, there was no attention paid to the cultural encounters and Indian art was treated as inferior. Therefore, within the context of colonialism, culturally, the borrower has been assigned an inferior position. So, Indian art during the colonial era was often deemed plagiarized, as opposed to being influenced or inspired by European art traditions. Later on, the political cartoons in Indian newspapers managed to carve an individual style for themselves by copying cartoons of *Punch* and David Low, as has been remarked by Indian political cartoonist R K Laxman (Khanduri, *Caricaturing Culture* 162). The comic books largely produced comic strips influenced by the style of Raja Ravi Varma and Western models where realism was combined with the conventions of American and British comics. The twenty-first century, with the experimentation in graphic novels, saw the use of traditional art styles like the *patua* scroll art, Gond art, etc. into the sequential narratives of the comics medium to bring about a new visual grammar and to establish a distinctly Indian identity to the genre. Such practices also reveal the identity struggle which came with the exposure to European art forms and inconsistencies in terms of acceptance and resistance to the Western comics tradition. However, I contend that the cultural transformations of Western art patterns by Indian artists within the confines of colonial domination gave Indian art an identity of its own in terms of the content, cultural production, and cross-cultural elements. This is established when, despite the claims about vernacular *Punches* as sub-standard, the British closely observed and monitored the published content of the indigenous versions of *Punch* which tactfully made sarcastic retorts and frequently exposed British government's hypocrisy about the use of humour.

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Several vernacular comic newspapers published during the colonial times, around the 1850s, brought out the duplicity of British imperialism through cartoons that dealt with British policies through stark humour and criticism. This resulted in the proscription of certain cartoons and the surveillance of vernacular press (vernacular *Punches* and newspapers like *Agra Akhbar* and *Oudh Akhbar*) by the state under the Vernacular Press Censorship Act of 1878. Since vernacular *Punches* acted as unofficial spokespersons of the public, the colonial government put them under surveillance. The British government hired English-educated Indians to put surveillance on the vernacular press by means of translating and surveying them. The British claimed that the vernacular press misunderstood liberty as a mode to criticize the colonial government. The question remained, if natives borrowed and learned from the British-style *Punch*, how can it pose a challenge to the colonial government which wanted their subjects to adopt modern habits? Nevertheless, the vernacular versions of *Punches* became a tool of colonial modernity used to subvert colonial politics in the nineteenth and early twentieth century India. The vernacular *Punches* were cast aside as "nonsense," "upstart *Punches*," that misunderstood the values of liberalism propounded by the colonial government (Khanduri, *Caricaturing Culture* 59). However, vernacular *Punches* became the framework for political cartoons in India that questioned the nature of governance and liberalism through humour. That is to say, the cartoons and vernacular *Punches* of the colonial times initiated a long period of cartooning in India. As a satirical form, cartoons always questioned (and still questions) the nature of governance and liberalism through humour. It also paved the way for a newspaper culture in India that contains political or satirical cartoons.

The middle class in India, who were the main consumers of newspapers, emerged during the time of British rule. In the cities, the middle class emerged as a consequence of the new economy (port cities developed by the British for the purpose of trade and monopoly) which was established by the British administration. Around the same time, the middle class in the rural areas were getting determined on the basis of land distribution system. The Indian middle class majorly emerged in urban areas like Calcutta (present-day Kolkata), Bombay (present-day Mumbai) and Madras (present-day Chennai) where the British had settled their presidency to exercise their political control and institute economic extractions. These places then paved the path for the process of modernization, as it unfolded, in India. In order to rule, the British elite began to interact with

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Sun to sabi jahaan me hai tera fasana kya; kehti hai tujhko khalq-i khuda ghaibana kya.

'Do listen to what tales are being told about you; by what various names people call you behind your back,' 25 June 1891. The story of poverty-stricken Indians pleading for relief from the government. The man in boots and bow-tie symbolizes British colonialism. In this picture, a woman—'Hind'—draws his attention to the poverty-stricken child. The artist manages to bring out the disdain and indifference of the man marked 'England'; of equal interest is the clothing of the seven Indian figures. The Urdu verse is by the poet Insha.

Fig. 2: *The Avadh Punch*. 25 June, 1891. Lucknow. Source: Mushirul Hasan. *The Avadh Punch: Wit and Humour in Colonial North India*. Niyogi Books, 2007, 40.

the local population which led to the formation of a local bourgeoisie who benefitted from the infrastructure, trade, job opportunities and educational institutions set up by the British officers. As a result, the Indian middle class[8] was made up of people who worked in the administrative, commercial, agricultural, the press, and industrial sectors, among others. They actively participated in the socio-political and cultural forms of the country which paved the way for modernization. The emergence of the

8 The British rule in India brought about changes in land and legal policies, introduced Western education, technological advancements, capital enterprises, etc. which gave rise to the middle class in India. For more details on Indian middle class and its further development, see B B Misra's *The Indian Middle Classes: Their Growth in Modern Times* (1961), Pavan K. Varma's *The Great Indian Middle Class* (2007), and Sanjay Joshi's *The Middle Class in Colonial India* (2010).

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Indian middle class came to be concurrently associated with the ideas of liberalization and reforms as well as advancement of educational and economic activities.[9] According to Robert S. Peterson, the Western-educated Indians who worked as government officials for the British "formed one of the first middle classes in Asia and were collectively called *babu*" and "those of the babu class were some of the first to read newspapers and seek out more secular forms of entertainment. The lifestyles of the babu," Peterson continues, "were among the visible signs that India was changing, and they became the subject of many early satirical prints and drawings (*kalighat*) that made fun of their colourful eccentricities" (Peterson 113).

Thus, the newspaper cartoons as commodities gradually emerged from the notion of colonial modernity with the establishment of print technology and the printed materials creating a heterogenous public culture essential to the experience of urban modernity. That is, apart from technologies of mobility (such as railways) and the establishment of industrial sectors, the printing press was a symbol of colonial modernity that transformed the urban public culture (which also indicated the British domination of life in the colonial metropolis). Subsequently, the print culture became vibrant in major colonial cities with growing Indian readership of linguistic variety. The introduction of English language and print culture in the colonial period as a part of modernity led to the unity of Indian intelligentsia of Western literate that served to overcome "local and regional differences" (Harder and Mittler 50). Thus, newspapers and newspaper cartoons became closely associated with the urban landscape and constructed the focus on the city to engage in public discourses.

By the early twentieth century, political cartoons began to find an integral place in Indian journalism as well as in various humour/cartoon magazines. By this time, the Swadeshi movement had picked up the pace reflecting nationalistic sentiments and agendas. Mahatma Gandhi's newspaper called *Indian Opinion* (1903-1914) published cartoons that criticized the colonial government, particularly through the reproduction of cartoons from *Hindi Punch*. One of the early cartoonists to publish political cartoons and caricatures in the 1910s and 1920s is Gaganendranath Tagore (1867-1938). His three volumes of lithographic collection of caricatures/cartoons are namely *Birupa Bajra* (1917; Indian Publishing

9 The emergence of middle-class society was also affected by the factors of religion, caste, gender, and region.

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House), *Realm of the Absurd* or *Adbhut Lok* (1917; Vichitra Press) and *Naba Hullod: Reform Screams* (1921; Thacker Spink & Co.). His art and cartoons reflected the hypocrisy in modern colonial Indian society and *Bhadralok's* Western affectations. Another earliest cartoonist is the Tamil poet Subramania Bharati (1882-1921), who published political cartoons in the weekly known as *India* (1906). It was the first publication from Tamil Nadu to have political cartoons. In the 1930s, *chitravalis* (satirical cartoon/caricature albums) were published in various parts of India such as Baijnath Kedia's *Vyang Chitravali* (Calcutta), Sukhdeva Roy's *Vyang Chitravali* (Allahabad; present-day Prayagraj) and Shiva Narayan Mishra's *Svang Chitravali* (Kanpur) (Khanduri, *Caricaturing Culture* 8). The 1940s witnessed political cartoons on Indian independence and the accompanying in-house political tensions in various Indian English newspapers such as *Dawn*, *The Hindustan Times* (presently called *Hindustan Times*), *National Herald* and *The Leader* by cartoonists like Enver Ahmed and Ajmal. After India's independence, cartoonists like R K Laxman, Shankar, Kutty and others continued to satirize the newly formed government. The lampooning in cartoons was appreciated by the then Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, who remarked "Don't Spare me, Shankar" in response to Shankar's cartoons while inaugurating the first issue of *Shankar's Weekly* (Devadawson 20).

Shankar, or K. Shankar Pillai (1902-1989), was the most popular cartoonist who left a deeper impression in the political cartooning tradition in India. He was a distinguished cartoonist who started one of the early satirical magazines in India known as *Shankar's Weekly* (1948-1975). Shankar drew cartoons for the newspaper *Hindustan Times* up until 1948 when he founded *Shankar's Weekly* (See Fig. 3). Shankar's weekly also produced many talented cartoonists and one such disciple of Shankar is Puthukkody Kottuthody Sankaran Kutty Nair (1921-2011), known as Kutty. After moving on from Shankar's magnum opus, Kutty captured the politics of the 1950s and 1960s in the *Hindustan Standard* (which folded/stopped publication in 1999). Other well-known cartoonists like Samuel (1925-2012; Thomas Samuel), Ranga (1925-2002; N. K. Ranganath), Abu Abraham (1924-2002; Attupurathu Mathew Abraham) and O. V. Vijayan (1930-2005) also began their journey in cartoons and caricatures through *Shankar's Weekly*. The political cartoonist E. P. Unny also got his cartoon first printed in *Shankar's Weekly* when he sent it as a response to a call for contributions. Later he worked with newspapers such as *The Hindu*, *Sunday Mail* and *The Economic Times*.

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The mid-1970s became a grim period for cartoons as well as cartoonists. The national emergency in 1975 declared by Indira Gandhi, the fifth Prime Minister of India, censored the press and, as a result, many cartoonists were not able to create any work at all. This period also marked the closing down of *Shankar's Weekly*.

Fig. 3: Cover Image. *Shankar's Weekly*. July 5, 1970. New Delhi. Source: cartoonexhibition.blogspot.in/2010/11/blog-post.html.

The kind of censorship imposed during the Emergency period was similar to British censorship in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century on the vernacular press which was born out of colonial anxiety and objec-

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tions over the newspaper contents of the native states. The reason for the imposition of the Emergency can be traced back to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's efforts to create a nation along the lines of secularism after India's independence in 1947. The middle class then was mostly comprised of government employees who contributed to nation building in political and economic ways. The Indian economy was already in shambles due to massive colonial exploitation and the partition of the subcontinent when Nehru took steps to build an economy that was under the control of the state and state-sponsored finances. However, the mixed economy model adopted by Nehru remained largely ineffective in achieving the concept of a welfare state. Also, access to power and independence remained restricted to a few, mainly the urban and rural capitalist class. As a result, the economic growth of the country began to decelerate by the 1960s. This led to widespread dissatisfaction among the public. Criticism began to emerge from several social groups, and political movements began to align against Nehruvian socialism. The right-wing critique of Nehru's ideals became very apparent when the idea of Indianness deeply rooted in Hinduism began to make advancements. It became difficult for the Congress party to sustain itself. After Nehru's death in 1964, Indian politics took a different turn. By the 1970s, various political and social groups were formed which sought separate demands and autonomy – for instance, the demand for regional autonomy in the case of Punjab and Kashmir. This was also the time when the Indian capitalist class grew stronger and had a different outlook towards foreign capital. For them, the socialist ideals of the government had led to economic disintegration. Due to the slackening of economic growth and price rises, the country became the site for various revolts and resistance. The government responded to such situation in a repressive manner and ultimately declared the Emergency in 1975. Such political events and economic reforms came under the scrutiny of the cartoonists as well. However, the Emergency period declared by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was largely marked by the suspension of freedom of expression, and imprisonment of political/social activists.

Despite the growing religious and political tensions of the following decades, the 1990s took Indian economy forward by means of economic liberalization and globalization. New economic reforms were introduced in 1991 which expanded Indian markets and foreign investments. The 1990s also opened up an increased space for enterprises, which resulted in the emergence of new entrepreneurs and businessmen who did not be-

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long to the traditional capitalist class. Thus, with the advent of globalization, a new middle class emerged that participated in the global economy either through work or through consumption. The nature and character of the Indian middle class have changed remarkably from being a small group of people who were seen as the product of colonial interaction to the ones who settled in the urban centers. In the 1960s and 1970s people began to find better opportunities both in the field of education as well as jobs, and many migrated to cities to make their mark. For instance, cartoonists and comics artists migrated to cities like New Delhi and Bombay seeking better opportunities. Kutty, Shankar, and Laxman are among those who migrated to the city in search of better education and career prospects. Their cartoons reflect the changing urban landscapes in their preoccupation with the characteristics of a city, be it the people or the social and political environment that constitute the urban space. The space captured by the cartoons convey to the reader the political situation, specifically targeting the audience occupying the city space. For instance, Laxman's depiction of Mumbai city, its roads, the *jhuggi jhopri*/slum area, administrative offices, and other spaces in an English language newspaper of a metropolitan city indicates that the newspaper mostly caters to the English educated urban population. That is, the cartooning tradition in India which has its origin in the cities has continued to maintain a lasting relationship with its locus point in terms of its readership, content, and production. This holds true majorly in the case of English language newspaper cartoonists, creating political cartoons, based in the city of Delhi or Mumbai (I have mentioned a few of them in this chapter but have not delved into the regional language political cartoonists or editions which lies beyond the scope of this chapter). However, with the coming of social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, cartoonists (both professional and amateurs) from different parts of India can integrate into a common space to showcase their cartoons.

Cartoonists like Ahmed (Enver Ahmed), Rajinder Puri, R K Laxman and others drew pocket cartoons and editorial cartoons to express their perceptions of the nation with regards to its development, identity, and workings. Their cartoons dealt with themes like democratic values, government policies, and social and political morality that affected the lives of the common people. The political cartoons which generally appear on the left most bottom half of the front page and/or editorial page are always critical of the issues pertaining to current politics and the latest news. Ahmed is famous for his *Hindustan Times* cartoon strip with the character

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Chandu, an ordinary Indian, who became a vehicle for the cartoonist's sharp criticisms on national and international affairs. Laxman is considered to have created the metropolitan cartoons, the single panel, single column cartoons that are suggestive of a cosmopolitan identity. He became well known for his *The Common Man* cartoons created for the *Times of India*. The cartoonists like Sudhir Tailang, Mario Miranda, Vins (Vijay Narain Seth) and others contributed distinctive characters that reflected the identity of the country through the medium of cartoons. Manjula Padmanabhan became the first notable female cartoonist for her work, *Double Talk*, about an urban Indian woman named Suki. The later cartoons by artists like Ajit Ninan, N Ponnappa, Ravi Shankar, etc., started to rely on technological aids for their creation. Further, business cartoons made their appearance in the early 2000s. However, most cartoons today find more readership on the internet than newspapers. Some of the older cartoons are also preserved and made available to the readers in the form of digital archives. However, the earlier cartoons which obtained a considerable space in newspapers or periodicals have been reduced in size to smaller cartoons that often "appear in newspapers as a bonsai" (Unny 83). The cartoons, comic strips and comic books were at their peak in the early and mid-twentieth century. They gradually lost their public appeal because of India's economic engagement on a global scale which paved way for a rapid increase in the number of artists/works and opened doorways to transnational networks and emerging technologies.

The comic strips, which seem to have originated from political cartoons and humour magazines, were also in circulation along with the newspaper cartoons when the aforementioned political events took place in India. However, comic strips were not affected by those events as they were mainly created for the children with the intention to remain fun and instructional (thus remained non-controversial unlike the political cartoons). Although comic strips appeared as early as the 1900s in newspapers like *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and certain weeklies, they only became prevalent in the 1960s. However, the beginning of "the comic strip in India has yet to be pinpointed, partly because of problems associated with nomenclature, India's multiplicity of languages, and the different versions of comics history" (Lent, *Asian Comics* 268). It is also possible that "the multipanel strip had its origins in the humor magazines and the work of newspaper political cartoonists, who added pocket cartoons and strips to their workloads" (Ibid.). The cartoonists who popularized their characters in strips and single panel cartoons include Toms (V. T. Thomas), Narayan

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Debnath, Mario Miranda, Pran Kumar Sharma, G. Aravindan, Abid Surti, Yesudasan (Chackalethu John Yesudasan), Madhan (Maadapoosi Krishnaswamy Govindan) and so on. However, as discussed above, the exact beginning of comic strips in India remains ambiguous due to its heterogeneous character in terms of its language as well as culture. Also, it is difficult to discuss the diversity in Indian cartooning given various styles, forms and dialects influencing Indian languages, Indian English language as well as the cultural practices. In relation to this, Khanduri states,

> [W]hen Kutty evoked prehistoric temple art in India, and when Raobail perceived no connection between Low and Laxman; it was a comment [similar] from other cartoonists in relation to Shankar's style. But these claims distancing Indian cartoonists from Low, from the West, and from English were equally if not more voluminously countered by a perceived lineage to Low and others in the West. Not to claim Indianness, or to dismiss such terms of engagement that lead to appropriation and provincializing, is agency too. It is agency from a vantage point that denies difference and claims similarity. Similarity is a thread linking the colonial and the postcolonial, and is one of the discourses on cartooning in India that circulates among practitioners. Needless to say, the process of recognition and alienation is shaped by a world that is a hodgepodge of sights and sounds. This fusion of glimpse, place, time, and perception gives new ways for thinking about global forms such as newspaper cartoons and how to sense modern life. For many in India, the first glimpse of the famous Low's cartoons was in an Indian newspaper [t]hat earned Low a place in the cultural memory of Indian cartooning. This perspective allows one to entertain the idea of moving beyond the notion of appropriation and recontextualization, and accommodate lateral stories and a (con)fusion of traces. The "Indian" in cartooning should account both for…[Indian artists] catching the imagination and cartoonist jobs in England, and for the fusion of cartoons that marks the styles of cartoonists in India. It is in this dual movement that a possible "Indian" can emerge (Khanduri, *Caricaturing Culture* 233-234).

The historical interactions, intermingling of various indigenous languages and borrowed English language have led to diverse cultural practices and a vague and hybrid sense of identity within India. Thus, the "dual movement" where the cartoons present an interaction between the receiver and the giver can be considered to offer an "Indian" identity to the art form.

Apart from political cartoons, the comic strips were circulated through children's magazines since the early 1900s with *Ghuncha* (in Urdu, meaning bud), *Phool* (of Lahore, meaning flower) and others

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Fig. 4: *Boban and Molly* cartoon strip. Source: V T Thomas. *Bobanum Molliyum* (Malayalam). Toms Publications, 2007, 34.

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(Lent, *Asian Comics* 272). *Chandamama* (1947-2013) was another such magazine started in Telugu language by B. Nagi Reddy and Aluri Chakrapani (it was bought by a Mumbai-based company called Geodesic in 2007). In Bengal, illustrated children's magazines like *Balak* (1885), *Sakha* (1883), *Sathi* (1893), *Mukul* (1895), etc., came very early as a tool for the educational reformers "to counteract missionary influences" (Mitter 126). However, post India's independence in 1947, children's magazines were superseded by children's periodicals or supplements published by newspaper groups and government firms (Lent, *Asian Comics* 272).

Toms, who drew strips as well as single panel cartoon columns, is famous for his characters Boban and Molly (See Fig. 4) that he created based on two children from his neighbourhood (these cartoons were created in Malayalam language; one of the official languages in India). The cartoon column initially appeared in *Satyapeedam* weekly in 1950 and later *Malayala Manorama* weekly in 1961. There was a legal feud regarding the copyright issue of Toms' cartoons between *Malayala Manorama* and Toms after his retirement from the weekly in 1987 as he continued to publish his characters in another weekly called *Kalakaumudi*. However, Toms was granted the ownership of his characters in the end. Later on, he started a comic magazine called *Toms Magazine* and published his remarkable *Bobanum Molliyum* (Boban and Molly), a social and political satire under the veil of children's adventures.[10] Pran Kumar Sharma, who is best known for his character Chacha Chaudhary, also faced a similar copyright issue regarding his cartoon/comic characters as Toms with Diamond Comics. Pran Kumar Sharma's first strips were created on the characters *Dabu* and *Adhikari* (a teenager and a professor) in the 1960s in a Delhi-based newspaper called *Milap*. It was later published in *Children's Sunday Magazine* as well as two periodicals from Karnataka in Kannada language. In an interview with John A. Lent in 1993, Pran said:

> It was tough for me as foreign comic strips were cheaper and syndicated. American characters were popular all over the world. One thing that helped me was that my themes were local, such as Indian Festivals and Indian customs. Indians thought these strips were something of their own. My themes gave me some advantage. Bit by bit, I got a part of the market. (Lent, *Asian Comics* 269)

10 Apart from *Boban and Molly*, Toms also published other works such as *Unnikkuttan*, *Mandoos* and, *Kunjukkuruppu*. For further information see V T Thomas' *Bobanum Molliyum* (2007) and *Ente Bobanum Mollyum* (2015) available in Malayalam language.

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However, his most popular strip was *Chacha Chaudhary* (1969; See Fig. 5), first published in the Hindi magazine *Lotpot* with the tagline "Chacha Chaudhary's brain works faster than a computer" (comic strip's tag line). The strip was later made available in both Hindi and English versions. Gradually, it got published into ten different languages in India. *Chacha Chaudhary* was also made into a TV series on Sahara One channel. His other famous strips include *Pinki*, *Shrimatiji* and *Billoo*. He also started a syndicate called Pran's Features in 1960 for the distribution and promotion of his works.

Fig. 5: Chacha Chaudhary comic strip in Hindi. Source: www.chachachaudhary.com/.

More and more indigenous characters began to appear in the 1960s. The Bengali cartoonist Narayan Debnath created *Honda* and *Bhonda* in 1962 for the children's magazine *Shuktara*. His other comic strips include *Shukti-Mukti*, *Bantul the Great* (the first Bengali superhero comic strips), *Nonte-Phonte*, *Bahadur Beral*, *Patalchand the Magician*, and *Black Diamond Indrajit Roy*. G. Aravindan is known for his comic strip or serial cartoon called *Cheriya Manushyarum Valiya Lokavum* (Small Men and the Big World; 1961-1973) published in a Malayalam weekly called *Mathrubhumi Azhchap-*

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pathippu. The cartoon series is considered by some artists as India's first graphic novel. The cartoonists like E. P. Unny regards that Aravindan anticipated the new graphic novel genre way back in 1961. His other cartoon series include *Ramuvinte Sahasika Yathrakal* (Ramu's Adventurous Journeys) and *Guruji* (Teacher) with the same characters as in *Cheriya Manushyarum Valiya Lokavum.* Yesudasan started his career with political cartoons in Malayalam daily *Janayugam*. He edited the children's magazine *Balayugam*, and satirical magazines such as *Asadhu* (invalid vote), *Cut-Cut* and *Tuk-Tuk*. He also created cartoon columns for *Malayala Manorama* newspaper and *The Week* magazine. He is famous for his female characters Ponnamma and Mrs. Nair who appear as central characters in *Malayala Manorama* and *Vanitha* magazine. M. Mohandas created comic strips like *Ramu and Shyamu* and *Kapish* in collaboration with the Indian comic books pioneer Anant Pai. The comic strips were distributed through Pai's Rang Rekha syndicate. Mohandas also contributed to the creation of other famous characters like *Mayavi*, *Luttappi* and *Dakini Ammoomma*. Abid Surti became noted as a cartoonist with *Dabbuji* that he created in 1965 for Hindi daily *Dharmayug*. His other strips include *Inspector Azad*, *Shuja*, *Rang Lakhudi*, *Doctor Chinchoo Ke Chamatkar* and *Inspector Vikram*. However, his most popular character was Bahadur that he created for *Times of India* group which they published in Indrajal Comics. He also started AFI Features in 1971, a comic/features syndicate under the ownership of Advertising Films of India (AFI). Both AFI Features and Pai's Rang Rekha Features (1969) competed with King's Features that brought popular Western comic characters like *Mandrake*, *Tarzan*, and *Phantom* to India. Some of the other comics/features syndicates in India to generate comic strips, cartoons and children's features were Amrita Bharati and Indian Features.

Thus, the comic strips that are considered to have originated from cartoons essentially became a mass medium published in periodicals, magazines, newspapers, and books. However, there exists a distinction between cartoons and comics as an extension of the difference between the cartoonist and the comic artist. The comics historian and artist Bharath Murthy, in his essay *An Art Without a Tradition: A Survey of Indian Comics,* talks about the difference between cartoonists and comics artists. According to him, comics artists work as employees under a corporate system where they must be collaborative and produce work depending on the demands of the market. Whereas cartoonists leave a signature style on all their works. The entire work is created by one person and, therefore, belongs to him/her. They are given the status of an author for the works they

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have produced. However, comics are produced on a large-scale basis often by large companies with mainly children as their target readers while cartoons which can be categorized as editorial cartoons, comic strips, etc., are created not only for the children with juvenile subject matter but are read by the adults as a form of satire on the socio-political scenarios. The next section of my chapter discusses the rise of comic books and later graphic novels to trace the continuities in the development of comic art in India that engages with newer formats and contents.

Comic Books and Graphic Novels

The comics culture in India expanded sporadically with the coming of comic books and since then, although experienced slackening with the shifting consumerism after the 1991 liberalization, it still sustains the scene with "[t]ransnational business and artistic collaborations, the emerging market in graphic novels and digital formats of print comics" ("Comicology" 187). In this section, I will discuss the comic books, their changing expressions and the advent of the long form genre called the graphic novel in India.

Towards the mid-twentieth century, comic books became part and parcel of middle-class households. They were subscribed to mostly weekly or monthly, for children, along with the daily newspaper at a reasonable price as they were printed in colored paper of low quality. The proliferation of Indian comic books started in the 1960s and reached its peak during late 1980s and early 1990s. The first Indian-produced comic book appeared in 1964 and was published by the *Times of India* (leading newspaper of India) group when they came up with Indrajal Comics which targeted a readership of English-educated children in the urban areas. The Indrajal Comics initially published the series based on Lee Falk's American comic strips *The Phantom*. Later, Indrajal Comics included various other King Features comic strips and the popular Indian hero comic strips called *Bahadur*. The most popular comic books are the Amar Chitra Katha series ("Immortal Picture Stories") started in 1967 by Anant Pai (aka "Uncle Pai" to children), who also worked as an editor of Indrajal Comics prior to that – this was criticized by many scholars such as Aruna Rao, Deepa Sreenivas, Karline McLain, Nandini Chandra and Ritu G. Khanduri for its biased depiction of Indian heritage and stereotypical portrayal of women. Amar Chitra Katha (ACK) was started with the mission to educate children

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who were unaware of their own roots and Indian culture due to the English education system adopted by Indian schools (mainly in urban regions). It included stories from Indian mythology, epics, folklores, and biographies of various notable figures. Apart from ACK, Anant Pai and India Book House (IBH) also came up with *Tinkle* in 1980. Both Amar Chithra Katha and *Tinkle* were published in English and later translated to many regional languages of India[11] (there is also a reading that ACK was first published in Kannada and not in English). In the 1990s, with the launch of various regional comics, the comic books industry experienced a growing demand for comics in regional languages compared to the English language comics. Champak, Diamond Comics, Raj Comics, Manoj Comics, etc., are some of the comics publishers (and titles) which were widely popular among children for their famous characters such as Chacha Chaudhary, Nagraj, Doga, Crookbond, Bhokal and so on (See Fig. 6). However, after the economic liberalization in 1991, there was a notable shift in consumer behaviour, leading to a significant decline in comic book sales. This decline can be attributed to the growing influence of television, video games, and the internet during that period.. By the early twenty-first century, comics creators (new entrants and old ones) came up with new companies and strategies to elevate its status.

Multimedia interactions, online presence and comic conventions gave comics new exposure. Several new comics and graphic novels published by, for example, Gotham Comics, Vivalok Comics, Vimanika Comics, Campfire books among others continued (and continues) to enter the market in the 2000s. The earlier Indian comics like Chacha Chaudhary, Amar Chitra Katha, Champak, and others have also been made available in electronic versions which can be easily accessed through mobile phones, PCs, and tablets. Thus, with the help of modern technology, a collection of comics was converted into digital form and distributed online, thereby making it easier to access. The new media platform – digital comics, web comics, vlog, and blog – has led to the democratization of the publication arena wherein comic/graphic artists (amateurs, enthusiasts, and professionals) have found a convenient space for artistic self-expression. As Khanduri puts it, "[in] this new moment, the more successful brands ACK and Diamond Comics also re-invent themselves by morphing into digital comics and exploring animation films. For struggling brands

11 ACK was published in twenty Indian languages while *Tinkle* was available in eight languages.

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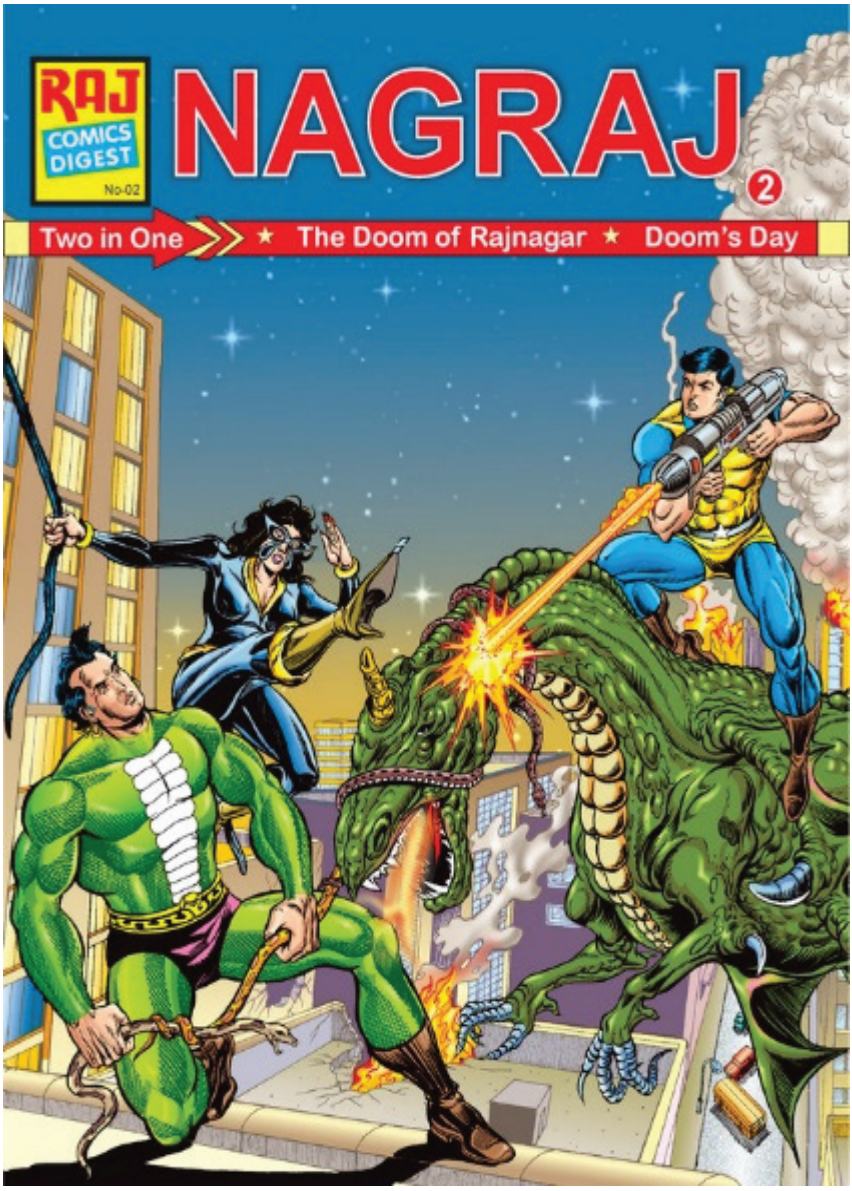

Fig. 6: Front cover of Raj Comics Digest No. 2. Source: www.rajcomics.com/index.php/49002/40001/english-comics/nagraj-digest-2_56039e3f68f8a-detail.

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such as Raj Comics, the digital interface might provide a new lease of life" ("Comicology" 187). The publication sector no longer remains a specific industry run by companies with the intention of making profit. Its modes of operation have undergone radical changes which has made it relatively easier for the new entrants, both individuals and groups. Bharath Murthy co-founded Indie Comix Fest, an annual event for independent comics creators to showcase their self-published comics/graphic novels and zines. He also publishes comics anthologies under *Comix India* magazine.[12] The World Comics Network (World Comics India[13]) started by the political cartoonist Sharad Sharma work towards the promotion of *grassroots comics* – artists, journalists, activists, cartoonists, and students who believe in the communicative potential of comics medium collaborate to inspire and create comics, often produced by the common people from the remote and marginalized areas of India. The annual Comic Con festival of India,[14] which was launched in 2011 in New Delhi, gave opportunities to new writers and publishers and diminished the gap between the artistes and publishers by bringing them together on the same platform. The Comic Con since then has been able to draw attention and receive good responses from the audience. New companies started bringing out comic books and graphic novels with more serious subjects (aimed at an adult readership), like Manta Ray (now obsolete and titles sold under Studio Kokaachi), Level 10 Entertainment,[15] Holy Cow Entertainment,[16] Studio Kokaachi,[17] and Orange Radius.[18] Several publishers like Penguin books, HarperCollins, Navayana, Phantomville Press, etc., have found a market in the graphic novel genre in India and are actively promoting its circulation.[19] Some comic book-inspired characters were recently adapted into animated TV series such as *Motu Patlu* (2012) which was made into an animated feature film called *Motu Patlu: King of Kings* in 2016. Digital comics

12 Here see, for example: https://comixindia.org/?v=c86ee0d9d7ed.
13 These are available online at: https://www.worldcomicsindia.com/.
14 For further details see: https://www.comicconindia.com/.
15 Cf. http://www.level10comics.com/.
16 See https://www.holycow.in/.
17 See: https://kokaachi.com/.
18 For further information see: https://orangeradius.com/.
19 After the economic liberalization of 1991, both global and domestic markets opened publishing houses in India. International publishing houses set up branches in India like Penguin India, HarperCollins India, etc. and made inroads into the Indian market in terms of production, consumption, and distribution. Independent publishers also expanded in the post-liberalized phase of the last two decades.

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or e-comics, web comics, motion comics, comics blogs, and websites (such as, for example, Comicology, Comics Byte[20]), online stores (e.g. Flipkart, Amazon, Infibeam), comics apps (as, for instance, Comics Circle, Graphic India, Raj Comics), Facebook pages, several comics fan sites, etc., form the new comics industry. It also points to the considerable progress India has made in the field of comic art today.

The twenty-first century also saw the rise of graphic novels in India with the publication of Sarnath Banerjee's *Corridor* (2004) by Penguin Books India. *Corridor* is often considered to be the first Indian graphic novel, but, in fact, Orijit Sen's *River of Stories* (1994) published by Kalpavriksh preceded it. *Corridor* could capture more attention nationwide as well as worldwide as it was published by Penguin Books. Therefore, it was Banerjee's work that grabbed a place for graphic novel in the Indian bookstores. The name 'graphic novel' (adapted directly from the British/American usage) itself suggests a demarcation from the comics genre, which encapsulated a wider audience to its share (nationally and internationally), and mostly addresses and critiques the socio-political and cultural issues of India through their content.

The Indian graphic novel has carved a niche for itself as a genre that deals with serious subject matter, away from themes such as humour, fantasy, and superheroes, and has entered the field of Indian academia. For instance, *Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability, Incidents in the Life of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar* (2011; written by Srividya Natarajan and S. Anand and illustrated by Durgabai Vyam and Subhash Vyam) is an Indian graphic novel which has been included in the syllabus of various Universities such as University of Delhi, University of Calcutta, Goa University, Christ University, and others (See Fig. 7).

Graphic novels are being promoted along with comics at Comic Con which has helped popularize the genre. Both graphic novels and comics have a growing youth and adult readership in India as well as among the Indian diaspora abroad. The expensive medium of the Indian graphic novel is mainly created to reach the English-educated public of India and the global market. Graphic novels are not mass-marketed in India due to pricing and relatively small number of readers. The peripheral status accorded to forms like the Indian graphic novel has its roots in the unequal

20 Cf. http://www.comicology.in/ and https://comicsbyte.com/, respectively.

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treatment of citizens on the basis of caste and gender.[21] This unequal treatment of citizens reduced the idea of modernity and liberalism to limited, mainly bourgeois spaces.

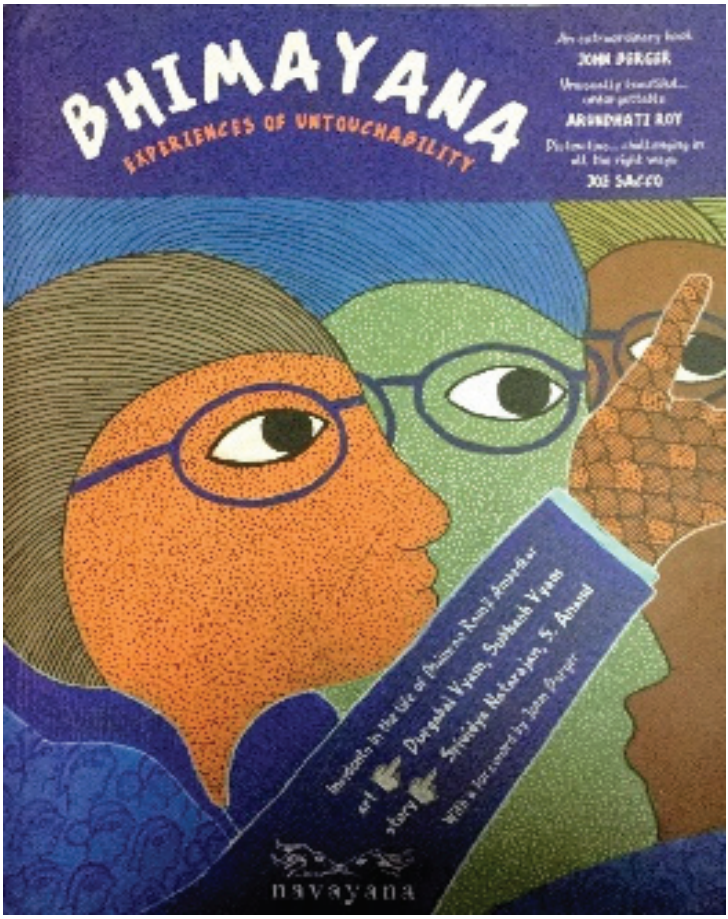

Fig. 7: Cover image. *Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability, Incidents in the Life of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar*. Text by Srividya Natarajan and S. Anand, and art by Durgabai and Subhash Vyam. Navayana, 2011.

21 During British rule, the Brahminical Hindu codes along with colonial system served to homogenize the colonial subject in a gendered context which prevails even in the present times. For details see Kanchana Mahadevan's "Colonial Modernity: A Critique."

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In 2012, a group of five graphic artists including Orijit Sen, Sarnath Banerjee, Vishwajyoti Ghosh, Parismita Singh and Amitabh Kumar came together with an anthology on comics, and they called it *Pao: the Anthology of Comics*, Volume 1.[22] The Pao board, along with the Pao members, brought together various artists and writers who contributed to this anthology. This initiative can be considered as a turning point in Indian comics culture as it shows a shift from the production aspect to a more artistic engagement with the comics form. Another such anthology is *This Side That Side: Restorying Partition* (2013) curated by Vishwajyoti Ghosh, and it is a collection of partition stories from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India by the authors and artists of the respective countries. Several such anthologies and graphic novels are being published, featuring new and emerging talents as well as stories.

Conclusion

Cartooning tradition in India began in newspapers and periodicals, and further expanded the art form with newspaper cartoons, comic strips, comic books, and graphic novels. From English language comics to regional comics of the 1970s and 1990s, the twenty-first century set the stage for more innovative long form narratives in Indian comics culture. According to Emma Dawson Varughese, "the 1980s witnessed a new wave of Indian writing in English," linguistic diversity being one of the key features (Varughese, *Reading New India* 13). She states that, from the 1990s, India experienced a growing expansion in enterprises which opened new economic and employment opportunities for middle class Indians. Indian writing in English also underwent a change in terms of its style, narration, and content as a result of India's presence in the global economy and its increased involvement with the rest of the world. According to Varughese, the graphic novel genre is a form of writing that emerged with the formation of a 'New India' in the late twentieth century (Varughese, *Reading New India* 17).

In many ways Pramod K Nayar's *The Indian Graphic Novel: Nation, History and Critique* offers the first consolidated and detailed discussion of Indian graphic novels and views graphic novels as a new mode of

22 The word 'Pao' is taken from the Portuguese language meaning bread which is very commonly used in several regions of India.

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representation in the canon of Indian Writing in English that "re-invigorates the canon, the form and the themes" (7). The book focuses on the use of the comics medium to deal with serious subject matters such as caste, gender, history, memory, identity, and politics of the Indian subcontinent. Although the Indian graphic novel has adapted a popular form – as popularized by the political cartoons and comic strips/books which are availed through newspapers or otherwise – it remains within the reach of a smaller readership which is mainly centered in the urban areas. Hence, Nayar has proposed that Indian graphic narratives with their localized stories about social and political conflicts should be a part of the global literary scene where the graphic medium is very popular and well recognized. Varughese (2018) has also raised similar concerns regarding the limited readership and the need for a global acceptance of the Indian graphic novel in her work *Visuality and Identity in Post-millennial Indian Graphic Narratives*.

In the post-millennial times, globalization, transnational corporations, political economy, and transnational flow of cultures are contributing to new visual forms and carving new perspectives on Indian graphic novels about caste/class oppression, gendered experiences, migration and forced displacements, religious and political anxieties, regional and ethno-racial conflicts, and environmental and urban issues. In fact, it is in the first decade of the twenty-first century that there has been a proliferation of Indian graphic novels that give a voice to numerous socially relevant issues. Apart from that, many Asians and Europeans/Westerners based in the Global North are now creating stories which have some affinities with/exposure to India, for instance, Joe Sacco's *Kushinagar* and Nidhi Chanani's *Pashmina*. Anglophone writers who primarily belong to the Global South, have sought postcolonial literatures across national and cultural boundaries to learn about the various socio-political patterns embedded in them. That is, in contemporary times, with transnational and global flows of ideas and cultures, local/regional/subaltern visual cultures place themselves within the global landscape and make attempts to engage holistically with the processes of creolization. As a part of this, the comics medium within the framework of postcolonial visual culture creates new sets of visual grammar. This is evident from Indian graphic novel's use of traditional art styles like the *patua* scroll art (in *Sita's Ramayana*), Gond art (in *Bhimayana*), the Kashmiri wood art and Kashmiri miniature art (in *Munnu*), the Rajasthani Mewar manuscript painting (in LIE), etc., into the sequential narratives of the comics medium. Thus, there is a convergence

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of the old and the new, traditional and the modern, and past and the present played out in the Indian graphic novel medium to revive, commodify and acquire a unique structure of narratives. The experiments with new comics and the long form graphic novel suggests a growing visual literacy in India.

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Appendix

The list of comic book/cartoon magazine titles from India and their contents (This is not a complete list; there are still many others that are not included):

S. no.	Comic Books/magazines/periodicals	Timeline	Publisher or Publishing house	Characters/Contents
1	Chandamama	1947-2013	Geodesic Limited	Indian mythology, folklores, etc.
2	Indrajal Comics	1964-1990	*The Times of India* owned by Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd	*The Phantom*, *Mandrake the Magician*, *Garth*, *Bahadur*, etc.
3	Amar Chitra Katha	1967	India Book House (IBH) and ACK Media	Indian mythology, folk tales, historical leaders and events.
4	Feluda Comics	1965	*Sandesh* magazine edited by Satyajit Ray's family; Puffin Books	Danger in Darjeeling, Murder by the Sea, The Criminals of Kailash, A Bagful of Mystery, etc.
5	Tinkle	1980	India Book House (IBH) and ACK Media	Suppandi, Shikari Shambu, etc.
6	Champak	1969	Japan Press Group	Cheeku, Meeku, short stories, etc.
7	Lotpot	1969	Mayapuri Group	Motu Patlu, Chacha Chaudhary, etc.
8	Diamond Comics	1978	Diamond Comics Pvt. Ltd.	Chacha Chaudhary, Billoo, Pinki, etc.
9	Nutan Comics	1970s	Nutan Pocket Books	Meghdoot, Mama ji, Muni Chacha, Amar Akbar, Bhootnath, etc.
10	Target	1979-1995	Living Media	*Detective Moochhwala*, *Granny's Gupshup*, *Gardhab Das*, *etc.*
11	Raj Comics	1986	Raja Pocket Books	Nagraj, Doga, Super Commando Dhruva, Parmanu, Inspector Steel, etc.
12	Manoj Comics	1980s	Manoj Comics	Ram-Rahim, Inspector Manoj, Crookbond, illustrated stories, etc.
13	Tulsi Comics	1980s-2004	Tulsi Pocket Books	Jambu, Angara, Tausi, Yosho, Mr. India, etc.
14	Fort Comics	1990s	Book Fort, Delhi	Chaurangi Lal, Gufina, Jangaru, Sando, etc.
15	Muthu Comics	1971	Prakash Publishers, Tamil Nadu	Steel Claw, The Spider, Iron Man, etc.

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S. no.	Comic Books/magazines/periodicals	Timeline	Publisher or Publishing house	Characters/Contents
16	Lion Comics	1984	Prakash Publishers, Tamil Nadu	Tex Willer, Captain Tiger, etc.
17	Rani Comics	1984	ThinaThanthi group of Publishers	Cowboy stories, detective stories, etc.
18	Balarama	1972	Malayala Manorama Publications Limited	Mayavi, Luttappi, Suthran, etc.
19	Poompatta	1964	P. A. Warrier and Pai Company	Undaappikkal, Kaloolu, etc.
20	Balabhumi	1996	Mathrubhumi Publications	Magic Malu, Kunchoos, Master Tintu, etc.
21	Balamangalam	1980-2012	Mangalam Publications (India) Private Limited	Dinkan, Saktimarunnu, etc.
22	Toms Magazine	1980s	Toms Publications	*Boban and Molly*, *Unnikkuttan*, *Mandoos*, etc.
23	Radha Comics	1980s	Radha Pocket Books	*Shaktipura*
24	Sudden Muanga Comics	1976-1990s	Laisaizawk's (Lalsangzuala) comic books	Sudden (cowboy)
25	Gotham Comics	1998	Gotham Entertainment Group LLC	Spider-Man India, X-Men, Superman, etc.
26	Virgin Comics	2006-2008	Virgin Comics LLC	Devi, Snake Woman, Sadhu and Ramayana 3392 AD
27	Liquid Comics	2008	Gotham Group	Chakra: The Invincible
28	Freelance talents	2006	Founded by Mohit Trendster (NGO and Publication House)	Educational books, Kavya Comics (comics poetry), World Comics & Graphic Novels News (e-paper), Indian Comics Fandom (magazine), Freelance Talents Comics, etc.
29	Vivalok Comics	2001	The Viveka Foundation	The Santhals, The Sunderbans, etc.
30	Kriyetic Comics	2007	Self-publishing venture	Graphic art, graphic novels, etc.
31	Campfire books	2007	Steerforth Press	Graphic novels, graphic biographies, classics, etc.
32	Vimanika Comics	2008	Vimanika Edutainment Pvt. Ltd	Moksha, Shiva – The Immortal, The Sixth – Legend of Karna, etc.
33	Indian War Comics	2008	Self-publishing venture created by Delhi-based Merchant Navy officer Aditya Bakshi	Heroic life of the Indian soldiers
34	Sufi Comics	2009	Banglore based independent venture started by Mohammed	Islamic traditions and history

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S. no.	Comic Books/magazines/periodicals	Timeline	Publisher or Publishing house	Characters/Contents
			Ali Vakil & Mohammed Arif Vakil	
35	Level 10 Comics	2010	Level 10 Entertainment	*The Rabhas Incident*, *Shaurya*, *Daksh*, etc.
36	Chariot Comics	2012	Independent Comics Publishing House	VRICA, Zombie Rising, etc.
37	Yomics	2012	Yash Raj Films Studios	Yash Raj Films (YRF) movies

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Mohit Abrol

Unpacking the *Punch*: A Genealogical Account of *Punch* Cartoons in Nineteenth-Century India

Introduction

At the end of the eighteenth century, the attitude of the British government towards the notion of 'freedom of press' can be described as fractious, at best. Britain's well-established tradition of political pamphleteering came under legal and extra-legal scrutiny as a reaction against the French Revolution. Any signs of revolutionary activism or moderate forms of association which informed the political debates about reform and revolution were brought under strict regulation. The access to print was restricted largely because it was being described as the "most malignant and formidable enemy of the constitution" (Hewitt 150). The radical mobilization of the masses by successive journalists and caricaturists who believed in a public sphere of free discourse and debate was eyed with suspicion by the conservatives who harbored fears about constitutional authority, free press and open elections (Woloch 5). Under the 1799 Seditious Societies Act, all presses were coerced to compulsorily register to institute legal liabilities for content and advertisements deemed blasphemous, seditious, or obscene. Further, the Blasphemous and Seditious Libels Act and the Newspaper Stamp Duties Act (1819) enacted to contain the proliferation of radical journals like William Cobbett's *Twopenny Trash* (1812-17) and Thomas Wooler's *Black Dwarf* (1817-24) limited the circulation of periodicals and broadened the scope of press prosecution (see Hewitt 150).

