COMICS AND PEDAGOGY

AUTHORSHIP, AUTHORITY AND LITERACY



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Abstract



Comics can be used as sophisticated teaching tools at a high level of education. Comic books, graphic novels and digital comics are increasingly being accepted into educational institutions, as instructional texts, textbooks and even as a way of publishing academic research. Although advocates for teaching with comics are growing alongside studies showing the benefits of educational comics, there has been little research done to situate educational comics within a theoretical framework.

This thesis addresses that gap using several methodologies, including cultural and historical discourse analysis, multimodal analysis and a practice-based case study. I have approached each of these methodologies from the perspective of critical pedagogy, specifically the philosophy of educational constructivism that argues that learners draw on available resources to create their own knowledge. My argument connects this constructivist understanding of comics with the work of media theorist Marshall McLuhan who suggested that comics, like seminars, have the quality of being open to interpretation and participation, compared to the more authoritative qualities of traditional printed text and lectures.

Since their inception, comics have had a fraught relationship with authority and education. Despite this, educational comics have been published for more than a century. For example, at the same time that Fredric Wertham was testifying about the dangers of comic books at the 1954 U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency, cartoonist Will Eisner was working for the U.S. Army as editor of an educational comic book for their troops. This thesis traces how the relationship between comics and education developed and evolved as pedagogical attitudes about literacy, authority, and the role of students in the classroom shifted during the 20th and early 21st century.

It also shows how educational comics themselves changed in accordance with these cultural shifts to model different kinds of pedagogical design, highlighting how the work of Eisner, Mexican cartoonist Rius and comics theorist Scott McCloud have influenced the current boom of educational graphic novels. By engaging broadly with the historical, cultural and formal challenges and opportunities of using comics as vehicles for education, I propose that comics mediate concepts of authorship and authority in ways that align strongly with the principles of constructivist pedagogy.

To put this hypothesis into practice, the final section of this thesis details how I designed and drew an educational comic for new doctors at a hospital in Queensland to help them improve their abilities to manage professional challenges. I designed this comic in accordance with theories developed in this thesis, and its effectiveness, as demonstrated through a series of qualitative and quantitative tests, helps to validate those theories. As an additional level of practice research, several chapters of this thesis were also composed entirely as comics.

As a whole, this thesis presents a critical and historical survey of the field of educational comics, and suggests how they can be best understood and designed to improve teaching and learning.

Declaration of Originality

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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Aaron Humphrey, March, 2016

Thanks and Acknowledgements

This thesis is in part about authorship and how the idea of "authors" as autonomous, authoritative individuals is a social construction. As the author of any dissertation can attest to, the process of writing involves many solitary hours. For me, and I suspect for most writers, it is a process that is only possible with the support of a small and informal team. This work (and indeed this authorship) would not exist without them.

My supervisors, Sal Humphreys, Mike Wilmore and Chad Habel have been consistent, enthusiastic champions and mentors who modelled constructivist teaching to me. They encouraged me to find my own path through what was initially a very broad research topic, and gave wise advice.

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I have gained greater insight into comics scholarship through my involvement with "Inkers and Thinkers" comics studies symposiums at the University of Adelaide, and the hard work of my colleagues Troy Mayes and Amy Maynard.

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Introduction: The perils of picture gazing… or new possibilities for pedagogical practices?

The historical legacy and contemporary horizons of educational comics

Comics can be effective and sophisticated tools for education, but they have often been associated with frivolity, irresponsibility and even illiteracy. In 1940, Sterling North claimed that comics "make the child impatient with better, though quieter, stories" (North 1940, p. 56). Frederick Wertham reiterated this line of thinking: "The most important harm done by comic books is in the field of reading. They interfere with elementary mechanisms of learning to read and with the acquisition of the essential perceptual techniques" (Wertham 1954, p. 396)." Comics were accused of being uneducational because they spoiled children's brains by being too appealing and too "easy to read."

However, at the same time that North, Wertham and others were critiquing comics, this "major medium of communication and influence" was being used to for teaching and learning (Zorbaugh 1944, p. 196), continuing a history that even then stretched back decades. From newspaper comics in the 1920s that were used as history lessons (Kleefeld 2014), to the monthly comic book about mechanical maintenance that the United States Army has published since the 1950s (Bakwin 1953; Eisner et al. 2012; Mercer 2011, p. 623), to the Marxist 'graphic guides' that gained widespread popularity in the 1970s (Lekachman 1979), there is a long history of comics being used for education.

Today, a growing volume of contemporary examples is joining that history, as comics and graphic novels are becoming increasingly accepted, and even championed, as educational tools (Chowdhury 2015; Depares 2014; Fessenden 2016; Garrelts 2012; Hunter 2013; Short, J 2012; Sousanis 2012b). In the early 2000s, comics were frequently advocated as a way of assisting struggling or sub-literate learners (Allen & Ingulsrud 2003; Bitz 2004; Hughes-Hassell & Rodge 2007; Schwarz 2002; Wilson & Casey 2007), and more recently the medium has been used at the highest levels of education

(DeSantis 2012; Hawkins 2013; Lin et al. 2014), and even as a primary form for publishing academic research in journals like *Nature* (Monastersky & Sousanis 2015) and *The Annals of Internal Medicine* (Green, Michael J. & Rieck 2013). Emerging fields such as Graphic Medicine and Applied Cartooning are developing this trend further by increasing the places where comics are used as targeted educational interventions (Albright 2014; Squier, SM 2015).

Despite this historical legacy and contemporary significance, scholarship on educational comics remains sparse. Even as experimental research is validating the use of comics in education (Hosler & Boomer 2011; Katz et al. 2014; Mallia 2007b; Short, JC, Randolph-Seng & McKenny 2013; Sim et al. 2014; Spiegel et al. 2013; Webb et al. 2012), the field lacks a body of critical theory. Although researchers have shown that comics *can* succeed as educational tools, the questions of *why* and *how* they work best have been left relatively unexamined.

Accordingly, this thesis will investigate the following primary research questions:

- How have comics been historically and culturally understood in relation to educational authority?
- How do comics mediate educational messages, as well as authorship and authority, differently from traditional pedagogical genres, such as textbooks and lectures?
- How can comics be best used in service of constructivist pedagogy?

This thesis will address these questions by exploring the ways that educational comics might facilitate learning which is more student-centric than traditional modes of instruction, such as teacher-centric lectures and

textbooks. This exploration shows how comics' formal and cultural properties depart from the banking/transmission model of education critiqued by Dewey (1916, 1938), Freire (1972), Vygotsky (1967) and the field of educational constructivism (Biesta & Miedema 2002; Biggs & Tang 2011; Garrison 1995; Kanner & Wertsch 1991; Kolb & Kolb 2012; Smith 2001), and can instead help to challenge traditional thinking about pedagogy, especially as it relates to the interrelated concepts of authorship and authority. This can help in achieving the constructivist goal of "changing the orientation of education from transmitting knowledge to creating environments where students can create their own knowledge" (Innes et al. 2015, p. 31).

What are comics?

From the outset, it is important to define what 'comics' means for the purpose of this thesis. Definitions for comics have been proposed on both formal and cultural grounds (Meskin 2007). From a formal perspective, Scott McCloud's description of comics as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence" (McCloud 1993, p. 9) is one of the most popular definitions, but is also overly broad and could be used to identify many things, from films to slide shows, to PowerPoint presentations, to musical notation. A more precise formal definition is Thierry Groensteen's suggestion that comics consist of "interdependent images that, participating in a series, present the double characteristic of being separated – and which are plastically and semantically over-determined by the fact of their co-existence in praesentia" (Groensteen 2007, p. 18). Groensteen defines the language of comics as one that must be understood as networked, rather than strictly sequential, with each panel, word balloon and character working as part of a larger structure while also existing as a discrete entity. This definition also applies to other media forms, such as illustrated children's literature or anatomy diagrams in medical textbooks, but it serves to highlights a crucial aspect of how comics can be read in contrast to traditionally written text.

Aaron Meskin argues that purely formal definitions of comics are misguided, and that "The art of comics … should be under stood on its own terms and by reference to its own history" (2007, p. 376). Some scholars have described comics as contingent on this history, and as being produced within particular cultures and industries, including Roger Sabin (1996) and Jean-Paul Gabilliet (2010). Gabilliet's criteria, which serves the purposes of this thesis, includes only work 'produced in the context of mass publishing since the 1830s' (Gabilliet 2010, p. xvi). This encompasses a variety of publishing formats, including newspaper strips, comic books, graphic novels, webcomics and proto-comics like the work of Rodolphe Topffer, all of which will be discussed in the following chapter.

The relationship between comics and education is defined by both the formal properties of comics, as well as the historical publishing industries that produced them, and by comics' shifting place within culture. Although comics have been more accepted within the discourses of education and literacy in recent decades, throughout the 20th century educators, readers and publishers generally defined comics in opposition to the "serious" task of education (Barker 1989; Thrasher 1949; Wright 1979), excluding them from these discourses. In this light, it is important to consider Ole Frahm's suggestion that "perhaps we have to take 'comics' literal(ly)" to mean that part of what defines them is that are "funny and strange, entertaining and weird" (Frahm 2003). This identifies comics as things which tend to depict authority in ways that are playful and irreverent, potentially putting them at odds with traditional and authoritative systems and institutions.

Traditional educational systems, as critiqued by Paulo Friere (1972), align with the authorship and authority that is mediated in typeset writing. The one-way, teacher-led production of knowledge is reiterated in the way students are taught to read books and sentences in a strict order, as determined by the author. Comics, as a multi-directional network, cannot be reduced to a one-directional line of expression; the process of reading comics, as theorised by McCloud (1993) and Groensteen (2007), is driven by the reader's discretion in mentally animating drawings, and moving in and out of

panels and pages. This resembles the process advocated by constructivist educational theories, where learning emerges from the students' own assembly of information (Brown, SW & King 2000; Howard & Brady 2015; Kinnucan-Welsch & Jenlink 1998; Lattuca 2006; Seimears et al. 2012; Yilmaz 2008).

What are educational comics?

The sharp division in the ways that authorship and authority have been depicted through comics compared to traditional education has resulted in a common understanding that comics are best used for teaching those who lack cultural authority, namely children, struggling students and literacy-deficient adults. Most research on educational comics has focused on how they can improve children's' intellectual engagement (Bolton-Gary 2012; Christensen 2006; Crawford 2004; Ezarik 2003; Lam 2011; Sabeti 2011; Spiegel et al. 2013; Wright 1979) and literacy skills (Brenna 2013; Cathy Newman & Jade 2007; Comings, Shrestha & Smith 1992, p. 214; Edwards 2008; Schwarz 2002; Zimmerman & Kruse 2013), or assist with teaching ESL students and other language learners (Bitz 2004; Danzak 2011; Leber-Cook & Cook 2013; Montoya, CM 2011; Nimmon 2007; Recine 2013; Takashima 1987). In these uses, comics are positioned as a crutch to assist with attaining literacy in a "proper" language, a crutch that should be removed once the student has reached a level of fluency. However, comics can be useful educational tools in a wide variety of settings, up to and including postgraduate education (Garbarino 1987; Lekachman 1979; Lin et al. 2014; Putnam & Yanagisako 1985; Tatalovic 2009). There is a long history of comics being used as instructional tools for adults in vocational settings (Herbst et al. 2010; Sim et al. 2014), especially within the military (Eisner et al. 2012; Sones 1944, p. 235; Witty 1944). Governments have also turned to comics to conduct information campaigns, including blatant propaganda (Barnett, B 2004; Graham 2011; MacFarlane 2014). In a newer trend, academics are producing comics for the purpose of communicating their research to their peers (Al-Jawad 2013; Green, Michael J. & Rieck 2013;

Humphrey & Carvajal 2015; Monastersky & Sousanis 2015). Comics that fall within all of these categories will be examined in this thesis.

The focus of this thesis is on comics that have been produced with a blatantly pedagogical intent, although it should be noted that this is not the only way that comics are used in the classroom. For example, comics memoirs such as Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1997), Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* (2007) and Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* (2006) are gripping narratives that are frequently taught in humanities classrooms (Chute, Hillary 2008; Cvetkovich 2008; Hathaway 2011; Vandermeersche & Soetaert 2011; Williams, P et al. 2014), and the virtues of using existing literary and/or popular comics as teaching aids have been sufficiently, and enthusiastically, extolled elsewhere (Christensen 2006; Decker & Castro 2012; Dong 2012; Miller 2015; Mosher 2013; Williams, RM-C 2008). Like superhero comics that are used to demonstrate literary, historical or scientific principles (Aiken 2010; Carter, HA 1988; Cates 2011; Raddo 2006), it is the context of the classroom that renders these comics specifically "educational." By contrast, the number of comics that have been published *primarily* to teach, educate or inform is vast, diverse and severely under-studied by both educators and comics researchers.

Methods

By engaging broadly with the historical, cultural and formal challenges and opportunities of using comics as vehicles for education, it is possible to see how an interrelated play between form, content and culture has allowed comics to mediate concepts of authorship and authority in ways that oppose the authorship and authority of traditional 20th century pedagogy and literacy. Literacy practices tend to embrace or reject texts based on how well they conform to the formal and cultural qualities of accepted genres (Cope & Kalantzis 2000; Hyland 2002, p. 125), and comics were typically excluded from literacy pedagogy during the 20th century on the basis of not just their content, but on how sharply their formal and cultural qualities diverged from those of textbooks and other accepted educational genres.

The argument of this thesis comprises two sections. The first, longer section (Chapters 1 – 10) is based around conceptual secondary research using a mixed methods approach that leans heavily on discourse analysis and close reading. The second section (Chapters 11-13) uses primary research to test the theories developed in the first section through an applied intervention in a practical setting.

This first section is divided into four parts. The first part (Chapter 1) begins with a theoretical examination of the pedagogy of comics which lays the groundwork for the rest of the thesis. Part Two (Chapters 2 – 5) then delves into the historical and cultural development of comics in relationship to the themes of authority, authorship and literacy. In Part Three (Chapters 6 – 7) these themes are expanded upon through a formal analysis of the multimodal design of educational comics. Finally, Part Four (Chapters 8-10) applies these ideas to a series of three contemporary case studies.

The theories and best practices discovered through the conceptual research in this first section were then put to the test in the second section, which shows how those ideas were used to develop an educational comic book that was used in the orientation program for new doctors as a hospital in Queensland. The second section is comprised of three chapters: an auto-ethnographic account of the creation of the comic (Chapter 11), a presentation of the comic which I designed and drew for this research (Chapter 12), and finally an account of how the efficacy of the comic was tested through quantitative and qualitative data collected from participant surveys and interviews. Ultimately, the success of this comic demonstrated in the second section is a direct result of the conceptual research described in the first section.

As an extension of this thesis's primary claim that comics can be valid and sophisticated tools for academic expression, three chapters (Chapters 7, 9 and 12, about a total of 50 pages) are presented as comics. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to make the same arguments in purely written form, as the comics form itself is integral to the individual arguments of each of these chapters. The use of comics also contributes to the broader argument

of this thesis that formal and cultural structures are central to how readers understand educational materials. By using the structures of both traditional written text and comics, I hope to draw my readers' attention to the multimodal properties of each of these compositional genres.

Central to this critique is the idea that the culture of Western education has historically elevated linguistic texts while disregarding other modes of expression. Comics have been used for decades as a means of education without being formally recognized as a legitimate form of pedagogy. Likewise, although all education is inherently multimodal, the pedagogical implications of many of these modes has gone unexamined. In order to expose and discuss some of the multimodal aspects of systems of education, this thesis frequently uses and interrogates images. In the first chapter in particular, popular visual depictions of education are examined as a way of uncovering cultural conceptions about teaching and learning.

Aims

This thesis will engage broadly with the historical, cultural and formal challenges of using comics as educational tools. The need for this research can be understood in context of how comics have been regarded by the guardians of education. The low point for the cultural authority of comic books in the 1950s (Park 2002), was followed by a slow accumulation of cultural capital over the next half century (Brown, JA 1997; Horsman 2015; Woo 2011), marked most decisively by the ascendance of graphic novels, book length comics that had a longer shelf life than the floppy, magazine-like comic books, and which came to be widely distributed to bookstores and libraries in the early 2000s (Ellis & Highsmith 2000; Leckbee 2005; Marsh 1999; Millard & Marsh 2001). More recently, as the media ecology has shifted to encompass networked screen media and handheld digital devices, the boundaries of literacy have been re-written to include visual and multimodal forms of expression (Borodo 2014; Connors 2010b, 2013; Jacobs 2007; Leber-Cook & Cook 2013; Scanlon 2013; Schieble 2009; Schwartz & Rubinstein-Ãvila 2006; Serafini 2011), and comics (especially 'graphic

novels') have become generally accepted into the realm of education (Connors 2010a; Downey 2009; Leckbee 2005; Williams, P et al. 2014).

Although advocates for teaching with comics are growing (Adair 2012; Brenna 2013; Carter, JB & Evensen 2013; Davis, E, MacGregor & Mouly 2015; Jacobs 2007; MacDonald 2013; Spiegel et al. 2013; Tatalovic 2009) alongside studies showing the benefits of educational comics (Brenna 2013; Iacono & Paula 2011; Lin et al. 2014; Sim et al. 2014; Tatalovic 2009), there has been little research into how or why educational comics work. It is likely that as comics begin to become an accepted form of academic publication, university-teaching practices will also begin to shift. Accordingly, there is an urgent need to understand how comics relate to education, and how they mediate messages differently from the traditional educational tools of lectures and textbooks.

Chapter Summaries

Part 1: Comics and Pedagogy

Chapter 1 – Introduction and Educational theory

Chapter One establishes the theoretical platform for this thesis through an interdisciplinary examination of comics and education. Drawn from the field of media studies is Marshall McLuhan's notion that comics require participation from readers in ways that resemble the pedagogical form of seminars (McLuhan 1964), while traditional educational media forms such as lectures and textbooks are more direct and less participatory. This is connected to the field of critical pedagogy, especially Paulo Freire's critique of lecture-style education, also known as the "Banking Model" of education (Freire 1972). A synthesis of the theories of McLuhan and Freire launches an investigation into the cultural and historical ways that authority has been conveyed in

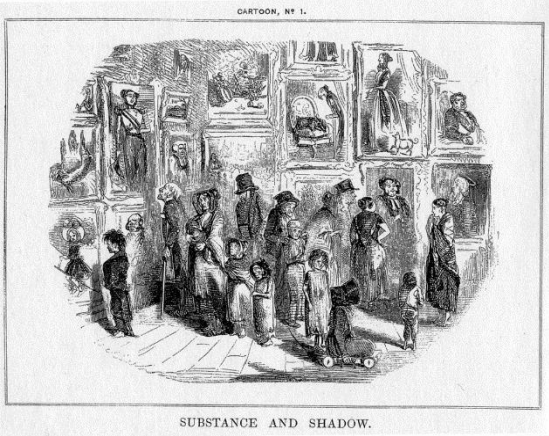


lectures and textbooks. This supports the suggestion that comics are an appropriate medium for creating constructivist-leaning educational texts.

Part 2: Historical and Cultural Context: Authority, Authorisation, Authorship and Literacy

The following four chapters survey the historical development of comics, centring on themes of authority, authorisation and authorship. Although the chapters are thematically focused, they are also roughly chronological, tracing the emergence of educational comics in relationship to shifting notions of literacy.

Chapter 2- Comics as a field of fun, and pastiche of authority



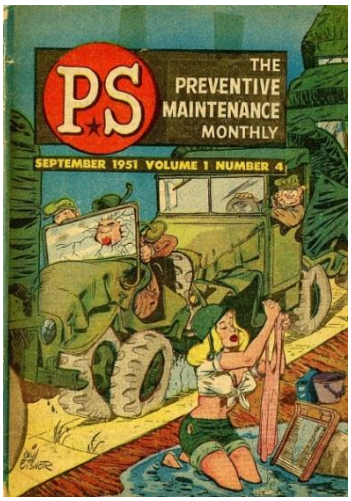
The sense of play found in comics is part of what makes them useful educational tools, but is historically one reason they were excluded from "serious" and "proper" educational discourses. Chapter two traces the cultural and historical development of comics as an irreverent way of combining images and words. This was made possible by technological advances in photoengraving in the mid-1800s (Robertson 2013), which allowed publishers to reproduce hand-drawn images in a way that conveyed a sense of direct spontaneity that was generally absent from earlier, more laboriously produced engravings. This new style of image making was popularised as a mass medium in satirical papers like Britain's *Punch* which helped to define the rapidly growing, newly literate middle class.

This cultural construction of comics kept them separated from media that were considered valuable for education and self-improvement, such as "proper," authoritative typeset texts and state-sanctioned "fine" art. However, encoded in the earliest comics are implicit critiques of the self-proclaimed cultural authority of so-called "official" art forms, and political systems. I

argue that the last decade and a half of comics can be understood in the context of this historical moment.

Chapter 3 – Comics and the Authorisation of Cultural Industries

A large part of the reason that comics came to be regarded as frivolous and juvenile was the establishment of publishing industries that created and marketed comics for children and working-class audiences. As a result, comics had little cultural authority in the public sphere. Commercial comics publishers made token gestures toward notions of education in an attempt to gain authority and respectability in the eyes of adults, but without alienating their core audience of children. To this end, although these publishers sometimes produced comics on acknowledged educational topics (including national and religious themes), the market remained largely orientated towards "irresponsible" material.



An alternative market for educational comics developed during World War II, as the United States military enlisted comics artists to create educational and propaganda comics. Publications like *Army Motors* featured cartoons and comics targeted at G.I.s, and after the war this format was expanded into a monthly comics-handbook, *P.S.: The Preventive Maintenance Monthly*, which continues today as one of the world's longest-running comic books. Artists who worked on wartime publications went on to establish long careers creating informational comics for businesses. Furthermore, following the war, Western government agencies, including the United Nations have also regularly used comics for civic education and public health campaigns. However, these projects are not part of a sustained cultural industry, and have remained largely disregarded from the popular understanding of comics. As Chapter Three will show, the much-discussed post-war backlash against commercial comic book publishers actually coincided with the development in America of a domestic

industry devoted to creating educational comics for businesses and governments.

Chapter 4: Authorship as a Requirement of Literacy

A key feature of "proper" art and literacy is the notion of authorship. This notion is also central to the 'Banking Model' of education, where teachers/authors are authoritative repositories of knowledge that they "write" onto the blank pages of their students' minds. While the book trade was founded on claims of authorship, Chapter Four will trace the development of the comic book publishing industry to show how it tended to suppress or obscure the work of individual writers and artists. Even as the comic book industry grew to popular heights in the 1940s and 1950s, their lack of credited authors further separated them the realm of literacy.

Cultural crusader, Frederick Wertham, who led the charge for the comic book industry to be destroyed in the mid-1950s, described the industry as being an authorless, anonymous machine for cranking out juvenile filth. Perhaps ironically, the publisher who Wertham most viciously targeted, EC Comics, was changing the industry by crediting its writers and artists and using these credits to build a relationship with its fans.

This chapter will show how the graphic novel format in the late 1970s gave comics a publishing label which suggested both an author and an affinity with an established form of literacy. This finally allowed them into the realm of literacy: bookstores, schools and libraries. However, many guardians of literacy still remained sceptical of this format.

Chapter 5: Visual and Multimodal Literacy

The changing media landscape in the second half of the twentieth century eventually disrupted these traditional notions of literacy.



Comics' role as the primary scapegoat for popular culture became supplanted by the widespread introduction of television broadcasting.

In dealing with the influence of television, educators eventually developed a paradigm of visual literacy. Chapter Five will show how this visual literacy movement largely bypassed comics. It would take until the more recent movement toward 'multiple and multimodal literacies', which was inspired in part by digital Internet technologies, that comics would begin to be accepted in the field of pedagogy. This coincided with the popular acceptance of graphic novels as an authorised publishing format for comics.

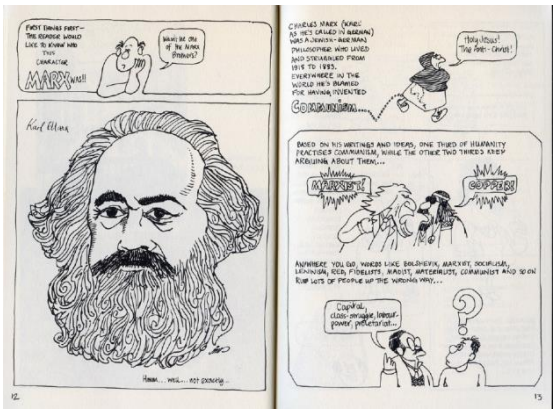
More recently, multimodal literacy has helped pave the way for the use of comics in a larger variety of educational settings, including academic journal articles and digital storytelling.

Part 3: Visual, Spatial and Multimodal Authorship

The following three chapters use the lens of multimodal literacy to examine how authorship and authority are conveyed in educational comics. As described in the previous section, authorship has traditionally been regarded as linguistically based. How can we understand authorship that is constructed multimodally?

Chapter 6 - Visual authorship and authoring

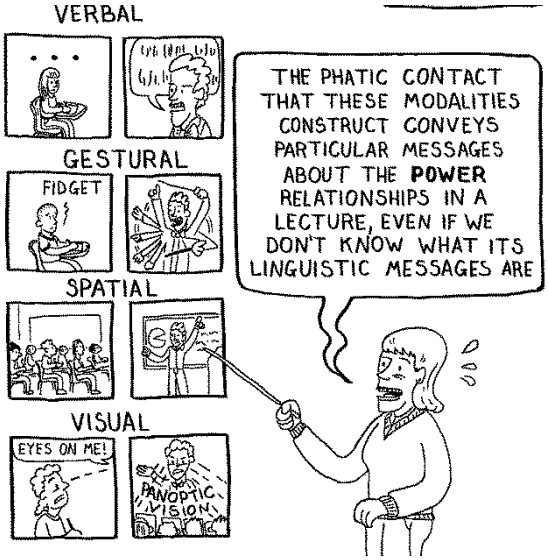
Following the legitimisation of "literary" graphic novels, publishers found success with educational "graphic guides," resulting in a publishing boom for pedagogical comics. The style used in recent graphic guides, educational textbooks and comics-style journal articles developed from earlier government and underground educational comics. Both of these publishing industries relied on different ways of visually conveying authorship and authority.



Whether to combat these potential multimodal complications or to more clearly position themselves as distinctly educational, many graphic guides and commercial educational comics include lecturer avatars to guide

the reader. However, this chapter argues that these figures are not always necessary, and can sometimes serve as unnecessary contrivances.

Chapter 7 – Multimodal authorship and authoring



Chapter Seven was initially composed as a comic-style article for the journal *Composition Studies*. Using the framework of Multimodal Literacy, this chapter is a self-reflexive discussion of how the phatic connection between author and audience is mediated multimodally in comics compared to traditional, didactic writing.

These first eight chapters develop a historical and theoretical platform which will be further explored and expanded on in three case studies in chapters eight, nine and ten.

Part 4: Case Studies

Chapter 8 – Writer, illustrator and reader as co-authors: Adaptations of Hamlet



In the first of these case studies, Chapter Eight, Nicki Greenberg's adaptation of *Hamlet* (2010) is compared to other comic book versions of the play. Historically, comic adaptations of Shakespeare and other classic literature have been attempts to convey some of the authority of traditional literacy onto the comic book form for commercial purposes. Greenberg's version, which emerged from the discourse of graphic novels, is more "authored" than previous "bard-biz" comic book cash-ins.

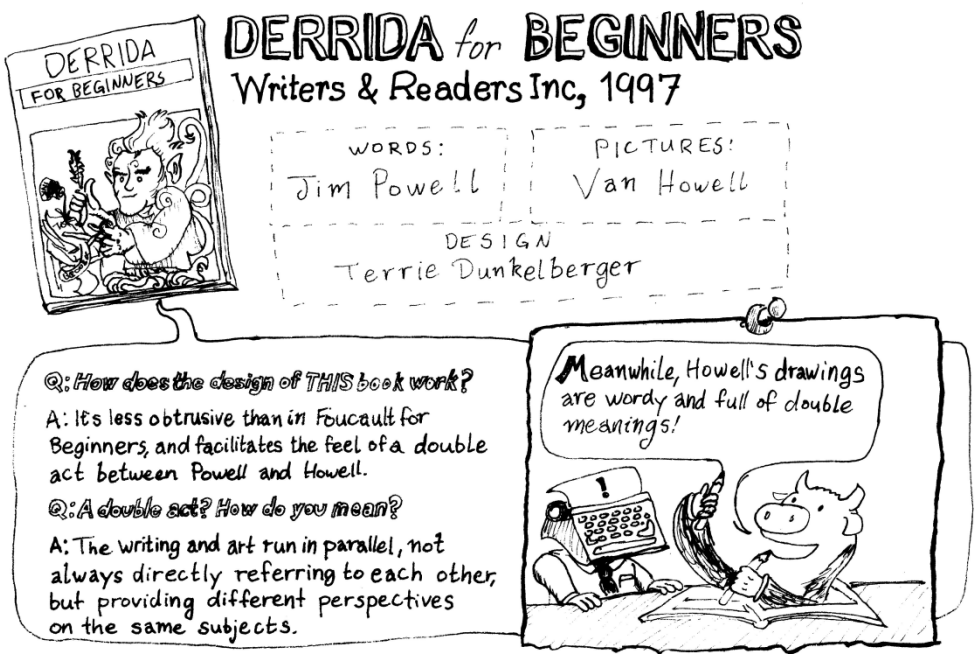
Despite this, Greenberg uses several design techniques to create a space where readers are invited to participate as co-actors and co-authors of the work. This case study will explore how Greenberg's design can be understood through the grammar of comics, including McCloud's concept of masking and Groensteen's concept of braiding. As *Hamlet* can also be used as an educational text, but lacks a central lecturer figure, this is also an example of how comics can eschew traditional constructions of authorship and authority.

Chapter 9 – Multimodal Authorship and Authority in Educational Comics:

Introducing Foucault and Derrida for Beginners



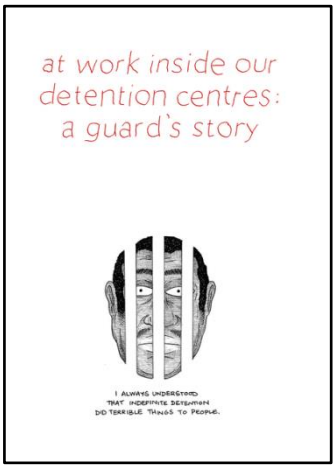
The second case study, Chapter Nine, examines several of the *For Beginners* and *Introducing* series of graphic guides that were published in the 1990s before the educational comics boom. This is another comics-style article, and it mimics and comments upon the visual styles used in the books that are being examined. The books chosen for this case study are about Derrida and Foucault. Demonstrating the compromised nature of authorship in many comics, each book is a collaboration between two or more writers, artists and/or designers.



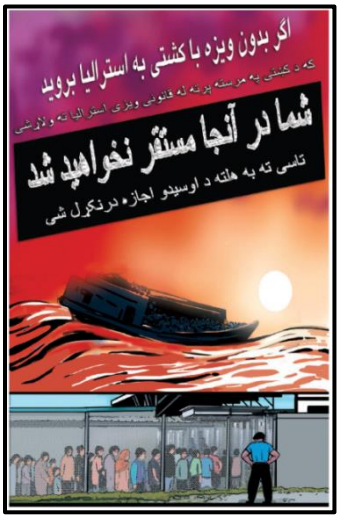
This close reading of the comics focuses on how authorship is constructed multimodally through these collaborations. Although there are a variety of patterns to be found in how these modalities relate to each other, ultimately the reader's interpretation of the text will emerge from the gaps between the modalities.

Chapter 10 - Chapter 10: Visual Authority and Anonymity in Asylum-Seeker Comics

The final case study, Chapter Ten, looks at a pair of comics that use these gaps to ultimately conceal their own authorship. Both comics were published in 2014 and deal with the Australian government's contentious policy of detaining asylum seekers. They are examples of different styles of educational comics with different pedagogical goals: one was published by Australia's Customs and Border Protection Service to inform potential refugees from Afghanistan that they will not be welcomed into Australia; the other was published by the left-wing journalism website *The Global Mail* and is based on an anonymous interview with a former detention centre guard.



The government's comic is silent, making it nearly impossible to call in to account using the linguistic tools of political debate, while the Global Mail's comic uses images to suggest emotional dimensions of its anonymous narrator that would not be possible in another medium. Through an analysis of these texts and the considerable online discourse that they each provoked, this case study will show how readers engaged with these apparently "authorless" comics in intense and emotional ways that are symptomatic of contemporary, image-heavy, and often anonymous, online discourse. These comics are examples of how comics and other multimodal texts are increasingly being used in online education, despite their lack of a traditional 'lecturer' figure.



Part 5: Experimental Research: Graphic Medicine in Practice

The final three chapters extend beyond the historical and theoretical approach of the previous eleven chapters to practitioner research. Using the framework that was uncovered in my investigations in this earlier chapters, I created a comic that was used as part of the medical education program for new doctors embarking on their intern year at a hospital in Queensland. Each of these chapters represents a different output of this practitioner research. Chapter Twelve is an autoethnography of the process of creating an educational comic, Chapter Thirteen reproduces that comic in its entirety, and Chapter Fourteen discusses the results of several tests that were conducted to determine the pedagogical effectiveness of the comic.



As other studies have looked at comics in primary, secondary and undergraduate

classrooms, this project sought to evaluate the effectiveness of educational comics for skilled adult learners in a professional, postgraduate setting. The comic was designed for medical interns, young doctors who have just finished medical school and are beginning their first year of practice. This group was chosen in part because they are highly educated adult learners, well acquainted with both rote and experiential learning.

The ability to develop a comic that applied the insights I had discovered in my research added an element of praxis to this thesis. As detailed above, one theme that developed in my investigation of educational comic was how they compromised the concept of lecturer-like authorship constructed in traditional literacy pedagogy. My goal was to make a comic that would meet the aims of the hospital's Medical Education Unit while eschewing the organisational and narrative conventions used in lecturer-centric linguistic texts. This project was successful, and helped new doctors to feel more prepared to manage the transition from student to professional.

A final word on comics-style chapters

As previously noted, three chapters of this dissertation will be presented almost entirely as comics. Although this style of composing for an academic audience is becoming increasingly popular, it is still fairly unusual. Personally, I have found that while working at a word processor it can be hard to think about writing as involving more than lines on a page, or to think about designing as involving more than choosing between different kinds of fonts. In the spirit of the comics I have examined for this dissertation, these comics-style chapters are an attempt to break out of the conception of writing-as-lecturing. In using this style, I hope that my thesis will allow my readers to reflect on the value and efficacy of comics in communicating educational messages.

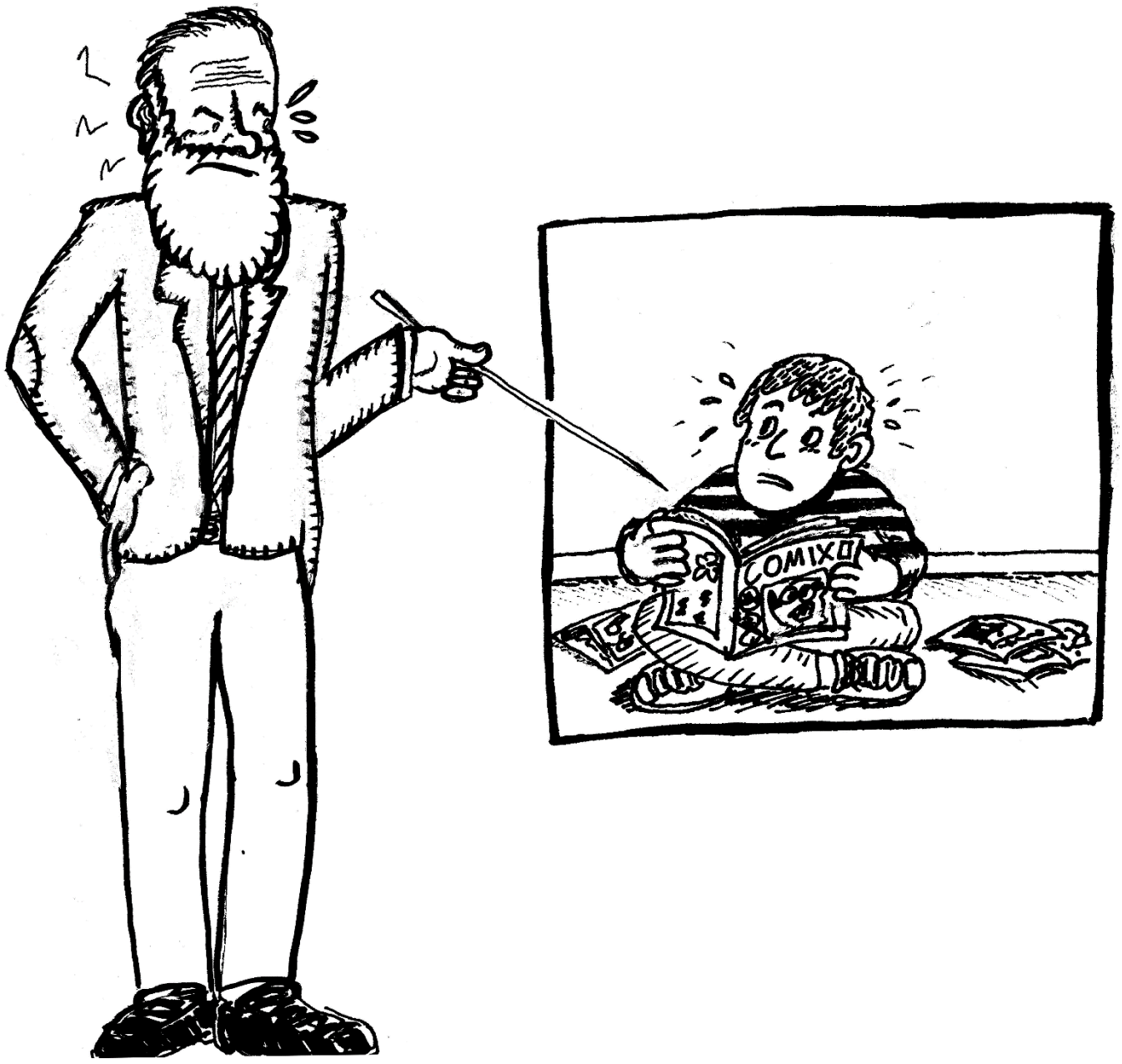
SECTION A



THEORY

- Part 1:

COMICS & PEDAGOGY



Chapter 1: Comics, Lectures and Pedagogy: Pointers vs Panels

Introduction

Comic books and textbooks were considered dynamic opposites of each other for most of the 20th century, at least from a pedagogical perspective. Textbooks imparted knowledge, and were a means of bettering oneself, of growing older and wiser, while comic books were perceived to impart nonsense and were a means of diverting oneself, of remaining childish and child-like.

Of course, there were exceptions that proved this rule: plenty of textbooks have been criticised for perpetuating nonsense (Klein, D 2007; Norris 1980; Raggio 2014; Sewall 2004; Stambaugh & Quinn Trank 2010; Winegard, Winegard & Deaner 2014), and likewise, some educators have long argued that comic books can be used to build knowledge on particular subjects (Carter, HA 1988; Gruenberg 1944; Takashima 1987). However, even in cases when the content of comic books or textbooks defied cultural expectations about its pedagogical utility, the styles of expression in both comics and textbooks tended to conform to cultural expectations for each genre: textbooks gave impressions of being serious and educational, while comics gave impressions of being juvenile and frivolous.

These cultural impressions that adhered to the formal properties of comics were created through the intersections between modes of expression, printing technologies, publishing industries, educational institutions, gatekeepers of literacy, and of course by readers and teachers. Each of these aspects will be discussed in turn in this thesis, beginning with this chapter, which will explore the formal properties that differentiate the modes of expression used in comics and text books, and how these properties affect how they mediate different models of education.

Gunther Kress (2005) has argued that "it is not only critical for us to understand and evaluate the affordances offered by modes and media but

also to act pedagogically and politically in light of those evaluations" (summarised in Prior 2005, p. 24). Accordingly, this chapter will principally draw from theoretical models proposed by Marshall McLuhan (1964) for determining the affordances of different styles of media, and by Paulo Freire (1972) for understanding the pedagogical and political implications of those affordances.

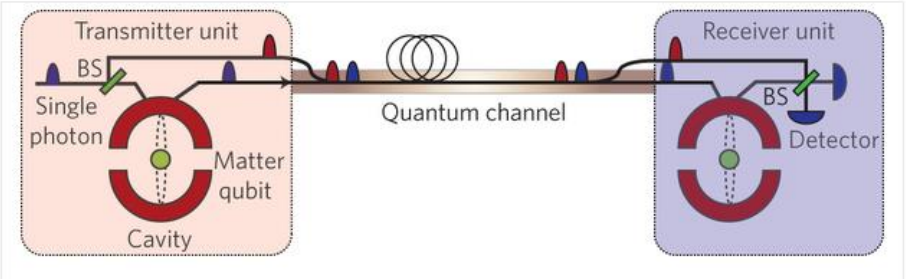
My intention in returning primarily to the work of these seminal theorists is to provide a broad platform to build from. McLuhan and Freire are both pioneers of their respective fields of media studies and critical pedagogy, and both produced their most influential works during the late 1960s and early 1970s, a time of great technological advancements and political upheaval. Perhaps due to the similar changes affecting today's society, scholarly interest in both Freire and McLuhan remains strong in the 2010s. Recently, scholars have given McLuhan's work a favourable reappraisal compared to the scepticism if garnered from his contemporaries (e.g. Duffy, Dennis 1969; Mitchell 2014). Hiebert (2014) argues "it's hard to overstate McLuhan's prescience." Meanwhile, Freire's work has remained central to the field of critical pedagogy since radical educators embraced the English translation of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1970, and he has been the subject of more than 100 scholarly books (Darder 2014, p. ix). Many writers and researchers have critiqued and expanded upon on both McLuhan and Freire's theories, some of which will be discussed below.

Myth of direct transmission

McLuhan is remembered for popularizing the exhortation "the medium is the message" (McLuhan 1964, p. 7), a phrase that encapsulated his central argument: the way that information is communicated has at least as much communicative value as the 'content' of that information. One example of this can be seen in the observation that how comic books and textbooks gave respective impressions of frivolity and education, regardless of what they were about.

The endurance of the "medium is the message" catch-phrase has only been exceeded by endurance of the myth that it was intended to dispel: the idea of communication as a direct transmission of ideas between sender and receiver. This theory, i.e. as explicated by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver (1953), is a mechanistic one, and it positions humans as analogous to machines receiving electrical impulses. A brief discussion of this so-called "Transmission Model" will help establish what McLuhan was reacting against.

Figure 1: Schematic of the direct transmission of the information from one communication node to another using a transmitter unit and receiver unit.



The theory of the "Transmission Model" of communication posits that information flows from sender to receiver in a way that resembles this diagram of photons from an article about quantum mechanics (Munro et al. 2012). Media theorists like McLuhan argue that humans don't work like photons.

Although the Transmission Model has long been discredited (Cox, R 2010, p. 174; Neuman & Guggenheim 2011, p. 171) as a simplistic and incomplete model of how human communication works, it persists both in popular understandings and in educational settings (e.g. Tollefson 2002, p. 23). This persistence may be a result of what Michael Reddy (1979) identified as one of the central metaphors in our cultural understanding of language, which he called the "Conduit Metaphor": that ideas are like objects, that language is like a package for ideas, and that the act of communication is like the act of sending a package. Like the Transmission Model, with which it is very compatible, the Conduit Metaphor is a conventional and culturally ingrained way of thinking about language and communication which nevertheless hides important aspects of the process (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, pp. 458-460).

One example of the ubiquity of the Transmission Model can be seen in the icon used for the Communication Studies portal on Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Communication_studies). This

diagram of the Transmission Model that is attached to dozens of Wikipedia pages about communication, many of which argue explicitly against the model it depicts. As Wikipedia is a popular resource for students (Allahwala, Nadkarni & Sebaratnam 2013; Dooley 2010; Head & Eisenberg 2010), as well as the general public (Halfaker et al. 2013; Law, Mintzes & Morgan 2011), this is an example of how the myth of the transmission model continues to be widely perpetuated.



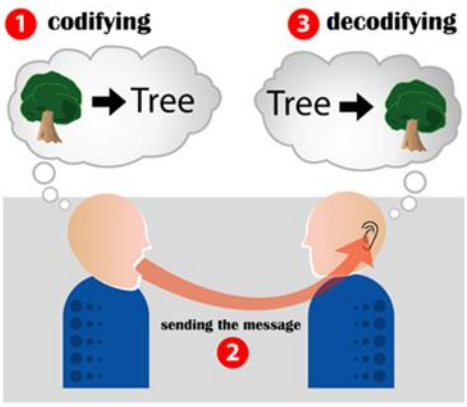
The Wikipedia Communication Studies portal, with its attendant icon depicting the Transmission Model (*Communication Studies* 2015). A similarly ironic and inappropriate situation might be imagined if the vignette of God touching Adam from of Michelangelo's painting of the Sistine chapel were used as an icon for the Evolutionary Biology portal.

This icon of the Transmission Model (which incidentally uses some of the grammar of comics) depicts communication in three steps:

1). Codification, which happens in the mind of the sender, where a thought, shown in this example as image of a tree, is coded into an expressible form, such as the word for "tree."

2.) Sending the message, a process represented as a transparent arrow leading from the mouth of the sender to the ear of the receiver.

3). Decodification, which happens in the mind of the receiver, shown here as the word "tree" being mentally decoded into the same image of a tree that appeared in the mind of the sender.



The Wikipedia icon for Communication Studies representing the overly simplistic Direct Transmission of communication (*Communication Studies* 2015).

As might be expected from an icon, this is an overly simplistic representation of communication. However, there are other problems. This icon shows the Transmission Model of communication as a utopia. Here, communication is depicted as a one-way process, where ideas originate in the mind of one individual sender and then are replicated identically in the mind of another individual receiver.

Crucially, it is not just the images of the trees that are identical, but the sender and receiver as also essentially clones of each other. In real life, communication is far more complicated, political, and messy, and is constructed very differently depending on what mediums or technologies are used. McLuhan's work sought to explicate some of these nuances.

McLuhan's affordances

McLuhan was interested in how societies change in concert with the technologies that they use to mediate communication (Bobbitt 2011). As a way of understanding the differences between forms of media, McLuhan conceived of a theoretical spectrum where forms of media could be organised according to their affordances and effects (McLuhan 1964, pp. 22-24). At one end, McLuhan placed what he called "hot" media forms, which engage in one sense directly in high-definition, while the other end of the spectrum contained 'cool' media forms that are of a lower definition and require more participation from audiences.

For example, McLuhan considered cinema to be "hot," as the cinema-going experience is one where the viewer is relatively passive, sitting in a darkened theatre, absorbing a projected image that is vibrant, intense and high-resolution. By contrast, he considered television to be "cool" both because the images were of a lower resolution, and also because the viewer had more control: they might be compelled to change the channel, or move around the house, or choose to just listen to the program while doing chores, for example.

Another example that McLuhan gave is forms of dance (McLuhan 1964, p. 27). He contrasted the "hot" waltz, which prescribes dance moves and body positions in a precise way that allows for many dancers to be moving in sync with each other without disruption, and its opposite, the "cool" twist, which reduced to its most basic form is really only the barest suggestion of movement, allowing for a wide variety of individual interpretations, and expressions of personal style among dancers. The fullest expression of the waltz involves many bodies moving in time, like clockwork machinery, while the excitement of the twist comes from seeing a personality emerge out of each dancer.

McLuhan's work has been criticised as placing too much emphasis on formal properties at the expense of content and context, and therefore falling into mechanical determinism (Williams, R 1974). However, more recently scholars have defended McLuhan's approach as being historically focused and dialectical (Grosswiler 1996; Guins 2014; Kroker 2015). Bobbitt reminds us that McLuhan used "hot and cool media not in terms of static definitions but as dynamic concepts that are designed to get at the *experience* and *effects* of how we use media" – a medium that is experienced as "hot" in one culture or time period may feel "cool" in another (Bobbitt 2011). For example, when McLuhan classified television as cool, he was writing in the days when television screens were small, and colour TV was only beginning to be popularized in North America. Today's wide-screen, high definition, flat panel "home theatre"-style of television viewing allows for a much "hotter" viewing experience was possible in the 1960s. McLuhan did not mean for these terms

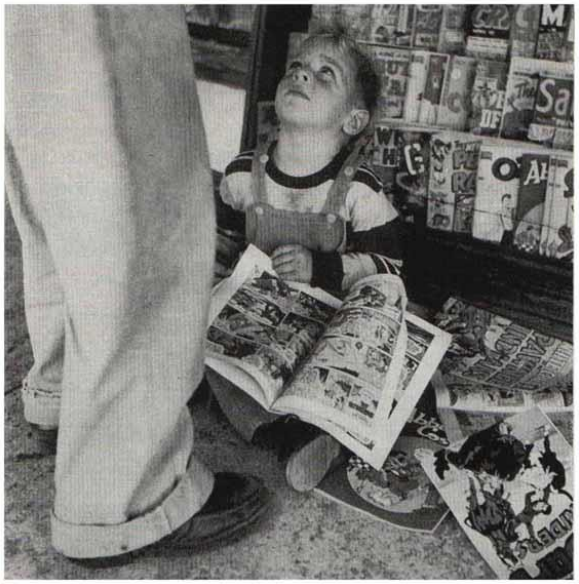
to be deterministic or absolute categories, but as a way of talking about the way different media interact with and are experienced in particular cultures.

Hot lectures and cool comics

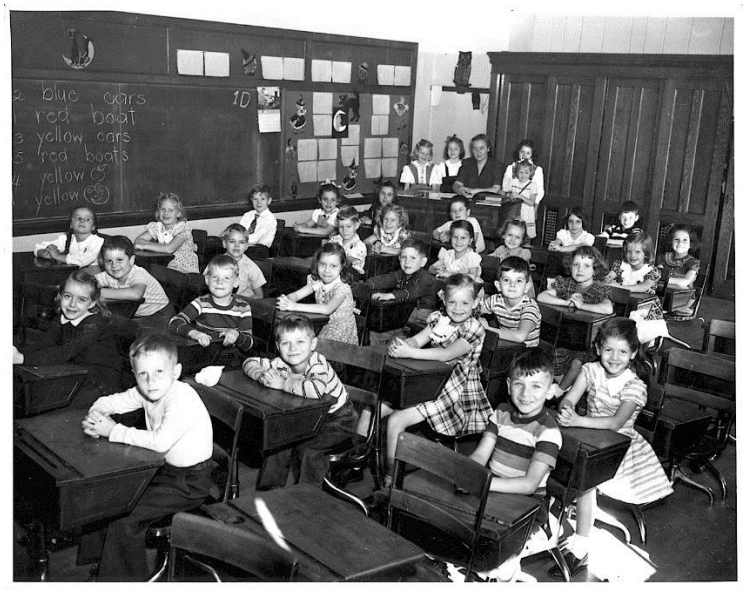
Under McLuhan's taxonomy, other "hot" media forms include radio, print and lectures, while other "cool" media forms include telephone conversations, comic books, and seminars (McLuhan 1964, pp. 22-23). McLuhan's theories about the "coolness" of comics have generally been overlooked in studies of educational comics, but they align well with more contemporary theories about comics developed by scholars including McCloud (1993, 2006) and Groensteen (2007), which will be discussed in later chapters. Briefly, the low-resolution style of drawing used in many cartoons requires readers to use their imaginations and memories to fill in the gaps, while the combination of words and images "make comics a potentially poly-semic text, encouraging multiple interpretations, even ones completely oppositional to any specific artistic intent" (McAllister, Sewell Jr & Gordon 2001, p. 4). Whether one agrees with McLuhan's taxonomy or not, it is clear that the form used to express a message plays a substantial role in how that message can be understood and interacted with. As McLuhan intended for his "hot" and "cold" distinctions to be both culturally and historically dependent, it is important to examine the broader cultural context in which these forms of communication were formed.

Comics as a symbol of frivolity; Lectures as a symbol of order

At the height of comic books' popularity in the 1940s and '50s, teachers complained of being "plagued" by "heathen" students who would "surreptitiously carry copies of comic books between the covers of legitimate textbooks" (Dias 1946, p. 143), as a tactic to avoid doing any actual learning. Photos of children reading comics from this time commonly show the readers spread out on the floor in youthful disarray, and stand in stark contrast to typical photos of classrooms from the same period, where students sit in identical desks arranged in neat rows.



Reading comic books on the floor. Photo from 1951, published in *Friends* Magazine, August 1959 (Mavlen 2011)



First grade class, Highland Elementary School, Midland Park (1961)

In these images, we can see bodily reactions to the "hot" and "cool" effects McLuhan delineated. The image of the classroom, although obviously staged for a photographer, is a depiction of what we might consider the "ideal" classroom: rows of students neatly arranged with hands on their desks and smiling faces focused at the front of the classroom, where there might be a teacher about to deliver a lecture. McLuhan considered lectures to be "hot", as they engage one primary sense, hearing, in a direct and focused way. The

students fold their hands and focus their eyes on the teacher to be more fully immersed in the lessons of her words.

The classroom might be arranged in a different way, and bodies positioned differently, to engage with the other pedagogical form McLuhan classifies: the "cool" seminar. In the case of seminar-style teaching, desks are often rearranged and turned inward to allow students to talk and engage with each other, to watch and listen to many different sources, and to participate themselves.

The physical arrangement of precise order in the lecture-style classroom is mirrored in the layout of "hot" typeset text and textbooks, where each letter and sentence has a designated place, facilitating reading in a single direction and a particular order, as the eye moves in an orderly way across the page. Lectures are often transmediated to textbooks, an adaptation that is facilitated in part by the mutual "hotness" of both forms. In each case, the focus on the words, either spoken or printed, is prioritised above all else.

Unlike the word-based linguistic structures of lectures and textbooks, comics are generally not read in an entirely linear way. In *Literacy in the New Media Age*, Gunther Kress, following in McLuhan's footsteps, examines the affordances of different kinds of media. He notes that "Reading paths in writing (as in speech) are set with very little or no leeway; in the image they are open" (Kress 2003, p. 4). In comics, this effect is multiplied by the presence of multiple images. Although panels may at times resemble still frames from the "hot" medium of film, unlike in film, readers do not process these panels in an entirely linear way. Readers can look at multiple panels at once, or move back and forth between them at will, and eyetracking studies of comics have shown that while there is some consistency in what readers focus on when shown individual panels (Jain, Sheikh & Hodgins 2012), when given a comics page to look at, readers find their own individual paths through the panels and word balloons on the page rather than following a fixed path as is common when reading conventional text (Claytor 2015; Ny et al. 2012; Omori et al. 2004).

As French film director Alain Resnais explained, "sometimes one must pick up a [comic book] page and turn it around to study some of the details. You can't do this with a film. In a good comic strip, in fact, the reader is asked for a greater measure of intellectual participation" (Resnais & Pascal 1971). This engagement is exemplified in the photo of the boy sitting on the ground surrounded by comics – it's easy to imagine he has turned the pages around, flipped them over, and generally immersed himself in the pile of comic books on the floor. The less structured reading style afforded by "cool" comics in comparison to the more structured reading style afforded by "hot" textbooks can be usefully paralleled with the less structured teaching style of "cool" seminars in comparison with the more structured style of "hot" lectures.

Authority in media forms

There is something else going on in these images, though: the presence of the adult authority figures. The world of reading comics has traditionally been seen as one that adults and parents are excluded from. Parents may encourage, tolerate, or even vehemently oppose the reading of comics by their children, but the act of reading comics has traditionally been seen as entering a world in which the authority of adults is disregarded. The boy in the photo looking up to see an adult is caught between worlds. Education, conversely, is a world where teachers, parents and adult figures have absolute authority. The well-behaved students in the classroom photo are looking up expectantly, as if at an adult figure who will soon impart knowledge to them.

This institutional and regimented conception of authority and education is part of how schools perform the roles of what Foucault would call "normalizing institutions," where hierarchies of authority are reinforced through the organization of the classroom (as seen in the photo above), the privileging of facts over concepts, and teaching that is oriented more toward "standardized tests than for intellectual nourishment" (Cheshier 1999, p. 12).

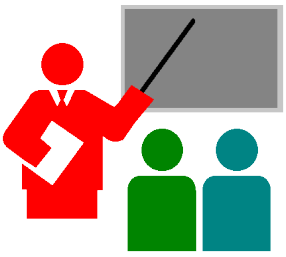
As Roger Deacon argued, even an "apparently 'simple' transfer of knowledge from one person to another…" such as the reductive Transmission Model "… cannot be disentangled from those authoritative processes which

seek to instil discipline into the deepest recesses of the school system, into the moral fibres of its inmates" (2005, p. 89). The regimented, hierarchical and compartmentalised systems of education were generally communicated through what McLuhan would classify as "hot" media forms, "from the gymnastics of handwriting to regimens of personal cleanliness" (Deacon 2006, p. 182).

Deacon (2005, 2006) theorised that these authoritative power structures in education were considered "moral orthopaedics," systems for fashioning children's bodies and minds to conform to adult expectations for upstanding citizens. By contrast, comics were thought to bring about moral decay in children, and crusaders in the 1950s compared their damages to those of drugs, alcohol and pornography (Criswell 1955). This sentiment is central to how comic books were understood during most of the 20th century, as a place free from the authority of adults and educators. By contrast, the presence of adult authority is integral to our cultural understanding of education, and educational texts.

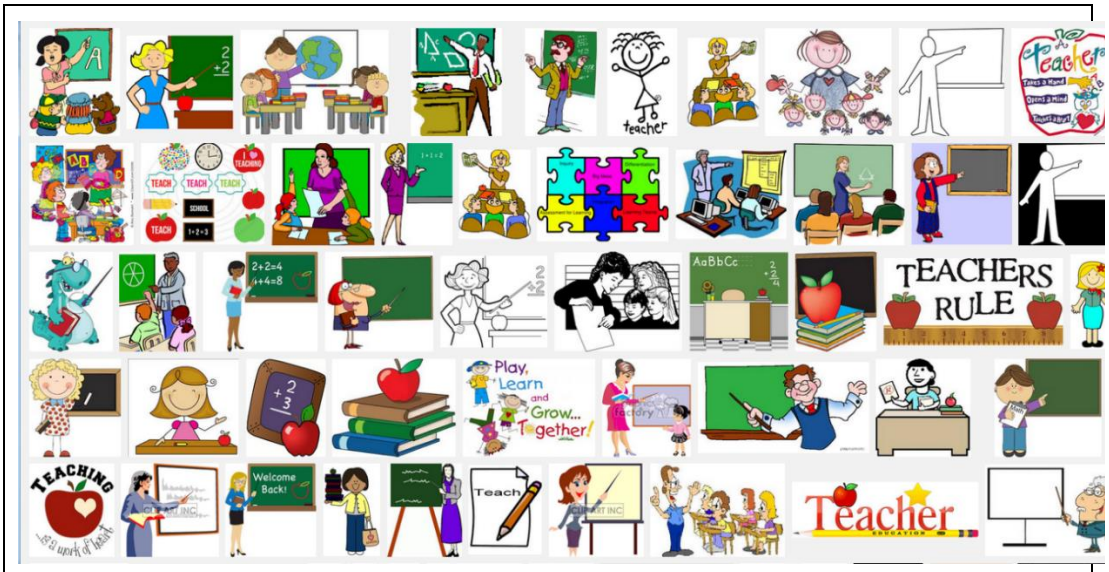
Lectures as authority

One example of the contemporary cultural context of educational texts is the following image, which was the first result from a recent Google Image Search for the word "teaching." It serves a useful entry point for discussing the cultural myths of teaching and lecturing which are also encoded in the structural and formal properties of many textbooks and academic publications.



This illustration, which was included in an article from *The Washington Post*, "The new challenges of teaching" by Katherine Schultz (Schultz, K 2013) is one of the top hits of a Google Image Search for the word "teaching."

The image, used in an article from *The Washington Post* (Schultz, K 2013), is typical of the visual cliché that has become part of our cultural conception of education: a lecturer holding a pointer in front of a blackboard before of a group of students. In twenty years as a student, I cannot recall ever having seen one of these devices used in a classroom, but like the chef's *toque blanche*, the teacher's pointer has become the quickest visual shorthand to signify the profession. The pointer seems a curious anachronism, a stubbornly vestigial part of our iconography.



The top 49 hits of a Google Image search for 'teacher clipart' show the common motif of teachers holding pointers, usually in front of blackboards. Note that when students are not present in the images, the teacher figure is usually looking straight ahead, as if we the viewers were students. The teacher and pointer are used to mediate between students and the blackboard.

In fact, what the pointer symbolises is control (this is its Barthesian myth): control of the classroom and of the students. Where it comes to a point is where every eye in the class is meant to be focused. The desire, expressed by Wertham, to limit and control the appealing dangers of "picture-gazing" can also be seen in these clipart and cartoon depictions of teachers who stand between their students and the images on the blackboard. When these three elements are all present, teacher, students and blackboard, the teacher is always positioned as intermediary between the students and the board; he is able to safely present images, and to translate them for his pupils, using his voice as well as the pointer, who he uses not only to corral the students, but also to keep the image itself "in line." The teacher's voice

controls what goes into the students' ears, and his pointer controls what goes into their eyes. This relates to McLuhan's classification of lectures as 'hot' in that they are focused, directed, and are formulated so as to not require students' active participation.

The pointer also doubles as a political tool: in the days of corporal punishment, it was often also used as a cane that could also control misbehaving students with the threat, if not the promise, of physical violence to their bodies. In the 1920s, "the school cane" was synonymous in Australia with the widely accepted practice of corporal punishment ('The School Cane. Use in Queensland. Retention Favoured.' 1921), and in this 1955 cartoon from *The London Times* ('cartoon' 1955), we can see the familiar stick figure 'teacher with pointer' iconography etched on the blackboard, implicating the intertwined roles of discipline and education.



Cartoon about corporal punishment from *The London Times* (1955). Note the cane leaning on the desk behind the teacher, and the stick figure drawing on the blackboard, looming behind the teacher like a spectre.

Behind the teacher, the image on the chalkboard is similar to that of the familiar clip art, except in this context the pointer/cane is also being wielded for whipping. The pointer takes the form of a straight line, calling to mind the need to keep an unruly class "in line," and the many ways that students are often asked to arrange their bodies into straight, orderly lines. The lecture as a cultural form is intertwined with the role of the lecturer as a source of authority and discipline; the content of a lecture is assumed to be

educational and authoritative because of the lecturer assumes a position of authority. The field of critical pedagogy has challenged this assumption.

Freire's critique – the banking model

Critical pedagogy has called into question the effectiveness of lectures as a teaching technique, and a growing body of evidence suggests that active and collaborative learning techniques result in better outcomes (Alt 2014; Bligh 1998; Calder, Dowell & Weimer 2007; Clynes 2009; Doyle 2011). Much of the bedrock of critical pedagogy was developed by Paulo Freire, a Marxist who concerned himself with breaking down the unequal power structures that he critiqued in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972). Freire's work can be characterized as part of the 1960s Latin American movement called *conscientização* in Portuguese, which is described in the English translation of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as "learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (p. 17). These contradictions can be understood through the lens of Freire's theory of the "banking model of education."

Freire used the banking model to critique the idea that teaching is a one-way transmission of information from teacher to student. He described it thusly:

> *"(a) the teacher teaches and the students are taught;*
>
> *(b) the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing;*
>
> *(c) the teacher thinks and the students are thought about;*
>
> *(d) the teacher talks and the students listen—meekly;*
>
> *(e) the teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;*
>
> *(f) the teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply;*
>
> *(g) the teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;*
>
> *(h) the teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it;*
>
> *(i) the teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his or her own professional authority, which she and he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students;*
>
> *(j) the teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects."*

(Freire 1972, p. 73)

Pedagogy of the Oppressed has been extremely influential, and to many educationalists "it is not only a classic but continues to be relevant in the twenty-first century" (Macedo 2013, p. 8), continuing to inspire new approaches to research and pedagogy (e.g. Benade 2015; Castro 2016; Martinez-Maldonado, Pinto & Moreno-Sabido 2014; Narita & Green 2015; Rodrick 2013; Wilkins 2013). However, is not without its detractors. Sol Stern, described by the *New York Times* as a "cantankerous provocateur against liberal education policies" (Medina 2008), has lamented Freire's influence on American teachers, and criticized his work for being overly vague and focusing on political ideology, noting that it fails to address practical problems that educators face, such as "testing, standards, curriculum, the role of parents, how to organize schools, what subjects should be taught in various grades, how best to train teachers, the most effective way of teaching disadvantaged students" (Stern 2009). However, as Stanley Aronowitz argues, it is a misreading of Freire's work to view it as "a kind of manual for teachers" (Aronowitz 1985, p. 8). Instead, it should be understood as a critique of the power structures of Western educational systems which normalized the idea that teaching and learning work via a one-way transmission of knowledge from teacher to student (Kuhn 2015). Reprinted below is a cartoon by Arnold Roth (2009) that accompanied Stern's article, representing a frightful vision of what critics of Freire's work fear could happen if the banking model were to be overturned.



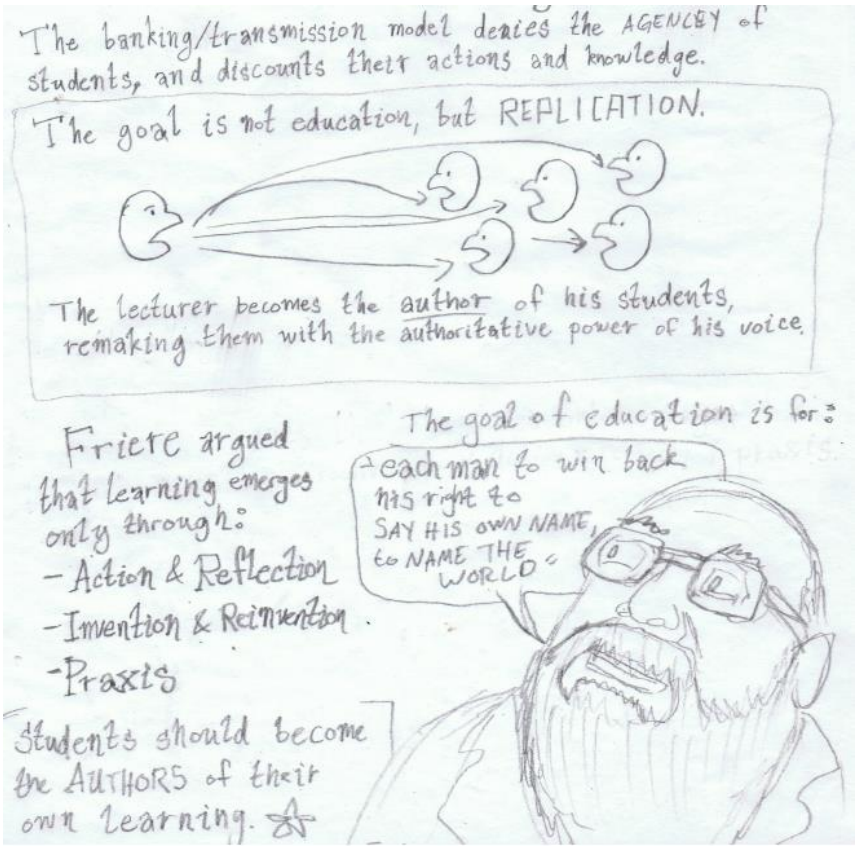
Arnold Roth's cartoon inverts the lecturer-dominated classroom and replaces the pointer with a child's cartoonishly long arm.

What is missing from this cartoon, as well as from most visual representations of education, is any sort of dialogue. Instead of presenting the dialogic pedagogy that Freire advocated, this cartoon simply shows a funhouse mirror-image of the iconography of the banking model. The exaggerated arm of the student in the upper left resembles the traditional lecturer's pointer, parodying its traditional authority. In another reversal of the traditional power structure, it is the teacher (wearing a dunce's cap) who is placed in a position of subjugation, forced to sit and listen (meekly) to the ranting nonsense of the students. Roth's cartoon is meant to critique Freire's

work, but it can actually be read as a critique of the educational power structures that Freire sought to overturn. The traditional, oppressive, power structure of the classroom is still extant in Roth's cartoon – is has simply switched polarities, so that students are now the oppressors and the teacher is the oppressed. This replicates the one-way flow of power that Freire critiqued. What Freire advocated for was not this carnivalesque inversion of the classroom, but instead an entire reimagination of the way power works within education, where instead of taking on the roles of oppressor and oppressed, teachers and students could act together as co-investigators.

The banking model might be understood as a pedagogical version of the Transmission Model of communication discussed earlier in this chapter. We see that only the figure who speaks (the teacher) has a mouth, while the other figure (the student) has only an ear. The teacher acts upon the student in this diagram, depositing his thoughts into the student's head. The student is given the role of an empty vessel that can be transformed by the words of the teacher. This is of course, a very limited view of education, and not indicative of how learning really works. Like the Transmission Model of communication, the Banking Model of education is a utopia, and Freire's work unmasks both of them as essentially fascist in nature.

The Banking/Transmission models deny the agency of students/senders, and discounts their individual actions and knowledge. What is shown in these models is not communication or education, but replication, as the lecturer/sender becomes the author of his students, remaking them with the authoritative power of his or her voice and position.



Notes and diagram on the Banking/Transmission models. Freire's quote is from (Freire 1972, p. 13). Image by the author.

In contrast to this teacher-centric model, Friere advocated liberatory education, in which teachers and students become joint investigators in dialogue with each other. In this dialogue, both teacher and student are positioned as learners, where "both participants bring knowledge to the relationship and one of the objects of the pedagogic process is to explore what each knows and what they can teach other" (Aronowitz 1985, p. 8). While many educators include education as part of the pedagogical process, Kelvin Stewart Beckett notes that for "Freire education *is* dialogue" (2012, p. 50).

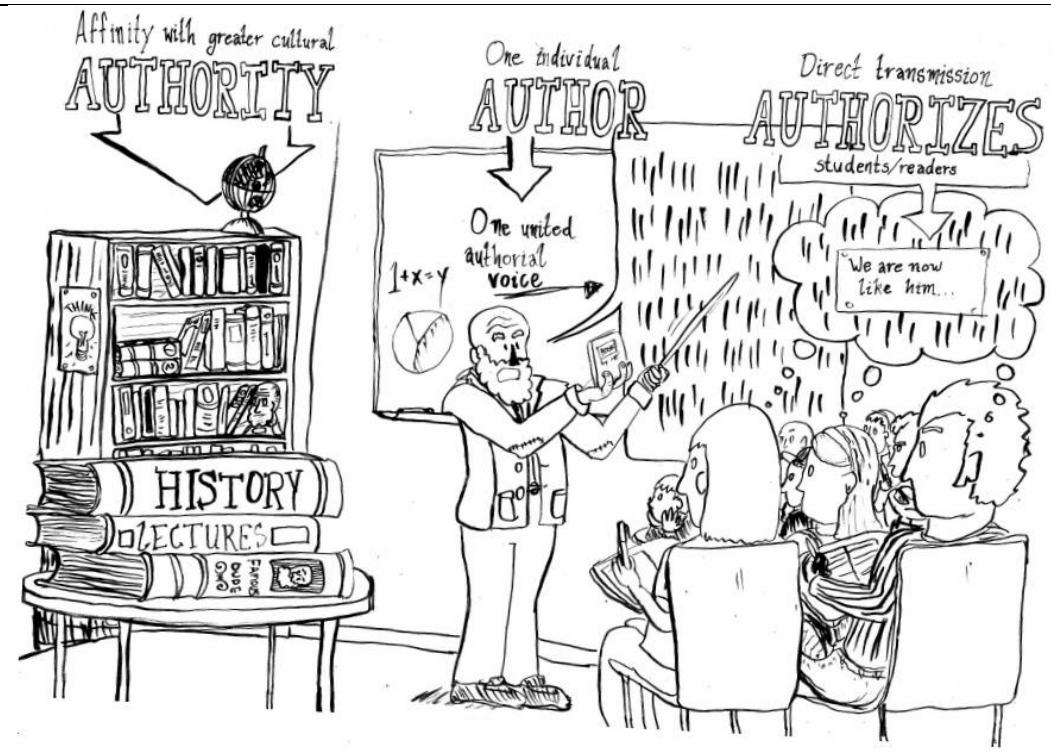
According to Freire, the content of this dialogue of liberatory education is the re-presentation to students of things they are curious about, as determined and organized by their own view of the world. Thus, "the task of the dialogical teacher … is to 're-present' that universe to the people from whom he first received it—and 're-present' it not as a lecture, but as a problem" (1972, p. 109). Freire argued that learning emerges only through students' action and reflection, or invention and reinvention, a process that

he called praxis. The focus is on students creating and acting upon their own ideas rather than being fed the thoughts of others.

There is a large body of writing in English devoted to Freire's pedagogy, and his work has transformed classrooms and the ways that we think about teaching (Beckett 2012; Glass 2001; Irwin 2012). The fields of Educational Constructivism and Multimodal Literacy, which will be discussed in more detail in later chapters are indebted to his work.

Lectures remediated as textbooks

Despite the transformative work of Freire and other educationalists who have followed in his footsteps, classrooms, textbooks and other educational materials are frequently designed according to this Banking/Transmission model.



The fantasia of the lecturing classroom – a synthesis of the critiques of McLuhan and Freire, this cartoon explores the themes of authority, authorship and authorization that characterize 20th century Western cultural expectations of education. This is how education and communication are often assumed to work, especially in a 'hot' medium like lectures or printed text. Image by the author.

Academic writing is expected to register in a voice that would not be out of place in a university lecture theatre. This kind of writing-as-lecture

often feels quite natural, and is incredibly common. However, it can also be considered a remediation of the lecture-based, banking model of education that Friere so staunchly criticized. In fact, the parallels between the banking model of education and academic writing may account for fact that "by all reports, the lecture is alive, well, in fact thriving" (Calder, Dowell & Weimer 2007, p. 4) nearly thirty years after education's critical turn in the mid-1980s (Gottesman 2010). Academics are expected to teach and to publish research; while there are many ways to approach teaching, there is really only one accepted model for academic publication, a model that leans toward lecture-like writing. It is understandable that academics who must use this mode of communication in the writing part of their profession will be inclined to adopt it in their teaching practice as well.

The lecturer's voice remains central to textbooks, which Hickman and Porfilio argue are positioned by elite cultural authorities and textbook manufacturers who encourage teachers to view textbooks "as rarefied forms of knowledge that not only should never be questioned, but also must be at the centre of their instruction, where students continually regurgitate this information to pass a battery of high-stakes examinations and come to believe social and economic inequalities are individual rather than social and economic phenomena" (2012, p. xxi).

This is not to say that readers' minds are at the mercy of their textbooks, since readers can and do construct a wide variety of interpretations, or readings, of a text. As Stuart Hall has suggested, these may be dominant readings that reflect the intended message, negotiated readings that dispute certain aspects, or oppositional readings which reject the dominant message entirely (Hall 1980). Michael Apple notes that readers "do not passively receive texts, but actively read them based on their own class race, gender and religious experiences—although we must always remember that there are institutional constraints on oppositional readings" (2000, p. 191).

Whether dominant, negotiated or oppositional readings, whatever meaning a reader takes from a text is invariably informed by the reader's

conception of how the text positions the relationship between the author and the reader. In most textbooks, this relationship by default is positioned as one resembling that of a knowledgeable lecturer speaking to ignorant students, which is reinforced by the mutual 'hotness' of both lectures and printed text.

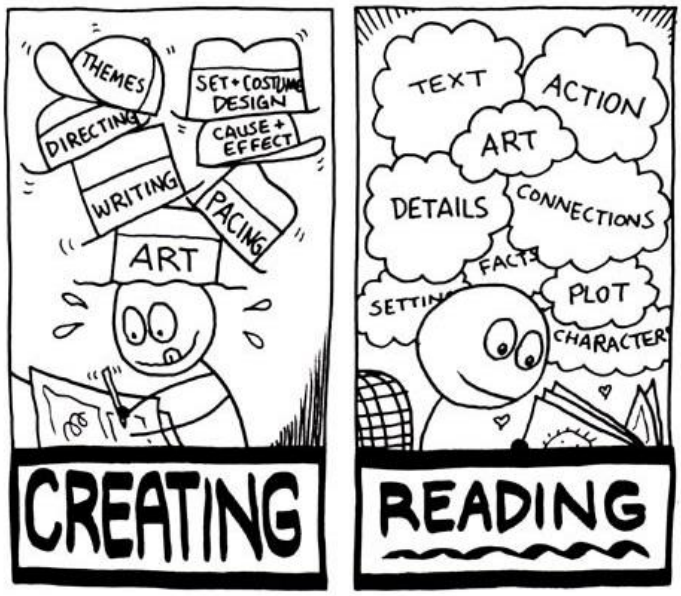
Cool education: Constructivism

By contrast, seminars, identified by McLuhan as "cool" and involving more participation, are a mode of learning that are frequently advocated in constructivist pedagogies, which emphasize student-led and student-centred learning. Constructivism in general suggests that learning is more successful when students play a greater role in constructing meaning in the classroom, so this type of pedagogy would seem to work best when mediated through what McLuhan called 'cool' forms of communication, such as seminars and comics, rather than 'hot' forms like lectures and printed text. However, while a wide variety of techniques have been suggested to reconfigure classrooms to better support learner-centred learning (Baird & Munir 2015; Bostock 1998; Cotterill 2015; Strachan & Liyanage 2015), it is less clear how textbooks and academic writing can be reformulated in a similar way. One possible route is through the use of comics as a medium for teaching and learning. The parallels between lecturing and textbooks, suggest that there may also be parallels between 'cool' seminars and comics as a form of education. Compared to lectures and writing, where the lecturer or author determines the precise order in which words are arranged, in comics the reader is given more control over the pace and direction that that information unfolds.

In Fellini's words, the comics form "benefits from the collaboration of the readers: one tells them a story that they tell to themselves; with their particular rhythm and imagination, in moving forward and backward" (quoted in Groensteen 2007). Comics require the reader to make connections between the panels and other elements on the page that exist in a network that Groensteen (2007) dubs the spatio-topia. The process of discovering connections between the visual and textual elements that are distributed

spatially throughout spatio-topia may be non-linear and iterative, a process of interpretation that Groensteen calls *braiding*. This kind of interpretation may lead to a greater engagement in the work through action and reflection of praxis (Freire 1972).

As a counterpoint to the banking and transmission models of education and communication discussed earlier in this chapter, the following illustration by Marek Bennett (2006), depicts comics as a method of communication that requires very different processes of encoding and decoding:



This illustration from Marek Bennett's minicomic *Why Comics?* can be read as an alternative to the Banking/Transmission models of education and communication.

Bennett's writer and reader are facing away from each other, emphasizing that creating and reading are different acts, both of which can be generative. Just as the comic 'creator' in his illustration wears many hats (including writing, art and pacing), the reader must juggle many different modalities of meaning in coming to understand the comic. Unlike the banking and transmission models, where the recipient of the message is passive, Bennet's reader plays an active, constructive role in the decoding meanings. Bennet also shows that the act of encoding a message is not a natural process, but involves both mental and physical effort (represented here by flying

droplets of sweat), a variety of actions, and the use of a medium of representation.

This depiction of communication as an asymmetrical, two-sided process that involves effort and construction on both sides denaturalizes the traditional conceptions of communication and education as proceeding from an active, authoritative lecturer for the benefit of a passive, receptive audience.

Conclusion: Beyond the binary

Although this chapter has focused on the differences between comics and traditional educational forms, like lectures and textbooks, as well as the exclusion of comics from the authoritative realm of education, it is important to emphasise that this is not a natural distinction, but rather an attempt at articulating the culturally and historically constructed archetypes of these communicative forms. The previous photos of children in the 1950s depict archetypical views of comics and education as representing an almost binary opposition: frivolity vs authority, delinquency vs instruction, unauthorised reading vs authorised reading. However, this binary opposition has never been universally accepted. As later chapters will show, comics have been in constant use as educational tools since the early days of the medium.



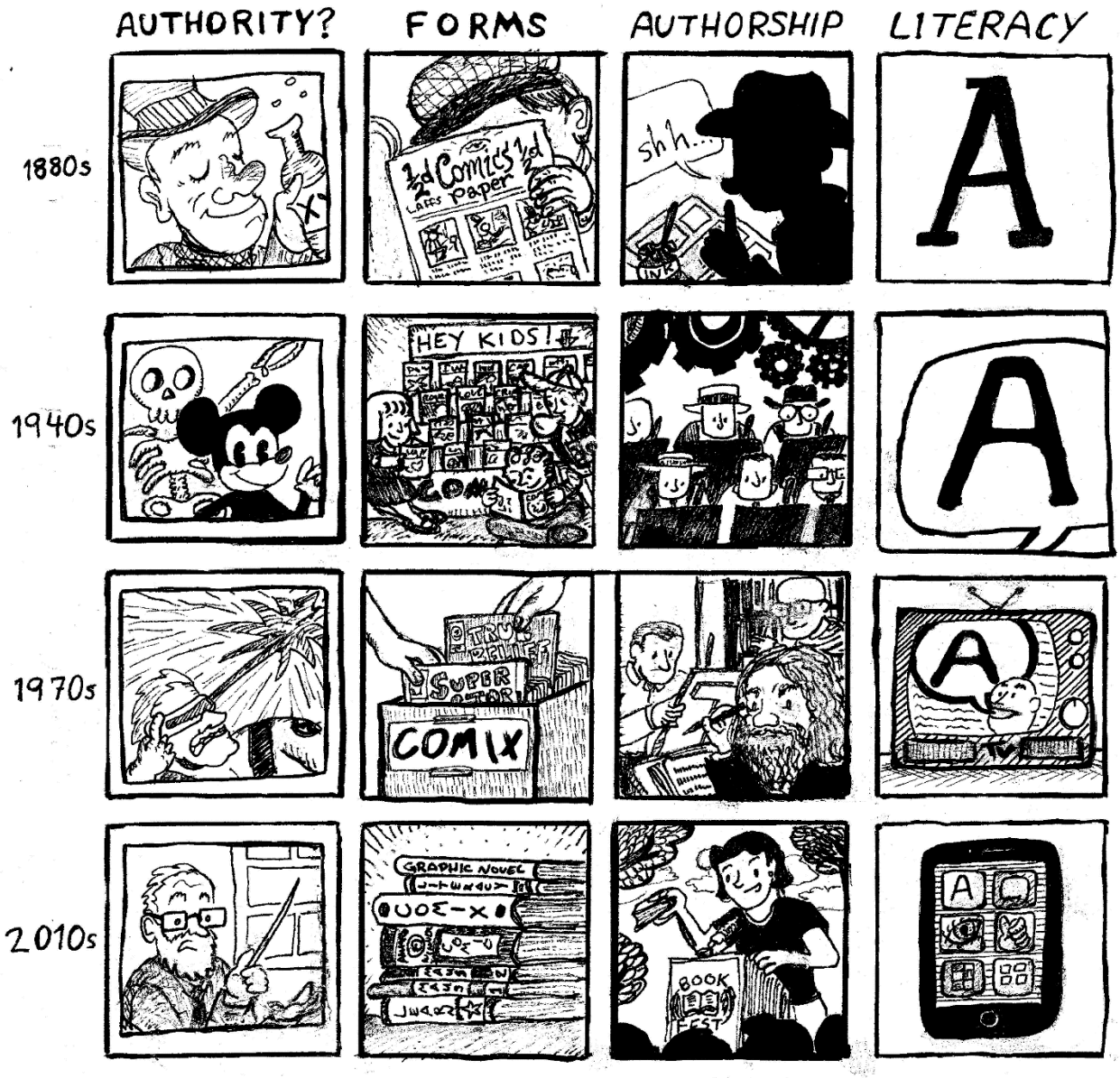
Based on the publication dates of the comics shown here, this photo from an archive of images of children reading comics was taken in 1951 (Beland 2011).

The following chapters offer a cursory overview of the history of the use of comics in education in English-speaking countries. Although some writers and academics have addressed specific uses of comics for education, this is the first attempt to synthesize these seemingly disparate uses into a theoretically cohesive historical narrative. This history will give greater depth to the broad theoretical issues explored in this chapter, exploring how the reader-centred "coolness" that McLuhan identified became a defining characteristic of comics, while their divergence from traditional, typeset linguistic text simultaneously separated them from the cultural realms of education and literacy.

At the centre of this history is the culturally constructed distance between comics and the banking/lecturing models of communication and education. This distance has played a large role in keeping comics out of classrooms and libraries, but it is also the key to their largely untapped potential as tools for learning and teaching.

Part 2:

CULTURE & HISTORY



Chapter 2 - Substance or Shadow? Comics, Authority and Frivolity

Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the idea that comics can be effective tools for constructivist pedagogy because they allow readers to have more control and participation than is encouraged in traditional educational media forms, such as lectures and textbooks. This analysis stemmed from an evaluation of the formal properties of educational media forms, drawing from Marshall McLuhan's theories of "hot" and "cool" media. Moving forward, it is important to stress that media cannot be fully described in terms of their formal qualities, but must also be understood in terms of how they have become established in culture and in history. The previous chapter also included a short cultural and historical critique of the way authority has been construed in lectures and in what Paulo Freire called the "Banking Model" of education. This chapter will commence a more thorough investigation of how comics have been culturally and historically constructed as alternatives to traditional education and textual authority.

One of the things that has made comics appealing to many readers, and made others suspicious of their value, is that many comics have a sense of playfulness, along with associations with fun or outlandish things, rather than serious things. The satirical and irreverent ways that comics have tended to depict authority is a crucial element of their pedagogy. Muna Al-Jawad (2013, p. 373) summarised some of these aspects in this panel from her *Journal of Medical Humanities* article "Comics are Research: Graphic Narratives as a New Way of Seeing Clinical Practice":



The citations in this cartoon by Al-Jawad (2013, p. 373) are to (Bakhtin 2006) for "carnivalesque" and (Sousanis 2012c) for "with play comes creativity."

The idea that comics and cartoons are "low culture" and freed from the conventions of both "high art" and "serious education" dates back to the mid-nineteenth century and some of the earliest publications of what we now consider comics, such as the illustrated books of Rodolphe Töpffer, the satirical cartoons of *Punch*, and the British comics papers. This notion of irreverent playfulness was certainly responsible for keeping comics out of traditional discourses of education, but it also contributes to their pedagogical possibilities. As Al-Jawad notes, "with play comes creativity."

Comics have long functioned as a carnivalesque burlesque of authority. This chapter will trace the early history of comics and cartoons to show how three developments in cultural industries gave comics their aura of playfulness. First, lithographic printing enabled the reproduction of a new, humorous style of drawn images, pioneered by Rudolph Töpffer. Secondly, the mass publication of these kinds drawn images in satirical papers like the British *Punch* established cartoons as a popular mass medium defined by its appeal to a growing middle class audience and irreverent attitude toward authority. Finally, the serialisation of reoccurring features, such as Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday, provided perennial spaces for readers to mentally rehearse their socio-political identity and their relationships with the cultural authorities of the day.

The doodling schoolmaster and the frivolity of autography

One cultural authority that early comics appeared to flaunt was the authority of typeset text. In her book *Print Culture*, Frances Robertson

describes how letterpress technologies were considered by the Victorians to lend an "aura of tradition" and "authority to the text," and to serve as a "potential source of (social and political) order" (Robertson 2013, p. 38). In contrast to this, themes of rebellion, frivolity and resistance to tradition and authority were generated through both the form and the content of some of the first examples of what we now consider to be modern comics.

Rodolphe Töpffer is widely considered to be one of the principle inventors of the comic strip for his satirical, hand-drawn comic novels that he published in Geneva and Paris in the 1830s and 1840s. In the words of David Kunzle, by "combining the visual and the verbal, he cooked up and seasoned with assorted satirical spices a new comic medium" (2007, p. 3). Although he was also a renowned literary critic and novelist, Töpffer earned his income primarily as a school teacher and eventually as a professor of literature at the University of Geneva. Accordingly, his inventions in the comics idiom should be understood in terms of his pedagogical position.

Kunzle notes "Töpffer's distaste for conventional learning" during a time when Geneva was renowned as the epicentre for new pedagogical ideas, and when Europe in general was "beginning to question the value of the classics as the alpha and omega of learning" (Kunzle 2007, p. 62). In this environment of educational experimentation, Töpffer remained skeptical, as the author of each new teaching theory claimed that all social and educational problems could be overcome – if only the author's instructions were followed, foresaking all others.

Töpffer 's comics started as something more akin to the kind of doodling one might do in a meeting or during a less-than-enthralling lecture. Töpffer would entertain his friends by quickly producing funny drawings, and these eventually developed into multi-page sagas, which Töpffer would lend to his friends and students to pass around. These originals would return to him dog-eared and slightly worn.

In 1831 he sent a copy to Goethe, and the staunch classicist wrote back enthusiastically. Having the support of such a prominent cultural authority gave Töpffer the justification to seek a wider audience for his work,

and he proceded to self-publish and distribute 800 copies of *Histoire de M. Jabot*. Despite the face that Töpffer signed each page with an 'RF", these were presented as the work of a mysterious, 'anonymous' author, a ruse that seems intended to help generate publicity (and also allowed Töpffer himself to offer a critical review of his own work in the newspaper!), but also because "to go public with his comic albums was to jeopardize his reputation as a schoolmaster and educator." (Kunzle 2007, p. 57)

The threat to the pedagogical establishment came from both the form of Töpffer's comic albums, and from their content. Töpffer's works were drawn and printed in a style he called "autography" that contrasted sharply with the way typeset textbooks were visually presented. Their satirical tone also lampooned various systems of authority, including the educational system.

Töpffer's "autography," was a relatively new way of printing that allowed him to directly reproduce the lively and loose style of his sketches. This differed from standard art lithography and traditional woodcut printing, which produced reversed images, and required captions to be set in letter press or inscribed by an artisan who specialised in mirror writing. Autography, instead used a "double reversal" that involved drawing in ink on a page of paper that had been smeared with a layer of glue starch. The lithographer would then transfer this drawing to a stone using pressure, and then transfer it from the stone to another piece of paper (Kunzle 2007, p. 78), flipping the drawing back to its original orientation. Although widely known as transfer lithography in England at the time, this method of printing seems to have been quite novel in Switzerland. It had the effect of appearing to remove the imprint of mechanical, industrial structures of printing press and publishing industry to present a more direct and intimate connection between author and reader, preserving the hand-made quality of the original, dog-eared manuscripts that Töpffer circulated among his students and friends.

Like doodled caricatures of school teachers that students covertly pass around classrooms, Töpffer's comic albums mocked the cultural authorities

and establishments of the day – although Töpffer himself held a position of great cultural authority. In his *Monsieur Crepin*, it is the educational systems that are mocked, as the book deals with a succession of eccentric tutors who fail in their attempts to educate the children of the eponymous *M. Crepin*.

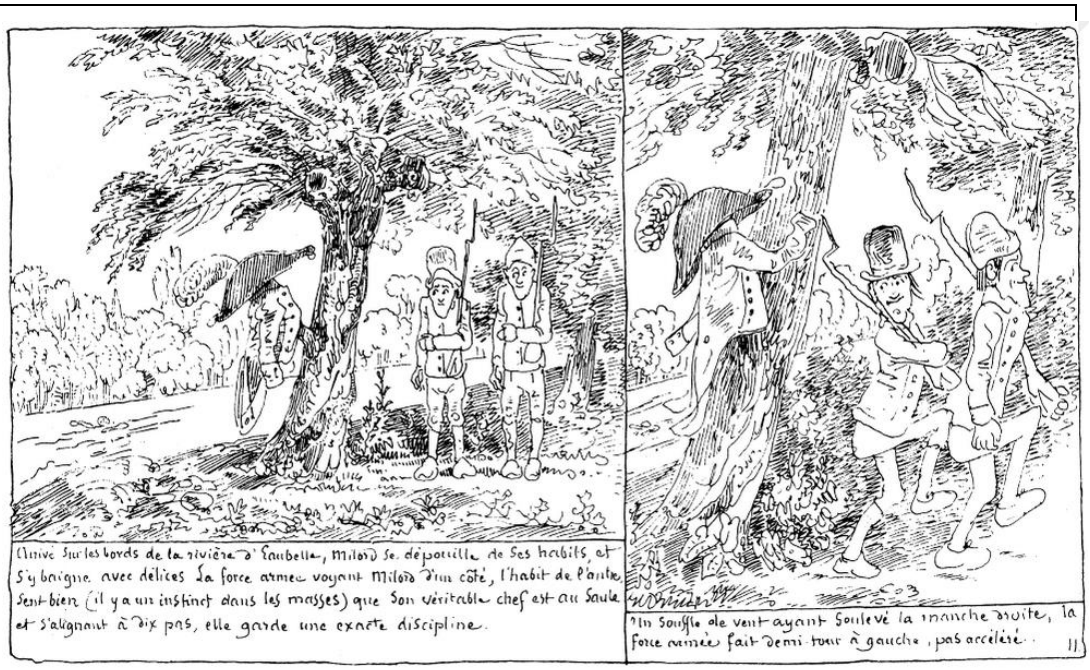


3-5. Bonichon sets the younger Crépins to his method, that is, studying the *Adventures of Télémaque* in the Jacotot manner. Mr. Fadet [illegible] reducing everything to fractions, according to a system he invented (*Crépin* 21).

In this sequence from *Monsieur Crepin* (Töpffer 2007), two different tutors are presented failing to control their pupils. Note that the panel borders, text and images have all been reproduced from Töpffer's original drawings, and preserve the loose, informal quality of his drawing style.

Kunzle notes *"Crépin* was certainly a provocative venture at such a time and in such a place, written as it was from within the pedagogic hierarchy, by one who relished the prospect of scandalizing 'that band of hateful pedants' among his colleagues" (2007, p. 64).

A similar critique of pedantry saturates *Le Docteur Festus*, the story of an all-knowing idiot, well-versed in all sorts of science and trivia, but without a lick of common sense. *Le Docteur Festus* also features as supporting characters two bumbling soldiers. Kunzle describes them as behaving like "moronic robots with a perpetual inane smile on their faces, mechanically following the uniform of their commander, the Mayor, whoever may be occupying it" (Kunzle 2007, p. 16). Accordingly, when the officious hat and jacket are draped on the branch of a tree and the wind catches the arm of the jacket, the soldiers respond by marching as if they had been commanded.



In this sequence from Le Dr. Festus (Töpffer 2007), when the wind catches the sleeve of the Mayor's jacket that is draped over a tree, two soldiers march as if the Mayor himself were commanding them.

This scene provides a good example of how the form and content of Töpffer's work in concert to create a satirical comic world. In having the mayor's jacket command the soldiers of its own accord, Töpffer parodies authority as an empty illusion, all hat and no cattle. But there is something else going on as well. Töpffer's lively pen strokes render his critique with touch of fantastical whimsy, while also creating a sense of depth and movement. At the same time, the paucity of detail in his drawings, as well as the division between panels, requires the reader to 'fill in' the gaps in the action.

As a result, the reader is invited to participate, on an imaginative level, in the comic, by mentally elaborating the foliage of the riverbank, directing the flow of the wind that blows the jacket sleeve, or even --this is crucial-- commanding the march of the soldiers. There is a sense of play in this sequence, as it mocks traditional notions of authority while at the same time allowing readers a level of interpretive authority over the images. In this way, the comic authorises its readers to assume an imaginative authority over these bumbling soldiers and to march them off the page like mental marionettes. While McCloud (1993), Groensteen (2007) and others have

noted that this active sort of reader participation is facilitated by the formal properties of comics (as will be discussed further in chapters five and six), in this case the sense of play is also mediated by the intimate and informal quality of Töpffer's line drawings, which look, more than 150 years later, as if they could have been scribbled mere moments ago, on the back of a bar coaster.

As Frances Robertson describes, Töpffer recognized that "the free, uncontrolled and wobbly lines of lithographic sketching … when applied to faces and bodies, became animated by the viewer in a new and vigorous way" (2013, p. 61). This style was well suited to both satire and flights of fantasy, in part because it was so far removed from the typeset, steam-and-steel style of printing that had become a symbol of authority and power. The playfulness of the lively cartoon-like drawings used even in early comics, like the work of Rodolphe Töpffer, stands in contrast to kind of cultural authority that was conveyed by earlier letterpress technologies, which were considered by the Victorians to lend an "aura of tradition" and "authority to the text," and to serve as a "potential source of (social and political) order" (Robertson 2013, p. 38).

The Substance and Shadow of Satire

Lithographic printing changed the way that print could depict authority, and Töpffer's playful attitude toward authority and power was echoed in the weekly British comic papers, including the venerable *Punch*, which was founded in 1841. Although it started a publishing trend that soon saw the establishment of many comic papers that targeted the working classes, *Punch* itself aimed for a more highbrow audience, seeking to be both popular and sophisticated.

These early developments in *Punch* highlight issues of power and authority that resonate throughout the later history of comics, and could be said to be encoded in our cultural understanding of comics. Since our cultural understanding of education is also related to power and authority, these issues are crucial to explaining how comics have been traditionally regarded in the public sphere as antithetical to proper, authoritative pedagogy, even as

comics were being widely used as educational tools by governments and businesses. Part of *Punch*'s publishing model was "not only to attract politicians and lovers of humour and satire, but to enlist also the support of scholars, to whom at that time no comic paper had avowedly appealed" (Spielmann 1895, p. 31). It was under these conditions that the magazine published full-page printed drawings that popularised our modern understanding of the word "cartoon" in 1843.

This is not to say that *Punch* invented the word itself, but that they subverted its established meaning to create its modern meaning. "Cartoon" originally meant a preparatory sketch drawn in chalk or charcoal, often used by an artist in advance of embarking on a painting. They were not generally intended for display or reproduction. However, they had created something of a buzz around in London at the time. In 1842, the British Parliament had announced a competition to decide on images that would be painted as large frescos on the walls of the new Place of Westminster. The competition called for proposed designs to be submitted as large "cartoons" which were to be done without colour and in "no less than life size, and were meant to represent either historical events, or the works of Spenser, Shakespeare or Milton" (Lapidge, Godden & Keynes 2000, p. 335). Some of these 140 "cartoons" were then displayed in the summer of 1843 in a much-publicised exhibition in Westminster Hall. Below are two of the winning cartoons, which were awarded prizes of £300.

	
Study of the accused for the first trial	**Caesar's first invasion of Britain, by Edward Armitage,**

by jury by Charles West Cope, c1843	c1843

These were not "cartoons" as we now know them, but what might be considered the epitome of "high art" – self-serious depictions of the establishment of empire and government by classically-trained painters designed to adorn a government building. These were images of power, designed to convey power to their patrons, the British government, and to the building they were designed to decorate.

The editors at *Punch* decided to mock the competition and the exhibition by announcing that they had commissioned cartoons for their own contest. One or two of these "winners" were published each week for a month, printed as over-sized full-page images that poked fun at the "no less than life-size" drawings in the Westminster Gallery. The cartoons were created by *Punch's* staff cartoonists, such as the well-known John Leech (Jordan 1992, p. 25), but they were credited to pretentious *nom de plumes* when Punch announced the "winners," of its competition, complete with absurd awards such as "The prize awarded to the Earl of Cardigan will consist of a summary of his merits on blank cartridge" (*Punch: Or the London Charivari* 1843, p. 68). There is an interesting parallel to Töpffer's work here in that the artists worked under a kind of false pretence of anonymity.

The most striking of these faux-gallery cartoons was the first, drawn by Leech, which was labelled "Cartoon, no. 1." It depicted not a heroic moment from British literature or imperial history, but the Westminster gallery itself.



***Punch*'s "Cartoon no. 1", which appeared in the 15 July, 1843 edition, was drawn by John Leech (Allingham 2014), but credited to "Lord Brougham," about whom the *Punch* editors facetiously reported "we had some difficulty in fixing on a suitable prize for his lordship, who would be satisfied with nothing by the great seal. We have, however, sent him our largest wafer-stamp" (*Punch: Or the London Charivari* 1843, p. 68)**

It is not politicians or noble gentry who are attending the exhibition here, but beggars and urchins who seem to be milling about, dead-eyed and confused. The cartoon ran with the caption "The Poor ask for Bread, and the Philanthropy of the State accords—an Exhibition." According to the 1895 *History of 'Punch'*, "The cartoon represents a humble crowd of needy visitors to the exhibition of pictures on a suggested "free day," in accordance with the recommendation of the Government" (Spielmann 1895, p. 187)187). The caption of this cartoon, 'Substance and Shadow' has a double meaning, as the art of drawing with charcoal involves the use of shading in order to build the impression of substance and shadow. Here though, the "substance" is the high art of the gallery, while the "shadow" is the wretched masses who go hungry in the shadow of the exhibition. So while the cartoons in the Westminster gallery depicted the glories of British Empire, this cartoon

instead shows the shortcomings of that empire – poor, dirty masses whose empty bellies prevent them from appreciating the triumphs of power as depicted in high art.

Similar dichotomies between the aristocratic pretensions and social ills of contemporary Britain were present in the other cartoons in the series. The second and third images of the series are reproduced below. Notably, the second cartoon in the series depicts rival authorities battling over the soul of an apparently helpless child, a theme that will reoccur throughout the discourse on comics, and that the third cartoon shows a water pump wearing a crown and cape and being venerated as the symbol of England – an uncanny parallel to the empty authority shown in Töpffer's mayoral tree.



BATTLE OF THE ALPHABET.

CARTOON, No. II.



CARTOON, No. III.

JOHN BULL'S IDOL!