Beyond the legal pressures due to which proprietors and editors like Daniel Lovell were sent to Newgate prison for more than four years and William Hone faced trial for his religious parodies, this reflected a social consciousness in which the polarized view of society as a whole was found embedded, a society constituted by "the respectable and the dangerous, the civilized and the savage" (Woloch 10). The categories of dangerous and savage were deployed against the popular masses who lacked the space for leisure and privacy in their lives and therefore could not respond to the need for critical reflection: as Godwin asserted, "political speculation had to be undertaken by a 'few favoured minds', for only 'studious

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and reflecting' men could 'see' into 'future events', and so conceive a new vision of society" (Denney 62). The art of caricaturing reached its "Golden Age" in such a milieu along with verbal and visual expressions at an "intensely combative and dialectical [pace], spilling from the courtroom to the press and back again" (Gilmartin 115). Not only James Gillray's pencil (founder of the *Punch* periodical in 1841) traced the excesses of the British attitude towards press, prosecution and policing of the public sphere, his *Punch* cartoons presented a spirited defense of the freedom of expression as well. The circulation of penny periodicals and cheap caricatures and flow of information in the early half of nineteenth century is, ironically, based on the repressive mechanisms which failed to repress them. Even the notion of 'public opinion' which was coined by de Rulhière in the mid-eighteenth century gained new impetus in the transcultural flows of ideas between Britain and its colonies when more than one language and culture got involved with the visual medium. This ironic stance coupled with the social modalities of censorship, regulation of press and the public sphere maintained the space from which newer forms of reading and artistic expressions could emerge. In the period after the Reform Bill of 1832, caricatures, through their willful exaggeration, satirical punches and physiognomic distortions (most notably through *Punch*) generated an adequate impression of the visual culture which brought to the fore the sense of ultimate inadequacy of the imperial accounts.

Since cartoons contain more dynamic glimpses of the colonial attitudes and that of the Indian figure than the written word, this paper will offer a genealogical account of *Punch* cartoons in India with an emphasis on their cultural representativeness, literary mimeticism, subversive potential and functioning as a form of anti-colonialist resistance in visual medium. This genealogical account of cartoons and caricatures, insofar as it will also give a history of the British rule in nineteenth-century India, seeks to highlight the political impact that such literary and pictorial forms generated in relation to the colonial views, positions, and practices. Further, it aims to problematize the ambivalent spaces that the traditional historical accounts based on the binary approaches of the colonizer and the colonized, the Europe and the Other, the center and the periphery, the vocal and the silent leave behind. These binaries have often worked as an extrapolated version of the polarized views which informed the social consciousness and class fabric of European society at the time. With this view, this chapter will provide a detailed analysis and unpack the culturally specific character of *Punch* to mobilize it as a geographical and anti-colonial referent against

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the British empire. The ephemeral nature of the vernacular cartoons and a lack of well-maintained archival sources[1], however, present significant challenges in analyzing the complete print runs of *Punch* cartoons in India and so the images under consideration have been particularly chosen to articulate the most visible colonial anxieties and characterization of Indian subjects as cross-cultural inscriptions of the British rule in nineteenth-century India. The next section of my chapter explores the political implications of the *Punch* cartoons in India.

Punch and the Politics of Image and Text

British *Punch* magazine (1841-1992), similar to its French and German counterparts like *Le Charivari* (1832-1937), *Kladderadatsch* (1848-1944), *Die Fliegende Blätter* (1845-1944), and *Simplicissimus* (1896–1944 and 1954–1967) not only disseminated the discourse about "European imperialism in terms of visibility and enduring influence" but also acted as the popular visual medium through which the colonial apparatus in terms of military and political power and, as Rita Khanduri argues, its claims of civilizational mission could be understood and critiqued (Scully and Varnava 3; Khanduri 3).

The study of *Punch* cartoons printed in India has been a relatively recent phenomena to analyze the print culture traditions, the emergence of public spheres and nationalist debates taking place in nineteenth-century India. The aim of this part of my chapter is to show how these cartoons offer the most visible imprint of Anglo-Asian 'cultural contract' through their humorous illustrations and many-layered meanings and often exhibit a transcultural and transhistorical life of their own. Indian historians of visual culture like Partha Mitter and Mushirul Hasan, through their curatorial and pedagogical frameworks, have explored the rich world of Indian

1 With regard to the archiving issue in India and particularly in the context of cartoons, Indian political cartoonist E.P. Unny writes, "Indian cartoon study has a wieldy bibliography, the whole of which can be scribbled into a chit no larger than the pocket cartoon" (Unny no pag.). In his interview, Indian historian A. R. Venkatachalapathy argues that cartoons drawn by a child are often discarded as mere scribblings and this attitude determines the larger culture in India where "no real documentation" takes place which is unlike the major newspapers in the West where historians or former journalists are hired to produce histories (Arunram no pag.).

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Punch and their visual iconographies to situate the structural and material conditions of India's multiple modernities.

Such a nuanced configuration of historical patterns and public opinions move firmly away from the Western and non-Western historiographies inspired by Edward Said's view about the Western techniques of representation which "excluded, displaced, made supererogatory any such *real* thing as 'the Orient'" (Said 21). Cartoons are a unique medium which function at both representative and operative levels in attaining the communicative goal between the image, the text, and the reader. Cartoons contain what Roland Barthes referred to as "the third meaning" according to which the image-text grid "outplays meaning—subverts not the content but the whole practice of meaning" (Barthes 328). For Barthes, the comic strip with its combination of drawing and story occupies the region which, similar to the filmic, goes well beyond the pure representative function and presents a rare practice (as opposed to the majority practice of determining signification) where an obtuse meaning emerges as a "luxury, an expenditure with no exchange" transcending "today's politics" and belonging "*already* to tomorrow's" (ibid.). *Punch* cartoons, then, are not to be read as "passive reflectors of reality" but rather as "the actual shapers—may be even realisers—of nineteenth-century popular thought" (Scully and Varnava 5; Browne 509). By inserting a "life" into this rare practice the "social system and the collective understandings on which it rests" can be glanced (Kopytoff 217).

Mitter analyzes the transcultural phenomenon that the *Punch* cartoons embody "during the high tide of imperialism, which represents the first great phase of globalisation" (Mitter, "Punch and Indian" 47). In taking up the story of Punch's dissemination across the Indian subcontinent, Mitter sketches a multi-scalar account of colonial India which not only looks back at the British empire but also overcomes the binary relation between the colonizer and the colonized for the reason that *Punch* cartoons emerge as the "third space" which combine and crystallize the original duality of the traditional historical accounts. Perhaps this explains the attractiveness of the Punch format and the many "cousin" models it led to in different parts of the world (Harder 4, 6).

Envisioning *Punch* through these familial (Indian) Punches which employed numerous intertextual references offer a new way to examine the colonizer-colonized relationship and re-contextualize the nineteenth-century debates about the colonial and the native cultures. The translingual and transcultural features of *Punch* in India can actively serve the means

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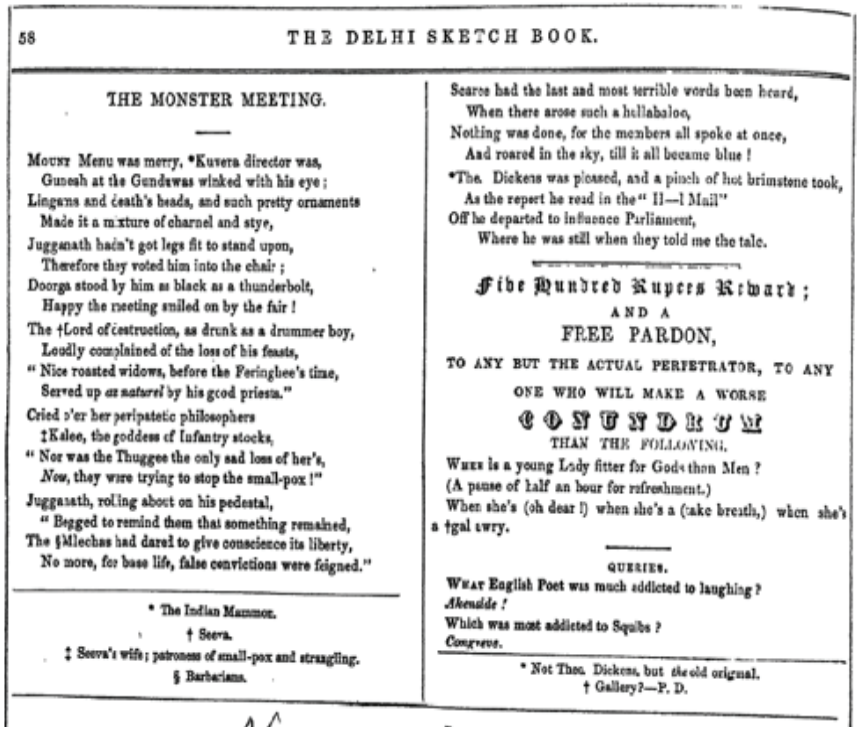
to provide a "nativist" perspective by offering an experiential dimension of the "vast ideological machinery" which constituted and interpellated Indian subjects (Slemon 37). As the next part of my chapter shows, *The Delhi Sketch Book* graphically preserved the many instances in which the two cultures came in contact and reacted with each other, time after time in a combative way.

The Delhi Sketch Book



58 THE DELHI SKETCH BOOK.

THE MONSTER MEETING.

Mount Menu was merry, *Kuvera director was,
Gunesh at the Gundawas winked with his eye;
Lingams and death's heads, and such pretty ornaments
Made it a mixture of charnel and stye,
Jugganath hadn't got legs fit to stand upon,
Therefore they voted him into the chair;
Doorga stood by him as black as a thunderbolt,
Happy the meeting smiled on by the fair!
The †Lord of destruction, as drunk as a drummer boy,
Loudly complained of the loss of his feasts,
"Nice roasted widows, before the Feringhee's time,
Served up *au naturel* by his good priests."
Cried o'er her peripatetic philosophers
‡Kalee, the goddess of Infantry stocks,
"Nor was the Thuggee the only sad loss of her's,
Now, they were trying to stop the small-pox!"
Jugganath, rolling about on his pedestal,
"Begged to remind them that something remained,
The §Mlechas had dared to give conscience its liberty,
No more, for base life, false convictions were feigned."

* The Indian Mammon.
† Seeva.
‡ Seeva's wife; patroness of small-pox and strangling.
§ Barbarians.

Scarce had the last and most terrible words been heard,
When there arose such a hullabaloo,
Nothing was done, for the members all spoke at once,
And roared in the sky, till it all became blue!
*The Dickens was pleased, and a pinch of hot brimstone took,
As the report he read in the "Il—l Mall"
Off he departed to influence Parliament,
Where he was still when they told me the tale.

Five Hundred Rupees Reward;
AND A
FREE PARDON,
TO ANY BUT THE ACTUAL PERPETRATOR, TO ANY ONE WHO WILL MAKE A WORSE
CONUNDRUM
THAN THE FOLLOWING.

When is a young Lady fitter for Gods than Men?
(A pause of half an hour for refreshment.)
When she's (oh dear!) when she's a (take breath,) when she's a †gal wry.

QUERIES.

What English Poet was much addicted to laughing?
Akenside!
Which was most addicted to Squibs?
Congreve.

* Not Thos. Dickens, but the old original.
† Gallery?—P. D.

Fig. 1: "The Monster Meeting" and "Conundrum." *Delhi Sketch Book*, vol. IV (1853), p. 58.

One of the earliest progenies of the British *Punch: Or, the London Charivari* (first appeared on 17 July 1841), the *Delhi Sketch Book* (1850-57; launched by the newspaper *The Englishman*) followed the colonial model to disseminate the major scientific, philosophical, engineering and medical developments to the masses along with general amusement about "British social

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life, as private jokes to be shared among its English readers" (Mitter, *Art and Nationalism* 140). *Delhi Sketch Book* contained diverse content, social commentaries, topical subjects of discussion, political speeches, humorous poems, jokes, puns and most notably, the visual images of the native figure through a set of physiognomic features drawn in a particular way and enhanced mannerisms to easily identify the parodied Indian.

The expatriate population in India which would frequently send visual and print entries for publication poked fun not only at the native inhabitants but feminine sensibility as well through misogynistic jokes (see Figure 1) within, what Vic Gatrell calls, "dangerous mixture of a primal male humour" (Gatrell 433). The big reward of five hundred rupees to participate in the explicit misogyny exemplified through these printed words provide us an access to its readers. It offers clues to the social attitudes, morality and imperial policies when compared to the visual depiction of the general postman of India (see Figure 2) carrying a big jute bag with a caption, "ONLY ONE ANNA FOR ALL INDIA" (one anna is 1/16th of a rupee for a population of roughly 240 million people in the 1850s) (*Delhi Sketch Book* 1853, 61).

This image with its ludicrous exaggeration fits well with Susan Bayly's argument in her article, "The Evolution of Colonial Cultures: Nineteenth-Century Asia," that the "[i]mperial officials were reluctant spenders, ever fearful that tampering with native laws, faiths, or learned traditions might undermine their fragile authority over large, and often turbulent subject populations" (Bayly 450). However, the native laws provided enough fodder for the poetic and literary pursuits which appeared in the periodical. One such poem titled "The Monster Meeting" abounds with references to the *Sati pratha* ("Nice roasted widows, before the firanghee's time"), Indian goddesses ("Kalee, the goddess of Infantry

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stocks") and terms like "mlechha"[2] and "thugee"[3] to designate the linguistic, cultural, physical and caste separations that the colonial gaze preserved between the high-caste Hindus and their regional counterparts, the "native gentleman" and the lower-caste and peripheral peasant groups. In his article, "The Imperial Spectator of Sati, 1757-84" (2008), Norbert Schürer argues that the British commentators adopted "a unique stance toward sati, namely that of the sentimental impartial spectator" and the late eighteenth century and mid-nineteenth century accounts merely followed the sentimental gaze till the practice of *Sati* was officially abolished in 1829 (Schürer 20).

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2 The word *mleccha*, derived from the Sanskrit language, has its roots to the word *vāc* meaning speech. The word *mleccha* denote a person who is unfamiliar or lacks grasp over the common speech in a particular milieu. It is related to the concept of barbarian with the arrival of the Indo-Aryan speakers in the early northern India who deemed the non-Sanskrit speaking indigenous people as barbarians. Further, the word *mleccha* suggests a cultural affair as opposed to a linguistic one. There are several readings on the etymology of *mleccha* in the Sumerian, Pāli, Budhist, proto-Tibetan and Kukish traditions. However, the adjectival use of *mleccha* as impure and uncivilized to connote identity and culture—*mleccha-deŝa* (country), *mleccha-bhāṣā* (language), *mleccha-nivāha* (horde), *mleccha-bhojana* (food), *mleccha-vāc* (speech)—became prevalent from the second half of the first millennium B.C. For further reference, see Romila Thapar's essay, "The Image of the Barbarian in Early India."

3 In her article, "Discovering India, Imagining *Thuggee*," Parama Roy examines the performative use of the word 'thug' as constructed in the colonial discourse on 'thuggee' (both as praxis and identity) and presents the figure of the thug as negotiating multiple and competing identities which, in turn, resists the totalizing epistemologies of colonialism that reduces the native to an easily recognizable and knowable subject. She says that the thugs were narrativized in nineteenth and twentieth-century colonial representations as "a cult of professional stranglers who preyed on travellers—though never on Englishmen—as an act of worship to the goddess Kali […] hereditary killers drawn from all regions, religions, classes, and castes, united by their devotion to Kali" (Roy 124). Roy identifies two contested readings of thugs/thuggee that emerge: one that defines the thuggee system as a quasi-religious fraternity which existed outside the realm of political and economic rationality, and the other which defines thugs as part of the indigenous society and supported by zamindars (landowners), Indian princes, law enforcement officials, merchants, and even ordinary farmers. The term 'thuggee' included "all kinds of organized and corporate criminal activity (including poisoning and the kidnapping of children) that was understood to be hereditary and/or itinerant" and the thug became a subject position that was criminalized (Roy 125). The discursive construction of thuggee as hereditary criminality was complicated by the fact that professional thugs maintained the appearance of responsible and civic-minded citizens which made it difficult for the British to establish it as a "pervasive yet eccentric form of lawlessness" (Roy 127).

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Fig. 2: "The New General Postman for India." *Delhi Sketch Book*, vol. IV (1853), p. 61.

The attitude of British officials in India towards *Sati* represented the larger European ideological discourse against women which treated widow burning (in the colony) and witch burning (at home) as separate instances to keep the dichotomy between the colonizer and the colonized intact. The indiscriminate use of 'monstrous and marvelous' imagery to depict Indian gods and goddesses further foregrounds the cultural and ideological investment that the Western imagination maintained in structuring the perception of difference. Although the British administration professed that the policies informed by the idea of difference (in terms of purity, race, and caste) were "based on the pronouncements of Hindu pundits

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and to be upholding the Hindu tradition against corrupt Brahmins," the imperial mindset behind these claims was always at-work in appeasing the Indian masses and keeping a check on any move which could undermine the British interests (Schürer 20). Even the terms like *mlechha* and *thugee* and their association with the word, barbarian (as the glossary in Figure 1 indicates) demonstrates most clearly the imperial imperatives and instrumentalizations of the native beliefs and cultural patterns to emphasize speech, cultural and political differentiation amongst Indians belonging to different castes and, importantly, between the natives and the British.

The *Delhi Sketch Book* soon emerged as the interstitial site encompassing information, criticism and glimpses of British domestic life, a comic forum where both the home and the world became subjects of discussion offering a sense of familiarity and belongingness to its mainly British and Anglo-Indian readers. Through the "interplay of text and image in its square double-columned page format and layout" we get to hear the conversations and varied voices from inside the bedroom and the daily hardships (or the "INDIAN LUXURIES") out on the street (see Figures 3 and 4; Mitter, "Punch and Indian Cartoons" 48).

Figure 3 offers a glimpse of the domestic space filled with tranquility suggesting that the British rule over India by 1850s (even before the Indian subcontinent was brought under the Crown rule) had already become an established fact. The presence of Englishwomen brought along the Victorian ideas of domesticity and gentility "remote from Indians in the midst of India" into the fabricated English life in Delhi (Hutchins 103). The sparsely filled room still manages to reflect the automatically endowed privileges which the Englishmen garnered by choosing a career as an administrative or military official in the colony. The aura of large income and elevated social status to turn into, what Francis Hutchins calls, "instant aristocrats" served as inspiration for many British Indian officials who felt, as Sir James Fitzjames Stephen observed, "undervalued and snubbed in English society" (Hutchins 108). These 'instant aristocrats' immersed themselves into the pretense of English aristocracy and ensured that "[n]o Collector's wife will wear an article of Indian manufacture […] and all her furniture, even to her carpets, must be of English make" (Hutchins 108). The caption, "STRIKING RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN BABY AND DOG LAUGHTER," exemplify the distinctively middle-class and metropolitan background since ordinary soldiers and lower-class or "other miscellaneous poorer Europeans – are more or less excluded from visual representation at this time" (De Silva 135).

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THE DELHI SKETCH BOOK. 57

STRIKING RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN BABY AND DOG LANGUAGE.

Affectionate Mamma.—" AND WASN'T IT A DEAR LITTLE WILLY ILLIE, AND DIDN'T IT LIKE A DARLING LITTLE PET OF A BOY, LIE AND SUCK ITS ITTLE THUMBS, ALL OF ITS OWN ACCORD !"

Affectionate Papa.—" AND WASN'T IT A DEAR LITTLE BILLY WILLIE, AND DIDN'T IT ALL OF ITS OWN ACCORD KILL ALL THE RATS," &c. &c.

Fig. 3: "Striking resemblance between baby and dog language." *Delhi Sketch Book*, vol. IV (1853), p. 57.

Besides the apparent familial ideology which underscores the sexual division of labor as the Englishwoman holding the baby is counterposed to the Englishman dotting over the pet dog, the image depicts the new trend of pet-keeping practices as it passed from the aristocratic circles in the preceding centuries to the new bourgeoisie of the Victorian times. Keridiana Chez, in her fascinating book *Victorian Dogs, Victorian Men: Affect and Animals in Nineteenth Century Literature and Culture* (2017), argues that "[t]o redress the apparent crisis of affective inadequacy, the dog was appropriated away from its historical usage as a beast of burden to become a beloved companion. The pet […] became a necessary relation for the emotional health of the bourgeoisie" (Chez 3). The emotional needs of the Victorian men were supplanted by pet-keeping which added an affective dimension to the deeply stratified family structures. At one level, print capitalism brought back the nostalgia of the countryside and the sentimental attitudes towards nature and nonhuman creatures as op-

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posed to living amongst the "ebb and flow" of Delhi streets. This could also partly inform the urge to live in a hill station like Shimla during the summer when Delhi would get engulfed by unbearable heat. As Hutchins states, "the custom of resorting to the hills for the hot months grew steadily with the progress of the century" so much so that "[a]t the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny [of 1857], for instance, the Commander-in-Chief was at Simla" (Hutchins 108).

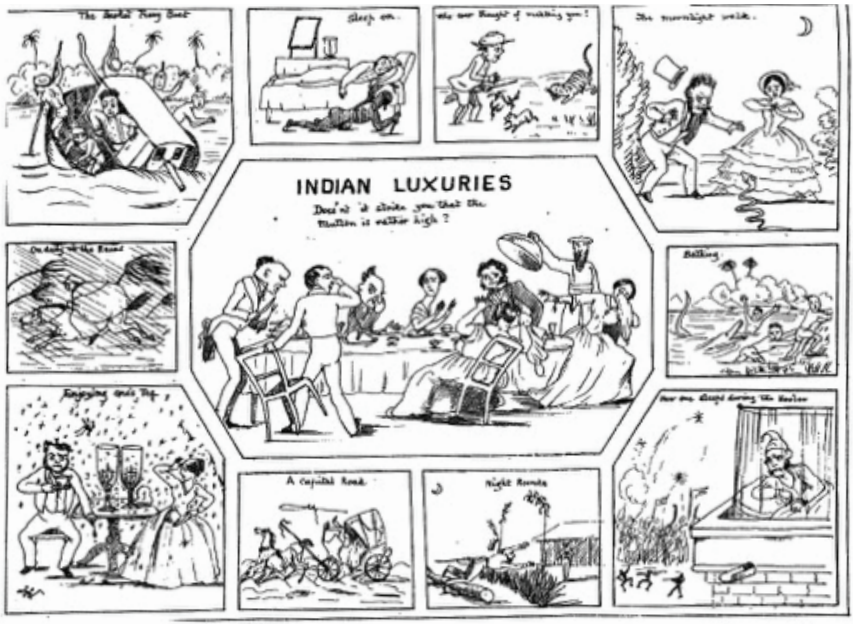

Fig. 4: "Indian Luxuries." *Delhi Sketch Book*, vol. IV (1853), no pag.

At another level, the image when read with the caption portray the language of scientific endeavor as was common to the British *Punch* which often dealt with topics about "animal behaviour and development, zoology, astronomy, analytical and industrial chemistry, natural history, electricity" (Noakes 107). In fact, the first page of the *Delhi Sketch Book*, volume 5 (dated January 1, 1854) begins with an assemblage of lithographic image (with the native drawn with obsequious expressions and folded hands while standing on a locomotive) and printed report by the Chief Engineer, the "statistics I hold in my hand" about the train journeys which began in April 1853 (see Figure 5). Introduction of railways to the Indi-

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an subcontinent was deemed necessary by the Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie who "stressed the political, military and economic benefits accruing to Britain, to the Anglo-Indian connection, and to the colonial regime" (Hurd and Kerr 9). However, the earlier proposals to set up railways almost ten years before in 1844 were rejected due to the British investors' demand for a guarantee of an annual dividend from the East India Company based on the profits from the proposed railway enterprise in the Indian subcontinent. It was further stipulated that the annual dividend would be deemed mandatory even in the absence of profit margins and had to be "extracted from the people of India via the revenues of GOI" – the British administration in India (Hurd and Kerr 8).

THE

DELHI SKETCH BOOK.

VOL. V.] JANUARY 1, 1854. [NO. I.

To Correspondents.

THE WAY WE FIRE AT BARRACKPORE received. It will be inserted—with a feed.

SOMEBODY. We dislike personalities when those exercised on us are not public property.

HARRY PUNT. Much too heady for us.

EXTENSION OF THE GREAT DELHI AND LUNAR RAILWAY.

SPEECH OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER.

1ST JANUARY, 1854.

MY LORD MARQUIS, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN.

IT is one of the four proudest moments of my life when I thus arise to return thanks for the honour you have now, for the fourth annual period, conferred upon me. When, in 1850, our enterprise was first set on foot, the moon was, to the Indian public, comparatively a *terra incognita*. Individual lunatics might indeed be found mooning about the country, veritable exiles, whose melancholy state of mind, while it clearly indicated their proper sphere, afforded anything but encouragement to society at large to visit that obscure and ill-regressaned locality. But the hour came, and the man. We started. A reference to the statistic I hold in my hand will suffice to give a faint idea of what we have performed.

Trains have run every month, making a total of forty-five trips. Each train has carried on an average five hundred passengers, which number is now however on the increase. We have exported to the moon forty-eight stale quotations (mostly booked by the respected firm of Knap and Grunticol) ninety-seven anecdotes of Sheridan, and one hundred and fifteen and a half of miscellaneous heavy goods, including worn-out jokes, puns, and similes.

During the same period our "down" traffic has been of the same encouraging character. Nineteen thousand of dry jokes, conundrums, and quips have been thrown

Fig. 5: *Delhi Sketch Book*, vol. V (1 January, 1854), no pag.

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Along with the proposals for railways meant to address the transportational needs, the 1840s saw William Brooke O'Shaughnessy's experiments with the transmission of telegraphic signals over the Hooghly River in Calcutta. Lord Dalhousie favored O'Shaughnessy's enthusiasm about setting up the telegraph services in India and wrote to the Court of Directors in India Office secretariat, London to establish an experimental line (27 miles long) between Alipore and Diamond Harbour. In his letter dated August 21, 1850, pertaining to the matter of electric telegraphs, Lord Dalhousie wrote, "I regard this […] as of such infinite moment in India that I recommend the sanction of Government to whatever sum may be necessary […] to enable those charged with it to carry on their labours with rapidity and the fullest efficiency" (Gorman 584). O'Shaughnessy succeeded in his attempts when the electric telegraphy was made available for use by the general public on December 1, 1851 and was immediately assigned with the task of covering principal cities of India from Calcutta to Agra and from Bombay to Madras, essentially connecting the port cities with the northwesterly regions of Delhi and stretching further north to Punjab (Figure 6, and its caption, represent this geographical manifestation of telegraphic signals in the form of electric spider spreading its web all over the subcontinent).

The entire grid became functional by early 1855 and revolutionized the field of journalism with its efficient and speedy dissemination of news. However, quite ironically, its first major and decisive application emerged on May 10, 1857 when Indian sepoys (mainly Brahmins, Rajputs and Muslims) rebelled against their officers in Meerut (the immediate cause for the rebellion was the cartridges for the new Lee-Enfield rifle which were greased with cow and pig fat and had to be bitten from the end to load the gun powder in the rifle riling Hindu and Muslim's religious sentiments although a larger discontent against the British regime was already simmering due to the exploitative land and tax reforms), reached Delhi the next day and, throughout the summer of 1857, massacred and killed British officers and civilian hostages in Cawnpore (Kanpur). The news of the rebellion by the sepoys against the British officers all over the country was relayed through telegraph and a war correspondent of the London *Times* described the events in such details:

> Never since its discovery has the electric telegraph played so important a role. In this war, for the first time, a telegraph wire has been carried along under fire and through the midst of a hostile country […] At one time his men were chased for miles by the enemy's cavalry […] and they and their wires were cut

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> to pieces. Again, their electric batteries are smashed by the fire of a gun, or their cart knocked to pieces by a round shot; but still they work on, creep over arid plains, cross watercourses, span rivers, and pierce jungles, till one after another the rude poles raise aloft their slender burden, and the quick needle vibrates with its silent tongue amid the thunder of the artillery. (qtd. in Gorman 598)

When the chief commissioner of Punjab and later the Governor-General of India, Sir John Lawrence declared (after the mutiny was crushed) that "[t]he telegraph saved India," the imperial hue behind the role that the telegraph played in uniting the British administration and tightening of control over the Indian masses cannot escape notice (Gorman 599). As the dependency and world-systems theories by Andre Gunter Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein have recently shown, capitalist tendencies since the sixteenth century dictated the colonial policies at a global level to transform the colonies into corporate lineages and modernizing tools like railways, telegraph, shipbuilding, and railroads mainly served the British interests and expansion to the other markets in south-east Asia (tea and opium trade with China is one notable example). As Eric Wolf argues in *Europe and the People Without History*, "[u]nder English domination, India became a key foundation of the emerging worldwide capitalist edifice" (261). This economic model is a further manifestation of the binary discourse of the core (London, the metropole) and the periphery (India, the dependent satellite or colony) which the hybrid space offered by the *Punch* cartoons in India serve to reveal.

The *Delhi Sketch Book* ended its print run with the Mutiny of 1857.[4] The caricaturing intent especially pertaining to the portrayals of the British officials was toned down when its successor, The *Indian Punch*, entered the print markets of Delhi and until it ended in 1862 (Mitter, *Art and Nationalism* 144). As an obverse effect, the aesthetic and the moral standards (which were imitative of Gillray and Thomas Rowlandson's satirical styles and loaded with the Italian connotations of Carracci brothers about the use of distorted proportions in describing the visual objects) which were deployed to represent Indians with their exaggerated oddities to generate

4 British *Punch* very distinctly captured the British responses to the Mutiny of 1857 and there exists extensive research on this topic (two most notable examples are Graeme Harper's edited work *Comedy, Fantasy and Colonialism* and Charles Graves' *Mr. Punch's History of the Great War* which appeared in 2002 and 2015). However, a deeper analysis of the Mutiny and their visual representations lie beyond the scope of this article since the focus is more so on the *Punch* cartoons printed in India in nineteenth-century either in English or vernacular languages.

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a comic effect for its readers seem to have been marked by a categorical shift. The stylistic change in the tone and the tenor was informed by the historical, literary, and eye-witness accounts of the British officials' massacre (and equally fierce suppression of the rebellion by the British administration) during the Mutiny of 1857.

Fig. 6: "The Electric Spider: Spreading his web over India to catch all the news as it flies." *Delhi Sketch Book*, vol. V (1854), no pag.

Caricatures about Indians now began to reflect the larger changes in the British attitude towards the native population by moving a step further from ridiculing their physical and cultural differences to standardizing them. Beyond the idea of general amusement, the understanding that

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caricature can 'unmask' the character became more pronounced to essentially conceptualize the Indian character which could then be trained or reformed to control the possibilities of any further indigenous rebellions. Through their visual representations and 'punches,' both the Englishman and the Indian marshalled the ironic underpinning of the image and the text against each other which entailed an authorial judgement based on their cultural situatedness.

The story of *Punch* in India embodies this confrontation in vivid details. It depicts the oppositions and attractions of the cultural patterns which shaped the colonial encounters in nineteenth-century India. In providing the historical accounts of these cultural engagements, *Punch* cartoons in India also signify the plurality of artistic expressions which emanated from the original *Punch* and that cannot be curtailed by the political prisms and moral strictures of the contemporary times. The earlier convergences between the British *Punch* and the *Delhi Sketch Book* gave way to the regional, linguistic, and cultural divergences in the *Indian Charivari* and the *Parsee Punch* which will now be discussed in greater detail.

The Indian Charivari

On 17th October 1872, a small piece of news appeared, barely noticeable and without any title, in *South Wales Daily News* stating that "an Indian Punch—the *Indian Charivari*—is announced for Calcutta" which would be "owned and edited by Colonel Percy Wyndham" and contain illustrations from "artists of acknowledged ability" with the aim to "laugh at and with our small world around us, and we hope they will return us the compliment" ("South Wales Daily News" 1872). The *Indian Charivari*, however, went well beyond the stated aim to reinforce the British anxieties, in the aftermath of the Mutiny of 1857, about their disproportionate presence in an alien land filled with people characterized by "sexual aggressiveness, constitutional deceitfulness, and incapacity for maturity and leadership" (Hutchins 78). Recent scholarship on imperial histories has turned its attention on the gendered portrayals of war in spatial terms especially the Mutiny of 1857 since the weakening of the "paternal authority" (as it manifested in the form of a rebellion within the army) gave the unrestrained native, "half devil and half child" (to use Rudyard Kipling's phrase), the "licence whose object and victim is the flesh of the European female" (Chakravarty 39). As *Bengal Hurkaru*, the leading English-owned

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newspaper of the time, reported "this is not a mere local outbreak, it is a great crisis, a crisis unprecedented in the history of British India […] It is now a question of empire" (Blunt, "Embodying War" 405-6).

The crisis of the British empire was haunted by what post-colonial thinkers like Franz Fanon have argued, the sexual discourse about "the figure of a white woman raped by a dark man" (Paxton 6). As Alex Tickell, in his essay "Cawnpore, Kipling and Charivari: 1857 and the politics of commemoration" (2009), has persuasively shown the survivors' accounts from Cawnpore massacre appeared as a direct libidinal assault on the perceived British masculinity which underscored the imperial narrative: "stalwart, bearded men, stern soldiers of the ranks […] have been seen coming out of that house perfectly unmanned, utterly unable to repress their emotions' stated one witness, 'From them there will be no mercy for these villainous assassins'" (Tickell 2). Thus, the military insubordination by the natives was re-enacted in the British imagination through "the obsessive repetition of the figures of rape and mutilation" although the official and judicial reports failed to corroborate such popular accounts with conclusive evidence of rape (Chakravarty 39-40). Here, it can be argued that the Mutiny of 1857 was considered instrumental by many British and Anglo-Indian writers in India to perpetuate rape narratives about English women and their literary and cultural narratives sharpened the focus on the presence of the British women in India. At a symbolic level, the graphic artists too presented their views about both the colonizer and the colonized in gendered terms which had far-reaching implications for the ways in which the political and royal figures appeared in the regional magazines particularly in the *Indian Charivari*.

The *Indian Charivari* employed the visual performativities inherent in the word *charivari* to articulate the sexual subtext of colonial encounters in India, which Charles Philipon used as a means of political protest in his Parisian newspaper, *Le Charivari*, and appeared as the subtitle, the *London Charivari*, to the British Punch magazine. During the Middle Ages and till sixteenth century, *charivari* denoted "a noisy, masked demonstration to humiliate some wrongdoer in the community" whereas Philipon, in nineteenth century, made use of the verbal and visual form to expose the hypocrisy of the last King of France, Louis-Philippe, when he declared in 1831 that "We shall seek to hold a middle way, equally distant from the abuses of royal power and the excesses of popular power" (Davis 97; Jobling 232). The thread which connects the two usages of the word, as the *Indian Charivari* depicts, is public humiliation or a "mock-trial […] against

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those who transgressed sexual or marital norms" (Tickell 6). Through jokes, sexual innuendos, moral commentaries and visual illustrations, the *Indian Charivari* served as, what Jane Goodall calls, a "wake-up call […] against anything that breached their codes of practice" especially after the Mutiny of 1857 which revealed the imperial crisis in terms of honor and prestige (Goodall 5). One of the distinctive features of the *Indian Charivari*, laced with the motifs of honor and dishonor, is its focus on the clothes to represent the native rural folk, the Anglo-Indians and the more exalted figures. In "Cloth, Clothes and Colonialism: India in the Nineteenth Century" (1996), Bernard Cohn narrates the shock British women felt when they first arrived in India and saw scantily-clad natives in *dhotis*, which James Johnson, a Royal Navy surgeon on a trip to Diamond Harbour in Calcutta, described as "a small narrow piece of cloth (*doty*), passed between the thighs, and fastened before and behind to a piece of stout packthread, that encircles the waist" (Cohn 151). However, unlike a Hindu, the Indian Muslim in nineteenth century wore tailored clothes and would be distinguished from a noble figure on the basis of the headgear, *fez*. According to Margaret Pernau, *fez* served as an Ottoman symbol and rallied non-Arab Sunni Muslims living in British and French colonies to pledge their allegiance to the Ottoman sultan who declared himself as the "universal Caliph" (Pernau 264). The real triumph of wearing *fez* in India lay in maintaining an effective visualization of difference (in terms of religious identity and manners of dressing) from the Hindus and the British who similarly wore turban and hat which "demarcated the boundary between the ruler and the ruled" (Pernau 262).

The front cover of the *Indian Charivari* (see Figure 7) depicts the entangled histories of headgear and clothing to represent the native and maintain the religious and cultural differences; the visual rhetoric particularly functioned against any such entanglements or attempts to hybridize the social discourse and parodied those who broke the hierarchy of appearances consolidated and achieved by the imperial conquest of India. Here, Mr. Punch, the editorial persona of the *Indian Charivari* and other *Punch* magazines, appears in the center with all the familiar depictions of India as a land of snakes and elephants tied to the enduring feudal conditions and hereditary power structures which now seem to have been replaced by the "enlightened" rule of the British Raj. Mr. Punch's frank enjoyment of *hookah*, the spectacular background and the dancing "dusky maidens" in blouses (*choli*) cast him in the role of an Indian juggler (*Jaduwallah*) who is about to employ the stagecraft to create grand illusions. For the

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members of royalty and expatriate readers, the front cover also invokes the twin reactions of fascination and apprehension about the *nautch* performances which "worked as a form of cultural interaction between Indian rulers and the British East India Company officials" (Howard 2). The front cover then performs as an interstitial space where the cultures interact and provide material to the offended moralists to reinforce the existing power-relations by scapegoating those who transgressed the sexual boundaries under the allure of magic, exoticism, or unfettered attire of the native women. The *Indian Charivari* thus serve as a historical narrative of how the colonizer visually confronted the colonized subject.

Fig. 7: The *Indian Charivari* (17 October, 1872), printed in: Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 140.

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The idiosyncrasies of the native figure, the social customs and code of dressing provided a way to express moments of historical contiguities and colonial romance with India. At the same time, these moments were exploited and configured with colonial anxieties to sketch more aggressive and masculine forms of the British rule. For instance, the *nautch* performance which flourished in the late eighteenth century as a means of entertainment for the Indian princes was perceived by the British officials as a symbol of India's unchanging feudal tendencies and political despotism. As Grace Howard argues, the representations of *nautch* girls in the nineteenth century "perpetuated the belief of British men 'saving' Indian women as a way to justify the continuation of colonialism in the subcontinent" (Howard 3). However, the colonial discourse about the Indian princes was marked by a certain degree of ambivalence as well. As Caroline Keen states, after the Mutiny of 1857 which left the British government with a large amount of debt, "[e]conomically a policy of detente with loyal princes and landlords made good sense" (Keen 16).

A special "Charivari album" appeared in 1875 to cater to those royal figures who had shown dedication to the British rule and forms of governance. In return, Lord Canning who succeeded Lord Dalhousie after the Mutiny of 1857 rewarded the princely rulers by abolishing the principle of annexation and assured that "every Chief above the rank of *Jagheerdar*, who now governs his own territory […] that on failure of natural heirs his adoption of a successor […] will be recognised" (Keen 17). When, in August 1858, newspapers like *Hindu Patriot* demanded a further assurance about not interfering into the princely states of "Native Rajas," Lord Canning asserted that the British government would intervene to deter "the opportunities now available for gross misrule" (Keen 18). Nonetheless, the profiles of native princes which appeared in the special album of the *Indian Charivari* were prefaced with a subtle flattery (see Figures 8 and 9) as "a recognition of princely aid in the Indian Mutiny, and [later on], in 1909 a policy of *laissez-faire* was adopted in an attempt to secure the loyalty of the princes in the face of emerging Indian nationalism" (Keen ix). The special album marks a change from the crude caricaturist patterns of the previous decades to a more benign form of humor. Moreover, it covertly perpetuates the political hegemony that the British administration maintained over the subcontinent – "forces […] which the Native Princes of India are *permitted* to maintain" (my emphasis) – and strengthens the cultural differences by re-enacting the binaries between the colonizer and the colonized ("Maharaja Sindhia most realises to a

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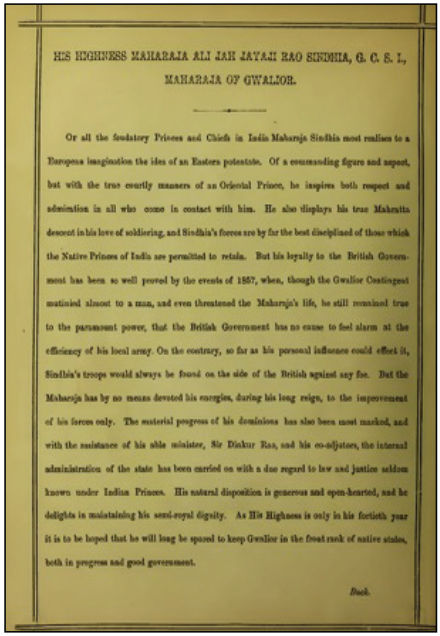
European imagination the idea of an Eastern potentate," *Indian Charivari* 1875, no pag.).



HIS HIGHNESS MAHARAJA ALI JAH JAYAJI RAO SINDHIA, G. C. S. I., MAHARAJA OF GWALIOR.

Of all the feudatory Princes and Chiefs in India Maharaja Sindhia most realises to a European imagination the idea of an Eastern potentate. Of a commanding figure and aspect, but with the true courtly manners of an Oriental Prince, he inspires both respect and admiration in all who come in contact with him. He also displays his true Mahratta descent in his love of soldiering, and Sindhia's forces are by far the best disciplined of those which the Native Princes of India are permitted to retain. But his loyalty to the British Government has been so well proved by the events of 1857, when, though the Gwalior Contingent mutinied almost to a man, and even threatened the Maharaja's life, he still remained true to the paramount power, that the British Government has no cause to feel alarm at the efficiency of his local army. On the contrary, so far as his personal influence could effect it, Sindhia's troops would always be found on the side of the British against any foe. But the Maharaja has by no means devoted his energies, during his long reign, to the improvement of his forces only. The material progress of his dominions has also been most marked, and with the assistance of his able minister, Sir Dinkur Rao, and his co-adjutors, the internal administration of the state has been carried on with a due regard to law and justice seldom known under Indian Princes. His natural disposition is generous and open-hearted, and he delights in maintaining his semi-royal dignity. As His Highness is only in his fortieth year it is to be hoped that he will long be spared to keep Gwalior in the front rank of native states, both in progress and good government.

Punch.

Fig. 8 and 9: "His Highness Maharaja Ali Jah Jayaji Rao Sindhia, G. C. S. I., Maharaja of Gwalior" and "The Gwalior Chief." The *Indian Charivari* (1875), no pag.

Still the urge to ridicule publicly and chastise British officials whose engagement with the native land seem to breach the prevalent social order, like Mr. S. S. Hogg, who took too much interest in the municipal matters of Calcutta (see Figure 10) convey the satirical potential that the magazine retained. The caption, "MISDIRECTED ENERGY," which accompanies the illustration of Mr. Hogg holding a broom and wearing the headgear generally worn by the natives, the red *safa*, seem to suggest a stiff resistance to the zones where different cultural systems could converge.

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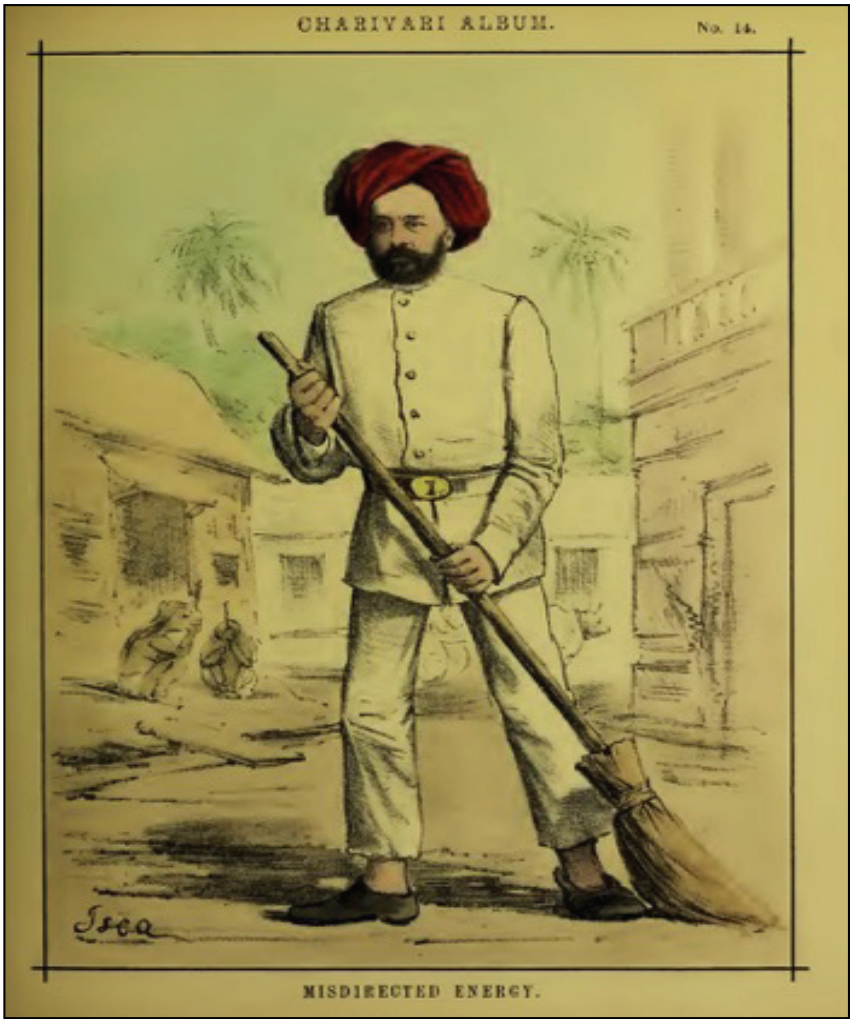

Fig. 10: "Misdirected Energy." The *Indian Charivari* (1875), no pag.

And yet such cultural assimilations took place, personified in the figure of Bengali *Baboo* (see Figure 11 below), which incited a more menacing response. The financial calculus after the Mutiny of 1857 heralded a change from the East India Company's standpoint of 'Oriental difference' to a reformist zeal towards the natives in the Indian subcontinent. The "Era of Reform" to modernize India had already begun with William Bentinck becoming the Governor-General of India in 1827. Conservative adminis-

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trators before Bentinck like Lord Cornwallis (1786-1793) and Lord Wellesley (1798-1805) had clearly mapped out a policy to exclude Indians from getting employment in the government offices and the ultimate validation to maintain such views, which often displayed racial undertones, came from the Mutiny of 1857. Lord Wellesley's plan to expand the British dominions within the subcontinent found further boost under Lord Hastings' rule (1813-1823) when the entire Central India came under the British rule with the defeat of the Maharattas in the Maharatta war (1816-18) and proved to be the watershed moment when "the British dominion *in* India became the British dominion *of* India" (Mitra 15). This conservative view about governing India was opposed by the emerging Liberals, both at home and in the subcontinent, who argued for political, social, and religious reforms and the spread of western education. The effects of these opposing ideologies coupled with the financial pressures that the Company faced after the Mutiny of 1857 created a need to draw on the indigenous resources, skills and power-relations based on caste and regional equations. The result was the emergence of Company's close cultural contacts with the "scribal gentries" (the high-caste Brahmins) and "martial communities" (the Rajputs and the *Bhumihars*) who filled positions to represent the bureaucracy and armed forces within the Indian subcontinent (Washbrook, "India, 1818-1869" 413-4). The *Indian Charivari* lampooned the figure of Bengali *Baboo* who represented the new and rising urban middle class (*shikshita madhvabitta*) in Bengal trained in western education and ways of dressing.

The British denigration of this new social group, which frequently appeared in the form of pungent visual statements and racialized caricatures in the *Indian Charivari*, was informed by the counter-hegemonic networks it sought to create through a mix of their literary creations, high-caste status, and tenured-government jobs. The articulate middle class in Bengal pursued a distinct cultural identity which was perceived by the Anglo-Indian commentators as attempts to transcend the colonial hegemonic patterns in the subcontinent. And so, the outline of the *Baboo*, as depicted in the figure, accentuates the cultural and racial differences and project a "mock serenade" to punish the social group for discursively articulating the shifting positions between the two cultures in nineteenth-century India. The articulation of exclusive feminine traits as opposed to the Victorian ideal of dominant masculinity in the visual representations of the Bengali *Baboo* serve as another instance to suggest the hardening of racial attitude towards the natives which began with Cornwallis' rule

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Fig. 11: "The young Bengalee Baboo of the future." The *Indian Charivari* (1873), printed in: Sutapa Dutta, "Packing a Punch at the Bengali Babu," *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 2021, p. 13.

in the previous century and had culminated with the Mutiny of 1857. In "Ethnicity and Racialism in Colonial Indian Society" (1982), D. A. Washbrook argues that beneath the taxonomy of martial races which enjoyed the patronage of Raj, the "criminal tribes of South India" who were strictly surveilled for their deviant tendencies and the non-martial

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races typified by the Bengali *Baboo* who was caricatured for his constitutional feebleness, servile demeanor and use of pompous rhetoric lay a steady explanation provided by the racial theories since "the vagrancy laws, which permitted the deportation of whites whose deviant behaviour undermined 'the mystique' of their race, and […] resistance of the Indian Civil Service to power-sharing with Indians lest the 'English' character of the administration be diluted" remained in place till the second half of the nineteenth century (Washbrook, "Ethnicity and Racialism" 156-7).[5] Such racial and gendered enunciations appear in the *Parsee Punch* as well with a twist that the native commentators strike back at the British Empire by employing the similar gestures which exemplify the cultural differences. As the next part of my chapter shows, after the *Indian Charivari*, the *Parsee Punch*, and other vernacular magazines which emerged between 1870s and the beginning of twentieth century, attempted to promulgate a resistance in literary and political terms and revealed further contradictions of the colonial discourse which till now determined how the colonized subject was visually represented.