***Punch's* description for this "cartoon" notes that "everybody deplored the ignorance of British babies; but then, nobody would admit anybody to enlighten them. As many sects as there are letters of the Alphabet fought for the child, all seizing him at the same time!" So as to not tear him to pieces, "by common consent, all let go of their hands; and the child was not to be troubled with letters." (*Punch: Or the London Charivari* 1843, p. 26)**

***Punch's* description for this "cartoon" notes that it "embodies in the most striking manner to social religion of John Bull. The beholder will be kind enough to observe that the things to be idolized are rank and money" (*Punch: Or the London Charivari* 1843, p. 34).**

However, if these cartoons satirised the failings of those in power, they also made sure its audience was aware of their distance from the lower classes as well. Half the joke of "Substance and Shadow" involved rolling one's eyes at the pretensions of power, while the other half involved shaking one's head at the illiterate and uncultured underclass. The cartoon depicting

the Westminster Gallery sliced out a social position for its readership where it could remain in contempt of the ruling class's authority and policies, but simultaneously maintain a sense of its own social authority over the working class. Its visual form accomplished this deftly, as the viewpoint of the image simultaneously surveyed both the pretentious exhibition and the pathetic crowd, while remaining at a distance. The viewpoint does seem to be *inside* the gallery, however, implicating more of an affinity with the gallery than with its absurd audience.

The silent, visual modality of *Punch*'s cartoons presented an opportunity for its readers to play with and shape parts of their socio-political identities. Although *Punch* provided a caption and a context, there is room in the cartoon for negotiation and interpretation, and for readers to assess their own feelings toward its subjects. I would suggest, however, that the preferred meaning suggested by this image is the construction of an upper-middle class socio-political identity.

Similarly, Kutzle notes that Topffer's satire works similarly, as it "flows in two, one might say contrary directions: it opposes an economically extravagant, none-to-efficient, archaic, and aristocratic educational system, that of the private tutor, and at the same time ridicules methods devised for mass public education" (Kunzle 2007, p. 66). His books, similarly, were perhaps too silly and frivolous for self-styled aristocrats, while being too expensive to appeal to the lower class.

Likewise, *Punch* was clearly not courting the readership of those wretched masses it depicted tottering around the Westminster gallery. However, both Topffer and *Punch* helped to pave the way for comics as a mass medium which would appeal to the middle and lower classes by critiquing social authority while simultaneously authorising its readers' established behaviours. As comics became a mass medium in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, they would continue to offer readers opportunities to shape their conceptions of their social identities using many of the same techniques as "Shadows and Substance," but adjusted to appeal to a more working-class audience.

A Half-Holiday from Authority?

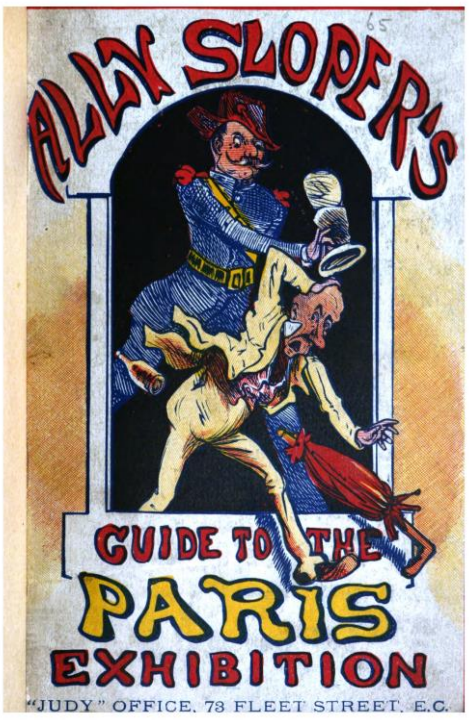
If *Punch*'s pastiche of the Westminster Hall cartoons were a satire of the politics of high art, they also heralded the arrival of a new kind of art, and a new kind of politics incarnated in the mass media. Walter Benjamin noted in his seminal 1936 essay, *The Work of Art on the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* that making many exact copies of a work of art served to reduce the perceived "aura," or "cult value" of that art by reducing the uniqueness of its presence. (Benjamin 1936)

The comic strip, as a mass medium, did not have the same cult(ural) value as something like a painting that is confined to a gallery. Art published in a newspaper was regarded as less valuable and less serious than "fine" art simply by virtue of its ubiquity. The trade-off was that newspapers were more widely available, giving them increased "exhibition value," or the ability to be collectively discussed and analysed. No one had to make the pilgrimage to Westminster Hall to see the cartoons in *Punch,* and indeed there was no genuine article that could be stared at in a gallery. Instead, there were thousands of copies printed in on smudgy, crinkly newsprint, and for three pennies, one could be all yours in the week's issue of *Punch*.

Punch would soon be "followed by a clutch of middle-class imitators, and also by a larger number of titles aimed primarily at a working-class readership. *Judy* (Gilbert Dalziel, 1867), *Funny Folks* (James Henderson, 1874), *Scraps* (James Henderson, 1883) and others," which "stuck to the basic formula pioneered by *Punch*, but added more slapstick and reduced the amount of text" (Sabin 1996, p. 15). Sticking to the formula also meant sticking to the formulation of authority that was constructed in that first *Punch* cartoon. This can be seen most clearly in the case of Ally Sloper, a character who first appeared in the pages of *Judy* and later moved to the long-running weekly *Ally Sloper's Half Holiday* (1884-1923), becoming the first cartoon character to headline a regular publication (Bailey 1983). Sloper's trademarks were his bulbous nose, inflamed by alcoholism, and his oversized, perpetually dishevelled top hat. "He was essentially a con-man and a

drunkard … and was often drawn with a bottle sticking out of his back pocket," and his name was "a pun on sloping off up the alley-way to avoid the rent collector" (Sabin 2003).

Ally was essentially the kind of ne'er-do-well that might have easily been spotted amongst the clueless lower-class spectators of *Punch*'s version of the Westminster gallery, and indeed an early publication, *Ally Sloper's Guide to the Paris Exhibition* (Ross & Duval 1878) played up exactly this angle, while a later cartoon shows him lecherously using a magnifying device to gaze at nude portraits.



Cover of *Ally Sloper's Guide to the Paris Exhibition*, art by Marie Duval, published May 1868.



Cover of the May 5, 1888 edition of Ally Sloper's Half Holiday. W.F. Thomas is the artist of the large image. (Sabin 2003)

Perry and Aldridge note that just as the character "Ally Sloper delighted in swigging gin and pouring scorn on his fellows," the paper which bore his name was "crude and hard-biting, aimed initially at a young adult readership. Its broad humour and its contempt for stuffed shirts and pomposity were directed towards the new literate masses emerging as the first effects of the 1870 Education Act" (Perry & Aldridge 1971, p. 47).

He also became tremendously popular, inspiring spin-offs, product endorsements and lines of merchandise. As Roger Sabin describes, "it is no exaggeration to say that his visibility in (UK) popular culture would have been comparable to that of any blockbuster Hollywood creation" (2003). Sabin details how savvy marketing helped to build the commercial Sloper empire, and he is just one in a long line of cartoon louts who has captured the public's imagination, from Homer Simpson to Beavis and Butthead.

Just as "Shadow and Shade" presented a polarity between upper class authority and lower class poverty, for its readers to construct an identity in between, Ally Sloper delimited life for his era's growing working class. He parodied, mocked and subverted Britain's cultural institutions, but was never able to overcome them (Kunzle 1986, pp. 27-28). He himself remained a figure to be mocked and made fun of, even as he made fun of the culture and authority around him. Ally Sloper showed simultaneously the fun that can be had in breaking the rules, and the ruinous results of that rebellion. In this way, he upheld hegemonic authority, even while appearing to flout it. He allowed readers the inner thrill of subversion, or in other words, *authorised* their laughter, while showing them, in an extremely exaggerated way, how *not* to behave. In this way, readers were offered a 'half-holiday' from the mechanising pressures of capitalist cultural authority.

In "Shadow and Shade," the society presented in the background of the image is satirised, while the characters in the foreground are to be pitied. Ally Sloper works the same way. The milieu of Ally's world is one of satire and parody, but Ally himself is a rather wretched, pitiful creature who the readers are always positioned above. His 20th century spiritual descendent would be Andy Capp, a similarly mass-merchandised cartoon drunk, created by cartoonist Reg Smythe, who led such a miserable life that even actual drunks could enjoy a chortle of schadenfreude at his expense.



***Andy Capp* by Reg Smythe, 22 May 1966. (Smythe 1966)**

'Closed' comics – sites for stagnation or development?

If Ally Sloper, Andy Capp and their ilk serve any educational purpose, it would seem to be as reverse role-models – to show what *not* to do. However, even in this capacity they fall short, as neither character ever suffers long-term consequences as a result of their actions. Like many comic book and comic strip characters, they remained in perpetual stasis. Ally Sloper would never hit it rich, gain great social standing, quit his drinking, or die, so his conflict with "polite" society was renewed every week. Andy Capp and his wife likewise continue to exist in a perpetual state of mutual loathing and co-dependence in comics that continue to be produced and published more than 18 years after Reg Smyth's death (Slade 2013).

Indeed, most comic strips and comic books have historically revolved around conflicts between social classes, individuals, and societies, and these conflicts are almost always *unresolvable*. Dagwood will always fall asleep at his job, and his children will always be teenagers. Meanwhile in the comic books, Archie will always oscillate between Betty and Veronica, and Superman's villains will always be vanquished but will always return; Scrooge McDuck will never lose his fortune, but will always seek more money. Perhaps then, what these comics teach their readers is that our society is a hermetically sealed closed circuit in which no one ever moves between social classes, and change is impossible. Dorfmann & Mattelart (1975) have argued that this lack of development in most comic strips and comic books shows that the medium is conservative, and used by capitalist societies as a means of maintaining hegemonic control.

The repetitive narratives of most comics played a role in keeping educators sceptical about their pedagogical potential for most of the twentieth century. Education is about growth, and traditionally only a very small number of comics have allowed their characters to grow or change. There are commercial reasons for this, as it allows for successful series to continue running indefinitely. The entire business plan at Marvel Comics, for example, rests on the idea of creating the *illusion* of change, while always returning its heroes to the status quo (Singer 2008, p. 281).

However, Martin Barker has critiqued the idea that there can be no development or learning from a closed text, noting that the way readers interact with a text is dependent on how they choose to interact with it; "the enclosedness of the text does not imply the enclosing of the readers. The assumption that readers must somehow be being 'made' to parallel the form of a text is a highly misleading one" (Barker 1989, p. 91).

Barker analysed the responses of children to the comedy/horror comic *Scream Inn* which ran regularly in the weekly 1970s British comics magazine *Shiver and Shake*. We have seen how *Ally Sloper* reached a poorer, more working-class audience than *Punch* (Banville 2008, p. 154), and many of the uncountable weekly comics magazines that were developed after *Ally Sloper's Half*, including *Shiver and Shake*, were aimed at a group of people who had even less cultural authority than Britain's working class: its children. The development of these comics coincides with the societal redefinition of childhood which began in the late nineteenth century Victorian era, which saw legal and cultural moves to "remove children from the full rigours of adult life" (Thane 1981, p. 10) and the birth of children's literature which "celebrated the world of the child's imagination" (Shuttleworth 2004, p. 111). In this world of childhood, the authority of adult culture is all-encompassing and can be overwhelming. Barker calls childhood "a socially-defined period when young people are most subject to forms of adult authority (at home, at school, etc.); they are innocent and in need of protection, and adults lay down rules for them which have an appearance of arbitrariness" (Barker 1989, p. 113).

Rules also govern *Scream Inn*, as they do so many other comic strips. It was set in a haunted inn that was run by a creepy old innkeeper, and populated by an assortment of ghosts. The premise of the strip was that the spectral proprietors of the Inn ran a regular contest, where "each week somebody had to try and stay in the haunted bedroom for a prize of a million pounds and each week they got chucked out" (Irmantas 2013).

In the *Scream Inn* episode below, it is an English gentleman who comes to the inn, looking for a ghoul to add to his mansion as a tourist attraction. Barker notes that part of the rules of *Scream Inn* are that patrons can only be removed in ways that are funny, and which relate to their character – so it would not have worked for the gentleman to have been removed by force. Instead, he is scared off by hordes of tourists who are looking for an "authentic" British experience. His self-proclaimed Britishness is his own undoing.



Scream Inn episode reprinted from Barker (1989).

As in *Punch*, *Ally Sloper* and *Andy Capp,* there is a structure here of a wider cultural satire, with an intrusive character who highlights absurd aspects of the status quo, but is unable to permanently disrupt them. Whereas "Shadow and Shade" mocked the Westminster Hall exhibition, *Scream Inn* mocks the haunted house genre – its ghouls are neither particularly scary nor supernaturally powerful. To adult readers this might seem to be an absurdly easy target, but to children, monsters and ghosts can seem like real forces of power. The patrons of *Scream Inn*, like the paupers in the Westminster Hall gallery, highlight the absurdity of the supposed authority that surrounds them, yet they are ultimately powerless to stop it. Furthermore, it mocks the authority of established cultural stereotypes – for example, the old British gentleman in the strip above is shown to be just as much of a fantasy as the ghouls of the house.

The reader is able to survey this tableau, rendered in lively drawings, descended from Topffer, that are animated by the reader's imagination. The readers are allowed ultimate judgment whether it as fair or unfair, funny or unfunny. There is an element of play at work in this response, in determining how well the comic plays by the rules and conventions that it has established for itself. Barker suggests that this structure of comics:

> *"offers a shape for what must be for children an experience of chaotic power. At school, a great deal of children's lives is incredibly regimented. Yet to the child there can be little logic or reason of that regimentation … What these strips do is to impose a 'child-like' logic on that disorder. They use the main resource acknowledged to be theirs as children, and turn it into a weapon of response to the very authorities that define them as children: that resource is the area called 'play' and 'fantasy'. Childhood is turned into a mode of response to the very forms of power that each day reproduce it" (Barker 1989, p. 88).*

Where others have seen comics as anti-pedagogical and encouraging both intellectual and emotional stagnation, Barker sees that they can be generative. Comics can be sites for exploring the nature of authority, power and identity. This is, in fact, how they have been used since the early comics of Topffer and *Punch*, in newspaper strips like Andy Capp, and in comic books

like *Scream Inn*. As we shall see in the next chapter, the most historically successful educational comics have also dealt with these issues.

Conclusion

The pedagogical potentials of comics can be attributed in part to the same formal qualities that distanced them socially from educational and cultural authorities. Töpffer's hand-drawn doodles were the perfect medium for a critique of the self-serious pretentions of the Geneva establishment, but also provided a unique way for his readers to interact with and share a degree of authorship over the image/text. The cartoons in *Punch*, which were printed cheaply and on a regular basis, were part of the new mass media that helped to define the growing middle class, and created spaces where readers could reflect upon their own social positions and identities. This effect was given a further humorous affect with the development of continuing features, such as Ally Sloper and Andy Capp, where characters' recurring struggles added an additional element of play to the comic strip format by prescribing rules that made each feature into a kind of game. Of these three elements - visual style, mass publication, and reoccurring characters - it is the visual style, pioneered by Topffer, which seems to be most essential to the form of comics as a whole, while the other two elements are more specific to the comic strip format, as developed in newspapers. The development of other publishing formats will be explored in the next two chapters, including their pedagogical implications.

Chapter 3 – Educational Experiments and Publishing Programs: Authorised Forms of Educational Comics

Introduction

For much of the 20th century, authority figures in schools, libraries and bookstores regarded comics as subversive, anti-educational, and anti-authority. This general disregard from the gatekeepers of literacy was not applied on a case-by-case basis, but to the entire format -- as one schoolteacher noted "teachers have without a knowledge of the contents of comic books discouraged their appearance in the schoolroom" (Denecke 1945, p. 6). Indeed, groups that sought to separate "good" comics from the "bad" faced significant logistical hurdles (Twomey 1955), and Wertham argued that even "good" and supposedly educational comics exhibited the negative characteristics of the format (1954, p. 394; 1955b, pp. 307-312). The publishing industries and formats in which comics are produced, have clearly been instrumental in defining comics' place within society.

New publishing formats emerge through the confluence of technologies, industries and cultural needs. In the early 20th century, American newspaper publishers adopted new printing technologies that transformed the way images could be reproduced (Clark 1902), allowing for the creation of the comic strip format as a means of enticing readers to purchase newspapers, despite their lack of newsworthiness – part of the "turgid, screaming sensationalism of the new journalism "(Waugh 1947, p. 6). A few decades later, the comic book format was developed as a means of selling the comics features directly, unencumbered by "proper" part of the newspaper, and free of intellectual value (Witty & Sizemore 1954, p. 501).

However, even within these maligned formats, some publishers, writers and artists have attempted to use comics as an educational format since the early days of the medium (e.g. Greeley 1914; Lyle 1935, and examples discussed below). The history of early educational comics runs in the shadows of the publishing forms of comic strips and comic books, showing how educational comics remained a small, but visible part of those

dominant industries until they spun off into their own industry in the wake of World War II. This industry continues today, with governments, NGOs and other institutions publishing comics through unconventional channels (one such comic will be investigated in Chapter Nine). However, until the 21st century educational comics have remained largely separated from, and almost invisible to, the publishing discourses of 'mainstream' comic strips and comic books, for various reasons.

The historical examples featured in the previous chapter all came from the UK, except for the work of Topffer, who was Swiss. By contrast, this chapter will jump across the Atlantic to look at historical examples of mostly American comics. These chapters have been organized in this way to give a sense of the historical development of comics in each country without constantly jumping back and forth between them. The transatlantic parallels that exist will hopefully become clear.

Visual formats: respected and disrespected

Nearly 75 years after the establishment of comic strip sections within American newspapers, Perry and Aldridge described comic strips as fulfilling "no high-flown social purpose, any more than gossip columns do. They are pure light relief..." (1971, p. 12). They reported that although the comics section frequently appeared in surveys of newspaper readers as the "most read feature" (1971, p. 16), many readers felt ashamed or guilty when made to admit that they read the comics. Perry and Aldridge wondered if this was "a hangover in the racial subconscious of the Victorian equation of pictures with illiteracy and ignorance, a combination of snobbery and Puritanism?" (1971, p. 17). This idea that it was pictures themselves that made comics repellent to the literary and pedagogical establishment was frequently repeated for decades (e.g. Berchtold 1935; Burton 1955). However the literary acceptance of other forms illustrated narratives throughout the 20th century suggests otherwise.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the narrative caricature strips of Rodolphe Töpffer were popular with both general audiences and the literary

vanguard, and were championed by no less than Goethe, a staunch classicist. Meanwhile, the editors of the Victorian *Punch* catered to scholars and intellectuals. In the 1920s and '30s, novels of woodcut images by artists like Frans Masereel and Lynd Ward which contained no words at all were accepted by the literary establishment, thus demonstrating that it was not images that kept comics from being authorized as proper literature but rather cultural status.



Image from Masareel's wordless novel *The City* (1925, p. 7).



Image from Ward's wordless novel *God's Man* (1929).

Masareel's books "received glowing forewords from Thomas Mann and Hermann Hesse" (Lanier 2001), and Ward's editor wrote that the visual novel "has narrative qualities of which words are incapable" (Herb 2010). Woodcut novels were serious, literary-minded, and could be placed in libraries side-by-side other "proper" books; in short, they were the "graphic novels" of their day (Spiegelman 2010).

The literary acclaim received by visual novels suggests that it was not the visual nature of comics strips that caused them to be so lowly regarded, but rather the publishing format itself, characterised by its role of enticing

mass audiences to purchase newspapers. The printing of images in newspapers were "once marks of rank sensationalism" (Berchtold 1935, p. 20). The idiom of cartoon drawing, which was frequently used to satirise "high" cultural authority, came to be associated with the newspaper comics pages, was perceived as holding little cultural authority. In the eyes of cultural gatekeepers, the comic strip came to be seen as the medium of those wretched masses in that first *Punch* cartoon, wandering confused bewildered around the gallery of "proper" art and culture. There were exceptions of course – George Herriman's *Krazy Kat* was famously beloved by intellectuals—but they generally proved the rules: early Herriman fan Summerfield Baldwin declared that *Krazy Kat* the only comic strip which could be read without "the shame and excuses" that came from of reading other comics (Baldwin 1917).

Newspaper Comic strips: A 'vulgar and popular medium'

In the United States, the publication of regular comic strips was established as a facet of the publishing rivalry between Pulitzer's *New York World* and Hearst's *New York Journal*, as both publishers sought to harness the popular appeal of comics to boost circulation numbers. *The World* began publishing a large number of illustrations in 1884, transforming overnight "veritable picture paper," which "sent the circulation skyrocketing" (Forman 1893, p. 314). Another circulation boost came in May 1895 when *The World* began featuring the adventures of the first reoccurring comic strip character, the Yellow Kid of R.F. Oucault's 'Hogan's Alley' (Olson 1995, p. 2). Hearst retaliated by poaching Oucualt from under Pulitzer in 1986, hiring him to draw the feature weekly for the *Journal*. This created two rival versions of the same strip, as Pulitzer employed George Luks to continue the "original" Yellow Kid in the *World* to combat the *Journal's* "counterfeit" version, albeit drawn by its original creator (Watson, F 1935, p. 25). As will be explored in the next chapter, this is an early example of the many clashes in the history of comics about who holds authority and authorship over comic strip characters and publications.

The competition between Pulitzer and Hearst was not confined to comics, but extended to every section of their papers, as the publishers printed increasingly lurid and sensationalist material to attract mass audiences. This practice was dubbed "yellow journalism," and it was actually named after the Yellow Kid, who was an immigrant street urchin in a dirty nightshirt that was printed with bright, lurid yellow ink (Winchester 1995). The readers that Hearst and Pulitzer were competing for were largely immigrants who, like the Yellow Kid himself, lacked literacy skills and "ordinarily would not buy a newspaper, but who were attracted by the colourful drawings" (Shannon 1995, p. 210)

It might be hard to imagine a character that could potentially convey less agency or authority than a child in nightclothes, but like Ally Sloper, the Kid resisted his lowly station through perpetual cheekiness. He was the readers' entry point into the chaotic world of Hogan's Alley. As discussed in the previous chapter, comics can be thought of as a place where reader are authorised to explore cultural systems and identities, and in *Hogan's Alley* "Outcault managed to mock all classes in his comic, offering a safe environment to laugh at American foibles" (Wood 2004), and Lisa Yaszek argues that the semiotic openness of the Yellow Kid strips meant that its jokes would appear differently to audiences from different classes and ethnicities – for example, middle class readers might laugh *at* the Kid, while working class, immigrant readers might be laughing *with* him (Yaszek 1994).



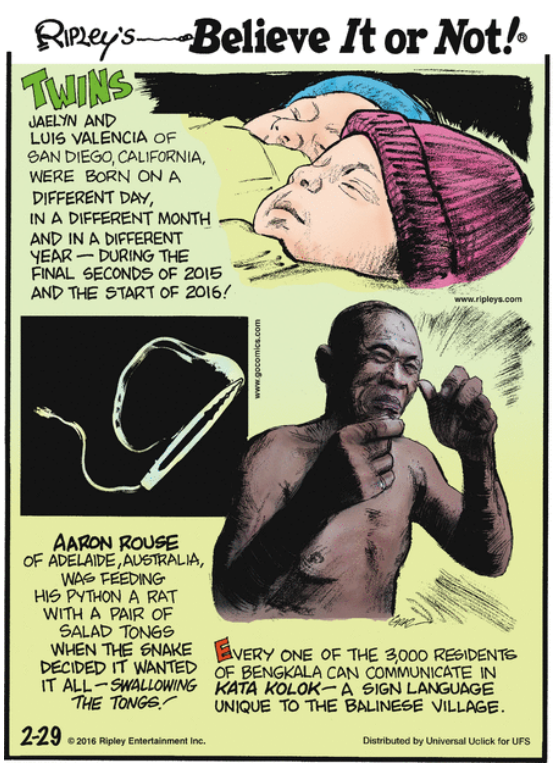
Luks, George. "The Open-Air School in Hogan's Alley." *New York World* 18 Oct. 1896. (Reprinted in Marschall 1989, p. 30)

Oucault was a talented cartoonist (as was Luks to a lesser degree) and is now considered an innovator of comics art (Haven 1995) and Luks would go on to be a renowned realist painter (O'Toole 2009), but in context of the "yellow journalism" publishing landscape, *Hogan's Alley* and other comic strips functioned like the "click bait" of their day—a way to attract the attention of as wide an audience as possible without needing to provide "newsworthy" content. This conception endured, and would make it difficult for audiences to see this style of publication as anything more serious than mere entertainment. However, while the comic strip genre would by the 1950s, become "as universally familiar as the daily newspaper" (Bogart 1955, p. 27) the first decades of American newspaper comics were characterised by a great deal of experimentation, both in terms of formats and intended audiences.

Comic Strip Experiments in Education

It is in this context of formal experimentation that early attempts at educational newspaper comics should be understood. Although not tied to a school curriculum and its way of presenting an unrelenting steam of unrelated factoids was more than a little dubious from a pedagogical perspective, 'Ripley's Believe it or Not!' could be considered a proto-educational comic. Robert Ripley was originally a sports cartoonist for the *New York Globe*, but he found greater success drawing little bits of interesting trivia about the world to edify his readers. He began the strip in 1919 for the *Globe*, and after its success was established Hearst predictably poached it for his flagship *New York Journal-American* (Lepore 2013; Markstein). 'Ripley's Believe it or Not!' would eventually spawn a multimedia franchise of books, television and movies, radio programs, museums and video games (Wong 2015).





'Ripley's Believe it or Not!' strips from 1937 (left) (Cronin 2011) and 2016 (right) (Graziano 2016). The format of the strip remains relatively unchanged over 80 years.

Considering the sorts of facts featured by Ripley were trivial in every sense of the word ("A will written on an empty eggshell was prohibited in England;" "Petrified apple 75 years old owned by Franklyn Pearce"), it's hard

to call much of the strip educational – even informational is a stretch. Here, the analogy of newspaper comics functioning as something similar to Internet-era 'click bait' might be extended. However, Ripley's never-ending stream of factoids has been used in classrooms to motivate fact-finding exercises (Crouse 1974), and there are a couple of pedagogical aspects of this strip that are of note for this study.

First, if comics are places for readers to play with notions of cultural power and identities, then the hodgepodge way that Ripley arranges facts plucked from across the globe can be thought of as an opportunity for readers to consider their own place an increasingly globalised society. World War I had just come to a close when Ripley's strip began, and Americans' perspectives on their place in the world were shifting. Ripley's cataloguing of oddities provided a comforting, if distorted lens on this expanding world, as Jane M. Gaines argues that "the 'believe it or not" function has always been, to a degree, an Orientalising one … the principle that everything in the world could be odd except for you and me" (Gaines 2002).

Secondly, as suggested by the duelling versions of 'Hogan's Alley,' and discussed in more detail in the following chapter, authorship can become a complex and complicated thing in comics. The idea of Ripley as the author of this strip is one of its central organising features. As Mark Squirek notes, "while the content could drift from the stunning to the mundane, one thing held it all together. It is Ripley's touch with a pencil. When he needed to be he was an excellent portrait artist and he could create a mixture of trees and mountains that truly looked like the profile of George Washington" (Squirek 2014). Ripley's distinctive signature has become a brand, a seal of authenticity over a very suspect collection of "facts" that appears in huge neon lights over his museums and still graces new editions of the comic strip half a century after his death.



The Ripley's Believe it or Not! Museum in Niagara Falls, Canada features the cartoonist's signature in large neon lights (Ricciuto 2015).

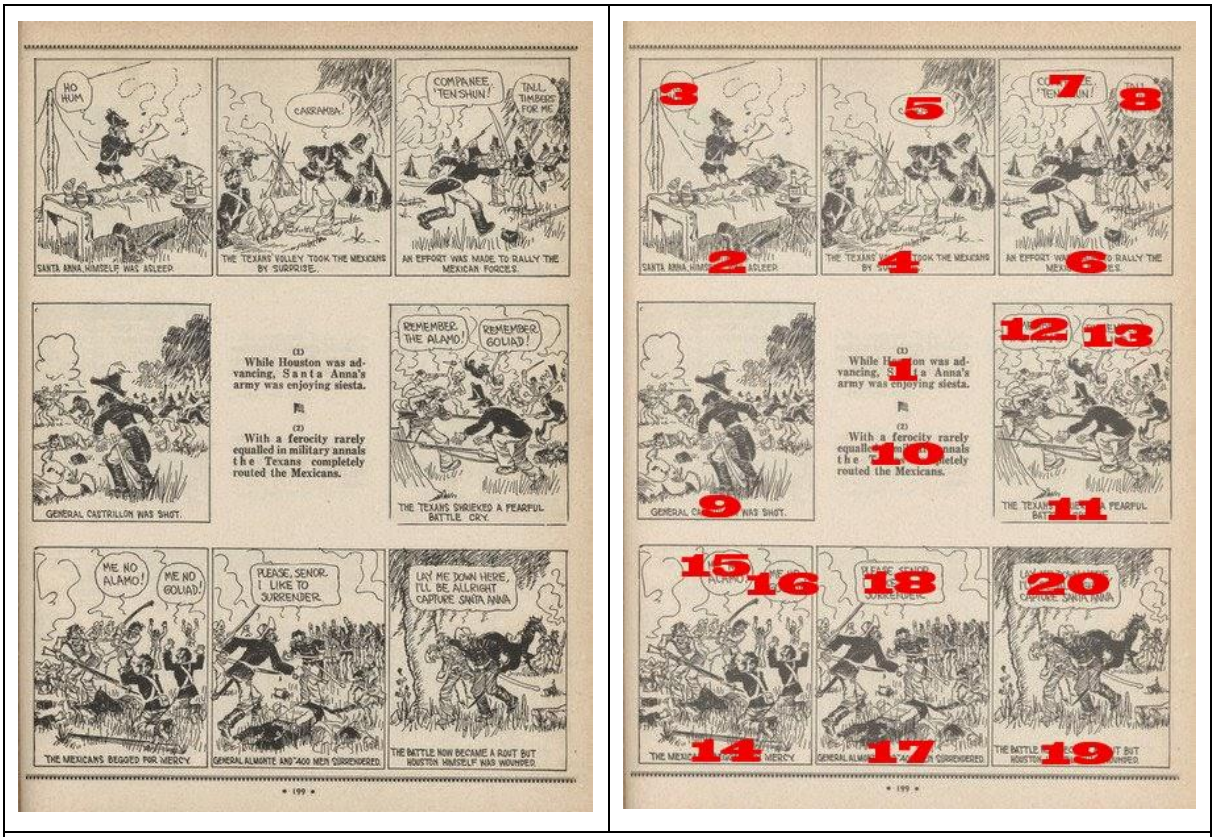
While authorship and authority are crucial to the Ripley's Believe it or Not! Empire, they are also clearly cultural constructions. Constructed authorship in more intentionally *educational* comics will be examined in more detail in the following chapters, but Ripley's signature is an instructive example to keep in mind.

America's first comics text book

An early comic with a more deliberately educational aim was 'Texas History Movies,' published far from New York. This comic strip by writer John Rosenfield Jr. and artist Jack Patton was conceived with help from Dallas' Superintendent of Schools, and "daily relayed the history of Texas four panels at a time" (Kleefeld 2014) in the *Dallas Morning News* during the school years of 1926-27 and 1927-28 (the strip did not run when school was out in the summer). The collected two years of strips were then reprinted in a hardcover book that collected all of the strips, as well as an abridged paperback version that was distributed for free to millions of students throughout Texas, compliments of the Magnolia Petroleum Company.

The unusual name of the strip was chosen because comics at the time were considered "movies in print" (Adams 2013), and illuminates how the publishing formats for comics had not yet entirely solidified into media forms we recognise today, with their attendant formal and cultural attributes. This

is further exemplified by the way the comic was collected and reprinted in book format: confronted with the difficulty of laying out the horizontal four-panel strips onto a vertically-oriented book, the designers adopted the unusual strategy of splitting two strips across three tiers per page.



A page from the *Texas History Movies* book. On the left, a diagram by Sean Kleefeld (2014) which numbers the elements in the order they were meant to be read, emphasising how the transition from comic strip to booklet was not immediately a smooth one.

The *Texas History Movies* book had a surprisingly long life, reprinted several times and "used in classrooms every few years from 1928 until 1959. In 1963, 1974 and 1986 it showed up in classrooms again, although as a reference book and not issued as a textbook." The comic was a key childhood inspiration to alternative cartoonist Jack Jackson, who would later publish his own comics version of Texas' history in an attempt to correct the racist undertones of the original strips (Rutherford 2007).

Both *Texas History Movies* and *Ripley's Believe it or Not!* are good examples of the wide variety of ways that information can be organised visually with comics. *Texas History Movies* uses comic sequential panels to represent and compress time, while *Ripley's Believe it or Not!* uses spatial plasticity to represent objects from various times and places so that we can

see them as if they were all piled before us. Another thing that both these comics have in common is that they achieved greater reach and influence outside of the daily newspapers that they originated from. This can be seen most clearly in the case of *Texas History Movies*, which only existed as a newspaper strip for two years, but after being bound into a book became a perennial piece of history curriculum that was used off and on for half a century.

The ephemeral nature of newspaper comics (Clark 1902), combined with their limited space and typical lack of narrative progression (as discussed in the previous chapter) made them a difficult medium for imparting more than just short snippets of information. The book format somewhat solved these problems by allowing for longer narratives that had a set beginning and end. Books were also more durable, easier to store and transport, and conveyed a greater impression of cultural authority than newspaper comics. The practice of collecting popular comic strips into 'proper' books was established early on – a square-bound book reprinting Outcault's *Hogan's Alley* strips was published in 1887, collecting strips from the previous year, and it was followed by more books reprinting other popular strips like *Mutt and Jeff* (Witty & Sizemore 1954, p. 501) and *Bringing up Father* over the next two decades (Gabilliet 2010). However, longer narratives using comics were uncommon until the establishment of the comic book industry in the early 1930s, a development that the *Texas History Movies* "textbooks" prefigured by several years.

Doubling down on vulgarity: the birth of the comic book and its popularity

Aside from reprinted collections of newspaper strips, comics remained contained within newspapers until the 1930s when "two employees at the Eastern Color Printing Company inadvertently gave birth to the modern comic book" (Yang 2003) by packaging together reprints of the colour Sunday comics into little booklets, which were originally distributed as promotional tools (Witty & Sizemore 1954, pp. 601-602). One of these employees was Maxwell C. Gaines, a former teacher and elementary school

principal, one of many educators who played roles in the development of comics – although in 1933 he found himself in 1933, at 39 years old, working as a salesperson for the printer. The cheap, colourful comics pamphlets Gaines and his colleagues packaged together found an enthusiastic audience in children, who in the 1930s represented a growing market of consumers.

For young people, comic books were a phenomenon. In the 1940s, an estimated that 500 million to 720 million comics were sold annually in the United States (Weaver, HB 1949, p. 173), and that "an estimated 95% of all 8-14 year olds, and 65% of 15-18 year olds, read comic books' (Sones 1944, p. 233), despite the fact that comics did not "represent the material which most educated adults would choose for their child to read" (Thorndike 1941, p. 110).

Compared to the previously available bound collections of newspaper strips, comic books were more accessible to children: they were cheaper, widely distributed, and usually printed in full colour. While Hearst and Pulitzer had used comic strips as a way of making their newspapers appeal to as many members of a household as possible, the format of comic books targeted children directly: it took what was typically a child's favourite section of the newspaper (Schramm, Lyle & Parker 1960) and tossed out the rest of the serious and adult-oriented material. The popularity of this format meant that demand for comic books quickly outstripped the supply of available comic strips to reprint. As a result, publishers began commissioning new material specifically for the new comic book format (Sabin 1993, p. 142). In this way, a new publishing industry and publication format was established.

The new comic book medium facilitated the creation of new types of stories, such as the super hero genre. In some ways, super hero comics can be seen as the inverse of Ally Sloper and his ilk. Instead of bumbling ne'er-do-wells whose comeuppance was always just around the corner, Superman (1938), Batman (1939), Captain America (1941) and other heroes were capable do-gooders who always achieved victory (Gabilliet 2010, p. 19; Lang & Trimble 1988). Unlike Sloper, Andy Capp and the Yellow Kid had no real

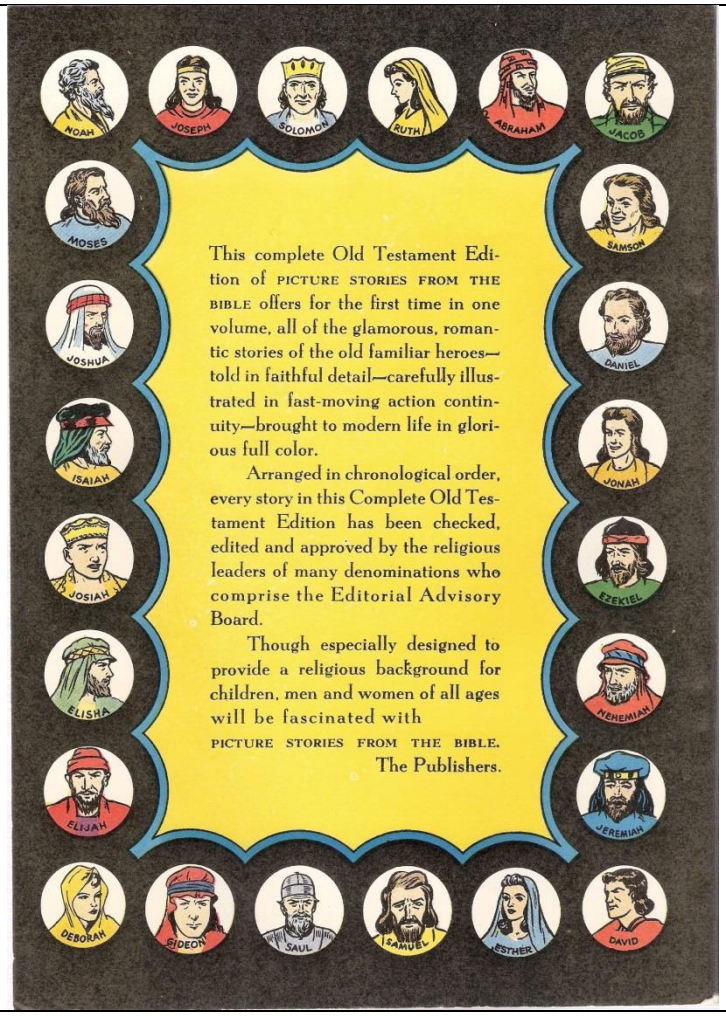
authority in their worlds, the new super heroes had *super*authority. However, their victories only lasted until the villains reappeared in the next issue, and were therefore just as limited as the comeuppances achieved by Andy Sloper and his descendants. These comics, like their humorous forbearers, were places for readers to ponder and play with issues of identity and cultural power, and psychologists Lauretta Bender and Reginald Lourie, argued that as the "folklore of the times," comics served as a means of helping children "solve the individual and sociological problems appropriate to their own lives (1941, p. 540)." However, the way that they presented these problems was not always appreciated by adults. As children's problems often involve "people in authority – policemen, mayors, senators, teachers, parents, corporation heads," and as Dwight Burton noted, these figures usually received comeuppances in comics, for "How appealing is this to the youngster who is so much under the thumb of adult authority! The rebellion against authority, whether of the Bugs Bunny or Li'l Abner variety, is a very real appeal" (Burton 1955, p. 74).

Comic books under threat – gestures toward education

Children's novelist Sterling North was one of the first public critics of the comic book format, writing in the *Chicago Daily News* in 1940 that "their crude blacks and reds spoils a child's natural sense of colour; their hypodermic injection of sex and murder make the child impatient with better, though quieter, stories. Unless we want a coming generation even more ferocious than the present one, parents and teachers throughout America must band together to break the `comic' magazine" (North 1940). North's call for a crusade against comic did not go unheeded. Many educators were prone to "confiscate and dismiss comic-books with condemnation or disregard them entirely" (Lee 1942, p. 677), and there were others such as Vera Slover who admitted to disposing of her pupils' comic books when "the wastepaper basket had been entirely too handy" (Slover 1959, p. 321). More worryingly, the Catholic Church "for a time in the 1940s, sponsored public burnings of comics at parochial schools" (Hajdu 2009).

Some comic book publishers tried to counter the claims that their books were anti-educational by including material that was supposedly educational and would support existing literacy pedagogy. DC Comics, for example, publicized in 1941 that they had established an editorial advisory board made up of 'professional men and women who have made a life work of child psychology, education and welfare' and would be publishing educational features including monthly book reviews (quoted in Jacobs 2013, p. 77). According to Jacobs, "DC wanted to be seen as not just unthreatening, but as an exemplary sponsor of (traditional) literacy" (Jacobs 2013, p. 79). This appeal worked for some teachers, who were more willing to give space to comics in the classroom after being pleasantly surprised by the authority of the advisory board, and the quality of the books on "Superman's reading list" (Armstrong 1944, p. 248).

Other publishers attempted to convey credibility to the maligned comic book form by associating it with established texts that had accumulated huge amount of cultural authority. In 1941, the series *Classic Comics* (later Classics Illustrated) began publishing adaptations of established literary classics, like *The Three Musketeers* and *Ivanhoe* (Jones, WB 2001; Sawyer 1987). Maxwell Gaines, while still at All-American Publications, began work on publishing comics that he felt would be more wholesome and edifying for their young audiences (Marston 1943, p. 37). The first episodes of these pet projects, *Picture Stories from the Bible*, and *Picture Stories from American History* were published in 1942 (BIPComics).



The back cover of Gaines' *Picture Stories from the Bible*, featuring portraits of important biblical characters surrounding the publisher's statement (Valenti 2009).

As in the Classics Comics adaptation, the names of the people who worked to adapt these stories were not credited, as if the authorship of these Biblical and historical sources belonged to none other than the Almighty himself (with some oversight from Gaines' "Editorial Advisory Board"). Unlike most comic books, for which children themselves were the target audience, these "classic" comics seem to have targeted parents and teachers seeking to provide more edifying reading material to their comics-loving children. They may have had the superficial trappings of comics, but they lacked the sense of playfulness and excitement that attracted kids to comic books in the first place: although the "classic comics" appear in many teachers' reports on the relative merits of comics, appear quite low on lists of student's favourite titles (e.g. Andersen 1948; Slover 1959; Witty & Sizemore 1954).

Comics go to war

The advent of World War II resulted in major changes for the comics industry for several reasons. For one thing, cultural critiques of comics that seemed to be heating up in the early 1940s lost a bit of steam, as the war "relegated the attack on comics to a secondary and almost forgotten role" (Schultz, HE 1949, p. 215). For another, the war gave American comic book creators the perfect opportunity to meld the excitement which children loved, with a righteous message that adults and cultural authorities would find hard to rebuke.



On the cover of *Captain America Comics #1* (Simon & Kirby 1941), published well before the attacks on Pearl Harbor, the hero teaches Hitler a lesson, just as the comic aimed to teach Americans a lesson about the need for U.S. involvement in the war.

In the famous first issue of *Captain America,* from March of 1941, the title hero socked Hitler on the jaw, nearly ten months before American involvement in World War II. Much has been made of this intersection between entertainment and politics (Dittmer 2005; Peterson & Gerstein 2005; Reyns & Henson 2010; Stevens 2011), but it should also be seen in light of the previously discussed attempts by the comic book industry in 1941 and '42 to produce material that could be accepted by adults as wholesome and edifying. Its message was propaganda, rather than education, but its blatantly nationalistic stance was regarded favourably by many cultural

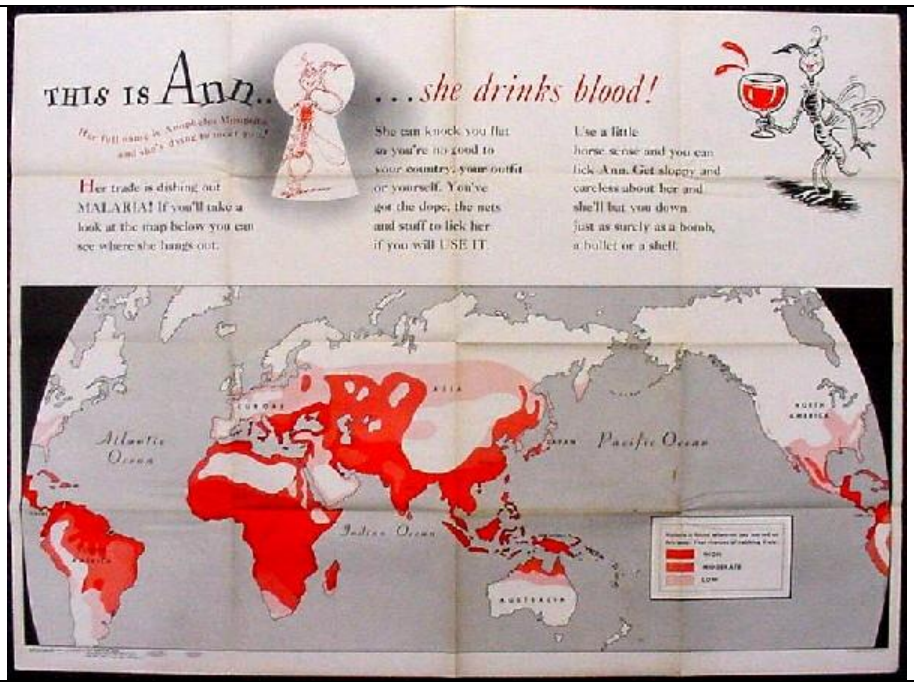
authorities at the time, and ensured that it would not be dismissed as "mere" entertainment (Dittmer 2007).

Perhaps as a result of the success of *Captain America* in "educating" civilians about the need to support the Allied cause in Europe, when America entered World War II, the United States government enlisted comics into the fight. On the home front, the established newspaper comics format was used as a propaganda tool. For example, "Disney strip showed none other than Mickey Mouse dropping a bomb on Berlin," while the main character of Bud Fisher's strip *Joe Palooka* enlisted in the Army, and the Navy worked with cartoonist Roy Crane to create the strip *Buzz Sawyer* and its title character (Heer 2015). Overseas, Joe Palooka appeared on "training manuals, recruitment materials, guides to invaded countries, and in hygiene instruction"(Waters 2002). This second use was part of the development of a new comics publishing industry: educational and instructional wartime publications.

Newspaper strips were a conveniently established media form that could be used to reach American citizens on the homefront, with fine-tuned and well-established methods of production, sale and distribution. These networks were not available to the government and military agencies that were creating comics intended to educate soldier serving overseas. As a result, new methods of publishing and distributing comics had to be developed, and cartoonists were recruited to help with this task.

Although many cartoonists, including *Captain America* artist and co-creator Jack Kirby, were drafted into active military duty (Wyman 2000), others were assigned to the tasks of creating comics and cartoons for educational, informational and propaganda purposes. Just as newspaper comic strips were generally developed as a way to entice audiences to pay for newspapers, comics were used as a way to entice audience to read these informational and propaganda publications. Accordingly, these publications used the charming drawing style and appealing characters that had been developed in comics since Töpffer's day to "sweeten" important messages that the military did not want its soldiers to disregard as dull.

For example, the poster excerpted below, by Theodor "Dr. Seuss" Geisel and Murno Leaf, was published by the United States War Department as part of a 1943 campaign to teach GIs how to avoid the dangers of malaria, and was accompanied by a similarly illustrated pamphlet featuring "Anopheles Annie, the malaria mosquito … the sexy whore of the insect world, spreading disease to men who failed to take precautions" (Nel 2007).

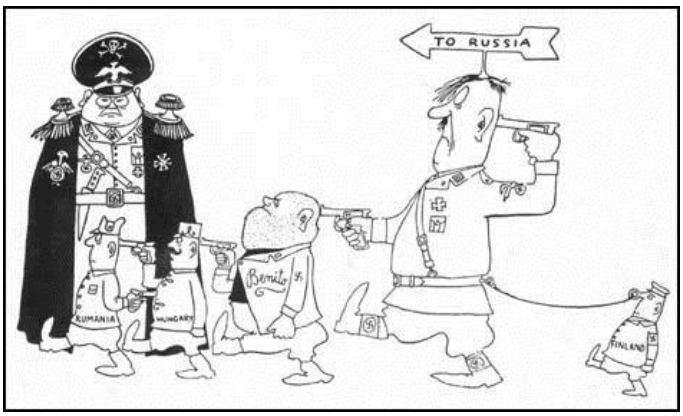


A poster produced for the "This is Ann" anti-malaria campaign was published by the Navy Department on 8 November, 1943 (Ziegler 2012).

The satirical and anti-authoritarian strains of comics were also deployed during the war. For example, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), a US intelligence agency that coordinated espionage and propaganda campaigns behind enemy lines, employed the cartoonist Saul Steinberg to draw cartoons "meant to arouse anti-Nazi feelings in Germany," which were "dropped behind enemy lines and included in the OSS-published newspaper *Neues Deutschland*" (Schiffrin 2009, p. 3), for which Steinberg also designed the masthead (Warner 1945).

Steinberg, a Jewish Romanian-born cartoonist whose American visa had been sponsored by the *New Yorker* (a magazine which published his cartoons from 1941 until his death in 1999) (Tedeschini-Lalli 2015) had previously drawn cartoons satirising Hitler as a savage buffoon for the leftist

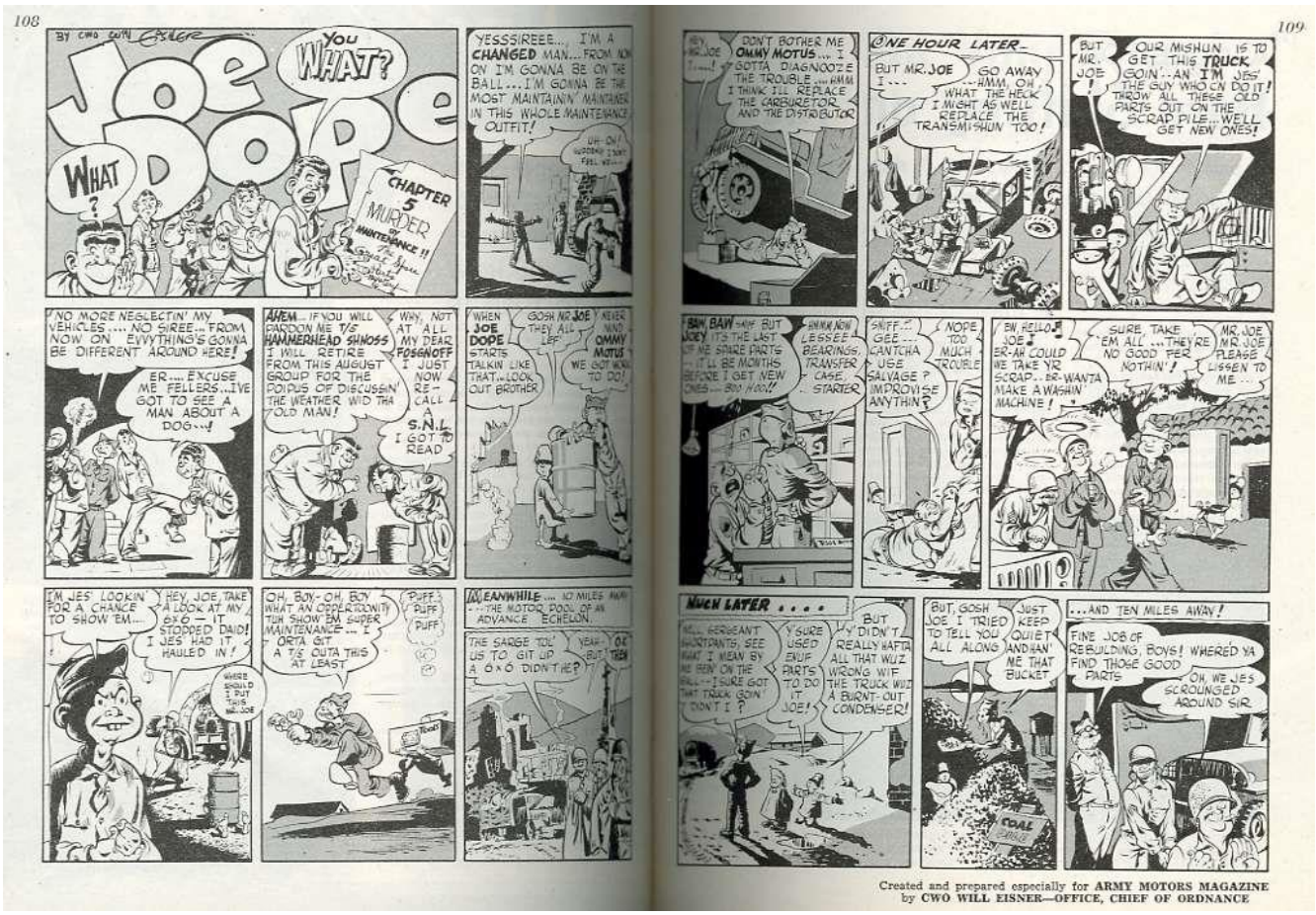
New York newspaper *PM*, which may have helped secure him the job with the OSS. For *Neues Deutschland* propaganda paper he drew "lurid images of Hitler with skulls hiding behind him and of Mussolini's twisted face with one eye popping out" (Boxer 1999).