The Parsee Punch

Despite sharing the literary and causal links with the British *Punch* and other Anglo-Indian magazines in nineteenth-century India, the *Parsee* Punch offers a space to resist and reinterpret the colonial stereotypes which functioned as institutionalized expressions of the British empire. The *Parsee Punch* and other vernacular magazines complicate the understanding that the cultural contours mapped by the British imperial project were linear, static, and clearly defined. The literary and visual hierarchies are appropriated by the native commentators to establish patterns of collaboration as well as contestation with the colonial narratives. Printed and published by Apyakhtiar Press at Elphinstone Circle in Bombay, the *Parsee Punch* began in July 1854 and maintained its circulation till 1878 when its name was changed to the *Hindi Punch*. As the *Hindi Punch*, the vernacular magazine voiced many concerns that resonated with the Indian nationalist movement and popular consciousness until its publication ended in 1930.

5 For a detailed account on the vagrancy laws, refer to Aravind Ganachari's article, "'White Man's Embarrassment' European Vagrancy in 19th Century Bombay."

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The *Parsee Punch* appeared with English and Gujarati letterpress which accompanied each illustration; a feature that distinguishes it from both the *Delhi Sketch Book* and the *Indian Charivari* which mostly used neologisms or anglicized versions of the native words. With an annual subscription fee of Rs. 6, the *Parsee Punch* began the pursuit of exploring the British attitude towards India and government's reform measures through mockery, humorous cartoons, direct criticism, and satirical methods. Although issues pertaining to colonial expansion through "conflicts in the Far East, sub-Saharan Africa, Egypt, South Africa (Boer War)" were frequently featured, the *Parsee Punch* really took it off by presenting various aspects of Parsi life and the predominant political and social conditions in Bombay (Hasan 19).

In Figure 12, Sohrab and his routine on the day of *Pateti*, the Parsi New Year, from early morning till 2 a.m. at night is humorously portrayed to convey the varied images and representations of the Parsi community in public discourses. The term *Pateti* is derived from the Avestan word, *Paitita*, mentioned in the sacred texts of Zoroastrianism which signifies the day of repentance for the sins committed in the previous year. On this particular day, the Zoroaster wakes up early, spends most of his morning personal grooming and wears new clothes to visit the fire-temple. Sohrab's insolent gestures (as depicted through the visual frames and accompanying captions, "The devil of a hajaam has not cut them right," "bhoo-bhoooo! Ah, walk away, you braying ass" and "The beggar nuisance") imply ridicule for the religious day and the idea of purifying oneself is inverted with each frame thrusting Sohrab deeper into the vices of life (Hasan 29). The Parsi stereotypes like "[a] Parsi loses no time in breaking his word" or that "a bankrupt Parsi starts a liquor shop and celebrates the day of Zoroaster by drinking brandy" acquainted the public to a biased version of their customs, ways of living and religious practices (Hasan 28). The social dimension of such cultural stereotypes (and Parsis' purity laws) kept the Parsi community relatively insulated from the epistemological models that the British employed to understand and control the natives. It resulted in a safe distance from which the Parsis could take advantage of the educational, financial, philanthropic, and professional opportunities which emerged from the evangelical insistence and reform measures instituted by the British officials. Unlike the Hindu and Muslim communities, the Parsis benefited immensely in their dealings with the British administration. At the time of their settlement in Bombay, the Parsis adopted the Hindu vernacular (Gujarati language) but

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their preference for the westernized ways of thinking, English language, and manners of dressing facilitated a close relation with the British while remaining situated amongst the natives.

Fig. 12: "How our Sohrab enjoyed his Pateti." The *Parsee Punch* (1884), printed in: Mushirul Hasan, *Wit and Wisdom: Pickings from the Parsee Punch*, Niyogi, 2012, p. 29.

As a literary vehicle of the native elite, the *Parsee Punch* chronicled the introduction of English education in nineteenth-century India. The university education at that time followed the Elphinstone model (after

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Mountstuart Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay, became the President of Bombay Native Education Society in 1822) of a pyramidical scheme to recruit an elite class of the natives. The hierarchical structure placed English at the top (to impart European education that laid special emphasis on science) with knowledge skills gained from the erstwhile *Peshwas*[6] in Poona and vernacular at the middle and lower tiers of the pyramid (Ahmad 391-392). However, the question of women's education remained peripheral for the most part of nineteenth century. As Partha Chatterjee notes in "Colonialism, nationalism, and colonized women: the contest of India," the colonial administrators took on a paternalistic role in order to protect Indian women from the "'degenerate and barbaric' social customs of the Indian people," and Sir James Fergusson, who became Governor of Bombay in March 1880, followed it wherever he could (Chatterjee 622). In another illustration (see Figure 13), the city of Poona (Pune) is personified as Miss Poona-bai and shown in an intimate embrace with Fergusson, and the letterpress reads, "A LOVING PAIR" (Hasan 95). The immediate context of the illustration is the land concession which Fergusson provided to establish a high school for the native girls at Poona (ibid.). The figure deliberately hinges on a sexual representation to suggest layers of morally ambiguity behind Fergusson's reforms, especially when seen in light of his differences from Lord Ripon's (the Governor-General of India; 1880-1884) liberal policies to minimize British interference in the native states. Fergusson resisted Ripon's idea to allow natives to the Indian Civil Service due to his distrust of the educated Indians. Both Fergusson and Ripon worked in furtherance of the imperial rule over the subcontinent, but their approach differed in terms of their dealings with the changing aspirations of the educated class in nineteenth-century India. For instance, Fergusson considered Poona Sarvojanik Sabha formed by the educated class of natives (the Deccan Brahmins) as fully opposed in spirit to the policies of the government, a disloyal spirit "barely concealed beneath specious professions of patriotism" (Gupta 239).

6 The term *Peshwa* denotes the chief minister of the Maratha Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century India.

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Figure 13. "A loving pair." The *Parsee Punch* (1884). Source: Mushirul Hasan, *Wit and Wisdom: Pickings from the Parsee Punch* (New Delhi: Niyogi, 2012), 95.

While it is not difficult to discern a racial pattern underlying Fergusson's thought in keeping the role of education limited to administrative purposes (unlike Ripon who laid stress on the political determination), the figure depicting Fergusson with Poona-bai enacts cultural anxieties seeped in gender relations from both ends: For the colonizer, Poona-bai represented the tension between a form of domination which is based on maintaining racial and cultural differences and incorporating educational reforms which tend to erase them. Moreover, she is perceived as a living embodiment of India whose sensual gaze "the good British man must resist" lest "its voluptuousness […] release[s] the passion of the stilted English body" (Luhrmann 6). The threat, in terms of dismantling of racial hierarchies, that the native women projected meant a need to 'domesticate' the empire (see Figure 14).

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Fig.14: "Honours for the Viceroy-Timely Advice." *The Parsee Punch* (1884), printed in: Mushirul Hasan, *Wit and Wisdom: Pickings from the Parsee Punch*, Niyogi, 2012, p. 139.

The imperial home for the colonists in India which housed either the British wife or mother fostered "appropriate gender roles, national virtues and imperial rule" (Blunt, "Imperial Geographies" 422). The household manuals, like Flora Annie Steel's *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* (1888), written by British and Anglo-Indian women ensured that the domestic space remained free of a native woman's presence. Even elderly native women (the *ayahs*) hired to look after young children were generally rejected in the imperial households due to the fear that they could appropriate the mother's role and teach the native language to the Anglo-Indian child creating an "oppositional site within the very heart of Anglo-Indian domesticity" (Sen 5). Individualized and regionally placeable to suggest a pan-India type, the image of Poona-bai represented a fantasized impression of oriental womanhood which colonizers like Fergusson attempted to retrieve, by means of reforms, from the dominant patriarchal discourses of the natives.

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For the colonized subject, Poona-bai in Fergusson's embrace showed the gendered politics behind the missionary, legal and reform projects which mainly sought to protect the Indian women from the everyday barbarity of religious doctrines, social customs and "darker races" (Hutchins 69). Conservatives, reformists, and nationalists alike had placed the Hindu woman[7] within the binary position of, as Chatterjee argued, the material (represented in Western, outer and masculine terms) and the spiritual sphere (represented in Eastern, inner and feminine terms) where the latter was fashioned as constituting 'Indianness'. The spiritual sphere accorded the place where the mythic and historical tangents of what Harriet Martineau in her book *British Rule in India: A Historical Sketch* (1857) characterized as, "'Hindoostan proper,' signifying the geographic space stretching from the Himalayas to the Vindhya Mountains in one direction 'and from the Burramppoter *[sic]* to the Indus in the other'" converged (Ray 58-9). For the natives, the figure of Hindu woman embodied and heightened visibility of the spiritual essence which was considered "superior to the West" and a counterfoil to the values represented by the British modernity (Chatterjee 623). Educational and missionary reforms conveyed a real danger in the form of religious conversions as the case of Maharashtrian upper-caste woman Pandita Ramabai reflects who was baptized in 1883 and felt relieved in "having found a 'religion which gave privileges equally to men and women; and where there was no distinction of caste, colour or sex in it'" (Anagol-McGinn 19). In this way, the *Parsee Punch* staged and articulated the ideological pulls and pressures which determined the ways the colonizer and the colonized looked at each other. At the same time, the *Parsee Punch* and other vernacular magazines can be seen as visual and verbal instances of microcultural flows which pose significant challenges for the ways in which the British empire and its colonies have traditionally been constituted. Since determining the exact opinions and feelings of a social group or class during a given period remains a difficult task in most historical situations, it is remarkable to see how *Punch* cartoons are able to capture the dialectical spirit of nineteenth-century India by being subversive and supportive of the British empire in the same frame.

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7 In her work, *En-Gendering India: Woman and Nation in Colonial and Postcolonial Narratives*, Sangeeta Ray explains how the Hindu woman essentially functioned as "a descriptive counterpoint to an emerging/emergent British India" in nineteenth-century India and rendered women from other communities as peripheral "for the staging of a temporal development of British ascension in India" (Ray 52).

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Conclusion

While Ian Haywood in his recent work, *The Rise of Victorian Caricatures* (2020), adopts an inverted approach to the British *Punch* by focusing on the lesser-known caricatures and satirical images of the 1830s and early 1840s whose markets and methods were appropriated by the most enduring and iconic periodical, my methodology has been to explore the geographical verticals which emanated from the *Punch* to map the extent to which the imperial power shaped and produced the idea of India and 'Indianness' through visual registers. The colonial state reproduced the native figure as being dangerous and savage (especially after the mutiny of 1857), terms which were reserved for the popular masses, "people whose burgeoning numbers and seeming rootlessness, moral laxity and presumed laxity caused a social panic in the big cities of nineteenth-century Europe" (Woloch 10). Through this chapter, I have shown that *Punch* cartoons reveal an alternate history which pose problems for the mutually constitutive relationship that the British administration in India and elsewhere maintained between knowledge-production and colonial expansion. The many progenies of *Punch* (*Delhi Sketch Book*, *The Indian Charivari*, *The Oudh Punch*, *The Delhi Punch*, *The Punjab Punch*, *The Indian Punch*, *Parsee Punch* and *Hindu Punch*) which inserted 'visuality' into the cultural and political practices of nineteenth-century India depict sites of interactions and intersections from which Indians were viewed and parodied by the British and Indian cartoonists.

At the same time, these cartoons and their divergent evaluations of the British *Raj* provide an insightful commentary to analyze the relationship between the colonial administrators, the native elites, and the marginalized groups. In tracing these visual encounters which flourished within the spaces of the vernacular, this chapter intends to broaden the scope of Comics Studies in India and assert difference from the authorized accounts of colonial history, a step which responds to nineteenth-century Indian novelist and journalist Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's famous assertion that "we must have our own history"[8] in the context of Bengalis' suffering and exploitative, everyday colonial practices under the British rule.

8 Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, *Bankim Rachanabali*, vol. 2 (Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, 1956), 337.

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Part II: (Re-)Productions

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Jean-Matthieu Méon

Untangling History and Patrimonialization: Woodcut Novel Reprints and Jean Davallon's Model

1. Introduction

Comics history is established through academic research, but it is also largely dependent on other sources: Reprints, reviews and awards —such as Angoulême's *Prix du patrimoine* since 2004—, all of these selective operations contribute to our current conceptions about comics' past, by organizing knowledge, accessibility, evaluation and (re)qualification of past works. When considering the past, it is thus hard to distinguish between what comes from historical research and what comes from patrimonialization, which is the social process of selecting elements of the past to give them a new status in the present.[1]

In *Le Don du patrimoine* (2006, *The Gift of Heritage*), Jean Davallon describes the symbolic and social processes that give an object from the past its status as a piece of heritage in contemporary times. Several moments or *gestures* ("gestes") form this process of patrimonialization (119-126). After what Davallon would describe as a fall into oblivion (a break between the past world of the object and our present world, which can occur for any of a wide variety of reasons), the object reappears through a *finding* ("trouvaille"), such as an archaeological find. This finding starts a series of backward operations, involving historians and heritage experts, that go from the present to the past: the certification of the object's origins and the confirmation of its original context. Based on historical knowledge, this retrospective process rebuilds the lost continuity between the past (the object's original context of creation) and the present and creates new obligations for the present owners or custodians of the object, such as preserving it, presenting it to the public and transmitting it to future generations. Considering the temporal direction of this process, Davallon

1 A first version of this paper was published online on the *Comics Forum* website in May 2021 (https://comicsforum.org/2021/05/10/the-comics-patrimonialisation-of-woodcut-novels/). I thank Annick Pellegrin for her help in editing the original text. For practical reasons, it has not been possible to include in this version woodcut novels reprints or academic published after the end of autumn 2022.

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compares it to the "reverse filiation" ("filiation inversée") described by the anthropologist Jean Pouillon (1975, quoted in Davallon, 97; English translation by JMM): patrimonialization is the way present agents acknowledge the past and selectively define how and what they inherited from it. One key aspect of this model is indeed how it highlights the direction of the patrimonialization process: it's a process that goes from the present to the past, contrary to the trajectory of the object itself, that 'travels' from the past to the present. The consequence of this is that this process is necessarily embedded in contemporary representations and stakes.

Focusing on a specific case study dealing with the contemporary reprints of early Twentieth Century woodcut novels in France, this paper offers an illustration of Davallon's model of patrimonialization applied to comics. Discussing the editorial aspects of these reprints, and especially their paratextual dimension, it underlines the requalifying nature of this process and how comics patrimonialization of woodcut novels has to be understood in a context of strategies of distinction and legitimation, of actors as well as of the comics form itself. The present reintroduction of woodcut novels in comics' past, through their likening to the contemporary "graphic novel" model, thus appears more as a result of these strategies than as a linear historical filiation. By reminding us of the presentness of every definition of heritage and of how the writing of history is dependent on present social issues, Davallon's model helps us to distinguish between chosen inspirations of comics creators and the historical past of comics.

The three parts of this chapter analyze the current comics valorization of decades-old woodcut novels. In the first part, the theoretical model of patrimonialization (Davallon) helps to shed light on this process, which relies on a specific relationship with the past, made of both rediscovery and reinvention. Next, in part two, I explain how the editorial paratext of the current reprints plays a central role here. It is a means to equate 'woodcut novels' and 'graphic novels" and to bring together distinct fields of artistic creations. And in part three, I discuss why the symbolic stakes of this patrimonializing process are important: for comics and for their publishers, it is part of a quest for legitimacy and for an artistic autonomy that Masereel and Ward could embody.

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2. The Current Comics Patrimonialization of Woodcut Novels

Woodcut novels form a genre of graphic narratives that emerged in Europe at the end of the 1910s with the works of the Belgian Frans Masereel. It was later explored and expanded by several European and Northern American artists, among whom the American Lynd Ward was one of the most influential (Cohen, Beronä, Walker). These books may differ in style or in their themes —even though a strong social vein runs through many of them. But they share a common narrative approach, based on a succession of silent woodcut images, most of the time in black and white, collected in a book to be browsed as a unified narrative. The genre waned in the 1950s, but its influence has been claimed by diverse artists, especially in the comics field.[2] In recent years, key works of the genre were reprinted and considered important elements of comics' heritage.

My analysis only deals with the present interest in France in woodcut novels in relation to comics. But this current phenomenon of course takes place in a larger context, with several moments of rediscovery of woodcut novels by comics creators, critics and historians, in France as well as in other countries. The most recent French rediscovery of woodcut novels seems to closely follow American efforts, even though it partially precedes them.[3] I can only briefly touch upon this context here. In the United States, there are at least two key periods when comics looked at woodcut novels. In the Seventies, reprints of such works were made in conjunction with comics. Dover Publications, for example, reprinted at about the same time works by Masereel alongside those of Wilhelm Busch, Milt Gross and classic comic strips such as *Buster Brown* or *The Katzenjammer Kids*. In 1978, Will Eisner mentioned Lynd Ward as a key influence in the creation of his *A Contract With God*, establishing woodcut novels as a possible template for new comics ambitions. The magazine *World War 3 Illustrated*, whose aesthetic and agenda often overlap with those of woodcut novels, was launched in 1980. A second key period started in the nineties and continued into the following decades. Eric Drooker published his first woodcut-inspired silent graphic novel, *Flood! A Novel in Pictures*, in 1992.

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2 I use this term in the sense of a social and symbolic space as defined by Bourdieu and first applied to comics by Boltanski. See also Beaty and Woo.

3 Masereel's *Le Soleil* was reprinted in 1996 by La Triplette infernale and *Mon Livre d'heures* in 2002 by Editions Cent Pages. Both of these reprints remained confidential. IMHO éditions published a first version of Nückel's *Destin* in 2005.

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Citing in his foreword one of David Beronä's first articles on woodcut novels ("Silent Narratives"), Will Eisner devoted several pages of his *Graphic Storytelling* book to discuss the works of Frans Masereel, Otto Nückel and Lynd Ward (1996). Articles -for example in *The Comics Journal* 208, November 1998- and books by David Beronä (2008) and George Walker (2007) on woodcut novels were accompanied by reprints, again by Dover. The Library of America published Ward's novels in 2010 in a boxset edited by Art Spiegelman, who later toured the world with *Wordless!* a live performance dedicated to wordless graphic narratives between 2013 and 2018.

Beronä's and Walker's books were translated in French respectively in 2009 and 2010. It was followed by a renewed editorial and critical interest in France. Six "novels in pictures" by Frans Masereel have been reprinted by Martin de Halleux since 2018[4] and *L'Éclaireur*, one exhaustive slipcase set of all six of Lynd Ward's "novels in woodcuts", was published by Monsieur Toussaint Louverture in 2020 (see list of works cited). But for one exception (in Walker's anthology), this is the first French edition of Ward's woodcut novels and only a few of Masereel's books had been reprinted as individual books in the preceding years by small literary publishers. In 2021, another (leadcut) wordless novel, *Destin* by Otto Nückel, first published in 1926, was also reprinted by a third publisher, Ici bas, with a political and critical catalogue.

On the occasion of these reprints, these bodies of works have been praised by publishers and critics as forerunners of the modern graphic novels—if not as graphic novels in their own right. Both Masereel's and Ward's works were also selected for the Angoulême festival award dedicated to comics' heritage: Masereel's *Idée* was nominated in 2019 and Ward's *L'Éclaireur* won the award in 2021. The place of these works in the history of comics thus seems formally established, as one more milestone in the form's past. Jean Davallon's communication approach to heritage offers a heuristic model to describe this process of (re)insertion of woodcut novels in comics history. It also helps to understand its internal logic as well as its specificity: the retrospective look here is as much one of rediscovery as one of reinvention.

The current recognition of eighty- to a hundred-year-old woodcut novels seems to fit this model of patrimonialization . Brought back to light

4 Martin de Halleux also published a detailed monograph on Masereel (2018) at the same time it published his woodcut novels.

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by creators, critics and publishers, these works saw their historical significance recalled and discussed, they were presented in relation to contemporary graphic novels on the basis of a formal analysis of their features and they were reprinted to be introduced to new contemporary readerships. But the process in this case needs to be further specified. Indeed, here, the dynamics of patrimonialization are not only temporal but also contextual: The woodcut novels from the past are considered from the perspective of the present; in addition, these works, which were originally produced in the context of fine arts and artist books are now considered in a comics context, i.e. in relation to contemporary graphic novels. In that sense, the "reconstructed continuity" ("continuité reconstruite," Davallon 114; English translation by JMM) that the patrimonialization process produces between woodcut novels and contemporary graphic novels is, partly at least, an artefact, an artificial linearity that results from the process itself.

The link that can be established today between the works of Masereel or Ward and comics didn't exist when those works were produced—even though comics were then an already established and widely distributed mass medium. As Art Spiegelman aptly notes about Ward, "[his] roots were not in comics"—which "he hadn't been allowed to read as a child" — ("Reading Pictures" xxiii) and "denied a comic-strip vocabulary, [he] would grow to help define a whole other syntax for visual storytelling" ("Reading Pictures" x). For the scholar M. D. Ball, Ward's graphic narratives stood at an "austere distance from popular print culture" (139). If Masereel's early drawings were published in the (pacifist) press, most of his works were produced at the intersection of fine arts and literature, with art and literary publishers and in relation with high-profile literary authors. The woodcut novels were therefore produced, distributed and discussed outside the realm of comics: in their graphic and narrative styles, in their editorial materiality, in the professional path of their creators, woodcut novels were distant from the comics of their times. This is also true of their reception, as when they were first published these works elicited comparisons with cinema and silent movies more so than with comics.[5] Thus, for Ward as for Masereel, there was no historical fall

5 This comparison was made, among others, by Thomas Mann (Beronä 10; Van Parys "Frans Masereel" 606; Mann 13, 16). Milt Gross's drawn satire of the woodcut novels, *He Done Her Wrong* (1930), also playfully draws such comparisons between wordless novels and silent melodramatic movies. For a discussion of the proximity of woodcut novels with silent films, also see Willett (128-130).

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into oblivion, no break in the continuity between the past of woodcut novels and the present of comics and graphic novels. Both these creators had long careers in fine arts and literary illustration, with recognition (even if of varying intensity[6]) in their fields. Instead of oblivion, there have been reciprocal forms of indifference—or incomprehension—between different spaces of cultural production: "few in the comics community of the day could get the message [sent by Ward and Masereel], their definition of comics, then as now, was simply too narrow to include such work" (McCloud 19). Thus, it's more a matter of symbolic distance than one of oblivion that excluded these woodcut novels from comics history until their recent reappraisal.

This symbolic and sectoral gap was only bridged when some creators deliberately and strategically tried to redefine comics by shifting their referential framework, looking outside the comics tradition of their time. That's what Will Eisner did, for example, when, in his introduction to his first "graphic novel" *A Contract With God*, he claimed to be influenced by Lynd Ward and that his work was an attempt "at expansion or extension of Ward's original premise".[7] This is indeed what Pouillon means when he talks about "reverse filiation": "we choose what we declare ourselves determined by, we present ourselves as the continuators of those we made

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6 This is true of their woodcut novels. Some of these books had some real commercial success in their time. For example, *Gods' Man* sold twenty thousand copies in its first four years (*Prelude to a Million Years – Song Without Words – Vertigo* 670) and the popular editions of Masereel's early woodcut novels in Germany by Kurt Wolff had a large distribution (Van Parys "Une biographie" 206-207) of several thousand copies, with a peak of one hundred thousand for the German popular edtion of *Mon livre d'heures* (Willett 116). But others were printed only in very limited runs destined to bibliophiles and art collectors. Most of these books were reprinted several times but only on an irregular basis, sometimes decades apart. Their international diffusion has also been varied and spread over long periods of time (for example, see Van Parys "Une biographie" 219). Ball states how Ward's woodcut novels may have fallen into a "critical blind spot" after a while (139). While central steps in the recognition of these creators, the woodcut novels were only one aspect of the long and diverse careers of Masereel and Ward.

7 In this introduction, Eisner mentions only one title by Ward, *Frankenstein* (1934), which is not one of his novels in woodcuts but an illustrated edition of Mary Shelley's novel. This adds another circumvolution to the path that links woodcut novels and graphic novels. Ward's *Frankenstein* illustrations had recently been reprinted in the self-selected monograph *Storyteller Without Words: The Wood Engravings of Lynd Ward* (Harry N. Abrams) in 1974, accompanied by a New York exhibition. This book also featured other selected illustrations, next to his six wordless novels. Only two of these had been reprinted—separately—previously, in 1966 (*Gods' Man*) and 1967 (*Wild Pilgrimage*), by World Publishing.

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our predecessors."[8] The patrimonialization of the "forgotten" woodcut creators as pioneer graphic novelists is thus based on an indistinction between *chosen* references or inspirations and *direct* and *historical* continuity. The chosen artistic (non-linear) referential framework is transformed into a (linear) historical narrative that tells of an evolution towards the modern graphic novel.[9] The "missing link" metaphor, used by Scott McCloud (19) as well as Monsieur Toussaint Louverture (in its promotional material for the Ward box set), is a direct expression of this linear reconstruction. This retrospective rewriting of comics history can be likened to the retconning process, common in long-term serial narratives.

Through retcon (retroactive continuity), new elements are added to an already-told narrative, tweaking inconsequential details or more largely changing its general (past and/or future) perspective. In that sense, the new "finding" of woodcut novels and their reinsertion into the past of comics indeed modifies the graphic novel lineage. In his discussion of retroactive continuity, Andrew J. Friedenthal highlights the proximity between retcon and the way history is written. He argues that "history is not a body of facts but rather the ongoing recreation of a contextualized narrative," and adds that "the past [is] constantly rewritten through new information and interpretations" (Friedenthal 6). Like in Davallon's model, the past is (re)defined by the present and scientific (historical) knowledge is central in the validation of this redefinition. Historical "findings" change history. In fiction, however, retcon is not so much a matter of historical correction as it is one of invention, due to poetic license and/or commercial incentives. In the case of the patrimonialization of woodcut novels as comics, the line between historical adjustments or corrections and reinvention appears very thin. If the historical existence of the woodcut novels and their later role in comics history, as influences claimed by creators, are documented, their retrospective qualification as

8 "Nous choisissons ce par quoi nous nous déclarons déterminés, nous nous présentons comme les continuateurs de ceux dont nous avons fait nos prédécesseurs" (quoted in Davallon 97; English translation by JMM).

9 Such a perspective is consistent with the coming-of-age narrative which is pervasive for comics (Pizzino 21-45), and that sees comics history as a constant progress from pulp origins to artistic and literary maturity. The inclusion of woodcut novels in this narrative makes it somewhat more complicated, but retains its implicit idea of progress.

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"missing links" or as "graphic novels" is more rooted in contemporary representations and stakes.[10]

What are the rationales for a retcon in comics? It's often an easy way of giving (at least a semblance of) density and depth to a new story development by relating it to the longer storyline. Retcon can also be, of course, a creative means of reinvigorating the narrative and to allow for new directions that the former continuity forbade. Both of these rationales (symbolic and creative) can be found in the retconning patrimonialization of woodcut novels. On a symbolic level, the reference to woodcut novels offers several distinction benefits to their promoters and to comics in general. These are prestigious forerunners or ancestors that help to justify the artistic legitimacy comics creators and publishers claim for themselves. Within the comics field, these references similarly help their re-publishers to distinguish themselves from more commercial and/or more traditional productions. Referring to this alternative past for comics can be seen as a position-taking (or position-making) strategy. This may be particularly useful for relative newcomers such as the two publishing houses involved in the reprinting of works by Masereel and Ward, that only recently started their comics-publishing activities.[11] On a creative level, woodcut novels offer another model of graphic narrative that can fit into an enlarged definition of the contemporary graphic novel as well as form the basis for different formal experiments. The creation by Martin de Halleux of a specific series dedicated to such experiments is a direct illustration of the creative effects of this retconning patrimonialization . In the *25 images* series started in 2020, contemporary comics creators follow Masereel's *25 images de la passion d'un homme* example to create new ambitious black and white, wordless narratives in the restricted format of 25 full-page images. The past "literally provides visual archives to draw from" (Crucifix 24): past works offer aesthetic references and patterns for new creations.

The "symbolic annexation" ("annexion symbolique," Davallon 84; English translation by JMM) of woodcut novels by comics thus produces

10 Thierry Smolderen (2011) points out the methodological risks of reversing the arrow of time when studying comics' past. Anachronisms and present-informed retrospective re-qualifications bias our understanding of complex historical evolutions.

11 Monsieur Toussaint Louverture is a small publishing house created in 2004, the catalogue of which mixes novels and only a few comics, but which got the French publishing rights for Emil Ferris' bestselling *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*; Éditions Martin de Halleux is an even more recent publishing house, created in 2018, that publishes only a few books a year, specializing in books dedicated to images and narration.

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effects on the present state of the comics field. This directly echoes another remark made by Pouillon about "reverse filiation": "it is the sons who beget their fathers to justify the actual changes that they bring to the existing system."[12] The way the present looks at the past is determined by present issues.

The patrimonialization of woodcut novels as comics heritage is based on a double movement: a temporal shift—from the present to the past—and a contextual one—from one field of cultural production (comics) to another (fine arts). The first operator of this patrimonializing process are the reprints of the woodcut works and their paratextual components.

3. The Paratextual Apparatus of Patrimonialization

Reprinting these woodcut novels, and distributing them in bookshops and comic shops, is a first bridging of the temporal and sectoral gaps but the paratext (Genette) of these reprints is also an essential aspect of this process. The paratext helps establish the double continuity between past woodcut novels and contemporary comics, creating a double "suture" (Davallon 114), between periods and between fields. As we'll see, it also makes the suture seamless, thus naturalizing the result of the process.

According to Jean Davallon, what stitches the past and the present together is not only the patrimonial object itself (which is the material presence of the past in the present), but also the historical discourse on this object (114). This discourse, produced in the present, authenticates the origins of the object and details its original context. The Martin de Halleux edition of Masereel's woodcut works offer such historiographical paratexts. Each book includes a historical presentation of the reprinted work as well as a general chronological biography of its creator. When possible, historical documents such as related illustrations or photographs of the original woodblocks are included as appendices. These peritextual elements are written by an art historian, Samuel Dégardin, a specialist of Masereel's body of work. Dégardin also contributed to the monograph released by this publisher in 2018, which constitutes another (epitextual) part of this historical accompaniment of the republished woodcut

12 "ce sont les fils qui engendrent leurs pères pour justifier les changements réels qu'ils apportent au système existant" ("Plus" 208; English translation by JMM).

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works.[13] In Monsieur Toussaint Louverture's Ward box set, a postface by Art Spiegelman, both as an influential creator and as an active historian of the form, similarly provides historical elements.

For Masereel's works, the temporal suture also takes another form. The publisher further asserts the contemporary presence of these works by giving them new developments through a parallel imprint dedicated to original works by current creators. The *25 images* collection was launched in 2020. According to its own definition (reproduced in the endpaper of the books), "the aim for the authors is to create a short work in 25 images—one per page, in black and white, without text—following the format defined by Frans Masereel in 1918 for his book *25 images de la passion d'un homme*, the first modern wordless novel."[14] The past creation is reactivated by its present continuators. The relation between the past and the present is thus both historiographical and creative.

The second suture operated by the paratext unites Masereel's fine arts field and today's comics field. The paratextual tools used by the publisher, Martin de Halleux, organize both a dialogue and an indistinction between these fields. The *25 images* collection contributes to this second operation. Indeed, the two books in this imprint are works made by creators active in (but not restricted to) comics: Thomas Ott, well known for his scratchboard drawing style; and Joe Pinelli, recognized for his expressive style of comics. Furthermore, all of Masereel's woodcut novels (as well as the monograph dedicated to him) come with an original preface. Except for *Idée*, prefaced by the writer Lola Lafon, all these texts are written by creators strongly associated with comics: Charles Berberian, Eric Drooker, Loustal, Tardi, Blexbolex and the aforementioned Thomas Ott. Modern comics creators enter a dialogue there with Masereel's narrative techniques, style and themes. The relation between the fields is made even more fluid by the versatile (Méon)—or "polymorphic" (Menu 149)—

13 For Genette (11), the paratext of a work includes the peritext, which is directly present within the material edition of this work, and the epitext, which encompasses all the contents related to the work but located outside of its material support. Thus, here, I include in the paratext those works whose co-presence within the publisher's catalogue qualifies them as epitextual elements. At the very least, these productions contribute to the publisher's identity, which frames the perception of the considered Masereel works. More directly, in the discussed example, they explicitly relate to Masereel's woodcut novels, such as the Masereel monograph.

14 "Il s'agit pour les auteurs de créer un format court en 25 images—une par page, en noir et blanc, sans textes— tel qu'il a été défini en 1918 par Frans Masereel pour son livre *25 images de la passion d'un homme*" (English translation by JMM).

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careers of these creators, who combine comics with illustration, serigraphy or painting. The Ward box set published by Monsieur Toussaint Louverture similarly uses this cross-referencing: the postface to Ward's novels is written by Art Spiegelman, the wrap-around band of the box set features a quote by Will Eisner and the promotional material cites Alan Moore.

The materiality of the Martin de Halleux books contributes to the seamlessness of this suture. They all share a similar format: hardcover, more or less A4-sized, similar materials for covers and pages, and a minimalist color scheme (black and white with one added color). This homogeneity creates a strong visual identity for the publisher's production; it also establishes a form of indistinction between fields, creators and works within that collection. Masereel's woodcut novels, Ott's and Pinelli's graphic novellas, Youssef Daoudi's graphic novel (on Thelonius Monk), Loustal's illustrations for Henry Levet's poems, José Guadalupe Posada's *calaveras* and Félix Vallotton's engravings all blend into one indistinct ensemble of figurative and narrative black and white drawings.[15] Reversing the process Bart Beaty described regarding Crumb's exhibitions in art museums, which primarily situate the cartoonist's works in a satirical and fine art tradition (204-206), Masereel and comics (as well as Posada and Vallotton) are (re)framed within different contexts.[16] Masereel's work can be seen as comics, while comics can belong to a larger graphic ensemble that encompasses diverse traditions of engraving and drawing.

Peritext is a common place for generic definitions of a work (Genette 98-106) and the woodcut novels reprints indeed use labels stating the nature of these works. The reference to the "graphic novel" is central here as the open and fluid nature of this label (Baetens & al.) allows for variations and adjustments in its definition. Moreover, the contemporary "graphic novel" (or at least one of its currents) relies on "a reflexive relationship

15 In a similar move, a book covering Posada's career and works was also published the same year (2019) by the French comics publishing house, L'Association (Bianchi).

16 The homogenising effects of juxtaposition can be observed in other recent examples. Masereel's drawings were recently featured next to contemporary comics and illustration works in the 2021 *Big City Life* exhibition, presented by the Cartoonmuseum of Basel. In 2019, the Belgian *Blow Book* imprint published a woodcut narrative (Carl Meffert's *Nuit sur l'Allemagne*, 1937-1938) next to a 1942 detective comics (Maz's *Dick Bos*) and two new creations (Dimitri Piot's *Salaryman* and Manuel's *"Au Travail"*), all in the same small format, creating formal echoes between these diverse works. More generally, the Angoulême "heritage award" (Prix du patrimoine) similarly embeds in comics' past works produced out of comics tradition (such as Gustave Doré's *Les Travaux d'Hercule*, for example, which was included in the 2019 selection).

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to its own historicity, concretized in the uses and appropriations of older comics that the graphic novel has lent to" (Crucifix 19). Referring to this 'graphic novel' label makes it possible to consider together works created in different times and in different artistic contexts. The limits or the ambiguities of the comics patrimonialization of woodcut novels are thus attenuated and the results of the process (woodcut novels as comics heritage) is naturalized.

The "roman graphique" (graphic novel) label has sometimes been slapped on woodcut novels quite squarely. The French editions of George Walker's anthology (2010 [2007]) and David Beronä's historical book (2009 [2008]) both kept the reference to "graphic novels" in their titles.[17] The 2015 edition of Masereel's *Le Soleil*, by the small publisher Editions du Ravin Bleu, presented it directly as a "graphic novel" on its cover, also using the term in a Stefan Zweig quote on one of the cover flaps.[18] But the more recent woodcut reprints referred to this label with more nuances, or precautions. The direct and indirect paratextual qualifications of Masereel's and Ward's books are characterized by an important terminological indecision, also resulting in different presentations of the nature of the link between woodcut books and contemporary 'graphic novels.'

For example, looking at the peritext of Martin de Halleux's edition of *25 images de la passion d'un homme*, four different formulations can be found: "wordless novel" ("roman sans paroles"), "wordless novel in pictures" ("roman en images sans parole"), "modern wordless novel" ("roman sans paroles moderne"), and "modern wordless graphic novel" ("roman graphique sans paroles moderne"; English translations are mine). Monsieur Toussaint Louverture's Ward box set uses the general label of "engraved narratives" ("récits gravés") but also sports a Will Eisner quote mentioning "graphic novel" ("roman graphique"). The publisher

17 The French edition of Beronä's book is a good illustration of how translation increases the terminological ambiguities in qualifying the woodcut novels. Its default translation of "woodcut novel" or "wordless novel" as "roman graphique" [graphic novel] blurs the distinction between these expressions and often makes the nuances in Beronä's historical point disappear. This argumentative simplification is present in the translation of the title itself: *Wordless Books: The Original Graphic Novels* becomes *Le Roman graphique, des origines aux années 1950* [The Graphic Novel – From its Origins to the Fifties]. Similarly, George Walker's *Graphic Witness: Four Wordless Graphic Novels* became *Gravures rebelles: 4 romans graphiques* [Rebel engravings: 4 graphic novels].

18 In the original German version, Stefan Zweig used "bildnerische Romane" to describe the woodcut books, a direct translation of Masereel's choice of "roman in beldeen" [novel in pictures].

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also used "woodcut narratives" ("récits en gravure sur bois") and "wordless novels" ("romans sans paroles"; English translations are mine). All these variations bear the traces of different historical contexts, they echo how these works have been qualified through the decades and what they've been compared to, including the contemporary *graphic novel* label.

These variations highlight different constitutive features of these works. Are they defined by their engraved style? Or by their "graphic" nature and their visual form of narration? By their non-use of words? Or by their "modern" approach of older forms? All of these criteria can be considered of course, but highlighting one instead of another puts the works in different perspectives and different ensembles. Graphic novels are *one* of these ensembles, but the exact articulation between woodcut books and graphic novels is also subject to variations when considering the paratextual presentations of these works and their creators. Three forms of articulation can be identified. Woodcut books appear as ancestors and prefigurations of the contemporary graphic novels: Ward as the "forerunner of the graphic novel"[19] or as its *pathfinder* ("éclaireur"; title of the box set). They also are presented as the direct originators of the new form: Masereel as "inventor of the modern wordless graphic novel,"[20] *25 images de la passion d'un homme* as the "first modern wordless novel."[21] Finally, they're seen as a "previously missing link in the ninth art history"[22] (Ward's books according to Monsieur Toussaint Louverture in its promotional leaflet), uniting different art forms of different periods.

The "circular circulation" (Bourdieu 22) of paratextual qualifications partly resolves these unstable or contradictory statements.[23] On its website, the publisher Martin de Halleux displays excerpts of press reviews of the Masereel books. On the *25 images de la passion d'un homme* page, one of the quoted reviews comes from a French magazine dedicated to comics and visual arts, *Les Arts dessinés*, stating that this book is "considered as the

19 "précurseur du roman graphique" (Eisner quoted by the *L'Éclaireur* box set; English translation by JMM).

20 "inventeur du roman graphique sans paroles moderne" (English translation by JMM).

21 "premier roman sans paroles moderne" (English translation by JMM).

22 "chaînon jusque-là manquant du neuvième art" (English translation by JMM).

23 I borrow the expression from Pierre Bourdieu, who used "circular circulation" to describe how media that quote each other in a seemingly circular fashion homogenise the news.

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first modern graphic novel."[24] What was presented as a "wordless novel" or a "(modern) wordless graphic novel" in the peritext is requalified as a "modern graphic novel" in its media reception and then can be presented as such in the promotional editorial epitext: the paratextual qualification process comes full circle and the nuanced or ambiguous original qualifiers are replaced with the more conventional label of "graphic novel." The symbolic annexation of woodcut books by comics and graphic novels, brought about through the patrimonialization process, is thus naturalized.[25]

These paratextual operations touch upon the status of comics and of their creators and publishers. Annexing woodcut novels offers symbolic benefits to a form characterized by its hybrid nature, by its intermediate situation between more legitimate artistic domains.

4. Turning an *Entre-deux* Situation into a Third Position

The terminological instability in designing Masereel's and Ward's books in their current paratext—and the ambivalences it produces— can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, this instability reflects the processual nature of this patrimonialization, consisting in the collective production of an equivalence between woodcut books, and graphic novels and comics. The equivalence is initiated by the publishers, reinforced by its critical reception and then re-appropriated by the publishers. On the other hand, the instability also reflects the symbolic tensions that the editorial paratext tries to manage and to overcome. According to these paratextual indications, the woodcut books are to be seen as comics without being comics, as graphic novels without being ordinary graphic novels, as "wordless novels" but not only, as past works but "modern"

24 "considéré comme le premier roman graphique moderne" ("25 images"; English translation by JMM).

25 This circular process could be similarly seen in the case of Monsieur Toussaint Louverture's Ward box set, for which the 2021 Angoulême heritage award even more strongly validates the transition from one field to another. For Nückel's *Destin*, the observation is the same: the paratextual precaution (the back cover presents the work as a "roman graphique sans paroles" [wordless graphic novel]) is partially lost in its review by *Le Monde*, published under the "roman graphique" [graphic novel] section of the newspaper's literary supplement (25 June 2021).

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and, as such, still relevant. What is at stake here is distinction—within or without the comics field.

Patrimonialization is a process that redefines the past and requalifies products and practices from a present perspective, but it also has effects on present representations ("it is the sons who beget their fathers to justify the actual changes that they bring to the existing system" wrote Jean Pouillon ("Plus" 208)).[26] The use of the label "graphic novel" in reference to woodcut novels has an effect on its definition. It marks a partial departure from or a broadening of the definition of the "graphic novel" as it has evolved over the past decades, which associates a genre and a format, and forms "a specific, and independent, kind of comics" (Baetens et al. 8-9). This play on definitions offers the publishers distinction from their competitors in the field and on the market; it creates a new position they can occupy.

Physically, Monsieur Toussaint Louverture's Ward books stick to the dominant model of the literary graphic novel: these small dust-jacketed volumes blend in with the rest of the literary production of the publisher. Martin de Halleux's books partly diverge from the standard book format: Masereel's titles are hardcover volumes a little larger than the most common format, with a page count that varies from long-length narratives (224 pages for *Mon livre d'heures*) to much shorter ones (64 pages for *25 images de la passion d'un homme*). The Masereel-inspired books published in the *25 images* collection drift a little further. These larger hardcover volumes, with only 32 pages, reintroduce something very akin to the classic album format that the graphic novel tried to distance itself from. Formally, the differences with the graphic novel model are stronger. The wordless nature of these works prevents the presence of "freer and more sophisticated" words and writing (Baetens et al. 10).[27] The one-image-per-page narration breaks with the dominant layout of panels (or moments) juxtaposition. It also gives a strong primacy to the graphic dimension of these (nevertheless narrative) works, that thus partly resist the "strong

26 "ce sont les fils qui engendrent leurs pères pour justifier les changements réels qu'ils apportent au système existant" (English translation by JMM).

27 It should not be inferred from my remark that graphic novels have to include text—contemporary examples of long-length wordless narratives are numerous in the genre (Postema). Yet contemporary graphic novels often do use text, echoing the literary tropism that marks the genre (Baetens et al. 10), and a total absence of text is the exception.

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gravitational pull" exerted by "the literary current" on graphic novels (Baetens et al. 11).

These are indeed black and white graphic narratives for adult readers but slightly at odds with what has become the graphic novel genre. In this context, the "graphic novel" appears in a more open manner, as a space of graphic expression. It's such an approach that Monsieur Toussaint Louverture explicitly puts forward in the promotional epitext of the *L'Éclaireur* box set:

> Whether the graphic novel is a marketing ploy or the expression of an artistic will, this term often defines a territory of original works, neither comics, nor experimentations nor novels, but all of this at once. This expression emphasizes the creative gesture, eager to liberate itself from genres, norms and borders.[28]

As any field, the comics field is a social and symbolic space of struggles, where competing regimes of value are promoted by different actors trying to impose their own definitions of the field's central issue (comics and their value, in this case) and thus trying to reinforce their own position within the field; some of these strategies borrow references and criteria from other more established and prestigious social spaces, such as the art and the literary fields, thus paradoxically founding the comics field's autonomy on heteronomous regimes of value (Beaty and Woo 138-139).[29] This paradox is apparent in the current comics patrimonialization of woodcut novels.

The editorial efforts of the publishing houses that recently reprinted Ward's and Masereel's works indeed take place in this paradoxical field context. The symbolic benefits for these actors directly come from the way their actions combine the legitimizing values from different fields. As already mentioned, their reprinting of Ward and Masereel is in relation with comics as much as it is with art history (Vallotton or Posada

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28 "Que le roman graphique soit une trouvaille marketing ou une volonté artistique, ce terme définit souvent un territoire d'œuvres uniques, ni bandes dessinées, ni romans, et tout cela à la fois. Il souligne le geste créatif désirant s'affranchir des genres, des normes et des frontières" (English translation by JMM).

29 Beaty and Woo's analysis is about the US comic book field. I consider that their idea of a paradoxical autonomy that relies on heteronomous values and criteria can be applied to the French comics field—even though Beaty and Woo rightly note that some autonomous critical apparatuses have developed for this national field since the Seventies. Indeed, the reliance on external institutions (national non-comics museums, literary publishers, the Ministry of Culture) is important for the French field, for its organisation, for the production of its cultural legitimacy. This produces similar heteronomous effects for the field.

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published by Martin de Halleux) or literature (the literary catalogue of Monsieur Toussaint Louverture). For these publishers, multipositionality brings symbolic capital. For comics, these efforts increase cultural legitimacy.

But in this legitimizing process, woodcut novels also offer an opportunity to claim symbolic and artistic autonomy for comics—or more precisely "graphic novels," as redefined in the paratext of these reprints. The prefaces in Martin de Halleux's Masereel books illustrate what this autonomy affirming strategy can be. As already mentioned, these prefaces are, but for one exception, written by creators involved in comics (Charles Berberian, Loustal, Thomas Ott, Blexbolex, Tardi).[30] Yet, they make no explicit references to comics. They instead deal with larger artistic issues: composition and style (Ott draws the attention to the absence of superfluous lines; Loustal notes how, for Masereel, light precedes line; Blexbolex observes the importance of graphic contrasts) or the experience of artistic creation (Blexbolex). The wordless nature of these works brings forth references to cinema and silent movies, contemporary to Masereel's works (Blexbolex, Tardi). But narration, and especially narration through images, is probably the central theme (Ott, Loustal, Tardi). According to Ott, Masereel uses "the reduction of effects, at once in the construction of the narrative and in his clear-cut style" (Ott 6[31]); Loustal praises Masereel's ability to tell "the entire life of a giant in sixty drawings" (Loustal 5[32]); Tardi stresses out how "the images, distributed in a rigorous narrative succession, […], are self-sufficient" (Tardi 5[33]). Issues common to different art forms are put forward and the specific contributions of woodcut novels—and implicitly comics—are highlighted. These prefaces show how comics and comics creators can engage in a dialogue between equals with other art forms and creators.

The equivalence between woodcut novels and comics redefined as "graphic novels" allows for a double emancipation. It's an emancipation from the literary tropism that characterizes graphic novels: the absence of

30 *Idée* is prefaced by the writer Lola Lafon. The monograph about Masereel (de Halleux) features an introduction by Eric Drooker, known for his illustrations and his wordless graphic novels.

31 "la réduction des effets, à la fois dans la conduit du récit, mais aussi dans son style tranché" (English translation by JMM).

32 "toute une vie de géant en soixante dessins" (English translation by JMM).

33 "les images "distribuées avec précision dans une rigoureuse succession narrative […] se suffisent à elles-mêmes" (English translation by JMM).

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words in the woodcut novels shifts definitional issues towards a form of graphic narration distinct from literary concerns. It's also an emancipation from the institutional and practical framework of fine arts: questions of graphic style and composition are taken out of museum rooms and walls and explored in books. Like Töpffers without words, artists having chosen books to express their visual art, Masereel and Ward can be presented as embodiments of the artistic autonomy that comics or "graphic novels" claim for themselves.[34] "Looking for clues as to where [his] "Low" Art and the High Arts intersected", Art Spiegelman found Masereel's stories and was amazed at how "Masereel's books seem to have found a loophole, allowing them to escape Lessing's law"—and its disqualifying effects for comics ("A Sigh" 5).[35] He stated that "each single pregnant image, untainted by words and formally complete in itself, just happens to give rise to another moment that happens to lie overleaf and forms…a narrative!" ("A Sigh" 5). Seized upon by patrimonialization and all its paratextual tools Masereel's and Ward's works can thus function as real philosophers' stones, turning an *entre-deux* situation with limited recognition into an autonomous third position, with greater potential for cultural legitimacy.

5. Conclusion

The reference to woodcut novels can be artistically invigorating and fruitful for comics, as demonstrated by works such as those of Eisner, Drooker or Ott, which draw their inspiration from these older creations. But it must be used with more caution when it comes to establishing comics history. The differences in their historical and sectoral contexts of production

34 Ward considered "the book [as] a unique form of expression... For the artist, the turning of the page is the thing he has that no other worker in the visual arts has: the power to control a succession of images in time" (quoted in Spiegelman "Reading Pictures" 667). Spiegelman sums up this point of view: "Lynd Ward made books. He had an abiding reverence for the book as an object. He understood its anatomy, respected every aspect of its production, intimately knew its history, and loved its potential to engage with an audience" ("Reading Pictures" ix). In a similar vein, in a letter to the artist Henry Van de Velde, Masereel wrote: "since before the war I wanted to write by drawing. It took me some time to find what now seems so simple and logical: a book of woodcuts, a novel of pictures" (Masereel quoted in Van Parys 416).

35 Spiegelman refers to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Paintings and Poetry* (1766) and the separation it establishes between painting, concerned with arranging colours and forms in space, and poetry, arranging words in time and narrative.