A Steinberg cartoon from *PM*, reprinted in (Schiffrin 2009). Unfortunately, copies of his cartoons for *Neues Deutschland* are not widely available.

Another cartoonist who was drafted was Will Eisner, whose early famous work, *The Spirit* was published weekly from 1940 as a comic book-style newspaper supplement, bridging the newspaper and comic book worlds. Eisner hoped his narratively inventive and visually daring strip could also bridge the gap between entertainment and art. However, in World War II, he was employed to educate soldiers about safety and preventative maintenance in the pages of periodicals like *Firepower* and *Army Motors* (Harvey 1996, p. 74).

Eisner created *Joe Dope* a regular comic book-style feature to the *Army Motors*, in the *Ally Sloper* mould. Joe was always scheming and screwing up, and his schemes served as examples of "what not to do." The Joe Dope comics were morality tales, with Dope serving as character that readers were encouraged to fix their identities in opposition to. Eisner's energetic art managed to depict life in the army as one full of energy, movement and character, even as his well-composed panels, along with the narratively inevitable comeuppance of Joe at the end of each chapter conveyed a sense of overriding structure, order and authority.



An example of Eisner's *Joe Dope* feature for *Army Motors*.

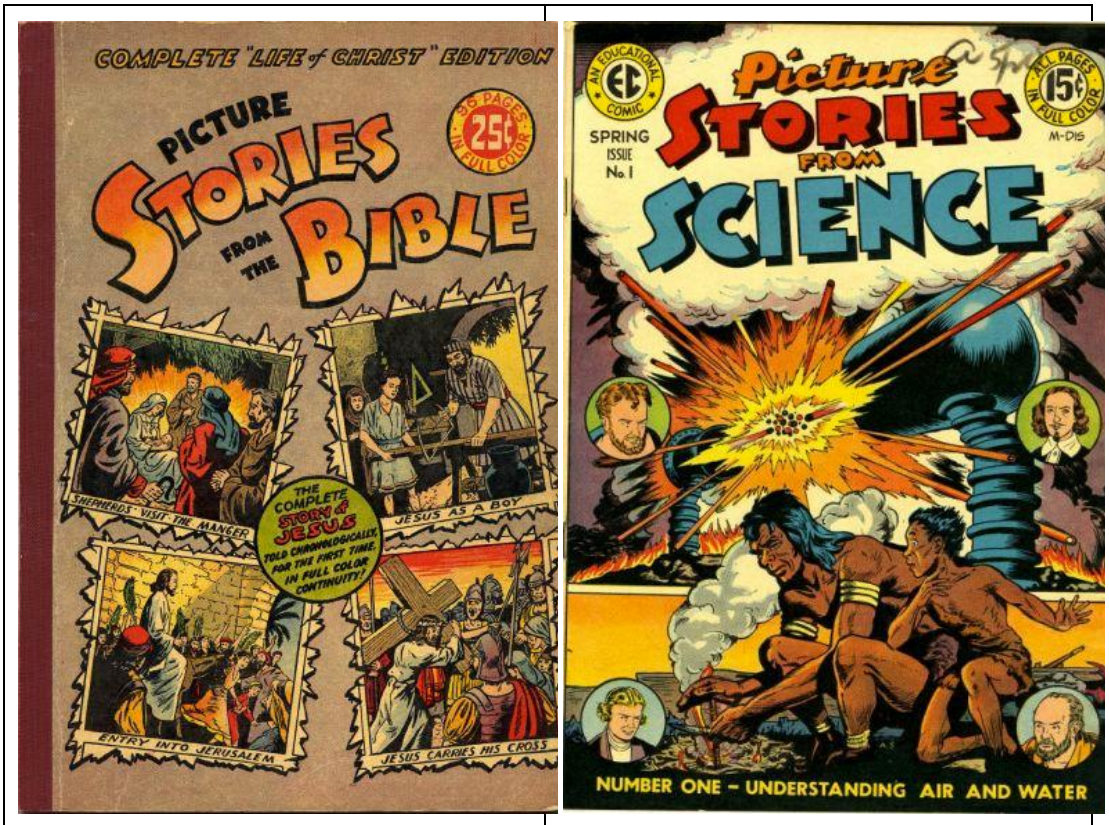
Over the course of the war, *Army Motors*' blend of comics, text and illustrations that grew increasing sophisticated over the course of its publication. These wartime publications gave cartoonists cause to think about the comics format in new ways. Informational pamphlets like Gisel and Leaf's *This Is Ann*, for example, had been published in a variety of sizes and shapes, which facilitated the use of image and narrative in different ways. For the cartoonists and illustrators who were employed by these government and military agencies, this seems to have broadened their horizons beyond the established genres of newspaper strips and comic books.

Post-war comic books: from bloody to bloodless

Cartoonists were changed by the war, and comics were changed as well. In the post-war era, the US military continued to turn to use comics, featuring Joe Palooka in "an educational comic book designed to assist soldiers in readjusting to civilian life" (Waters 2002). Other government

agencies followed in the late 1940s and 1950's, including the Social Security Administration, Department of the Treasury, Department of Agriculture, and Federal Civil Defence Administration.

There were post-war changes brewing for mass-market comic books as well. The publisher Maxwell Gaines, who had been too old to be drafted, and had continued to publish instalments in his *Picture Stories* series throughout the war as backup features in other comics for All-American Publications. In 1945 he took the rights to those series with him when he departed All-American and founded a new company, which he called Educational Comics, or 'EC Comics.' EC published two collections of the Bible stories, in what might now be recognised as a "graphic novel" edition, and began new periodical comic book series about science and world history.



The covers of E.C.'s collected Picture Stories from the Bible: Complete "Life of Christ" Edition and the first issue of Picture Stories from Science.

The *Picture Stories from the Bible* collections were "enormously popular series" (Arbuthnot 1947). A review of some of the collected "Picture Stories" titles in the December, 1945 issue of The Journal of Educational

Sociology notes that the New and Old Testament volumes had sold three million copies, and seemed optimistic about planned future volumes on other topics, and about the potential of educational comics in general. The review began: "Increasingly, teachers and educators, aware of children's universal interest in comics, are becoming interested in the possibility of using comics as instructional material" ('Picture Stories from the Bible' 1945). The editors of the journal were certainly interested in this possibility, and in fact the previous December's issue of 1944 had been a special issue devoted to "The Comics as an Educational Medium," and educators in the mid-1940s seemed relatively fascinated with the possibilities of using comics to teach (Tilley, C 2013).

Despite the success of the Bible collections, which were presumably sold largely to churches and Sunday school groups, Gaines' attempts to sell educational comics directly to children through the newsstands faltered. *Picture Stories from American History*, the most successful in the line, lasted only four issues, while *Picture Stories from World History* and *Picture Stories from Science* managed just two issues each. At the same time that these 'Entertaining Comics' were failing to find an audience, EC was finding more success through its 'Entertaining Comics' brand, which published more conventional children's fare such as *Dandy Comics* and *Land of the Lost Comics,* which each reached seven issues.

The whole publishing line saw a great upheaval in 1947 when Maxwell Gaines was killed in a speedboat accident. His 25-year old son Bill took over the reins of the company and rapidly changed its direction (Roberts 2004, pp. 211-212). The struggling 'Educational Comics' side of the venture was closed (although the company continued to sell the Bible adaptations by mail order), and the 'Entertaining Comics' side began producing material for slightly older audiences.

Under Bill Gaines, EC quickly became known as the vanguard of the industry for its daring, often gruesome stories, and the quality of its art and stories. The younger Gaines hired a roster of the industry's best writer and artists (many of them war veterans), paid them well, and let them sign their

work – a rarity in those days (Hajdu 2008, pp. 184-185). By granting a degree of authorship to its creative teams, EC soon developed a faithful following of readers, which it courted by establishing a national 'EC Fan-Addicts Club.' EC was also known for publishing material that was violent and lurid in books with titles like *Tales from the Crypt* and *The Vault of Horror* (Sabin 1993, p. 154). Murder and monsters abound in many of their stories, and except for the ghastly narrator figures, such as the Cryptkeeper, "the only recurring character in most book was Satan" (Hajdu 2008, p. 190). Unlike the static heroes of many humour and adventure comics who were the authoritative figures in their fictional worlds and had their stories and central conflicts perpetually renewed in each episode, the protagonists of EC comics often wound up dead, disfigured or transformed at the ends of their stories. The lack of continuing characters contributed to the sense that it was the writers, artists and editorial staff of EC who had ultimate authority in these fictional worlds.

Art Spiegelman has suggested that the grisly content in EC and other 1950s horror comics should be seen a response to the traumas of World War II that many of the young writers and artists had experienced first-hand (Spiegelman 1999, p. 80). Certainly, the post-war era saw comic books become more violent, as Twomey noted "in 1946, comic-books began to exhibit a growing preoccupation with themes of crime and violence, featuring, in many instances, sexually suggestive and sadistic illustrations" (1955, p. 622). This exacerbated fears that Sterling North had articulated in the 1940s, that comics were destroying children.

Criticisms of the Comics

The most influential critic of comics during the backlash against them after World War II was Fredric Wertham, a psychiatrist who believed that comics were poisoning the minds of children. In a series of popular magazine articles (e.g. 1948, 1954; 1955a) and his nearly 400-page book *Seduction of the Innocent* (1955b), Wertham railed against violence and sexual themes in comic books, and called for the whole industry to be dismantled. Though his work has remained controversial, and recent research suggests he fabricated

data (Tilley, CL 2012), his influence was undeniable and long-lasting. In the wake of Wertham's critique, Henry E. Shultz reported, "Every youngster in difficulty was described as a comic book addict," (1949, p. 216) and that "in almost one hundred communities some form of organized suppression of comic books appeared" (p. 217).

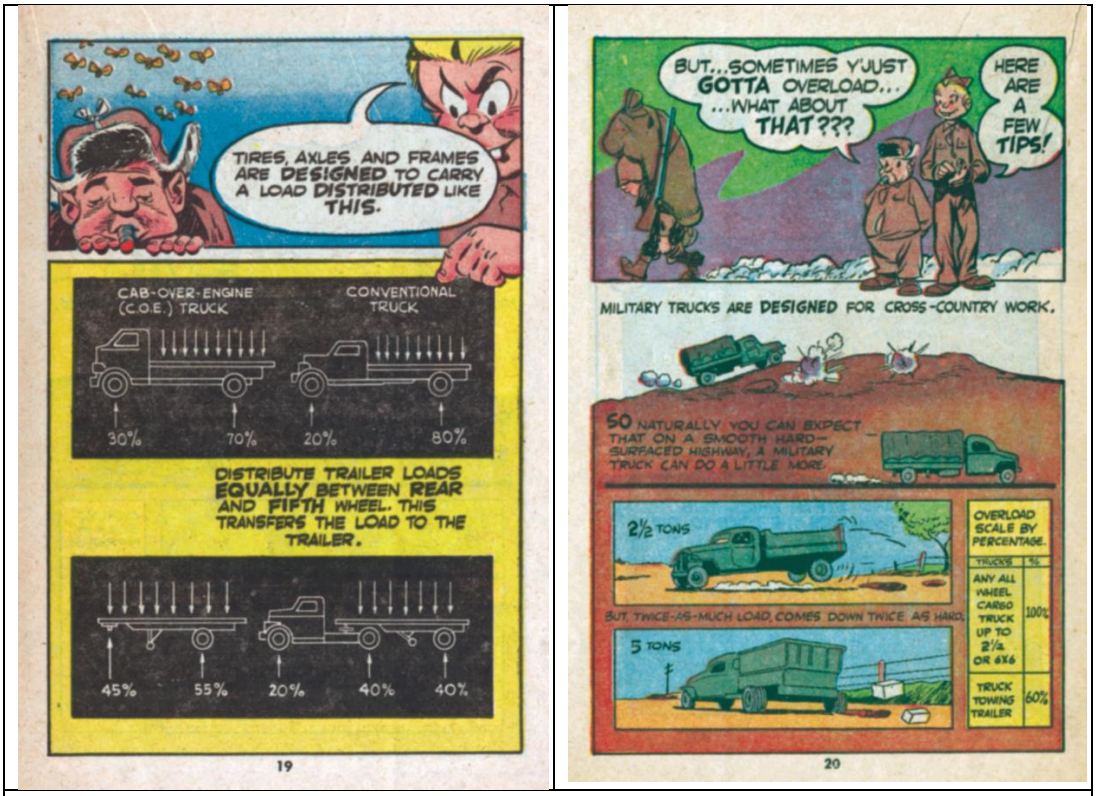
Wertham's crusade against comics has been extensively documented elsewhere (see, e.g. Beaty 2005; Hajdu 2008; Lent 1999), and will be touched on in the next chapter. Here it will be sufficient to note that the anti-comics fervour led by Wertham and other cultural authorities eventually resulted in a series of congressional hearings on comics and juvenile delinquency in 1954. Their eventual outcome was that the comic book industry decided on a course of self-regulation – all comics would now have to satisfy the standards of a Comics Code Authority in order to be sold on a newsstand. The Comics Code Authority served to restrict the content published in comic books in such a way that the audience of comic books was also constrained; only material that was 'safe' for children could be published, and thus children were generally the only readers (Williams, JP 1987). The code also, in practice "banned everything EC was publishing at that point," including its humour comics, *Mad* and *Panic.* (Hajdu 2008, p. 291). *Mad* survived only by jumping to a new format – reconfigured as a magazine, instead of a comic book, it has managed to survive until the present day. Comics remain the majority of *Mad's* content, but as a magazine it operates in a sphere that is distinct from the established comic book and comic strip formats, employing different publishing practices and reaching different audiences.

Information Comics – A New Post-war Industry

Many educational comics that emerged in the post-war era also operated outside of the established comic book and comic strip formats. The war had served as something of a proving ground for educational comics, and many cartoonists emerged as skilled practitioners of the genre. For example, although Will Eisner returned to *The Spirit* for a few years after the war, in 1952 he moved on to create instructional comics for private clients. Perhaps most notably, he created a publication for the United States Army, *PS*

Magazine: The Preventative Maintenance Monthly, which was a hybrid of text, comics and illustrations (Eisner et al. 2012). For two decades, Eisner edited this magazine, which was largely a continuation and expansion of his work on *Army Motors*, featuring Joe Dope and other familiar characters (McGurk 2012; Vaughn 2011a).

However, while in *Army Motors*, Eisner's comics sections had been mostly about suggesting productive behaviors and attitudes, in *PS Magazine* the comics were longer and more sophisticated, as Eisner and his team also used them to visually demonstrate physical and organisational procedures. The information design techniques used in *PS Magazine* showed complexity and nuance that far surpassed those that had been used in *Ripley's Believe it Or Not! and Texas History Movies*.



Two pages from an early issue of *PS Magazine* demonstrate a variety of information design strategies. A digitized archive of the issues published under Eisner's two-decade editorship is available courtesy of the Virginia Commonwealth Library: http://dig.library.vcu.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/psm

In many accounts of Eisner's biography this is represented as a hiatus in his career, until the returned in the mid-1970s "to his first love, storytelling with sequential art" (Eisner 2008). However, *PS Magazine* was a

significant portion of Eisner's life work, and was a strong influence on his seminal theoretical and instructional books about comics, including *Comics and Sequential Art (1990)*. In a 1968 interview he said using comics as a tool for education was 'really the thing I'm proud of. I'll teach anything with that tool" (Garrelts 2012). Eisner's American Visuals Corporation was set up precisely for that purpose, and made educational and promotional comic books for companies as varied as General Motors, the Baltimore Colts football team, and RCA Records (*The Army Years and PS Magazine* ; White, Berger & Barson 2011).

Another war veteran cartoonist, Malcolm Alter, set up his own outfit, the Commercial Comics Company, which produced comics for commercial and political clients from 1951 until his death in 1992. Altogether, Alter "wrote and produced almost 80 comic books that propagandized and informed;" An equal-opportunity propagandist, he made comic books for the left-wing Congress of Industrial Organizations that promoted the rights and nobility of workers, while also producing campaign comics for the stridently racist Alabama governor George Wallace in which he promised to keep the civil rights organisation NAACP out of "his" state (Christopher 2014).





Alter's Commercial Comics Company took clients from all sides of the political spectrum. Left: *Joe Worker and the Story of Labor* (Alter 1948); Right: Alter's *Alabama Needs "The Little Judge" George C. Wallace for the Big Job* (Alter 1960).

Some of these comics used the established comic-book format, but most eschewed the newsstand distribution of most comic books. Instead, they largely were distributed to readers for free through schools, businesses,

and other organisations, following the model that had been pioneered by *Texas History Movies* in the late 1920s. This meant that while many of these educational comics may have had large number of readers, they were largely separate from the commercial and literary discourses of mainstream comic books and comic strips.

Mad and P.S. – comics vs magazines

The following two comics pages were both published in 1954, same year as the comic book obscenity trials. The page of the right appeared in the 24th issue of *P.S. Magazine*, edited by Eisner, from that issue's 'Joe Dope' comics feature. The page on the right was published in the 10th issue of the comic book version of *Mad*, from a story written by Harvey Kurtzman and drawn by Wallace Wood. A parody of heroic war comics and machismo attitudes, Kurtzman and Wood's 'G.I. Shmoe' is a representative example of the kind of satire that regularly appeared in *Mad*.



Left: the first page of a *Joe Dope* feature in P.S. Magazine issue 24; Right: the first page of a story titled 'G.I. Shmoe' from Mad Magazine issue 10. Both published in 1954, the two comics share many visual similarities.

The two pages resemble each other in several ways. The panel layout is similar, as are many of the stylistic properties – the shapes of the word

balloons, the letter shapes, and the level of cartoonish exaggeration. The compositions of the final panels on each page nearly mirror each other.

These parallels were likely not deliberate, but simply consequences of separate artists working at the same time, in the same milieu with similar subjects. However, despite their similarities, *Mad* and *P.S. Magazine* were not really part of the same 'industry.' *P.S.* was operating under the authority of the US Army, while *Mad* was published and distributed as part of the comic book industry, which was then facing public scrutiny and criticism. Even though *P.S. Magazine* demonstrates how comics had become accepted as a useful medium for education by a long list of government bodies, the fate of E.C. shows how the commercial field of comic books struggled to establish both cultural authority and authorship within the public sphere.

Mad was able to circumvent the Comics Code Authority by switching industries and formats – it was reconfigured to be sold as a magazine, rather than a comic book, and as a result was the only EC publication to survive past 1955. Circumventing the mainstream commercial discourse of comic books, which only reached certain audiences in certain ways, allowed both *Mad* and *P.S. Magazine* to outlast most of their contemporaries (Norris 1984). They remain among the longest continually-running comic publications: MAD has published more than 500 issues, P.S. more than 700… and counting (Garrett 2016; Vaughn 2011b).

Conclusion

As this chapter has detailed, authorship and literacy are tied to commercial publishing formats. As new publishing formats for comics have evolved, they have engendered new relationships between publishers, authors and audiences. In the United States, comic strips were used to sell newspapers to readers, and to appeal to what publishers saw as the lowest common denominator, which was seen as a kind of pandering that was dismissed by the prevailing cultural authorities as unliterary and generally un-educational. Some forward thinking educators tried to use this format as a teaching tool in features like *Texas History Movies*, and to a lesser extent,

Ripley's Believe it Or Not. However, the commercial format of comic strips and the prevailing cultural attitudes about comics meant that these attempts were exceptions within the larger discourse. The comic book format, which directly targeted children, was seen as extending and elaborating on the excesses of the comic strip format, further eroding comics' reputation in the eyes of the gatekeepers of literacy. To mitigate this reputation, popular comic book publishers would make concessions to parental authorities by including educational messages in their comics. Other publishers explicitly targeted parents and teachers by publishing overtly wholesome comics such as adaptations of culturally authoritative texts, but these publications were largely marketed, distributed and sold separately from mainstream comic books. This secondary or alternative market of educational comics expanded after World War II, as cartoonists who had worked on informational and propaganda comics during the war returned to the home front with new skills and new confidence in the abilities of comics to communicate to adult audiences. This discourse of educational comics remained largely separate from the established publishing formats of comic strips and comic books. For reasons that will be explored in the next two chapters, it also remained largely separate from the realms of literacy and education until the end of the 20th century.

Chapter 4 - Authors, Scriptors and Graphiauteurs: Constructing Authorship

Introduction

The previous chapter traced the early developments of educational comics in North America, showing how they emerged in a variety of places but failed to congeal into an accepted mode of discourse or sustained industry. Even in the wake of World War II, when educational comics were funded by large government organisations like the US Army, they remained on the fringe of literacy, outside of the realm of literary institutions like libraries, schools and commercial book stores. This tradition still continues today, with governments, NGOs and other institutions publishing comics through unconventional channels (one such comic will be investigated in Chapter Nine).

One of the reasons why educational comics tended to be published outside of the commercial market place is that comic books and comic strips saw their cultural authority eroded by attacks from critics like Sterling North and Frederick Wertham who saw comic books as a threat to conventional literacy. In addition to this, the cultural conceptions of literacy and education were historically tied to the conception of authors, which was for a variety of reasons regarded as lacking in comic books.

This chapter will discuss authorship as being comprised of two interrelated elements: credit and voice. Credit is how authorship is attributed to a text, while voice relates to how readers supposedly understand and experience this authorship. Together these elements construct the idea that language belongs to an individual and to some extent accurately represents his on her thoughts. The veracity of "authorship" has been debated by theorists such as Wayne Booth (1961), Roland, Barthes (1967) and Séan Burke (1989) This idea is also central to the author-centric banking model of education exemplified in lecturing, as well as to the way that literacy has generally been understood. Comic book publishing practices in the mid-20th century generally lacked credits for artists and writers, and this helped

reinforce the argument made by cultural critics like Frederick Wertham that comics expressed no voice of authorship.

Eventually, publishing practices changed to acknowledge individual contributors in comic books, but these credits remained relatively incompatible with the cultural conception of authorial voice, until the establishment of the graphic novel publishing format. The idea of the "authored" graphic novel paved the way for comics to eventually be accepted into the highest echelons of the academic establishment, including the pages of scholarly journals.

Comics: an anonymous discourse?

Leading the crusade against comic books during the 1950s, Frederick Wertham charged that, "children do not think of reading a comic book as they might 'read a book.' They 'look at' a comic. They become picture-gazers" (Wertham 1954, p. 396). This fear that pictures could undermine "proper" literacy demonstrates what Harvey J. Graff termed "the literacy myth," a logocentric belief in the written word as a symbol of education, morality and authority (Graff 2010). However, literacy is itself a historical artefact, and just as comics predate graphic novels, combinations of words and pictures existed long before the book's ascendance as a symbol of knowledge and culture.

Part of Wertham's rhetorical strategy was to deny any authorship to the people who made comics, writing that "Comic book writers should not be blamed for comic books. They are not free men. They are told what to do and they do it – or else!" (Wertham 1955b, p. 264). As Hajdu has described, Wertham's opinion was that the comic book industry featured "no creativity, but only the artless factory output of avaricious publishers" (2008, p. 237). In fact, Wertham went even farther than this. "If I were asked what I have found to be the outstanding characteristic of the crime-comic-book publishers," he wrote in *Seduction of the Innocent*, "I would say it is their anonymity" (1955b, p. 256).

Anonymity might be thought of as the opposite of authorship, and the notion of "authorship" has been important in the way traditional literature is understood. For example, Wayne Booth's influential book *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), argued that in written texts readers imagine an "implied author" in their heads as a guiding voice who is "an axis through which the reader can conceptualize the 'total form' of the text," and that "the voice of the author is understood to encompass all other voices in the text and serves as a limit point for any speculation about the meaning of the text" (Atkinson 2010, p. 116). Although Booth was primarily discussing fiction, his argument can be extended to educational and academic writing, and is helpful in understanding how literacy authorises reading as an action that resembles listening, as he regards an implied authorial "voice" as central to the way writing is expressed. In educational writing, this can be seen as an extension of the authority of the lecturer's voice, as discussed in Chapter One. In Booth's construction, literature cannot be separated from authorship. Therefore, Wertham's earlier insistence on comics' anonymity excluded them from this author-centred discourse of literature.

However, Booth's "implied author" should be recognized as a logocentric construction, as it is based on idea of voice as the ultimate expression of authority. This is problematic when discussing comics, as much of the meaning of a comic cannot be reduced to linguistic words, but is instead often found in images and in the ways that different elements are displayed and arranged on the page. The inability of comics to fit into this logocentric framework of authorship can be seen as playing a role in the denial of authorship to comic books during much of the 20th Century. However, Booth's logocentric framework is not the only way to conceive of authorship or creativity.

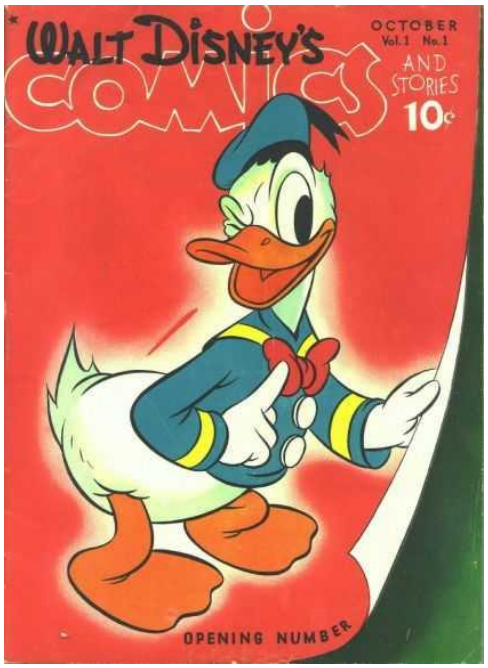
Authorship as Historical Construction and Commercial Commodity

It is important to recognize that the connection between authors and literacy emphasized by Booth is a cultural and historical construction. As Foucault has argued, the connection between authors and their work needs to be seen in the historical and economic context of "the privileged moment

of individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy, and the sciences"(Foucault 1975, p. 603).

For example, Mark Rose notes that although the "institution of literary property is so deeply rooted in our society that many jurists and even some legal historians regard it as a transcendent moral idea that has been available in all times and places," (Rose 1988, p. 77) in reality it came into existence with the establishment of sixteenth century British copyright laws, which turned books into commodities which could make money for their writers. The legal institution of copyright "not only makes possible the profitable publishing of books but also, by endowing it with legal reality, produces and affirms the very identity of the author as author" (Rose 1988, p. 54). Authorship, then, must be understood as a legal and commercial commodity, rather than as a natural characteristic of communication.

Most comic book publishers initially regarded it unnecessary to credit the authorship of the writers and artists who worked on their books. In most cases, writers and artists were not permitted to sign their work, and publishers established the fictional characters of their stories in positions of prominence and authority that often obscured or even appeared to erase the labour of comic book workers (Beaty 2012, pp. 77-82; Philipzig 2011, p. 50; Stein 2013). One illustration of this is the cover of the first issue of *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* (October 1940), where Disney's signature is printed on the cover, like a brand implying the media mogul has provided his personal stamp on the contents, despite the fact that Disney himself had almost nothing to do with this licensed publication (Andrae 2006, p. 3). He certainly did not write or draw any of the material inside the comic (a fact underscored by the fact that Disney's signature has continued to appear as part of the title of this long-running comic series for decades after his death – similar to the post-mortem authority of Ripley's signature as a brand). Here the Walt Disney Company, rather than an individual, is ascribed authorship over the contents of the comic.



The cover of the first issue of the long-running *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* features Donald Duck himself crowding out the title's logo. None of the people who worked on the stories in this comic received credit inside its pages.

However, more prominent than Disney's signature is the drawing of Donald Duck, who is drawn so large that he is crowding out the text of the logo. On this cover, Donald appears to be engaging directly with the reader, winking at them and even appearing to open the comic for them to read. Just as the cover of a superhero comic book (such as the *Captain America* example in the previous chapter) usually depicted its title character as having authority over his environment, this *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* cover positioned Donald in a place of authority between readers and the contents of his comic.

The fictional characters featured in these comics in a way had more 'authority' than the humans who wrote and drew their stories. The characters were what sold the books, and the people who provided the creative labour were generally poorly paid, anonymous and considered replaceable. This ambiguity over the authorship over comic strip characters dates back to some of the earliest examples of comics discussed in the previous chapters, including Ally Sloper, who outlived and overshadowed several teams of writers and artists, and different versions of The Yellow Kid

who competed for audiences' attention as the authoritative version of the character.

The lack of credits in most comic books allowed Wertham and others to attack comic books as being essentially "unauthored" and lacking intellectual labour. By distancing themselves from the idea of authorship, comic book publishers also distanced themselves from the concept of literacy and cultural authority. While newspaper cartoonists (like Ripley) typically signed each strip, and were much more respected (Ripley's signature was key to establishing *Ripley's Believe it Or Not!* as a cultural and commercial force), comic book writers and artists during this period were generally not credited for their work. Wertham named several newspaper cartoonists in *Seduction of the Innocent*, and even quoted them as experts (Wertham 1955b, pp. 265-267), but he kept the comic book writers and artists he discussed almost entirely anonymous – which of course served his rhetorical purpose. Wertham argued that the lack of authorship in comic books meant that they should not be considered literature, or even cultural products, but the rather the by-products of a mechanized industry. This was premised on the idea that authorship is connected to intellectual labour and originality.

Barthes: author vs scriptor

Roland Barthes' 'Death of the Author,' published in English in 1967, suggested several alternative ways of understanding authorship that can be used to argue against Wertham's already dubious critique. Barthes acknowledged Booth's "implied author" concept, but proclaimed that the idea of an author who creates, precedes and controls a text is a myth, "a modern figure, produced no doubt by our society insofar as, at the end of the middle ages, with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual" an individualism that now occupies the centre of capitalist ideology (1967, p. 1). Barthes was critical of this myth for suggesting that "all writing is itself this special voice, consisting of several indiscernible voices, and that literature is precisely the invention of this voice, to which we cannot assign a specific

origin… the trap where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes (1967, p. 1)."

Séan Burke has critiqued "Death of the Author" as predicated on Barthes' setting up authorship as godlike and authoritative, as if it emanated from "a transcendent being" (Burke 1989, p. 20), and then attacking it on these same grounds. Burke argues that this was a view of authorship that few, if any, literary critics actually held in twentieth century, and that the strawman "author/god" falls apart as soon as Barthes examines it. Burke argues that there is value in understanding authors as historically individuals involved in the creation of a text, and certainly, Barthes himself "welcomed" back the author, if only as a guest ("like one of the characters"), rather than as the master of a text. (1977, p. 61). Barthes' essay then, should be seen not as an attempt to discredit the concept of author as a historical figure or point of criticism, but to pull apart the mythology of authorship as voice.

As an antidote to the conception of writing as producing an invisible, authorial voice, Barthes suggested an alternative mythology that substituted the focus on the voice with a focus on the "body that writes." Instead of the traditional mythology of writer as author, Barthes proposed writing could be conceived of as the act of a "scriptor" whose "hand, detached from any voice, [is] borne by a pure gesture of inscription" (Barthes 1967, p. 4). Both of these myths are social constructions, particular ways of thinking about where a text comes from, which in turn affects the ways readers understand and experience writing. Barthes shows that each construction encourages a different kind of criticism. He suggests that the traditional conception of writing has privileged the mythology of "authoring" as an authoritative mental act, while suppressing the mythology of "inscribing" as a subordinate, physical act. Wertham's critique of comics can be understood in these terms, as he positions comic book makers as subordinate and interchangeable cogs in the commercial machine of the comic book industry, mere "scriptors" and lacking both the agency and authority of an "author."

As will be discussed in the following chapter, traditional literacy pedagogy trains students to disregard the scriptor, and to attend to the

author. Printing technologies such as typesetting, typewriters and word processing programs reinforced this notion by removing the "body that writes" from the process of how writing is printed and displayed. In this mechanized writing, the scriptor is obscured, while the author persists, because the physical and the visual are not the realm of the mythology of the author.

The act of drawing, however, is both physical and visual, the realm of the scriptor. Despite the fact that graffiti tags often take the form of stylised signatures, literal claims to authorship, their letters are deliberately stylised to such an extent that an audience without a literate understanding of the tags cannot read them, but can only see them as what Barthes might call "pure inscription," voiceless, authorless and anonymous. This recalls Wertham's claims about the anonymous processes through which comic books were created.



Graffiti street art blurs the line between pictures and letters. Although tags like this are in some ways literal claims of authority and ownership, they are not considered mental acts of authorship, but physical acts of inscription ('morphett wall - 18 june 2012').

Graffiti tags emphasize the shape and visual form of words and letters by exaggerating and playing games with their physical properties. Comics similarly make meaning out of the physical, spatial and visual aspects of writing. Traditional literacy pedagogy trains readers to ignore writing's physical presence and to instead find the meaning of a text in the context of the voice of an imagined author. As seen through this lens, the physical, visual qualities of comics (and graffiti) do not allow an "author's" voice to develop, because they come between readers and the "purity" of linguistic language, which can convey an author's thoughts.

Both "author" and "scriptor" are mythologies, and imperfect constructs of the acts of communicating. In delineating the role of the scriptor, Barthes revealed the disregarded, shadow side of communication that is often obscured by the focus on the author above all else.

Authored voice vs inscribed image?

The cultural focus on the "voice" of the author is what allowed Wertham to deny that there was little of the mental work of "authoring" being done in the creation of comic books. He could make this claim, despite clear evidence than many comic book workers of the time saw themselves as "creators," because the physical and visual representation used in comics eclipsed and made invisible any "authoring" that had taken place.

As Wertham described them, comic books were not authored literature, but authorless products. He described both writers and illustrators of comic books as "victims" forced to "turn out an inartistic assembly-line product" (Wertham 1955b, p. 267). Wertham argued that the men who worked on these comics could not be held accountable for them, as unlike even authors of the lowest forms of fiction, such as the pulp writer Mickey Spillane (who was then facing a "critical outburst" that called for him to be held accountable for the violence in his popular Mike Hammer novels) they toiled in anonymity as part of faceless machine. The pay for working on comic books was low, and the conditions were not great, but Wertham certainly exaggerated the degree to which these writers and artists were "afraid of the ruthless economic power of the comic-book industry" (Wertham 1955b, p. 264). If comic book writers had received credit for their work at that time, Wertham might have known that Spillane himself had a career as a comic book writer before he turned to novels, and had originally conceived his Mike Hammer protagonist as a comic book character (Alfano 2006).

Fractured and collaborative authorship

Interestingly, the publisher that Wertham most reviled, EC, was also the publisher that was most likely to credit its writers and artists. As members of the "EC Fan-Addicts Club" could attest, under the reign of Bill

Gaines, EC's writers and artists were not anonymous (Warshow 1954). In creating an editorial identity and promoting the work of its individual writers and artists, EC was able to imply a more direct and intimate relationship between its audience and the "authors" of its comics, and "The E.C. letter columns attest that readers felt a bond to the comic book producers and to the books themselves" (Adler-Kassner 1997, p. 16). While readers of other comic books bought new issues based on the relationships they had established with characters like Captain America or Donald Duck, EC readers bought new issues to see what its stable of talented creators like Harvey Kurtzman, Wally Wood, Johnny Craig and Al Feldstein had come up with that month.

The establishment of "authored" comics would be combined with the authority of reoccurring characters by Marvel Comics' successful line of superhero comics in the 1960s, which revolved around the continuing adventures of its characters like Spider-Man and the Fantastic Four, but also on the creative consistency of its 'bullpen' of creators that were promoted through editorial features and letter columns, and given prominence on the title page of each issue, along with congenial, fan-facing nicknames like "Smilin' Stan Lee" and "Jolly Jack Kirby" (*List of Marvel Comics nicknames* ; Stroud 2008).

In this way, publishers like EC and Marvel were able to imply authorship in their comics, even though these "creators," unlike most authors of novels and other books, did not retain legal copyright over their work for these publishers. This idea of authorship was important in building relationships with readers and fans, and provided another way for comic book readers to enter into and understand the texts. However, the multimodal, collaborative authorship of comic books did not mesh well with the understanding of authorship that was promoted by literacy and traditional literature.

Comic book fans, however, developed a discourse that acknowledged the act of inscribing, if perhaps not the same conception of the "scriptor" that Barthes envisioned. In addition to attributing credit to writers and artists,

publishers eventually began crediting inkers, colourists and letterers, and industry awards were established to honour these roles (Uidhir 2012, p. 48). This allowed fans to learn the names of comic book workers who performed jobs that were generally unacknowledged in other kinds of print media, and which do not fit into traditional understandings of authorship. For example, typesetters of novels and textbooks are often anonymous, while modern comic books it is industry practice to credit letterers, sometimes even on the cover, and their work is analysed and critiqued by the fan press (Klein, T 2014). This is an acknowledgement of the physical act of inscription, as letterers are generally not writers – they writer chooses which works will be in the comic, while the letterer physically decides how these words will be arranged on the page. This might be considered a fracturing of the roles of "scriptor" and "author" into several different multimodal domains of authorship, or it might be considered a way of combining the work of several individuals into a single, collaborative "implied author."

Booth has suggested that an implied author need not be a single individual, but can be the product of a collaboration. However, even focusing on a collaborative authorship would have been seen as a mistake by Barthes, who concluded that focusing on the author, even a collaborative author, reveals little truth about a text, since "a text consists of multiple writings, issuing from several cultures and entering into dialogue with each other, into parody, into contestation; but there is one place where this multiplicity is collected, united, and this place is not the author, as we have hitherto said it was, but the reader" (1967, pp. 5-6). This focus on the reader, rather than the writer, as producing meaning in a text, has similarities to the focus in constructivism pedagogy on students as agents of their own education rather than on teachers as keepers of knowledge. However, it is at odds with the author-focused approach of lecturing and traditional literacy pedagogy.

Authorship in Images and Comics: A Tissue of Citations



This collage of images and text from Lynda Barry's *What It Is* shows some of the difficulties in ascribing authorship to images – as well as to texts (Barry 2009, p. 15).

Barthes' critique of authorship as focused on voice, along with Wertham's theory that images are "concocted" rather than authored, suggests that it is difficult to make images and other multimodal forms of expression fit into the cultural paradigm of authorship. The above page from Lynda Barry's educational comic *What It Is* confronts the tricky nature of ascribing authorship to images in the first place. Using a collage of found images and text, along with her own drawings and handwriting, the page asks "Where are images found?" It suggests that images are found both inside us and outside us, and the very form of the page problematizes the idea that

images (and words) have authors or creators. The page is a composite of words and images from a series of unknown sources, which all draw meaning from their relationships to each other, and suggest several questions: Where does one image end and another begin? Where does Barry's "authorship" of the page begin and end? Can we really call Barry its author, since she has not 'written' the page as much as she has assembled it?

The ways that we can read the page from *What It Is* are also extremely different from the ways of reading that are suggested in traditional literacy pedagogy. Traditional literacy practices authorise reading that is linear, sequential, and tied to the ideas of authorial voice. Barthes writes, "We know that a text does not consist of a line of words, releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God), but is a space of many dimensions, in which are wedded and contested various kinds of writing, no one of which is original: the text is a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture" (Barthes 1967, p. 4).

However, as much as readers may "know" that the author is dead, and that a text is a multidimensional "tissue of citations," the visual form of traditional text, and the literacy pedagogy which supports it, tends to encourage the conception that a line of words does in fact contain a single authoritative voice. In traditional literacy pedagogy, readers are generally authorised to disregard the visual form of text, its physical shape, its historical presence, and anything else which may get in the way of the voice of the author. By contrast, in Lynda Barry's work the qualities of inscription are almost impossible to ignore. The reader is visually confronted with the constructed, collaged pages that are obviously full of "various kinds of writing" originating from "thousands of sources of culture," all "wedded and contested" together. Barry provides a visual form to Barthes' previously invisible "tissue of citations."

This tissue of citations is a better way to understand authorship in comics, in part because it recalls the material form of the page. Paul Atkinson (2010) argues that while in a novel, the implied author's voice is considered to encompass the entirety of the text (with any aspects that are not in this

voice, such as an abstract or publishing indicia being relegated to the paratext), this is not the case in comics. Meaning in comics is also made visually and through spatial organization, which cannot be contained or expressed through the 'voice' of linguistic text. Therefore, Atkinson argues that the voice of the implied author is "subordinate to the visual structure" (Atkinson 2010, p. 117).

Comics scholar Philippe Marion (1993) has argued that visual style largely what defines authorship in comic books." Marion coined the term "graphiateur" ("graphic author") to refer to this implied authorial presence in comics, arguing that it emerges from the drawn line (Groensteen 2012, p. 117). This mediates the way readers experience authorship through the visual modality, in a way that is distinct from other kinds of writing. As Jared Gardner notes, "We never look at the printed book and imagine that the font gives us access to the labor involved in the scene of writing," but "we cannot look at the graphic narrative and imagine that the line does not give us access to the labored making of the storyworld we are encountering (and participating in crafting)" (Gardner 2011, p. 64).

The idea of a cohesive multimodal "voice" conveyed through the visual style in which a "graphiateaur" melds words, images and spatial design is one that lends itself well to the comics where one person has acted as the physical scriptor of all of these elements – the comics produced by Rodolph Topffer are excellent examples. Topffer argued that it was important that all the text, images and even panel borders be drawn by his hand (Gaudreault & Marion 2005). However, while there are plenty of example of comics produced largely by one person, Inge argues that in comics, "collaboration has been the order of the day almost from the start" (Inge, M Thomas 1994, p. 31). "The "graphiateaur", like Booth's author or Barthes' scriptor, can be conceived of as a composite entity comprised of the work of multiple individuals, but this concept meshes awkwardly with the commercial practices and system of crediting used in comic books and many graphic novels, which delineate specific roles, such as writers, pencilers, inkers, letterers and colourists.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 will explore the issues surrounding this multimodal authoring in further depth, but here it is enough to say that the comic book industry constructed ideas about authorship that were in some ways opposed to the ideal of authors constructed in traditional literacy. Even when crediting creative labour became standard practice in the comic book industry, so that critics like Wertham could no longer claim that their work was "anonymous," the multimodal properties of comics made it difficult to argue that they engendered the kind authored "voice" that has become enshrined as central to literature. The divisions of creative labour in the comic book industry only increased this difference.

As Barthes has argued, the author is a myth constructed historically and culturally, and ultimately how readers interact with a text is more important that how an author may have conceived of it. Within the comic book fan communities that first germinated in the readership of the EC comics published under Bill Gaines, and later expanded through the comics of Marvel comics and other publishers in the 1960s, the incompatibility of comic books with the traditional discourse of authored literacy resulted in fans developed their own discourses to discuss and differentiate the work of individual pencilers, inkers, colourists, letterers and writers (Uidhir 2012). Eventually these communities would pave the way for the establishment of "graphic novels," which would present a construction of authorship that was more in line with the way credit and voice were expected to be present in traditional literacy.

Graphic Novels: 'Authored' Comics

The term 'Graphic Novel' was first popularized as a subtitle on the cover of Will Eisner's 1978 short story collection *A Contract With God,* his first major work after leaving *P.S. Magazine* in the 1970s (Eisner 2004; Weiner, S 2012, p. 17). This was not the first book-length comic -- notable predecessors include *It Rhymes with Lust* in 1950 and *Kurtzman's Jungle Book* in 1959 (Inge, M. Thomas 2014; Lyons 2013) -- nor the first appearance of the phrase "graphic novel," which had been used in various ways by publishers and fans since at least the mid-'60s (Hatfield 2011, p. 100).

However, Eisner had an established reputation as a master cartoonist, and *A Contract With God* marked his return to commercial comics after two decades, which gave the book a unique legitimacy. Perhaps more importantly, its publication coincided with changes in the comic book market in the late 1970s which saw the establishment of specialty comic book shops and advances in printing technologies that transformed the way cartoonists worked and the kind of material that could be published (Scott, RW 1984). As a result, around the time of *A Contract With God*'s publication, other cartoonists were working on more literary works that would eventually be published in book-length collections, like Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (originally serialized in *Raw* starting in 1980), The Hernandez Brothers' *Love and Rockets* series starting in 1981, and Moore and Lloyd's *V for Vendetta* (originally serialized in *Warrior* starting in 1982). These works were first published as serialized stories in various comic book series, but they would only be authorized by literacy pedagogy as texts that could be sold in bookstores and studied in classrooms once they had been collected together and bound in book-length publications that were marketed as "graphic novels."

Wertham denied that comics could be considered to have 'authors', and the comic book industry denied this in its own way by often not crediting the men and women who worked on its publications. But with "graphic novels" came a new job title that better suited literacy pedagogy's discourse of authorship: "graphic novelist." Unlike "cartoonist," which is the job title most people who write and draw graphic novels use to identify themselves (Chute, HL 2014; Valenti 2014; Weinberger 2016), "graphic novelist" fits comfortably within literacy pedagogy's discourse of authorship. "Cartoonist" has a tendency to inspire a certain sceptical derision that can be traced back to the mock-seriousness of *Punch*'s first "cartoon" parodies. Furthermore, it cannot easily be applied to those who write comics but don't illustrate them. Most graphic novelists who have been feted by the literary establishment, such as Eisner, Spiegelman, Bechdel, Satrapi and Ware are in fact cartoonists who are writers, illustrators and letterers in the tradition of Topffer, and can be considered 'graphiateurs' in Marion's parlance. However, a good many

books published under the banner of graphic novels are the work of multiple individuals under the divisions of labour established by the comic book industry. In this case, the "graphic novel" category, and the acclaim attributed to the work of "graphic novelists" (or perhaps "graphiateurs") has helped to establish the cultural conception of authorship needed for these books to succeed in the discourse of literacy, regardless of how they were actually created.

Maus in particular helped to establish graphic novels as a form of serious literature, especially after it received the Pulitzer Prize in 1992, and has appeared on countless best-of lists and course syllabi (Thompson 2008; Yang 2003). Spiegelman has been a tireless crusader for the legitimization of comics, but has not been overly fond of the term "graphic novel," calling it a marketing tool for conveying respectability that "leads to books that are made to be studied in academia and that's no less of a marketplace than making comics to appeal to 12-year-old boys" (Gross 2013). However, 12-year-old boys lack the cultural authority to bestow prestigious literary awards, write reviews for the *New York Times* or make purchasing decisions for school and university libraries. In all these domains, graphic novels have flourished where comic books had failed.

The positioning of 'graphic novels' as a heavily authored form of comics led to many in the North American book trade commenting on the acceptance of graphic novels reaching critical mass in the middle of the 2000s. Booklist proclaimed in 2007 that graphic novels had "taken both the library and the literary worlds by storm!" (Cart 2007), and they became known as "one of the rare publishing categories that's actually *expanding*" (Thompson 2008). This success was predicated by the systematic acceptance of graphic novels into the discourse of literacy by cultural institutions such as libraries, literary criticism and large commercial publishing houses. This acceptance was only possible when comics were reformulated to fit into the legal, cultural and economic framework of authorship that these institutions were built upon.

Although Barthes' distinction between the myths of author and scriptor, and his focus on the reader as the locus of the text rather than the author is a better way of theorising the ways that comics are produced and understood, the establishment of the "graphic novelist" identity allowed comics to fit into the "implied authorship" theory advanced by Booth. This helped creators and publishers to fend off critics who might denounce comics as Wertham had, as merely "concocted," due to their reliance on visual images at the expense of authorial voice.

Graphic novels bring authoring to educational comics

Graphic novels fit so successfully within the authoring discourse of literacy, that the term has often been applied to comics that are very clearly not novels at all, including many comics-style textbooks. Many educational comics have found their way into those bookstores and libraries under the guise of "graphic novels" or a variant on that term. This publishing boom of educational comics has certainly been influenced by the literary authorisation of graphic novels, but this spike in activity in some ways obscures the much longer history of educational comics being sold in bookstores, especially alternative bookshops and on university campuses, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

Even more recently, the acceptance of educational 'graphic novels' has also widened the door to allow comics to be published in established academic journals, such as *The Annals of Internal Medicine.* In March, 2013, a comic written by Michael J. Green and illustrated by Ray Rieck, titled "Missed It," became the first comic to be published by this "heavyweight" of the field (BMJGroup 2012) but the word "comic" did not appear in the journal. Instead, an editors' note described "Missed It" alternately as a "graphic novel," "'graphic' article," and, "article in 'graphic novel' format" ("Editor's Note" 2013).

However, "Missed It," at two pages long, hardly seems like any sort of novel. The editors' choice of language is symptomatic of a wider use of the 'graphic novel' terminology to imply an elevated cultural authority which is

still lacking in "comics." Elsewhere, comics that re-imagine works of classic literature are published in *The Graphic Canon* (Weatherwax 2012), an anthology of educational comics for primary students is called *The Graphic Textbook* (Canfield 2013), and a long-running series of "documentary comic books" (the *Introducing* series) that have been rebranded as "Graphic Guides."

Conclusion

The growing presence of comics in school and university libraries, and their acceptance in places like high-ranked medical journals, are at least partially the result of the increased cultural authority of graphic novels as authored literature. It has also authorised readers to consider "graphic novels" as the authored texts of "graphic novelists" (a form of Booth's implied author) rather than work that has been drawn, assembled and inscribed by cartoonists or a team of collaborators (or "scriptors" in Barthes' terminology).

Through the establishment of Graphic Novels, comics have been made to fit within the author-centric, teacher-centric pedagogy endorsed by the banking model of education. Despite this, the ways that comics are produced and read is frequently at odds with the banking model. Educational comics can be better understood through the lenses of constructivism and multimodal literacy. The next chapter will detail how changing cultural understandings of literacy since the 1950s have gradually endorsed ways of reading that better align with the multimodal structures of comics, while chapters six, seven and eight will explore how this multimodal kind of reading works in comics, as understood through the lens of constructivism.