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invite a reconsideration of the articulation between woodcut novels and contemporary graphic novels. If woodcut novels are to be reintroduced in comics history timeline, it's probably more heuristic to place them at the point at which they were chosen as outside references by some comics creators (from the 1970s onward, with a new vogue in the 2000s) than at the point at which they were originally produced (between the 1910s and the 1950s). Otherwise one runs "the risk of reducing the complexity and historicity as well as aesthetic value of such [woodcut novels] by recasting them as 'mere' predecessors in a forward-moving history" (Crucifix 22). A too direct reinsertion obscures the historical diversity of graphic narratives, which exceeds comics. There is also a risk of blurring the history of comics, whose evolutions, even though they followed polygraphic influences (Smolderen *Origins*), nevertheless took place in specific economic and editorial contexts.

In that sense, the current comics patrimonialization of woodcut novels is not so much a matter of rediscovering a forgotten past (or rather previously ignored elements of another past). "Enlist[ing] the past and the symbolic efficacy of the [patrimonial] object to justify present representations" (Davallon 199[36]), it is a reconstruction of genealogy that offers a basis in the present for new legitimacy and distinction claims and new creative endeavors. When considered with Davallon's patrimonialization process, the current comics approach to woodcut novels tells us more about the present than it does about the past.

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Stéphane Collignon

From Print Cartoons to Animated Cartoons: How Caricature and Comic Strips Shaped Early Studio Animation

1. Introduction

In this paper, it is argued that studying the aesthetics set up at the turn of the 19th and early 20th century by caricature and print cartoon artists, is essential to understand the birth of animated cartoon aesthetics. In a limited context of study on the reception of animated cartoon aesthetics, this chapter argues that it is possible to forge a theoretical model of animated aesthetics based on the study of caricature and comics, a model that can then be re-injected into a more global understanding of graphic narration.

It was John Randolph Bray, a New York cartoonist best known in the 1910s for his newspaper comic strips (cf. Knudde no pag.), who was responsible for the first efforts to turn animation into an industry (Barrier 12). Bray saw animation as something new and original that could quickly become important. He also thought that there would probably be a way to "make money out of it" (Maltin 6). Bray therefore quickly devoted himself to the development (and above all the filing of patents) of a series of techniques that would not only allow his studio to flourish but also promote the commercial development of animation (Denis 138).

In 1913, with the studio's second film, *Colonel Heeza Liar in Africa*, a recurring character was created. This film was one of the first[1] to be commercially distributed, with a copy of it still available.[2] It is neither part of a vaudeville act, nor an isolated experiment. It is one of the first episodes of a series, and in this respect, it marks a turning point in the history of animation (Maltin 7).

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1 According to Donald Crafton, the first episode of *The Newlyweds*, titled "When He Wants a Dog," directed by Émile Cohl, was distributed almost nine months before *Colonel Heeza Liar in Africa*. Of *The Newlyweds*, only one episode survives: "He poses for his Portrait" (1913). For further information see Crafton, *Émile*, p. 163.

2 While the episode "Colonel Heeza Liar in Africa" is not available online, the second known episode ("Colonel Heeza Liar's African Hunt") from October 1st 1914 is available on *YouTube*. It is very similar, meaning, some scenes are identical and were probably reused. See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FWzso2Qu2Q.

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The film opens with a title card indicating that it was drawn by the "noted cartoonist", J. R. Bray. The term 'cartoon' here actually refers to a particular style of drawing encompassing both humorous press drawings and comic strips. From the outset, the film attempts to capitalise on Bray's personality as a well-known cartoonist, although the Colonel appears to be an original creation.[3] When the animation starts, one immediately notices a graphic style clearly reminiscent of the comic strip and press cartoons of the early 20th century: a fine black line and a relatively detailed but highly stylised figure.[4] Indeed, when one compares the drawing in this film with some examples of Bray's comic strip works (see Knudde), one immediately recognises the artist's style, although for practical reasons,[5] the images in the film are obviously less detailed than those in his comics.

As Michael Barrier points out in *Hollywood Cartoons* (1999), the surviving Bray studio films of the 1910s tend to be quite elaborately drawn in the manner of the 19th century magazine cartoons they evoke (Barrier 17-18). Thomas Stathes, curator of the Bray studio archives, adds that:

> the graphic quality of the characters is more or less the same. Perhaps, the animated characters have slightly less details (literally, pen strokes) but the structure and overall look of the characters is pretty similar or the same comparing between the comics and cartoons. (Stathes)

This similarity between the aesthetics of the film and the aesthetics of Bray's comic strips is emphasised, as pointed out at the beginning of this analysis, in the first title card of the film. The short animation is presented as the work of a famous 'cartoonist,' understood here in the sense of a print cartoonist. In fact, the film is conceived as a succession of press cartoons, with captions and drawings. For the modern spectator, it is surprising to note that these intertitles describe exactly the action seen a few moments later, as if the studio did not entirely trust the moving image in its capacity to convey the action alone. However, the formula

3 According to Thomas Stathes, Bray Studio's archive manager, there is no known record of Colonel Heeza Liar's previous existence in print (see Stathes).

4 Consulting comics and caricature archive sites such as http://www.coconino-classics.com/ and http://www.comicstriplibrary.org/ (last consulted in September 2015), or https://www.lambiek.net (last consulted in February 2023), can provide an idea of the dominant graphic trends in cartoon and comic strip art at the time.

5 An animated film should contain at least twelve pictograms per second to offer a reasonably fluid animation. It would therefore be rather unproductive to try to maintain a high level of detail in each pictogram.

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worked and, between 1913 and 1917, the dominant mode of animated film was the adaptation of comic strips (Wells 17).

2. The Print Cartoon: One of the Origins of Animation

The Newlyweds by George McManus and adapted by Émile Cohl from 1913, *Colonel Heeza Liar* by John Randolph Bray the same year, or *Mutt and Jeff* by Bud Fisher from 1916, all testify to the attachment of the animated cartoon as a cinematic category to the model of the illustrated press (Massuet 47). This section of the article is intended to demonstrate the strong historical ties between the "print cartoon" industry and the nascent animation industry, establishing one as a direct ancestor of the other. This connection will help to forge a further tie with the genre of caricature, identified as a key component of both the comic book and the early animation industry.

Dick Tomasovic says it all when he mentions "the relationship between the newspaper drawing industry and the animation industry," specifying that: "In fact, in the 1910s, directors, animators and newspaper cartoonists adapted and adopted each other to the point of generating a phenomenon of circulation of images and artists" (Tomasovic 55; translation mine).[6]

Donald Crafton also mentions the influence of comic strips, admitting that they provided not only a fertile ground for stories and characters but also for artists (Crafton, *Émile*, pp. 48-57). Other researchers go further. In *The Art of Animation, An Anthology* (1987), Charles Solomon points out (quoting Crafton) that pre-existing forms of entertainment such as magic shows, magic lantern projections, the Lightning Sketch, political caricature, vaudeville monologue, popular scientific demonstrations, shadow puppets, spiritualism, advertising, journalism, pulp fictions, etc., constituted the "cultural bouillabaisse" of early cinema (Solomon 13).

The set of influences of animation cinema seems more complex here, but it nevertheless contains an essential element in the search for an aesthetic origin: caricature. Indeed, it serves as a binding agent for many of

6 Here is the original French version: "les relations entre l'industrie du dessin de presse et l'industrie du cinema d'animation [...] En effet, dans les années dix, réalisateurs, animateurs et dessinateurs de journaux, s'adaptent et s'adoptent les uns les autres au point de générer un phénomène de circulation des images et des artistes" (Tomasovic 55).

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the ingredients of this "bouillabaisse" described by Solomon and Crafton. It is undoubtedly a common ancestor of Lightning Sketches and comic strips and is used in advertising and in the press via political cartoons. It is even present in shadow puppet theatre, notably through the works of Caran d'Ache, a famous caricaturist from the end of the 19th century, such as *L'épopée* (1886), produced for the Chat Noir cabaret (Collectif n. pag.). In an article on political caricature published in 1967, Lawrence Streicher points in this direction when he states:

> Caricature, cartoon (in the downgrading sense), the comic strip, and the animated cartoon are a connected series of para-artistic creations. They arose historically in the above order, but since the days of the animated cartoons, all have existed together. All use artistic means and mediums. Caricature, which is our central concern, underlies the others and is present in each (Streicher 431).

According to Streicher thus, caricature, or cartoon, is the starting point of a series of related artistic creations that also include comics and animation. In the *World Encyclopedia of Comics*, Maurice Horn points out that if we simply look at the etymology of the term 'animated cartoon,' the word used to designate animation derives directly from the term 'cartoon' (Horn 35); that is to say, according to the online Oxford English Dictionary: "a drawing executed in an exaggerated style for comic or satirical effect" (OED n.pag.), a caricature in short. And this is not an isolated argument. As early as 1920, E.G. Lutz in his book *Animated Cartoons, How They Are Made*, states that

> When some of the comic graphic artists began to turn their attention to the making of drawings for animated screen pictures, nothing seemed more natural than that the word 'animated' should be prefixed to the term describing their products and so bringing into usage the expression 'animated cartoons'. But the term did not long remain restricted to this application, as it soon was called in to service by the workers in the industry to describe any film made from drawings without regard to whether the subject was of a humorous or of an educational character (Lutz viii-x).

Twenty-eight years later, Lo Duca reaffirmed the theory by insisting that 'cartoon' is used metonymically for caricature (Duca 11). Thus, if we take up the reasoning of Horn, Lutz and Lo Duca, quite literally, an 'animated cartoon' is nothing less than an animated caricature. Of course, this could be seen as a simple etymological word play, but it is enlightening in many ways, especially when Lutz highlights the background of the founders of animated cinema as "comic graphic artists" (Lutz ix), or when

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the very opening title card of a film such as *Colonel Heeza Liar in Africa* (1913), states that it was created by "The Noted Cartoonist" (Bray n. pag.).

In his book on the pioneers of animation, Crafton specifies that they had acquired some experience in the field of "popular graphic arts" before devoting themselves to animation (Crafton, *Before*, p. 44). Ralph Stephenson agrees with this when he explains that the majority of these animators were "newspaper cartoonists" trying their hand at a new medium (Stephenson 27-28). And he goes on to explain that while there were individual variations in style, generically the artists of this period were similar. They had a strong tradition of comic drawing, born of magazines like Punch and its French and American equivalents, waiting to be transposed, adapted and set in motion. These were usually line drawings, perfectly suited to black and white cartoons (Stephenson 34). Sébastien Denis adds that animators, especially in the early days, became interested in animation through press cartoons, and that press cartoons are a perfect exercise in exaggeration and precision of line (Denis, 2011, p. 50). Wells goes on to point out that in order to be able to produce a coherent collective work, animated film productions relied on the specific vocabulary of the comic strip which all animators readily understood (Wells 17). E.G. Lutz, indicates that in his days (1920), it was already clear that "patterns of emulation in the manner of depicting action and the representation of the character can be found in the drawings of Mr. A.B. Frost" (Lutz 248), a famous American cartoonist of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Norman Klein also defends the hypothesis that animated cartoons are related to caricature. He states that animated cartoons "continued a tradition of graphic narrative which dates back to the eighteenth century, but particularly stems from nineteenth-century illustration. They were animated comic strips with a frantic life of their own" (Klein 3-4). According to him, the "memory" of the graphic narrative, as much for the animators as for the spectators, finds its origin primarily in the printed page, and this form of graphic storytelling, by 1928[7], is at the core of animation (Klein 6). Moreover, he indicates that the literature of the 1930s on the subject, puts forward the fact that animation has its roots in a different substratum from live action cinema: comic strips (Klein 9). According to Klein, there is a real tradition of graphic narration which takes shape in the illustration

7 Klein uses the creation of the Mickey Mouse (1928), notably the first animated cartoon using synchronous sound, as a significant turning point for the industry and a shift from a more visual slapstick style of narration to melodrama and a more aural style.

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of the end of the 19th century, continues in the comic strip and finally in the animated cartoon (see Klein 15).

Most of the animators of the early years of animated cinema were initially caricaturists, or are in any case indebted to this tradition. In fact, Stuart Blackton, to whom the first animated cartoon: *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces* (1906) is generally attributed, began his career as a caricaturist for the *New York Evening World* in 1896 (Crafton, *Before*, p. 44), Émile Cohl, another pioneer of animation, creator of the films based on the character 'Fantoche' from 1908, or the *Newlyweds* series from 1913, was a pupil of André Gill: one of the most important caricaturists of the late 19th century. Cohl himself was a well-known caricaturist when he took up the cause of animated film. Winsor McCay, the artist behind some of the most impressive animated films of the 1910s, including *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914), is one of the most famous comic strip artists of the early 20th century, whose influences can be traced back to Tenniel or Grandville (Crafton, *Before*, p. 125). John Randolph Bray, founder of one of the first animation studios, as explained above, is one of the best-known illustrators and "graphic humorists" in New York at the time (Crafton, *Before*, p. 140). And the list goes on with Paul Terry, and the rest of the Bray studio team, but also Gregory La Cava, Walter Lantz, or even Max Fleicher who claims that it is to cartooning that he "owed his first bread", since he was an artist at the Brooklyn Daily Eagle for a salary of two dollars per week (Duca 104). These are all examples which, as Vrielynck claims, "illustrate and flesh out the theories and arguments of those who claim that animated cinema owes everything to the printed image" (Vrielynck 29-30; translation mine).[8]

As Crafton points out, the artists just named forged animation as a genre in its own right in the eyes of the general public, separate from the simple special effects of Méliès-style 'trick films.' He adds that it is with these artists that animation begins to be associated with dramatic situations, narrative structures, iconography and recurrent content expectations. Especially strong links are forged with the popular press (Crafton, *Before*, p. 9). In other words, it is in caricature that animated cartoons find the foundations of their aesthetic. And Marie Thérèse Poncet, one of the first

8 Here is the original French quotation: "illustrent et étoffent les théories et les arguments de ceux qui prétendent que le cinéma d'animation doit tout à l'image imprimée" (Vrielynck 29-30).

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university researchers to have studied animated films, indicates that if we want to

> understand an artistic form of expression, it seems essential to understand where it comes from, in which school the artists who use and define it were trained, to understand the relationship with what precedes it, what accompanies it and what follows it in the time of its evolution. (Poncet 32; translation mine)[9]

It is therefore essential, if we really want to understand the animated cartoon, to link it to what preceded it, to the 'school' in which the first animators were trained: caricature. This is why it is important to take the time to analyse the aesthetic program proposed by nineteenth-century caricatures in order to understand the graphic language spoken by the pioneers of animation when they started to animate. The next section, will offer an overview of the aesthetic characteristics of nineteenth-century caricature. This will in turn allow to summarize what could be said to be the 'essence' of caricatural drawing that will be passed on to animation through the comic strip.

3. Characteristics of Caricature

In an article on the conventions of caricature in the Georgian period (1714-1837), Robert Patten points out that the aesthetic program developed by caricaturists was partly the result of the fact that most of them had no academic education. They therefore depended, he argues, on innate talent, keen inventiveness and 'tricks of the trade' that minimised, if not exploited, their artistic weaknesses (Patten 335). The author argues that most of these 'tricks' will find their way into the practices of comic-strip artists and then, ultimately pass on to early studio animators.

Two of the main problems nineteenth-century caricaturists faced were perspective and anatomy. As far as perspective is concerned, the academic means of creating it (mastering contrasts and decreasing the size of the figures according to their distance), are inappropriate for the medium of caricature. Caricature being in essence an art of portraiture demands that

9 The original quotation in French reads as follows: "comprendre une forme d'expression artistique, il apparaît essentiel, de comprendre d'où elle vient, a quelle école ont été formes les artistes qui l'emploient et la définissent, de comprendre le rapport avec ce qui la précédé, ce qui l'accompagne et ce qui la suit dans le temps de l'évolution" (Poncet 32).

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the characters be recognisable. And the scale of their representation can be part of the recognition code. For example, Gillray regularly represented Napoleon as a character of Lilliputian proportions. Therefore, size would not be indicative of distance in a system of perspective, but a clear clue to whom the person depicted was (Patten 335).

Cruikshank, another famous nineteenth-century English cartoonist, solved the dilemma of perspective by avoiding outdoor scenes. Most of his drawings are set in what can be called a 'shallow box' scene. In this way he created a space with very little depth in which the figures were arranged in the manner of a frieze, thus avoiding the problem of having to draw groups one behind the other. If necessary, he tilted the scene so that the figures behind were higher, an effect achieved by choosing the angle of view slightly above the line of sight (Patten 335-336).

In the case of problems caused by anatomy, 'print cartoonists' also found ways to circumvent their possible artistic weaknesses. Clothing, for example, is such a mark of identification that it can, to some extent, compensate for the rendering of the body underneath, especially when that body is in motion (Patten 337-338). Loose-fitting clothing is particularly useful for this kind of exercise. Hands are also a rather difficult element to draw. Caricaturists therefore took care to partially hide them by giving them something to hold, by putting them in pockets, out of sight, or by making them wear gloves (Patten 338).

The 'print cartoonist' can also summarise the characteristics of a certain class of individuals. To do this, he synthesises its qualities and defects to give form to an archetypal character (Roberts-Jones 89). Another aspect of the accentuation of physiognomic characteristics lies in what could be called distortion for the sake of distortion, i.e. the search for the grimace and the grotesque as an end in itself (see Roberts-Jones 89-90). According to Roberts-Jones, as early as 1860, one can almost define a kind of 'academicism' of sorts of caricature which consists in representing subjects with a large head above a small body so that the disproportion between these two elements adds to the comic effect already obtained by the exaggeration of the features (see Roberts-Jones 94-95).

Of course, as Roberts-Jones points out, there are attempts at variation. Duradeau, for example, does not focus on the disproportion between the head and the body but seeks a comic effect through his work on the shadows of his subjects (Roberts-Jones 95). Another interesting invention is that of Carlo Grippa, who added around a photograph a series of small caricatural drawings representing in a satirical and critical way certain

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aspects of the subject's life (Roberts-Jones 96). For his part, André Gill, the most famous caricaturist of the Second Empire until the 1880s, imposed his style on most of his contemporaries. Roberts-Jones presents Gill's work as a reduction of drawing to its essential core, shunning details to embrace the detail, the movement, the attitude that offers not only a physical synthesis but transposes the soul of the characters represented (see Roberts-Jones 104).

Finally, the anthropomorphisation of animals, plants and objects was always a fertile ground for caricature (Roberts-Jones, 1963, p. 97). Examples can be found in the work of Grandville, Busch or Alfred Lepetit. This non-exhaustive list gives a quick overview of these 'artists tricks' which were to serve as a basis for the new art form that animated film was to become in the early 20th century: simplification of the design, enlarged heads on a smaller bodies, exaggerations and distortions, shadows independent of the characters, states of consciousness that manifest themselves around the head of the figure, anthropomorphisation of non-human figures, etc., are all characteristic elements of 'print cartoon' drawing, as many 'tools of the trade' that Blackton, Cohl, McCay, and other pioneers of animated cinema learned to manipulate as 'print cartoon' artists and transferred into early 'animated cartoon' films. But these former 'print cartoonists' who became animators were not content with simply putting the 'print cartoon' into motion. Indeed, Klein notes that animated cartoons "are a record of consumer rituals over the past seventy years: of transitions away from print media towards cinema" (Klein 1). By the 1920s the formula that consisted of merely animating comic-strip characters without much thought to the specificities of the cinematic screen gradually lost breath. As Maltin points out, the graphic style of the original comic-strip works suffered at the hands of animators forced to simplify these still too complex drawings and to eliminate the backgrounds to increase productivity (Maltin 17). The aesthetics of animation had to evolve beyond the simple copy of 'print cartoons.' The next part explores this transformation and claims that while the art of animation evolved, the essence of caricature remained at its core.

4. Towards an Animated Aesthetic

As the first parts of this chapter have shown, there is an historical and aesthetic affiliation of animation with nineteenth-century caricature or,

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to cover a wider sense including the press cartoon and the comic strip: the 'print cartoon.' However, a second element that becomes apparent when watching the first animated films produced in the 1910s is that one of their weaknesses is precisely this over-reliance on the codes of the 'print cartoon,' leading to a certain rigidity, a lack of fluidity in the animation itself. The problem quickly became apparent and artists such as Bill Nolan, Gregory La Cava or Charles Bowers tried to improve the situation in order to make animation an art in its own right, distinct from 'print cartoons.' As expressed earlier, this next part of this chapter will explore how animators transformed their practices mainly through the conquest of a greater fluidity of movement and steering away from the aesthetics of printed media. Animators first of all increased the number of images per second, but also gradually brought in a more rounded and simplified drawing style. This rounding and simplification of the drawing makes the characters easier to draw, which compensates for the increase in the number of drawings to improve the fluidity of movement. Now, movement, or "the moving"[10] is precisely what makes the difference between a 'print cartoon' and an animated one (Rowley n. pag.).

According to Willoughby, the real invention of the animated cartoon happens around "graphic characters" along the lines of a graphic animated being who gradually became a kind of popular animated actor, a star, an industrial product of which Felix the Cat, created by Pat Sullivan's studio,[11] was the prototype (Willoughby 194). In its first appearances, Felix's figure is rather angular, differentiating itself from previous figures mainly by the simplicity of its black body (Barrier 31). A body that actually aims to save time by eliminating most of the contour lines. Moreover, a solid figure, all in black, moves more easily on the screen (Barrier 23), firstly because it is a solid mass, which eliminates any tremors that may appear when the lines vary from one drawing to another, and do not superimpose perfectly during projection, and secondly because the fact of animating a body in solid black means that, for any movement in profile, one cannot distinguish the limbs in the foreground from those in the

10 Dick Tomasovic defines the moving (*le mouvant*) as the illusion of life revealing its artificiality as opposed to the *movement*, characteristic of the living (Tomasovic 30).

11 The authorship of Felix is disputed. According to some, the animator, Otto Messmer, was responsible for its creation, while others claim that producer Pat Sullivan was the creator of the character. This paper will not engage in this debate. For further information see, for example, Willoughby, or Barrier.

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background. This means that for a walking cycle, for example, only a half a cycle needs be animated.

Messmer, the lead animator at the studio, then had a stroke of luck in hiring Bill Nolan. Nolan brought in a style of drawing and animation that emphasised curves rather than straight lines, as briefly mentioned above. Felix's design quickly reflects Nolan's presence by becoming rounder and more immediately pleasing to the eye. Moreover, in its circular construction, as well as in the general simplicity of its design, the revised Felix facilitates animation in a way that most earlier characters did not (Barrier 31-32). This improved design, with its large white areas around the eyes and mouth, also enhances the figure's expressions (Maltin 25).

With his round body, entirely black except for the area around his eyes and mouth, Felix became one of the rare animated figures of the time not to be adapted from a comic strip and to be drawn with animation as a primary goal. According to Klein, from 1927 onwards, Felix's aesthetic type was imposed because it better corresponded to the kind of gags that were being set up as animation evolved away from the comic strip (Klein 37). For Dominique Willoughby, the artistic and aesthetic motif of the Felix-type figurines generated a new type of animation that relies on two methods. First, there is the development of the figure's 'acting-' An expressive acting pushed towards exaggeration and caricature by exploiting the properties of the animated line. Then there is the exploitation of the properties of line and animated graphics, of cartooning proper: schematisation, caricature, very advanced exaggeration. To Willoughby, these two modes combined constitute the new singularity of the animated cartoon figures that appeared at the time, and of their movement (Willoughby 195). But if we are to believe Willoughby, in order to establish this aesthetic specific to animation, better accommodating the realities of the industry, while allowing for the production of performances more capable of arousing emotions, animators did not in fact turn away from print cartoon, from caricature. On the contrary, they appropriated its essence (simplification and exaggeration) to adapt it to the possibilities of this medium, which was still relatively new at the beginning of the 20th twentieth century: cinema, and in particular animated cinema. These new animated figures are therefore, fundamentally, caricatural figures. Although on the surface, animated figures such as Felix, or Mickey Mouse ten years later, seem to be moving away from the comic book and printed cartoon aesthetics of the first studio productions. In reality, the very foundations of this aesthetic remain at the heart of the productions

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that would bring about the golden age of Hollywood animated cartoons. But the story does not end here. When Tomasovic, quoted earlier, states that "directors, animators and newspaper cartoonists adapted and adopted each other to the point of generating a phenomenon of circulation of images and artists" (Tomasovic 55; translated from the French), this was not a one-way stream. Very quickly animated cartoon characters would find their way onto the print pages. This will be briefly explored in the final part of my chapter.

5. Return to Sender

In the opening of this chapter, it was explained that it was John Randolph Bray who was responsible for the first efforts to turn animation into an industry (Barrier 12). The author then explored how Bray transferred his comic-strip aesthetics onto the silver screen but also how this style showed limitations that had to be overcome for animation to truly flourish. But Bray also "realized the potential of promoting his own cartoons through newspaper comic adaptations" (Knudde n. pag.). Indeed, "Colonel Heeza Liar was also the first animated character to inspire a comic strip spin-off" (Knudde n. pag.). With the success of characters such as Felix in the 1920s, then Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck in the 1930s or Bugs Bunny in the 1940s, cross-media marketing strategies, from merchandising (toys, etc.) to comic strip adaptations were naturally quickly put in place. While in the 1910s it was essentially the comic strip that provided the animated cartoon with a pool of characters, from the 1920s onwards, it was the animated characters that began to take over the pages of comics. Felix was published by the King Feature Syndicate from 1923, Mickey Mouse from 1930 and Donald from 1934. Bugs Bunny was adapted in 1941 in a magazine entitled *Looney Tunes and Merry Melodies* by Dell Publishing (see Gaumer and Moliterni). The title directly alludes to Warner's animated series and marked a 'return to sender' of sorts from the animated cartoon to the comic strip.

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Part III: War [in] Comics

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Paul M. Malone

The Forgotten World of Vienna's Interwar Comic Strips

Introduction

Austria between the two World Wars was marked by instability. After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire in 1918, the tiny rump republic lurched from one political or economic crisis to the next for two decades, transforming in 1934 from a shaky parliamentary democracy into a no less fragile authoritarian state—which was itself absorbed into the neighbouring German National Socialist dictatorship five years later.

Deprived of its former provinces, Austria was dominated by the city of Vienna, home to almost a third of the shrunken nation's population. While most of the country was devoutly Catholic and politically conservative, "Red Vienna" was the stronghold of the Social Democratic Party, advocate of the trades and industrial workers, led largely by educated, middle-class moderates. The fact that many Social Democrat leaders were of Jewish background hardly endeared the party to the conservatives and nationalists, who had undercut support for liberal and socialist movements at the end of the nineteenth century by emphasizing a deeply anti-Semitic populism (Judson 223-65). Nonetheless, for the first decade and a half after the Great War the Social Democrats controlled Vienna's city council, setting the policy and budget affecting a huge number of Austrians; at the same time, despite continual electoral gains at the federal level, the party was shut out of national government by rotating coalitions of the conservative Christian Social Party and various further-right parties (Barnett and Woywode 1463-4). Even with a common enemy, these coalitions were so volatile that between 1918 and 1934, twelve chancellors presided over twenty-two different cabinets.

The republic's constant upheavals were reflected in a lively press landscape: prior to 1934 every political party had its own daily or weekly newspaper—if not several, appealing to different segments of the population (Paupié 83-116). This spectrum included satirical and humorous papers such as the originally liberal but later right-wing *Kikeriki* ("Cock-a-Doodle-Doo," founded 1861), the conservative *Die Muskete* ("The Musket," founded 1905) and the left-wing *Die Leuchtrakete* ("The Flare," founded 1923). There were also *unparteiisch* or unaffiliated newspapers, including those re-

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flecting liberal viewpoints (since liberalism as a party-political movement was moribund), as well as fully apolitical papers (Paupié 42); and periodicals aimed at specific trades or professions. By 1918 all these genres, and indeed some individual newspapers, already had decades of history. Satirical newspapers in Vienna, for instance, stretched back at least to Moritz Gottlob Saphir's *Humorist*, founded in 1837 (Haas 4)—although prior to the partial abolition of censorship following the revolutions of 1848 they had seldom used drawn caricatures, which were both less ambiguous and more accessible to the barely literate than prose (Haas 5). By the 1870s, political cartoons had become common (Haas 6-8); when the First World War began, they could be found not only in dedicated satire periodicals but also on the editorial pages of conventional newspapers. It was in the pages of the postwar satirical press, however, that isolated single-panel cartoons developed into comic strips, spreading from there into other types of newspapers.

The following is a description of comic strips with continuing characters published in the Viennese press between 1919 and 1942. These strips, a handful of which were both popular and long-lived, appeared in newspapers across the political spectrum during the 1920s. As political developments increasingly narrowed that spectrum following the inception of authoritarian government in 1933; the brief Civil War and establishment of dictatorship in February 1934; and finally, the *Anschluss* with Nazi Germany and dissolution of Austria in March 1938, new strips continued to debut in the dwindling number of newspapers. No comic strip created after the Civil War, however, managed to achieve longevity; and indeed, the majority of these strips lasted only a few episodes. In general, those strips that lasted longest accommodated themselves—often perforce—to changes in the political landscape; just as importantly, they also addressed their readers not only in political terms, but rather also as consumers of the very newspapers they were reading.

The Press and Consumer Culture in Interwar Vienna

Histories of comics art long declared that, notwithstanding evidence of European antecedents, the origins of the modern comic strip lay in the US, specifically in the form of Richard F. Outcault's *The Yellow Kid* in William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* from 1895 on. In terms of

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both form and content, this argument maintained, comic strips were thus "uniquely American" (Gordon 5-6). As Ian Gordon points out, however:

> Comic strips in the United States were the product of a specific set of social relations that ripened in American cities in the 1890s. In a particular time and place comic strips developed a specific form. *But it was a form that leaned heavily on the past and that could be transported to, or invented in, other cultures with slight variation as they too achieved modernity*. (8; emphasis added)

In addition to its long history of satirical newspapers and caricatures, postwar Austria had also come to accept the general consumerism and commodification Gordon describes as a main impetus for American comic strips; to such an extent that historian Anton Holzer writes:

> "The republic converted the street into a vertically opened newspaper. …." In this brief, laconic observation, the Austrian writer Alfred Polgar sums up the transformation of public space in the 1920s. The "vertically opened newspaper" refers to the script of political and commercial promotion—advertisements, posters, neon signs and the like.[1] (Holzer)

Notably, in the magazine *Moderne Welt* ("Modern World") in February 1928, the nationalist *Feuilletonist* Alexander Schilling expressly described this effect on the Viennese cityscape as "a symptom of ongoing Americanization" (*ein Symptom fortschreitender Amerikanisierung*; Schilling 24). As Polgar's metaphor of the "vertically opened newspaper" indicates, however, these changes had already occurred in the pages of Vienna's newspapers, where an increasing number of advertisements vied for space with political and social commentary of all kinds—and with pioneering comic strips.

According to statistics compiled by Gabriele Melischek and Josef Seethaler, the number of Viennese daily newspapers between 1919 and 1945 peaked just before the end of the republic in 1934, sank in the four years of the authoritarian *Bundesstaat* or federal state—with a brief plateau in the middle—and fell deeper yet following the 1938 *Anschluss* with Nazi Germany, until a rapid final decline in 1942 (see Fig. 1). Weekly papers presumably followed a similar pattern, given that most of them were produced by the same publishers; the Austrian weekly press, however,

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1 "'Die Republik hat die Straße zur vertikal ausgespannten Zeitung gewandelt. ….' In dieser knappen, lakonischen Beobachtung fasst der österreichische Schriftsteller Alfred Polgar in den 1920er Jahren die Veränderung des öffentlichen Raumes zusammen. Mit der 'vertikal ausgespannten Zeitung' ist die Schrift der politischen und kommerziellen Reklame gemeint—Anzeigen, Plakate, Lichtschriften und ähnliches."

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remains under-researched, particularly during the Nazi era (Seethaler and Melischek 11).

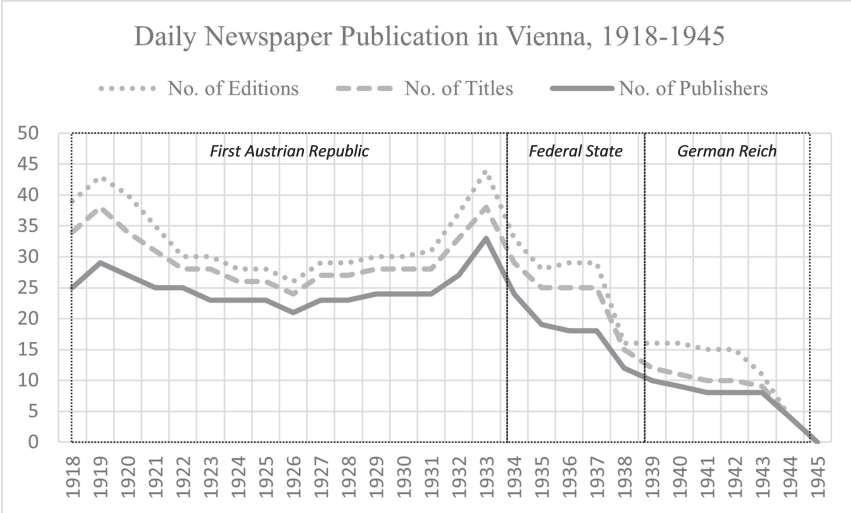

Fig. 1: Based on Melischek and Seethaler 1992.

Between 1923 and 1942, Viennese newspapers across the political spectrum published at least twenty locally produced comic strips with continuing characters, many of them American-style strips with speech balloons; some were short-lived, containing only three or four episodes, while a handful, such as Ludwig (*né* Ladislaus) Kmoch's *Tobias Seicherl*, lasted a decade or more. There were also many gag comic strips without recurring characters, particularly in the 1930s. Although a few foreign comic strips were licensed from abroad—most notably George E. Studdy's charming British strip *Bonzo the Dog*, which ran in the *Illustrierte Wochenpost* ("Illustrated Weekly Post," or *Illwo*) for three months at the end of 1929; Bud Fisher's *Mutt and Jeff*, which appeared in the same paper for the first three months of 1930; and Walt Disney's *Donald Duck*, which was printed in the *Wiener Neueste Nachrichten* ("Viennese Latest News") under the title *Duck, die Ente* ("Duck, the Duck") from 2 Dec. 1938 to 5 May 1939—these were relative latecomers, and far outnumbered by strips written and drawn by Austrians. Unfortunately, the editorial records of Viennese papers prior to 1945 have all been lost (Früh 37); as a result, the biographies of newspaper artists during this period are difficult to reconstruct, and some artists can-

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not even be identified. Moreover, the writers of comic strips were almost always uncredited.

The First Austrian Republic: Heyday of the Comic Strips

Between 1919 and mid-1933, as Melischek and Seethaler's statistics show, the Viennese newspaper landscape was at its broadest and most diverse. It is during this period that comic strips first appeared, and that the long-lived strips had the opportunity to establish themselves; by the end of this period, however, the imposition of strict censorship began a trend of attrition among newspapers that was never to be reversed.

The first proto-comic strip was published in the satirical paper *Der Götz von Berlichingen*. *Der Götz* had first appeared on 10 April 1919, taking its name and attitude from the irreverent knightly protagonist of Goethe's 1773 drama. The colourful tabloid spent seven months excoriating both the Austrian politicians who failed to achieve *Anschluss* with the nascent German Republic and the victorious Allies who prevented it, before ceasing publication in September. In its final issue of 27 September 1919, however, the paper linked together all the cartoons in its eight pages into a narrative about the coal shortage in Vienna. The captions and additional text portrayed desperate Viennese (p. 1; see Fig. 2) driven to seek warmer climes, such as the equatorial regions (p. 3), or to hang themselves (p. 4), only to find that coal was lacking in both heaven (p. 5) and hell (p. 6). Returning to Vienna, barring digging into neighbours' hidden stocks of coal (p. 7), the only recourse was to resign oneself, because "Vienna remains Vienna" (*Wien bleibt Wien*; p. 8). The cartoons were provided by Franz Kraft (pp. 1 and 8), Carl Josef (pp. 3 and 4), Josef Danilowatz (pp. 5 and 6), Franz Dobias and Paul Humpoletz (both p. 7).

This *tour de force* was unfortunately the paper's swan song, at least for the time being. *Der Götz* returned in a cheaper, black-and-white form in October 1923, however, with a new publisher, Maximilian Schreier, and editor, the controversial novelist Hugo Bettauer. Though the paper was left-liberal in its leanings, the revived *Götz*—subtitled "a humorous polemic against everybody" (*eine lustige Streitschrift gegen alle*)—mocked conservatives, socialists, bourgeois, anti-Semites and, with increasing frequency, Nazis for the next eleven years, using satirical prose, poetry, exquisite single-panel cartoons—and genuine comic strips.

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Sondernummer. Hinaus aus der Kohlennot! Nr. 25. Wien, 27. September 1919. Preis 90 Heller.

Der Götz von Berlichingen

Die letzte Sparmaßnahme. (Zeichnung von Franz Kraft.)

*)

25 Heizkohle

Der Hausmeister: „Aus Kohlen-Ersparungsrücksichten wird das Haustor bereits um 8 Uhr früh geschlossen und überhaupt nicht mehr aufgesperrt!"

Die Wiener: „Da bleibt uns nichts anderes übrig . . . . . .

*) Wie die Leser sehen, konnte der Künstler die Zeichnung nicht mehr beenden, da, als er bei dieser Ecke angelangt war, sein Kohlenstift beschlagnahmt wurde.

Fig. 2: "The Final Economizing Measure," *Der Götz von Berlichingen* 27 Sept. 1919, p. 1, drawn by Franz Kraft. The landlord locks out his tenants to save coal. The coal shortage is so dire that the artist supposedly lacked charcoal to finish the upper left corner of the picture. [2]

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Foremost and longest-lived among the revived *Götz*'s comic strips was the feature *Bilderbogen des kleinen Lebens* (roughly, "Scenes from Everyday Life"), which first appeared in the fourth issue ("Frau Riebeisel Buys A Dog," 2 Nov. 1923, 4). The strip was drawn by Fritz Gareis, Jr., a trained painter who already during the war had moved into magazines and newspapers, producing cartoons for Schreier's other paper, *Der Morgen*, and other publications on the political left, as well as children's books. Possibly the first ongoing speech-balloon comic strip in German, the *Bilderbogen* was unlike any of Gareis's previous work; Eckart Sackmann and Harald Havas suggest that George McManus's 1904 American comic strip *The Newlyweds*, which also appeared in Europe, may have been a model (52). Like *The Newlyweds*, *Bilderbogen* had an elegant young couple as its protagonists—unlike their cloyingly affectionate American counterparts, however, Herr and Frau Riebeisel (a dialect word for a grater, such as a cheese grater) both have difficulty staying faithful, and divorce is constantly threatened from the very first episode. The strip's scripts were written by Bettauer (Krug 99-100), who had worked as a journalist in New York between 1904 and 1910, and who may thus have been directly acquainted with the McManus strip. The addition of twins to the family only three months later, after a week's pregnancy, only added to the family's instability, again in contrast to the idyllic family life of McManus's American pair, whose Baby Snookums further cemented his parents' happiness. The Riebeisel children, Hansl and Gretl, grew to school age in eight months, and then no further for the strip's remaining decade. Herr Riebeisel, a monocled dandy, is a bank director, but continually broke thanks to Frau Riebeisel's extravagant spending and his own fecklessness; no family outing is complete until his wallet and watch have been stolen. Equally incompetent at his job, home repair, and philandering, Riebeisel's pretensions to respectability are punctured as he is repeatedly taken for a Jew in one of the strip's running gags—whether rightly or wrongly is never clarified, though all his colleagues from the bank have Jewish names. By means of this gag, Hugo Bettauer, himself a convert from Judaism to Lutheranism, carried on the fierce criticism of anti-Semitism that he had expressed in his controversial 1922 satirical novel *Die Stadt ohne Juden* ("The City Without Jews"; see Fig.3).

2 See here: https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=gvb&datum=19190927&seite=1&zoom=33 (ANNO/Öster-reichische Nationalbibliothek)

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Fig. 3: "Scenes from Everyday Life: Riebeisels at the Football Match," *Der Götz von Berlichingen* 16 Apr. 1924, p. 4, drawn by Fritz Gareis. [3]

Thanks to the hapless Riebeisels' comic attempts to maintain their middle-class status despite Austria's economic difficulties and their own impracticality, the *Bilderbogen* quickly became a popular feature in *Der Götz von Berlichingen*; not only did the paper itself frequently depict the Riebeisels as its "stars," even within the strip itself, but they also appeared in adver-

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tising, such as a 1924 poster for Aristophon radio sets, signed by Gareis (Sackmann and Havas 55). An August 1924 editorial in the *Götz* averred that the Riebeisels "are worthy to rank with the great figures of contemporary literature, [Thomas Mann's] *Buddenbrooks*, [Leo Tolstoy's] *Anna Karenina*, [Gerhart Hauptmann's] *Rose Bernd*, [Oswald Spengler's] *Decline of the West*, etc."[4] ("Riebeisels Go Sledding," 1 Aug. 1924, 7).

It must have come as a double shock when both of the strip's creators died suddenly: Hugo Bettauer died on 26 March 1925.[5] The writing of the *Bilderbogen* was presumably taken over by the satirist and lyricist Theodor Waldau, who had already relieved Bettauer as editor of the *Götz* in March 1924. Then, however, Fritz Gareis died of influenza on 5 October 1925; he was two weeks short of his fifty-third birthday, and his last Riebeisel strip had appeared only a week and a half before his death. For two months, the *Götz* did without the Riebeisels—then, on 27 November 1925, they are welcomed back by the tabloid's namesake and mascot, Götz von Berlichingen himself ("Riebeisels Are Back Again!," 27 Nov. 1925, 3). The Riebeisels' adventures were now drawn by Karl Theodor Zelger, a trained painter like Gareis, who continued the strip for a further eight years and three hundred episodes. Zelger's version continued not only Gareis's original thematic concerns and characterizations, but also the strip's commercialization: in a series of strips appearing for six weeks in January and February 1928, Herr Riebeisel is driven mad by the family's decrepit icebox until he purchases a Frigidaire refrigerator.[6]

The Riebeisels remained a fixture of *Der Götz von Berlichingen* until 30 March 1934, only twelve weeks before the paper ceased publication. The

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3 A digitized copy is available at: https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=gvb&datum=19240516&seite=4& zoom=33 (ANNO/Österreichische Nationalbibliothek). Jr. Herr Riebeisel is surprised to be labelled a "Jewish ass" when he roots for Vienna's Jewish football club, Hakoah; the woman who insults him, a supporter of the working-class club Rapid (as is Frau Riebeisel), later calls another Hakoah fan "meschugge." The resulting brawl is interrupted in the final panel when a ball from Hakoah player Egon Pollak strikes Riebeisel's head.

4 "Herr Riebeisel, Frau Riebeisel und zwei kleine Riebeisels … reihen sich würdig den großen Gestalten der zeitgenössischen Literatur, den Buddenbrooks, der Anna Karenina, der Rose Bernd, dem Untergang des Abendlandes usw. an."

5 Bettauer had been shot on 10 March by Nazi supporter Otto Rothstock, and died in hospital two weeks later.

6 These advertisements, which ran on a different page of each issue from the regular strip, were the strip's only episodes credited to a writer: lyricist and film scenarist Franz Josef "Joe" Gribitz (see, for example, "Herr Riebeisel repariert den Eiskasten," *Der Götz von Berlichingen* 20 Jan. 1928, 11).

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final strip is both an apt metaphor for contemporary politics and a fitting epitaph for its characters: Herr Riebeisel destroys a carpet trying to remove a grease stain and sets up a shrine to Goethe to conceal the damage (see Fig.4).

Fig. 4: "Scenes from Everyday Life: Herr Riebeisel and the Stain," *Der Götz von Berlichingen* 30 Mar. 1934, p. 4, drawn by Karl Theodor Zelger. [7]

7 Herr Riebeisel spills sardines on the carpet, and all attempts to clean the stain only make matters worse; the resulting hole is finally hidden by erecting a shrine to the poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. A digital copy is available at: https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=gvb&datum=19340330&seite=4&zoom=33 (ANNO/Österreichische Nationalbibliothek).

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In the brief interregnum when the Riebeisels were missing from the *Götz*, Peter Eng (*né* Engelmann) began publishing *Turl und Schurl*, or "Artie and Georgie," which continued for forty-four episodes over almost two years, from October 1925 to July 1927. Where the Riebeisels' middle-class pretensions were signalled by their speaking standard German, Turl and Schurl were working-class and spoke thick Viennese dialect in speech balloons. Drawn in a grotesque, lively style that showed Eng's background as an animator, the pair were of indeterminate age, but constantly on the lookout for women, drink and opportunities to make easy money, few of which were successful; if a third party did not foil their plans, they frequently sabotaged each other (Havas 30-33). What they excelled at, however, was mocking and skewering intellectuals and authority figures in a carnival upheaval of class dynamics, as for example when they present a forensic scientist with a mysterious bone that he interprets as proof of a violent suicide—but which they ultimately reveal to be a bone from their lunch (see Fig. 5).

Only eleven days before his first Riebeisel strip, Karl Theodor Zelger had published the first episode of *Wamperl und Stamperl* in the left-liberal weekly tabloid *Der Montag mit dem Sport-Montag*. This full-page strip's protagonist was the portly *bourgeois* landlord Alois Wamperl, who is continually led into trouble, to his wife Amalie's exasperation, by his tall, skinny friend Seppl Stamperl; both men began the strip as husbands, but Stamperl's wife soon disappeared, and he became a rambunctious *divorcé*. The landlord class had historically been a major supporter of conservative and nationalist movements (Boyer 390-403), and Wamperl could have become a biting satire of that group; but the strip was rarely political. Nonetheless, Wamperl ran unsuccessfully for the "Interconfusional Nazi-Imperial-and-Royal-Republican Black-Red-Blue Haze Party" in the Republic's final parliamentary elections of November 1930, promising lower beer prices and "the free exchange of wives" (see Fig. 6); incensed by the price of alcohol, he threatened a coup against the government a year later, but drank himself unconscious before carrying it out ("Wamperl's Putsch," 21 Sept. 1931, 16); and he ran for mayor in Vienna's municipal and provincial election of spring 1932 as leader of the "Anti-Party," which was simply "against everything," garnering a mere six votes ("Wamperl Founds a New Party," 18 April 1932, 16).

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Fig. 5: "Turl, Schurl and Forensic Medicine," *Der Götz von Berlichingen* 12 Nov. 1935, p. 5, drawn by Peter Eng. [8]

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Such political sallies ended when the Dollfuss government instituted a rigorous censorship regime in March 1933; but they had never been a crucial part of the strip. For the most part, free of the financial pressures that in the Riebeisels' strip fuelled real social criticism, Wamperl and Stamperl pursue fad diets, build crackpot inventions, wrestle with recalcitrant home appliances and uncooperative pets—and fail at various side hustles (including a brief stint as sports reporters for *Der Montag*) and repeated drunken attempts at infidelity. Although they occasionally travel abroad for more extended adventures, most of their activities revolve around Wamperl's apartment and building. On *Der Montag*'s larger pages, and no longer having to maintain continuity with Fritz Gareis's Riebeisel characters, Zelger was able to use a more spacious, airy style; the comparison is even clearer because for the next nine years, Zelger was drawing both strips. The scripts for many of the episodes between April 1927 and September 1928 are explicitly credited to Joe Gribitz, with a handful from August to November 1928 ascribed to "Salpeter" (Karl Pollach), who like Gribitz was a popular musical lyricist. The authorship of the remaining strips, despite a general continuity of style, is unknown.

The Social Democratic Party, meanwhile, saw itself as the voice of the working class; but its main official press organ, the heavily theoretical *Arbeiter-Zeitung* or "Workers' Newspaper," was no easy read. To increase its reach, the party began publishing *Das Kleine Blatt* ("The Little Paper"), a family-friendly daily newspaper, on 1 March 1927. The first issue featured *Bobby Bärs Abenteuer* ("Bobby Bear's Adventures"), which appeared Sundays—and for a brief period in 1930, daily—for the next fourteen and a half years, making it by far the longest-lived strip of the period (see Fig. 7). Aimed at young readers, *Bobby Bär* was a captioned strip, with rhyming dialogue under pictures drawn in an elegant illustrative style by Franz Plachy. Despite the realistic drawings, anthropomorphic animals and human characters mingled freely. Although the texts were probably written by several hands, at least some of the scripts were by Josefine Fischer (Pfolz 7). Initially, the strip educated the eponymous protagonist

8 Turl and Schurl bring in a bone given them by "a man in a black jacket." The doctor interprets it as "the cheekbone of a 23-year-old suicide" with traces of "violent extraction with a fork-like instrument" and signs of "progressive arteriosclerosis." When he condescendingly asks what they think it is, they reply that it was listed on the menu as "short ribs with beets." A digital copy is available here: https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=gvb& datum=19251112&seite=5&zoom=33 (ANNO/Österreichische Nationalbibliothek).

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Fig. 6: "Wamperl's Election Programme," *Der Montag mit dem Sport-Montag* 13 Oct. 1930, p. 16, drawn by Karl Theodor Zelger. [9]

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and his schoolmates, Hansi Has' (Hansi Hare) and Mitzi Maus (Mitzi Mouse), about the achievements of Vienna's Social Democrats in municipal government, from housing projects, vacation camps and children's hospitals to garbage collection, as well as confronting social issues such as inequality, alcoholism, child abuse and cruelty to animals.

Fig. 7: "Bobby Bär: In the Animal Museum," *Das Kleine Blatt* 25 Nov. 1930, p. 12, drawn by Franz Plachy. [10]

Bobby Bär quickly became enormously popular, constituting a major form of outreach to young working-class readers (Pfolz 8). Communication with the strip's readership took place through letters to the editor and the editor's responses, write-in contests, surveys and the creation in 1931 of a "Bobby-Bär-Bund," or Bobby Bär Association, which united regional clubs into a national organization for activities and charity work. This idea was likely borrowed from the British Labour newspaper *The Daily Herald*,

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9 The *interkonfuse-nazistische-k.k.-republikanische schwarzrotblaue Dunstpartei* mocks the far-right wing of contemporary Austrian politics, particularly the *Nationaler Wirtschaftsblock und Landbund* or *Schoberblock*, a coalition of the Greater German People's Party (*Großdeutsche Volkspartei*) and the Rural Federation (*Landbund*) headed by former chancellor Johannes Schober. Unlike Wamperl, in real life both the *Schoberblock* and the even more reactionary Homeland Block (*Heimatblock*) won enough seats to enter parliament. A digital copy is available here. https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=mon&datum=19301013&seite=16&zoom=33 (ANNO/Österreichische Nationalbibliothek).

10 A rare use of speech balloons in what was generally a captioned strip; this episode, featuring Bobby, Mitzi Maus, Hansi Has' and a later addition, Ali Aff' (Ali Ape), is from a brief period when the strip appeared daily in addition to the larger Sunday strip, which featured much longer rhyming texts. The daily run was abandoned after two months due to complaints from readers whose families could only afford to take the paper's Sunday edition. A digital copy is available here: https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=dkb&datum=19301025&seite=12&zoom=33 (ANNO/ Österreichische Nationalbibliothek).

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which had published a *Bobby Bear* comic strip since 1919 and instituted its own "Bobby Bear Club" in 1930; however, the Austrian organization was more overtly political, serving as a gateway into long-established Social Democratic youth organizations (Pfolz 8; Potyka 197). *Das Kleine Blatt* attempted to foster a sense of democratic participation in *Bobby Bär* fans: at the beginning of 1930, in response to readers' comments, the strip's captions were changed from the blackletter *Fraktur* typeface to a Roman type, so that six- and seven-year-old readers who had not yet learned *Fraktur* in school could read the strip for themselves ("Dear Children!," *Das Kleine Blatt* 12 Jan. 1930, 15). Party-sponsored celebrations advertised in the paper regularly promised personal appearances by Bobby Bär and his friends—presumably costumed employees—and annual books collecting the year's comic strips were given away in the thousands to readers between 1929 and 1932 (Pfolz 8; Potyka 198).

Das Kleine Blatt was so clearly successful that in January 1929, a publisher allied with the conservative Christian Social Party founded its own rival family newspaper, *Das kleine Volksblatt* ("The Little People's Paper"), with their answer to *Bobby Bär*: *Bumsternazi*.[11] The protagonist was a wooden Christmas ornament—a programmatic choice—come to rambunctious life, drawn by painter Theo Henning under the pseudonym "Onkel Theo." *Bumsternazi* is, like *Bobby Bär*, a caption comic with separate pictures and rhyming text; but where the Social Democratic hero is generally well-behaved, the Pinocchio-like Bumsternazi is a prankster who regularly earns corporal punishment for his escapades. Bumsternazi could on occasion prove himself as good-hearted and inventive as Bobby, however, and they also both had bursts of globetrotting adventure. Likewise, if Bobby Bär and friends turned up at Social Democratic party functions, Christian Social children could count on an appearance from Bumsternazi—"in person" or in the form of a narrated magic lantern show—at their fêtes. However, no clubs or associations were formed in Bumsternazi's name, and he was favoured with only a single early collection of his first year's strips (Henning 1934), with no further volumes, which may indicate that he never achieved the popularity of his ursine competitor.

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11 At the time, this was an innocent name, the Austrian equivalent of saying to a toddler "fall-down-go-boom." *Nazi* was also a nickname for *Ignaz*, a popular name in Catholic Austria. Note that while *Das Kleine Blatt* (and its later stablemate, *Das Kleine Frauenblatt*) consistently capitalized the *k* in *Kleine* in its title, *Das kleine Volksblatt* did not.

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The commercial publishers in particular were always eager to lure readers from one of their papers to another, and in 1930, Maximilian Schreier promoted his two newspapers by means of a contest: from mid-June to mid-August both *Der Morgen* ("The Morning," which appeared Mondays) and *Der Götz von Berlichingen* (which came out Fridays) published alternating chapters of an ongoing comic strip titled *Die Jagd nach dem Bild* ("The Hunt for the Picture"). The strip, drawn by Franz Kraft and plotted by the author Theodor Brun, had no captions or dialogue; the contest was to provide them, for a prize of 500 *Schilling*, divided among the best 27 entries; the top prize was 120 *Schilling* ("The Mute Newspaper Novel," *Der Morgen* 26 May 1930, 9), at a time when one *Schilling* bought about 2 kg of beef. Composing an entry required reading both papers for two months; however, because of the mailing time after the final chapter appeared, the evaluation period and the republication of the strip in larger instalments in *Der Götz von Berlichingen* alone, the promotion lasted six months, until mid-January 1931. The winner was a Dr. Grete Moldauer, whose rhyming couplets were a match for the professionals' (see Fig. 8); the consolation prize for entrants who failed to win a share of the prize money was a year's subscription to *Der Götz*.

In the meantime, October 1930 saw the arrival of the final comic strip of the interwar period to be granted a long life: Ludwig Kmoch's *Tobias Seicherl* in *Das Kleine Blatt*. Unlike *Bobby Bär*, this daily strip was aimed at adults: *Seicherl*, whose surname was slang for someone with no firm convictions, viciously lampooned the reactionary *petite-bourgeoisie* via its protagonist, whose belligerence was matched only by his stupidity—as pointed out regularly by his talking dog Struppi. Through *Tobias Seicherl*, Kmoch mocked not only the local conservative and nationalist right wing, but also Adolf Hitler's German National Socialists, in strips that seem uncomfortably prophetic in hindsight. Nonetheless, Kmoch, a veteran of the left-wing and liberal press, made the bigoted and big-nosed Seicherl instantly recognizable and even lovable as a Viennese stereotype, complete with thick dialect, and he quickly became the paper's trademark (Havas and Sackmann 50-3). Common among almost all the comic strips of the period is the characters' self-awareness: they know that they are appearing in newspapers, and other characters often recognize them as celebrities from comic strips; within his own strip, Seicherl often advertised his upcoming appearances in special holiday issues of *Das Kleine Blatt*, and once even complains to Struppi that because the previous day's episode had shown him appearing with Hitler, "When people read that, they'll

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Seite 4 Der Götz von Berlichingen

DIE JAGD NACH DEM BILD

Zeichnungen von Franz Kraft

Vielfachen Wünschen aus unseren Leserkreisen entsprechend, veröffentlichen wir die mit dem I. Preise gekrönte Lösung des im „Götz" und „Morgen" erschienenen „Bilder-Romans ohne Worte" von Grete Moldauer

1

Wenn man Direktor Klapptosch heißt,
Man gerne recht behaglich speist.
Für diesen Fall und außerdem
Ist eine Gattin sehr bequem.

2

So zart — wie rundlich sieht man sie
Den Abschied ihm versüßen hie,
Indessen all sein Denken schon
Bei Firma Bock und Robinson.

3

Wer Eile hat und Schwergewicht,
Verschmäht gewiß das Auto nicht;
Auch steigert dieses allemal
Noch den Respekt beim Personal.

4

Ach was „Respekt" — man fühlt sozial!
Und küssen kann man überall,
Mien, die die Tippen tüt versehen,
Braucht auf die Lasten nicht zu sehen.

5

Herr Kille, der Buchhalter blöd,
Denkt: „Da ist auch für mich was los!"
Doch wahre Tugend, glaubt der Spur,
Führt aufwärts von Direktor nur.

6

Hört! Zwischen Tür und Angel noch
Sagt Klapptosch eunuch: „Wir sehn uns doch?"
Ihr Lächeln, breit und sehr entzückt,
Ward von der Türe eingeweckt.

7

Im Kodex guter Sitten steht:
Komm nicht zum Rendezvous zu spät

8

Herr Kille späht gleich hinterher:
Der Vogel fort, der Käfig leer!

9

Ich kann Mien Mune wohl verstehen:
Die Straßenbahn, das Herz bleibt stehen,
Denn Klapptosch küßt so elegant
Die Hand (oßn, wirklich: nur die Hand).

10

Herr Kille traut dem Ding nicht recht
(Ach Gott, die Männer sind so schlecht!),
Er fühlt zu praktischem Behuf
In sich den Detektivberuf.

11

Es ist der Wege Eigenheit,
Daß sie ein wenig eng zu zweit.

12

Bequem dagegen und sehr weit
Ist's in der Berge Herrlichkeit.

12

Und bald entwickelt sich denn auch,
Was in den Bergen eben Brauch.
Ich zeige euch davon allein
Herrn Killes Zorn und Seelenpein.
„O pfui, o pfui!" Herr Kille spricht
Und schont auch seine Haare nicht.
Denn unmoralisch und verhaßt
Sind Küsse, die man selbst verpaßt.

12a

Inzwischen streicht mit frohem Sinn
Herr Schuhloch durch die Gegend hin.
Die „Herr"-lichkeit ist nicht weit her,
Das „Schuhloch" stimmt schon etwas mehr.
Ein eigenes Weib, ein braver Hund,
Ein guter Fund sind Gottes wert,
Besonders dann, wenn weit und breit
Kein Zeuge unserer Ehrlichkeit.

15

Ein Fachmann ist, wer wohlbewehrt
Sich dem Objekte zugekehrt.
(Wenn das Objekt dann stillhält nur,
Wie meist der Fall bei der Natur.)

16

Den Eindruck hat Herr Kille auch.
Er haut herzu, und wie es Brauch,
Erkauft er sich mit teurem Geld
Die Sachen, die ihm wohlgefällt.

17

Wenn weit und breit kein Mensch zu sehn,
Dann läßt man sich halt manchmal gehn.
Doch Kille hintern Busch, klick, klick!
Fixiert den schönen Augenblick.

18

Gelegenheit kann tückisch sein,
Stellt sie zur rechten Zeit sich ein.
Herr Kille spricht als Wütterich:
„Na warte nur! Jetzt hab' ich dich!"

19

In dunkler Kammer, ungestört,
Entwickelt er Herrn Klapptoschs Flirt.

20

Weh, alles kommt ans Sonnenlicht,
Nur grade Klapptoschs Küsse nicht.
Der Zorn sich so zu äußern pflegt,
Daß man recht kräftig sich bewegt.

21

In diesem Bilde seht ihr nun
Herrn Kille — hm, Gymnastik tun.

(Fortsetzung folgt)

JEDEM MUNDET ES
JEDER VERLANGT ES
WIENER
STADTBRÄU

Fig. 8: "The Hunt for the Picture," *Der Götz von Berlichingen* 7 Nov. 1930, p. 4. [12]

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lose all appetite for the Third Reich!" (*Wenn die Leut' des les'n, verlier'n s' den ganzen Appetit auf's dritte Reich!*; "Seicherl Fears Hitler's Vengeance," *Das Kleine Blatt* 15 Apr. 1932, 13). At one point, Seicherl even appears in Bobby Bär's strip, drawn by Franz Plachy ("Bobby and Seicherl Get Together," *Das Kleine Blatt* 9 Aug. 1931, 17); and later a magically rejuvenated Seicherl attempts to join the Bobby-Bär-Bund (see Fig. 9).

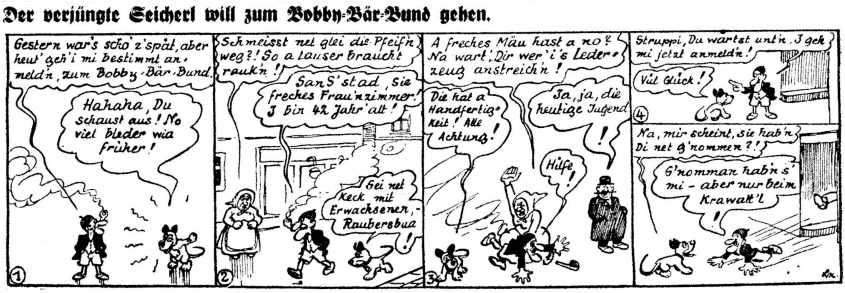

Fig. 9: "Tobias Seicherl: The Rejuvenated Seicherl Wants to Join the Bobby-Bär-Bund," *Das Kleine Blatt* 22 Mar. 1932, p. 13, drawn by Ludwig Kmoch. [13]

Also in October 1930, *Das Kleine Blatt* began publishing the daily adventures of *Klipp und Klapp*, two young brothers with a penchant for mischief that saw them stow away on a steamer bound from Vienna to New York for adventures in America. The geographical impossibility of the trip segues into a fantasy new world consisting of skyscrapers and escalators immediately bordering on frontier wilderness and Hollywood film studios. The artist, Wilhelm "Bil" Spira, was only sixteen years old, and the strip seemed to be aimed at his peers: rather than speech balloons, *Klipp*

12 The first installment of the contest strip, drawn by Franz Kraft, with the winning captions by reader Dr. Grete Moldauer, republished "according to the many wishes of our readers." The full story consisted of 210 panels in ten weekly chapters. A digital copy is available here: https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=gvb&datum= 19301107&seite=4&zoom=33 (ANNO/Österreichische Nationalbibliothek).

13 In a typically absurd situation, the usually moustachioed Seicherl has been surgically reduced to childhood, earning a spanking for smoking his pipe. His strips often end with him bodily ejected from some establishment; to Struppi's question, "Well, it seems they didn't take you?" he replies, "Yes, they did—but only by the necktie." Kmoch became expert at sketching his tiny figures recognizably, leaving plenty of room for speech balloons. A digital copy is available here: https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=dkb&datum=19320322&seite=13&zoom=33 (ANNO/Österreichische Nationalbibliothek).

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und Klapp used rhyming captions, and it had no real political content. Klipp and Klapp flew back home to Vienna after a whirlwind seven weeks to a hero's welcome on 27 Nov. 1930—which, given that they had left town on the run from the police, was as unlikely as the rest of the tale, but provided a happy ending (see Fig. 10).

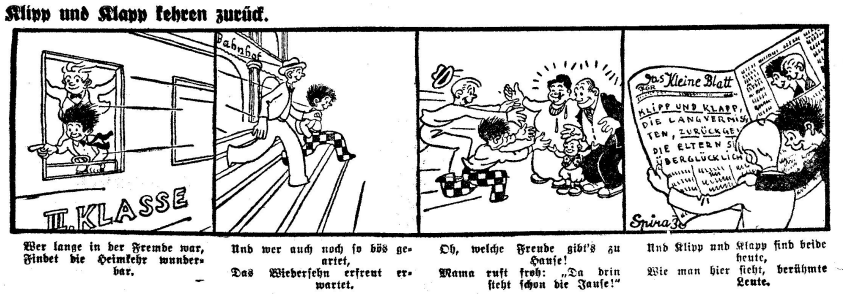

Fig. 10: "Klipp and Klapp Return" from their adventures in America, *Das Kleine Blatt* 27 Nov. 1939, p. 11, drawn by Bil Spira. [14]

By the spring of 1931, Karl Theodor Zelger was drawing the *Bilderbogen des kleinen Lebens* only bi-weekly for *Der Götz*, while *Wamperl und Stamperl* continued weekly in *Der Montag*; Zelger was one of the period's busiest artists, regularly producing comics pages for the Steinsberg Verlag, whose comics were sold to department and chain stores as customer giveaways to keep children occupied (Lukasch 175-6; Dostal 71-2). With only eight to ten pages per issue, *Der Götz* had little room for additional comic strips, but in September and October of 1931 the tabloid published four instalments of a strip called *Die Abenteuer des Meisterdetektivs Tom Schnapps* ("The Adventures of the Master Detective Tom Schnapps"), drawn by Fritz Krommer. Two of these episodes appeared in issues of the paper where there was no Riebeisel strip.

With his tweed flat cap, plus fours and pipe, Tom Schnapps parodies the detectives in popular fiction; in particular, there had been a series of German silent films about "Tom Shark" in 1916-17, and in 1928 the name

14 Of course, their exploits are recounted in *Das Kleine Blatt* itself; the characters of Viennese comic strips were frequently aware of their status as "stars" of their respective papers. *Klipp und Klapp,* unusually for the period, seems to have been short-lived by design. A digital copy is available here: https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno? aid=dkb&datum=19301127&seite=11&zoom=33 (ANNO/Österreichische Nationalbibliothek).

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had recently reappeared as "The King of Detectives" (*Der König der Detektive*) in a popular dime novel series. Tom Schnapps, however, is no king of detectives; in his first four-panel "adventure," he hears a cry for help from a cellar and sneaks in, pistol drawn, only to be asked by a housewife to carry a heavy sack up to the fourth floor ("The Cry From the Cellar," *Der Götz von Berlichingen* 4 Sept. 1931, 5). Subsequent episodes showed him to be not only unlucky, but incompetent: he mistakes wine for blood and a sleeping drunk for a corpse; thinks illicit sex in Vienna's famous Prater amusement park is a murder (see Fig. 11); and finally apprehends an adulterer's mistress, only to be caught with her by his own wife.

Fig. 11: "The Adventures of the Master Detective Tom Schnapps," *Der Götz von Berlichingen* 18 Sept. 1931, p. 5. [15]

15 The third and penultimate episode, drawn by Fritz Krommer. Vienna's Prater park was a popular venue for lovers' trysts, but Schnapps sees it only as "The right place for crimes!" As a result, he misinterprets the cry, "Oh, you're killing me!" Schnapps's walking out of the fourth panel may be funnier than the strip's text. A digital copy is available here: https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=gvb&datum=19310918&seite=5&zoom=33 (ANNO/Österreichi-sche Nationalbibliothek)

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In comparison with the *Götz*'s previous strips, this is insubstantial stuff, lacking in social commentary and weak as parody; four panels are not enough to develop a suitable situation, and neither Krommer's art nor the texts are witty enough to compensate—every gag falls flat. Instead of giving *Tom Schnapps* a chance to fill out its premise, the strip ended; the Riebeisels remained the only comic stars in *Der Götz*. For the paper itself, however, the end was nearing.

Throughout the early 1930s, tensions between left and right in Austria continued to rise. Although the Social Democrats had won a plurality in the 1930 election, the Christian Socials built a governing coalition with the right-wing *Schoberblock* and *Heimatblock*. Variations of this coalition struggled under two chancellors before Engelbert Dollfuss was appointed to the position in May 1932; seeking to stave off both the Social Democrats to his left and the rising National Socialists to his right, Dollfuss used a parliamentary crisis in March 1933 to dissolve parliament and establish an authoritarian government with strict press censorship. Open conflict finally broke out in the four-day Austrian Civil War of February 1934, which ended with the defeat of the Social Democratic forces.

The Federal State

The Austrian Republic officially ended with the promulgation of a new constitution, inspired by Mussolini's Italy, in May 1934. Although the resulting government is frequently called the *Ständestaat* or "corporate state," after the guild-like corporations that were meant to replace political parties, trade unions and social organizations alike, in fact most of these corporations were never created, partly due to the assassination of Dollfuss on 25 July 1934 in a botched Nazi coup. Officially, the May constitution replaced the *Republik* with a *Bundesstaat* or "federal state," an innocuous term that camouflaged the regime's authoritarian nature. Both the Social Democrats and the National Socialists were outlawed, and the large number of Social Democratic newspapers, including the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* and *Das Kleine Blatt*, were shut down, as were many satirical papers across the political spectrum. As Barnett and Woywode point out, the result was that the newspaper competition among the various ideological camps actually intensified; but the Social Democrats and Nazis were forced to publish underground, while the Dollfuss (and later Schuschnigg) regime co-opted apolitical, conservative and non-Nazi right-wing organs in order

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to present itself "as both a constructive and moderating force vis-à-vis the left and a patriotic Austrian alternative to the German-Nazi militancy of the right" (1474-5).

After only a few weeks following the Civil War, however, it became clear that workers were not migrating to the more conservative papers; and so *Das Kleine Blatt*, among others, was resuscitated with new editorial staff "to help win over great numbers of the workers for the prevailing regime" (Paupié 59).[16] As a result, both *Tobias Seicherl* and *Bobby Bär* returned in apolitical form—although the previous year's censorship measures had already tamed both strips considerably. Kmoch's and Plachy's drawings remained elegant as ever, but now the strips focussed on domestic matters, foreign travel, or fantasy. *Seicherl* concentrated increasingly on travelling to exotic lands, where Kmoch could still gently mock local society by making everyone, even Black Africans, speak in Viennese dialect. Meanwhile, in *Das kleine Volksblatt*, which was already well aligned with the state's reactionary values, *Bumsternazi* could continue much as before. Some of the liberal papers apparently came to an arrangement with the regime: Maximilan Schreier ended *Der Götz von Berlichingen* in June 1934, but was permitted to continue *Der Morgen*, which published no comic strips, and whose editorial page now focussed on support for Dollfuss and criticism of German Nazism; *Der Montag mit dem Sport-Montag*, published by Paul Kolisch, continued the now-harmless *Wamperl und Stamperl*, which was a popular enough feature that from mid-March to late June of 1935, a promotional contest offered prizes for readers who could find figurines of the pair hidden in various places throughout Vienna.

Only two newspapers seem to have attempted to establish new comic strips during the remainder of the *Bundesstaat*. The former Social Democratic women's weekly, *Die Unzufriedene* ("The Dissatisfied Woman"), had been founded in 1923 with a focus on women's social issues, such as the high incidence of sexual exploitation in domestic service and the corresponding frequency of suicide. Although less dry than the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, it had been far more polemical than the later *Kleines Blatt*, and despite the censorship measures of 1933 had maintained a critical stance. Even its serialized novels and sewing tips were presented in the light of the class struggle, and interspersed with reminders that readers should wear the Social Democratic Party badge. After being shut down, *Die Unzufriedene*

16 "Das Blatt sollte dazu beitragen, weite Arbeiterkreise für die herrschende Regierung zu gewinnen."

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too was relaunched two weeks later as an organ of the state, by which time editor Paula Hons-Nowotny had been replaced by Fritz Robert Kirchner, who had likewise taken over *Das Kleine Blatt* (Potyka 29); the first new issue of 22 April 1934 announced a contest for a new title, and as of 1 July the paper became *Das Kleine Frauenblatt* ("The Little Women's Paper"). The title change consolidated the paper's transformation from an organ of socialist and feminist activist journalism into a conservative newspaper that idolized film stars and idealized women's traditional place in the home as wives and mothers; in fact, *Das Kleine Frauenblatt* now resembled a cheaper version of the well-established glossy magazine *Wiener Hausfrau* ("Viennese Housewife," 1909-39).

Already in May 1934—over a month before the title change—*Die Unzufriedene* began publishing a humour strip entitled *Die Gedanken des lieben Nächsten* ("The Thoughts of Your Fellow Man," 6 May 1934, 6), by an artist who signed only as "Niessl." The strip's conceit, which substituted for continuing characters, combined speech balloons, in which people in everyday situations uttered what they were really thinking, with captions underneath the panels displaying the polite blather that they said out loud. Niessl's drawing style is grotesque and rather clumsy, and the jokes are generally predictable, but twelve episodes were published, though almost two months passed between the final two strips. It remains unclear why the new editorial staff might have thought *Die Gedanken* would appeal to the paper's readership any more than to a general audience, or how the strip fulfilled the paper's new mission of reconciling its readers with an increasingly repressive regime, other than by distracting them with apolitical entertainment.

In mid-March of 1935, *Das Kleine Frauenblatt* tried again, publishing fifteen instalments over the following six months of a strip by the painter Edmund Stierschneider. *Herr Knacker* was essentially a pantomime strip based on absurd sight gags; most of the episodes, however, were accompanied by rhyming couplets that added little to the humour but aided in deciphering the sometimes-awkward drawings. The gags themselves—involving unintended, usually harmful consequences of everyday actions, such as sawing through both a board and the table beneath it—are reminiscent of Oscar Jacobsson's Swedish strip *Adamson* (1920-1964), which had become hugely popular in the early 1920s, with episodes appearing in several Viennese newspapers. Even more than Adamson, Knacker was a grotesque: bow-legged, with a doglike, jowly snout but no chin, and a toothbrush moustache (see Fig. 12). Once again, however, the strip's

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placement in a women's newspaper seemed inexplicable; most of Knacker's misadventures occur in the traditionally male preserve of handiwork or physical labour, and in not a single episode does a female character even appear.

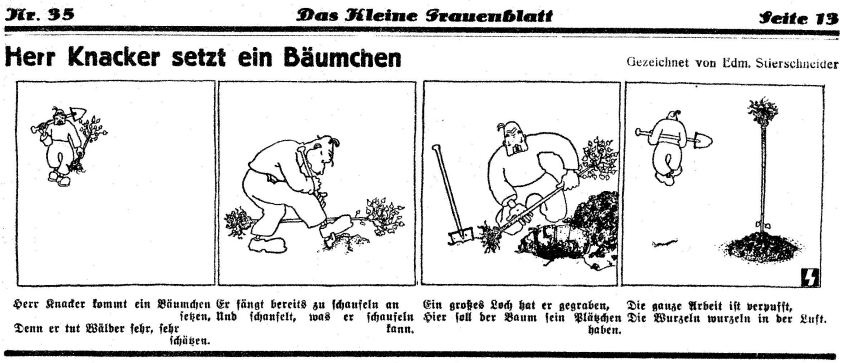

Fig. 12: "Herr Knacker Plants a Sapling," *Das Kleine Frauenblatt* 1 Sept. 1935, p. 13, drawn by Edmund Stierschneider. [17]

The week after *Herr Knacker* ended, the paper began its longest experiment yet: over twenty-two weeks from 29 Sept. 1935 to 23 Feb. 1936, Otto Bittner's *Wendelin* appeared. This was the first strip that not only seemed to consider its readership, but also addressed it directly; in an introductory paragraph, the protagonist presented himself as a man who wanted to prove that he could keep house without a woman, and had adopted a son, Peperl, to raise according to the same principle. The female audience was clearly supposed to find this attempt amusing, since at the introduction's end, Wendelin asks his readers not to judge him too harshly: "For after all, I am only—a man" (*Denn schließlich bin ich ja doch nur—ein Mann*; *Das Kleine Frauenblatt* 29 Sept. 1935, 13).

Of course, Wendelin proves to be utterly incompetent at the simplest household task, from cooking to mending to shopping. The strip's charm comes from Bittner's loose, cartoony style and from the interaction be-

17 Knacker is as odd-looking in profile as he is full-on; in most of his misadventures he seems to be faced with a perverse world in which his actions backfire on him, but here he blithely plants his little tree upside down and is apparently satisfied with the result. A digital copy is available here: https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno? aid=uzf&datum=19350901&seite=13&zoom=33 (ANNO/Österreichische Nationalbibliothek).

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tween Wendelin and Peperl, whose patience with his inept "uncle" seems to be grounded in genuine affection and understanding. There are also some unsettling undertones, however, when Wendelin buys a dozen lacy parasols at discount as a Christmas present for his twelve nieces and then returns home after being beaten, apparently for carrying such effeminate goods ("Wendelin Buys Inexpensive Christmas Presents," *Das Kleine Frauenblatt* 24 Dec. 1935, 8); and again when he goes to a costume party at Carnival time in drag, where he is kissed by a cowboy—and the crowd, realizing Wendelin is a man, joins forces to beat him (Fig. 13). In both cases he unconvincingly tells Peperl in the last panel that he has fallen down the stairs, connecting the two incidents and implying embarrassment or shame on Wendelin's part. Whether the joke is meant to be that Wendelin has been mistaken for a homosexual, or to hint that he desires to do without women because he is homosexual, these episodes stand out from the otherwise lighthearted proceedings. In any case, once *Wendelin* ended, *Das Kleine Frauenblatt* pursued no further comic strips.

Fig. 13: "Wendelin Goes to the Masquerade Ball," *Das Kleine Frauenblatt* 2 Feb. 1936, p. 13, drawn by Otto Bittner. [18]

18 Comic strip characters enjoyed the carnival and ball season in Vienna as much as real-life Viennese; Wendelin, however, is the only male character who goes to the costume ball in drag. Although a cowboy is tempted to kiss him, the crowd who beats him appears to be largely women. The adult comic strips of the period generally approached heterosexual activities—even mutual adultery—with a light touch, but the mere hint of a kiss between men results in immediate violent reprisal. A digital copy is available here: https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=uzf& datum=19360202&seite=13&zoom=33 (ANNO/Österreichische Nationalbibliothek).

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In the spring of 1937, the weekly *Sport-Zeitung am Sonntag* ("Sports Paper on Sunday") featured an untitled comic strip in its first issue, depicting a local fan in a working-class peak cap painting himself brown to pass as an Italian player so that he can sneak into a football match (21 Mar. 1937, 14). By the next week, the paper had become *Sport-Zeitung für Sonntag* ("Sports Paper for Sunday") and the week after that, the fan returned, now with a name—Haxl—to continue his adventures for the following six months. By that time, the paper had long settled on its final name, *Fußball-Sonntag* ("Football Sunday"). Haxl, whose name in this context could be translated "Footsie" (and he indeed had massive feet to match his enlarged head), was drawn by the caricaturist Ferdinand Korber, who signed his work with "Kóra," from his Hungarian name, Nándor Kóra-Korber. Haxl's enthusiasm for football drove him to absurd lengths to get into matches beyond his meagre budget (see Fig. 14). Kóra combined hand-lettered captions in standard German with Haxl's speech balloons in thick Viennese dialect, demonstrating his proximity to the paper's reader; his adventures soon became repetitive, however, and after November he disappeared, although Kóra continued to draw gag cartoons for the paper until September 1939. After *Haxl*, no new local comic strips appeared in any major Viennese papers until shortly before the *Anschluss* in March 1938.

Then, suddenly, Paul Kolisch's liberal weekly *Illustrierte Wochenpost* began publishing short-lived local strips, with an emphasis on politically anodyne domestic situation comedies. Beginning on 7 January 1938, Karl Bannert's *Familie Waserl* lasted five episodes; Bannert's art was lively and became more elegant, but the strip's premise essentially combined elements of the Riebeisel family with a talking dog like Tobias Seicherl's. The strip's introduction said that *Familie Waserl* would appear "whenever the *Illwo* has room and the artist feels like it" (*Immer, wenn die "Illwo, Illustrierte Wochenpost" Platz und der Zeichner Lust haben wird*; *Illustrierte Wochenpost* 7 Jan. 1938, 20), which was hardly promising. Not only was the strip's continuation interrupted by reprinting three of Fritz Gareis's old Riebeisel strips of fourteen years earlier (altered to become the story of "Frau Blaserl," or "Mrs. Little Bubble"), but the final Waserl strip, concerning an exploding coffee maker (see Fig. 15), is virtually plagiarized

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from one of Karl Theodor Zelger's last Riebeisel strips ("Riebeisels' Mocca Machine," *Der Götz von Berlichingen* 12 Jan. 1934, 4).[19]

Fig. 14: "Haxl as Scalper," *Sport-Zeitung für Sonntag* 2 May 1937, p. 11, drawn by "Kóra" (Ferdinand Korber). [20]

Waserl was immediately followed by three episodes of another domestic comedy, *Amandus Wichtig*, drawn by Zelger himself. The hapless newlywed Amandus Wichtig, despite his name, is neither loved (Latin *amandus*) nor important (German *wichtig*): his bride dominates him, his mother-in-law despises him, and even on his honeymoon he prefers to be in jail. By the third and final instalment he is happy to be hospitalized from a chill; since their tiny flat is too small for a double bed, Amandus has had to sleep on the floor ("Amandus Wichtig Moves Into His New Home," *Illustrierte Wochenpost* 25 Mar. 1938, 16). *Amandus Wichtig* last appeared two weeks after the *Anschluss* with Nazi Germany of 12 Mar. 1938; Paul Kolisch, the Jewish publisher, and his editors had already been removed from both the *Illwo* and its stablemate *Der Montag mit dem Sport-Montag*.[21] Both papers were "Aryanized"—cleansed of Jewish editors and contribu-

19 Karl Bannert also drew for several satire magazines, including *Mocca*, *Die Muskete*, and *Wiener Magazin*, and worked beside Zelger both for the Steinsberg children's magazines and the similar advertising giveaway magazine *Das Hammerbrot-Schlaraffenland*, produced by the Hammerbrot bread company (Hall 47).

20 A series of ridiculous disguises fails to gain tickets to a match against Scotland that Haxl can resell, and by the final panel he will have to buy his own tickets from another scalper. A digital copy is available here: https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=fus&datum=19370502&seite=11&zoom=33 (ANNO/Österreichische Nationalbibliothek).

21 Kolisch was sent to the concentration camp at Dachau on 2 April 1938, and eventually on to the Buchenwald camp, where he was killed on 15 Dec. 1939.

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tors—and continued with new staff who would follow the directives of the Nazi Party (Paupié 74). Both at the *Illwo* and elsewhere, however, artists and cartoonists who were not Jewish usually kept their positions even when they had long careers prior to 1934 working in liberal, Social Democratic or even Communist newspapers; but the price would be collaborating with the propaganda aims of the National Socialists.

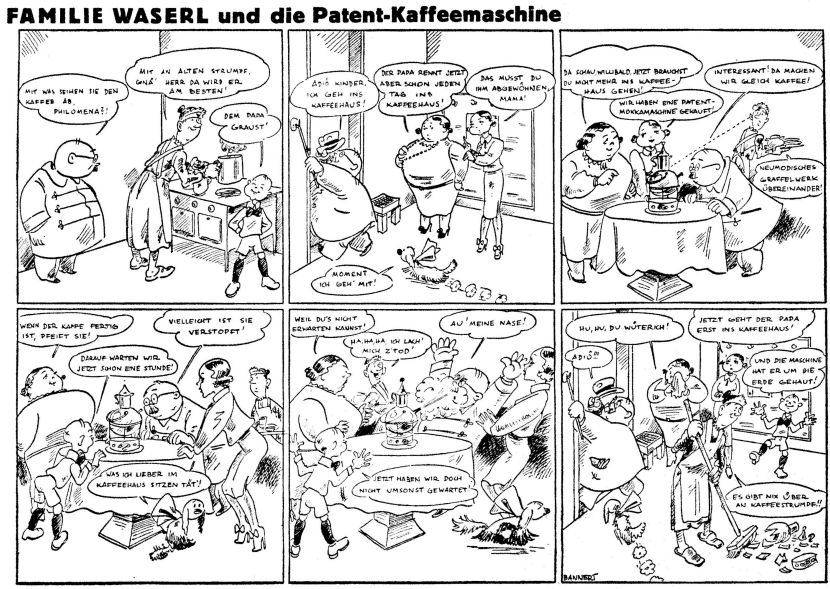

Fig. 15: "The Waserl Family and the Patent Coffee Machine," *Illustrierte Wochenpost* 25 Feb. 1938, p. 16. [22]

The German Reich

All the other newspapers underwent similar processes of *Gleichschaltung*—coordination with Nazi ideology—with the result that regardless of their

22 The strip's final appearance, drawn by Karl Bannert. The Waserls looked very different from the Riebeisels, and lacked any satirical aspect, although they were a similar constellation of parents, brother and sister, and know-it-all housekeeper. This strip is suspiciously like a Riebeisel strip of four years previously, right down to several lines of dialogue, leading up to the final explosion. A digital copy is available here: https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=iwp&datum=19380225&seite=16&zoom=33 (ANNO/Österreichische Nationalbibliothek).

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original political orientations, all of Vienna's mass-market papers now bore the same headlines, stressed the same stories, and printed the same photos (Paupié 74). The common theme for the first few weeks of the *Anschluss* was the new "freedom" of the Austrian press from the supposed "Jewish yoke," making it truly German at last. Even the advertisements emphasized shops' Aryan ownership.

Newspapers whose outlooks or programs were incompatible with National Socialism were closed altogether; conservative papers that had supported the *Bundesstaat*, such as the reactionary *Reichspost*, were even less likely to survive than former Social Democratic organs that had been co-opted. Even while an Austrian identity separate from Germany was expunged, the remaining papers maintained a deceptive continuity; the mastheads, features and sections looked much the same—including comic strips. The children's comic strips were most visibly affected initially, with both *Bobby Bär* and *Bumsternazi*, once diametrically opposed politically, now proudly displaying swastika flags (see Fig. 16), though their enthusiasm was soon diverted into less overt, innocuous activities.

As for *Tobias Seicherl*, in March 1938 its protagonist was in the middle of another journey through Africa that now abruptly detoured through Palestine to indulge in several episodes of crassly anti-Semitic humour, flying in the face of every anti-Nazi cartoon that Ludwig Kmoch had ever drawn when *Das Kleine Blatt* was a Social Democratic paper; whether Kmoch was working hard to prove his political reliability or following editorial fiat is unknown, though he was reputedly personally an anti-Semite even in the earlier period (Havas and Sackmann 56-7). Seicherl's dog Struppi, previously always the voice of reason, was now as virulently bigoted as his master—and the anti-Jewish jokes continued as Seicherl went on to visit the United Nations in Geneva. The strip eventually went back, however, to alternating domestic incidents of slapstick comedy with lengthy journeys to exotic lands. Meanwhile, in *Der Montag mit dem Sport-Montag*, *Wamperl und Stamperl* paid no attention to the *Anschluss* and continued much as before—although on 1 June 1938, only ten weeks after Austria was absorbed, Karl Theodor Zelger died of illness at only forty-nine years old.[23] The strip was continued without a break and in

23 Zelger's obituary in *Der Montag* emphasized that he was "Aryan," and claimed that his career as a painter had suffered under the supposedly Jewish-dominated "Schuschnigg-System" of the *Bundesstaat* ("A Death," *Der Montag mit dem Sport-Montag* 7 June 1938, 3).

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Seite 18 — Nr. 78 Das Kleine Volksblatt Sonntag, 20. März 1938

SONNTAG DES KINDES.

Der Huflattich.

Auf dem Weg zur Schule war ein großer Schutthaufen. Der hat recht garstig ausgesehen. Im Winter hat man das freilich nicht gemerkt. Da ist ein schönes, weißes Schneetuch darübergelegen. Aber, wie die Sonne den Schnee weggetrunken hat, ist er ganz nackt und grau dagelegen. Er hat sich wohl selber geschämt, daß er so häßlich war, und hat sich ganz eng an den Gartenzaun angedrückt. „Pfui, der grausliche Haufen!" haben die Schulkinder gesagt, wenn sie auf dem Schulwege an ihm vorübergegangen sind.

Da ist aber auf einmal etwas Merkwürdiges geschehen. Ihr müßt nur wissen, in der Erde drin schlafen die Blumenkinder und warten, bis es Zeit ist für sie, herauszukommen. Vorher aber raungen sie sich noch ein Weilchen aus und strecken Arme und Beinchen, gerade so wie die jungen Menschenkinder.

Unser Schutthaufen ist auf einem Bauplatze gelegen, der früher eine Wiese war. Eigentlich war der Bauplatz noch immer eine Wiese und hat wohl noch so lange eine Wiese bleiben müssen, bis der Herr, dem der Platz gehörte, genug Geld gespart hat, um damit ein Haus bauen zu können. Ihr könnt euch denken, daß da viele hundert Blumenkinder in der Erde gschlummert haben. Wie nun die Märzensonne so recht warm und lieblich gescheint hat, werden eine ganze Menge soscher Blümlein wach und gucken auch schon mit ihren Köpflein ein bißchen heraus. Da hört eines von ihnen, wie gerade wieder ein Schulkind sagt: „Der grausliche Haufen!" und da hat ihm der Schutthaufen sehr leid getan. Schnell ist es zu seinen Schwesterlein gelaufen und hat zu ihnen gesagt: „Kommt, wir wollen den armen, grauen Haufen dort schmücken, damit er nicht gar so traurig aussieht." Und eins, zwei, drei... laufen, laufen alle Huflattichpflänzlein auf den Schutthaufen zu, und wo nur ein Plätzchen frei ist, setzt sich eines hin. Ei, da hat der Schutthaufen auf einmal ganz anders ausgesehen! Ueber und über war er besät mit hellgelben Blütensternen. Nein, das war eine Pracht! Der Schutthaufen hat sich so gefreut, wie ein Kind am Heiligen Abend.

Und wie die Schulkinder am nächsten Tag vorbeigekommen sind, da haben sie nicht wenig gestaunt. Alle sind stehengeblieben und haben die herrlichen Blumen bewundert. Bist du nicht auch darunter gewesen?

Nach einigen Wochen sind die gelben Blütensterne schlafengegangen. Aber sie haben ihren Schutthaufen deswegen nicht vergessen. Sie haben jetzt schöne, große, saftige Blätter herausgeschickt aus der Erde, die sind alle Tage größer geworden und haben den Schutthaufen ganz zugedeckt. Da war er schön grün den ganzen lieben Sommer lang.

Im nächsten Frühjahr kommen aber gewiß wieder die gelben Blütensterne. Geht dann nur hin und seht nach.

Dr. Hulda Mical.

Die Frühlingssonne leuchtet wieder,
Sie strahlt hell auf die Erde nieder,
Familie Maus macht alles schön,
Das könnt ihr hier im Bilde seh'n.

Athleten im Garten.

Ob es die ersten Schneeglöckchen oder die anderen Frühlingsblüher sind, die ihre Blattspitzen durch den winterharten Boden stecken — sie müßten um dieser Kraftleistung willen eigentlich bewundert werden. Denn diese zarten Pflanzentriebe bringen es fertig, selbst durch steinhart zusammengebackenen oder auch gefrorenen Boden zu dringen. Ebenso wie die Wurzeln an der Spitze Stromlinienform haben und außerdem „geölt", das heißt mit einem Schleim schlüpfrig gemacht sind, um im Boden leichter und besser vorwärtszukommen, sind auch die Blattspitzen für ihre Zwecke besonders ausgerüstet. Sie gleichen in ihrer Festigkeit Speeren, denn ihre Zellen sind stark verdickt und stärker als die anderen Teile des Blattes.

Die Goldmedaille für athletische Kraftleistungen müßte aber dem Löwenzahn verliehen werden, denn seine Blätter dringen sogar durch eine fünfzehn Zentimeter dicke Straßenteerdecke hindurch, um ans Tageslicht zu gelangen.

Aale wandern über Land.

Verschiedene Arten von Fischen, darunter auch Aale, können längere Zeit außerhalb des Wassers leben. Oft unternehmen sie regelrechte Wanderungen über Land von einem Gewässer zum anderen. In England gab es sogar schon einmal eine Zugverspätung, weil große Massen wandernder Aale bei hellem Tageslicht über den Bahndamm krochen und den Eisenbahnverkehr störten.

Der Kletterfisch „Anabas", der in Indien, Burma und auf den Inseln vor der südöstlichen Küste Asiens weit verbreitet ist, erklettert bei seinen Wanderungen über Land sogar geneigte Baumstämme und ist imstande, hundert Meter Landstrecke in dreißig Minuten zurückzulegen.

Onkel Freddy spricht:

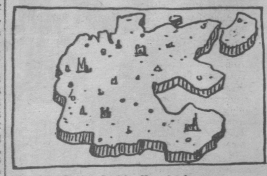
Liebe Nichten und Neffen! Nun braust seit Tagen ein ungeheurer Jubelsturm durch unser deutsches Oesterreich! Wir können die Ereignisse, die sich seit der Vorwoche bei uns abspielten, noch gar nicht fassen; aber eines wissen wir, und das ist uns Erklärung und Sinn genug: Unser deutsches Oesterreich, das wir so lieben, ist wieder heimgekehrt ins große Deutsche Reich! Der Führer und Reichskanzler Adolf Hitler hat uns es gesagt, und wir alle haben seine Stimme und sein Wort gehört, und viele von euch, meine lieben Freunde, haben das Glück gehabt, den geliebten Führer selbst zu sehen. Vergeßt nie diesen Tag, er wird euch eine dauernde Erinnerung bleiben euer Leben lang! Wie draußen in der Natur nun das Leben erwacht und dem schönen Frühling sich entgegensehnt, so ist nun unsere Heimat erwacht und wächst einer schöneren, glücklichen Zukunft entgegen! Ihr, die Jugend dieses Landes, seid die Gewähr dafür, daß die Begeisterung, die den Führer umtobt, auch bis in die spätesten Geschlechter fortlebe und nie erlöschе. Ihr werdet euch nun sammeln in der Hitlerjugend, und ein starkes Bollwerk sein gegen alle Feinde. Wie bald wird es sein, daß viele von euch nun bald auch die Schönheiten des Deutschen Reiches sehen dürfen, die alten Städte, die alten Kulturorte Deutschlands, wenn die KdF.-Fahrten auch uns Oesterreicher ins Reich bringen werden. Wir wollen nun Gott danken, daß er auf so unblutige Weise unsere Heimat heimgeführt hat ins Reich und daß nun das ganze deutsche Volk zu Ostern eine wahre Auferstehung feiern darf für alle Zukunft. Wir aber wollen weiterarbeiten im Geiste der neuen Zeit, uns gegenseitig begeistern am neuen Reich. So schließt seinen heutigen Brief mit „Heil Hitler!" euer

Onkel Freddy.

Volkserhebung.

Bumsternazi samt Umgebung
Sah des ganzen Volks Erhebung:
Auch die Wachleut' trag'n bereits
So wie alle Hakenkreuz'!

Vor des Kanzleramtes Stufen
Hörte er begeistert rufen:
„Hitler — heil! Ein Volk — ein Reich!"
Und da rief er mit sogleich!



Wie die Stadt, so die Provinz!
Und der Führer sagt in Linz,
Daß sich Oestreich, lang gepeinigt,
Wieder mit dem Reich vereinigt.

Freudig rief der kleine Bazi:
„Ich war immer schon ein Nazi!
Und ich muß in unsern Ländern
Weder Sinn noch Namen ändern!"

Fig. 16: "Bumsternazi: Exaltation of a People," *Das Kleine Volksblatt*, 20 Mar. 1938, p. 18, drawn by Theo Henning. [24]

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the same resolutely apolitical spirit by Franz Kraft, whose rounded style with bold lines bore little resemblance to Zelger's, until September 1939; presumably the scripts were written by the same unknown hand.

By the autumn of 1938, even the *Wiener Neueste Nachrichten* ("Vienna's Latest News"), whose Nazi leanings went back to the days of the Republic (Paupié 84-5), was experimenting with comic strips, publishing Alois Negrelli's pantomime strip *Willi, Wulli und Walzl* from September 1938 ("The Surprise Goal," 20 Sept. 1938, 11) until February 1939. The three protagonists—two boys and a dog—cheered for Vienna's local football teams, even against teams from pre-*Anschluss* Germany, and the matches mentioned in the strip were always recent and real. Just as this internal sports rivalry began to resemble mild resistance to the Nazi state in the real world (Marschik 224), this strip was dropped. The same sentiments then surfaced in *Der Montag mit dem Sport-Montag*, however, where Otto Bittner's *Herr Mayer* ran from April 1939 until late August 1940—from September to December 1939, he also appeared in the sister publication *Fussball-Sonntag*, once home to *Haxl*. Herr Mayer (or Maier—the spelling was inconsistent), a portly, moustached character with a cigarette holder whose prototype had long appeared in Bittner's cartoons, was as proudly Viennese as Haxl, with the dialect to prove it; and his love for football, above all for the team Rapid Wien, allowed little tolerance for *Piefkes* (as Austrians refer slightingly to Germans) from Berlin or Munich who rooted for their own teams (see Fig. 17). Bittner's strip ended just before German-Austrian football matches became sites of real-life rioting in September 1940 (Marschik 225). Both Negrelli and Bittner had been prolific veterans of Social Democratic and Communist periodicals in both Berlin and Vienna (Lorenz 141), and it may be by means of the slightly dissident content of these football-oriented strips that they resigned themselves to the many anti-Semitic and anti-British political cartoons they were required to produce for the *Nachrichten*.[25]

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24 In the last panel, Bumsternazi celebrates the *Anschluss*, claiming "I've always been a Nazi!" Less than two weeks previously, the paper had still supported Austrian independence. Bumsternazi's Nazism remained overt for almost two months before subsiding into apolitical adventures—but was rekindled briefly when the war broke out in 1939. A digital copy is available here: https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=dkv&datum=19380320&seite=18& zoom=33 (ANNO/Österreichische Nationalbibliothek).

25 Otto Binder died of lung disease at the age of 40 on 17 January 1941; Rainer Negrelli was killed fighting on the Eastern front sometime in 1944.

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Fig. 17: "Herr Mayer: Drat it!!," *Der Montag mit dem Sport-Montag*, 22 July 1940, p. 4. [26]

In the last months before the war, the now-Aryanized *Illwo* made two more attempts to establish comic strips. From 1 April until 20 May 1939 the mysterious "Niessl" published eight episodes of *Didi*, a grotesquely drawn knock-off of Tobias Seicherl so intellectually stunted that laughing at his mishaps seems cruel. Didi's elongated bald head suggests some form of hydrocephaly, and in his second adventure, for example, it is supposed

26 Otto Bittner's work varied between detailed ink drawings with intense fields of black and quick, simple pencil sketches, drawn on whatever paper came to hand. Here Mayer's friend Herr Karl is surprised that Mayer is not in Berlin for the German championship semi-final; but since Mayer's beloved local team Rapid Wien has been shut out, he'd rather stay home and watch "genuine Viennese school" (a very different style of play from German teams), even if the team using that style is Bratislava. A digital copy is available here: https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=mon&datum=19400722&seite=4&zoom=33 (ANNO/Österreichische Nationalbibliothek).

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to be comical that he is ejected from a streetcar after sexually assaulting a fellow passenger (see Fig. 18).