Chapter 5 - Literacy for Maturity: Authorised Ways of Reading

Introduction: The Changing Face of Literacy

The acceptance of comics into libraries, schools and bookstores via the graphic novel format did not happen in a vacuum, but can be seen as a part of a wider cultural re-evaluation and redefinition of literacy pedagogy which began in the middle of the 20th century. Comics and graphic novels played a role in this redefinition, but it was largely driven by more recent and radical technological advances. The "Visual Literacy" movement that began in the 1960s was inspired by television, and more recent discussions of "Multiliteracies" and "Multimodal Literacy" which began in the 1990s can be seen as influenced by the emergence of Internet platforms that were authorising new ways to create and consume information. This chapter will trace the evolving pedagogies of literacy during the second half of the twentieth century to show how even as "visual literacy" moved beyond the logocentrism of traditional literacy, comics remained largely excluded from this discourse until educators, prompted perhaps by digital, networked technologies, redefined literacy as multimodal. The chapter will close by discussing examples of recent comics-style journal articles that exemplify both this multimodal style of reading and composition, as well as the cautious acceptance of this style into the highest levels of academic discourse.

Traditional guardians of literacy

The traditional take on literacy, which very much excluded comics and other visual media, was exemplified in an address given by Thomas Clark Pollock, the president of the American National Council of Teachers of English, to his fellow teachers in November 1948, following on the tails of Wertham's initial march against comics through a series of magazine articles in *Collier's* (March), *The Saturday Review of Literature* (May) and *Reader's Digest* (August) (Beaty 2005, p. 118). Pollock championed his fellows to uphold the traditions of literacy, calling them the foundations of a civilised way of life currently under threat from both communism and fascism:

> *We teachers of English… are primarily responsible for helping students to grow in two of the most important ways in which human beings must develop if they are to become truly mature and civilized.*
> *First, we must help them to become mature in their use of language. It has been known for centuries, but is always wise for teachers of English to remember, that language is the chief instrument of thought … If our students are to become truly mature people, they must, for example, develop the ability to communicate clearly whatever they are able to think; and still more fundamental, they must learn to clarify their thoughts. This is the primary function of language.* (Pollock 1949, p. 249).

Secondly, Pollock argued, teachers must "help our students to become mature through the reading of literature;" Although he acknowledged that "The radio and the movies and the beginnings of television have recently extended the physical limits of literature beyond the printed page, as they have been extended for centuries by the voices of the priest and the bard and by actors on stage", Pollock argued that "the great reservoir of literature is, nevertheless, still between the covers of books" (1949, p. 250).

Authorised ways of reading

By aligning language with civilization, and reading with maturity, Pollock's address linked literacy with cultural authority. As discussed in previous chapters, the history of educational comics can also be understood in terms of their "cultural authority," which has a mutually-reinforcing relationship with literacy: texts which have achieved a level of cultural authority are more likely to be authorised by literacy pedagogies, and likewise, texts that are authorised by literacy pedagogies are more likely to accumulate cultural authority.

Our understanding of literacy is also presaged on two related ideas, which Pollock alludes to: authorship and authorisation. *Authorship*, which was discussed in the previous chapter, is the idea that language belongs to an

individual, and to some extent accurately represents his or her thoughts. *Authorisation*, which will be discussed in more detail in this chapter, is the process by which literacy pedagogy sponsors not only particular types of texts, but also particular ways of reading.

I use the term *authorisation* to mean enable or encourage through social or cultural authority, but also in the sense that to authorise a person is to make them "like an author." If literacy pedagogy is meant to bring readers and authors closer together, then the authorised way of reading can be seen as a way for readers to retrace the author's line of thought.

For example, the pedagogy extolled by Pollock in his 1948 address saw language as authorising students to think clearly and concisely, as well as having an individual voice. He authorises new media to the extent that it continues the culturally authoritative oral tradition of "the voices of the priest and the bard," but gives no ground to the visual aspect of either television of writing. This of course links to the central idea within traditional literacy pedagogy is that writing carries the "voice" of its author, and that the historical existence of that author gives a text validity and authority.

This traditional literacy pedagogy centred on fostering in students an authored (and authorised) internal voice of the "mature citizen." Comics, on the other hand, not only carried little cultural authority at the time, but also did not fit into this framework of traditional literacy pedagogy. Comics tended to not credit writers or artists, but they also authorised different ways of reading which were not congruent with the idea of authorship constructed by traditional literacy. This chapter will explore how the construction of authorship in traditional literacy pedagogy traditionally worked to exclude comics from classrooms and libraries, and how comics have gradually become more accepted within this framework. Although evolving literacy practices have progressively authorised visual and multimodal approaches to reading that are more welcoming to comics and other hybrid visual/verbal texts, the acceptance of comics into the commercial literary world has also been predicated on the comics industry establishing systems of authorship

which fall more in line with the practices authorized by traditional literacy pedagogy.

Traditional Literacy Pedagogy

Traditional literacy practices involve particular constructions of authority, authorship and authorisation that have been developed to suit written and spoken forms of language. According to the New London Group, "Literacy pedagogy has traditionally meant teaching and learning to read and write in page-bound, official, standard forms of the national language. Literacy pedagogy, in other words, has been a carefully restricted project – restricted to formalized, monolingual, monocultural and rule-governed forms of language" (1996, p. 1).

An example of how authority, authorship and authorisation function within this carefully restricted pedagogy is provided by Michael W. Apple in *Cultural Politics and the Text*:

> *[A] teacher in Boston in 1899 relates a story of what happened during an observation by the school principal in her first year of teaching. As the teacher rather proudly watched one of her children read aloud an assigned lesson from the text, the principal was less than pleased with the performance of the teacher or her pupil. In the words of the teacher:*
>
> *The proper way to read in the public school in 1899 was to say, "page 25, chapter 4" and holding the book in the right hand, with the toes pointing at an angle of forty-five degrees, the head held straight and high, the eyes looking directly ahead, the pupil would lift up his voice and struggle in loud, unnatural tones. Now, I had attended to the position of the toes, the right arm, and the nose, but had failed to enforce the mentioning of page and chapter.* (Apple 2000, p. 186)

Because this example is over a century old, it demonstrates the legacy of these pedagogies, and can be used as a comparative touchstone to discuss how literacy has changed in the intervening centuries.

The power structures of authority are clearly delineated in this example: the teacher who instructs and disciplines the student is herself instructed and disciplined by the principal. The "correct" actions, postures and attitudes *authorised* by those who hold power in the classroom become

intertwined with the acquisition of literacy. It is not enough that the student learns to read – she must learn to read in the "proper way." Part of this "proper way" of reading involves developing an understanding of the authorship of a text – which in this case involves giving proper attribution to the page and chapter of the passage. This in turn positions the book itself, as well as the industries and practices that support it, as culturally authoritative.

Foucault has argued that this pedagogy of disciplinary power, which was developed in the 18th century and 19th centuries, shapes students in such a significant way that it "reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives," as self-control of the body is related to control of the mind (Foucault 1980, p. 38). The Boston teacher's anecdote reveals that power structures, media forms, and reading practices all have disciplinary dimensions, and are intertwined into literacy pedagogy to such an extent that changing one element could threaten to overturn the whole enterprise. Swapping out the text book for a film, video game or graphic novel is not a simple exchange -- changing the kind of material authorised in literacy pedagogy, also authorises different kinds of reading practices, different conceptions of authorship and different constructions of authority.

The Voice of Print Culture

In 1961, David Holbrook borrowed the title of Pollock's address, 'English for Maturity' for his influential guide to teaching English, where he called for his compatriots to stalwartly defend their profession from "The new illiteracy of the cinema, television, comic strip, film-strip and popular picture paper." His rallying cry: "We must never give way: we are teachers of the responsiveness of the word" (Holbrook 1961, p. 37). While Pollock had civilly welcomed the new media of the 1940s into the circle of literacy for the potential that "the radio and the movies and the beginnings of television" held to expand the physical dimensions of literature's voice, by the 1960s, this promising "voice" of new media had transformed into a threatening "image."

For Holbrook, Pollock, Wertham and other advocates of literacy, the voice of linguistic meaning was the natural way that human beings came to be made whole people, as authors of their own lives, and authorised members of society. Holbrook argued that, "The roots of true literacy are in the child's natural urge to use language to make sense of its life" ('Look Ma, I'm Writin'!' 1964). However, there is a fundamental flaw in seeing the acquisition of literacy as a "natural" process, since literacy is not a natural phenomenon, but, like authorship, is a social and political construction.

The challenge of visual literacy

The framework of authorship used in 'traditional literacy' was built upon, and mutually reinforced by, the commercial and legal structures of authorship developed by the print industry. Educators needed to reconceptualise this framework to accommodate the new media industries that arose in the 20th century, including radio, comics, film and television. As we have seen, comics alone pose significant difficulties to the idea of authorship, and the other, larger media industries provided challenges of their own. Although this kind of visual media was common, it was also commonly excluded from literacy pedagogy. However, huge social and technological changes in the decades following the Second World War resulted in a transformed mass media ecology that challenged the dominance of print-based literacy, as television, for example, became a vital tool for government agencies to promote both the public's civic education (Gurevitch, Coleman & Blumler 2009) and its scientific understanding (LaFollette 2002; Lewenstein 1992).

While Wertham and Pollock staunchly defended literacy in the face of comics during the 1940s and 1950s, educators and cultural critics of the 1960s, including Booth, Holbrook, Foucault and Barthes, were grappling with what authorship and authority meant in a culture that was increasingly dominated by televised images. It was during this time that the idea of "Visual Literacy" was developed by a group of teachers who became concerned with how to best reach young Baby Boomers, "that whole generation of children

who have found, through television, that it is easier, faster and more pleasant to learn visually" (Williams, CM 1978, p. 4).

The New London Group defined pedagogy as "a teaching and learning relationship that creates the potential for building learning conditions leading to full and equitable social participation" (1996, p. 1), and the Visual Literacy movement can be seen as an acknowledgement that visually-based mass media, such as film and television, had become an integral part of what it meant for citizens to participate in society. However, this approach was (and remains) contested on multiple fronts.

The arguments over visual literacy can be understood in terms of authority, authorship and authorisation. This approach also can be used to understand why the discourse of visual literacy has tended to exclude comics. Just as the establishment of "traditional" literacy is connected to the rise of print cultures and the publishing industry, the rising cultural and economic prominence of visual mass media in general, and television in particular, gave a certain authority to the visual literacy movement. This authority was often set up in opposition to traditional, text-based literacy, as described by Feldman in 1976:

> *Today, written language steadily recedes; the ratio of printed words to printed images grows smaller; only spoken language holds its own, and even here the image of the speaker (as in television and films) is more vivid and often cognitively and affectively more significant than what he says. Words multiply as they lose their semantic value in a desperate effort to catch up with the electronic and printed images that carry them along like so much baggage. We have in effect a re-versal of the time-honored relation between a text and its illustrations: unlike the medieval manuscript in which the illuminated letter was an adornment of a sacred utterance, our forms of communication feature images whose embellishments are a kind of verbal calligraphy. Words have become decorative accessories so far as the sharing of essential ideas is concerned. (Feldman 1976, p. 200)*

This future-focused approach conjured anxiety, awe and fear of the coming age of electronic media. It can be seen as a continuation of the antagonistic "images vs. literacy" rhetoric used by critics such as Wertham and Holbrook to rally a defence of traditional text-based literacy, with the

difference being that Feldman is announcing that the battle is over, and the images have won. However, this suggests a false dichotomy between images and text.

The development of visual literacy was in fact less about images in general, and more about teaching students to understand the images of electronic mass media, especially television. For many educators, the new, electronic authority of visual communication was both undeniable and untrustworthy, as indicated by Fillion's recommendation that "Visual education should inculcate a sense of fearful appreciation for the visual media" (1973, p. 310). While Wertham had led an offensive crusade crush comics, Fillion hoped simply to teach his students to defend themselves from the crushing effects of television.

Fillion's pedagogy of visual literacy in general reflects both a reluctance to grant authority to images and an understanding of the difficulty of attributing authorship to images. Although he advocated an ecumenical approach, writing that "In our attempts to introduce serious visual education into the print-dominated schools, we should not take the dangerous and erroneous tack of pitting visual against verbal or print against non-print," Fillion believed that a text-based approach was necessary to claim authorship and authority over images: "Only by translating vision into the symbolic realm of verbal language are we really able to cope with and analyse it, to determine its potential effects upon behaviour" (1973, p. 310). This cautious approach saw images essentially authorising a new route to text-based literacy, creating opportunities to read and write arguments that discuss the effects of visual media or analyse it in literary terms.

In contrast to Fillion and Feldman's defensive pedagogy, more progressive understanding of visual literacy saw it as challenging the longstanding cultural assumptions that "we most commonly think in a verbal medium" and that "intelligence itself can be measured primarily in verbal dimensions" (Cyr 1966, p. 25). Although in some classrooms, the acceptance of Visual Literacy simply meant that teachers could show films and 'educational' television programs, Cyr and others recognised that since

literacy involves both writing and reading, students needed to be able to not just understand visual messages, but to be able to create them. In this way, literacy practices can be seen as not only conveying authority to certain types of communication, but also *authorising* particular ways for students to act, communicate, and to think.

At the beginnings of the Visual Literacy movement, photography classes were recommended as a way of increasing students' awareness of how images can be understood, since "literacy in the visual language demands not only an exposure to and a storage of visual imagery, but also the frequent utilization of an image-thinking vehicle" (Cyr 1966, p. 26). In some ways, this demonstrates how focused early Visual Literacy advocates were on teaching students new technologies. Drawing is a way of making the body into an "image-thinking vehicle," and is a skill that does not require expensive equipment—however, it is an action that is typically not authorised by literacy pedagogy or in English classrooms.

Similarly to the way that authorship was developed primarily as a way of advancing the commercial interests of writers and publishers, the "visual literacy" movement can be seen as a response to the massive commercial growth of the film and television industries. Comics had attracted their share of detractors and advocates during the first half of the 20th century, but ultimately critics of comic books were able to force the industry to start a program of self-censorship (the Comics Code Authority)(Nyberg 1994), and the gates of literacy remained relatively barred. However, the rapid popularization of television during the 50s and 60s saw the infrastructure of the broadcasting industry colonize households in a comprehensive way (Spigel 1992). The champions of literacy could not repel this invasion of images. Only at this stage did talk of 'visual literacy' gain traction in schools and libraries, despite the fact that visual communication was nothing new.

However, the lack of a consensus about what students should do with images or how they should learn to relate to them has hindered the establishment of widely accepted visual literacy pedagogy. To be "literate" in the traditional sense entails being able to read and write; it is less clear what

actions and abilities are authorised in visual literacy—is it being able to communicate visually in some particular medium, being able to construct (written or spoken) critiques of visual media, developing an awareness of the structures and biases in mass media, or something else entirely?

This is the crux of the problem facing visual literacy: its very name forces it into binary comparisons to "traditional," or verbal literacy, even though the discourse of "traditional" literacy developed specifically to support print cultures and text-based learning. The ways that authorship, authority and authorisation are understood in literacy pedagogy were designed to support linguistic texts, and cannot easily be transposed/translated to the realm of images.

Comics further complicate this binary construction of literacy being either visual *or* verbal, since comics communicate using both modes of communication. As Nick Sousanis (2012c) argues, verbal and visual communication each authorise different ways of ordering our thoughts, and these modes of communication are brought together in comics. Comics authorize reading of both the spatial organization of panel layouts (e.g. Cohn 2013) and the visual form of words (for example, Aaron Kashtan (2011) argues that the use of handwriting, as opposed to typeset text, is a signifying feature of the "alternative comics" genre). As much as there might be two different modes of literacy – visual and "traditional" – then comics require readers to use them both in an integrated way. They authorize readers to use both modes of literacy simultaneously – so they cannot be entirely grasped through either the methods of "traditional" literacy or those of visual literacy. They require a literacy that is multiple, or multimodal.

Multiple and Multimodal Literacies

The concept of "Multiliteracies" was defined in 1994 during an international summit of ten educators in New London, New Hampshire, who would come to be known as the New London Group: Courtney Cazden, Bill Cope, Norman Fairclough, James Gee, Mary Kalantzis, Gunther Kress, Allan Luke, Carmen Luke, Sarah Michaels, and Martin Nakata. In their collaborative article, *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures* (New London

Group 1996), they delineated "design" as a way of approaching the different ways meaning can be conveyed, in which meanings may be constructed through the various design elements of "Linguistic Meanings, Visual Meaning, Audio Meaning, Gestural Meaning, Spatial Meaning and the Multimodal patterns of meaning that relate the first five modes of meaning to each other" (Cope and Kalantzis 2000).

Although traditional literacy pedagogy is heavily slanted toward Linguistic Meaning, this is not because the other design elements are not present. Kress has emphasized that "all texts have always been multimodal"; even the most didactic textbooks heavily employ the design elements of Visual Meaning and Spatial Meaning (Kress 1996, p. 20). However, literacy practices have generally only authorised critical attention to Linguistic Meaning, at the exclusion of other design elements.

For example, in the story quoted by Michael Apple (2000)about the Boston teacher in 1899, the student was attempting to demonstrate her literacy by reciting from a book, a practice that is supposedly rooted in Linguistic Meaning. However, the kind of recitation that was developed to gauge students' proficiency in "traditional" literacy can be more accurately seen as authorising multimodal literacy practices. The student in the example was evaluated on how accurately he employed design elements, including Verbal Meaning, such as reading out loud in a certain way ("lift up his voice and struggle in loud, unnatural tones"), and Gestural Meaning, such as maintaining proper posture ("toes pointing at an angle of forty-five degrees, the head held straight and high, the eyes looking directly ahead").

In modern undergraduate classrooms, such proficiencies might be gauged by such behaviours as remaining seated unless otherwise instructed, speaking clearly, and visibly showing interest in the class. In a student essay, non-linguistic competencies might include proper formatting and choice of fonts, which employ non-linguistic design elements including Visual Meaning and Spatial Meaning. As both these cases demonstrate, in most classrooms there are complex and highly normalised multimodal systems made up of non-linguistic design elements that are used to demonstrate particular

aspects of proficiency in so-called "linguistic" literacy. The concept of multiliteracies allows us to look at the discourses and practices that surround different modes of communication. It asks how different ways of communicating form meanings and create identities, communities and literacies.

The past decade has seen the concept of multimodal literacies increasingly embraced within education. Questions of multimodal literacy are often intertwined with digital technologies, online communication and other forms of "new media." Slatin argues that in contrast to interactive digital media, where users have a great deal of control over how they read a text, traditional literacy has framed reading as an action that requires following a sequential and linear route which the author has "carefully laid out for the sole purpose of ensuring that the reader does indeed get from the beginning to the end in the way the writer wants him or her to get there" (Slatin 1990, p. 871). However, digital media is not unique in its abilities to allow readers to make their own way through a text.

The National Council of Teachers of English issued a Position Statement on Multimodal Literacies in 2005 which addresses issues related to electronic resources, but also notes that an exclusive emphasis on digital literacies "would limit students' access to other modes of expression," and highlights that the "interplay of meaning-making systems" is not exclusive to electronic media (NCTE 2005). Comics are an obvious example of pre-digital texts that thrive on this interplay, incorporating visual, spatial and linguistic meaning. Research exploring the multimodal characteristics of comics has recently flourished (Borodo 2014; Carter, JB 2007; Connors 2013; Duffy, Damian 2009; Frey & Fisher 2008; Hammond 2009; Leber-Cook & Cook 2013; Scanlon 2013; Schwartz & Rubinstein-Ãvila 2006).

Multimodal literacy authorises readers to make connections that may be nonlinear and nonverbal, similar to the way that comics are read. As the actions authorised by traditional literacy pedagogy are both linear and grounded in the idea of an author's voice, this meant that to critics such as Holbrook and Wertham, comics were not only not part of literacy, they were

the incarnation of *illiteracy*. However, in our digital media ecosystem the idea of the author as a central figure in literacy pedagogy has been eroded by the increasing social authority of modes of communication that are not wholly linguistic.

In addition, digital, networked communication technologies are changing the ways that we think about authorship and copyright with the introduction of "copyleft" practices and Creative Commons licensing offering more porous and tenuous ways of ascribing media ownership (Berry 2008). Soffer & Eshet-Alkalai reason that "the proliferation of digital editing and communication technologies during the digital era" has resulted in a weakening of the connection between authors and their works (Soffer & Eshet-Alkalai 2009, p. 53). This might be considered as further eroding the cultural position of traditional, author/lecturer-centric literacy and pedagogy.

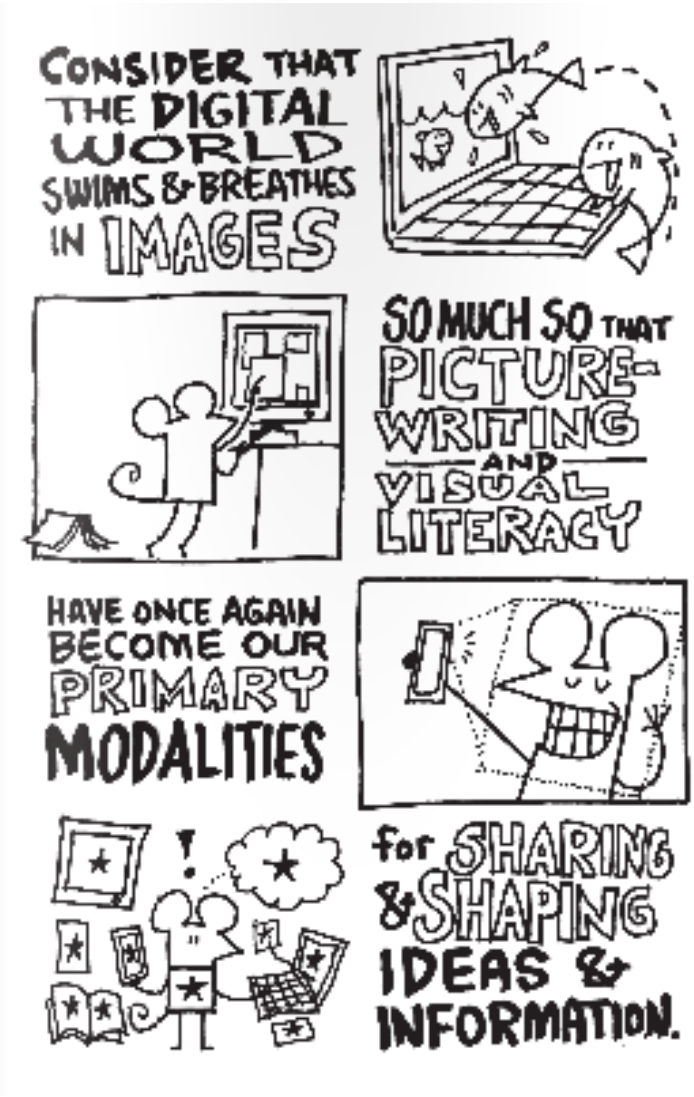
Authorising New Ways of Thinking

Despite being an older form of communication, comics are surprisingly relevant in the newer pedagogy of multiliteracy. As Michael Bitz, founder of the Comic Book Project at the Columbia University School of Education has noted, "Every year there are new literacies," and "when you look at a comic book, you can see how it's a storyboard for a film, or a Web-based media project. There are connections to media literacy all along the way" (Cleaver 2008).

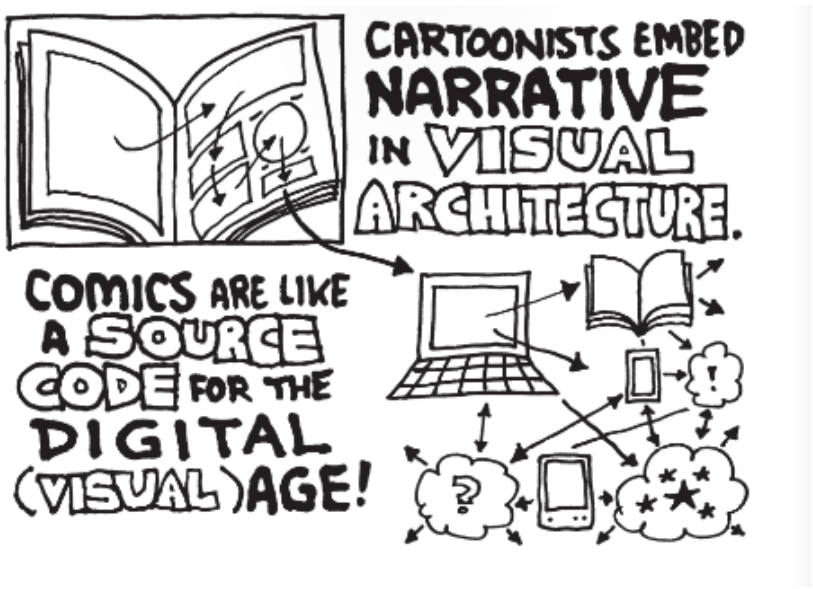
In the context of the pedagogy of multimodal literacy, comics authorize readers to use a variety of reading practices that are generally not encouraged in traditional literacy. In addition to paying attention to images, comics can also encourage reading that is non-linear and not centred in the concept of an author's "voice" – this will be demonstrated more explicitly in the formal analyses in Part 3 and the case studies in Part 4. These approaches can open up new routes for understanding, and authorize new ways of reading texts, but also new ways of thinking about the world.

Marek Bennett and James Sturm argue in the *Applied Cartooning Manifesto* (2014) that the current digital media ecosystem authorises many

of the same literacy practices and ways of reading that are embedded in comics:



(Sturm & Bennett 2014, p. 7)

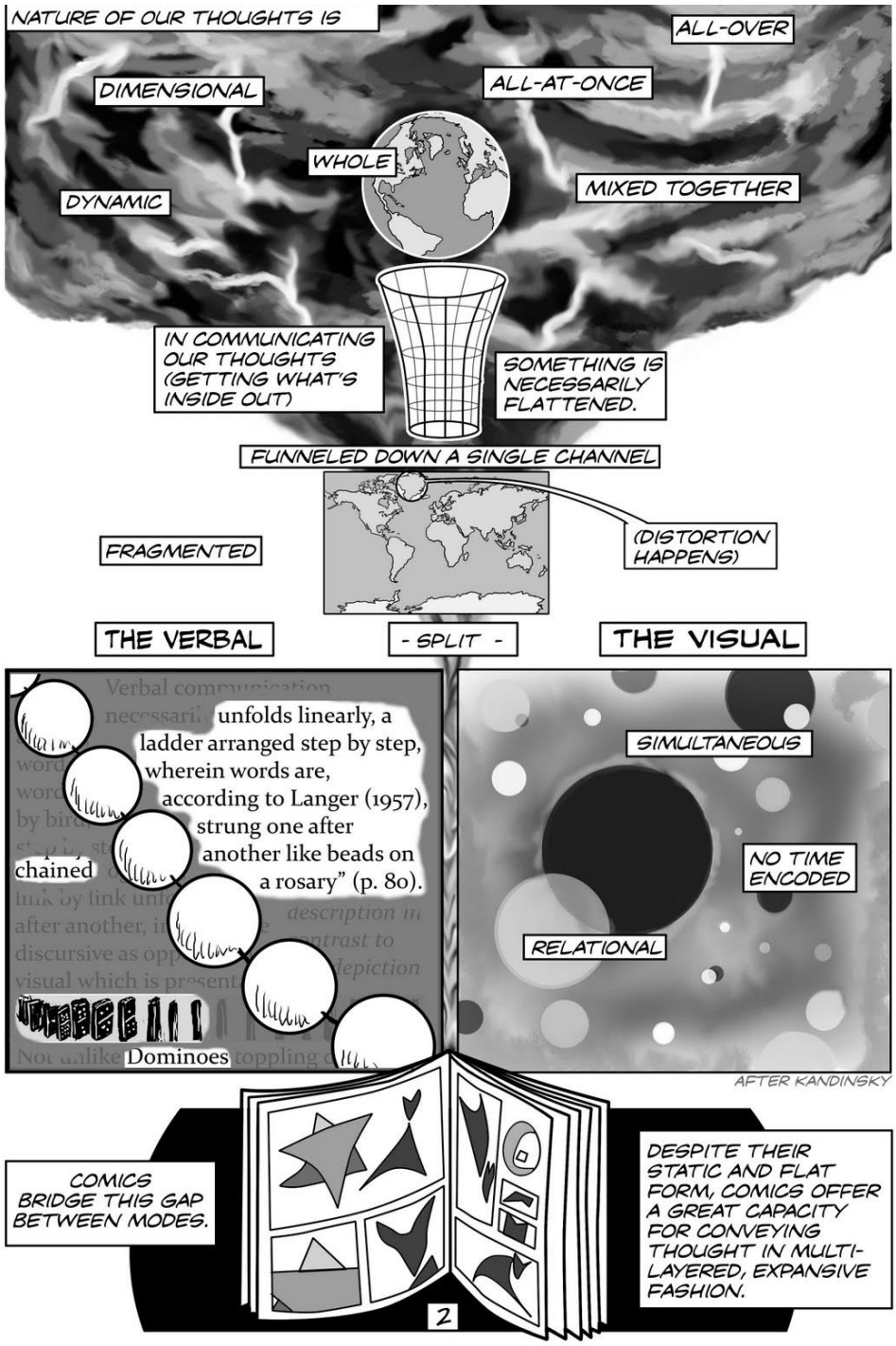


(Sturm & Bennett 2014, p. 8)

As the previous chapters have shown, the use of comics as educational tools significantly predates what Bennett and Sturm call the "Digital (visual) age." Despite this, comics have historically been considered exempt from the world of literacy, even though, as made up of ink and paper, they are formally similar to the printed texts that are considered foundational to traditional literacy pedagogies. The growing cultural authority of comics in a world where literacy is increasingly recognised as multimodal, has recently facilitated the publication of comics in respected academic journals, such as the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, discussed in the previous chapter, and Nature (Monastersky & Sousanis 2015).

These sorts of academic journal articles in comics form have also appeared in, e.g. *Refractory* (Krasniewicz 2005), *The Journal of Medical Humanities* (Al-Jawad 2013) and *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* (Jones, P & Evans 2011), as well as *The Annals of Internal Medicine* (Montoya, R 2016), and recently formed the basis of special issue of Digital Humanities Quarterly on "Comics as Scholarship" (Salter 2016). Comics scholars who have recently completed doctoral dissertations as comics, include Nick Sousanis at Columbia University's Teachers College (2014) and Jarod Roselló (2014) at Pennsylvania State University.

According to Sousanis, drawing comics can function as a kind of research: "the very act of working spatially and visual-verbally facilitates creative discoveries otherwise obscured when limited to a sheet of lined paper or my keyboard" (Sousanis 2012a). In the following page from his dissertation, Sousanis argues that our thoughts are "dimensional," "dynamic" and "mixed together" – a shift from understandings expressed by earlier champions of literacy that intelligence is best expressed in the linear, linguistic form of language:



(Sousanis 2012c, p. 2)

Sousanis suggests that the fragmented forms of our thoughts are expressed more fully in the fractured, multimodal forms used in comics, rather than in the single strand of language.

Al-Jawad, a clinical doctor who does practitioner research, argues that making comic links "what happens on the ward – 'practice' – with what

happens in my head – 'theory' – a similar process of analysing qualitative data" (Al-Jawad 2013). She explains that the multimodal facets of comics help to explicate some of the realities of her work that would not be as apparent in the prose writing authorized in traditional literacy pedagogy:



(Al-Jawad 2013, p. 371)

The inward focus of many of these comics means that they act a kind of praxis or action research. This use of "drawing as thinking" is also reflected in work by Sandra Weber and Claudia Mitchell who found that drawing "provides an excellent forum for critical reflection" for university Elementary Education students (Weber & Mitchell 1996, p. 312). Other recent examples include Michael Green's class on graphic medicine' at Pennsylvania State, where medical students make comics about their experiences working in hospital (one former student reports, "I truly believe

using comics will make me a better doctor" (Hawkins 2013), and cartoonist Lynda Barry's cross-listed art/science/English course 'The Unthinkable Mind' at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where the coursework involves extensive image-making (Halliday 2013).

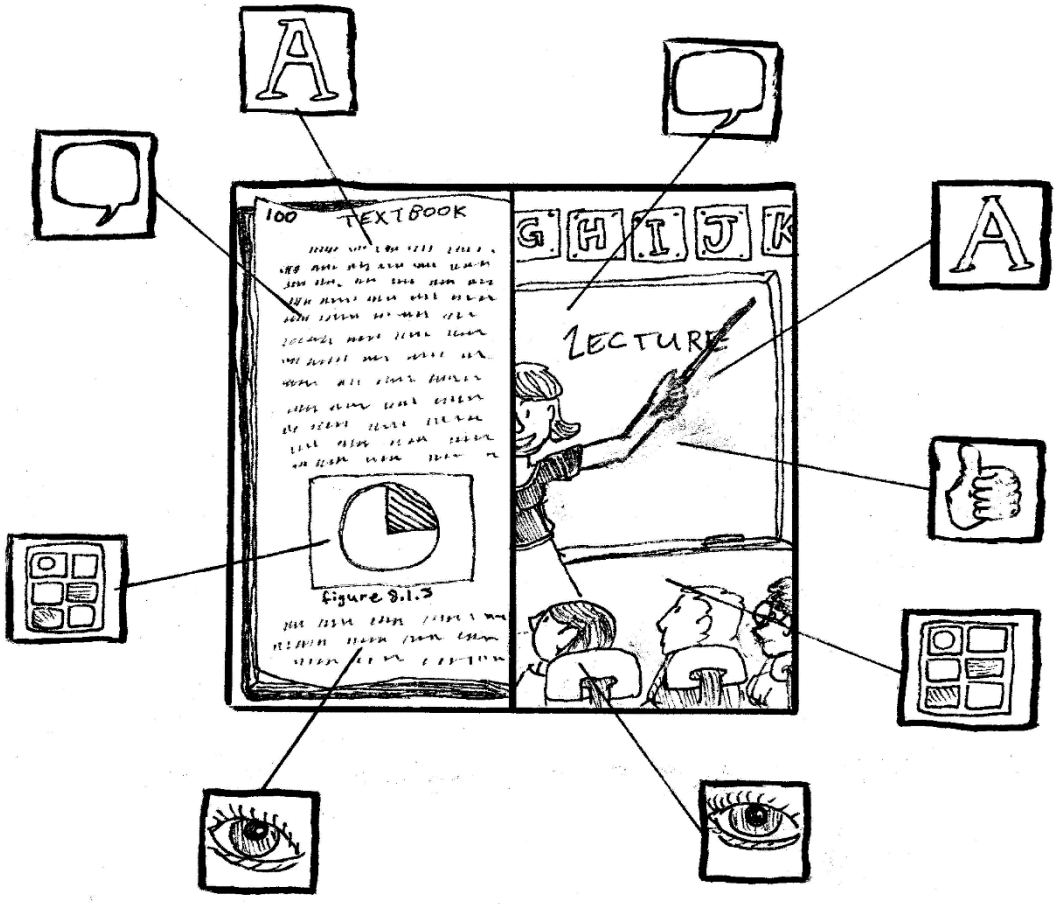
Conclusion

Being "literate" means being proficient in communicating through a particular mode of expression, so as new media technologies enabled the widespread adoption of new modes of expression, new forms of literacy have developed. In the final section of this chapter, I have visually quoted from the work of cartoonist-researchers like Al-Jawad, Barry, Bennett and Sousanis to highlight how comics construct a multimodal literacy that is quite different from traditional literacy pedagogy. The work of these cartoonist-researchers has largely been enabled by the cultural redefinition of literacy along the lines of multiliteracies. This redefinition has helped to widen the possibilities of what published research can be, and how academic writers are allowed to write and to publish.

Many of these dimensions of thinking and learning are generally not accounted for in "traditional" literacy or visual literacy. A multimodal approach to literacy pedagogy helps highlight the wide range of types of thinking that are authorized in comics. This greater range generally comes at the expense of traditional notions of authorship. The publication of the comics in academic journals would have been unthinkable to Holbrook, Pollock or Wertham.

Part 3:

Formal Analysis



Chapter 6 – Fictional Authority and Author Avatars: Visual Authorship of Educational Comics

The previous chapter outlined how graphic novels came to be accepted into the discourse of literacy, and briefly described how this has allowed educational "graphic novels" to find success within the institutions of literacy, such as bookstores, libraries and schools, and more recently as articles published in scholarly journals. This chapter will examine the visual styles and strategies of conveying authorship that have come to characterize many of these modern educational comics by examining the historical development of two different visual strategies. The influence of comic strips and comic books can be seen most clearly in the strategy used by *PS Magazine* of imbuing fictional characters with authority and a degree of implied authorship, which is contrasted with the more direct dialectic approach to authorship used by Rius in *Marx for Beginners* (1976). Rius' style has been adopted in other graphic guides and educational comics, but adapted to suit a more lecture-like style of delivery. These strategies highlight some of the diverse ways that comics use the visual modality to both imply and simultaneously diverge from more traditional conceptions of authorship and authority.

Traditions of Educational Comics

PS Magazine, the US Army's publication devoted to preventative maintenance of military equipment, is sometimes regarded as an exemplar of educational comics. It is certainly one of the longest-running educational comics in history, and has the distinction of being edited in its first decade by Will Eisner, who is regarded as an important and authoritative "pioneer of comic books and graphic novels" (Gravett 2005).

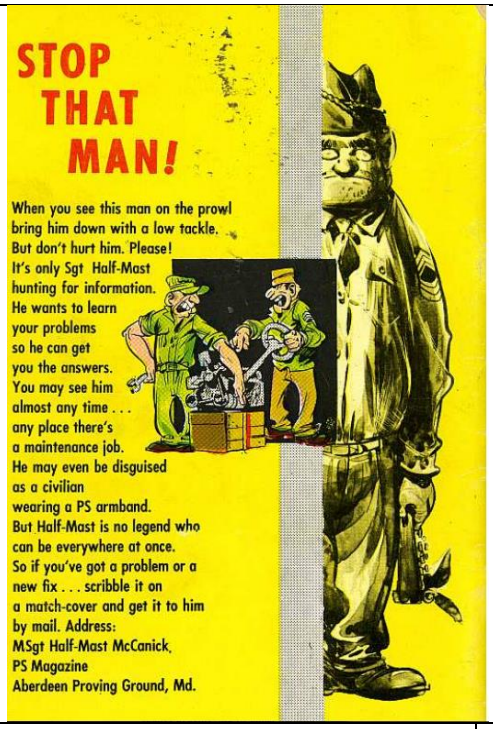
Will Eisner began work on *PS Magazine* in 1951, and it is still being published monthly as of 2016, which is a legacy that predates Marvel Comics' longest-running superhero comic, *The Fantastic Four*, by a decade. Taking this into account alongside Eisner's work in commercial narrative comics like *The Spirit* and *A Contract with God*, it is perhaps not surprising that he is often

singled out as the most notable educational cartoonist. Mallia (2007a) calls him "guru of the genre," and the title of Garrelts' overview of scholarship on educational comics, "The Children of Anthropomorphic Guns" (2012), implies a family tree that begins with Eisner's work on *P.S.*, a publication which often gave voices and faces to military equipment, although this was more common after Eisner's editorship. While Eisner was certainly an innovator in instructional comics, the visual strategies employed in *P.S.* are organized around conceptions of authorship and authority that mark them as significantly different from the kinds of comics that have recently been used as "graphic guides," academic journal articles and classroom texts. *P.S.* initially used a style inspired by the satirical and irreverent tone common in comic strips and comic books, but derived its authorship and authority from its association with the organization that commissioned and published it, the United States Army. On the other hand, in the "graphic guides" that have inspired the current crop of educational graphic novels and journal articles (including *Marx for Beginners*, *The Cartoon History of the Universe* (Gonick 1990), *Understanding Comics* (McCloud 1993), and others), the visual modality is used to construct identities for their authors that suggest a more direct relationship with the reader.

The world of *P.S Magazine*

The world created in the comics of *P.S. Magazine* resembles that of strips like *Ally Sloper* and *Andy Capp*, which took place within their own perpetually-renewed parodies of contemporary society, where the rule of authority could be challenged and played with, but would always be renewed the next day. Like those strips, and other comic features, from *Asterix* to *Tintin* to *Batman*, *P.S. Magazine* is defined by its cast of characters. The three longest-standing principle characters in P.S. Magazine are Joe Dope, an accident-prone GI, the curvaceous mechanic Connie Rodd, and the knowledgeable Sergeant Half-Mast McCanick. Their characteristics changed over the decades in line with shifting mores within the military. Joe Dope became less bumbling, and was ultimately phased out in the late 1950s, as "the Army decided it did not want soldiers depicted as incompetent or stupid"

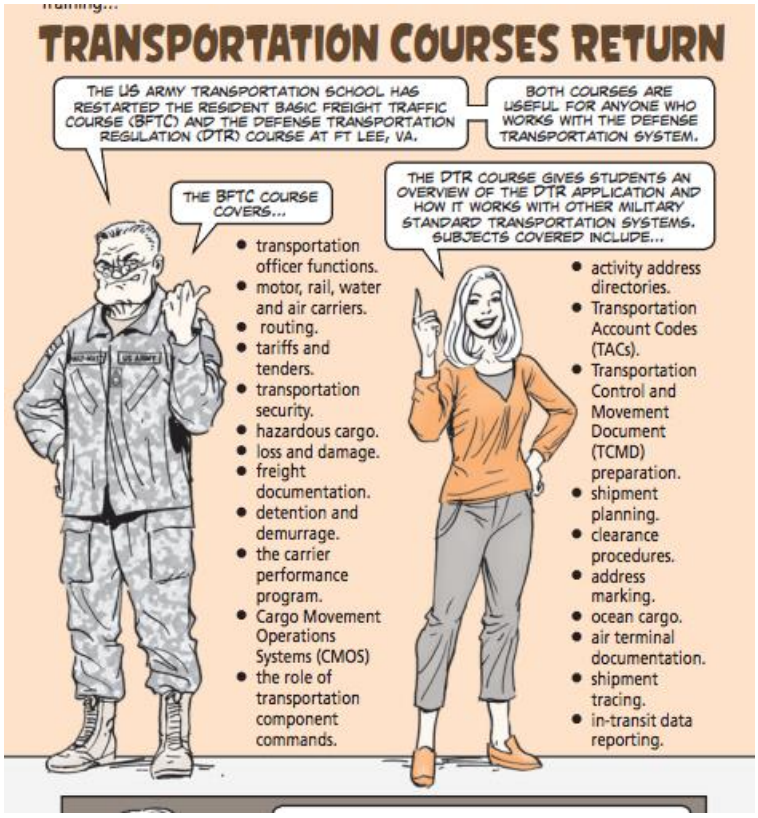
(Steward 2004, p. 86). Connie Rodd's sex appeal increased throughout the 1960s and 70s, before being eventually toned down around 1980 after her depiction became the subject of a series of congressional hearings (Fitzgerald 2009, p. 80; Simmons, EB 2010, p. 17). However, despite these changes, Connie and Half-Mast remain P.S. Magazine's "two most prominent characters" ('PS Magazine: 50 Years of PM' 2001).



Half-Mast McCanick as he appeared in *P.S. Magazine* issue 7, July 1952.



Connie Rodd as she appeared in *P.S. Magazine* issue 52, January 1957.

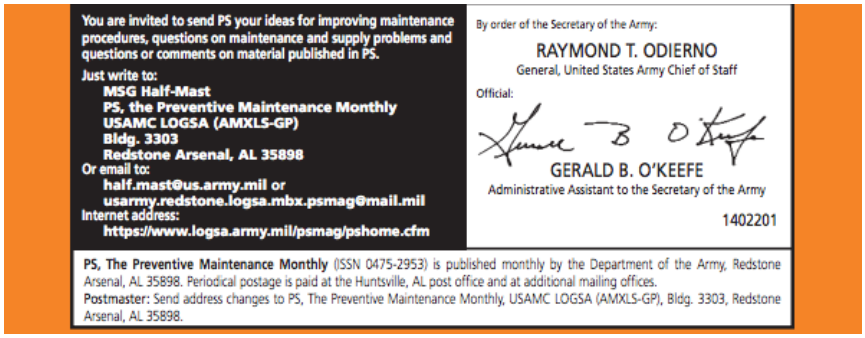


Half-Mast and Connie Rodd as they appear in the 2010s.

These reoccurring characters help to define *P.S.*, and have come to be seen as having a degree of authority over the magazine, similarly to how comic book and comic strip characters often eclipsed the writers and artists who worked on their features. In the case of *P.S.*, Half-Mast and Connie were actually treated as real members of the US Army, with whom soldiers could interact with and correspond. The writers and artists who produce *P.S.* have generally not been credited, although exceptions have been made for famous cartoonists, such as Eisner and Joe Kubert, whose signatures often appeared on covers they drew. In contrast to this, the signatures of the fictional Half Mast and Connie are all over *P.S.*, authorising their responses to soldiers' letters and other features.

There is one signature from a real individual that authorizes every issue of *P.S.*: on the first page of each issue above the publishing indicia is an official endorsement from the current Secretary of the Army, usually through the signature of an assistant. Interestingly, this authorization sits alongside

instructions to send correspondence related to the magazine, which should be addressed to Half-Mast McCanick himself.



You are invited to send PS your ideas for improving maintenance procedures, questions on maintenance and supply problems and questions or comments on material published in PS.

Just write to:
MSG Half-Mast
PS, the Preventive Maintenance Monthly
USAMC LOGSA (AMXLS-GP)
Bldg. 3303
Redstone Arsenal, AL 35898
Or email to:
half.mast@us.army.mil or
usarmy.redstone.logsa.mbx.psmag@mail.mil
Internet address:
https://www.logsa.army.mil/psmag/pshome.cfm

By order of the Secretary of the Army:
RAYMOND T. ODIERNO
General, United States Army Chief of Staff
Official:
GERALD B. O'KEEFE
Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army
1402201

PS, The Preventive Maintenance Monthly (ISSN 0475-2953) is published monthly by the Department of the Army, Redstone Arsenal, AL 35898. Periodical postage is paid at the Huntsville, AL post office and at additional mailing offices.
Postmaster: Send address changes to PS, The Preventive Maintenance Monthly, USAMC LOGSA (AMXLS-GP), Bldg. 3303, Redstone Arsenal, AL 35898.

Indicia from a 2014 issue of P.S. Magazine. The parallel structure visually equates the authority conveyed by the signature of Gerald B. O'Keefe, Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army, an actual human being, with the authority of the magazine's editorial staff, which is headed by Half-Mast McCannick, a cartoon character.

From the first issue, readers were invited to send in letters with questions and maintenance advice addressed to the characters, which Half-Mast would answer. Today, he posts to the *PS Magazine* Facebook page and even responds to reader comments.



SGT. HALF-MAST McCANICK'S ANSWER DEPT.

I THINK I NEED A NEW CARBURETOR!

OILING SPRINGS

Dear Half-Mast,

The other day I heard some joes mention that if you'd squirt some #30 SAE engine oil between the spring leaves on the 2½-ton GMC she wouldn't ride so hard. Thought I'd better get some advice on the deal before I tried it.

Sgt. G. I. D.

Dear Sergeant,

My advice is to lay off. Grease 'em where you're supposed to and let it go at that. Pass the information around to those other joes. Don't pull your punches in stopping it, Sarge, or it'll sure screw up the works.

Tell 'em that those springs are designed and put together with just the right amount of friction, and they make use of it. When you squirt 'em with oil you destroy that friction, get too much bounce, and break a spring.

This, to quote a quote, is asking for trouble.

Half-Mast

GMC BRAKE FREE-TRAVEL

Dear Half-Mast,

I disagree with my Ordnance Corps Technician about brake-pedal free-travel on the GMC 2½-ton 6x6. He says it should be ½" to 1". I say ¼" to ½".

Please tell me who is right.

Sgt. R. W

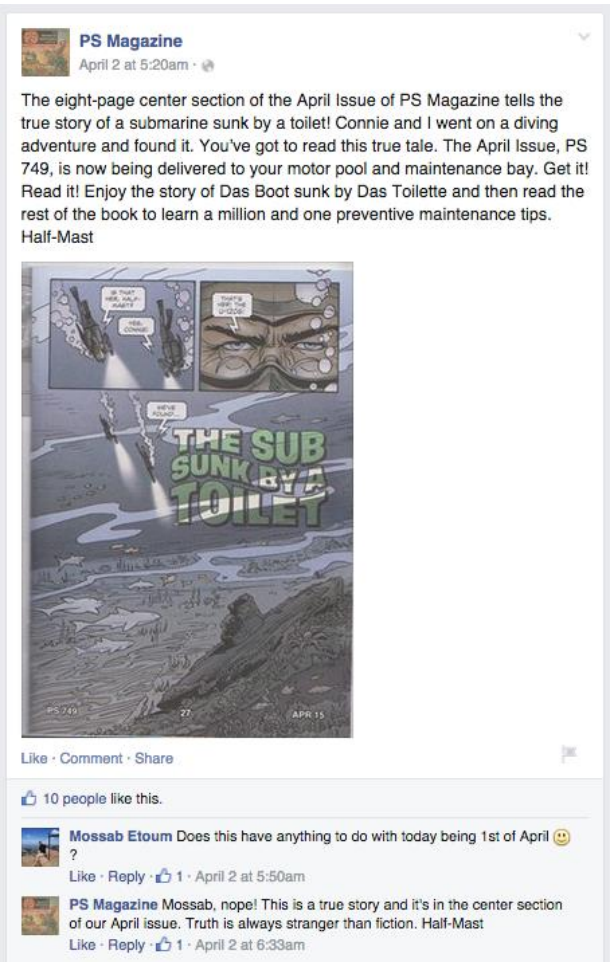
Dear Sergeant,

You and your OCT could be talking about a few different things when you mention free travel of a brake pedal, and I'm kinda leery about sticking my neck out—but here goes.

Staying on the real technical side of things, if all the brake parts were shiny-new and the brakes were adjusted accurately, the **only** free travel you'd get in the pedal would amount to approximately 1/10".

This would come from the .020" clearance between the stop screw in the master-cylinder bracket and the inner-lever arm. The clearance at the stop screw is measured with the return spring discon-

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PS Magazine
April 2 at 5:20am ·

The eight-page center section of the April Issue of PS Magazine tells the true story of a submarine sunk by a toilet! Connie and I went on a diving adventure and found it. You've got to read this true tale. The April Issue, PS 749, is now being delivered to your motor pool and maintenance bay. Get it! Read it! Enjoy the story of Das Boot sunk by Das Toilette and then read the rest of the book to learn a million and one preventive maintenance tips.
Half-Mast

Like · Comment · Share

10 people like this.

Mossab Etoum Does this have anything to do with today being 1st of April ?
Like · Reply · 1 · April 2 at 5:50am

PS Magazine Mossab, nope! This is a true story and it's in the center section of our April issue. Truth is always stranger than fiction. Half-Mast
Like · Reply · 1 · April 2 at 6:33am

Half-Mast's letter column from P.S. Magazine, issue 4, September 1951. Note his signature in blue.	Half-Mast responds to a reader's comment on the P.S. Magazine Facebook page, April, 2015. Note his sign-off at the end of the comment.

This approach in some ways mirrors the way Eisner had used his signature character, The Spirit, a domino-masked crime-fighter who appeared in the eponymous strip that Eisner produced for newspapers in the 1940s and '50s. Eisner needed a central character to authorize The Spirit as a successful publishing project, even though he was generally uninterested in writing stories about a crime fighter. "As the strip progressed, The Spirit as a serious crime fighter gave way to The Spirit as a not so serious focal point for whatever zany fantasy Eisner felt inspired to build around him that week. Crime became incidental; sometimes Eisner forgot to put it in" (Mercer 2011, p. 3).

The characters of The Spirit and Half-mast McCannick acted as constant conduits for readers to enter each issue of their publications. Their perennial presence gave these periodical comics a consistency and legacy. In 2016, Half-Mast McCannick gives *P.S.* Magazine a kind of authenticity that is based in the long history of the character. He has become part of the brand that gives the publication its authority. Correspondence from Half-Mast is obviously written by a PS staff member, but acknowledging that would ruin the game. Barker (Barker 1989, p. 88) argues that that comics should be understood as organized around a set of rules understood as a "particular historically and socially specific contract between publisher, genre and audience," and part of the play of this game in *P.S. Magazine* is maintaining the illusion that Connie, Half-Mast and the others are entities that exist beyond the confines of the page.

A philosophy of playfulness has been central to the pedagogy of *P.S.*, particularly in its first few decades, as the idea was to create a publication that soldiers would enjoy reading. Although it borrowed some of the conventions of comic books that had initially targeted children, *P.S.* was originally tailored for an audience "in the era when the Army was practically all-male, (Simmons, EB 2010, p. 15) and its sense of play is randy, mildly subversive, slightly sarcastic, and often casually violent. The US Army's

institutional authority gave the advice in *P.S.* its credibility, and in return, the characters in *P.S.* gave the publication its appeal, while also working to convey a certain congenial attitude to the authority of the Army. More than just educating its readers, *P.S.* also constructed an idealized image of the authority that had commissioned it. Similarly to other comic strips, the world of *P.S. Magazine* and its central conflicts were renewed in every issue. Half-Mast would always reply to letters and dish out advice; Connie's blouse was on the brink of almost revealing too much; the characters would always be ready for combat but never be killed or permanently injured, and finally, there would always be preventative maintenance to attend to.

However, as the identity of the U.S. Army changed, the identities of Connie and Half-Mast were also changed to better reflect it. Similarly, the art style and conception of the world that P.S. authorized also changed. The "boys club" feel of the original publication has become more inclusive, Connie's buttons are no longer in danger of flying off, and the soldiers are no longer depicted as sweat-beaded horn-dogs. The teeth of the satire directed at Army policies and power-structures have also been filed down. Soldiers are less frequently depicted as dangerously negligent, and commanding officers less frequently as fearsome bullies. The comic is generally drawn in a less exaggerated, more realistic style, and these kinds of covers are a thing of the past:



P.S. Magazine covers from the early 1950s featured a carnivalesque satire of Army life.

As the identity of the U.S. Army has become more inclusive and accountable to the public, many of the initial elements of play that characterized the original conception of the magazine have been eroded. In order to maintain its congenial, comical conception of authority, *P.S.* has had to find new targets for its sense of play. The imaginative and satirical elements in the magazine now most generally come from the way piece of equipment, rather than people or power structures, are depicted. Eugene Bradley Simmons (2010) notes that anthropomorphized equipment has been appearing in increasing numbers, and playing larger roles in P.S. since the 1980s. In the modern *P.S. Magazine*, everything from guns to tanks to thermometers has a chance of being anthropomorphized, and given a face, emotions and the ability to speak. The equipment's emotions run the gamut of "anguish, sadness, and panic show the fear of neglect and possible dysfunction or termination of the equipment's life. These technologies plead with the reader to complete preventive maintenance while there is still time to save the equipment and themselves" (Steward 2004, pp. 90-91)(Steward 2004, pp. 90-91). This may seem like a clichéd cartoon effect, but it was comparatively rare in the first decades of the magazine.



The covers of *P.S. Magazine* from the 2010s feature the thoughts, voices and emotions of all sorts of machinery – from tanks to thermometers.

In all its iterations, *P.S. Magazine* has derived much of its appeal from presenting a world familiar to its readers through a kind of satirical looking glass, and using that cartoon world to reflect back educational messages, while at the same time conveying a sense of humour to the authority that publishes it -- the US Army. In an interview with Simmons, Stuart Henderson, a *P.S.* production

manager, admitted that the talking machines increased when the publication was forced to curb its sexualised depictions of the female characters. "'There's no union of talking trucks that will be unhappy with us,' Henderson said. 'It was the perfect way to pick up the slack of adding some humour when we had to give up a different style of humour. Plus, the soldiers enjoy talking vehicles'" (Simmons, EB 2010, p. 49). While the early issues of *P.S. Magazine* asked readers to consider if their preventative maintenance techniques were comparable to those of the foolish Joe Dope or worthy of the praise of the buxom Connie, the current version of P.S. Magazine asks its readers to consider their equipment as if it had human thoughts and emotions, like a companion rather than mere machinery.

The reoccurring cartoon characters and fun-house view of the world that were developed in *P.S. Magazine* over the decades were important visual devices for how the magazine related its own educational authority and reflected a certain conception of the institution that had authorized and published it. Some modern educational comics, especially those aimed at children, employ a similar tactic of creating fictional characters and worlds for readers to explore, while implying a pedagogical authority that is both fun and informative. One example is the *Max Axiom* series of comic books, which is aimed at children in grades three through nine, and features the titular "Super Scientist" as its central character and authority figure. Like Half-Mast, this "super-cool super-scientist" is a fictional expert who has been scripted and drawn by a small army of different people (Barnett, DA 2011, 2015; Biskup & Smith 2007; Kimmel 2013; Sohn, Erwin & Barnett III 2007).



The cover of *The Attractive Story of Magnetism with Max Axiom* (Gianopoulos, Martin & Schulz

2007).

Another example, the business management comic *Atlas Black: The Complete Adventure* (Short, J et al. 2011), also uses a fictional conceit: like the book's target audience, its main character is an undergraduate business student. Similarly to Joe Dope, his character is a bumbling fool who eventually learns the lessons he needs to succeed. However, these fictional worlds of play are less common in graphic textbooks that are intended for general audiences, and almost non-existent in comics-style, academic journal articles. Instead, the lineage of those comics can be more accurately traced back to the work of the radical Mexican cartoonist Rius and other 'underground' comics, which are markedly different from Eisner's work.

Rius: different conception of authority

Rius is the penname of Mexican cartoonist Eduardo del Rio, whose work was inspired by the '60s Latin American pedagogical tradition called concientizadora or "raising consciousness" (Priego 2002), the same movement that Paulo Friere's work emerged from. A master cartoonist who is relatively unheralded in the English-speaking world, Rius has achieved "a certain celebrity status within Mexico" (Young 2011). His initial renown began with "one of the most famous comic books in Mexican history: *Los Supermachos*," a satirical series about life in a small village that poked fun at "the country's problems and the abuse of power by the oligarchies" (Neria 2012, p. 87). Starting in 1964, Rius produced 100 issues of that comic before being forced out by Mexican authorities forced in 1967. He followed up with a second series in 1968, *Los Agachados*, which retained the satirical tone of *Los Supermachos*, but quickly became more didactic, emphasising "the direct communication of information in the form of lessons complete with bibliographical sources" (Tatum & Hinds 1979, p. 6). He has also "has authored and illustrated more than a hundred books on topics that include philosophy, political theory and history — with a knack for making dense subject matter easily digestible" (Young 2011). Now 81 years old (UniradioInforma 2015), Rius continues to publish new work regardless of a seemingly decades-long lack of interest from English-language publishers, and remains "one of the

few authors in Mexico aside from Carlos Fuentes who can pack any venue with an appearance" (Priego 2002).

To Anglophone readers, Rius is known almost exclusively for his book *Marx for Beginners* (translated from 1972's *Marx para principantes*), first published in 1976 in England by Writers and Readers, a small publishing cooperative. Although Writers and Readers had published a translation of Rius' earlier *Cuba for Beginners* in 1970, it was met with muted sales compared to *Marx for Beginners*, which was in the words of Publisher Richard Appignanesi, "an immediate hit" that went on to sell over a million copies in twelve languages; Writers and Readers quickly employed other writers and illustrators to create more "documentary comic books" in the For Beginners series in the style and format that Rius had pioneered. (Appignanesi). It is worth noting that the English publication of *Marx for Beginners* was published several years before Eisner's *A Contract with God* (1978) established the graphic novel form as a commercially viable publication model.

In the mid-1980s, Josh Brown called Rius' work the exemplar of pedagogical comics "mixing a critical analysis with irreverent humour and an informal, lively cartoon style. I think we could use many more Riuses" (Brown, J et al. 1984). Writers and Readers obviously agreed, as their Rius-inspired "For Beginners" series proceeded to publish dozens of comics, on topics ranging from philosophy and economics to feminism and black history – although none of them with input from Rius himself (some of these books will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9). The cooperative split in the 1990s, resulting in two separate lines, "For Beginners" at Pantheon and "Introducing" at Icon Books (MacDonald 2003a), which occasionally produce parallel volumes on the same subjects. More than 80 different volumes had been published as of 2016. These lines of books were distributed to and sold in bookstores separately from graphic novels, which did not get a firm foothold in the mainstream book market until the mid-1990s (Davis, JR 2004; Ezarik 2003; Macdonald 2003b). Even into the 1990s, the *For Beginners* books were not marketed as "graphic novels," but as "documentary comic

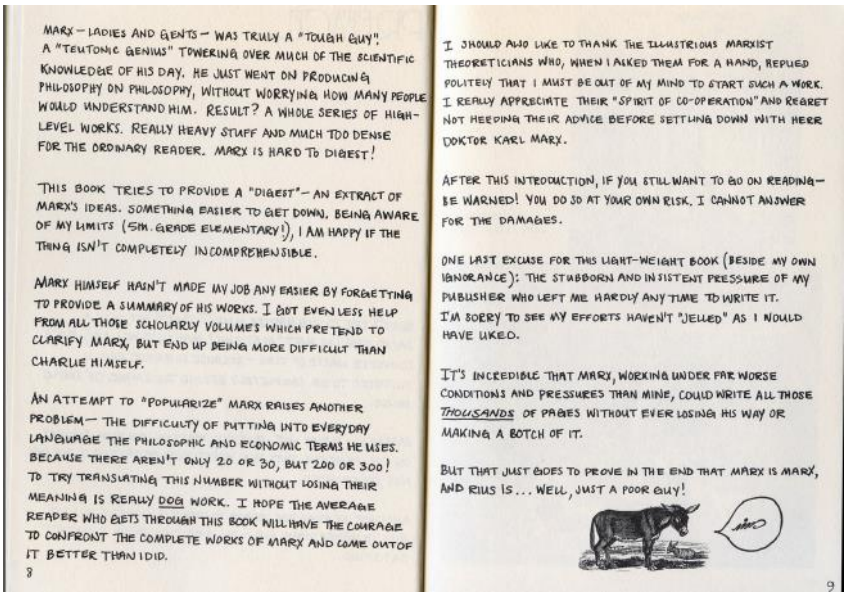
books." These lines of books that descended from *Marx for Beginners* functioned as a separate discourse from the graphic novel discourse.

The *For Beginners* and *Introducing* lines of books were generally made by people who had no experience in the comic book industry (a notable exception was *Kafka for Beginners* (Mairowitz & Crumb 1993), which was illustrated by legendary underground cartoonist Robert Crumb). For the most part they were not distributed to or sold in comic book stores. Instead, Writers and Readers marketed their books to university bookstores and "alternative" bookstores (Horning 1993, pp. 530-531), retailers that for the most part did not sell comic books.

Authorship in Marx for Beginners

In *Marx for Beginners*, Rius uses the cultural position of comics as "low art," as well as the McLuhanian "cool" formal properties of comics, which give readers more control, to establish a pedagogical environment that is at odds with established "high" cultural authorities of literacy and academia. At the same time, in *Marx for Beginners* these properties also help to establish the identity of Rius as author of the book, albeit as an author who is deliberately working outside the boundaries of traditional text-based authority.

In order to see how this works, it may be helpful to start by looking at what the book explicitly states about its author, and how it conveys this. *Marx for Beginners* is almost entirely handwritten, and the introduction is no exception. This short introduction to the book establishes the identity of Rius-as-author through something of a tongue-in-cheek apology. "Being aware of my limits (5th grade elementary!)," Rius writes, "I am happy if the thing isn't completely incomprehensible." He goes on to dryly thank "the illustrious Marxist theoreticians who, when I asked them for a hand, replied politely that I must be out of my mind to start such a work. I really appreciate their "spirit of co-operation" and regret not heeding their advice before settling down with Herr Doctor Karl Marx." (Rius 1976, pp. 8-9).



MARX – LADIES AND GENTS – WAS TRULY A "TOUGH GUY". A "TEUTONIC GENIUS" TOWERING OVER MUCH OF THE SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE OF HIS DAY. HE JUST WENT ON PRODUCING PHILOSOPHY ON PHILOSOPHY, WITHOUT WORRYING HOW MANY PEOPLE WOULD UNDERSTAND HIM. RESULT? A WHOLE SERIES OF HIGH-LEVEL WORKS. REALLY HEAVY STUFF AND MUCH TOO DENSE FOR THE ORDINARY READER. MARX IS HARD TO DIGEST!

THIS BOOK TRIES TO PROVIDE A "DIGEST" – AN EXTRACT OF MARX'S IDEAS. SOMETHING EASIER TO GET DOWN, BEING AWARE OF MY LIMITS (5TH. GRADE ELEMENTARY!), I AM HAPPY IF THE THING ISN'T COMPLETELY INCOMPREHENSIBLE.

MARX HIMSELF HASN'T MADE MY JOB ANY EASIER BY FORGETTING TO PROVIDE A SUMMARY OF HIS WORKS. I GOT EVEN LESS HELP FROM ALL THOSE SCHOLARLY VOLUMES WHICH PRETEND TO CLARIFY MARX, BUT END UP BEING MORE DIFFICULT THAN CHARLIE HIMSELF.

AN ATTEMPT TO "POPULARIZE" MARX RAISES ANOTHER PROBLEM – THE DIFFICULTY OF PUTTING INTO EVERYDAY LANGUAGE THE PHILOSOPHIC AND ECONOMIC TERMS HE USES. BECAUSE THERE AREN'T ONLY 20 OR 30, BUT 200 OR 300! TO TRY TRANSLATING THIS NUMBER WITHOUT LOSING THEIR MEANING IS REALLY DOG WORK. I HOPE THE AVERAGE READER WHO GETS THROUGH THIS BOOK WILL HAVE THE COURAGE TO CONFRONT THE COMPLETE WORKS OF MARX AND COME OUT OF IT BETTER THAN I DID.

8

I SHOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK THE ILLUSTRIOUS MARXIST THEORETICIANS WHO, WHEN I ASKED THEM FOR A HAND, REPLIED POLITELY THAT I MUST BE OUT OF MY MIND TO START SUCH A WORK. I REALLY APPRECIATE THEIR "SPIRIT OF CO-OPERATION" AND REGRET NOT HEEDING THEIR ADVICE BEFORE SETTLING DOWN WITH HERR DOKTOR KARL MARX.

AFTER THIS INTRODUCTION, IF YOU STILL WANT TO GO ON READING – BE WARNED! YOU DO SO AT YOUR OWN RISK. I CANNOT ANSWER FOR THE DAMAGES.

ONE LAST EXCUSE FOR THIS LIGHT-WEIGHT BOOK (BESIDE MY OWN IGNORANCE): THE STUBBORN AND INSISTENT PRESSURE OF MY PUBLISHER WHO LEFT ME HARDLY ANY TIME TO WRITE IT. I'M SORRY TO SEE MY EFFORTS HAVEN'T "JELLED" AS I WOULD HAVE LIKED.

IT'S INCREDIBLE THAT MARX, WORKING UNDER FAR WORSE CONDITIONS AND PRESSURES THAN MINE, COULD WRITE ALL THOSE THOUSANDS OF PAGES WITHOUT EVER LOSING HIS WAY OR MAKING A BOTCH OF IT.

BUT THAT JUST GOES TO PROVE IN THE END THAT MARX IS MARX, AND RIUS IS... WELL, JUST A POOR GUY!

9

Rius' introduction to *Marx for Beginners* is hand-written, and features his signature in a word balloon emerging from the mouth of an ass.

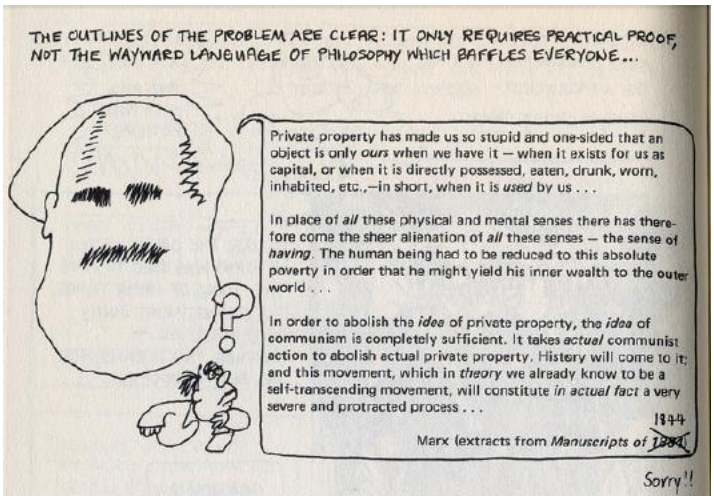
In this opening statement, Rius both distances himself from the established academic authorities and undercuts his own authority. As described in Chapter 2, power relationships are often addressed in comics by positioning hapless underclass characters against the background of pretentious upper-class backgrounds. In *Marx for Beginners*, Rius classifies himself in the hapless position.

Part of this effect is conveyed by Rius' handwritten words, which are scrawled across the page in capital letters. This approach creates the effect of further distancing Rius' writing from that of other academics who use typeset fonts that automatically suggest authority. Handwriting can potentially convey a closer, more intimate relationship between writer and reader, but it also implies things about the writer's class, gender and age which typewriting is able to conceal. In this way, the reader is encouraged to step back from the text and consider its author, Rius, as a unique individual, or as Barthes' scriptor, or "body that writes," rather than the bodiless "author" aligned with systems of authority, as encouraged readers are encouraged to relate to typewritten text.

Of course, it's worth reiterating that this is an effect created by the act of reading, rather than being a truth which is contained in the written text,

which is underlined by the fact that the handwriting in this English translation has been handwritten by someone other than Rius himself. Its assumed authenticity is a construction. However, the use of handwriting, and its distance from traditional visual constructions of authorship and authority still serves to distance *Marx for Beginners* from other textbooks and monographs about Marx.

In *Marx for Beginners*, Rius uses the visual modality to destabilize the traditional, banking notion of author-as-lecturer. For example, he uses typeset text to present extracts from his primary sources, like The Communist Manifesto. Academic writers traditionally quote their sources using the same font and formatting that they employ for their own words, which has the effect of enveloping the voices of other sources within the voice of the author, making quoted and "original" words visually indistinguishable. Rius does the opposite, and rarely elevates his words to the typeset style reserved for Marx and Engels.

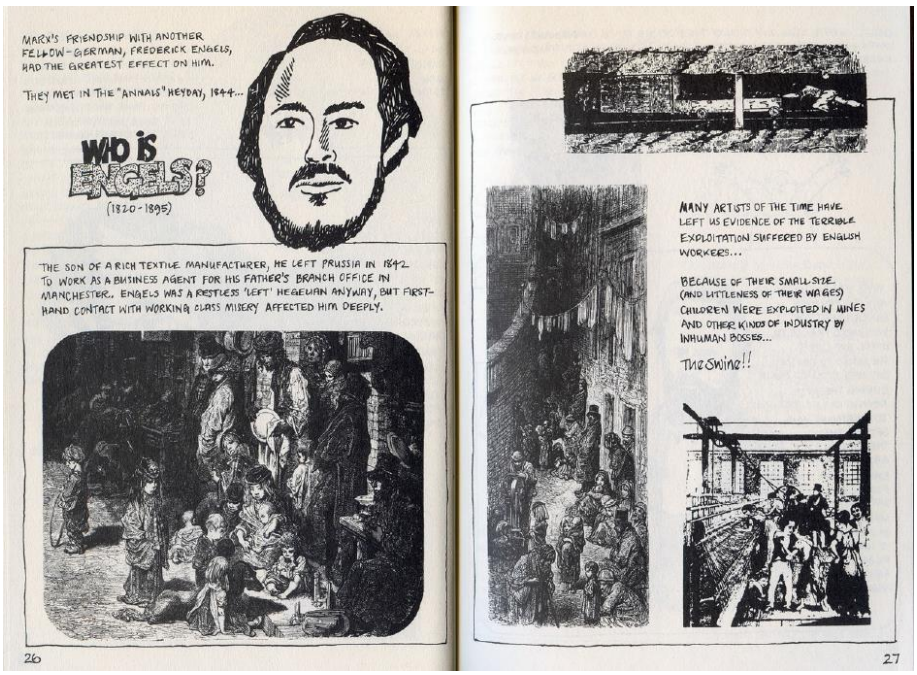


In this section from *Marx for Beginners*, Rius quotes Marx using typeset words, to distinguish it from his own handwriting. Note the crossed out error with the date in the lower right corner.

He does something similar with images throughout the book. Rius' own drawings are simple, loopy scribbles in the vein of Saul Steinberg or Jules Feiffer. These drawings stand in stark contrast to the more elaborate woodcuts and other appropriated images that Rius uses on his pages, collage-like. This use of collaged woodcut images became a hallmark of Rius' style around 1971 in *Los Agachados*. As Sandra Young has noted, "The status and

meanings of textual elements such as woodcut images change when they are removed from their original context and reinserted into a new textual context," and in *Marx for Beginners*, these woodcuts have a satirical function. As a product of the industrial imperialism from which the modern print industry developed, these woodcuts function as a symbol of capitalist labour, and of "the growing role of print culture in keeping Empire together" (Simmons, CA 2001, p. 4).

For the "illustrated novels" by Lynd Ward and Franz Masereel, the use of laboriously produced woodcut images helped to mark them as more "authored" and "authoritative" than early 20th century comic books. However, in *Marx for Beginners*, reappropriated woodcut images appear stilted and staged compared to his loose and loopy drawing style. Considered alongside the typeset passages from Marx and Engles, these collaged images also reinforce the idea that Rius is working in the margins of earlier, more established works and call into question his authority over the book's contents, since there is no evidence that he sought or obtained permission to use these old images.



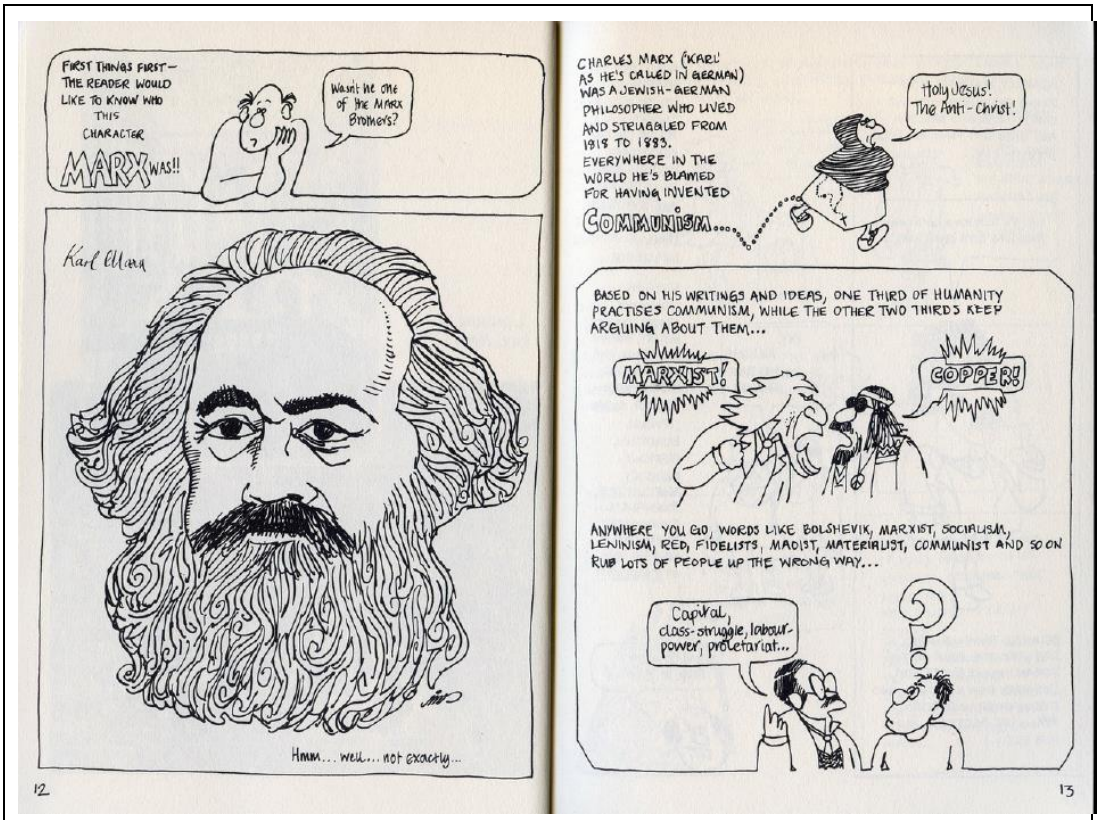
An example of Rius' collage style from *Marx for Beginners* (Rius 1976, pp. 26-27).

While using images within a scholarly text is in no way unusual these images are almost always presented as supplementary or somehow separate

from the rest of the text, usually classified with a number (i.e. "Figure 1.2.5"), and are often dispersed throughout the text in a way that may seem clumsy or arbitrary. However, Rius' images, even the collaged woodcuts, are an integral part of his text, and all play a role in creating meaning within the spatio-topia of the page.

However, just what this meaning may be requires some interpretation, construction and creation from the reader. Unlike a lecture, where a speaker explicates what is self-evident to him for his unknowing audience, or an academic text which replicates this model, the use of images and multiple modalities in *Marx for Beginners* means that it is impossible to argue for a single, "authorized" meaning. Readers must investigate its potential meanings.

Underscoring this, Rius's pages contain multiple, sometimes contradictory voices, making it difficult to determine which voices and words belong to the "true" author, and which are an affectation. On, Page 12 (below), for example, there are two panels and an unclear number of voices. The first panel contains an anonymous, balding male figure next to the words "First things first – the reader would like to know who this Marx character was!!" The bald guy's speech balloon says, "Wasn't he one of the Marx Brothers?" The second panel contains a large portrait of Marx, which Rius has signed in the lower right; Marx's own signature is also replicated in the upper left corner, almost like a title of the piece. At the bottom of this panel is a written response to the bald guy's Marx Brothers question: "Hmm…well…not exactly…" There is a dialogue going on here, but it's not clear to whom these voices belong. The readers, then, are able to consider their own places within this dialogue. By employing multiple styles of writing and drawing, Rius creates a site for praxis, where readers must move between and reflect upon different styles of reading and different constructions of authorship and authority.



This passage from *Marx for Beginners* (Rius 1976, pp. 12-13) features several characters reacting to Marx's image and legacy.

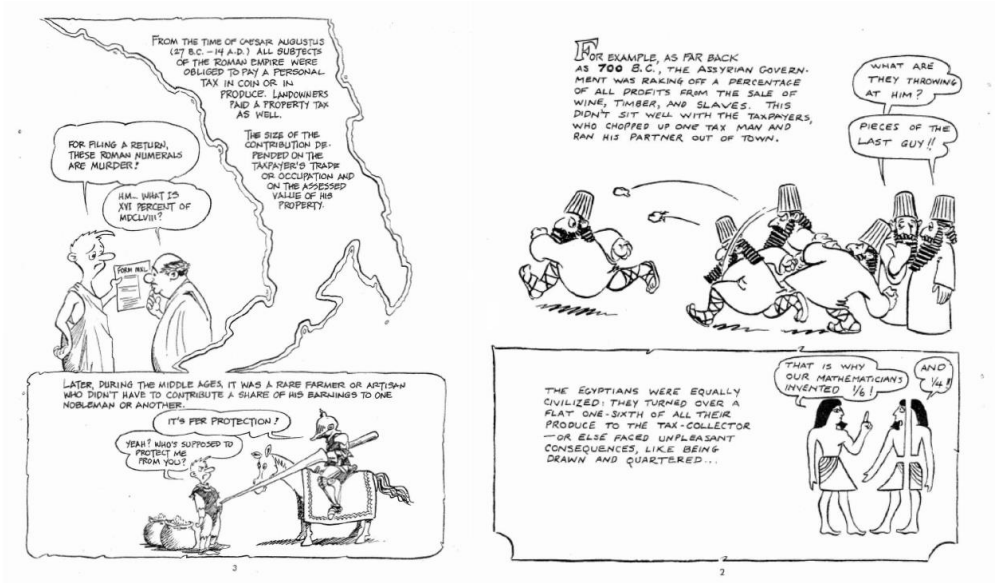
These different modalities, images and voices are constructed in *Marx for Beginners* as if presented by an author/scriptor who resembles more of a fellow student doodling notes to pass in class than as an authoritative lecturer. This humble construction of the author is supported by Rius' loose drawing style, which lacks the same technical proficiency as the slick, professional style used in *P.S.*, and has more in common with Töpffer's simple "autographic" method. *Marx for Beginners* uses the formal and cultural characteristics of comics to encourage its readers to see themselves not as students who must be 'filled' with information or as subjects of a greater cultural authority who must be entertained and distracted in order to willingly participate in education (a viewpoint detractors might accuse *P.S.* of taking), but as co-investigators into the subject of Marxism. This is a relationship between writer and reader that destabilizes the "banking model" which characterizes most textbooks. This kind of educational comic gives readers a power and control over their own learning, which that runs counter

to the "banking model" conception of textbooks written in the knowing voice of a lecturer, ideally pitched in a register just above the reader's comfort level.

Rius' Legacy

Rius' approach in *Marx for Beginners* inspired a style of educational comics that bore little resemblance to the character-driven style employed by Eisner in *P.S.* The subsequent books in the For Beginners series that followed many of Rius' techniques, but have generally struggled to replicate his method of constructing an experience of reading-as-praxis encouraged by the voice of an "author"/"scriptor" as colleague or co-investigator. Most of the other books use do not use handwriting in the same way as Rius, relying instead on typewritten text. Notably, most of the other books have employed separate people to write and illustrate the books, which complicates how they construct authorship. This will be examined more closely in Chapter 9.

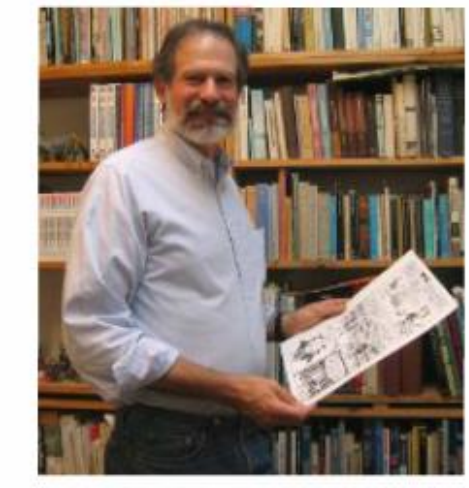
A more successful adaptor of Rius' style is the cartoonist Larry Gonick, whose first educational comic was *Blood from a Stone: A Cartoon Guide to Tax Reform* (Gonick & Atlas 1977). Gonick became interested in the project after his friend Steve Atlas introduced him to the work of Rius, which Gonick found "revolutionary" (Gonick 2011). The two took Rius as a guide, using a disembodied narrator and a similarly loose drawing.



***Blood from a Stone: A Cartoon Guide to Tax Reform* (Gonick & Atlas 1977, pp. 2-3) features a style inspired by Rius.**

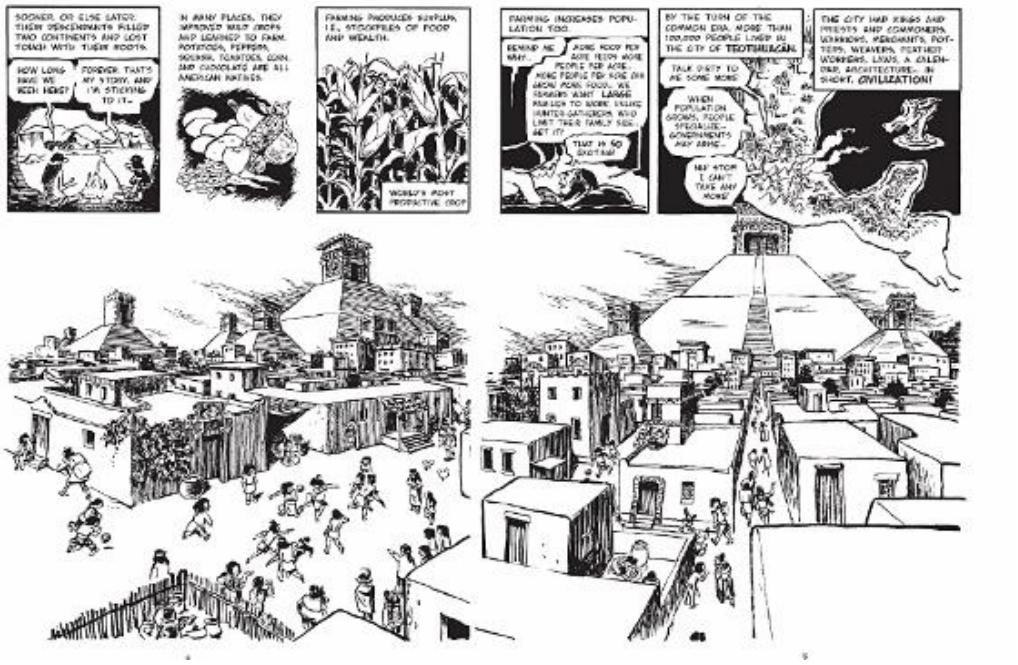
Encouraged by the result of the comic on tax reform, Gonick turned to a larger project, the comic book series *The Cartoon History of the Universe* (1977-) series, which was initially distributed as an "underground comic" before it became a best-selling educational comic in the late 1980s championed by Doubleday editor Jacqueline Onassis (Lawrence 2011, pp. 193-197). In this series, Gonick diverged somewhat from the author-as-scriptor construction that Rius had used. Instead, he brought in a reoccurring character to introduce each chapter, an Albert Einstein-esque professor character who served as a narrator figure (Duncan & Smith 2013, p. 309). This motif served as a way to organise the books more directly around an "implied author." Unlike the implied author/scriptor constructed in Rius' work, this character created a remove between Gonick and the world of the comic, like a ventriloquist talking through a puppet. While Rius had positioned himself as an outsider to the academic establishment, Gonick's narrator is drawn in a tweed jacket and a tie, indicating that he himself is part of that establishment, and the comic is organized as if it were a lecture from this professor.





Gonick's narrator character, compared to a photo of Gonick. While there are some similarities, Gonick does not seem to have based the narrator on himself.

It did not take much to achieve this effect – the narrator character typically only appeared on the first page of each chapter, with the rest of the narration in the books proceeding in caption boxes. By presenting the books as if they were narrated, or lectured, by someone who looked like a college professor, Gonick constructs an implied author who had an implied cultural authority, even within a style that resembles anti-authoritative "underground comics."



These pages from *The Cartoon History of the Modern World* (Gonick 2006) feature multiple narrative modalities – caption boxes, dialogue between characters, and the unspoken panorama of Tenochtitlan.

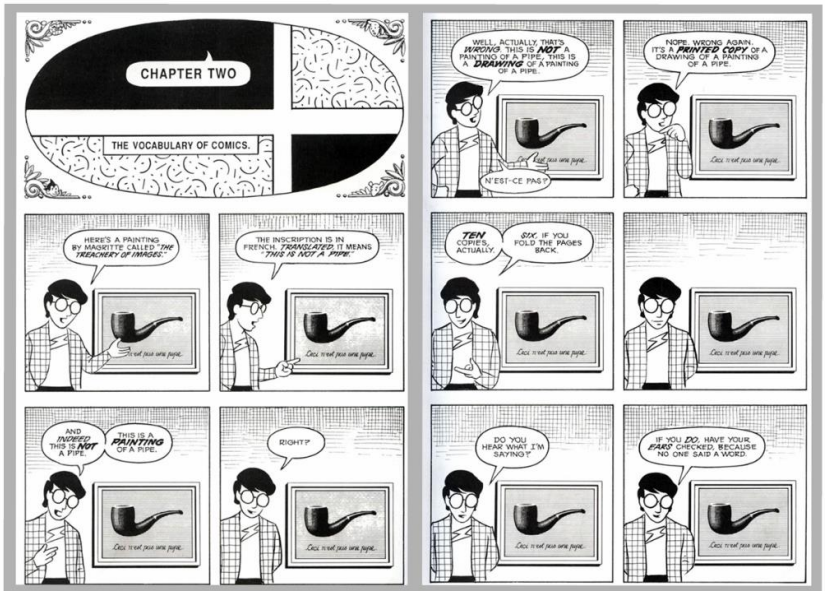
Gonick uses a variety of voices and types of text, as Rius had, but they are organized in a way that adheres more closely to comic book conventions: word balloons are attributed to specific characters, while the rest of the text is usually understood to be the voice of the professor-narrator. Duncan and Smith suggest that Gonick uses a tripartite narrative structure: the first thread is the captions (the voice of the narrator), which tend to deal with facts, while the second thread involves the characters in the panels, who "comment and respond to the role (they are) being forced into within the first thread," and finally the third strand, which appears mostly in Gonick's illustrated footnotes, is a "critical metacommentary on the nature of knowledge, academia and institutional systems," and could be understood as

Gonick's own voice (Duncan & Smith 2013, pp. 308-309). This is an astute analysis of the way that words are used in Gonick's work, but it misses a crucial element of its appeal: the way that Gonick employs the visual modality to allow readers to "see" the historical figures, objects and places that are being discussed.

Following the success of *The Cartoon History of the Universe*, Gonick has published more than fifteen books on subjects ranging from sex to statistics. Some of these have been used as textbooks in high school classrooms, as well as at "dozens of colleges and universities" including Harvard and Yale (Duncan & Smith 2013, p. 312). This usage is perhaps facilitated by the lecture-esque organization employed by Gonick, especially through his narrator avatar.

Understanding Comics as a lecture?

This use of a visually-constructed lecturer was deployed to even greater effect by cartoonist Scott McCloud in *Understanding Comics* (1993), which Julian Wolfeys considers to have "done more to shape Comics Studies as a field, or readers' perceptions of comics" than any other book (2006, p. 210), and which was directly influenced by Gonick's educational comics (Chute, Hilary 2007). However, unlike Gonick's more perfunctory narrator whose identity was ambiguous, and who generally only bookend chapters, McCloud's narrator functioned as an avatar of the author/scriptor himself. This author-avatar appears on nearly every page, speaking directly to the reader to explain how comics work, and creating the impression of the artist as a visible, visual lecturer of the book.



McCloud the lecturer explains Magritte's *La trahison des images* in *Understanding Comics* (1993).

Central to McCloud's project is the establishment of himself as an expert and authority over the comics form – an authority which he demonstrates by essentially turning himself into a comic book character. He demonstrates a variety of forms of multimodal expression in comics by transforming and contorting his avatar to suit the techniques he is discussing. The reader is aware that McCloud is both the author/lecturer and the scriptor/cartoonist of the book, so it serves as an exhibition of his cartooning skills, as well as his theoretical ideas. In this way he combines *P.S.'s* technique of using a knowledgeable character to establish an authoritative presence and readerly familiarity (a la Sergeant Half-Mast), with Rius' technique of creating an author/scriptor who directly addresses and collaborates with the reader.

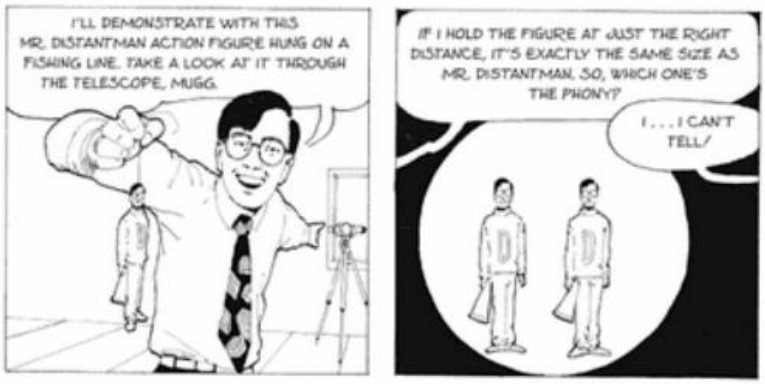
Although he uses a lecturing style of presentation at times, in *Understanding Comics* and its sequels, McCloud often encourages a kind of praxis by asking readers to consider how they are reading and constructing their understanding of the material in his books. In the following sequences, for example, he shows how his avatar is a blatant construction.



McCloud deconstructs his author-avatar in *Understanding Comics* (1993).

Lecturer Avatars in Educational Comics

Understanding Comics is possibly the most popular and influential "comic book text book" and its style has been widely imitated. One of the earliest examples of McCloud's influence is David Chelsea's *Perspective for Comic Book Artists* (1997) similarly casts its author as hero/lecturer/teacher.



David Chelsea draws himself as an expert explaining perspective to his readers in *Perspective for Comic Book Artists* (1997).

While McCloud's style worked in part as a way of providing a vehicle for playing with and commenting on the visual and spatial form of comics, other author-avatar figures are mostly used as a convenient visual device for constructing an author/lecturer.

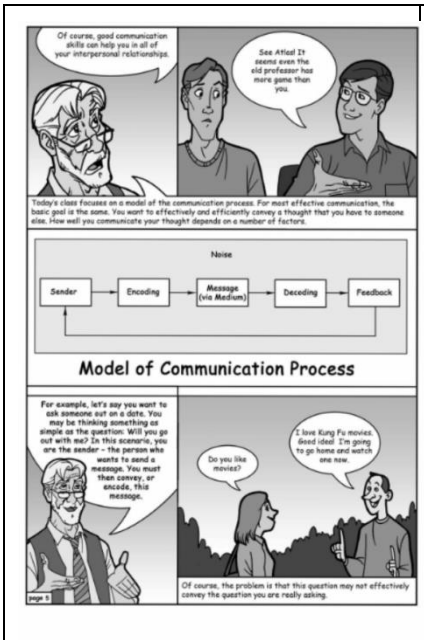
Gladstone and Neufeld's *The Influencing Machine (2011)* for example, lifts McCloud's style, but is much less formally inventive. Artist Neufeld draws writer Gladstone, an NPR radio personality, into a variety of humorous guises, but these tend to be decorative more than illustrative. The book reads like a

visual lecture from Gladstone, and is clearly organised around the verbal modality, with the visuals merely acting as a scaffold.

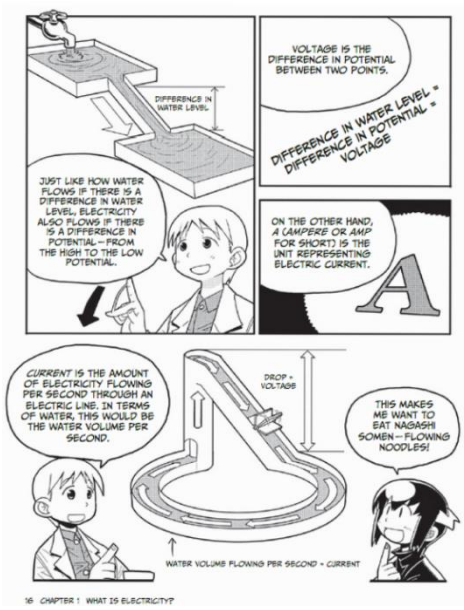


Brooke Gladstone's avatar appears in a number of costumes on this page, but her text reads like the kind of radio program that she is popularly known for, dominated by her voice, with occasional guests popping in to deliver soundbites.

Other modern educational comics are similarly organised around an author-avatar, and some have made the lecturing style more literal by pairing it with the use a classroom as a narrative device. In *Atlas Black: Managing to Succeed (Short, J et al. 2011)* (below left), the main character is a business student who attends a lecture in each chapter given by a stereotypical tweed-suited professor. As the example page below shows, the visual and spatial modalities in this book often communicate very little information that is not related to reinforcing the lecturer-student relationship. The visual modality is used more effectively in the *Manga Guide to Electricity* (Fujitaki 2009) (below centre). However, this series of 'Manga Guide' books employs a formulaic narrative structure across its titles that is similar to that used in Atlas Black – in every volume a female student requires the advice of a male tutor, who then explains most of the book's educational content.



Atlas Black: Managing to Succeed (Short, J et al. 2011)



The Manga Guide to Electricity (Fujitaki 2009)



Logicomix: An Epic Search for Truth (Doxiadis & Papadimitriou 2009)

The *Manga Guide* series and *Atlas Black: Managing to succeed* are examples of this graphic reformulation of the banking/transmission model of teaching. Unlike Rius, who established his authorial voice as one of an outsider who was frustrated by the opaque 'authority' of experts, these more recent 'graphic novel'-style text books use narrators who are positioned as knowledgeable authorities in positions of power – teachers, lecturers and experts.

This transition was only possible once graphic novels had achieved a level of cultural authority and respectability. In *Marx for Beginners*, Rius used the culturally disregarded form of comics as part of his strategy to make Marx accessible to a working class population that similarly lacked cultural authority. The cultural ascendance of graphic novels has rendered this comics style of presentation as more culturally acceptable, but also less revolutionary.

Doxiadis and Papadimitriou's *Logicomix: An Epic Search for Truth* (2009) (above right), details the life of Bertrand Russell and the "foundational quest" in mathematics, in a way that is much more novelistic than the previous examples and uses a nested storytelling structure which uses a framing sequence in which the book's creative team debate the best

way to tell the story. Nevertheless, the bulk of the book is presented as if it were part of a university lecture given by Russell reflecting back on his life.

Lecturing in educational comics: a close analysis

According to Kress, "the imaginative work in writing focuses on filling words with meaning - and then reading the filled elements together, in the given syntactic structure. In image, imagination focuses on creating the order of the arrangement of elements which are already filled with meaning" (Kress 2003, p. 4) In comics, the imaginative work encompasses both of these actions. Even when a lecturer figure is drawn into educational comics, the reader is given a great deal of imaginative control over the lessons and of the classroom.

The following lecturer-centric page from *Atlas Black: Managing to Succeed* does not feature particularly good pedagogical practice, but its deficiencies mean it is an excellent example for how comics work differently than text-based educational materials, regardless of their artistic or pedagogical merits. *Atlas Black* reflects a lecturer-centric pedagogy, and on this page only the second and fourth panels contain any useful information, and that information is delivered entirely linguistically. The generic images have no relationship to the page's educational content– the text could be swapped out for an entirely different lesson without altering the images at all.



One of many pages in *Atlas Black* (Short, J et al. 2011, p. 4)that centres around a management professor delivering a lecture. Note his attire, and the use of a pointer.

Although the educational information is entirely textual, and positioned as being delivered directly to students in a lecture, this text is not as "hot" or "high-intensity" as text and lectures are categorised by McLuhan (1964, pp. 22-24). In hot, printed text, the sensory, visual form effectively "disappears" as it is read, creating the effect of the direct mediation of ideas. Here, this is not the case.

The lecturer on this page wields the iconic pointer, but it is primarily part of the iconography of the character's costume, as the character never uses it to point at anything specific. With his loose tie, rolled shirt sleeves, scruffy beard and exaggerated expressions, this lecturer is a more precise figure than the invisible, "implied author" whom Booth (1961) implicates in traditional texts. His facial expressions and gestures may inform the meaning that readers braid into the words on this page, providing them with a particular character and substance to draw from that the words alone would

not have. However, this lecturer figure is hardly a complete, or even realistic representation. In fact, he seems distinctly *unrealistic*, like a fantasy amalgamation of clipart clichés, right down to the iconic pointer. Unlike Kress' understanding of images which are "plain full with meaning" (2003, p. 4) this lecturer is a caricature, waiting to be filled in with, and informed by readers' own understandings and experiences of teachers and lecturers. The fact that this somewhat bizarre depiction of a lecturer might bear little resemblance to readers' actual experiences only serves to increase the imaginative work that readers must undertake.

Reading this page also involves mentally constructing (on a very basic and abstract level) the spatial relationships within the classroom between the lecturer and students, which is depicted from a different angle in each panel, so that a more complete, quasi-three-dimensional space is braided throughout the spatio-topia. This classroom of course has no actual, specific dimensions, and it is depicted at a low level of detail, meaning that the reader's understanding of the spatial and social relationships in the classroom is highly dependent on readers reconciling their own prior experiences with the abstracted depiction here.

Spatially, the text is also split up over the spatio-topia, with multiple potential entry points for readers. Readers may find their eyes initially, and repeatedly, drawn to the third balloon, where the text is given a large and appealing "cushion" of white space, while the bulk of the information is found in the fourth balloon, squished together at the bottom of the page. This might be considered bad design, as text on the page is actually somewhat difficult to read. However, it also highlights how in comics writing relies heavily on the way visual and spatial modalities are deployed. In contrast to how Kress characterises reading as following a fixed path, here there is actually room for readers to diverge from that path, and circle back between the word balloons. Even when reading the balloons in their intended order, it takes a certain amount of imaginative work to stitch together the fragmented utterances on this page in a coherent way.

Educational content makes up a very small percentage of the information presented on this page, which is mostly devoted to establishing the pedagogical scenario of the lecture. Despite this, the way readers interact with the comic, as described by Groensteen's concept of *braiding* (discussed in Chapter 1), means that although the comic depicts the "hot" medium of a lecture, the comic itself can be considered "cool" in McLuhan's taxonomy, compared to traditional text books, which remediate the "hot" medium of lectures into similarly "hot" text.