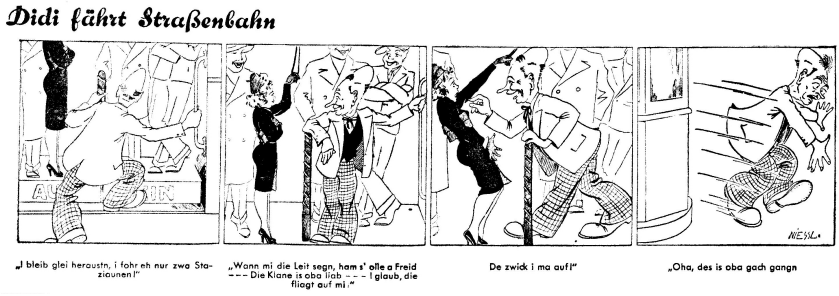

Fig. 18: "Didi Takes the Streetcar," *Illustrierte Wochenpost* 8 Apr. 1939, p. 10, drawn by "Niessl." [27]

Finally, eight episodes of *Ehepaar Maier*, by an unknown artist, appeared from 1 July to 26 August 1939. The elegantly rendered adventures of this physically mismatched middle-aged couple—she is imposing, while he is tiny and meek—are surprisingly strenuous, involving boating, hiking and biking, which makes for much of the strip's humour. In the final episode, they are riding a tandem bicycle uphill when her seat breaks and she falls off, leaving him to pedal away, triumphant and free (*Illustrierte Wochenpost* 26 Aug. 1939, 10). Whether or not the Maiers had been destined for further adventures, the *Illwo* itself ceased publication with this issue, a week before Hitler invaded Poland. Two days later came the last instalment of *Wamperl und Stamperl* in *Der Montag*, though the paper lasted until the end of 1940; during the last year of *Wamperl und Stamperl*, the strip's middle panel was frequently taken up by an advertisement for the *Illwo*, which at one point mentioned the *Ehepaar Maier* strip (*Der Montag mit dem Sport-Montag* 14 Aug. 1939, 12). Apparently, there was still some belief that comic strips were features that attracted readers.

Meanwhile, into the first few months of the war, the *Wiener Neueste Nachrichten* published another domestic comedy, Fritz Bock's *Onkel Theo-*

27 Despite Didi's bizarrely conical head, with its odd patches of hair, he assumes that a pretty fellow passenger finds him attractive; this leads him to "put the moves on her" (*zwicken* can also mean "to validate a ticket"), with immediate consequences. A digital copy is available here: https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=iwp&datum=19390408& seite=10&zoom=33 (ANNO/Österreichische Nationalbibliothek).

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dor und seine werte Familie ("Uncle Theodor and his Worthy Family"), from 5 May 1939 until the end of the year. Bock contributed many gag comic strips to this and other papers in an idiosyncratic sharp-edged cartoon style, but this was his only attempt at continuing characters. Both Uncle Theodor and the other family members are continually overshadowed by the talking family dachshund Seppl, however, who is more obnoxious than endearing (see Fig. 19). Nonetheless, the strip lasted twenty-one episodes. The other "worthy" family members—Aunt Emma and son Heinzi—are not even named until they express their Christmas wishes in what turned out to be the penultimate episode before a final, bland New Year's greeting.

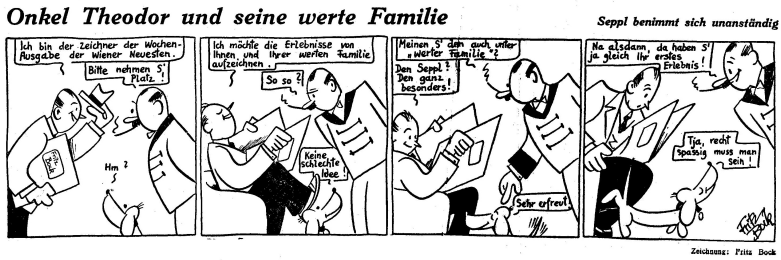

Fig. 19: "Uncle Theodor and his Worthy Family: Seppl Behaves Badly," *Wiener Neueste Nachrichten* 12 May 1939, p. 34. [28]

Once the war began in September 1939, the children's comic strips became increasingly escapist. Theo Henning was replaced as artist on *Bumsternazi* by another painter, Franz Brazda, soon after the war broke out, and in the early weeks of the fighting, Bumsternazi cheered on German military victories, but as the conflict dragged on the strip became detached from reality and devolved into puerile gags. *Bobby Bär*, meanwhile, had made only subtle nods to Nazi ideology—although regardless of the readers' wishes, the captions were again printed in *Fraktur* from 7 May 1939 on—and now Bobby spent weeks travelling through fairy-tale kingdoms,

28 The artist Fritz Bock introduces himself in the first episode, and Seppl the dachshund obliges by lifting his leg on Bock. Seppl was clearly the strip's star, and more intelligent than his owners. Bock's angular style was unmistakeable, though he himself has so far been impossible to trace. A digital copy is available here: https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=wnn&datum=19390512&seite=34&zoom=33 (ANNO/Österreichische Nationalbibliothek).

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ignoring the war altogether. *Bobby Bär* hung on until 17 August 1941, and *Bumsternazi* survived until 6 December of that year—the last few strips were drawn by *Das kleine Volksblatt*'s long-time cover artist, painter Karl Langer.

The adult strips, on the other hand, were doomed much sooner. Of those strips that survived the outbreak of the war, *Onkel Theodor* was gone by New Year's of 1940, and *Tobias Seicherl* appeared only intermittently after August 1939, when a trip through India was abruptly cut off, apparently because Ludwig Kmoch himself had been called up. When Seicherl returned a few weeks later, he was magically back in Vienna, confined to mild domestic mishaps in sporadic episodes, and he vanished for good on 6 May 1940 (with a short revival long after the war). There were no editorial explanations for these strips' cancellations.

Only one new comic strip appeared during the war—Kmoch's *Zeitgenosse Sauerhirn* ("Our Contemporary Sauerhirn"), which counted five episodes in *Das Kleine Blatt* between December 1941 and February 1942. The toothless, dyspeptic Sauerhirn, whose name means "sour-brain," is too selfish and venal to follow the rationing rules; whether the strip was making fun of coping with wartime rationing or the rationing itself was never clear. In any case, the strip quickly disappeared, though in its final episode Sauerhirn joins a long queue expecting that something is on offer—hopefully cigarettes. To his chagrin, it turns out to be a queue of Jews preparing to emigrate (Havas and Sackmann 57; see Fig 20).

In fact, by this point Jews were forbidden to emigrate from the German Reich, and the extermination camps in Chelmno and Auschwitz were already in operation. Although scurrilous anti-Semitism was a constant feature of editorial cartoons in Nazi Germany—including cartoons produced by many of the artists mentioned here—among Viennese comic strips with continuing characters only Kmoch's *Seicherl* and *Sauerhirn* ever contained overtly anti-Semitic elements; in all the other strips, after March 1938 Jews were simply absent. Even Kmoch's strips, however, lacked all the outward manifestations of the totalitarian state: there were no swastika flags or black uniforms, and nobody had a picture of Hitler on the wall, even in government offices. At the same time as these strips addressed their readers as consumers of particular newspapers, advertising themselves, after the *Anschluss* they additionally came to advertise an illusory normalcy in which membership in a unitary German *Volk* neither required nor permitted political consciousness; even those strips that appeared

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apolitical therefore became part of the overarching Nazi system of control (Oggolder 68).

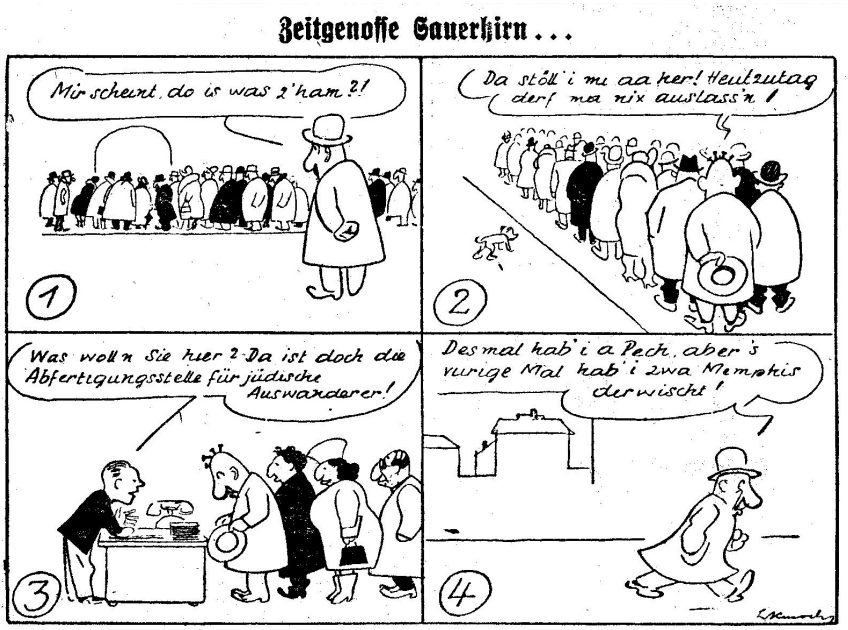

Fig. 20: "Our Contemporary Sauerhirn," *Das Kleine Blatt* 15 Feb. 1942, p. 6. [29]

Conclusion

Thus ignominiously ended the brief flowering of an expression of popular culture that remained largely isolated from the development of comics in Germany, and with a few exceptions, has yet to be thoroughly documented. Although attempts to found new comic strips increased even as the number of newspapers decreased, as shown in Fig. 21, no strip of any longevity, either for children or adults, was created after the Civil War of February 1934.

29 The final episode, drawn by Ludwig Kmoch. The greedy Sauerhirn mistakenly joins a queue of Jews seeking to emigrate. In the second panel, a dog in the street beside the lineup looks very much like Seicherl's dog Struppi, perhaps as a reminder of better times. A digital copy is available here: https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid= dkb &datum=19420215&seite=6&zoom=33 (ANNO/Österreichische Nationalbibliothek).

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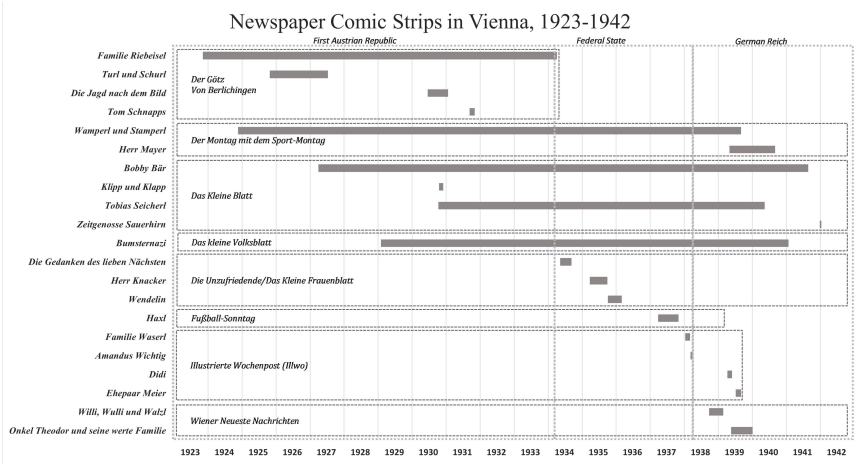

Fig. 21: Newspaper Comic Strips in Vienna, 1923-1942. [30]

It was once widely believed that the Nazis banned comics due to their American associations. On the one hand, however, comics remained relatively rare in German-speaking Europe prior to 1945 in any case, with Vienna serving as an unusually active locus for publishing comic strips; and on the other, wherever the Nazi state expanded—occupied France, for example, as well as Austria—it had no difficulty absorbing local comics into its propaganda regime as a conduit for disinformation, escapist entertainment, or both.[31] Comic strips disappeared between 1939 and 1942 not because the comic form was banned, but rather as newspapers dwindled in number, size and breadth of content due to consolidation and mergers, increasing paper rationing and censorship in general (Paupié 74-5).

30 Although the number of comic strips beginning increased even as censorship tightened and the number of newspapers declined, no strip founded after the end of the Republic enjoyed a lengthy run. The children's strips, *Bobby Bär* and *Bumsternazi*, were the longest-lasting, along with *Wamperl und Stamperl*; however, *Tobias Seicherl*, the only daily strip, achieved the most appearances, with more than 2,000 episodes, over half of them prior to February 1934.

31 Even the *Österreichischer Beobachter* ("Austrian Observer"), an Austrian National Socialist Party organ published illegally from 1936 and then openly from the *Anschluss* until late 1944, used comic strips from mid-1938 on, although none with continuing characters. This paper should not be confused with the infamous *Völkischer Beobachter* ("People's Observer), the major Nazi newspaper, which had its own Vienna edition after the *Anschluss*.

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During its heyday, however, the Viennese newspaper landscape between the World Wars is unique for its surprisingly high frequency of American-style speech-balloon comic strips aimed at adult readers. The repeated attempts to create new strips, even after the *Anschluss*, would seem to indicate that in Vienna, comics were taken seriously as a medium, whether for journalism, entertainment, or propaganda, and that local content was regarded as important—hence the frequent use of the local dialect rather than standard German. Once authoritarianism displaced the Republic's original political conflicts, however, and comic strips no longer served either a satirical or a political-educational purpose, it proved extremely difficult to create new characters successfully. As with many other origins in German-language comics history, the politics of dictatorship and the disruption of war cut off any chance of creating a tradition. *Tobias Seicherl* enjoyed a brief revival from 1957 to 1961 in the newspaper *Wiener Woche* ("Vienna Week"; Havas and Sackmann 58-60); but despite its nostalgic popularity, it evoked no memories of the earlier flourishing of comic strips. Seicherl's compatriots and competitors remained forgotten, and are only now being rediscovered.

A more sustained examination of the newspaper comic strips of the period could take into consideration the many additional strips that did not have continuing characters, and which extended across an even broader political spectrum; as well as the fact that many of the artists named above also worked regularly as editorial cartoonists and/or as illustrators of children's books and serialized novels. In these functions, too, these largely forgotten artists participated in an increasingly modern and commodified consumer culture. Moreover, given that two-thirds of the comic strips described above—fourteen of twenty-one—appeared in weekly newspapers, such an examination might also contribute to a more complete picture of the Austrian weekly press.

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Anja Lange

Probing the Limits of Representation: Serhii Zakharov's *Dira*

1. Introduction

The graphic novel (*графічний роман*) *Dira* (*Hole*) by Serhii Zakharov was published in 2016 and is interesting in many respects. First, the young Ukrainian comic market is in its infancy, and many readers are not accustomed to comics and graphic novels.[1] Second, the story concerns the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) – the occupied territories of the east of Ukraine – which is a sensitive matter because, in 2022, the conflict between the two republics rose to a full-scale war that is still ongoing.

Dira is deeply rooted in the political events in Ukraine after 2014, and it is impossible to understand the graphic novel without the cultural and historical background of the ongoing events since 2014. In late 2013, the so-called *Euromaidan* began in Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine. Groups of students and young people protested against the termination of the European Union–Ukraine Association Agreement. Since 2014, in the Eastern part of Ukraine, namely in the two *oblasts* (administrative divisions) of Donetsk and Luhansk, an armed conflict has been on the rise and escalated to a full-scale war in February 2022 when Russia attacked Ukraine. After a Referendum in 2014, two entirely new states were found within the territory of Ukraine. The separatist groups declared independently the DPR and LPR, which are not accepted by the Ukrainian government or the international community

In this chapter, I will examine how, through modes and means of representation such as focalization, *Dira* negotiates the above-mentioned conflict. My contention is that the graphic novel can be seen as a case study to show that the conflict within Ukraine is not only a geo-political conflict but also about identity and belonging, citizenship, and language. The analysis will show the point of view from which the events are told. To examine that, I will analyze the narration of the graphic novel because

1 Mburianyk statet in 2015 that the comic is still an unfamiliar genre for Ukrainians. "So unfamiliar is the comics form to audiences, the publishers deem, that they added reading instructions!" (*Ukrainian Comics of the 1990s* no pag.).

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Dira contains short stories that seem to have no date or could also have taken place in a non-linear progression. The narrator tells his personal story as one example of many similar, current destinies in the east of Ukraine. He uses common narrative techniques such as foreshadowing and flashbacks to mediate his point of view.

The analysis of the graphic novel will prove yet another point: "Comics have a big task in Ukraine: Through them nation is built, historical events are discussed, and identity is constructed" (Lange "The Beginning" 245). I will explore how the narrator of *Dira* talks about both the conflict in the country and the personal fate of the author, Serhii Zakharov, an artist who was detained in the DPR in August 2014 for one and a half months.

First, I will provide an overview of the (still ongoing) conflict in the east of Ukraine. I will also examine the status of comics in Ukraine and introduce the graphic novel. Then, I will offer some brief remarks concerning the narrative structure of the text, along with remarks about the narration theory of Genette. Finally, I will analyze some episodes of the graphic novel to answer the following research questions: How is the conflict narrated (in words) and shown (in pictures) in the graphic novel? What role do language, representation and identity play in the graphic novel? How is the position of the narrator shown? By answering these questions, it will become clear how an ongoing conflict is depicted in the graphic novel and how the medium of the graphic novel recounts history that is still in the making.

2. The Narration of a *Dira*

As Kovalov (2014) demonstrates, the conflict in Ukraine itself is replete with narratives, and there seem to be two sides to the story: a Russian and a Ukrainian one (see Kovalov, esp. pp. 144-146). In many articles about the matter (see, for instance, Fischer), the narration of the conflict is explicitly mentioned as being highly controversial. Adopting a neutral approach to the events is complicated given the polarizing narratives covering this conflict, and "Whichever narrative we adopt, the continuation of the armed conflict is in no one's interest" (Kovalev 149). In this chapter, I will use one narrative (the Ukrainian one) as an example of how one conflicting party talks and writes about the conflict. I will demonstrate how political events interfere with the personal story of the author and what role language and identity play within the conflict. Therefore, I will

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first offer some remarks about narration in general to identify the specific aspects of narration that will be the focus of the analysis.

The narration of the conflict in the graphic novel is ambiguous, as mentioned above. In this part of my analysis I will show how aspects such as identity and nation are represented in the graphic novel. In my paper, narration is understood as follows: "narratives involve temporal chains of inter-related events or actions, undertaken by characters" (Gabriel 63). Throughout the plot, readers follow the character and, in the case of *Dira*, experiences the Russian–Ukrainian conflict through the voice of the narrating agency as a part of it. When discussing the Ukraine conflict, one could simply consider the facts and figures, the death toll, and the internally displaced people. However, the graphic novel tells the story from the perspective of one Ukrainian citizen who is captured in the DPR. As I will show later, the narration is not objective but told from one man's point of view. He retells his experience, which is shaped by his view of the events.

The structure of the graphic novel is important to understand not only the *what* (is being depicted/ narrated) but also the *how* of the narration of *Dira*. Many graphic novels mainly work through the combination of images and text. As Lefèvre (2020) claims, "In comics (or other narratives) meanings are constructed by the reader's interpretation of the formal system (drawings and texts)" (no pag.). The analysis will reveal how the pictures and text in *Dira* are used. The graphic novel contains no speech bubbles, and text and pictures are in black and white. Many pages are completely without text and instead show only pictures. Moreover, the graphic novel has no page numbers.[2] The pictures of the graphic novel are used not only to recount events but also to show them to the reader. Like a picture book, the images transport the reader into the story. This transportation will be demonstrated in this article.

The process of reading and seeing a picture – and reading pictures in a sequence – is different from the process of reading a verbal text. In comics and graphic novels, the reader mentally frames the panel (Lefèvre no pag.), which means every reader adds their own meaning to the text and visuals. The pictures do not simply work as an illustration of the text; they are semiotically at least as, and sometimes more relevant than the text. Even if there are no panels in *Dira*, the following quote is relevant

2 Though there are no page numbers in the graphic novels, I have decided to add page numbers in this chapter to make it more readable.

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for the graphic novel: "The reader has to accept that the arrangement of the panels on the page is not random but directed, and that the panels are interconnected. They form a sequence of successive situations" (Lefèvre). The narrator's arrangement of the narrated situations in *Dira* is not random; he chose to retell the story in an anachronous way. After the above introductory remarks about the narration as well as the comics and graphic novels in Ukraine, I focus on these aspects of *Dira* next.

To do this I rely heavily on narrative theory, specifically on terms and concepts used by the French literary studies scholar Gérard Genette in his study on *Narrative Discourse* (1980). According to Genette, there are three categories of relations within a narration: order, duration, and frequency (Genette, esp. pp. 33-160). With regard to order, there are two possibilities: As Seymour Chatman summarizes, the story and the discourse have the same order, or the story and the discourse are anachronous (cf. Chatman 353). The anachronous story will be the focus of the analysis because the graphic novel contains several small histories. The two main narrative techniques employed in the graphic novel are flashbacks and flashforwards. Genette distinguishes between a flashback and a flashforward: A flashback is, as Chatman succinctly puts it, "where the discourse breaks the story-flow to recall events earlier than what precedes the break" (353), whereas a flashforward describes a so-called foreshadowing – a reference to events that are yet to occur in the story. Later in this chapter, I will show how these two techniques are used in the graphic novel. The narrative techniques and the anachronous order of the plot are all related to the so-called diegetic world. Genette's central terms are *mimesis* and *diegesis*, and the differentiation between *diegesis* (poetic representation of 'one world,' or the way a story is narrated) and *diegese* (the level/s of the narrated world). Diegesis affects the levels of time, space, and action (for a useful summary, see Fuxjäger 18). If a narrated element can be placed with a reference to time, space, or action within a story, it is diegetic. In this chapter, non-diegetic events are understood as narrated elements without any diegetic reference to time, space, or action. As the analysis will show, the narrator employs a mixture of diegetic and non-diegetic elements. After providing a summary of the conflict and the structure of the graphic novel and introducing key elements of narration, I explore the anachronous structure of *Dira* next.

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2.1 The Anachronous Events

Anachronous narration is an important aspect of *Dira*. For example, on page 54 the text begins with "from that moment, the worst part of my imprisoning began" (Zakharov and Mazurkevych 54). The reader, however, has no idea what "from that moment" means or what "that" refers to. The diegetic information is poor, except for the fact that, as readers are told, "approximately ten days I was beaten up daily" (Zakharov and Mazurkevych 54). The lack of details and the non-diegetic episodes in *Dira* support the idea that recounting a (traumatic) memory often also means the impossibility of putting into language incisive events in one's life. The use of flashbacks and the anachronous narration of the events in *Dira* convey that coherency and linear progression of story and plot are not possible. The authors aim, I would claim, to make the story more realistic and authentic by indicating that the narrator spontaneously (and involuntarily) remembers certain episodes of the story. The result is, what might be termed, an eclectic plot in *Dira*. But these seemingly spontaneous memories do not only make the plot more eclectic. The difficulty to indicate a certain time or location of the events could also have been intentional to increase anonymity and relatability: The fate of the narrator could have been the fate of every other person protesting against the local authorities at that time. His story hence represents numerous other stories similar to the one narrated in *Dira*.

At the very beginning of *Dira*, the narrator starts by saying that there is a gun pointed at his head. Then, several dates are mentioned prior to the narrator's arrest. The events he describes in the main part of the graphic novel have no date. Moreover, because of the lack of page numbers, the events described could take place in a different order, at a different time. As I will show later, the effect of this is that the events that took place in 2014 could also happen today, to another person. A broader national context can be interpreted here as well: When and where the events occurred are not important; what is important is that they happened and that Russia oppresses Ukraine and its people which is experienced in the person of the narrator. The graphic novel frequently refers to historical events of the nearest past. A single reference is made to an event further back in history: the 1937 massacre of Vinnitsya – a mass shooting of approximately 10,000 people by the Soviet NKVD, which is today's Russian Federal Security Service (FSB). Here, the narrator's position becomes clear: He compares the current situation in Donetsk with the situation of 1937 – once more,

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people are shot by the Russians; once more, Ukrainians are the victims. Through this parallel, *Dira* mediates that history is repeating itself and, at the same time, that the narrator of the graphic novel is among the innocent Ukrainians who are shot by the separatist police forces.

Zakharov's and Mazurkevych's graphic novel must be understood as a personal narration (not an objective report), quite similar to Art Spiegelman's two-volume (historio-) graphic 'tale' *MAUS*, which narrates the author's parents' odyssey of surviving Auschwitz in the form of a subjective (recorded and then transcribed) recollection of Spiegelman's father Vladek. Because of the way *MAUS* highlights its own making (the tale of how it became told, in other words), and Spiegelman's implication in the writing of the book, his work has often been described as historiographic metafiction. I would argue that *Dira* operates with similar narrative techniques. In "Historiographic Metafiction" (1988), Linda Hutcheon explains that in a metafictional-historiographic work, a narrator adds "an equally self-conscious dimension of history" (3) to the historic events. This "self-conscious dimension of history" can also be seen in how the narrator in *Dira* proceeds – in an anachronous way, interrupting himself time and again. In addition to Hutcheon and her claim that conventions of both fiction and historiography are simultaneously used and abused in modern novels (cf. Hutcheon 5), Hayden White's discussion of the concept of emplotment in historiographic metafiction can help to understand the structure of *Dira* and the historiographic storytelling in the graphic novel. White (1974), states: "With emplotment I mean simply the encodation of the facts contained in the chronicle as components of specific kinds of plot structures" (83), which can be found in every chapter of *Dira*. Historical facts, as illustrated above, are mentioned and woven into the narrator's plot structures to show how Ukraine and the Ukrainians, represented by the narrator in particular, suffered under Russian oppression.

The events recounted in *Dira* took place in reality, which, according to Yiannis Gabriel, results in a "creative ambiguity [that] gives stories a unique combination of two qualities, those of having a plot at the same time as representing reality" (64). The story of Zakharov's capture and torture by the DPR prison guards is one example of a story that could happen (and possibly still is happening) in the eastern part of Ukraine every day. The narrator tries to "draw in a documentary way" (Zakharov and Mazurkevych 4) the events that happened like a documentation of the story of Zakharov. A person's memory is unpredictable, and one cannot be certain of whether events are remembered accurately or falsified by other

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events that occurred thereafter. "Despite a growing interest in memory today and the establishment of memory studies as a field in its own right, the unreliability and irrationality of memory make it a simultaneously challenging and exciting topic" (Ahmed and Crucifix 1). Zakharov is a contemporary witness to events that are still ongoing today, as the prison cells where he was held in likely exist even today. The narration of events that took place long ago, from the memory of the narrator, is problematic because of the brain's limited capacity to remember the details of events. A memory can be falsified in retrospect but gives the impression of being sound and real. Nicol highlights that a retrospective narration can lead a reader to believe that all events narrated are accurate (cf. 187). Flashbacks are one aspect of the narration of events that took place in the distant past. In an interview, Zakharov was asked whether the memories he retells are his own experience, to which he responded, "Yes, it is based on my experience, and it is quite unpleasant sensations. But I want to say that there is nothing unique in my story. I mean, everything ended well" (Vagner no pag.). With the commentary "there is nothing unique in my story," he makes himself a witness who was lucky enough to survive and to document the events for those coming after him. Zakharov uses several techniques to recount his memories. Two of them, foreshadowing and flashbacks, will be discussed below.

2.2 Flashbacks and Foreshadowing in *Dira*

To demonstrate how history in the making is narrated in the graphic novel, I analyze the two main narrative techniques, foreshadowing and flashbacks, in the graphic novel. As mentioned earlier, foreshadowing and flashbacks are the most relevant techniques to order a narrative discourse. I will show how these two techniques are used to retell events anachronously and with what implications. First, I analyze foreshadowing using several examples in the text. The very beginning of the graphic novel is a prime example of foreshadowing: *Dira* starts with a double page showing a gun pointed at the reader (Fig. 1). Dallacqua (365) states that one of the main characteristics of graphic novels is their special attraction to the reader: "Readers walk with characters and see from their points of view." This is also possible with novels, but graphic novels promote visual literacy (Dallacqua 365) and therefore provide a higher level of relatability for the reader to identify with the main personage, as evidenced by the

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first two pages of *Dira*: The text describes that it is terrifying to have a gun pointed at oneself and realize that the person who could pull the trigger is no longer sober. The narrator comments on his thoughts (it would not be aesthetically pleasing if my brain were to spill all over the wall), and there, with three dots, the text ends. This double page is not commented on, and page 7 starts with the events in Donezk in February 2014. There is no indication of when and where the gun incident took place or who the gun bearer is, other than that he had consumed alcohol. The narrator is homodiegetic; that is, to use Genette's wording here, "the narrator [is] present as a character in the story he tells" (Genette 244-245). One could even call this an autobiographical story because the hero, the main character, is the narrator of the story. The reader follows the hero through the graphic novel, and the narrator clarifies from the outset that this will not be a pleasant story and conveys his oppressive situation as a Ukrainian. Ukrainian readers now know, because of the context of the conflict, that a Russian must be pointing the gun at him. From the very first page, guns and other weapons are shown, and the reader knows that Ukraine is under attack and must defend itself.

The narrative method of foreshadowing is used to evoke emotions such as curiosity and suspense (Bae and Young 156). These emotions "can be important tools for the author to communicate with the readers for a dramatic effect" (Bae and Young 157). Every Ukrainian reading the graphic novel is emotionally involved because of the tragic past that Ukrainians share, including being attacked by the Russian Tsarist Empire several times. Especially now, with the full-scale war under way, this foreshadowing could be interpreted in a broader national sense: The non-specific diegetic situation, with no further information on time and place, could happen at any time, to any Ukrainian. The analyzed first two pages seem to be a rough introduction for the reader to the graphic novel, but my contention is that these two pages summarize all events that will occur later in the story. They show the narrator's anachronous telling of the story; convey the tone and emotions that will feature in the graphic novel; and exemplify how the narrator deals with the trauma that he experienced during the kidnapping. The individual trauma, the ongoing historical processes, and the emotions of the narrator all seem to be thrown together in these two pages, overwhelming readers' receptive capacities, one might say.

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Fig. 1: Zakharov and Mazurkevych 6-7.

The narration technique of foreshadowing, as has been shown, sets the tone for the graphic novel. The narration also contains various flashbacks,

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the second important narration technique in *Dira*. There are two kinds of flashbacks in the graphic novel: those with a specific date and place (diegetic) and those without a time or a date (non-diegetic). One example of a diegetic flashback is the referendum itself, which took place on May 25, 2014. The narrator also describes his unsuccessful attempt to vote in his old school because the doors were closed. These events are already common history, retold by a witness to those events. He indicates the time and date of these events, saying that he wanted to vote at his old school. The event can be located diegetically in the story. These two types of flashbacks characterize the story as one told from someone's memory. A story form is a natural and spontaneous cognitive unit for representing information (McGregor and Holmes 1999, 403), and the spontaneous aspect of the story can be underlined in *Dira*. In the episodes with flashbacks, the narrator seems to spontaneously remember something but cannot remember the exact moment or order of the events. The exact moment of when they happen do not seem to be important; what is important, however, is that they happened at all. One could state that these events – the referendum regarding the Donezk oblast illegally organized by the Russians – are one more instance of Russia oppressing Ukraine that will have a lasting impact in the collective memory of Ukrainians.

3. National Tendencies in the Graphic Novel *Dira*

As previously explained, the narrative techniques in *Dira* can be interpreted in a national context. To begin with, I elaborate on the name of the graphic novel: Zakharov chose *Dira* (*Hole*) because, first, the prison cell felt like a hole. Second, in an interview, he explained the name as follows: "And now the inhabitants of Donetsk use this name – Hole. They say 'in our hole'" (Vagner no pag.). The term could easily be used for cities such as Bakhmut, Irpin, and Mariupol – cities that were bombarded by Russia and no longer exist. Since 2014, people in Donetsk feel like they are living in a hole because of the Russians helping the separatists in the Eastern oblasts of Ukraine – "The term 'hole' reflects the current state of this place" (Vagner no pag.). Furthermore, Zakharov stated that in the graphic novel, the events themselves are not the main focus. It is obvious that the first goal is to show not so much the events that took place as the places of lack of freedom through which people go. Reporting as such is

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impossible from these places for an understandable number of reasons (cf. Vagner).

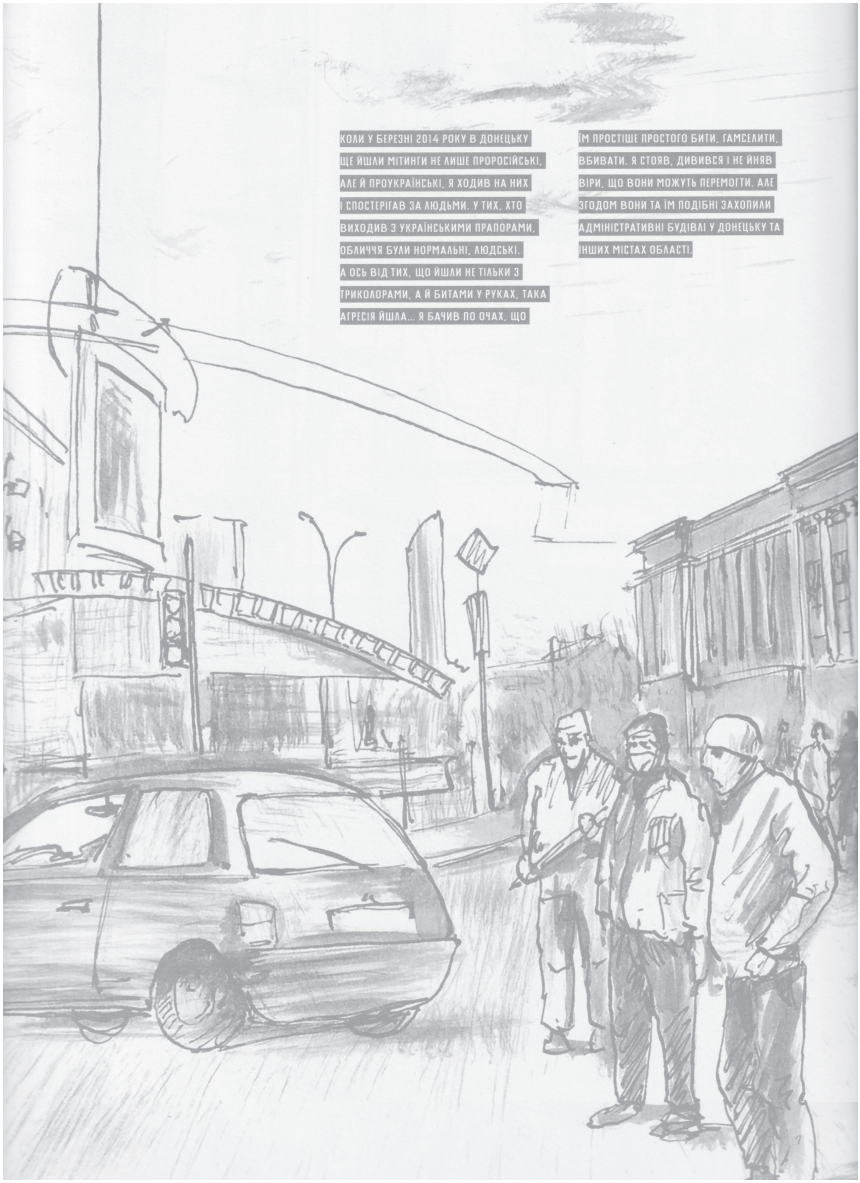

Fig. 2: Zakharov and Mazurkevych 14.

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Zakharov sees his graphic novel as a report on current events in eastern Ukraine. The images he drew from his own memories illustrate the situation in the prison cells. In a broader sense, these images symbolize the struggle of Ukrainians for their independence and the integrity of their country. The narrator concentrates on the people in the Donetsk oblast whom he sees. One example is on page 14 (Figure 2): Here, he compares the "normal human faces" of pro-Ukrainian protesters with the "aggressive ones" of pro-Russian protesters, who are ready to hit someone with a stick or shoot with a gun. This interpretation is supported by the image of three young men carrying sticks and wearing long hoodies that mask their faces. It is evident from the start of the graphic novel that the narrator adopts a pro-Ukrainian position and feels oppressed by the Russians.

One key aspect of the narration is the question of language and identity through language. As I have shown elsewhere (2014), the last census of Ukraine and language was held in 2001; 67.5 % of the respondents cited Ukrainian as their native language, while 29.6 % stated that Russian was their native language (Lange "Taras Shevchenko"). Many people are bilingual – they understand Russian and Ukrainian, even if one of them is not their native language.[3] The narrator quotes the words of the pro-Russian separatists in their original language, Russian, a language almost all people in Ukraine understand. The direct quotation without any translation demonstrates the wider context of this conflict: The conflict within Ukraine also concerns identities, languages, and pro-Russian or pro-Ukrainian attitudes. The narrator shows that Donetsk is in the Russian-speaking part of Ukraine, whereas the Western part of Ukraine is mostly Ukrainian-speaking. The linguistic ambiguity in the graphic novel illustrates the conflict and the story on yet another level.

"The men who beat me were Russian" (Zakharov and Mazurkevych 56). This information is once again provided without any context of time or place. Readers have no idea how many people beat him, when, how often, with what, or why. He recounts that once there was a woman, but he offers no further information. Neither the number of Russians nor the time or frequency of the event is important – but it becomes clear once more that Russia and the Russians are beating up Ukraine and Ukrainians. The national context of the conflict can be seen almost everywhere in the

3 After the full scale war in 2022, most of the Ukrainians switched to Ukrainian seeing Russian as the language of the oppressor (cf. Lange "Ich spreche" as well as Lange "Taras Shevchenko").

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graphic novel. A whole country is under attack – this becomes obvious when the narrator uses the emotional power of retelling the fate of the other prisoners. On page 76, for example, he recounts the story of a man named Albert, with whom he shared a small prison cell. They were bonded together, and Zakharov recounts not only his own fate but also that of his prison mate using the word "we." In the narration, it is unclear who the word "we" represents: Albert and the narrator, all prison inmates, or all Ukrainians. Once more, the narration could be understood on a national level – all Ukrainians who are terrorized by Russians.

The national aspect can also be observed in the colors of the graphic novel. Many images are dark, reminiscent of the dark prison cell Zakharov was kept in, except for the very last image at the end of the graphic novel, which is in color: the yellow-blue Ukrainian flag. On page 110 (Figure 3) of Zakharov's graphic novel, there is an outpost on the border between Ukraine and the so-called Peoples Republic of Donetsk.

The narrator states, "I drove into a new life" (Zakharov and Mazurkevych 110). The moment he is led free from his prison and the moment he is able to return to his home country, marked with a Ukrainian flag, is the moment the tension and suspense of the story abate. The reader immediately knows that the prison time is over because the narrator sees the "flag of freedom" – the Ukrainian flag. Here, one must understand the meaning of the Ukrainian flag at that time. The protesters at the Maidan are pro-Ukraine and pro-European. "They carry national flags and symbols and sing the national anthem every hour. To refer to their country is important to them, to show that they are Ukrainians and that they stand together against Russia" (Lange "Taras Shevchenko" 255). The carrying of a national flag became a symbol of freedom and self-determination for many Ukrainians in 2014. Moreover, historically, Ukraine's fight for independence did not begin in 1991, when the country became independent from the Soviet Union; centuries before Ukraine attempted to become an independent nation and wanted its language to be spoken countrywide. The Maidan brought a feeling of togetherness to Ukraine: "The Maidan movement established a consensus concerning shared goals (such as effective action against corruption) and an idea of solidarity among citizens that extended across large parts of Ukrainian society" (Halling and Stewart 1). Ukrainian readers will have this in mind when they see the Ukrainian flag on page 110 of the graphic novel. They will consider that flag to be a symbol of the fight for recognition and freedom. On a broader level, one could state that the colorful flag of Ukraine serves to symbolize life and

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hope while the black and white images represent Russia and the loss and death brought to Ukraine.

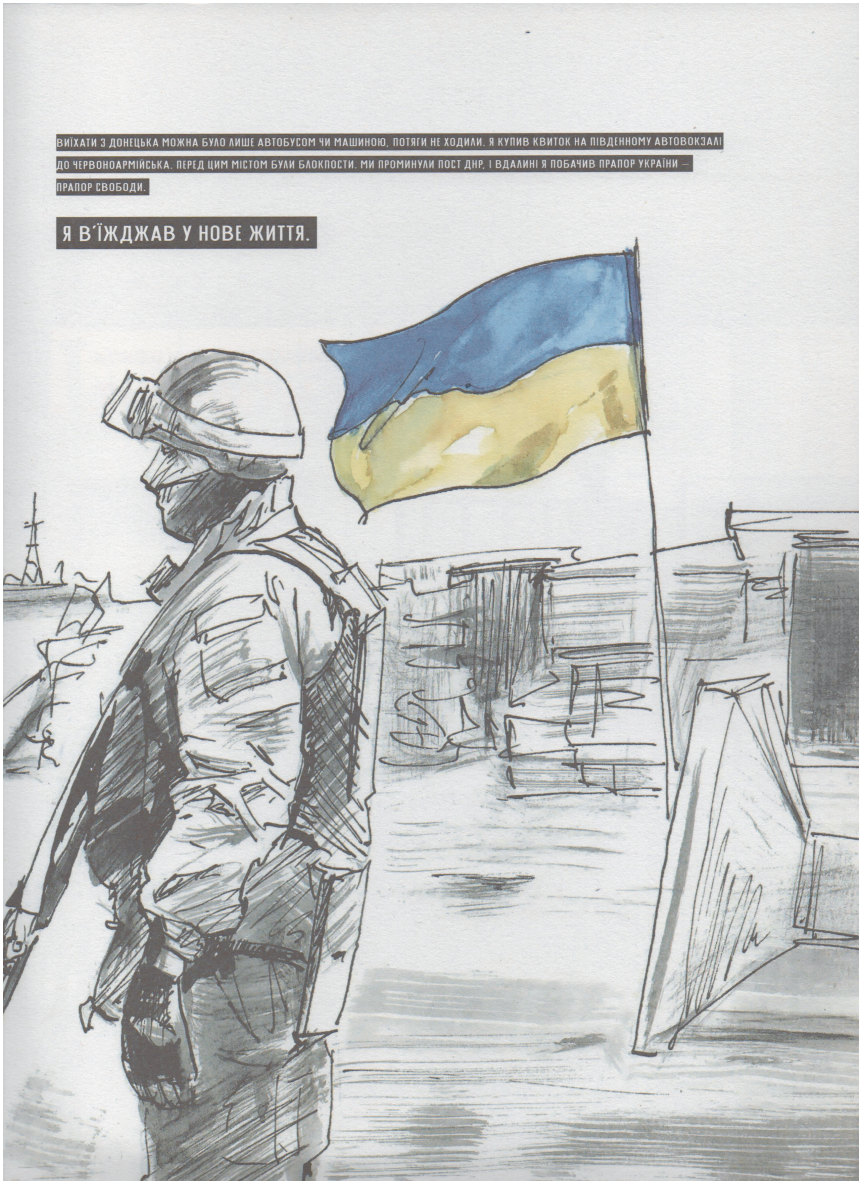

Fig.3: Zakharov and Mazurkevych 110.

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4. Conclusion

One of the questions at the beginning of this chapter was: How does the medium of a graphic novel recount history that is still in the making, and how is the conflict in Ukraine related to identity, language, and representation? My analysis revealed that the authors of *Dira* use several techniques to narrate the story realistically, namely, by means of the narrating agency, flashbacks, flashforwards, and anachronous storytelling. The fact that the episodes are not set on a time and space continuum but happened at an unspecified time in 2014 in Donetsk makes the fate of the narrator one example of the destiny of a 'normal person' in the resistance. The narrator sees himself as an example of how the so-called People's Republics treat critics and artists in the resistance. However, he recounts not only his own memories but also the destinies of other people. As Vagner states:

> Zakharov's drawings are an endless line of tortured people, mostly lying on the floor of cells, in corridors and offices with desks, beaten by armed men in military uniform. It is not always possible to make out identification marks on them, and if you do not know that we are talking about what happened in Donetsk in 2014, you can imagine any prison in those countries where torture has become a part of everyday life. (Vagner no pag.; translation mine)

The black and white pictures make it impossible to distinguish places or people from each other. The lack of page numbers and the many small episodes give an impression of life in a prison cell. However, as Vagner mentions, this prison cell could be anywhere, and the prisoner could be anyone.

The narration, with its numerous flashbacks and foreshadowing, structures the story and evokes strong emotions. Most of the episodes and flashbacks have no date and hence could also be told in a different order. A linear, chronological progression of the events is denied in *Dira*. Diegetic words such as "from now on" do not help to set the story within a certain time frame, although the author makes it clear that he has been held captive for six weeks. This lack of time, place, and other diegetic expressions, as well as the lack of page numbers, characterize the structure of the graphic novel. The events depicted in *Dira*, in words and images, could happen to anyone, anytime, anywhere, and (while readers go through the images) somewhere someone is likely experiencing them – perhaps in another order, perhaps with other prison guards and other prison inmates, but unjustified arrests because of a human right to express free speech are happening today in various countries.

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Zakharov's *Dira* is not only about his personal fate but also about the fate of his country. Once more, Ukraine is oppressed and tortured by Russia. In releasing the novel, he pays homage to all victims of oppression, and gives a voice to the Ukrainians. On the cover text, Zakharov writes, "We had to do it." Creating the novel was a way for him to process his experience: "In a way, it can even be called art therapy: of course, you relive everything anew, but at the same time you give up a piece of paper; that is, you take it out of yourself" (Vagner no pag.; translation mine).

Against this backdrop, I look forward to further research projects that could set this graphic novel in the context of the still ongoing open war between Russia and Ukraine since February 24, 2022. The front line is once again in eastern Ukraine, and Zakharov's story could also be interpreted as the fate of a modern Ukrainian being threatened by Russia in a full-scale war. I also look forward to future projects that will situate *Dira* in the larger medial history of graphic narratives that negotiate personal and national traumas, as well as in the extensive scholarship on (auto-)graphic fiction. The questions of how *Dira* mediates the narrator's attempt to cope with traumatic memories, and the author's challenges of trying to put on paper, to contain, to capture fleeting, incisive moments in time, and the pain and exhaustion that come with these efforts of trying to "take it out of yourself," are questions that deserve – and are in need of – further critical engagement.

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Sylvain Lesage[1]

Did the Algerian War of Independence Gave Birth to French Graphic Novel? Coral's *Journal d'un embastillé*, 1962

I. Introduction

The year 1962 was a major turning point in the decolonization of the French Empire. In March 1962, the Evian agreements were signed between the French government and the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic, putting an end to a 7-year-war that had made 250 to 350,000 dead on the Algerian side and 25 to 30,000 on the French side.

For France, the Empire came to an end, at the same time as the war disappeared from the horizons of the French society. Then began the work of remembrance, slow and tumultuous. Indeed, it was only in 1999 that the term Algerian War was recognized by the French government, which had shielded behind the fiction of "pacification operations" (Shepard) during the entire period of the war. Even today, the reconciliation of memory remains complex.

As Jennifer Howell pointed out, comics play a role in this reconciliation process: "French comics on the Algerian War create historical memory and influence how contemporary France engages with its colonial past and manages its postcolonial present" (Howell xxxii). Many scholars have highlighted the importance of the theme of memory in contemporary graphic novels (Ahmed and Crucifix 2018). Mark McKinney, for example, has explored the importance of "imagined, invisible lines" that simultaneously unite and separate France and Algeria (McKinney, *Redrawing* 3). Isabelle Delorme has shown the importance of the figure of the witness and of generational transmission (Delorme): children of soldiers, *pieds-noirs*, *harkis*, activists, and immigrants explore the gaps between family narratives and national history, in a post-memorial approach: "They are family memories studied through the prism of history, collective memory, and personal experience" (Howell xxiv).

1 Univ. Lille, CNRS, UMR 8529 - IRHiS - Institut de Recherches Historiques du Septentrion, F-59000 Lille, France

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The memory of the Algerian War plays a singular role in French graphic narratives. From Farid Boudjellal to Lax and Giroud, from Morvandiau to Giroud, there have been many accounts of the memory of the Algerian War, particularly since the turn of the century. Jennifer Howell argues that *Une éducation algérienne*, published in 1982, can be considered "the first noteworthy comic book on the [Algerian] war" (Howell 19).

Both Mark McKinney and Jennifer Howell point out, however, the existence of two stories published at the end of the war, in 1962 and then two years later, in 1964, which offer a drawn account of the Algerian War: *Journal d'un embastillé* (1962) and *Journal d'un suspect*, by Coral, a former army officer involved in the fight for French Algeria with the OAS (*Organisation de l'armée secrète*). However, these two stories appear marginal: as Mark McKinney notes, these works "appeared so far outside of mainstream comics that they have gone largely unnoticed" (McKinney, *Redrawing* 155).

Yet, as this chapter will argue, this oversight of Coral in comics histories is questionable. Coral would indeed be a serious contender for the title of pioneer of the French graphic novel, and for the writing of a comic autobiography. The publication comes well before Justin Green's *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary* (1972), but also well before the first French formalizations of graphic novels in the 1970s, studied notably by Jean-Matthieu Méon (Méon). Until then, the mid-1970s offered an effective benchmark for dating the emergence of graphic novels – in all its problematic aspects, notably around the publication of *La Ballade de la mer salée* by Casterman, inaugurating a collection of *Romans (A Suivre)* destined to transform the contours of cultural hierarchies in France (Lesage, *Ninth Art. Bande dessinée, books and the Gentriification of Mass Culture*). Considering the case of Coral leads to question these periodizations and the historical trajectory of French comics. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, *Le Journal d'un embastillé* sheds a light on the tensions that run through French society in the context of decolonization. It also highlights the creative effervescence of the 1960s and the vitality of graphic experimentation far beyond the children's illustrated magazines that dominate comics historiography. Therefore, it shows the extent to which the writing of the history of comics is a prisoner of the *Bildungsroman* which, in France too, permeates the narrative.

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II. Coral and the Algerian War

Understanding Coral's book now is not easy, as the narrative is deeply rooted in the context of the end of the Algerian War. Coral's book can only be read in the light of the French defeat. Coral is a pseudonym for Jacques de Laroque-Latour, and his *Journal d'un embastillé* was published by a far-right publishing house, Éditions Saint-Just. Laroque-Latour was a former parachute non-commissioned officer, born in 1935; he joined the parachutists at the age of 20, served in Algeria in the early days of the war of independence, was decorated, and returned to metropolitan France in 1957 while remaining close to military and pro-French Algeria circles. In April 1961, during the putsch of the generals that tried to overthrow the Gaullist government, he was one of the Frenchmen imprisoned in mainland France. Sentenced to one year in prison, he appears – in the current state of my knowledge – to be only as a fairly minor player in the movement.[2] In 1963, after *Journal d'un embastillé*, he became editor-in-chief of *Europe-Action* (1963-1967), a journal that served as an incubator for the entire extreme right which was trying to modernize its doctrine and recompose itself after the failure of the colonial project: he was thus an important player in the *Nouvelle Droite*, which brought together key players of the reconfiguration of the extreme right like Alain de Benoist, François Duprat, François d'Orcival, etc., published by the same Saint-Just publishing house.

The *Journal d'un embastillé* is part of this dynamic: it is a charged account of the Algerian war, seen from the perspective of the OAS, *Organisation de l'armée secrète* (Secret Army Organisation), the clandestine paramilitary organization that fought (and, in 1962, still fights) against the decolonization of Algeria by seeking to sabotage – both figuratively and literaly – the negotiations and the accession of Algeria to independence. The OAS emerged in early 1961 as a clandestine organization created at a time when the French authorities were clearly moving more and more towards the policy of Algerian self-determination (Dard). While de Gaulle was brought to power in 1958 by his very ambiguous position likely to win him the votes of supporters of French Algeria ("je vous ai compris," 4 June 1958), once in power he indeed began a shift towards

2 I have not yet, however, managed to access the judiciary sources concerning Coral. These might shed a new light on the character and his involvement in the war. This an ongoing research project.

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self-determination, envisaged from September 1959. The question of de Gaulle's personal positions is the subject of a lively dispute of interpretation, especially since de Gaulle is a master of ambiguity (Jackson). This question goes far beyond the limits of this chapter, and I therefore leave the question of de Gaulle's personal attitude on the side. However, the denunciation of de Gaulle's duplicity is a recurrent motif in the OAS's rhetoric, and one of the foundations of an extremely diverse movement.

Self-determination was the subject of a referendum in January 1961, widely approved by the French population. The growing rift between French public opinion and the Parisian authorities, on the one hand, and the European populations in Algeria and the military present there, on the other hand, provoked the formation of militant direct-action groups, aiming to prevent the march towards independence by means of assassinations and attacks. The signing of the Evian agreements in March 1962 led to an intensification of the attack campaign, with the OAS embarking on a veritable scorched earth tactic from May 1962 (Thénault).

It is therefore a story set in the midst of a burning topicality, something that French-language comics at the time very rarely faced. At the beginning of the 1960s, one of the keys to Asterix's success, as many commentators immediately pointed out, was certainly its ability to echo contemporary society (Stoll; Rouvière, *Astérix ou Les lumières de la civilisation*). This ability to satirize current events is part of a "*Pilote* spirit" (Groensteen), itself largely inherited from *Mad*, which can be found in other series of the newspaper, such as Gotlib's *Rubrique à brac*. But satire as found in *Pilote* remained, in the early 1960s, mainly confined to good-natured and relatively consensual social satire: In 1962, Cabu came to *Pilote* from *Hara-Kiri*; but in *Pilote* he offered a very depoliticized version of his "Grand Duduche" stories, where his character reflected the growing misunderstanding between the generations but without openly encouraging rebellion.

The more political publications, for their part, made very little use of comics. Thus, while the communist newspaper *L'Humanité* published *Pif* in daily strips, the series was almost entirely depoliticized, even though it could have been an unprecedented vehicle for political mobilization. However, political forms of comics did exist: Robert Fuzier, for example, animated the series "Dédé et Doudou" in the pages of *Le Populaire*, the newspaper of the Socialist Party, featuring pacifist and internationalist ideals that echoed very directly the rising tensions in Europe. Finally, testimonies of directly political uses of comics remain extremely rare, and the

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most spectacular cases are undoubtedly the parodies of *Tintin* published by *Le Canard enchaîné* in the context of de Gaulle's installation in power (Screech) – but Matthew Screech has clearly shown how they constitute quite exceptional examples.

Thus, in the early 1960s, comics were marked by a clear depoliticization. Of course, comics still carried political values: 'Buck Danny,' in the pages of *Spirou*, conveyed a very NATO-oriented vision of the Cold War – which was precisely why he was reprimanded by the supervisory commission responsible for the application of the 1949 law on publications intended for young people (Joubert). However, the political sphere remains, for the most part, a very distant background in children and teenagers' illustrated magazines.

Coral's account of the pro-OAS view of the Algerian War is therefore singular in that it directly engages the most heated debate of the time. It should be noted, however, that the OAS is far from having an ideological unity, apart from the desperate struggle to keep Algeria French, the hatred of the Head of State and the will to stop the process of Algeria's independence. As Olivier Dard observed, three main currents can be distinguished: a fascist current for the survival of the white race, a traditionalist and counter-revolutionary current (nostalgic for Petainism and Catholic fundamentalists), and finally, nationalists (Dard).

The narrative offered by Coral, however, tries to erase these strong divergences and to offer the united face of an OAS gathering true patriots by depicting its members as united behind a common goal. This is largely the result of the structured strategy put in place by the OAS to develop an active propaganda: leaflets, posters, radio, television... The OAS, in this respect, prolongs the effort of in-depth modernization of war propaganda, under the effect of the recommendations of colonel Charles Lacheroy, who returned from Indochina with the firm conviction that it was necessary to turn the methods of the "revolutionary war" against the insurgents. The main theorist of psychological action and subversive warfare, he belonged to the first circle of the Madrid branch of the OAS.

At this stage of my research, I cannot see any tangible proximity between Lacheroy and Coral; so I will simply state out that the effort to mediatize the OAS vision of the war through comics, that Coral undertook in his *Journal d'un embastillé* (Diary of a prisoner) and then in *Journal d'un suspect* (Diary of a suspect) are in line with Lacheroy's recommendations, which he raised in his conference Revolutionary War and Psychological Action: "in a war like this one, it is necessary to inform in such a way as to

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have general opinion on one's side" (Schmidt-Trimborn). This new doctrine, which advocated the use of psychological weapons, resulted in the creation in the summer of 1957 of Fifth Bureaus specializing in psychological warfare and action. "These bureaus, which complement the four traditional bureaus at all levels of the military hierarchy, undoubtedly represent a real materialisation of the insertion of the psychological weapon within the organic structures of the army" (Villatoux 42). As Charles Villatoux points out, psychological action briefly occupied a central place in military activity in Algeria, even if it is difficult to establish an assessment due to the brevity of the experience (the 5th Bureaus were abolished in February 1960). However, the time is certainly ripe for a rethinking of propaganda methods and a new awareness of the importance of the battle of ideas.

It should come as no surprise that, in the context of the defeat of the supporters of French Algeria, Coral's work did not meet with a considerable response. The referendum ratifying the Evian agreements was approved by more than 90% of the French population. The publication of *Journal d'un embastillé* at the end of 1962 was therefore part of a complicated ideological context, and in a society seeking to turn the page on the conflict. It nevertheless offers a first-hand account of new forms of graphic narration, in a perspective of both biting satire and colonial nostalgia. This will be further addressed in the next part of this chapter.

III. 2° Coral and Graphic Experiments

Coral's album manifests a political commitment that was unprecedented in French comics at the time. Graphic satire is certainly an old tradition in French politics (Erre; Vaillant; Duprat). However, under Coral's pen, it takes a new form: that of a long-term graphic narrative, mobilizing the language of comics in a militant rereading of a crucial episode of the Algerian War: the OAS and its role in the decolonization of Algeria.

At a first glance, the story mobilizes the classic forms of caricature. Thus, we find recurrent representations of de Gaulle as the *Roi Soleil* (Fig. 1): the President of the Republic is thus presented by the text as "his most gracious majesty," "the king," "the monarch, in his golden carriage." Above all, Coral almost systematically depicts him in an outfit reminiscent of Louis XIV: powdered wig, silk stockings, scepter, etc. This representation is interesting on two levels. On the one hand, it echoes the title of

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the work, denouncing royal arbitrariness through the founding figure of the imprisoned as a political opponent, allowing Coral to follow in the footsteps of Sade or Voltaire. The representation he chooses for the cover, in which he shows himself with a large quill pen, fits in well with this imaginary of the political opponent as a victim of personal arbitrariness. On the other hand, this representation of the president as a monarch echoes the very lively debates in French society about the presidential regime of the Fifth Republic, and the excessive weight given to presidential power, particularly since the referendum allowing the election of the president by direct universal suffrage, adopted in 1962 in spite of strong reservations expressed by major political figures such as Senate President Gaston Monnerville.

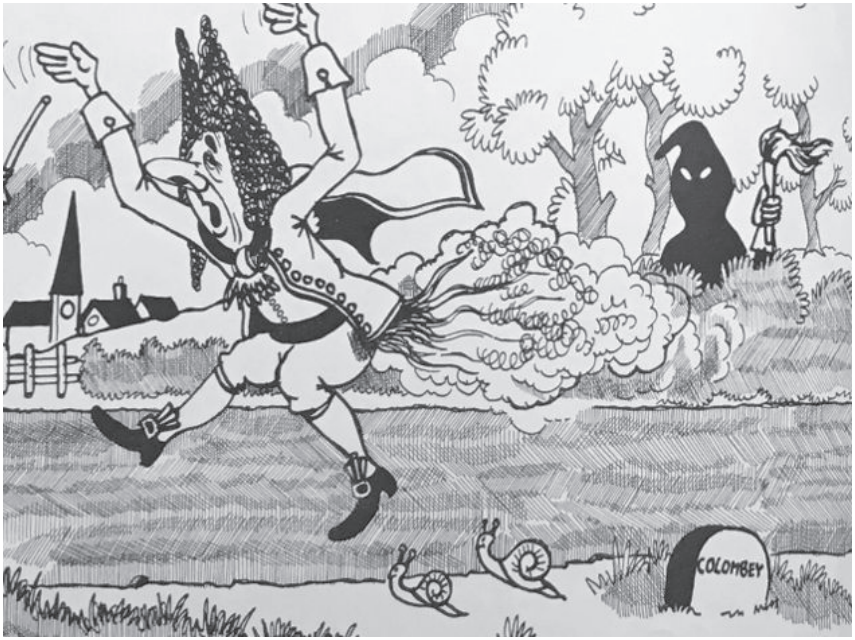

Fig. 1: Coral, *Journal d'un embastillé*, 1962.

The figure of de Gaulle is certainly the most present in the narrative. Less frequently, other well-known French and Algerian political figures are caricatured. This is the case, for example, of Pierre Mendès-France, depicted and described as an "old crab emerging from the mud" (see Fig. 1, above), or Georges Pompidou, Krim Belkacem, Messali Hadj, or other

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leaders such as Nasser, Krushchev, Kennedy or Bourguiba. These caricatures are very virulent: Habib Bourguiba, for instance is depicted under the features of a jackal taking himself for a lion, which "a good blow of para boots [...] made him go back into his cage" (see Fig. 1). Pompidou is the subject of anti-Semitic caricatures, the Prime Minister being presented as "the deceitful Rothschildian banker" who, from his busted nose to his cigar and bag of dollars, ticked all the boxes of the codes of graphic anti-Semitism. There is no shortage of racist representations either, such as the sequence where de Gaulle "organised sumptuous and expensive parties where he received the little kings of Africa," where Coral uses the worst racist clichés to depict the African leaders, rooted in a long tradition of colonial comics (McKinney, *The Colonial*), where Coral uses the worst racist clichés to depict the African leaders, rooted in a long tradition of colonial comics (see Fig. 2).

Fig. 2: Coral, *Journal d'un embastillé*, 1962.

However, apart from de Gaulle, who is the central figure in the detestation of the OAS, caricatures representations remain marginal. What characterizes Coral's work is its mixed form, halfway between a picture story and comics. The narrative plays with the boundaries between types of narratives: illustrated vignettes, pictorial narratives, comics sequences, even some pastiches of cinematographic novelizations (Fig. 2). The narrative constantly alternates between different ways of articulating text and image, sometimes even going so far as to rediscover old forms from the illustrated press of the 19th century. For example the page relating radio propaganda efforts undertaken by the OAS (FIG. 3), (sabotage of transmitters, pirate broadcasts) takes the form of *miscellanées* reminiscent of the juxtapositions one could find in *The Graphic* and the *London Illustrated News*, for example (Smolderen).

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Fig. 3: Coral, *Journal d'un embastillé*, 1962.

The main complication that Coral encounters in his portrayal of the OAS action is the question of embodying the narration. The narrative is conducted in the first person, and Coral represents himself on several occasions, for example on the occasion of his arrest, which opens the story. But with a broader ambition to provide a general account of the Algerian War, de Gaulle's 'betrayals' and the action of the OAS, the narrative also adopts a general perspective that often condemns it to the status of illustrated text, following a chronological tale of the events, illustrated by the artist. The story is told by a very present narrator, who provides dates, names and precise circumstances in a meticulous narrative that unfolds, week by week, the tragi-comic story that Coral envisions. The images provide a humorous counterpoint, and the narrative often relies on the discrepancy between the grandiloquence of the text and the ridiculousness of the images. The narration is thus emphatic, while the drawing emphasizes the good-natured tone.

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Indeed, Coral's story is based on a double shift. On a first, purely textual level, the story uses hyperbole and displaces the settlement of the Algerian question under the guise of a Louis-Quatorzian court story, in the manner of Moisan who, in the pages of the *Canard enchaîné*, transposed de Gaulle's term of office under the features of the reign of an absolute monarch (Martin). This is how De Gaulle's trip to Corsica is presented: "in the early hours of the morning, the King, in the procession of his glory, set off for his possessions in Corsica. To force the peasants of this wild island to bow to their Lord and Master, he was accompanied by a few squadrons of mercenaries" (Coral). At the same time, Coral proposes a second shift, this time graphic, using a graphic style that is round, clearly evocative of humorous strips, a style that suggests a confrontation made of mischief. This is probably one of the keys to the use of comics: their ability to depict bloody confrontations (assassination campaigns, bombings, plastic attacks) as childish pranks. For example, the attacks on the headquarters of the general government are depicted as the work of "invisible and mischievous leprechauns who came at night to blow up what had been built during the day" (Coral).

Yet the violence of the conflict is not absent, paradoxically. If the representation of law enforcement and loyalist soldiers remains almost systematically in the register of the ridiculous, repeating all the clichés about cowardly and stupid policemen, the representation of OAS forces is more ambivalent. On the one hand, they are portrayed as good boys with a bit of a joke, on the other as fierce fighters with exacerbated virility. Thus, they take on the features of mischievous *Chouans* who kidnap Edgard Pisani to make him listen to "some very blasphemous remarks." The riot at the Santé prison concerning the internment of Jean Dides, an epiphenomenon in the history of the OAS, becomes an epic confrontation spread over 10 pages, where once again violence is euphemized in the guise of a joyous brawl, which takes place with pots of extra-strong mustard or ground pepper. Therefore, if the violence is not absent, it remains largely euphemistic due to the graphic style derived from the "big nose" tradition. Thus, the clashes in the streets of Oran between the riot police and the supporters of the OAS during the Evian peace conference was transformed into a pleasant mischief, in which "the King's henchmen were disarmed and undressed at every street corner" – thus concealing the violence of the attacks on the French forces.

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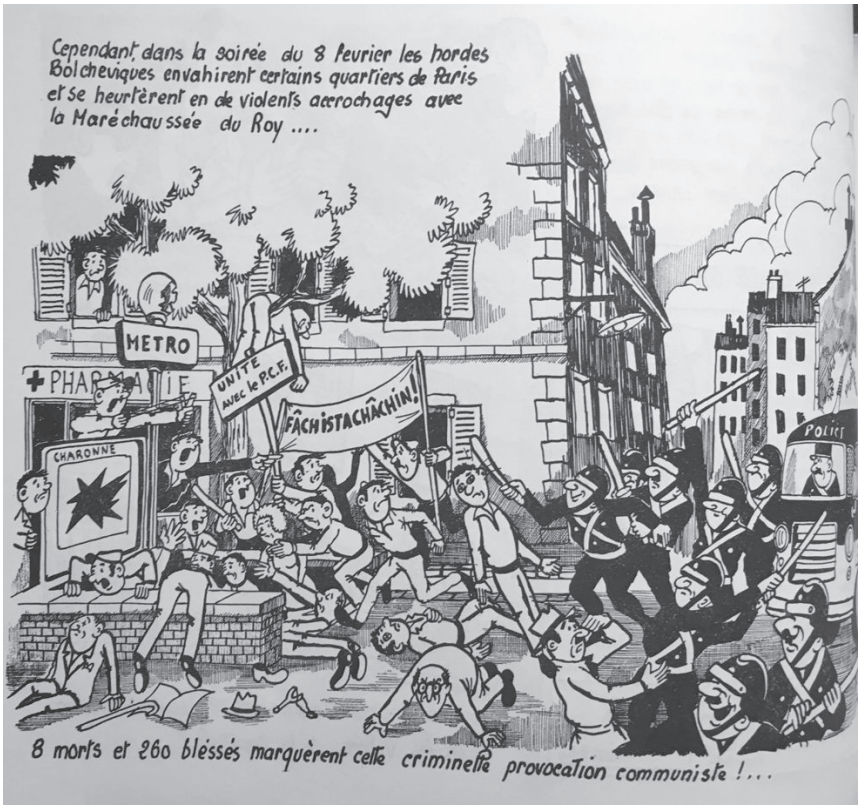

Fig. 4: Coral, *Journal d'un embastillé*, 1962.

The most symptomatic episode of this euphemization of violence is the representation of Charonne (Fig. 4). A drama structuring the left during and after the Algerian war, Charonne bears witness to the extent of police violence extended to the very heart of Paris. The demonstration organized by the unions and the main left-wing forces (PCF, PSU) turned into a tragedy when the police charged the demonstrators in the Charonne metro station; the jostling and the projectiles (cast-iron grills, in particular) thrown by the police resulted in the death of eight people (a ninth victim died shortly afterwards in hospital). The situation is problematic for Coral: Representing police violence makes it possible to castigate Gaullist hypocrisy; but the demonstration was protesting against the violence of the OAS. Coral therefore chooses a humorous representation, while clearly indicating the toll of 8 dead and 260 wounded – a toll immediately

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reduced by the observation that the demonstration was a "criminal communist provocation" – in fact taking up the state lie complacently peddled by the media of violent demonstrators who would have compelled the police to fight back.

Alongside these representations of good-natured violence, Coral also juxtaposes representations offering an apology for the virile strength of the OAS. In a very different style, anchored in a dark realism and a taste for crosshatching and chiaroscuro, Coral also includes representations that stem more from the codes of film noir or the spy novel, with its characters of virile and determined *baroudeurs*. The story thus oscillates between two figures embodying the OAS, casual *bonhommie* on the one hand, and manly assurance on the other.

This ambiguity on the front of violence – between laughing occultation and fascinated exaltation – is also found in the registers adopted by Coral. The author spends his time juggling between different levels of representation: metaphor, allegory, or realism. Many scenes borrow striking visual shortcuts from the visual cultures of childhood. These representations, most often, proceed by visual declensions of written figures. Thus, the administrative city of Rocher Noir, some twenty kilometers from Algiers, becomes "the fortress of Rocher-noir,' where the worst intrigues and the most diabolical projects were hatched. This process is repeated several times in the book, even in its title, *Journal d'un embastillé*, which proceeds by metaphorization of arbitrary confinement – an arbitrariness permitted precisely by the dynamics of war. Bluebeard, the witches' sabbath or the trope of the evil forest are thus taken up as elements feeding the dreamlike discourse.

In addition to the comical and whimsical style that dominates, and the dreamlike atmosphere that permeates certain pages, the dominant tone is one of realism that emerges in certain pages. It is precisely the interest of Coral's story to juxtapose fantasy and serious documentary. It is thus with great documentary precision that Coral depicts his cell at the Santé prison, in a drawing full of hatching that has all the features of authentic observational drawing (Fig. 5). This realism takes the form of pathetic representations in particular. Coral has to deal with a contradiction: his story is a story of defeat, and the apology of the OAS in images clashes with his position as a victim. He must therefore simultaneously project a positive, joyful image of the OAS, while portraying them as victims. From then on, between two sequences in the purest tradition of slapstick, Coral can depict the fate of the repatriated populations in pathetic terms.

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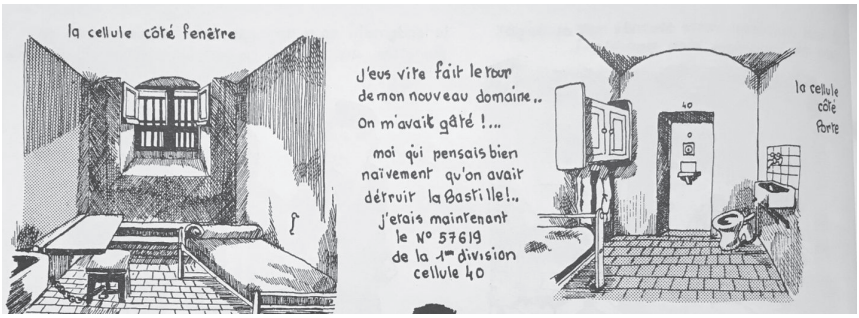

Fig. 5: Coral, *Journal d'un embastillé*, 1962.

As the next part of my chapter illustrates, Coral's entire narrative is impregnated by the memory of past conflicts that were then affecting French society. Through the memory of these conflicts, Coral summons a visual culture structuring the OAS. The visual heritage of the Second World War is particularly present, and what is striking about it is the way in which the narrative tries to turn the figure of de Gaulle upside down.

IV. 3° War of Images and Cultural Memory of Conflicts

Coral draws a sinister image of a camp, with the caption "While in a wild desert region the infamous Frey, minister of the King and executioner of the patriots, was opening a new concentration camp and throwing in bundles of citizens torn from their families, their children and their homes." Above this legend, he depicts the camp of Saint-Maurice l'Ardoise, with the sinister word "Stalag." The reference, in 1962, is clear: while the memory of the concentration camps is still largely obscured, and replaced by that of the camps where captured soldiers were detained, Coral brings together the imprisonment of the OAS militants and the German concentration camps – the expression "concentration camps" appears elsewhere in the book. In that perspective, Coral's book is clearly set in the context of the repressed memory of the Holocaust (Rousso; Azouvi).

What he neglects to mention in passing is the multiple roles of these camps. In fact, Saint-Maurice l'Ardoise was first of all an internment camp (or house arrest center, to use its official name) for Algerians. It was only later that this camp – and the others – welcomed OAS militants, before being reused from the summer of 1962 as a reception camp for repatriated

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harkis. The story is thus marked by a very clear schematism, which makes de Gaulle-Louis XIV an infamous despot at odds with noble patriots.

This episode of the camp also illustrates a procedure that Coral uses extensively: the reversal of the heroic imagery of Gaullism. The embodiment of the spirit of resistance during the war, de Gaulle here becomes the oppressor par excellence. Indeed, de Gaulle's political legitimacy is largely derived from his aura as a Resistance leader, and Coral sets out to demolish this figure by attempting to turn the iconographic codes on their head. The ball and chain with which he represents himself on the cover is thus affixed to the cross of Lorraine, which goes from being a symbol of Free France to a symbol of oppression. OAS militants were renamed "patriots of the Resistance"; the camp for Muslim "suspects" at Djorf, reallocated to the internment of Europeans arrested after the putsch of 22 April 1961, was thus renamed a "concentration camp." The arrests following the shooting of the Rue d'Isly and the dismantling of the Bab-el-Oued bastion were also described as "deportation," while dark and dejected figures paraded behind barbed wire.

Other, rarer references punctuate the narrative with allusions to earlier conflicts. With his "*On ne passe pas*," Coral mobilizes memories of the propaganda of the First World War, with a particularly famous poster by Maurice Neumont (Neumont 1918), using a formula from a popular song during the war, which crystallizes the resistance of Verdun (Verdun ! On ne passe pas 1916).

Above all, Coral multiplies the references to the Vendée War which, from 1793 to 1796, bloodied the French Revolution (Fig. 6). An episode that is still sensitive in French memories, the infernal columns remain a structuring factor in the imagination of the royalist far right. The Vendée War was a very violent war in the countryside and is represented here through the classic figures of the Chouans armed with rustic rifles and scythes, facing the modern weaponry and numbers of the CRS "infernal columns." Against the Cross of Lorraine erected as a symbol of oppression, Coral makes the sacred heart of the Chouans an alternative mobilizing symbol.[3] Other historical references pepper the story: while de Gaulle is sent back to Waterloo, Coral depicts the French soldiers leaving Algeria in the summer of 1962 as making "Franks, knights, musketeers,

3 One can observe here a contradiction between an artist retorting to the trope of French kings as political oppressors and his very clear appeal to monarchists. But precisely, the OAS itself was very heterogenous politically (Dard).

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sans culottes, grognards and poilus [...] blush with anger and shame at this unprecedented defeat." Here Coral returns to the historical imagination of the Third Republic, and the mobilization of history in favor of a project of national recovery after the 1870 defeat against Prussia.

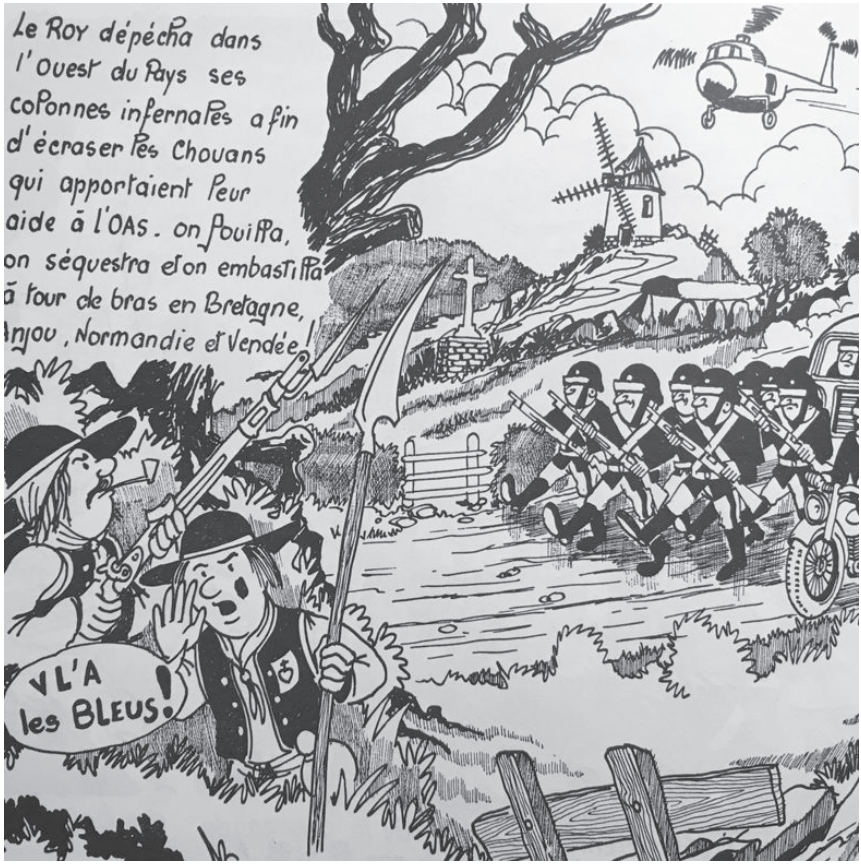

Fig. 6: Coral, *Journal d'un embastillé*, 1962.

These references to past conflicts can also be linked to the colonialist imaginary that feeds the narrative. Unsurprisingly, Coral's story is steeped in Orientalism, but it offers a limited version of it. While French Orientalism has its roots in the conquest of Algeria, it is based on a fascination with and eroticization of female bodies. However, this eroticization is absent here: all that remains of this orientalism is an obsessive hatred of "barbarians," depicted in the grimacing guise of savages armed with

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scimitars, "sowing desolation and misfortune through the arteries of the capital," or vociferating "anarchic *youyoutries* and hysterical contortions of a few decadent elements."[4] Also described several times as "sarrazins," the FLN is represented through racist clichés, which are first and foremost conveyed through images and grimacing features. However, the denunciation of the FLN remains secondary in the narrative: what Coral is aiming at is first and foremost the duplicity of de Gaulle and the renunciations of the French government.

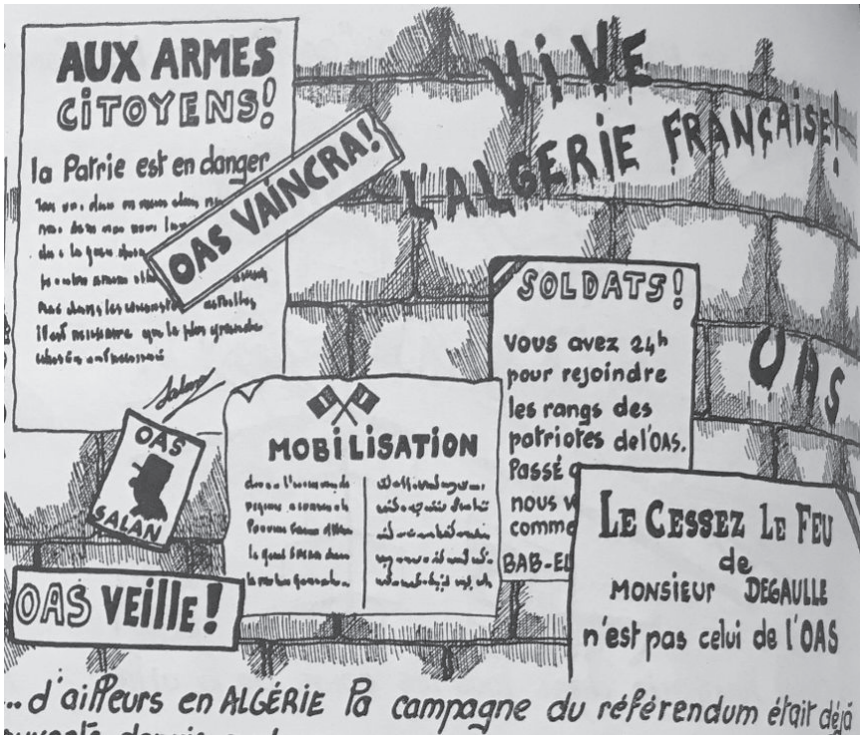

Fig. 7: Coral, *Journal d'un embastillé*, 1962.

This focus on de Gaulle can also be explained by the type of satire he uses in his story, which is quite similar to what can be found in the pages of

4 The term *youyoutries* is a portmanteau word used by Coral, aggregating women's ululations, *youyous*, and a very offensive word used by Anti-Semites, *youtrerie*, designating a gathering of Jews.

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the *Canard enchaîné* at the same time ("La Cour" section illustrated by Moisan), transposing de Gaulle's term of office under the features of the reign of an absolute monarch reigning in Versailles) or that of Jean Effel, notably in *L'Express* (for example the famous representation of a press conference on 30 January 1964, in which de Gaulle provides questions and answers). From then on, although xenophobic clichés (Italians described as "macaroni"), racist clichés (African kings as cannibals) and anti-Semitic clichés (Pompidou and Rothschild) are not lacking, they remain in the background and serve the purpose of denouncing de Gaulle's policies.

In addition to the references to past conflicts, Coral's narrative offers an interesting testimony on the weight of propaganda and counter-propaganda. His narrative is indeed woven with quotations, borrowings or allusions to propaganda efforts on both sides. The mobilization efforts of the OAS are, not surprisingly, very present. Posters and slogans punctuate the narrative, as do painted slogans, and concerts of pans. This aspect is probably all the less surprising as one can imagine Coral being involved in the OAS's psychological action activities. In this respect, his account is an extension of the war propaganda, but also offers a testimony on its implementation. The Algerian war led to a return of censorship, and Coral multiplies the scenes representing this war of information which redoubled the civil war in Algeria (see Fig. 7 above). Hacking into the radio waves, distributing leaflets, tagging slogans on walls, flying OAS colors, posters. This media battle is a response to the effectiveness of government propaganda. The independent press is also represented as being under orders and peddling governmental intoxications, such as *France-Soir*, the largest circulation of the French press at the time, renamed *France-Bobard* (*France-Fib*).

Although the orientalist imagination does not take up many sexualizing clichés about Arab women, Coral's work does present a highly sexualized vision of the European population in Algeria. On the one hand, it contrasts the virile strength of the OAS militants with the weakness of the loyalist forces, described for example as "the most beautiful collection of gaudy, good-for-nothing people we have seen." But it also offers, in parallel, a very sexualized vision of European women in Algeria, depicting them, for example, in Oran in a "seduction operation" supposed to demobilize the loyalist troops.

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Fig. 8: Coral, *Journal d'un embastillé,* 1962.

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Similarly, when Brigitte Bardot took a stand against the OAS, she was reduced to her looks. In November 1961, the actress received a threatening letter from the OAS demanding that she support French Algeria activists financially. The actress leaked the letter to *L'Express* magazine, which was at the forefront of the fight against the Algerian war; she declared, among other things, "I don't march because I don't want to live in a Nazi country." A sexual icon of the early 1960s, "B.B." saw this status turned against her: Coral described her as "the most beautiful buttocks in the kingdom," and depicted her on a film poster, naked, from behind, in a fictitious film entitled "*Je serai un vain cul*" (see Fig. 8).

The play on words is fraught with meaning: at first, it means "I will be a defeated man," but it also means "I will be an aimless ass." The Brigitte Bardot fantasy thus stops at the threshold of politics: Bardot's body not only disqualifies her politically, but it is also of no use once she joins the enemy's camp. Although the eroticization of the gaze also remains in the background, it plays an important role in sexualizing imaginaries, testifying to the way in which the Algerian War sexualizes colonial roles (see Brun and Shepard).

V. 4° Coral and the History of Comics: French Comics and the Bildungsroman

From then on, it's not that difficult to see in Coral a pioneer of the French graphic novel. With a story anchored in current events, in the most burning conflicts of the time, a narrative that carries the traumas still alive, *Journal d'un embastillé* could be considered as a turning point in the history of French comics, It is a story that is eminently partial and biased, but that offers a unique insight into what comics can provide as social testimony. However, the *Journal* is absent from the history of comics, and only a handful of specialists of the Algerian War mention its existence in passing. This discrepancy speaks volumes on how much comics historiography is canon-oriented.

In the French-speaking world, traditional historiography insists on the decisive changes that affected comics in the early 1960s. The period was indeed marked by several important transformations in the readership and the comics scene, starting with the launch of the newspaper *Pilote* (1959), which progressively targeted a teenage audience (and no longer only children) (Michallat). From its very first issue, the newspaper welcomed the Astérix series, through which Goscinny and Uderzo set out to mock

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school knowledge of history, and to make the Gaulish background the setting for a satire of identity (Rouvière, *Astérix ou Les lumières*; Rouvière, *Astérix ou La parodie*). Published in album form by Dargaud, the series established itself as a major publishing phenomenon; in 1966, it exceeded one million copies sold – a threshold below which the series has never since fallen – contributing decisively to the shift in the comic book market from newspapers to books (see Lesage, "Astérix, phénomène éditorial").

At the same time as these mutations affected the youth comic sector, the first visible signs of the birth of adult comics appeared. The publication of Jean-Claude Forest's *Barbarella* in 1964 by the Surrealists' publisher Éric Losfeld is often taken as a symbolic marker of this change: drawn eroticism left the space of the soldier's pocket, and ventured into the sector of respectable publishing (see Lesage, *Ninth Art*).

At the same time, the first comic book circles took shape between 1962 and 1964: the publication in the pages of the magazine *Fiction* in 1961 of a note by Pierre Strinati devoted to the "golden age" of science fiction comics in France (Strinati) gave rise to an abundance of letters from readers – several hundred, according to Francis Lacassin (Lacassin). This outpouring of letters from *Fiction* readers led to the creation of a 'Club des bandes dessinées' in March 1962, bringing together adults to reminisce about their youthful reading. This Club was renamed *Centre d'étude des littératures d'expression graphiques* (Centre for the Study of Graphic Narratives) at the time when a conflict broke out with a dissident faction of the club, which left to found the *Société civile d'études et de recherches sur les littératures dessinées* (Socerlid), directed by Claude Moliterni, who, around his magazine *Phénix*, quickly established himself as the nucleus of comics activism (Demange; see also Gabilliet and Labarre).

All these signals testify to the profound mutation that affected the comics landscape in the first half of the 1960s: comics were becoming more provocative, more mature. Handling self-mockery and absurd humor, venturing into the field of eroticism and radical graphic experimentation, it emancipated itself – not without conflict – from the gangue represented by the July 1949 law on publications intended for young people. Stimulating new reading practices, it structured new communities of learned and cultured readers.

At first glance, Coral's album *Journal d'un embastillé* fits well into this scheme. Published in 1962, it depicts the Algerian war from the French side. It is clearly intended for an adult audience, in touch with the most burning news, part of the debate of ideas, a hybrid object halfway between

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non-fiction and political satire such as can be found, for example, in the pages of *Le Canard enchaîné* (Screech). Coral's bbok might seem to be part of this wider movement of thematic expansion of comics to current issues, which can also be found, in the same period, in the pages of *Hara-Kiri* (Kohn). As such, adding it to the chronology could be no more than an additional nuance, a footnote that enriches our knowledge and understanding of the mechanisms that lead the Francophone comics to what they have become today.

But this model on which the Franco-Belgian history of comics is built is based on a clearly teleological writing: like American comics, the traditional history of comics is impregnated with the *Bildungsroman* (Pizzino) which would lead comics towards adulthood, in the double sense of a maturity of the readership and the medium. This tension between young and adult readership on the one hand, and between entertainment and art on the other, has been constructed since the early 1960s by journalists and comic book enthusiasts. Working to legitimize the "ninth art," these actors aimed to claim a new status for comics, at the cost of a selective writing of its history (Lesage, *Ninth Art*).

This linear schema, which would go from childish entertainment to a complex work intended for adults, constructed by the first comics enthusiasts, was taken up and amplified in particular by Luc Boltanski, one of the sociologists closest to Pierre Bourdieu, who, in the first issue of the journal that Bourdieu launched, the *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, described this schema in an article that has remained famous (Boltanski). In it, Boltanski analyses in a pioneering way the transformation of the landscape of comics. He links this transformation to the mutation of the way comics are viewed and, more broadly, to the mutation of the readership. In France, where schooling has been extended and secondary and, soon, higher education has been massively expanded, the relationship to culture is changing. While French cultural life is in the process of being overturned by the expansion of the middle classes, the comic book readership is extending its consumption of comics beyond adolescence. For Boltanski, this is not a coincidence, but rather one of the testimonies of what Pierre Bourdieu has called the "average arts" (*les arts moyens*) (Bourdieu). What is at stake in the comics scene is therefore the re-composition of cultural values, against the background of the emergence of middle classes that impose their new cultural norms while, simultaneously, the transformation in the socio-cultural composition of the authors brings out new voices, new creative adventures.

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VI. Conclusion

This understanding of the mechanisms by which the French comics changed status during the 1960s-1970s and gradually came to be treated as an art form has been, and continues to be, bitterly discussed (Maigret, "La reconnaissance"; Maigret, "Bande dessinée et postlégitimité"; see also Seveau). What interests me here is not so much the sociological interpretive key – the process of legitimation and its epistemological soundness – as the discussion of that moment in the 1960s when comics were supposed to move linearly from being entertainment for children, to being reading for adults. For, as the reader might have (hopefully) understood from the previous developments on the visual contents of the *Journal*, Coral's book does not fit this narrative. Not only because it was published directly in book form, whereas the 'adult' comics of the 1960s were first and foremost published in the press – such as *Barbarella*, which was published in album form by Losfeld (Forest), but first published in the pages of a second-rate erotica magazine, *V Magazine*. Although the albums received more critical interest, the creation of these works was primarily carried out by the comics magazines until the mid-1970s. The works that appeared directly in bookshops were more like editorial UFOs: for example, Alain Tercinet's astonishing adaptation of *Et on tuera tous les affreux*, a sulphurous cult novel by Boris Vian, which Losfeld (again) published in 1967 (Vian et Tercinet). Tercinet's version, which is the only known foray into comics, offers a parallel rereading of Vian's story, proposing a hybrid form between adaptation and illustrated novel. But such examples of comic stories appearing directly in book form are still totally exceptional (Preteseille).

Coral's story certainly shifts our chronology of what we call (with all the problems that poses) a graphic novel, because in many respects, if we were to accept the term (Baetens et Frey), this book would be a very good candidate, shaking up our conception of adult comics emancipated from children's illustrated press. We would therefore have another cultural series emerging here (Gaudreault), which remains to be questioned. Moreover, Coral's work is in line with the mobilization of drawing in the service of racist and anti-Semitic satire, which had a golden age at the time of the Dreyfus Affair, notably under the pen of Caran d'Ache (Tillier).

Coral's work raises many additional questions, starting with its reception: in which circles was it distributed, and how was it perceived? Moreover: How does the satire that Coral proposes (at least in part) fit in with the nostalgia that permeates the OAS? The investigation remains to

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be carried out, and promises to be complicated in terms of sources and accessibility. Despite the questions that remain open, Coral's album offers a fascinating glimpse into a little-known part of the history of comics: their militant uses, especially those leaning towards the extreme right. The way in which the extreme right-wing movements seized on comics to renew their communication is still little known, and would undoubtedly shed light on the complex re-compositions that this fringe experienced in the 1960s and 1970s, in the phase preceding the irruption of the National Front on the political scene.

It is of course uncomfortable to set up a reactionary, supporter of French Algeria, who multiplies misogynistic, anti-Semitic and racist representations as a key figure in the history of comics – but these are traits that could qualify many canonical authors, beginning with French "founding fathers" such as Alain Saint-Ogan or Hergé. In the end, Coral's concealment should probably be seen as a trace of this decolonial past that does not pass away, of the difficulty of French society in settling the accounts of the Algerian War (Stora; Branche; Jauffret; House et MacMaster). Inscribed on the wrong side of history, Coral is an eminently problematic figure. But it is undoubtedly in this way that he is a fascinating object of study.

If we want to understand the way in which comics allow the expression of competing and sometimes conflicting memories of the Algerian War, it seems to me that we should start by considering the treatment of the conflict in the heat of the moment, which already bears witness to the battles of memory surrounding the Algerian War. Coral's book should thus encourage comics scholars to broaden the corpus of the history of French-language comics. Beyond the magazines well known to several generations of researchers, a great number of stories nestle in the recesses of the cultural memory. Questioning the canon of comics historiography opens many perspectives to enrich our understanding of graphic narratives, their past and the issues they address.

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Part IV: Periodization, Canonization, Digitization

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Mark Hibbett

Periodizing 'The Marvel Age' Using the Production of Culture Approach

Introduction

Periodization is the process of defining temporal divisions which can then be used to categorize events within a certain period. Many attempts have been made to periodize American superhero comics, both in fandom and academia, mostly using the so-called 'Ages' system, but there has rarely been any agreement on how this should be done (Coogan). Furthermore, most attempts to define these 'Ages' have been based on personal interpretation of the contents, with vague ideas of start and end dates which are unsuitable for quantitative analyses. This chapter will demonstrate a way to avoid such issues by using an approach which concentrates on the way that texts are actually produced, rather than value judgements placed upon their contents, in order to define 'The Marvel Age' with specific dates which can be empirically justified.

The 'Ages' system for periodizing superhero comics was introduced in the 1960s when fanzines such as Roy Thomas's *Alter Ego* borrowed the term 'Golden Age' from Science Fiction fandom (Pustz; Bould, Butler and Roberts; Lent; Gordon). This has since become generally accepted and used to refer to the period covering the first wave of American superhero comics, which began in 1938 with the introduction of Superman in *Action Comics #1* (Reynolds; Saunders).

The idea of a 'Silver Age' to describe the second wave of superhero comics was first suggested in a letter in *Justice League of America* #42 and quickly gained popularity amongst the growing fan community, especially when it started to be used by back issue dealers as a way to categorize and price stock (Hamerlink; Yockey; Smith). This 'Silver Age' is generally agreed to begin with the debut of the second version of The Flash in *Showcase #4* in 1956 (Sabin).

Most schemes follow this with the 'Bronze Age,' but there is no single agreed starting point. Proposed beginnings rely on the idea that comics in the 'Bronze Age' became more 'relevant' with something to say about the 'real world,' such as the discussion of race in *Green Lantern and Green Arrow* #76 (1970), the halving of Superman's powers in *Superman* #233

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(1971) and the death of Gwen Stacy in *Amazing Spider-man* #121 (1973), amongst many others (DK; Sabin; Coogan, Superheo).

As to what comes next, there are almost as many definitions as there are fans and academics attempting to define it, with Iron, Dark, Renaissance, Heroic, Modern, Independent, Revisionary Superhero Narrative and Zinc Ages all being suggested along the way. These attempted definitions tend to suffer from the same problems, in that they are based on personal judgements and cannot be empirically verified. As Benjamin Woo (2008) states, "the Ages schema has demonstrated its usefulness as a means for fans to organize trivia and for the comic book industry to segment the market for its back catalogue, but it is singularly unsuited to the needs of contemporary scholarship" (269).

I had personal experience of this unsuitability for academic purposes during research for my PhD, which required the definition of a corpus of texts featuring the Marvel comics character Doctor Doom. My thesis sought to examine Doom as an early example of a transmedia character, and the intent was to do this by analyzing his appearances during the 'Silver' and 'Bronze' ages of comics. The initial corpus for this analysis was to be generated by querying a comics database, which required definite start and end dates. However, there was no consensus on what these dates should be, and all of the existing proposals were based purely on personal opinion, rather than any empirical methodology. Eventually I realized that a different periodization was required that could be defined in a clear, empirical manner, with reference to the Marvel comics that Doctor Doom appeared in during the 1960s to 1980s. Ideally this would be a periodization that had already been described, possibly with a name related to my subject matter, which I could then define.

This paper will therefore seek to explain how such a periodization was developed using an approach based on the cultural production of texts in order to examine a corpus of comics, cartoons, books and other media featuring the character Doctor Doom, and propose that it could be used in future as an empirically justified replacement for existing versions of the 'Ages' system which are, at best, vaguely defined. The term chosen for this periodization was 'The Marvel Age,' for reasons explained in the following section.

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The Marvel Age

The phrase 'The Marvel Age' first appeared on the front cover of *Journey Into Mystery* #94 in 1963 and has been repeated on Marvel covers and within their comics ever since. It has been used similarly in biographies, fan discussions and popular texts, as well as journal articles and academic volumes, but has never been formally defined.

The single aspect of 'The Marvel Age' that is generally agreed upon is that it began with the publication of *The Fantastic Four* #1 in 1961. As the oft-repeated story has it, when Marvel's publisher Martin Goodman told Stan Lee to create a new superhero team book to cash in on the success of *Justice League Of America*, his wife Joan suggested that, as he was considering leaving the comics industry anyway, he should write the kind of story he'd always wanted to write, with more complexity of character than standard superhero stories. Lee teamed up with Jack Kirby to create the series and together they combined their previous work in romance, monster and superhero comics to create a new kind of story that had more in-depth characterization, dynamic art and a more 'hip' sense of humor that was happy to mock itself (Pustz). They created a template for a 'Marvel style' that would set a dynamic, melodramatic and humorous tone for superhero comics for decades to come, eventually expanding beyond comics into the hugely successful Marvel Cinematic Universe (Yockey).

This new kind of superhero comic was immediately successful, both creatively and financially (Wright). Marvel became the dominant force in superhero comics for the next two decades, as its creators built a universe of super-powered characters who existed in a recognizably 'real' world where cosmic forces combined with everyday issues (Reynolds). Thus the publication of *Fantastic Four* #1 and the subsequent development of a cohesive universe, developed by a small team including Lee, Kirby and other notable creators like Steve Ditko, letterers, colorists, and in-house staff like Flo Steinberg and Sol Brodsky, marked the start of what came to be known as 'The Marvel Age.'

However, despite the term being used so regularly, there is no agreed upon definition of when 'The Marvel Age' actually ends. Indeed, in all my research I could only find three suggested end dates, all from comics writers. Mark Waid suggests that 'The Marvel Age' ended in 1992, with the 'The Death Of Superman' storyline in DC comics, which completed a move from "larger-than-life" to more "real life" heroes (Hoyle 15). Steve Englehart places the end as happening somewhere during his own run

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as writer on *The Fantastic Four* from 1987 to 1989, when he states that there was a "deliberate decision to end creativity" (Schwent). Finally Roy Thomas has it ending either in 1978 in his book *The Marvel Age of Comics 1961–1978* or, in the larger *75 Years Of Marvel Comics*, in 1985 (Thomas; Thomas and Baker). However, unlike Waid and Englehart, Thomas does not say why these dates were chosen, making them even less useful for periodization.

Elsewhere the end of 'The Marvel Age' tends to be placed at some vague point in the mid- to late 1980s , when DC came to be seen as the home of innovative superhero storytelling with series such as *Watchmen* and *The Dark Knight Returns*. There are, however, two problems with using this definition of 'The Marvel Age.' Firstly, it is far too ill-defined to be used for a data-driven approach – a database query cannot use the phrase 'sometime around the mid- to late 1980s' as a search criterion. Secondly, much of the definition of an endpoint relies on texts produced by another company – DC comics, rather than Marvel themselves. This is counter-intuitive for a period with Marvel in its name, and so an alternative method is required to find a specific comic, or set of comics, published by Marvel which can be used to mark the definitive end of this period. The method used for this project was the production of culture approach.

The Production of Culture Approach

Mass-produced comics have never been the work of a single creator yet, as Casey Brienza and Paddy Johnston argue in the introduction to *Cultures of Comics Work*, "there exists a tendency to canonize the writer and to advance a narrow, auterist vision of production when analyzing and studying comics" (Brienza and Johnston 1). Even when fans and scholars are aware of other credited individuals, such as pencillers, inkers, letterers and colorists, they are likely oblivious to the involvement of professionals such as designers, publicists, typesetters, distributors or retailers.