Conclusion

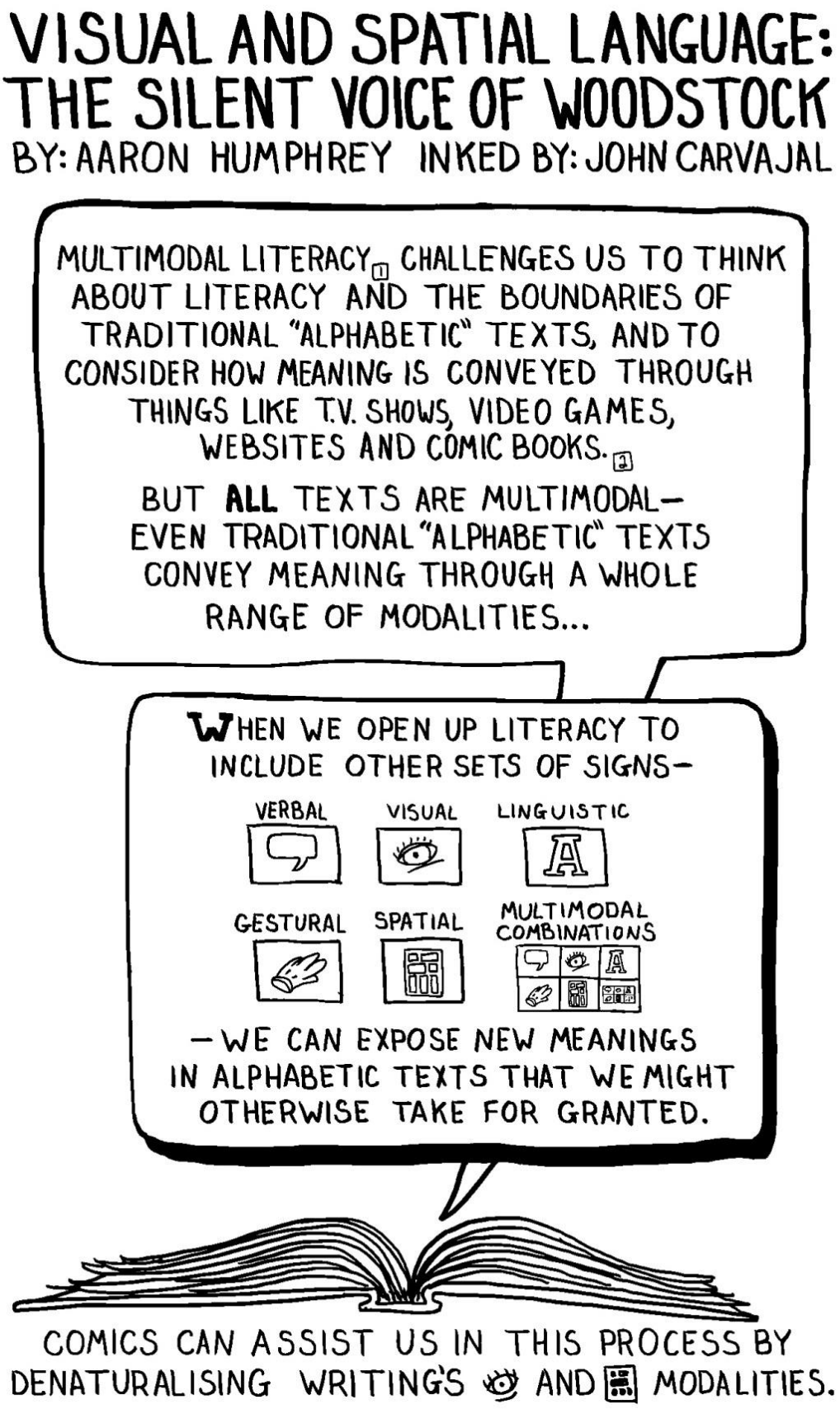
Atlas Black: Managing to Succeed, despite its flaws, has garnered positive reviews from business educators (Crook 2010; Dollinger 2010; Weiner, RG 2011). In an experimental study where business students were given either a passage from *Atlas Black* or a passage from a more traditional business text book, "students using the graphic novel textbook performed better on verbatim recognition of passages than those using a traditional textbook" (Short, JC, Randolph-Seng & McKenny 2013, pp. 294-295).

It is likely that the success of this *Atlas Black* book despite the pedagogical problems in its content and delivery, may indicate that more pedagogically sound comics could perform even better as educational texts. Additionally, unlike textbooks, which share some of the same formal pedagogical qualities of lecturing, the cooler medium of comics is open to greater possibilities in terms of content, style and delivery.

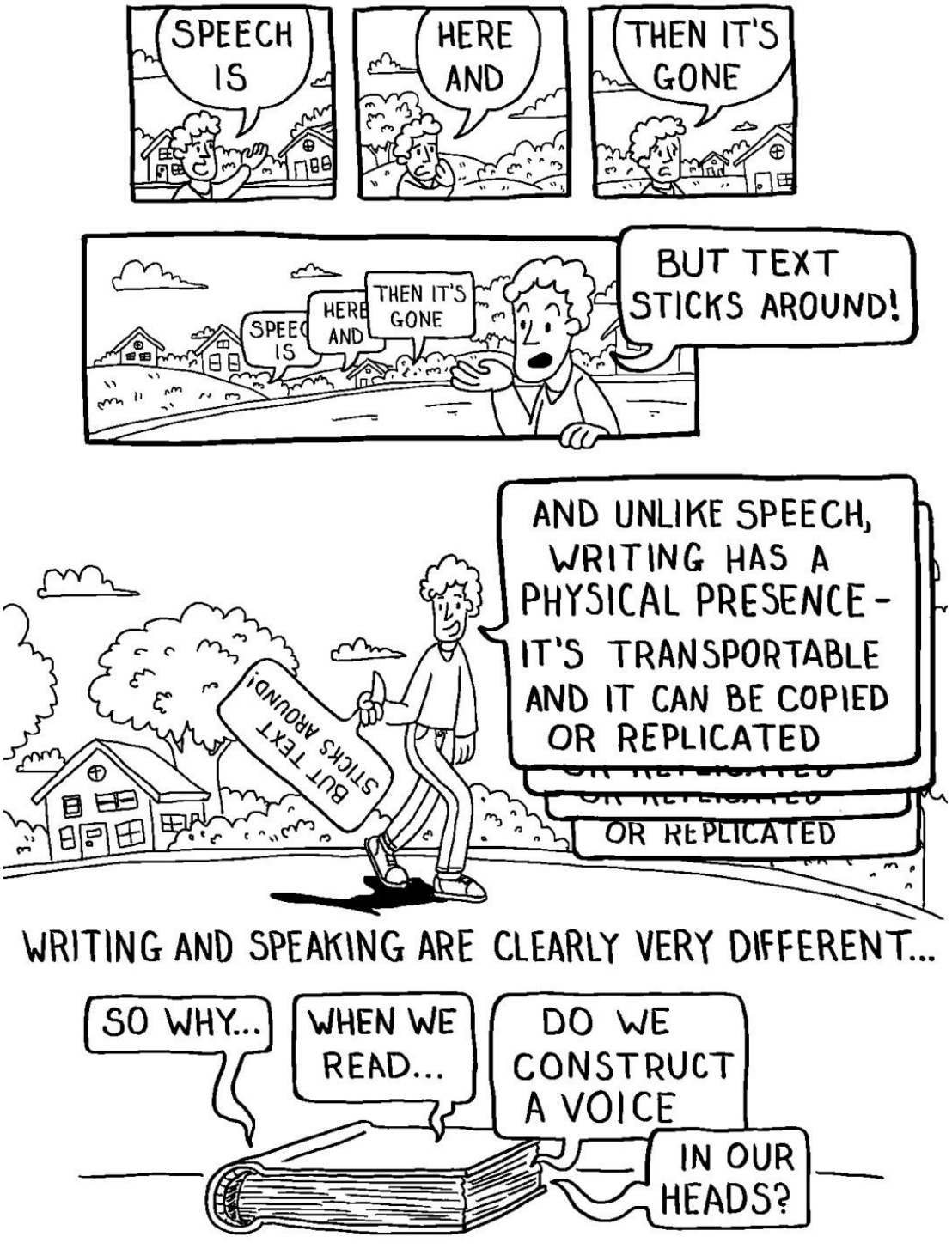
This chapter has looked at the way that comics construct authority and authorship in ways that are formally very different from traditional textbooks, and the pedagogical repercussions of these differences. I have shown in this chapter that although Eisner has been considered a pioneer of educational comics, the predominant style in modern educational comics owes a greater debt to the work of Rius. Over time the formula of educational "graphic guides" has become centred on lecturer-avatars that construct authorship in a more conventional manner based on traditional educational authority, rather than the Latin American pedagogical tradition called *concientizadora* or 'raising consciousness' (Priego 2002) that inspired Rius.

However, as this chapter has suggested, comics can employ organisational strategies that do not rely on the idea of an author's voice or a lecturer's presence. The following chapter, which takes the form of a comic, is an attempt to demonstrate how the multimodal properties of comics can be deployed in ways more conducive to the praxis advocated by Friere and other proponents of *concientizadora*.

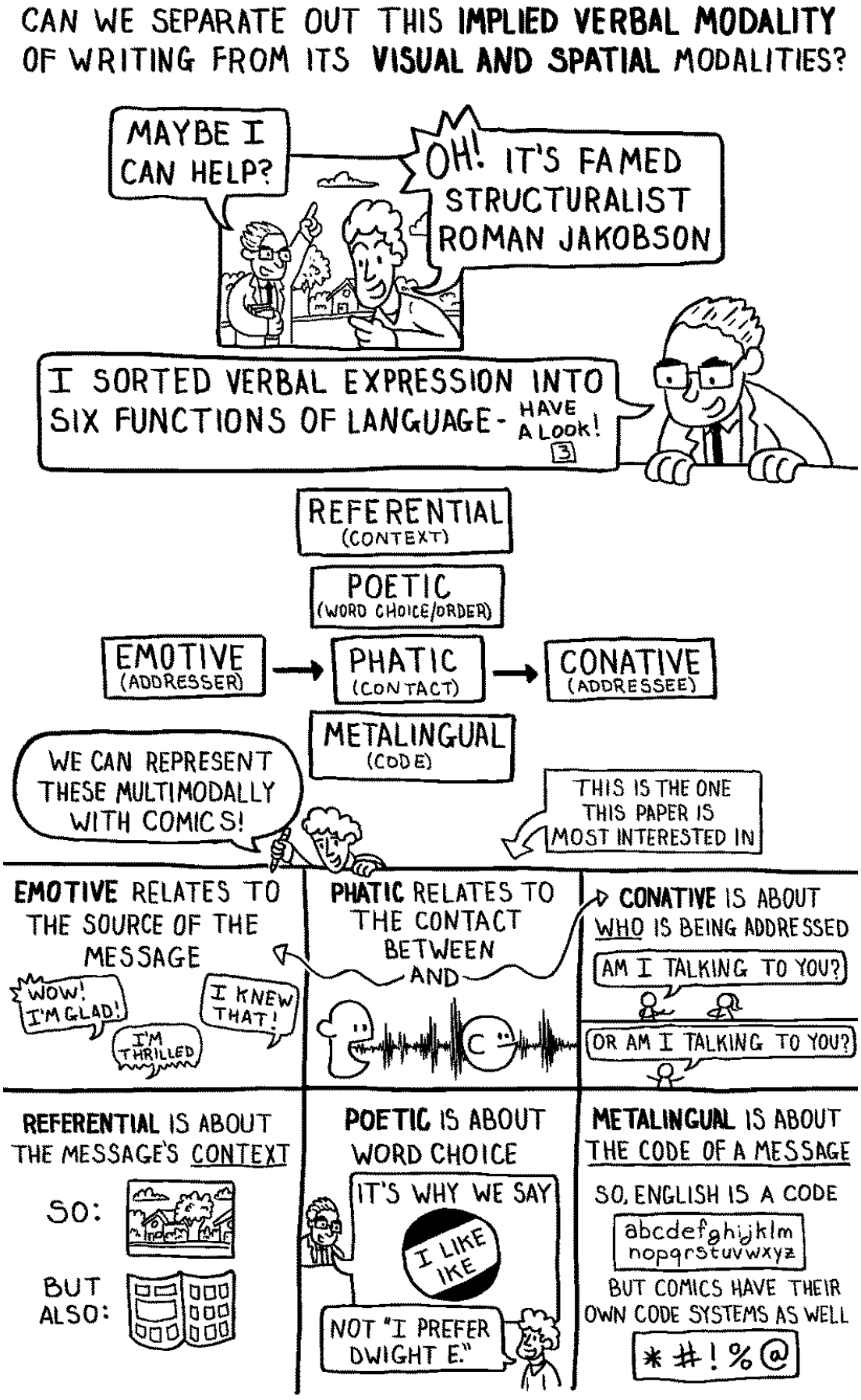
Chapter 7: Visual and Spatial Language



FOR EXAMPLE,
WRITTEN LANGUAGE IS OFTEN LINKED TO SPEECH–
(IN FRENCH, LANGUE MEANS BOTH "LANGUAGE" AND "TONGUE")
–BUT COMICS CAN EMPHASISE THEIR DIFFERENCES.

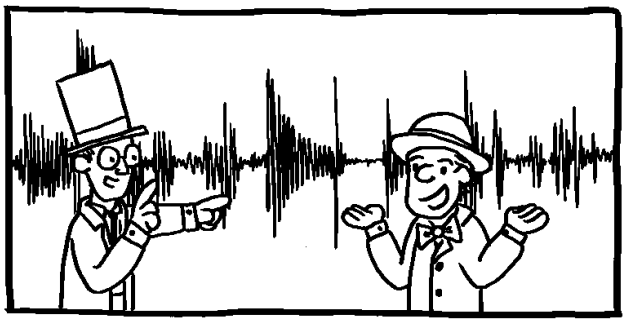


WRITING AND SPEAKING ARE CLEARLY VERY DIFFERENT...

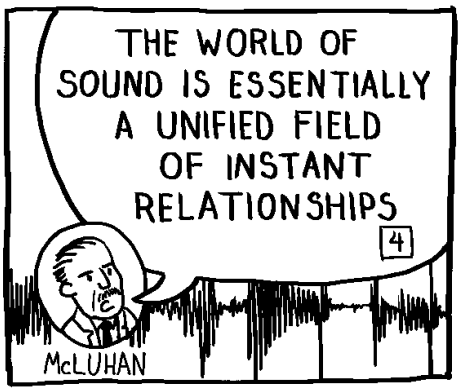

CAN WE SEPARATE OUT THIS IMPLIED VERBAL MODALITY OF WRITING FROM ITS VISUAL AND SPATIAL MODALITIES?
MAYBE I CAN HELP?
OH! IT'S FAMED STRUCTURALIST ROMAN JAKOBSON
I SORTED VERBAL EXPRESSION INTO SIX FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE- HAVE A LOOK! [3]
REFERENTIAL (CONTEXT)
POETIC (WORD CHOICE/ORDER)
EMOTIVE (ADDRESSER)
PHATIC (CONTACT)
CONATIVE (ADDRESSEE)
METALINGUAL (CODE)
WE CAN REPRESENT THESE MULTIMODALLY WITH COMICS!
THIS IS THE ONE THIS PAPER IS MOST INTERESTED IN
EMOTIVE RELATES TO THE SOURCE OF THE MESSAGE
WOW! I'M GLAD!
I'M THRILLED
I KNEW THAT!
PHATIC RELATES TO THE CONTACT BETWEEN
AND
CONATIVE IS ABOUT WHO IS BEING ADDRESSED
AM I TALKING TO YOU?
OR AM I TALKING TO YOU?
REFERENTIAL IS ABOUT THE MESSAGE'S CONTEXT
SO:
BUT ALSO:
POETIC IS ABOUT WORD CHOICE
IT'S WHY WE SAY
I LIKE IKE
NOT "I PREFER DWIGHT E."
METALINGUAL IS ABOUT THE CODE OF A MESSAGE
SO, ENGLISH IS A CODE
abcdefghijklm nopqrstuvwxyz
BUT COMICS HAVE THEIR OWN CODE SYSTEMS AS WELL
*#!%@

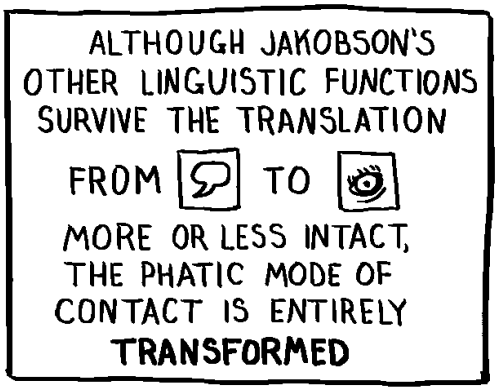
PHATIC COMMUNICATION HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS THE "SOCIAL GLUE" THAT CHARACTERISES "SMALL TALK" AND "TALK ABOUT THE WEATHER"

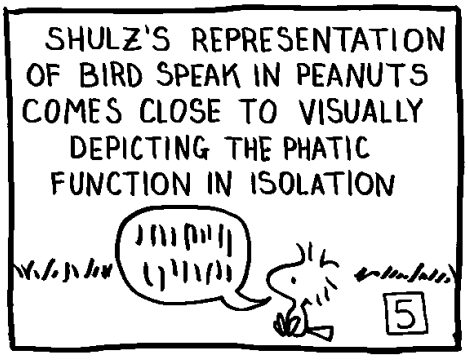
HOWEVER, THE **PHYSICAL PROPERTIES** OF SPEECH ALSO WORK TO BIND BOTH PARTIES TOGETHER IN TIME + SPACE



SOUND WAVES LITERALLY SURROUND US AND PASS THROUGH US ALL IN AN INSTANT - (EVEN VOCALISATIONS WE CAN'T UNDERSTAND PERFORM THE PHATIC FUNCTION!)

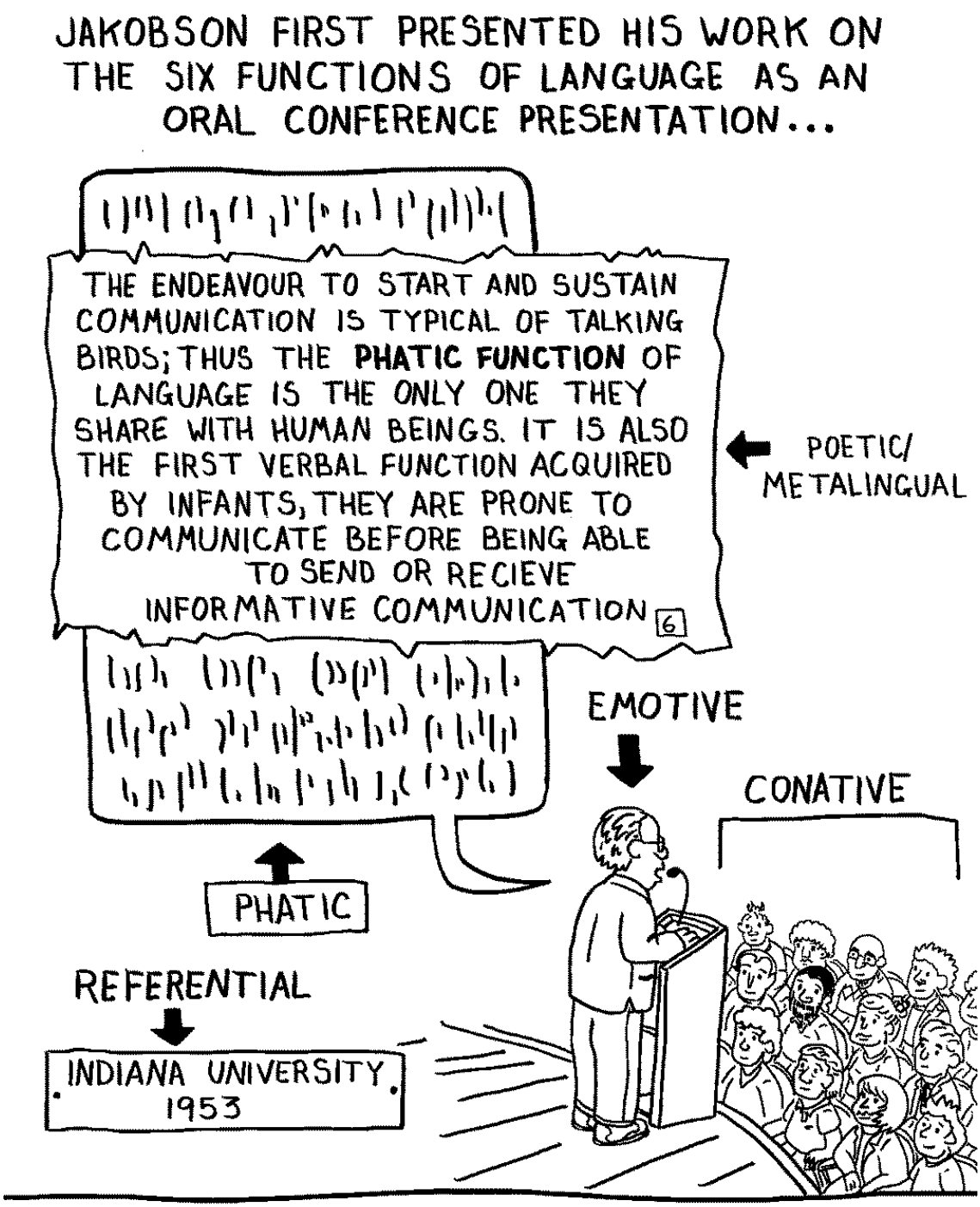


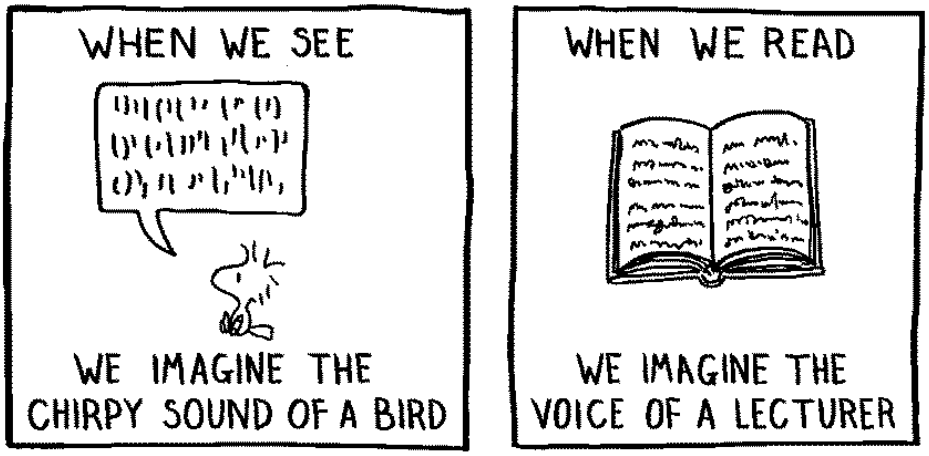






I THINK THIS IS A GOOD WAY TO REPRESENT THROUGH A **VISUAL MODALITY** THE QUALITIES OF **VERBAL MODALITIES** THAT ARE LOST IN TRANSLATION TO WRITING.


JAKOBSON FIRST PRESENTED HIS WORK ON THE SIX FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE AS AN ORAL CONFERENCE PRESENTATION...
THE ENDEAVOUR TO START AND SUSTAIN COMMUNICATION IS TYPICAL OF TALKING BIRDS; THUS THE PHATIC FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE IS THE ONLY ONE THEY SHARE WITH HUMAN BEINGS. IT IS ALSO THE FIRST VERBAL FUNCTION ACQUIRED BY INFANTS, THEY ARE PRONE TO COMMUNICATE BEFORE BEING ABLE TO SEND OR RECIEVE INFORMATIVE COMMUNICATION 6
POETIC/ METALINGUAL
EMOTIVE
CONATIVE
PHATIC
REFERENTIAL
INDIANA UNIVERSITY 1953
THIS FOLLOWS THE LONGSTANDING TRADITION OF PHILOSOPHICAL, ACADEMIC AND RELIGIOUS TEXTS BASED IN AND COPIED FROM SPOKEN LANGUAGE –
WE HAVE COME TO LINK SPEECH & TEXT
THIS IS WHY WOODSTOCK'S CHICKEN SCRATCH WORKS-
IF YOU SQUINT, THIS
LOOKS LIKE





AND SO, WE ARE SURROUNDED BY "VOICES" EVEN WHEN WE ONLY SEE WRITING AND DO NOT READ IT - BECAUSE THE VISUAL FORM OF WRITING HAS COME TO BE SYMBOLIC OF THE VERBAL MODALITY.

THE BOUNDARIES OF THIS THEORY ARE EXPLORED IN THE FIELD OF ASEMIC WRITING WHERE WRITERS & ARTISTS CREATE TEXTS THAT MIMIC SOME OF THE QUALITIES OF PRINTED WRITING, BUT WHICH HAVE NO PRESCRIBED LINGUISTIC MEANINGS.

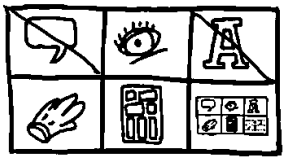


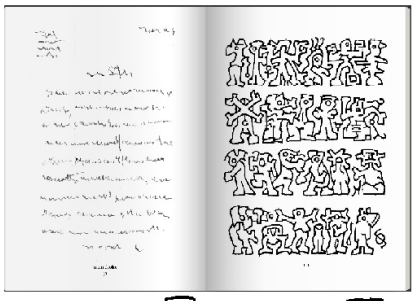
7



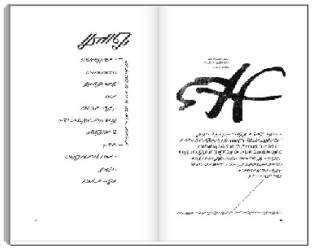
8

THESE TEXTS ARE READ USING MULTIPLE LITERACIES





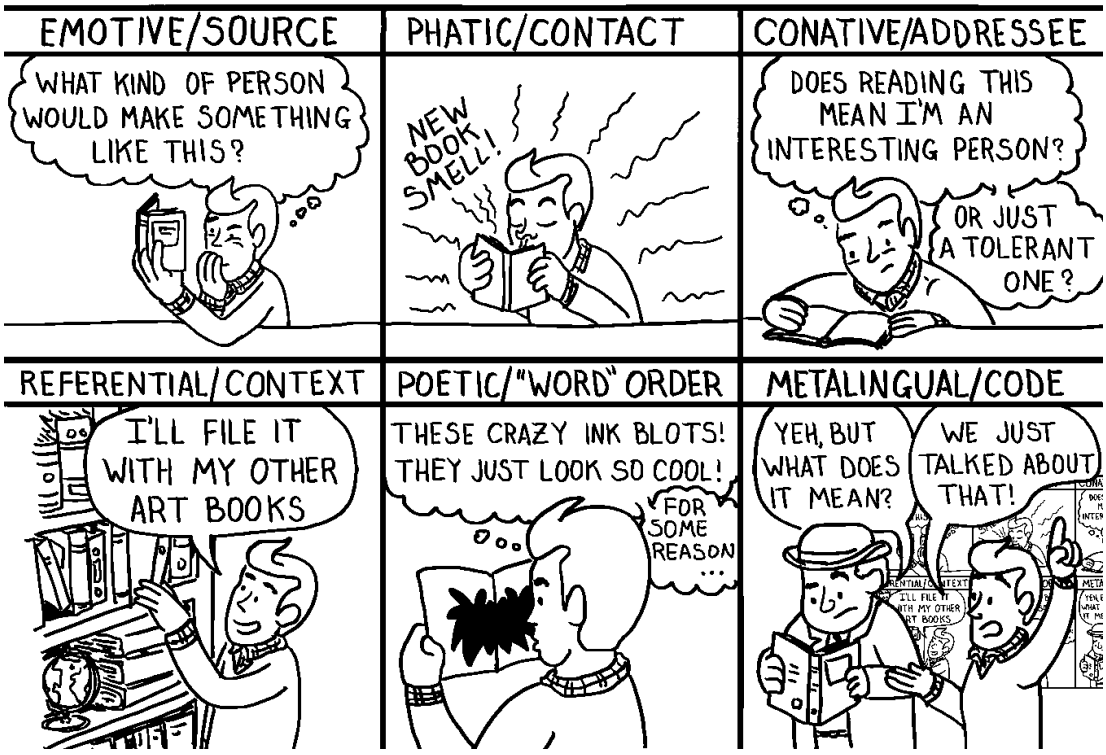
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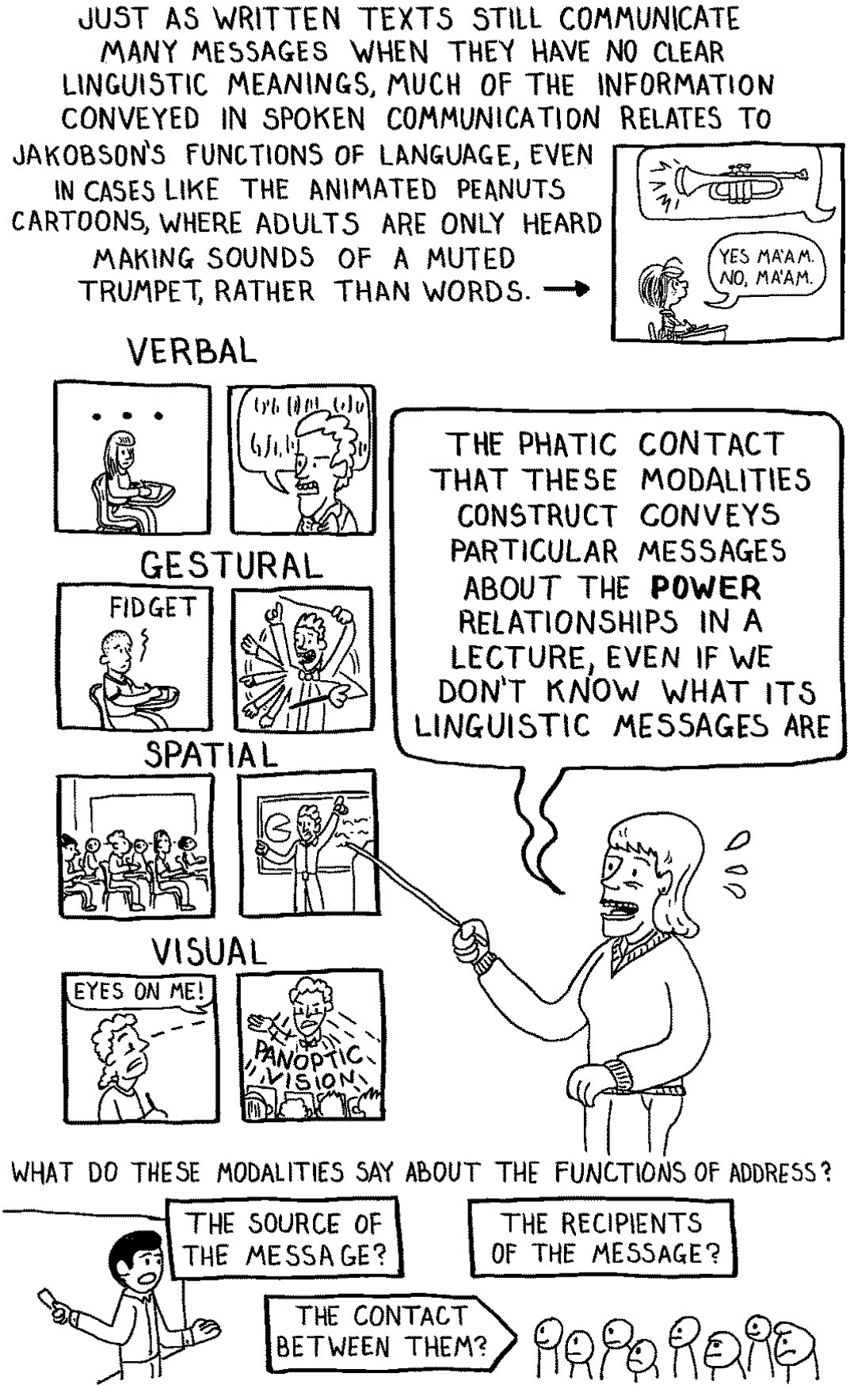


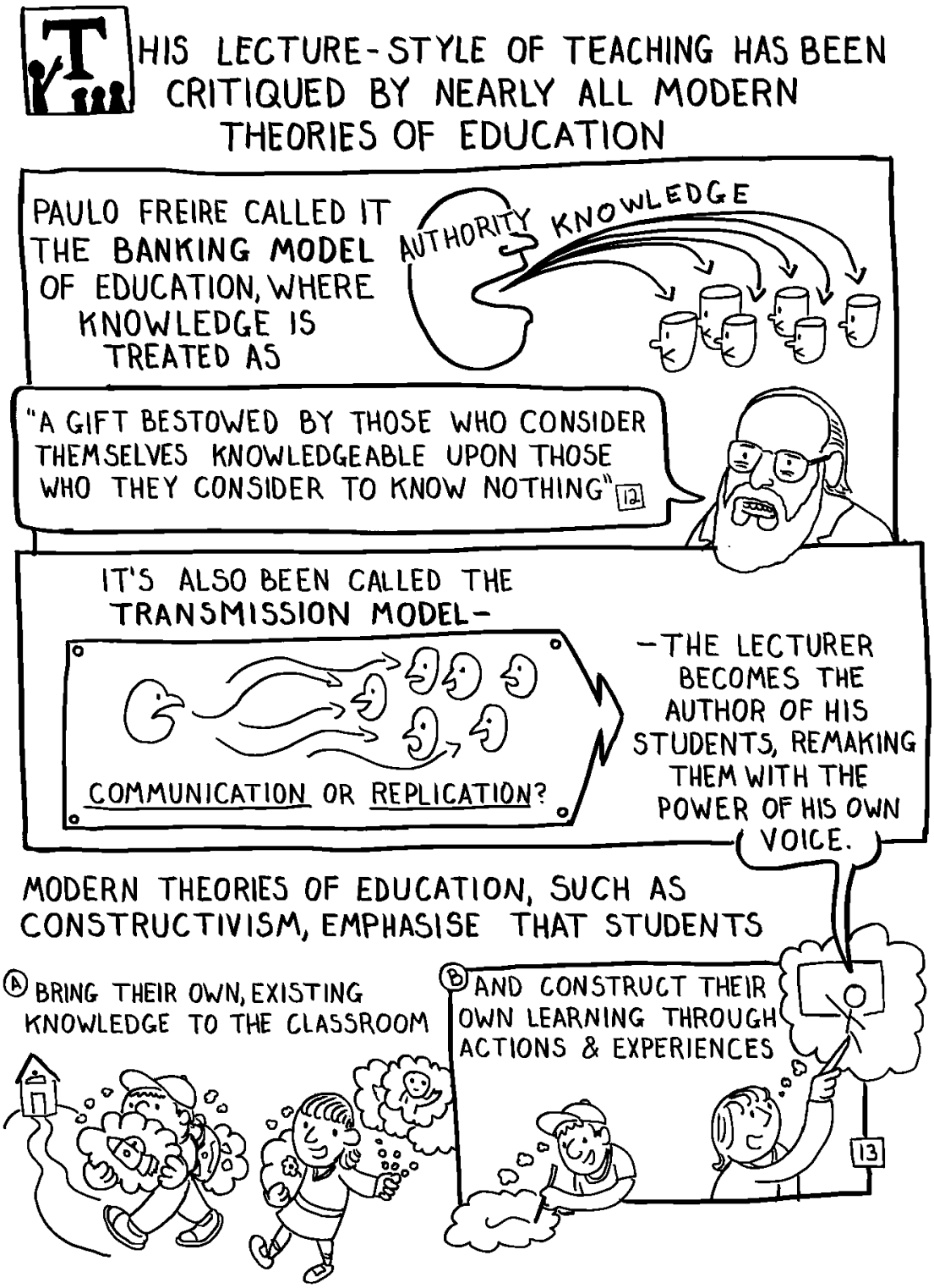
11

AND SOME IMPLY LINGUISTIC AND VERBAL MODALITIES MORE THAN OTHERS

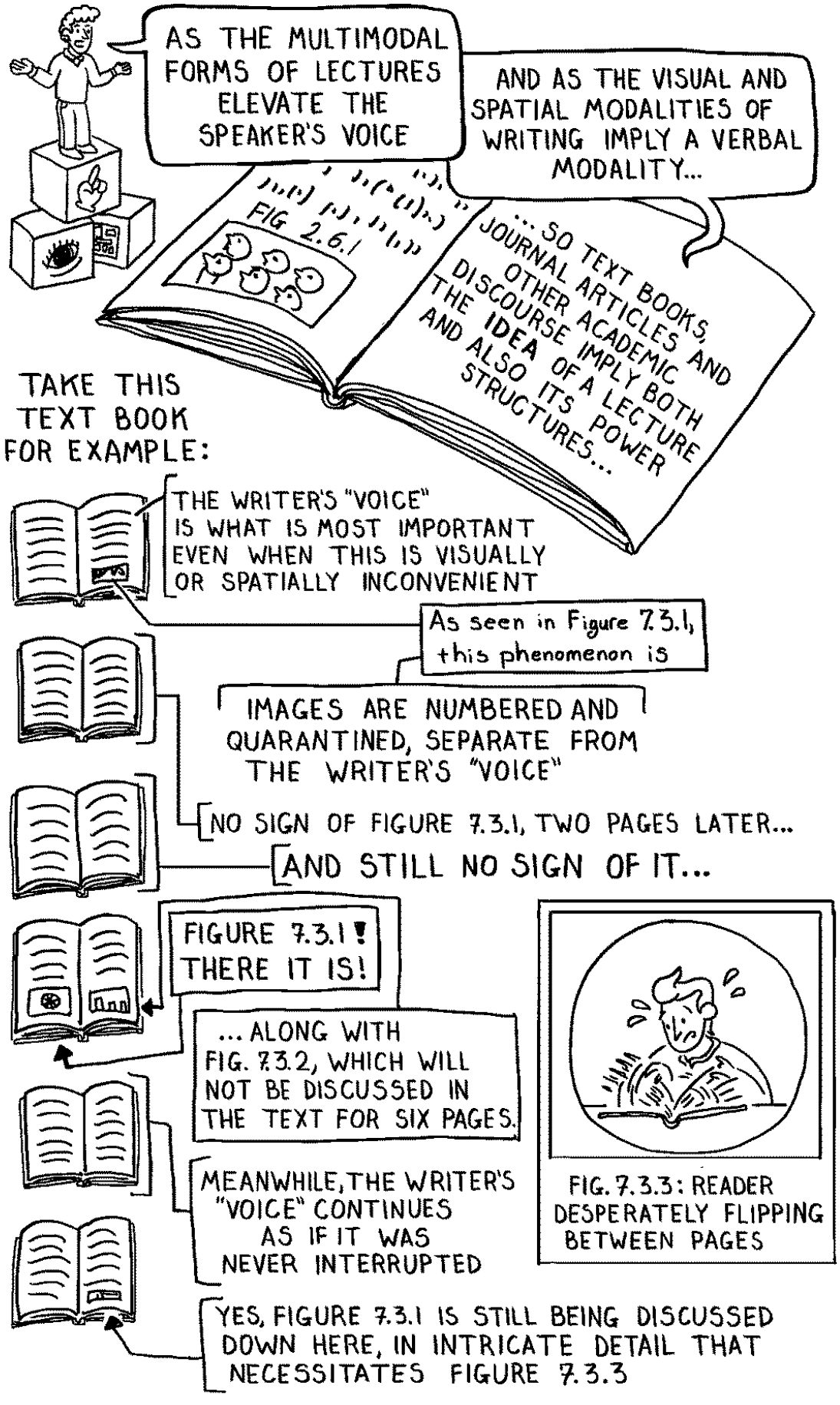
IT'S NOT JUST LINGUISTIC MEANING WHICH IS CONSTRUCTED MULTIMODALLY, BUT ALL THE FUNCTIONS OF ADDRESS –

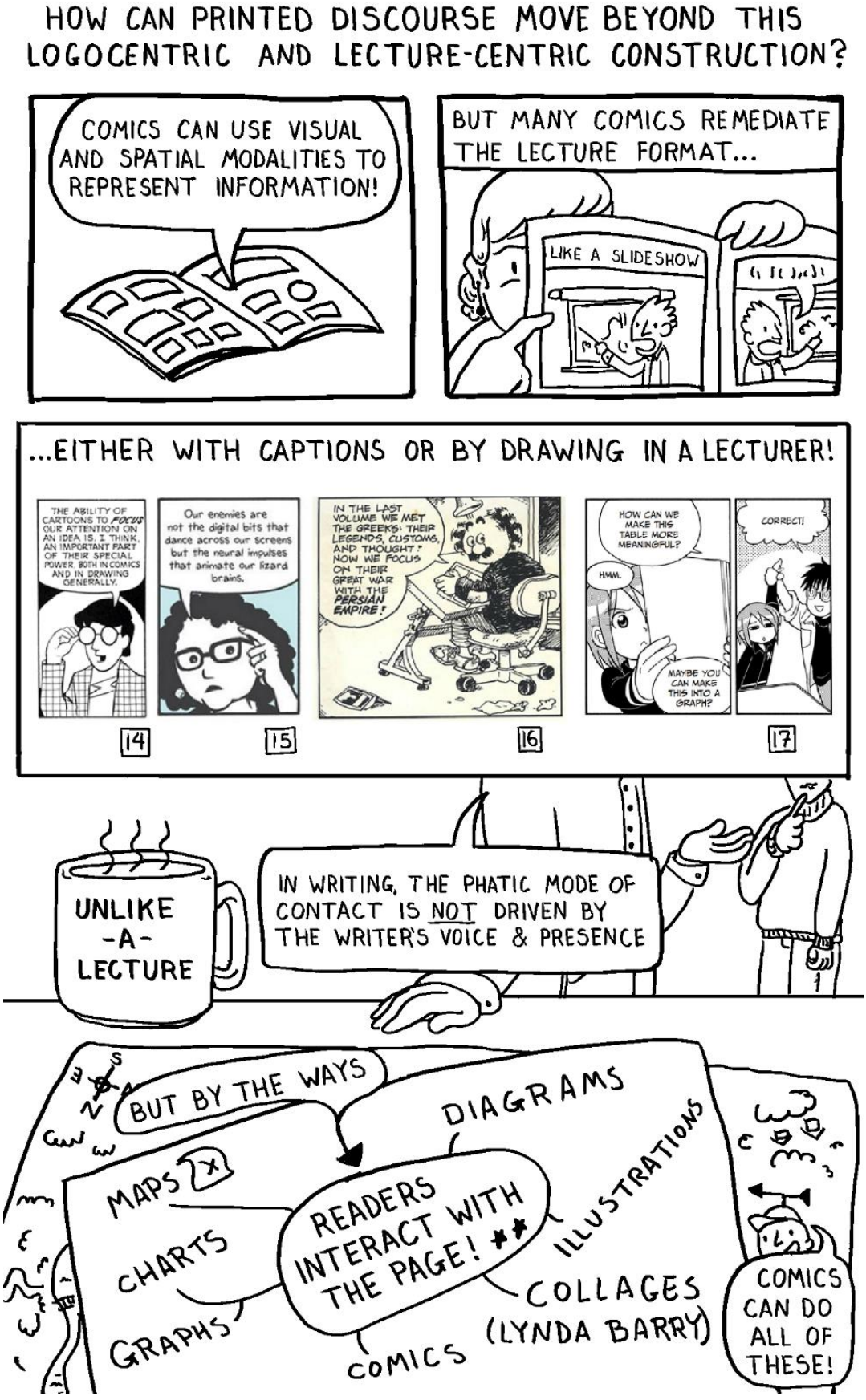


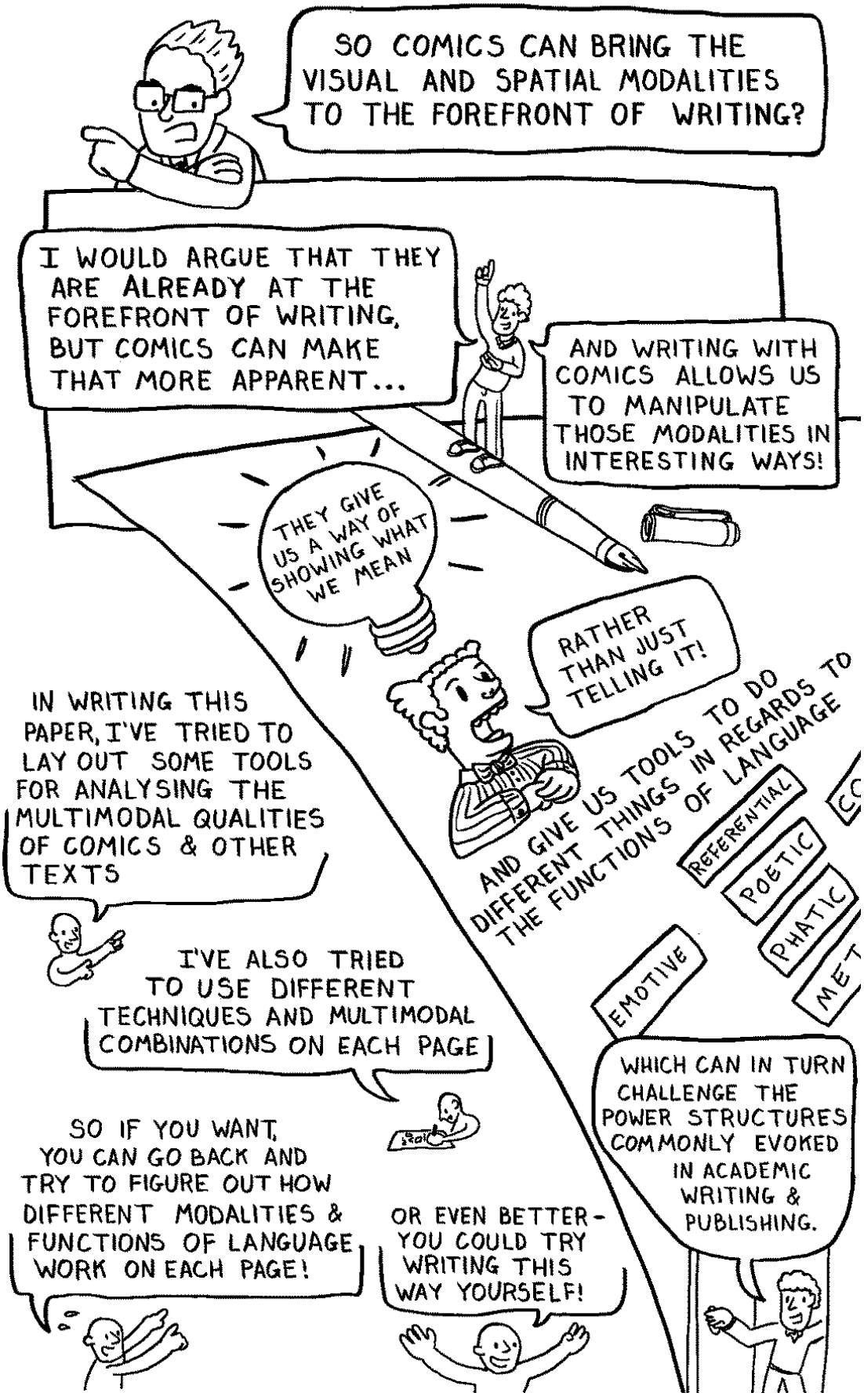

JUST AS WRITTEN TEXTS STILL COMMUNICATE MANY MESSAGES WHEN THEY HAVE NO CLEAR LINGUISTIC MEANINGS, MUCH OF THE INFORMATION CONVEYED IN SPOKEN COMMUNICATION RELATES TO JAKOBSON'S FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE, EVEN IN CASES LIKE THE ANIMATED PEANUTS CARTOONS, WHERE ADULTS ARE ONLY HEARD MAKING SOUNDS OF A MUTED TRUMPET, RATHER THAN WORDS.
YES MA'AM.
NO, MA'AM.
VERBAL
GESTURAL
FIDGET
SPATIAL
VISUAL
EYES ON ME!
PANOPTIC VISION
THE PHATIC CONTACT THAT THESE MODALITIES CONSTRUCT CONVEYS PARTICULAR MESSAGES ABOUT THE POWER RELATIONSHIPS IN A LECTURE, EVEN IF WE DON'T KNOW WHAT ITS LINGUISTIC MESSAGES ARE
WHAT DO THESE MODALITIES SAY ABOUT THE FUNCTIONS OF ADDRESS?
THE SOURCE OF THE MESSAGE?
THE RECIPIENTS OF THE MESSAGE?
THE CONTACT BETWEEN THEM?



Despite this, lectures remain central to academic discourse, as exemplified by how closely lectures and conference papers are linked with published journal articles, book chapters and textbooks. For example, Jakobson's 1953 lecture was transcribed into text and turned into a frequently cited piece of writing.
This is underscored by the fact that academic conference presentations, which are essentially lectures, are called 'papers' even if they are never published in print.


AS THE MULTIMODAL FORMS OF LECTURES ELEVATE THE SPEAKER'S VOICE
AND AS THE VISUAL AND SPATIAL MODALITIES OF WRITING IMPLY A VERBAL MODALITY...
FIG 2.6.1
...SO TEXT BOOKS, JOURNAL ARTICLES AND OTHER ACADEMIC DISCOURSE IMPLY BOTH THE IDEA OF A LECTURE AND ALSO ITS POWER STRUCTURES...
TAKE THIS TEXT BOOK FOR EXAMPLE:
THE WRITER'S "VOICE" IS WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT EVEN WHEN THIS IS VISUALLY OR SPATIALLY INCONVENIENT
As seen in Figure 7.3.1, this phenomenon is
IMAGES ARE NUMBERED AND QUARANTINED, SEPARATE FROM THE WRITER'S "VOICE"
NO SIGN OF FIGURE 7.3.1, TWO PAGES LATER...
AND STILL NO SIGN OF IT...
FIGURE 7.3.1! THERE IT IS!
...ALONG WITH FIG. 7.3.2, WHICH WILL NOT BE DISCUSSED IN THE TEXT FOR SIX PAGES.
MEANWHILE, THE WRITER'S "VOICE" CONTINUES AS IF IT WAS NEVER INTERRUPTED
YES, FIGURE 7.3.1 IS STILL BEING DISCUSSED DOWN HERE, IN INTRICATE DETAIL THAT NECESSITATES FIGURE 7.3.3
FIG. 7.3.3: READER DESPERATELY FLIPPING BETWEEN PAGES


HOW CAN PRINTED DISCOURSE MOVE BEYOND THIS LOGOCENTRIC AND LECTURE-CENTRIC CONSTRUCTION?
COMICS CAN USE VISUAL AND SPATIAL MODALITIES TO REPRESENT INFORMATION!
BUT MANY COMICS REMEDIATE THE LECTURE FORMAT...
LIKE A SLIDESHOW
...EITHER WITH CAPTIONS OR BY DRAWING IN A LECTURER!
THE ABILITY OF CARTOONS TO FOCUS OUR ATTENTION ON AN IDEA IS, I THINK, AN IMPORTANT PART OF THEIR SPECIAL POWER, BOTH IN COMICS AND IN DRAWING GENERALLY.
Our enemies are not the digital bits that dance across our screens but the neural impulses that animate our lizard brains.
IN THE LAST VOLUME WE MET THE GREEKS: THEIR LEGENDS, CUSTOMS, AND THOUGHT. NOW WE FOCUS ON THEIR GREAT WAR WITH THE PERSIAN EMPIRE!
HOW CAN WE MAKE THIS TABLE MORE MEANINGFUL?
HMM.
MAYBE YOU CAN MAKE THIS INTO A GRAPH?
CORRECT!
14
15
16
17
UNLIKE -A- LECTURE
IN WRITING, THE PHATIC MODE OF CONTACT IS NOT DRIVEN BY THE WRITER'S VOICE & PRESENCE
BUT BY THE WAYS
MAPS
CHARTS
GRAPHS
READERS INTERACT WITH THE PAGE! **
DIAGRAMS
ILLUSTRATIONS
COLLAGES (LYNDA BARRY)
COMICS
COMICS CAN DO ALL OF THESE!