In order to solve this problem Brienza suggests that Comics Studies adopt the production of culture approach, which views all artistic work as "the product of collective, often routinized, human activity" and states that "to fully understand any artistic work, one must also study the larger social and organizational context of its production and dissemination" (Brienza 105).This seems an eminently sensible suggestion for the study of comics which, unlike more traditional literary fields, has always been

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rooted in collaboration, with a team of writers, artists, editors and other creators usually working together to create texts, rather than a single individual (Kidman).

This is especially the case for Marvel during this period, when 'The Marvel Method' was heavily used. This process involved the writer and penciller discussing a plot which the artist would then draw, the inker would embellish, and then the writer would dialogue, before the letterer would add speech balloons, and the colorist would color in (Yockey). The finished comic would then be printed, distributed, promoted and sold - this last part of the chain, crucially, would in later years take place in specialist comic stores which had their own input into the iterative creative process by feeding back to the publishers about what was selling (Pustz). Taking this approach has the potential to include all contributors to the final text, not just the writer and artists, thus including groups which have traditionally been absent from the study of comics from this period - for example, the common exclusion of colorists from the analysis would mean ignoring a profession that was vital to the creation of such stories and was almost entirely occupied by women (Century).

Brienza proposes the use of Richard Peterson's *Five Constraints on the Production of Culture* as a tool for comics research (Peterson). This offers an accessible, rigorous approach to comics research with concrete definitions based on practical evidence, independent of value judgements about the contents of text, which can then be used for analyses and corpus creation that requires specific dates (Brienza 108).

Peterson's five factors which constrain or facilitate the production of culture are organizational structure, occupational careers, laws, markets and technology. By analyzing these five factors, and their interactions with each other, he argues that one can develop a sociological, detail-oriented picture of an area of research. In comics terms Peterson's five factors can be understood as follows: 1) **Organizational Structure** – the corporate structure, size, and owners of the publisher, how it organizes its staff, and the way in which it is linked to other organizations; 2) **Occupational Careers** – the various individuals responsible for devising and producing the comics, and how they were organized to work within the industry. 3) **Laws** – the legal framework within which the comics are produced; 4) **Markets** – how the comics are purchased or consumed, which would include locations such as newsstands and comic stores, and details of sales figures; 5) **Technology** – developments in printing processes, coloring technology, and the delivery of product to stores. The next section will

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show how this approach can be used to periodize 'The Marvel Age' by examining the history of Marvel comics through the lens of Peterson's five factors.

Using the Production of Culture Approach to Periodize 'The Marvel Age'

The early organizational structure of the company we now know as Marvel Comics can be glimpsed within the actual text of *Fantastic Four #1*. This comic was issued in August 1961, although the date on the cover was November 1961, following the procedure of the time for cover dates to be roughly three months ahead of the on-sale date, in theory to encourage retailers to leave it on the shelf longer (Adams; Levitz). Also on the cover was a small box labelled MC, referring to Marvel Comics, but the indicia - the text inside the magazine giving official publication information - stated that it was published by Canam Publishers Sales Corporation. This was one of several different company names used by Martin Goodman, supposedly in order to make it difficult for creditors to track him down if his business got into trouble (Simon loc 1279). This had happened several times previously, notably in 1956 when his own distribution company Atlas got into heavy debt and he signed up with American News Company instead, who promptly went bust a year later (Tucker). Goodman was then forced to sign another new distribution deal with Independent Distribution, owned by his competitors National Comics, who offered him a restrictive deal whereby he could only publish eight titles a month. This required huge cutbacks for Goodman, and he was forced to fire his entire staff, with the sole exception of Stan Lee.

The effect of this for occupational careers at Marvel was that Stan Lee became the editor and main – sometimes only – writer for the sixteen bi-monthly titles that he and Goodman decided to publish in their eight monthly slots, with a small group of artists, letterers and colorists responsible for the entire line with little or no guidance from Goodman. This meant that the 'Marvel Universe' storyworld was able to emerge across different titles which were all being generated by the same compact team of creators and, although Stan Lee's notoriously poor memory meant that some errors still crept in, this form of cohesive, serialized, storytelling became a major selling point for Marvel over its competitors (Lee and Mair; Hills).

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In terms of laws, the legal framework for American comics in the twentieth century was set by The Comics Code Authority, a self-regulatory body set up by comics publishers in 1954 as an alternative to government regulation in the wake of public concern resulting from the publication of Frederic Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* (Costello). The code was a way for the industry to avoid government regulation by providing a voluntary standard of 'decency,' enabling distributors and retailers to be sure that the items they were offering to customers were free from controversial content which might land them in legal difficulty. (Palmer, 2016). It imposed guidelines such as government officials not being portrayed in an unflattering light, good always triumphing over evil, and no depictions of "sex perversion," "baser emotions" or "Vampires, werewolves, ghouls and zombies" (Weiner 246). Though not legislation in the strictest sense of Peterson's definition, compliance with the code was required by most distributors, especially in Marvel's early years, and changes to the way that the code was applied would resonate throughout 'The Marvel Age.'

Marvel gently pushed against the limitations of the Comics Code, reaching a climax in 1971 when Stan Lee was contacted by the Department of Health Education with a request that he write a Spider-Man story "warning kids about the dangerous effects of drug addiction" (Daniels 152). Lee agreed, but when the first instalment of the story in *Amazing Spider-Man* #96 was submitted to the Comics Code Authority it was rejected (Lee and Mair). Rather than change the storyline, issues #96 to #98 of the series were published without the Comics Code stamp. No mention was made of this in the comics themselves, with issue #99 returning to code approval, and there were no detectable consequences for the publishers. The code itself, however, was amended later that year to allow for more leeway in story content (Lopes).

The more 'realistic' storylines presented by Marvel were seen by fans as a definite selling point, especially when compared to the output of DC (Reynolds). Marvel's share of the comics market rose throughout the 1960s, although precise sales figures are unavailable due to the historical reluctance of comics companies to disclose such information (Tucker). Marvel became so profitable for Independent Distribution that in 1967 Martin Goodman was able to negotiate an increase in the number of titles which he could publish, leading to popular heroes such as Captain America and Iron Man finally getting their own titles (Howe).

The following year Goodman sold Marvel to Cadence for around $15 million, although he remained as publisher. As well as being profitable

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personally for Goodman this worked in Marvel's favor as Cadence owned its own distributor, Curtis Circulation. Marvel began to use them in 1969, removing any restrictions on the number of titles they could publish. By 1972 they would be publishing 270 comic titles a year, an expansion of 281% in ten years, and their sales figures finally surpassed DC's, an occasion which Marvel celebrated with a commemorative badge (Thomas and Baker)

Throughout this early period Marvel and DC, along with most comics companies in the USA, used the same printing company, based in Illinois, and so were subject to the same issues with print technology and the costs involved. Thus, when one company raised their prices, the others tended to follow suit. However, the way they managed these changes differed. In 1972, for instance, DC increased their cover prices from 15 to 25 cents, a huge rise which was matched with a rise in page count from 32 to 48 pages, with the extra taken up by reprints. Marvel did the same three months later, but only for one month, dropping their page count to the usual 32 pages again but the cover price to 20 cents, thus managing to raise their own profits while simultaneously appearing cheaper than their competitors.

This was one of Martin Goodman's final moves as publisher of Marvel comics. He retired in 1972 with Stan Lee taking over, leaving his post as editor-in-chief and thus beginning the process of gradually removing himself from the day to day running of comics, eventually moving to the West Coast to pursue movie and other media projects for the company. Lee's departure completed the exodus of the most well-known drivers of Marvel's early creative success, with Lee's main collaborators, Ditko and Kirby, having left in 1966 and 1970 respectively and signaled an end to this first period of 'The Marvel Age,' which saw the creation of the Marvel storyworld which is still in existence today.

What followed was a much more chaotic period, in which Marvel had five different editors-in-chief in six years. This was partly due to changes in the organizational structure, with Cadence's CEO Sheldon Feinberg hiring Al Landau as Marvel's new president, replacing Martin Goodman's son Chip. Landau had no experience in comics publishing and often clashed with staff, notably getting into a fist fight with Len Wein in 1975 after informing the editor that he hadn't been consulted about a change to the penciller on *Amazing Spider-man*, Marvel's top-selling title because "it was none of your fucking business" (Howe 166). A fight broke out, with Wein's friend Marv Wolfman, having to separate the two men.

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By this time Sheldon Feinberg was becoming suspicious of Landau's sales reports, so appointed Jim Galton, an accountant from Curtis Circulation and former executive at CBS, as Vice President. Galton discovered that Landau was basing his reports on sales estimates rather than actual quantity of titles shipped, leading to print runs constantly increasing to meet entirely fictional levels of demand, and more and more returns piling up in warehouses. He sacked Landau and took over as President himself. After discovering that Marvel was losing $2 million dollars a year, he decided to cancel titles, fire staff, and generally pare down the company.

The first editor to come into conflict with Landau was Stan Lee's successor as editor-in-chief, Roy Thomas, who tried and failed to persuade him to grant creators royalties or to return art once published (Tucker). When Thomas took over as editor-in-chief he found it difficult to give orders to the older generation of staff members he had inherited, who according to John Romita "felt like he was a kid who shouldn't be in charge" (Howe 149). He actively pursued new talent from the world of fandom where he himself had begun his comics career, bringing in a new wave of creators, including such names as Marv Wolfman, Len Wein, Steve Englehart, Steve Gerber, Tony Isabella and Jim Salicrup (Sacks, Hoffman and Grace; Gabilliet).

Thomas resigned in 1974 when he discovered an agreement between Stan Lee and DC's editor-in-chief Carmine Infantino to share information about pay rates in order to stop freelancers playing them off against each other. His replacement Len Wein only lasted for a year, resigning rather than undertake the sackings required by Sheldon Feinberg's attempts to "stop the bleeding" after Landau's dismissal (Howe 205). Marv Wolfman took over in April 1975 and tried to bring Marvel back into profitability by taking steps to reduce the missed deadlines that were causing more and more comics to be issued full of reprint material, leading to reader dissatisfaction and falling sales. This included employing a young DC writer called Jim Shooter as an associate editor, tasked with proofing plots before they went to artists to avoid errors before they got too far in the production process. Shooter would take this job very seriously, causing consternation amongst the editor/writers who, until that point, had been in complete control of their own output (Tucker).

Despite these efforts Wolfman, like Wein before him, found the job exhausting, especially in the face of demands from Cadence Industries to cut costs, and in 1976 he too stepped down, with Roy Thomas initially

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ear-marked to return. Thomas got as far as discussing his new pay deal before his friend Gerry Conway asked why he wanted to return to a job he'd left on such angry terms. Thomas agreed, removing himself from the running and recommending Conway for the job instead (Howe).

Conway encountered the same problems as all of his predecessors since Stan Lee, caused in part by the Marvel's increase in output. He was the youngest editor-in-chief yet at only 23 years old, and so the embedded staff felt able to resist his attempts to change the working culture. His attempts to change staffing procedures, combined with Shooter's ongoing efforts to properly edit material, led to further rebellions, and an exhausted Conway resigned, having been in post for just three months.

The final editor-in-chief during this period was Archie Goodwin, an experienced and much-liked figure within the comics community who, at 38, had the benefit of seniority over many of the younger writers and artists (Sacks, Hoffman and Grace). Like his predecessors, he attempted to introduce profit sharing, health insurance and the return of artwork as incentives to retain creators, but his requests were turned down by executives who didn't see why "people we hire for piecework" should receive such benefits (Howe 191). Eventually Cadence Industries agreed to pay royalty rates for reprints, which DC had done months earlier, but no more (Tucker).

The increase in comics coming onto market as a result of Marvel's new distribution deal led to increasing competition for sales during this period (Costello). Alongside this the cost of paper rose, bringing increases to cover prices, while the growth of television programming for younger viewers and the emergence of the video game industry led to increasing competition for the disposable income of comics' traditional adolescent audiences (Tucker; Palmer). At the same time, the traditional sales outlets for comics such as newsstands and 'mom and pop' corner stores were closing, being replaced by shopping centers and supermarkets which preferred to stock more profitable periodicals (Palmer). Put together all these factors caused a drop in overall comics sales throughout the 1970s (Howe).

During this time the relaxation of the Comics Code Authority meant that a wider range of story-types were available, and there was a brief boom in the monster and horror genres, with titles such as *Werewolf By Night* and *Tomb of Dracula* being published. Although still small in comparison, in 1974 the monster/horror genre was second only in popularity to superheroes (Lopes). This in turn influenced the content of superhero comics, notably by giving creators the encouragement to introduce

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'darker' themes and to feature characters like The Punisher and Doctor Doom in lead roles, going unpunished and sometimes even celebrated for acts which might elsewhere have been deemed 'horrific.' These sorts of storylines appealed to the changing demographic of comics buyers during this period, as teenage fans who would have normally moved on to other interests stayed within the community (Palmer), Their increase in number relative to other audiences accentuated their influence over the industry – as the traditional pre-teen audience declined these older fans began to demand more 'mature' storylines, with an increased interest in continuity (Pustz).

However, the biggest change to markets during 'The Marvel Age' began in 1973, when Phil Seuling approached both Marvel and DC with a proposition that would lead to the creation of the direct market (Howe). He proposed that the companies sell comics to him at the same level of discount as the major chains, but with the agreement that he would keep all copies bought, rather than returning them. With pre-orders months in advance the comics companies could print only as many copies as required, whilst direct market retailers like Seuling, and others who followed, got a discount, and could sell off unsold comics over time in the growing back-issue market.

In 1974, the first year of the direct market, Marvel made $300,000 through this route. By 1976 this had risen to $1,500,000 and by 1979 it was earning the company over $3,500,000 (Reynolds). The direct market began to change the economics of the comics industry, making it easier for series to return a profit with much lower print runs, giving the possibility, if not necessarily the actuality, of more diverse output (Palmer).

Jim Shooter had remained in place as Archie Goodwin's assistant, a position which some believed he saw as an audition for the top job (Howe). Stan Lee certainly came to regard it as just that. He saw that Archie Goodwin was unwilling to take the administrative and staffing decisions which he felt were necessary for the company's future, particularly firing people, and decided to replace him with Shooter, who appeared much more willing to do so (Sacks, Hoffman and Grace). This brought an end to some of the chaos that Marvel had been going through, and led to a period of consolidation during which Shooter attempted to strengthen the company and its storyworld.

Shooter set about bringing a more disciplined, DC-style, organizational structure to Marvel, installing a traffic manager and production expert to assist editors, overseeing the production of books more rigorously, and

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cancelling several titles that were underperforming (Tucker). One of his key appointments was Carol Kalish as Direct Sales Manager, who began the process of professionalizing this part of the industry, forging greater links between Marvel and the new comics shops, listening to retailers' needs and suggestions, and instigating sales of trade paperback editions to conventional bookshops (Howe; Hibbs; David) .

In 1983 Marvel came to the attention of corporate raider Mario Gabelli, who attempted a hostile takeover of the company (Howe). Jim Galton order Jim Shooter to bring in more revenues quickly in order to fight Gabelli, leading to a series of one-offs such as *The Marvel No-Prize Book* and *The Marvel Fumetti Book* and an increase in reprints (Sacks, Hoffman and Grace). Gabelli was eventually bought off, and Marvel was sold three years later to the film company New World Pictures. Shooter's attempts to enforce his own theories of story structure and professionalism on established creators led to many of them moving to DC and thus many DC books taking on Marvel's style, notably *Teen Titans* by Marv Wolfman and George Perez, and John Byrne's reboot of Superman in *Man O Steel* (Hatfield). The change in styles, with each company becoming more like the other, was evident at the time, with editor Al Milgrom remarking that "DC is Marvel and Marvel is DC" (Tucker 154).

Despite this discontent, overall sales rose, partly due to Marvel's series featuring licensed characters such as *Rom*, based on a Parker Brothers toy, Mego's *Micronauts* and Mattel's *Shogun Warriors* (Howe). These series were so successful that Marvel and Mattel decided to pair up to produce their own line of action figures starring the company's most popular heroes and villains, with its own tie-in series *Secret Wars*, which Shooter wrote taking inspiration from the constant requests from fans for one big story featuring all of the company's characters (Sacks, Hoffman and Grace).

The series was sold in huge numbers, selling an average of 800,000 copies for each of its twelve issues (Reynolds; Wright). Marvel's owners were delighted, demanding a sequel immediately (Sacks, Hoffman and Grace). When Carol Kalish addressed a meeting of comic shop owners she summed up the feelings of many when she said "Let's be honest, Secret Wars was crap, right? But did it sell?" (Howe 279). The gathered retailers reportedly cheered, and then cheered even more when she announced that a second series was on the way.

The success of *Secret Wars* and the continued professionalization of the sales operation contributed to Marvel's continued success in the Direct Market, which by 1982 had grown to make up 50% of the company's

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sales, and 70% of its profits (Tucker). By 1984 Marvel's combined circulation was double that of DC's, but Shooter's strict guidance on formulaic superhero storytelling allowed DC to begin to find a new market for itself by tapping into the growing older audience of comics buyers (Morrison). Thus while DC produced acclaimed series such as *Watchmen* and *The Dark Knight Returns* Marvel came to be seen as predictable and conservative, even amongst the narrow confines of superhero comics and their fans (Pustz).

The acceptance of comics as a 'mature' art form was at least partly due to changes in available printing technology during this time (Sabin). The fact that direct market retailers ordered comics in advance meant that Marvel were able to drastically reduce wastage in their printing processes, so that by 1980 they could afford to switch from cheap letterpress printing to the slightly more expensive offset method. DC and other comics publishers followed suit, and thus comics became less cheap-looking, and more acceptable to 'outsiders' as a product that could be kept rather than thrown away, more in line with the supposed sophistication and higher production values of the European *bandes dessinées* which were filtering through to comic stores in the USA at this time (Tucker).

One of the few events that curtailed Marvel during this time was a law suit from First Comics in 1983, claiming that they had deliberately flooded the market with new titles in order to push out smaller rivals (Howe). The suit would eventually be settled in 1988, but while it was ongoing it made Marvel nervous of over-expansion, notably preventing it from agreeing a deal with Warner Bros. to take over the publishing of several of DC's main superhero series (Sacks, Hoffman and Grace). It also demonstrated the growing influence of the comics fanzines, who were notably supportive of First's claims and critical of Marvel. For the first time, the comics companies were being 'watched' by a more organized fan community, and found themselves taking their concerns more seriously.

Thus, during Shooter's tenure the longstanding battle between Marvel and DC had seen the two exchange roles, with Marvel the conservative sales-leader unwilling to experiment and DC the creative underdog where exiting new content was being created (Tucker). Despite this commercial success, however, it was Shooter's ongoing battles with creators that would lead to his dismissal. Marvel's owners New World attempted to use Hollywood methods to solve human resources issues, sending fruit baskets to staff and upgrading job titles, but this had little effect (Howe). Matters reached a peak in April 1987, when the recently departed star

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creator John Byrne held a party at his house during which an effigy of Jim Shooter, stuffed with unsold copies of his *New Universe* line of titles, was burned by other former and present Marvel staffers (Sacks, Hoffman and Grace). A video of these proceedings reached New World who, seeing that Shooter's authority was well and truly undermined, fired him two weeks later in April 1987 (Howe). Jim Shooter's name was replaced by Tom DeFalco's as editor-in-chief in the credits of Marvel comics with cover dates of November 1987, meaning that comics dated October 1987 mark the end of Shooter's term as editor-in-chief.

After this Marvel, and the entire comics industry, entered a period of commercial turmoil which almost led to its destruction. New World sold Marvel to investor Ronald Perelman in 1989, and he placed the company's focus firmly on cash flow, selling licensing rights and publishing as many titles as possible (Howe). Editors were put on royalty plans to encourage this, and advances in printing technology meant that all sorts of variant covers, using holograms, glow in the dark ink, foil and various other gimmicks, were able to be issued as a way to extract as much money out of existing customers as possible by persuading them to buy the same comics multiple times (Sabin). Supposedly 'rare' variants attracted speculators and, once stories of such comics rising in value began to appear in the media, an idea took shape that comics were a good investment, leading to further increased sales (Tucker).

In terms of occupational careers, Tom DeFalco did much to repair relations with former employees and make improvement to creator rights over his seven years in charge (Howe). Notably he brought in a policy of returning artwork to artists, which meant that they were now able to make money selling original art to fans (Dean). This arguably led to an increase in splash pages and a reduction in story coherence, as pages with a single striking image could be sold for a lot more than multi-panel pages which simply advanced the story (Howe).

The company briefly experimented with the so-called 'Marvelution' in 1994, replacing DeFalco with five separate editors-in-chief, each in charge of their own 'family of titles,' but this only lasted for a year, with Bob Harass being instated as lone editor-in-chief in 1995. Harass would be in charge during a very difficult time for Marvel, as Perelman used the company to leverage debt on other investments, such as the purchase of companies like Toybox, Heroes World and Malibu (Tucker).

Around this time speculators realized that comics were not the great investment they had thought, and the sales bubble burst (Raviv). With

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many existing fans alienated by the drop in quality and new fans excluded by the over-reliance on continuity, the sudden departure of speculators led to a drastic drop in sales (Rogers). Comic stores across America went out of business, with the numbers dropping to 6,000 in 1995, 5,000 in 1996, and falling to 2,300 by 2002 (Pustz; Rogers). With the market in such massive decline Marvel's profits collapsed and Perelman was no longer able to service his debts, forcing the company into bankruptcy in December 1996 with debts totaling $1.6 billion (Tucker; Raviv). Marvel comics was nearly destroyed during this time, but gradually fought its way back to profitability under Harass and then Joe Quesada from 2000 to 2011 (Howe). Quesada's time as editor-in-chief covered the beginnings of the Marvel Cinematic Universe with the release of *Iron Man* in 2008 and the sale of Marvel to Disney in 2009.

Thus it can be argued that the departure of Jim Shooter as editor-in-chief in 1987 marked the end of 'The Marvel Age' as a distinct period in superhero comics history which had begun with *Fantastic Four* #1 in 1961. This periodization of 'The Marvel Age' saw the small, quick-footed structure of Marvel's early years allowing it to experiment and develop in exciting new ways that its much bigger rival DC was unable to compete with. The commercial success this engendered led to the company's sale to Cadence and then further sales success in the following decade which, in turn, led to internal chaos as Marvel's output and staffing grew quicker than its organizational structure could adapt to deal with. This would necessitate the organizational reforms of the 1980s which professionalized the running of Marvel, and allowed it to develop deals with other companies, licensing out its own characters in other media and taking on the licensing of other companies' characters for comics adaptation. However, this professionalization reduced its ability to experiment and develop and, ironically, allowed its now smaller rival DC to take on the creative underdog role that had been the source of Marvel's initial success. What came next was a period of turmoil, with huge sums of money being made and lost by people and corporations who had little or nothing to do with what had gone before.

Ending 'The Marvel Age' with Shooter's firing in 1987 also fits with the often-expressed idea that it finished at some point in the mid- to late 1980s, notably with Steve Englehart's suggestion that it happened during his run as writer on *Fantastic Four* from 1987 to 1989 (Schwent). It also feels appropriate that the cover date of October 1987 – the last month

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when Shooter was credited in all Marvel comics as editor-in-chief – was the cover date for the final issue of *Watchmen*.

Conclusion

Using cover dates to define 'The Marvel Age' as including comics dated from November 1961 to October 1987 gives a precise definition which can be used in the selection of a corpus of texts for other analyses. Furthermore, cover dates combined with the position of editor-in-chief can be used to define three sub-periods within 'The Marvel Age.'

The first is the 'creation' period contained within Stan Lee's time in charge, with comics dated November 1961 to August 1972, when the Marvel Universe as we know it today was largely created. This is followed by the 'chaos' period from September 1972 to April 1978, when Marvel had a rapid turnover of editors-in-chief, and finally Jim Shooter's time in charge from May 1978 to October 1987 which I have named the 'consolidation' period. These sub-periods can be used to select texts for analysis within 'The Marvel Age' and to show how the storyworld developed over time (Hibbett).

	Cover dates
Creation	Nov 1961 Aug 1972
Chaos	Sep 1972 - Apr 1978
Consolidation	May 1978 - Oct 1987
The Marvel Age	Nov 1961 - Oct 1987

Table 1: Cover dates for 'The Marvel Age' and its sub-periods

Using the production of culture approach to define 'The Marvel Age' and its sub-periods in this way ignores the actual content of the texts, thus removing value judgements about the storylines or artistic styles from the periodization (Palmer). This means that, once the periodization is complete, it can be used as a way to reliably examine exactly those creative trends, understanding the creative changes within Marvel through an examination of the broader social and organizational context of the time. For example, it shows the way that gradual changes to distribution mech-

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anisms had a colossal commercial and creative impact on Marvel's output, something which would be missed in a purely content-based review.

Seen this way, the development of the storyworld that came to be known as 'The Marvel Universe' is not some unexplainable wonder of creativity, but rather the product of the working conditions of the company. In a highly collaborative industry with low cultural capital, a small group of people working across a range of series were able to connect their stories together in a way that would not have been possible with separate creators working individually, or in an environment where their work was valued enough to be appraised by executives.

Additionally, periodizing 'The Marvel Age' in this precise manner means it can be used by other research projects to define their own corpuses, and then for the datasets derived to be reliably cross-analyzed, safe in the knowledge that they are examining exactly the same period. This in turn opens the door to the possibility for greater collaboration and the uncovering of information which would not be possible for individual researchers working alone.

As an example, this periodization was originally developed in order to define a corpus of texts to be examined for my PhD thesis, and the data generated from this is now available to be downloaded online (Hibbett). This data concerns Doctor Doom, but if another researcher wished to carry out another such analysis on a different character, they would have an empirically defined periodization with which to generate their own corpus which did not depend on any biases inherent in the original study. The character Mr Fantastic, for example, has appearances that pre-date the first text featuring Doctor Doom, but these would still be included under the periodization of 'The Marvel Age.' Defining the period independently of specific characters, individual creators or value judgements on content means that researchers can use it reliably to produce independent datasets about topics such as character development, authorships, corporate competition, fan studies or multiple other aspects of Comics Studies which can then be shared, as mine is, and hopefully re-used.

In short, taking a production of culture approach to periodizing 'The Marvel Age' is not only a way of closely examining a time of creative collaboration, but also a way of encouraging further creative collaboration in the field of Comics Studies itself.

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Felix Giesa, Rita Hartel and Alexander Dunst

On German Comics Traditions: An Explorative Approach to Digital Comics Historiography

1. Introduction

A recurring topos in the historiography of national comic traditions is the question of the independence of existing styles, even to the point of claiming that comics were invented in a single country, whether in the United States, Germany or France. However, transnational distribution channels, such as the fact that American or Japanese Comics are read globally in their original language, and collaborations across borders complicate such accounts of specific characteristics or alleged origins (cf. Mazur 2014). Against this backdrop, the chapter that follows will approach the question of style by using a distant-reading approach, a term first introduced by the literary scholar Franco Moretti, which has come to be closely associated with the digital humanities (cf. Moretti 2000). This approach refers to the intersection of computational analysis and the study of literature and culture. The research results presented below will serve as the basis for a research project that aims to create a digital corpus of German comics productions from 1945-1970, adapts selected methods from the digital humanities – from digital annotation to automatic image recognition – to these serial pictorial texts, and demonstrates their potential for comic research through selected pilot studies.

For more than a decade, comics research has been one of the fastest growing fields in the humanities. However, as we argue below, comics historiography in the German-speaking world has so far remained limited. As a consequence, the lack of representative corpora not only prevents the sort of quantitative research that characterizes much of the digital humanities but, as we will demonstrate, also stifles ambitions to arrive at a more comprehensive historiography of German comics production. Although computer-assisted methods are beginning to find their way into comic research (cf. Dunst et. al. *Empirical Comics Research*), carefully constructed corpora and medium-specific modes of analysis are needed to fully benefit from these approaches.

The chosen period of study – the years 1945 to 1970 – represents a first productive period of German-language comics, which were able to estab-

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lish themselves as a popular medium in the aftermath of World War II with the aid of translations as well as domestic titles (cf. Dolle-Weinkauff, *Comics.*). In particular, the 1950s and early 1960s represent an initial heyday of comics in Germany (cf. Faulstich; see also Rosenfeld 2016). With the cultural transformation initiated by the generation of 1968, significant upheavals also took place in the comics market (cf. Dolle-Weinkauff 1990, Mazur 2014). In the following decade, these changes led to a diversification of comics production and an increase in comics specifically aimed at adult readers (cf. Dolle-Weinkauff *Comics made in Germany*; Giesa). The changes in comics production in the 1970s towards a significantly older audience (cf. Kaps) represent a clear caesura for the classification of the corpus under investigation. Therefore, this research project aims to fill a gap in previous historiography, as the early decades of German-language comics in particular have remained understudied so far (cf. Giesa). In addition, we want to increase the visibility and accessibility of the comic archive of the Institute for Children's and Young Adult Literature at Goethe-University Frankfurt, which has a substantial collection for the chosen period (cf. Dolle-Weinkauff 2005; Giesa 2021), and from whose holdings a sufficient research corpus can be formed.

Making these holdings accessible is a central prerequisite for our project: Since 1990, the holdings of the Frankfurt Comics Archive had been recorded in a local database using the library software BISMAS. For some time now, this database no longer met the technical and security requirements of such a system. Together with the Frankfurt University Library and the Hessian Library Information System *hebis*, a migration solution was developed and implemented in spring 2020. However, the current indexing system only consists of basic information, including title, author, publisher, and location, and inconsistently records additional details such as language, publication series, or unit post title (Giesa 2021).

In what follows, we will first give a brief overview of historical research on German-language comics to date. This section will be followed by an overview of the state of the art in digital comics research, which provides the foundation for the pilot study conducted for this chapter. After discussing its results, we end on a short outlook on future research.

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2. Historical Research on German Comics

In the 1980s, collectors began to publish bibliographical records on the subject of comics. Peter Skodzik's *Deutsche Comicbibliographie* (German Comics Bibliography) represents an important cornerstone in the systematic recording of German-language comics and continues to be published as *Allgemeiner Deutscher Comic Preiskatalog* (cf. Skodzik). Much more limited in access but attempting to provide information beyond bibliographic data is the multi-volume *Illustrierte Deutsche Comic Geschichte* (1986-2002; altogether 19 volumes), edited by Siegmar Wansel. In addition to bibliographic data, illustrations of covers and, in some cases, content are included. These function as important (re-)sources for the construction of a sample corpus for our research project, for instance, when estimating the total number of titles for each year under investigation. At the same time, the annotation of the title records and digitized comics with metadata would enable more complex access to the holdings.

In his PhD thesis, Joachim Kaps describes *Erwachsenen-Comics in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* [transl.: *Adult Comics in the Federal Republic of Germany*] als *Das Spiel mit der Realität* [transl.: Playing with Reality] (1990), while Gerd Lettkemann and Michael F. Scholz initiate East German comics research with *"Schuldig ist schließlich jeder ..." Comics in der DDR. Die Geschichte eines ungeliebten Mediums* [transl.: "After all, everyone is guilty ..." Comics in the GDR. The history of an unloved medium] (1994). These bibliographic-historiographic works contain a wealth of relevant material. In addition to providing an overview of historical periods, they represent individual case studies. However, their approach proves to be circular, since the scholarship is not hypothesis-driven but rather relies on its own founding assumptions – comics increasingly address adults from the 1980s on (Kaps), or the political and artistic dependencies of comics creators in the unjust regime of the GDR – as a prerequisite for the selection of the research material. Even though the proposed project will conduct research on earlier periods, we also aim to establish methodologies that may prove useful for further research by establishing empirically valid procedures for historical corpus construction and analysis.

In addition to the publications initiated by Skodzik and Wansel, *Jahrbuch Deutsche Comicforschung* (Yearbook of German Comic Research) has been published since 2005 and analyzes German visual culture from a historical perspective and in a more popular vein. The contributions to the yearbook usually amount to a purely descriptive treatment of indi-

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vidual phenomena. This approach is characterized by the limited access to historical comics production that scholars of German comics must currently rely on. However, the contributions do not usually reflect on the ensuing bias and are also characterized by their focus on German comics traditions alone. A transnational comics historiography, aware of processes of exchange and mutual development, therefore still remains a desideratum. As a consequence, our approach aims to show how or if German comics traditions have developed in comparison with comics that appeared in translation during the same period. As we argue in the next section, digital research methods represent an opportunity to identify previously unrecognized aspects of comics style with the help of large comics corpora.

3. Digital Comics Research to Date

After a rather hesitant start, computer-aided approaches have increasingly found their way into comics research in recent years. This is evidenced not only by the first book publications and overviews, but also by a number of externally funded projects in Europe and North America, as well as existing research networks (Dunst et al. *Empirical Comics Research*; Laubrock & Dunst 2020). Nevertheless, it could be argued that the fruitfulness of digital research methods for comics history is only just beginning. There are several reasons for this assessment: As a multimodal medium that combines writing and images, comics pose complex challenges for computational recognition and analysis that require domain adaptation of existing solutions from computer science. In many cases, this adaptation is complicated by the lack of high-quality datasets. In addition to the amount of data required, the key issue is to ensure that the diversity of cultural production is represented in digital corpora. Although progress has been made in this area as well, no data collection exists to date that maps German-language comics of the twentieth century. As a result, historical research in this field mostly refers to individual titles. Due to the limited availability of data, these cannot be examined for their representativeness: Historical developments potentially remain unrecognized, or their significance cannot be correctly assessed (cf. Dunst ,"How We Read Comics").

Our approach to digital comics historiography is based on another pilot project in computational comics research, the early-career research group "Hybrid Narrativity" at the universities of Paderborn and Potsdam,

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which was funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) from 2015-2020. Within this group, digital methods were developed and evaluated to automatically recognize and analyze the content and structure of graphic novels, i.e., comic narratives in book form, which have received increased attention since the 1970s and have helped comics to gain cultural recognition. In the first project phase more than 250 graphic novels, representing a total of more than 55,000 pages, were retro-digitized.

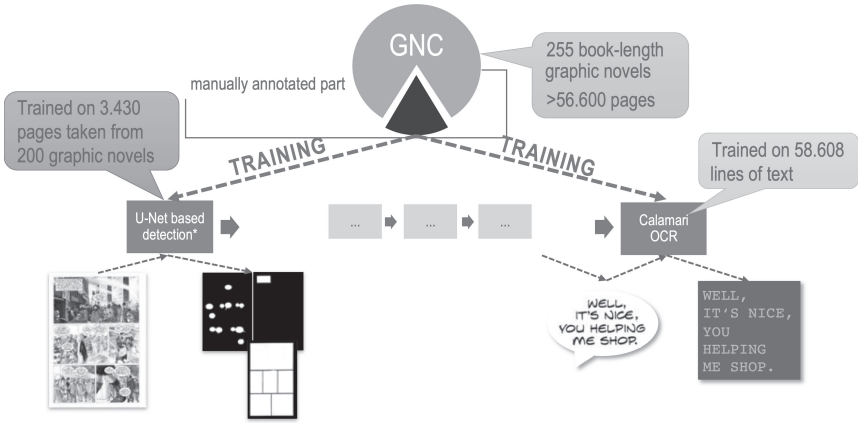

Fig. 1: AI models trained and training data and process within the early-career research group "Hybrid Narrativity"

A sample of these pages – complete graphic novels as well as excerpts – was annotated manually. These annotations include comics panels, characters, speech bubbles, and text captions, including their textual content. Annotations were then used to train AI models, which make it possible to find the outlines of panels, speech bubbles, and text captions or to recognize text content, which remains a non-trivial task due to the handwritten or quasi-handwritten fonts used in comics. This process is visualized in Figure 1. One outcome of this research was the M3 editor (Dunst et. al., "Graphic Narrative Corpus"), a tool for the semi-automatic annotation of comics, pre-trained on AI-based models for text and object recognition in comics (see Hartel and Dunst, "An OCR Pipeline"; Dunst and Hartel, "Computing"; Dubray and Laubrock) as well as historical studies on the stylistic and narrative development of comics (Dunst, "How We Read Comics"; Dunst, *The Rise of the Graphic Novel*). In the following section,

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we present a pilot study that builds on this existing research to envision a digital historiography of German comics.

4. Pilot Study

The Institute of Children's and Young Adult Literature at Goethe-University Frankfurt currently owns a collection of around 70,000 comics, of which approximately 60,000 are indexed by title records. The department thus has the largest holdings of German-language comics in public ownership. For the period 1945-1970, publication figures of approximately 30,000 comics can be assumed by extrapolation from the catalogue, of which a non-representative cross-section of 3,260 can be found in the Frankfurt comics archive. The holdings are divided into 3,200 issues and 60 albums and paperbacks. These figures were calculated as follows: in the catalogue, issues, albums, and paperbacks can be distinguished by local classification. The numbers for albums and paperbacks were unambiguous but needed to be established manually for magazine issues. The information given in the catalogue does not specify how many issues of a specific comics series are available in the library. Therefore, a random sample of ten comics series was selected to calculate the average number of individual issues. Since the existing database is not very granular, comics in German as well as in several foreign languages in the collection (the most common are English and French) were included in the sample.

In a next step, we sought to evaluate how well the methods developed for the "Hybrid Narrativity" research group work on comics in the Frankfurt archive. For this purpose, we digitized a test sample from the collection. 74 comic books were chosen at random. Student helpers then digitized the first 10-15 pages (depending on the number of bibliographical pages among them) with a book scanner. Comic books that did not include a majority of pages with a panel layout were excluded from the test sample. Once these pages had been scanned and saved, the sample included 1,723 pages. We used the AI-based software developed as part of the aforementioned research group to run automated panel, balloon, and caption recognition on the scanned pages. While the model had been trained on book-length graphic novels, most of the pages for our current approach were rather short comic books. As we might assume more variation between than within texts, it was a reasonable assumption that the models would not perform as well on the comics book as they did on the

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graphic novels. To estimate the automated recognition rates on the fresh data, we therefore performed two different evaluations. On the one hand, we printed so called overlays that fill the area of the detected objects with half-transparent color, so that a quick glance can establish whether the objects had been detected correctly. In addition, the student helpers counted the number of panels, balloons, and captions for each scanned page as a target value. This calculation made it possible to compare the target value to the actual number of objects that were detected automatically.

Our previous work had shown that the confidence ratio of the automated text recognition (ATR) correlates quite well with the precision of the text recognition itself. Thus, we chose to take this confidence ratio as a quality estimate. If text is recognized with a confidence ratio of more than 90 percent, this text can usually be read quite well as it only contains a few characters that deviate from the original (often these deviations are missing blank spaces between two words). The results of the pilot study tests showed that among the different objects, panels and speech balloons can be detected most successfully, reaching a recognition rate of 93.7 and 90.4 percent, respectively. In these cases, 89 percent of pages reach a recognition ratio of more than 90 percent for the panels, and 80 percent of the pages achieve a recognition ratio of more than 90 percent for balloons. Automated detection of captions still works quite well, with an average recognition rate of 77.4 percent. Here, 64 percent of pages have a recognition ratio of more than 90 percent for the captions. The average confidence of the automated text recognition was even higher, at a ratio of 94.2. These particular results came as something of a surprise. The original training material, the graphic novels, were mostly written in English, whereas the comics pages also contained French and German text. 88 percent of the pages achieve a confidence rate of more than 90 percent.

A detailed overview of these figures is presented in Figure 2. The figure shows a histogram of the detection quality of the different objects. The dashed lines visualize the mean quality for each of the objects.

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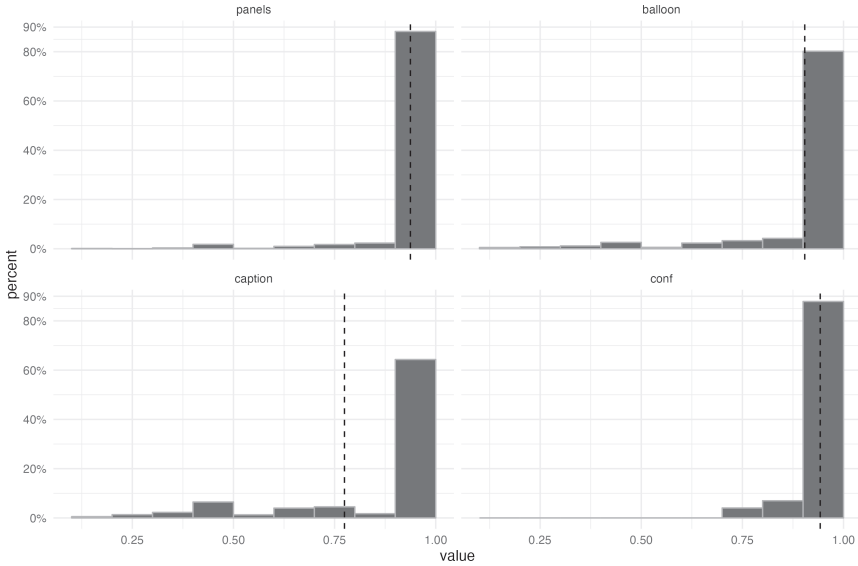

Fig. 2: Frequency distribution and mean value for the quality of the automated detection of panels, balloons, captions, and texts.

Table 1 shows examples of original pages, the speech balloons that were detected on this page, one of the speech balloons, and its recognized text. The first line shows a page of the German comic "Ulf der edle Ritter" (transl.: Ulf the noble knight) that reached a confidence rate of 99 percent. All balloons have been detected correctly, and the single error in the text detection is the missing umlaut (which was to be expected, as the AI was trained on English training data, which does not contain umlauts). The second line shows a page of "Slow Death", which has a confidence rate of 93 percent. Nearly all balloons have been detected correctly – but with a lower confidence rating, demonstrated by the gray speckles within the speech balloons – only the small balloon in the top right panel was mistakenly identified as a caption. Although the text lines are a bit crooked and the font is quite irregular, the text contains only a few errors: "F" instead of if "iF", "APDEAR" instead of "APPEAR", "EFTFECTS" instead of "EFFECTS", and "GREENE" instead of "GREENIE". In this case, an automatic spell-check would eliminate two of these four errors. It should be noted that the confidence rating of this comic is lower than that of 75 percent of the comics that we processed in the preliminary tests. In

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other words, the quality of most other texts included in this sample was significantly better.

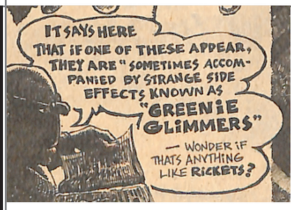
Original Page	Detected Balloons	Example balloon	Detected Text
			FAHRT DEN WAGEN VOR UNSER VER STECK UND VERSTAUT DIE WAREN! D SCHIEBT DEN WAGEN UBER DIE KLIPI PFERDE VERKAUFEN WIR. HINZ UND KOMMEN NACH WIR HABEN NOCH EINE ARBEIT ZU ERLEDIGEN!
			IT SAYS HERE THAT F ONE OF THESE APDEAR, THEY ARE " SOMETIMES ACCOM-PANIED BY STRANGE SIDE EFTFECTS KNOWN AS "GREENE GLEMMERS" -WONDER IF THATS ANYTHING LIKE RICKETS?
			TOUOURS RIEN DE CHICAGO,NIDE WASHINGTON, NI D AILLEURS?.... C'ESTBON. PUISQUECESTCOMME CELA, JE VAISPROCEDER AUTRE-MENT!

Table 1: Original Pages, detected balloons, and the automatically detected texts for different confidence rates.

In comparison, the third line shows an example of a comic, for which the automatic text recognition did not work as well, with a confidence rate of 85 percent (95 percent of the comics had a better confidence rate). The page is taken from the French comic "Kon Tiki." In this example, there are more errors within the detected text. However, the errors are all missing blank spaces, missing apostrophes, and a missing accent. As we mentioned before, our model was trained on English texts, whereas the detected text is in French. So, we are confident that we can increase the quality of the text detection significantly if we adapt our training process to the comics corpus of the Frankfurt Comics Archive.

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5. Conclusion and Outlook

To summarize the evaluation based on our preliminary sample: Although the models were trained on substantially different data, our first tests show promising results. A set of training data based on the Frankfurt comics archive should help to improve the models further and yield even better results for automated recognition. With improved recognition, we can establish a semi-automated annotation process that detects panels, speech balloons, and captions including the texts of the latter two. This will result in annotations that only require a final round of quality control and minor corrections – a process that we expect to be a lot less time-consuming than fully manual annotation. This semi-automated process will provide high-quality data for different types of text and image analysis and allow for comparison between the Frankfurt comics archive, the Graphic Narrative Corpus (GNC), and other datasets.

Of course, automated recognition of the fundamental graphic and semantic components of comics does not, in itself, constitute scholarly insight. Yet, as other historical research that build on digital humanities methods has shown, large-scale data may build the foundation for new perspectives on cultural production. Thus, a quantitative analysis of comics text has the potential to reveal changing vocabularies, as the medium sought to address a new readership during the 1970s. Comparison between translated comics from the Francophone or English-speaking world with German-language comics may highlight specific themes that have escaped more anecdotal studies. Long-term trends in the amount of text per page could indicate a shift towards greater visual focus in comics, as Neil Cohn, Ryan Taylor, and Kaitlin Pederson have argued for serial comics in the United States (2017), which increasingly sought to tell their stories with the help of narrative drawings rather than linguistic explanation. A focus on the number, placement, and sizes of panels may similarly demonstrate stylistic shifts. Further insight will be gained from combining visual and textual measures in comics and drawing on information regarding authorship, genre, and place of publication. In all these cases, the combination of qualitative and quantitative research, rather than the rejection of one approach for another, promises to advance comics scholarship in the years to come.

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List of Contributors

Mohit Abrol: As Doctoral Fellow, Mohit Abrol is currently pursuing PhD in Literature from the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IITD), New Delhi, India. His research interests include the postmodern condition, phenomenology, narratology, Marxist studies, affect theory, Indian graphic novels, modernist poetics and literary criticism.

Stéphane Collignon: Dr Stéphane Collignon is lecturing on animation theory, image analysis, and transmedia as well as teaching a variety of writing workshops for live action, animation and transmedia at Haute École Albert Jacquard, in Namur, Belgium. He has a background in Journalism, Film Studies and Film Writing, and his PhD dissertation focused on animation aesthetics and its ties to print cartoon, caricature and the uncanny valley theory. His research interests include empirical aesthetics, genres, visual narration (including animation, comics, etc.), transmedia and pro wrestling (cuz it's awesome!)

Alexander Dunst: is currently Privatdozent in the Department of English and American Studies at Paderborn University and Honorary Research Fellow at the Centre for the Social History of Health and Healthcare at Strathclyde University. He has published widely on the intersection of comics studies and the digital humanities, most recently in the monograph The Rise of the Graphic Novel: Computational Criticism and the Evolution of Literary Value (Cambridge UP, 2013).

Rita Hartl: is a research associate at the University of Paderborn. Her current research is focussed to the areas of data compression for sequences (e.g. Strings, genome sequences), trees and graphs. In this area, she is primarily interested in the research of compression techniques that allow to work on the

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compressed data in a similar way as on the original data, e.g. to search, process, and modify the compressed data. In addition she worked on the automatic or computer-aided analysis of text and image data of graphic novels and comics.

Mark Hibbett: Mark Hibbett currently works for University of the Arts London and holds a PhD about Marvel's Doctor Doom. He also plays music with his band The Validators, in which capacity he is best known for the song 'Hey Hey 16K', one of the world's first ever internet singles.

Felix Giesa: works as assistant professor and custodian at the Institute of Children's and Young Adult Literature Research at Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main. In addition to his responsibility for the institute's historical comic and children's book collections, he is interested in making these holdings digitally accessible and researchable.

Anja Lange: Anja Lange studied Eastern Slavonic studies and Western Slavonic studies in Leipzig and Kyiv and German studies in Magdeburg. In Kyiv, she worked as a DAAD language assistant from 2013 to 2014 and as a DAAD lecturer between 2014 and 2019. From 2019 to 2020, she taught scientific work and writing at the Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg. Since 2020, she has been a DAAD lecturer at the German-Kyrgyz Institute for Applied Computer Science in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. She is completing her doctorate on the subject at the University of Leipzig. Her dissertation title is "Promoting autonomy through individual language learning counseling with Kyrgyz students: an action research project." She has published a comic study titled "The Beginning of Ukrman – a Fighter Against the Evil and the Coronavirus" (Galactica Media: Journal of Media Studies Vol 2, No. 3) and *Daohopak*, a comic series about Cossacks as part of the identity formation of

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Ukraine (Bernd Dolle-Weinkauff: Geschichte im Comic: Befunde – Theorien – Erzählweisen)

Sylvain Lesage: Sylvain Lesage is associate professor in history at the University of Lille. He specializes in book history and media studies, with a particular interest in comics. His PhD dissertation provided the material for two books published by the Presses de l'Enssib (*Publier la bande dessinée. Les éditeurs franco-belges et l'album*, 2018) and the Presses universitaires François Rabelais (*L'Effet livre : métamorphoses de la bande dessinée*, 2019). His latest book is published by Palgrave Macmillan: *Ninth Art. Bande dessinée, books and the gentrification of French mass culture, 1964-1975* (2021).

Paul Malone: Paul M. Malone (pmalone@uwaterloo.ca) is Associate Professor of German in the Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies at the University of Waterloo, Canada. He is the author of *Franz Kafka's The Trial: Four Stage Adaptations* (Peter Lang, 2003), and has also published on performance theory; Faustian rock musicals; German theatre and film; and on German-language comics, from advertising periodicals to superhero comics and *manga*, from the 1920s to the present

Jean-Matthieu Méon: Jean-Matthieu Méon has a PhD in political science and is senior lecturer in communication studies at the Centre de Recherche sur les Médiations (University of Lorraine, France). He has published extensively on censorship, amateur musical practices and comics. His work on comics explores, in particular, the institutional, professional and artistic dimensions of their qualification.

Anu Sugathan: Anu Sugathan is a PhD student in the Department of English at the University of Oregon. Her areas of interests include Visual Culture, Comics and Graphic novels, Postcolonial Writings, and South Asian Literature and Cinema

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