SO COMICS CAN BRING THE VISUAL AND SPATIAL MODALITIES TO THE FOREFRONT OF WRITING?
I WOULD ARGUE THAT THEY ARE ALREADY AT THE FOREFRONT OF WRITING, BUT COMICS CAN MAKE THAT MORE APPARENT...
AND WRITING WITH COMICS ALLOWS US TO MANIPULATE THOSE MODALITIES IN INTERESTING WAYS!
THEY GIVE US A WAY OF SHOWING WHAT WE MEAN
RATHER THAN JUST TELLING IT!
IN WRITING THIS PAPER, I'VE TRIED TO LAY OUT SOME TOOLS FOR ANALYSING THE MULTIMODAL QUALITIES OF COMICS & OTHER TEXTS
AND GIVE US TOOLS TO DO DIFFERENT THINGS IN REGARDS TO THE FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE
REFERENTIAL
POETIC
PHATIC
EMOTIVE
I'VE ALSO TRIED TO USE DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES AND MULTIMODAL COMBINATIONS ON EACH PAGE
WHICH CAN IN TURN CHALLENGE THE POWER STRUCTURES COMMONLY EVOKED IN ACADEMIC WRITING & PUBLISHING.
SO IF YOU WANT, YOU CAN GO BACK AND TRY TO FIGURE OUT HOW DIFFERENT MODALITIES & FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE WORK ON EACH PAGE!
OR EVEN BETTER - YOU COULD TRY WRITING THIS WAY YOURSELF!

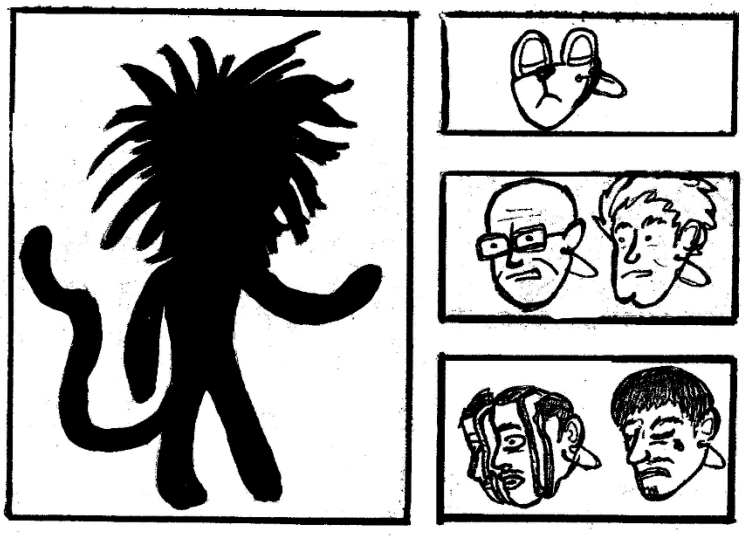
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Part 4:

CASE STUDIES



Chapter 8 - The Page is the Thing: Multimodal Design and Co-Authorship in Comics Adaptations of Hamlet

Introduction

This chapter is a case study that focuses on comics adaptations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, specifically on how Nicki Greenberg's 2010 adaptation diverges pedagogically from previous comics versions of the tragedy. The long history of adapting Shakespeare into comics means that this case study helps to illustrate wider trends in the use of comics to depict serious and educational topics. Although *Hamlet* itself is not explicitly educational, it is frequently taught in classrooms and regarded as a culturally authoritative text. Familiarity with, and understanding of, *Hamlet* is commonly regarded as distinguishing an individual as well-educated within Western cultures.

Earlier chapters in this thesis have explored the relationship between cultural authority, authorship, and authorized ways of reading. This chapter will address how these themes can be understood in terms of their pedagogical effectiveness in graphic adaptations of *Hamlet*. Using the framework of educational constructivism, specifically Biggs and Tang's theory of Constructive Alignment, and some specific learning objectives related to the study of Shakespeare, this chapter will look at the ways that authorship, authority and authorisation are engendered through different multimodal design strategies to support different *phatic* relationships between reader, author and text. Since each of these adaptations are working from the same source text, it is possible to compare how each adaptation's multimodal design strategy conveys or contributes to Shakespeare's work.

The first section of this chapter will introduce Constructive Alignment and discuss common goals and challenges identified in teaching Shakespeare that might be addressed with the use of comics. The second section will look at a wide range of historical and contemporary comics that have adapted *Hamlet* and discuss how they can be understood pedagogically in terms of the teaching goals that have been identified. The final section will discuss how

Greenberg's adaptation of *Hamlet* departs from the genre conventions of most *Hamlet* comics to create a textual performance that better aligns with the way Shakespeare is taught in modern English classrooms.

Constructive alignment

One way of evaluating the pedagogical effectiveness of textual performances of *Hamlet* is through the lens of constructive alignment, as defined by John Biggs and Catherine Tang in their book *Teaching for Quality Learning at University: What the Student Does* (Biggs & Tang 2011). Biggs and Tang begin with the fundamentals for educational constructivism, which they describe as the philosophy that "learners construct knowledge with their own activities, building on what they already know" (2011, p. 22). Biggs and Tang focus on the fact that learning comes not from what teachers do, but from "what the student does," and note that this kind of active learning works best when accompanied by sensuous experiences – touch, speech, hearing and sight, as well as smell and taste. "Even learning straight declarative knowledge, the stuff of academia, is best done in association with a rich store of images and actions" (2011, p. 64), and so it would seem to follow that comics, which are full of images and invite a number of different kinds of readerly actions, can be strong tools for learning. However, as this discussion of comics versions of *Hamlet* argues, some comics have more pedagogical potential than others.

Biggs and Tang's "constructive alignment" is a way of evaluating how well teaching tools support learning objectives, and this can be applied in a limited way to comics. Constructive alignment involves lining up learning objectives, activities and assessment so that the all resemble each other as closely as possible. One example Biggs and Tang give is that in order to learn to drive a car (the objective), students engage in sessions where they practice driving (the activity) and then demonstrate their competence through a driving test (the assessment). As Biggs and Tang explain it, "The more one modality reinforces another, the more effective the learning" (Biggs & Tang 2011, p. 63).

Learning *Hamlet*: Textual integrity and text in context

In the case of texts, such as the comics adaptations of *Hamlet* discussed in this chapter, their effectiveness can be assessed by examining how well their multimodal design permits readings that align with potential educational goals. Of course, this effectiveness can only be understood in terms of defined learning objectives, which will vary considerably from classroom to classroom. This case study will use some objectives identified by Cathy Sly, who notes that high school students in New South Wales who study *Hamlet* do so within the context of a syllabus (Module B: Critical Study of Texts) that requires them to achieve several goals aimed at increasing their understanding of how they relate to the text. These goals include: "explore and evaluate a specific text and its reception in a range of contexts," and to "develop understanding of questions of textual integrity" (*English: Stage 6 syllabus*, quoted in Sly 2011, pg. 6).

Both goals reflect the questions of context and textual integrity that are common in literature about teaching Shakespeare. Kate McLuskie suggests that "every time a new project on 'teaching Shakespeare' is announced, old oppositions between 'academic' and 'theatrical' Shakespeare, Shakespeare-read and Shakespeare-performed, accessible and inaccessible Shakespeare, are reasserted" (2009, p. 132).

McLuskie notes that "In educational circles, the idea that Shakespeare 'wrote for performance' has supported the view that the experience of Shakespeare in performance is critical to the appreciation of his plays and that that experience will in and of itself produce educational value" (McLuskie 2009, p. 125). This can be seen in the New South Wales syllabus, where a crucial element for studying *Hamlet* is understanding the theatrical context in which it was written and in which it is has and continues to be performed. However, McLuskie cautions that granting pedagogical authority to the experience of watching performances of Shakespeare reduces the authority of the original text, producing a risk of "a consumerist free-for-all in which students feel both entitled to their 'own interpretation' and an anxiety that the resulting account of the play's significance will not carry the

authority required to achieve the necessary and desired high grade" (2009, p. 135). From this perspective, there is a risk, that an emphasis on performances and performative contexts can reduce students' "understanding of questions of textual integrity."

A similar problem was observed by Mellor and Patterson (2000), who described a common problem in their students' reading of Shakespeare as the tendency to view the characters like "real people" about whom they could make concrete judgments. They often found their students "debating whether characters were nice or nasty- as if they were real people. This may not be seen as a problem in itself, but it does involve the reader's judgment of characters in terms of sets of beliefs and values that can escape analysis" (Mellor & Patterson 2000, p. 513). They argue that as long as the debate centres around what a character is "really like," "it is unlikely that an analysis will take place of how each of these readings is produced, under what conditions, and for what purposes" (2000, p. 515), and that to combat this tendency students should be "taught not only to produce readings of text and characters, to but also how to analyse the production of particular readings … to question how specific readings are produced and why" (Mellor & Patterson 2000).

Pedagogy of the Phatic Function

Mellor and Patterson worry that students are not appreciating that *Hamlet* can be understood within a range of contexts, while McLuskie worries that students may not appreciate the textual integrity of the original work. Both of these concerns highlight the pedagogical question of how students relate to the text -- how they understand its *phatic* function.

As argued in the previous chapter, multimodal design is *phatic* in that it constructs a relationship between the reader and the text, within which the reader can take particular actions or positions. Maureen Walsh highlights that reading should be seen as an interaction between reader and text that occurs "within a number of contexts simultaneously," including "the socio-cultural context of the text production, the genre and purpose of the text" as

well as each reader's individual context and situation (2006, p. 25). Although each reader's case is different, it is possible to examine individual texts.

The ways that different versions of *Hamlet* construct the *phatic* relationship between reader and author is central to how students engage with the pedagogical questions about the differences between text and performance, and the ways that particular readings can be produced from a text. For example, a typical typeset version of the play connects to the reader through the unspoken, verbal modality of print that is expressed through a homogeneous visual-spatial system. The "voices" of the characters are visually undistinguishable from each other, subsumed in the visual milieu of "unadorned" typesetting. The implied author of Shakespeare is phatically conveyed to students through the act of reading, an act which students are taught is the natural way that language is understood (see Chapter 4), even if they find the language of Shakespeare's plays difficult to interpret. In fact, the printed Shakespeare is mediated through the performances and decisions of editors, printers, designers, typesetters and other cultural and historical actors working together to create the impression of authorship and textual integrity. Students who watch a theatrical performance of *Hamlet*, on the other hand, experience their connection to the text in a way that is *phatically* quite different – they are connected to it through sound, through representational images, through movement – the context of the specific performance is foregrounded through these sensuous experiences. Although constructivist pedagogy would suggest that engaging students through these multiple modalities could encourage more active learning, McLuskie (2009) worries that the "fun" of theatrical performances may actually encourage students to passively accept the play as an experience rather than actively engaging with the text on an intellectual level. Biggs and Tang's constructive alignment philosophy provides a route to answer this criticism, by asking how the multimodal performance of a text, whether in printed, theatrical or comic-book form, allows for student actions that align with learning goals.

A constructive alignment analysis of comics adaptations of *Hamlet* should therefore assess the extent that the *phatic* properties of the comic

(which are both socio-cultural and multimodal) help readers to relate to the text in the context of it being a performance, while also appreciating the integrity of the text. Comics adaptations could help to incorporate both of these goals, as they combine readerly actions that are associated with both reading texts and experiencing performances.

Analysing comics adaptations of *Hamlet*

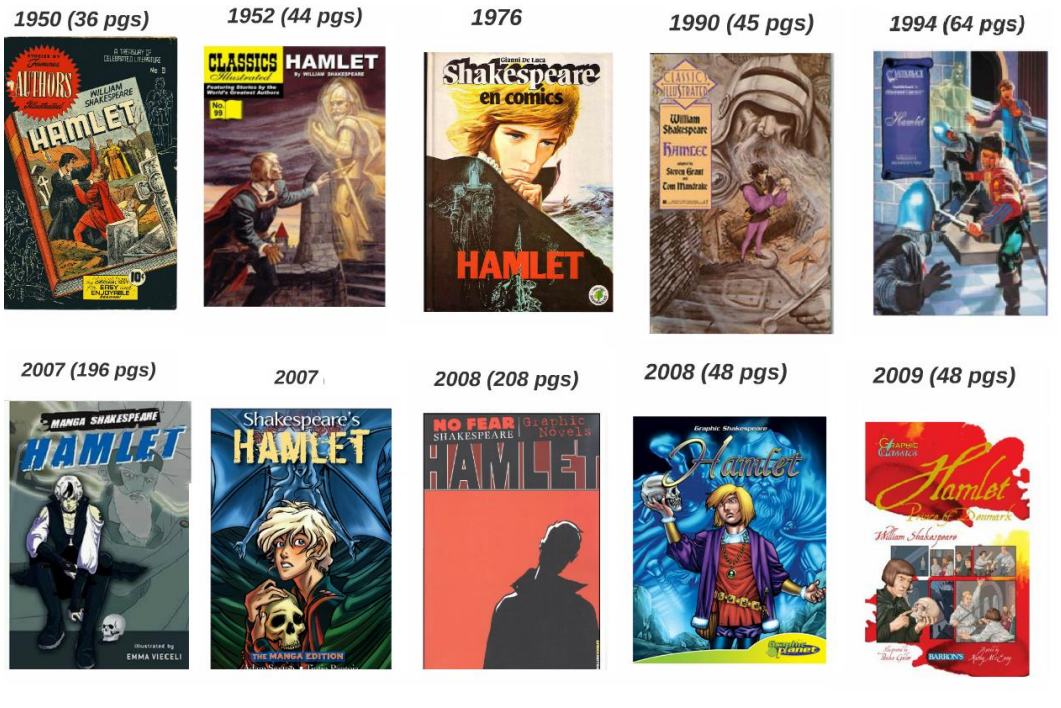
Reading comics adaptation of *Hamlet* involves readerly actions that are inherent to both printed and theatrically performed versions of the play. The student can flip through, browse and re-read the text similarly to a how they can interact with a traditionally printed version. However, like watching a theatrical performance, there are also multiple levels of visually expressive interpretations that the student must navigate alongside the linguistic text. This combination of both printed and theatrical performances could help comics adaptations to align with the New South Wales syllabus's goals.

Although factors affecting each student and classroom would also need to be considered alongside analysing the texts themselves, an adaptation could help to achieve the first goal, of having students "explore and evaluate a specific text and its reception in a range of contexts," if the multiple modalities were themselves represent a range of contexts – for example as both "Shakespeare read" and "Shakespeare performed." A text could help meet the second goal of having students "develop understanding of questions of textual integrity" if students were encouraged to ask how the design of the comics adaptation supports or undercuts the "integrity" of the text, and how it constructs particular readings. Although a student or teacher could find a way to address these questions in an adaptation, a constructively aligned adaptation would be one that focused attention on these questions. The following analysis will examine how well a variety of comics adaptations of *Hamlet* align with these goals.

Phatic formats: *Hamlet* in context

There have been many comic book versions of *Hamlet*, and most of these can be understood as part of larger publishing initiatives to produce comics versions of "the classics." The way that these formats have been

produced and marketed suggest particular *phatic* relationships between reader, text, and author that did not always align with educational goals. The first wave of adaptations of Shakespeare into comics began in the early 1950s with adaptations for the *Classics Illustrated* and *Famous Authors Illustrated* lines that should be considered alongside attempts (discussed previously in Chapter 3) by the comic book industry in the late 1940s and early 1950s to establish a greater cultural legitimacy by showing that comics could be wholesome and educational. The cover art of the *Famous Authors Illustrated* line emphasized this on the cover of each issue with a large illustration of a hardbound book featuring the story being adapted– as if to suggest that a reader could achieve the same kind of *phatic* relationship with culturally authoritative texts and authors through this comic book as they might through an impressively bound tome. Teachers at the time often did not agree, such as high school English teacher Earl Dias, who worried that students saw these "classics comics" as a way to circumventing the work of reading the originals, through a small investment of "just a few pleasant moments" spent with the comic, when the reality was that "a comic book version is but a feeble echo of the original; like a blurred photograph, it gives only half the picture" (Dias 1946, pp. 144-145). Another high school teacher, Herman Makey, argued that although teachers could not "match the detail of the comics," they should persuade students to read traditional texts, which would allow them to "create their own mental counterparts of what they read much more satisfyingly, for they will be constructed of elements essentially personal" (Makey 1952, p. 549).



A selection of different comics adaptations of *Hamlet* produced since 1950.

Although educators of the 1940s and 1950s worried that comics' use of images muddied the formerly "pure" connection between reader and text, Amy Maynard (2013, p. 108) reports that in the 21st century, comics adaptations of Shakespeare have received "glowing appraisals from the majority of teachers, education professionals and librarians in Britain and in Australia." This can be attributed to the establishment of the "graphic novelist" author identity discussed in Chapter 4, and the redefined boundaries of literacy as multimodal discussed in Chapter 5. The wave of Shakespeare adaptations that appeared in the early 2000s included *Manga Shakespeare, No Fear Shakespeare, Graphic Planet Shakespeare* and *Shakespeare: The Manga Edition* among others. This wave was larger and more diverse than the early 1950s "classic comics," featuring titles that were intended for bookstores and libraries, rather than the magazine racks where comic books had been sold, and included publishing lines inspired by the recent manga publishing boom (Hayley 2010). However, these recent "graphic adaptations" share some similarities with their comic-book predecessors. Most notably, each "graphic adaptation" is part of a larger series devoted to Shakespeare and other classics. Just as the "classic comics" were made to fit the genre conventions of adventure comics of their day,

these modern adaptations are confined and defined by their place within larger publishing lines.

Historically, these comics are part of the cultural industry Terence Hawkes calls "Bardbiz" (2003), which holds up the idea of Shakespeare as "a transcendent signifier of value and culture" (Washington 1998, p. 146), even as "right-wing curriculum designers turned him into a highbrow alternative to the popular culture of our own time" (Hawkes 2003, p. 562). In other words, Shakespeare sells, but Shakespeare's name also sells the (conservative) impression of education and literacy. Comic book formats on the other hand, historically sold not cultural authority but the impression of a youthful reverie of "a few pleasant moments" (Dias 1946).

Aligning with genre conventions

These formats affect the way that the text is presented, and also the ways that students are encouraged to interact with it. For example, just as the *Classics Illustrated* comics resemble boys adventure comics, Jessica Maerz finds that Kenneth Branagh's cinematic adaptation of *Hamlet* "replicates, in every way, the excess valorized by the classical Hollywood epic of other generations" (Maerz 2011, p. 130) and uses these familiar filmic genre conventions (including everything from choice of film stock to cast size) to make a version of the play that is "more easily assimilable by a contemporary audience" (Maerz 2011, p. 138).

Watching a film also involves very different actions, and in classrooms can authorise a more passive response from students, who often stay seated in their desks as the instructor presses play on a video monitor. Some comic book adaptations of *Hamlet*, however, more closely mimic film than theatre. Take, for example, the following excerpt from Rebecca Dunn and Ben Dunn's adaptation for the Graphic Planet line (2008).



Excerpt from *Graphic Planet Shakespeare* (Dunn & Dunn 2009).

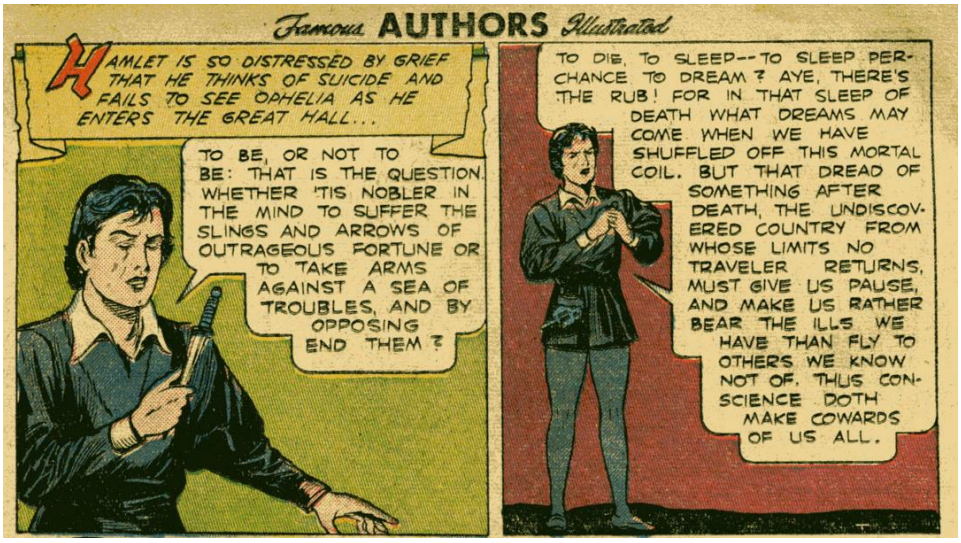
These two panels betray a reliance on the visual vocabulary of film: they mimic the classic shot/reverse-shot technique used in filmed dialogue scenes, and Dunn has deftly composed each panel so that the reader's gaze is drawn to Hamlet and Ophelia's eyes. A crucial difference in film and stage acting is that while an actor's eyes are central features in close-ups, theatre audiences are often too far away from actors to read any subtle facial expressions. Dunn and Dunn also prioritize rich, Technicolor visuals over Shakespeare's text -- the folds in Hamlet's tunic have been rendered with more precision than the appalling abridgement of the soliloquy, which ends, rather damningly, in the middle of a clause.

Textual integrity or generic integrity?

As the Graphic Planet adaptation suggests, although studying these adaptations may be helpful for exploring the range of contexts that *Hamlet* has appeared in, they may have limited use for discussing textual integrity, as the text they are adapting is always secondary to their commercial publishing

formats. For example, in the *Famous Authors Illustrated* and *Classics Illustrated* versions, *Hamlet* is cast by these comic books as a boys-adventure story, replete with castles, medieval costumes and swordfights, all wrapped up in a few dozen pages. This format is at odds with the text of *Hamlet*, where "the locales seem largely undistinguishable," and many of the exciting elements (the pirate battle, the betrayal of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern) happen off stage (Duffy, RA 1976, p. 141).

The most culturally renowned part of *Hamlet* is not its costumes or swordfights, but its fourth soliloquy, which begins "to be or not to be." Any adaption of *Hamlet* must contend with that famous passage in order to be considered a "true" adaptation of the play. In *Famous Authors Illustrated*, the soliloquy is dispatched in two short panels, in a perfunctory manner to make room for more exciting action.



The fourth soliloquy as depicted in the *Famous Authors Illustrated* version of *Hamlet*.

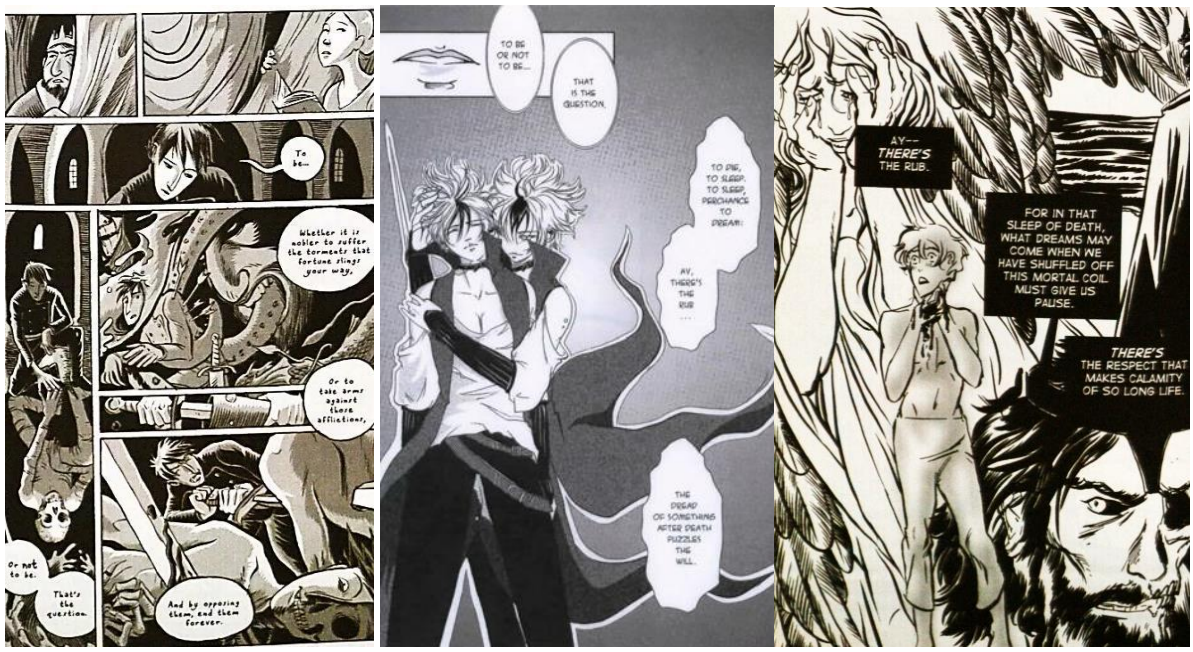
The abridged nature of this version makes it essentially impossible to ask questions about "textual integrity," as this most famous section of *Hamlet's* text has been compromised in such a significant way. By contrast, the *Classics Illustrated* version instead devotes an entire page to the soliloquy, where the characters appear to freeze as Hamlet delivers the full text of the speech in a single, giant word balloon, as *Classics Illustrated* essentially bends over backwards to accommodate the text, even though it fits poorly into the adventure-style adaptation of the rest of the comic.



The fourth soliloquy as depicted in the *Classics Illustrated* version of *Hamlet*.

Although the *Classics Illustrated* adaptation features the entire the soliloquy, the linguistic meaning of the text is not reinforced through the images, which show little more than *Prince Valliant*-esque costumes and props. Although it is possible to read the soliloquy in full, the multimodal context of the page adds little of interpretive value. Aside from the wall of text, castle walls are what dominate this page's spatio-topia.

Most modern adaptations significantly abridge the soliloquy, but at least use the visual modality to provide an emotional context, and Angel Matos argues that in the best of these adaptations "the character's mind, through the comics medium, literally becomes illustrated in ways that transcend the realm of the realistic and the physical" (Matos 2013).



From right to left: pages adapting the fourth soliloquy from *No Fear Shakespeare*, *Manga Shakespeare* and *Shakespeare: Manga Edition*. All of these versions visualise Hamlet's inner turmoil through the use of symbolic violent images.

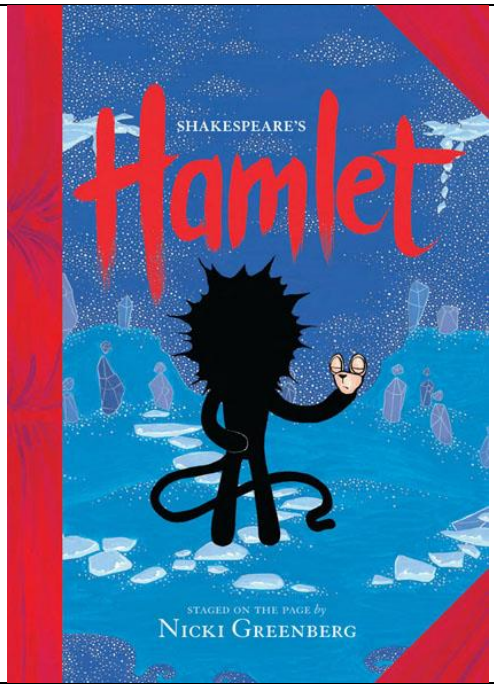
However, while this does add an interpretative channel, and provide a better contextual environment to discuss the text in, for Mellor and Patterson, who worry about students focusing on characters "as if they were real people," these psychological portrayals could be seen over-emphasising the inner life of the imagined *Hamlet*. Questions about the "textual integrity" may be superseded in these readings by questions about the integrity of the characters as people.

Advocates for comics in educate argue that "young people live in a world saturated with visual images" (Power 2009) and that the visual narratives in comics help to strengthen students' "21st century skills" (Evans-Boniecki 2013, p. 9). However, the use of established publishing formats that appeal to young people, such as manga and comic books, seems to be at least equally important in how publishers market these adaptations to students. In these publishing lines, the format itself as an authoritative power, as for example, the "manga literacy of teenagers which is taken for granted," while Shakespeare is presented as something that "is not easy to become literate in it without some mediating aid" (Sabeti 2014, p. 186). The publishing format alone, regardless of the skill of those working on the

adaptation, is assumed to play a powerful *phatic* role in connecting the reader to the material. Indeed, while Shakespeare's name appears largest on most of these graphic adaptations, the name of the publishing line is always printed larger than the names of those who have done the work of adaptation – if they are credited at all.

An exceptional adaptation: Greenberg's *Hamlet* "staged on the page"

Nicki Greenberg's 2010 version is different from the other modern adaptations in many respects. It is not part of a publishing line dedicated to literary adaptations, and unlike the adaptations in those lines, which are the work of several individuals, Greenberg is presented the sole "author" of her adaptation. In fact, her name appears larger than Shakespeare's on the cover of the book. This was Greenberg's second comics adaptation, following her well-received, version of *The Great Gatsby (2009)*, which was considered "playful" and formally "experimental" compared to other comics adaptations of classic literature (Worden 2010, p. 232). Her *Hamlet* is just as playful and inventive, and in many ways more ambitious. It is presented in an encyclopaedia-sized hardcover, which is nearly 400 pages long, and described as a authorly "labour of love" (Selinger-Morris 2010). Although Greenberg's *Hamlet* can be considered a product of the graphic novel publishing industry, its format marks it as unique among other graphic adaptations of Shakespeare. More than any of the other adaptations, Greenberg's version represents her as its 'graphiauter', and uses visual, spatial and verbal modalities in ways that are unique and do not correspond to generic conventions.



On the cover of Greenberg's adaptation, Shakespeare's name is at the top of the page, but her name is printed larger. The title makes it clear that the text is Shakespeare, but the performance is Greenberg: this is her version, "staged on the page."

While many of the other comic book *Hamlets* reformat the play to fit the styles and conventions of a publishing line in a particular genre, such as boys' adventure comic, or manga, Greenberg's version expands to well beyond the normal page length of graphic adaptations in order to accommodate Shakespeare's full text. Furthermore, she spotlights *Hamlet's* theatricality by treating her book as a simulacrum of a theatre, complete with curtains, props and backstage areas. This technique encourages readers to see her version of the play as a constructed, hand-made performance. It frames the play not as a story that lends itself to the narrative structure of an existing genre of comics, but as a piece of theatre.

By using almost the entirety of Shakespeare's text, and by providing a context that mimics a theatrical production, rather than the conventions of a particular style of comic, Greenberg's version demonstrates more pedagogical potential for use in literature classrooms than most of the other comics adaptations of *Hamlet*. It aligns with the New South Wales goal for students to "explore and evaluate a specific text and its reception in a range of contexts," because it bridges the context of printed and theatrical performances, and it aligns better with the goal for students to "develop

understanding of questions of textual integrity" because it presents the text as something which must be interpreted and constructed – with the active participation of the reader.

Performative context -- Theatrical resemblances in Greenberg

While the *Graphic Planet* adaptation seems to take place in the same brick castle as the *Classics Illustrated* version, Nikki Greenberg does not set her version of Hamlet in any particular time or place, but instead situates it primarily as a piece of theatre. Her book itself is designed to act *as* a theatre, and each scene opens with a double page spread that mimics the proportions of a stage, complete with curtains. Each of these scenes opens with characters positioned on a large, abstract background – frosty blue crystalline structures outside the castle, for example, or a cacophony of disjointed clockwork in the throne room.



Act 1, Scene 1 of Greenberg's *Hamlet* – note the fabric used as curtains, the way the characters resemble both shadows and blots of ink, and how the dimensions of the book are used to mimic the dimensions of a stage.. Each scene of the play opens with this kind of double-page spread.

After this opening spread, each scene breaks down into pages with multiple panels, but the static background is constantly repeated, so that the characters seem to be acting in front of it, rather than inhabiting an actual castle or courtyard. The characters are nearly always depicted at the same

size, the same distance from the reader. This is similar to how audiences would have experienced a stage production of Hamlet, and rather different from most movie versions, where the action tends to take place in a practical and specific setting, as seen from a variety of camera angles.

As the play unfolds, the emphasis is on the characters' actions and interactions with each other on the "stage." Greenberg's drawings of the characters provide movement and pantomime that embody and correspond to the lines in Shakespeare's text. For example, this passage from the nunnery scene depicts Hamlet and Ophelia circling around one another, pleading, entreating, chastising, moving closer together and then farther apart. This stands in stark contrast to most other comics adaptations, where the characters hardly seem to move at all.



An excerpt from Greenberg's version of *Hamlet*.

By creating a visual milieu that invokes a theatre-in-book-form, and by relying primarily on visual techniques that mimic to those available to theatrical productions, Greenberg's performance of *Hamlet* in many aligns

with the ways that audiences watch theatre. This helps to place the text in a theatrical context

Reading as constructing – Greenberg's *Hamlet* as enacting theatre

Greenberg depicts her characters not as human characters in stately costumes, as in most visual adaptations of Hamlet, but as a creatures that exist somewhere between inkblots and anthropomorphic animals. Solid black except for faces, which can be removed like masks, these actors recall shadow puppetry, *comedia del arte* and other formal styles of theatre.

And indeed, Greenberg's inkblot creatures are actors on the page, for she even includes brief backstage vignettes between many of the scenes, in which they can be seen "out of character," preparing scenery, carousing and pursuing backstage romances. What we are given here is not just an adaptation of Hamlet, but also a simulacrum of a theatrical adaptation.



Backstage during Greenberg's *Hamlet*, the inkblot 'actor' takes a bow, applauded by his fellow cast members.

In this way, Greenberg's performance draws her audience's attention to its own theatrical context, but also prompts readers to consider the textual integrity of *Hamlet* itself as a text designed to be reconstructed and restaged. This visual milieu of this version of *Hamlet* is centred around theatricality of the work, which not only reinforces many of the themes of the play (which centrally features a play-within-a-play), but aligns closely with the way that Shakespeare tends to be studied in the modern classroom, where as Mellor

and Patterson note, the focus is often on "the conception of texts and readings as made or constructed."

Constructivism argues that learning emerges from the actions of students, so it is notable that while Greenberg's version of *Hamlet* authorises actions from its readers that are similar to watching a theatrical adaptation, it also in some ways authorises actions that resemble those involved in creating and staging such a production.

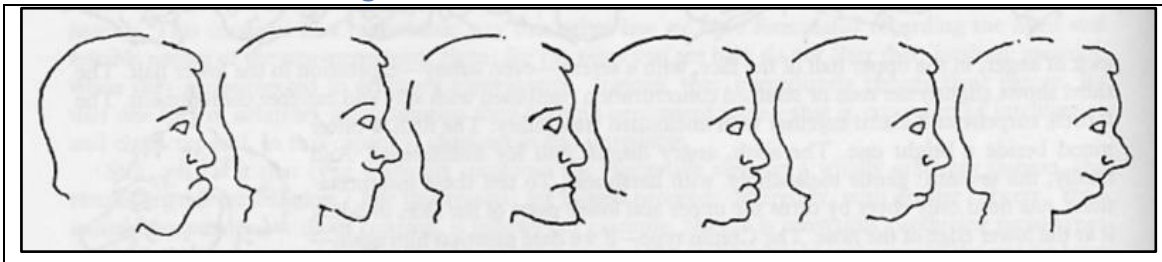
Of course, most adaptations of stage material require the work of multiple interpreters, but as graphiauter, Greenberg not only performs the roles of all the characters in the play, but also acts as director, costume designer, prop master, lighting technician, set designer and other backstage roles. However, the readers are also encouraged to take an active role in assembling this production. As previously noted, the film director Frederico Fellini's view of the comics medium is that it "benefits from the collaboration of the readers: one tells them a story that they tell to themselves; with their particular rhythm and imagination, in moving forward and backward." Readers are active participants in the action of directing the stage performance constructed in Greenberg's *Hamlet* – the play moves forward according to their rhythm and imagination. Although in many ways bound by the choices Greenberg has made in staging the material, the readers are not passive observers, but must actively work to construct a performance that is more than just ink on the page.

Design for Construction and Praxis

As graphiateur, Greenberg makes specific choices that discourage the notion that it is possible to discover what Hamlet's characters are "really like," by presenting them as blatantly constructed interpretations – actors putting on a performance. Her abstracted design of the characters also allows for multiple interpretations, and the gaps between panels in her notation mean readers must assist in constructing the emotional choreography of each scene. This helps to preserve the textual integrity of *Hamlet* by not burdening it too heavily with Greenberg's personal interpretations.

For example, Greenberg's depiction of Ophelia could be interpreted as a character who is burdened with her own sexual shame or as one who is frustrated by the possessive expectations the men in her life exert over her. This polyphony of meanings extends to the visual design of individual characters. Greenberg's Gertrude resembles a cow-like creature with six exposed breasts. This could be read as an allusion to A.C. Bradley's oft-quoted interpretation of the queen as a "happy sheep in the sunshine," while simultaneously her exposed breasts can be read as representing motherhood, wanton sexuality or, as Spiros Xenos suggests, "a predisposition to be milked." Although Greenberg's reading of *Hamlet* obviously cannot encompass all possible interpretations of the material, the blatant construction of her staging is her most valuable contribution as graphiateur, because this quality of her interpretation is most likely to cause students to question *how* they are reading the material, calling to mind both its context and its textual integrity.

Abstraction and Masking



One of Töpffer's exercises to show how easily a few lines could convey character and emotion (Töpffer 1845).

Greenberg's character designs are composed of just a few simple elements. Rodolphe Töpffer, one of the earliest theoreticians of comics, whose comics were discussed in Chapter 2, wrote that the simple line drawings like these enable even inexperienced artists to "represent feelings and passions with fair success" while the reader "sees them as so many blanks that his imagination can people, fill up, complete automatically, accurately, and without effort." (Töpffer 1845, p. 8). The visual abstraction of facial expressions allows for emotions to be decoded by the reader based on their own emotional experiences. Stuart Medley has examined how this process works on a cognitive level, and notes that an abstracted drawing of an object, "does not precisely match any 'real' visual version of such an object since the memory will contain a range of information from different

viewpoints and under different lighting conditions" (Medley 2010, p. 61). Reading cartoon drawings requires drawing on one's own emotions and memories.

Scott McCloud's theory of "masking," takes this idea of engagement one step further, positing that that simplified drawings of faces, like those typically used in comics, serve as masks which readers project themselves into, essentially allowing the reader a high level of identification with the character and allowing them to in a sense enter the world of the comic (McCloud 1993). This theory applies to Greenberg's work quite literally, since her actors themselves as essentially just shadowy figures endowed with masks. If we subscribe to McCloud's theory, these characters readily accept the mental projection of the reader, who in a way experiences the world of the comic through their eyes, by in a sense also becoming an actor as well.



In this excerpt from Greenberg's version of *Hamlet*, the "actor" playing the prince removes his mask. Greenberg's actors are literally inkblots wearing faces as masks, which they can remove and interact with.

But even without accepting McCloud's theory, it is easy to see how the action of mental playacting is necessary to read Greenberg's work. A character might be depicted showing a wide range of emotions over the course of a page or soliloquy, and in order to reconcile these various depictions, the reader may be prompted to imagine the emotional connective tissue that bridges the gaps between these emotional states. So not only do the readers act in a sense as "co-directors" during the process of reading this Hamlet, they also participate as "co-actors."

In this way, Greenberg has created an adaptation of Hamlet that requires more reader participation and engagement than that which is usually seen in a typical adaptation, and the reader creates meaning not simply by "seeing" her staging of the play, but also by mentally participating in it. These qualities of "acting" and "directing" are not unique to Greenberg, although it is easier to frame the reader's actions this way in relation to her work because it revolves around theatre. McCloud sees "masking" as a phenomenon that occurs in many comics, and what I have refereed to here as "directing," McCloud calls "closure."

This is quite different from the effect of watching a stage or screen adaptation of a play where, if the production is good, the words seem to be coming not from the author at all, but rather emanating from the characters themselves. In a comics adaptation, the text appears more like a quotation that emanates from a place outside of the visual page, yet is framed within it. In Eisner's version, like Dunn and Dunn's version, we can see an attempt to locate this text as *voice* belong to specific characters in a particular time and place – much like Eisner's work in *P.S. Magazine* can be seen as functioning in a cartoon 'world' that is parallel to the reader's own world. The detailed, naturalistic backgrounds function as a way of grounding the text by surrounding it with the visual world of the graphiateur.

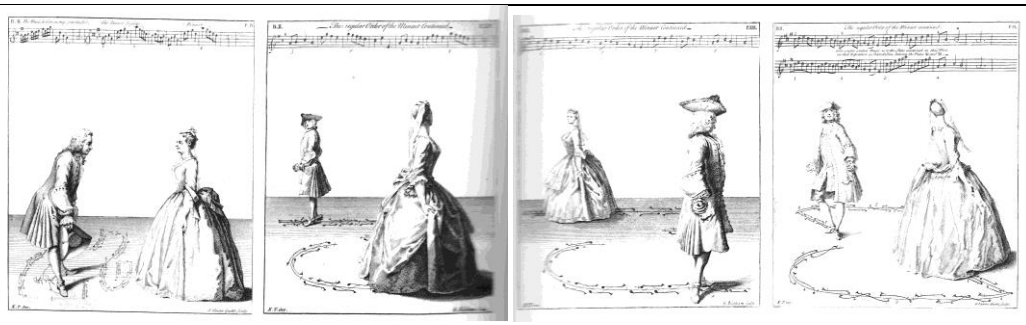
Greenberg's more abstract approach, on the other hand, has the opposite effect. In this way, it resembles Rius' hand-written primer on Marx in suggesting a close phatic relationship between "author" and reader, and by emphasizing the constructed nature of the performance. Both Greenberg and Rius authorise readers to see the materiality of their books and to notice the seams in their "author's" handiwork. In Greenberg's handwriting, which is at times hastily-written, we are made aware of the "scriptor" that has physically copied down the text of the play.

This effect of quotation creates something of a dissonance in Greenberg's adaptation that makes her version of *Hamlet* feel in a way less immediate and visceral than most stage and screen productions. However, because the reader is constantly made aware of the separation between the

Shakespeare's text and Greenberg's staged, visual interpretation, critical reflection upon Greenberg's choices in staging and characterization is made relatively easy. In this way her multimodal design strategy encourages praxis, as readers are able to "act" in and reflect upon the performance, and upon its construction.

Standardised Notation

This readerly involvement is further facilitated in the way that Greenberg organizes her pages, which shares some similarities to visual depictions of dance choreography from Kellom Tomlinson's *The Art of Dancing, Explained by Reading and Figures*. Noted information design expert Edward Tufte, who included this choreography notation in his book *Envisioning Information*, says these images, "translate human movements into signs transcribed onto flatland, permanently persevering the visual instant" (Tufte 1990).



Kellom Tomlinson's *The Art of Dancing, Explained by Reading and Figures* as excerpted in *Envisioning Information* (Tufte 1990).

Of course, this dance notation is not preserving one specific visual instant that can be traced back to a particular time and place, but rather expressing the idea of a moment that takes place while dancing. This could be considered in terms of "textual integrity" as preserving the repeatable and irreducible core of the "text" of the dance, which can then be reproduced by individual dancers within their own context. Similarly, Greenberg's visual choreography in Hamlet does not refer to an actual stage production, but to an imagined one that is assembled by readers within their own contexts.

Unlike the dance notation, Greenberg's choreography is not oriented toward expressing actual movement in space – often her characters move in

ways that are physically ambiguous or even impossible. The inkblot design focuses attention on the faces of the masks that the characters wear, allowing the readers to focus most of all on the emotions of the characters and their interactions with each other. Instead of charting physical movement, her images express emotional and thematic movement between characters.

Level of authority implied by author/graphateur

Although Greenberg's book is the only one that claims to be a literal performance, all the comics adaptations of *Hamlet* can be understood as performances. This understanding casts the comics' graphiautuer in a role similar to Barthes' scriptor – bodies that act physically to inscribe a visible performance. This distinction also preserves some distance between the performers (the graphiautuer) and the author. As author, Shakespeare retains a higher degree of authority over the text, but the performers/inscriscriptors/graphiautuers play a distinct *phatic* role in mediating the text to the readers.

Greenberg's phatic design of *Hamlet* is markedly different than what can be seen in Will Eisner's version of the soliloquy, "Hamlet on a Rooftop," which appeared as an exercise in his *Comics and Sequential Art* (Eisner 1985). Eisner's performance shares the same "staged on the page" approach, with a solitary Hamlet against a constant background "acting out" the monologue.



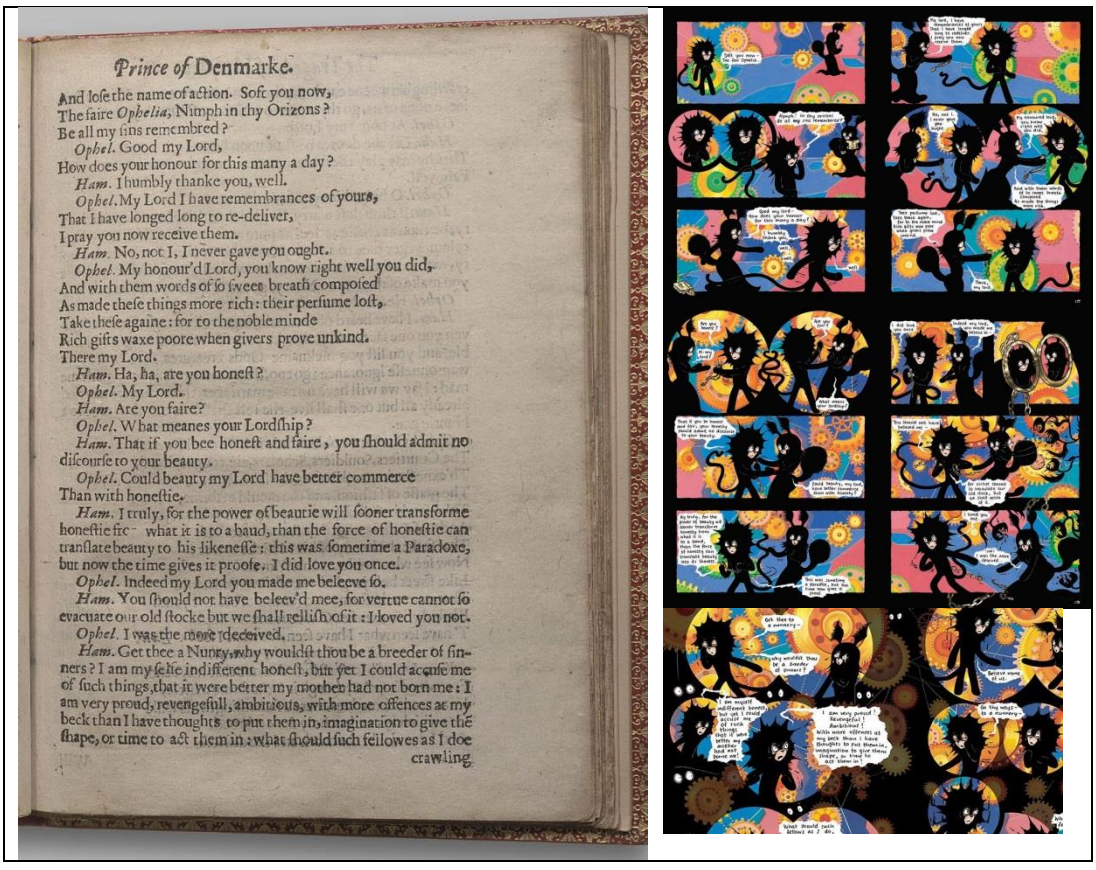
Excerpt from *Hamlet on a Rooftop* by Will Eisner.

Eisner's performance here is more virtuosic – drawing upon unusual page layouts and dynamic panel transitions. Eisner's approach owes much more to film and exaggerated caricature than Greenberg's, and although there is melodramatic theatricality to Eisner's work, it feels like it is meant to be located in a specific time and place. Although both Eisner and Greenberg's performances are fairly idiosyncratic, Eisner's detailed and flamboyant approach gives less room for readers to 'enter' into the performance – they are more passive participants. Reading this version makes it more difficult to discern the integrity of the text as separate from Eisner's multimodal interpretation of the text.

Greenberg's design, unlike most other graphic versions of *Hamlet*, aligns with the way that Shakespeare is taught in modern classrooms. Greenberg emphasises the performed nature of her production through theatrical resemblances, which relate to the contexts in which *Hamlet* has been understood and performed throughout the centuries. Furthermore, her design choices reiterate the constructed nature of her performance, allowing readers to consider their own roles as interpreters of the play, and calling to mind questions of textual integrity.

Conclusion

Any representation of *Hamlet*, whether in pen and ink, word-processed type, or the movements of actors, is in fact a performance. An approach informed by multimodal literacy might be one way to disarm both sides of the battle between "read" and "performed." The "academic," "inaccessible" "Shakespeare-read" approach might be understood as centred on the linguistic modality in Shakespeare's work and on questions of textual integrity, while the "theatrical," "accessible" "Shakespeare-performed" seeks to engage it through a wider range of modalities (visual, verbal, gestural, spatial, et al), and relates more to questions of context. As Greenberg's adaptation shows, these approaches need not be contradictory. Seen as a radical, hyper-visual way of publishing the linguistic text of the play, her "staging" of it can denaturalise a linguistically-focused approach to Shakespeare by exposing the normally unseen visual element of "Shakespeare-read." A conventional printing of *Hamlet* looks quite different to Greenberg's version, but it is still communicated through the visual modality.



Prince of Denmarke.

And loſe the name of action. Soft you now,
The faire *Ophelia*, Nimph in thy Orizons?
Be all my ſins remembred?
Ophel. Good my Lord,
How does your honour for this many a day?
Ham. I humbly thanke you, well.
Ophel. My Lord I have remembrances of yours,
That I have longed long to re-deliver,
I pray you now receive them.
Ham. No, not I, I never gave you ought.
Ophel. My honour'd Lord, you know right well you did,
And with them words of ſo ſweet breath compoſed
As made theſe things more rich: their perfume loſt,
Take theſe againe: for to the noble minde
Rich gifts waxe poore when givers prove unkind.
There my Lord.
Ham. Ha, ha, are you honeſt?
Ophel. My Lord.
Ham. Are you faire?
Ophel. What meanes your Lordſhip?
Ham. That if you bee honeſt and faire, you ſhould admit no diſcourſe to your beauty.
Ophel. Could beauty my Lord have better commerce
Than with honeſtie.
Ham. I truly, for the power of beautie will ſooner transforme honeſtie fro- what it is to a baud, than the force of honeſtie can tranſlate beauty to his likeneſſe: this was ſometime a Paradoxe, but now the time gives it proofe. I did love you once.
Ophel. Indeed my Lord you made me beleeve ſo.
Ham. You ſhould not have beleev'd me, for vertue cannot ſo evacuate our old ſtocke but we ſhall reliſh of it: I loved you not.
Ophel. I was the more deceived.
Ham. Get thee a Nunry, why wouldſt thou be a breeder of ſinners? I am my ſelfe indifferent honeſt, but yet I could accuſe me of ſuch things, that it were better my mother had not borne me: I am very proud, revengefull, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them ſhape, or time to act them in: what ſhould ſuch fellowes as I doe crawling

Two visual performances of the same text of *Hamlet,* Act 3 Scene 1.

Seen this way, a conventional printing of *Hamlet* (one that aligns with the "academic" and "inaccessible" school of 'Shakespeare-read') can be understood as a multimodal performance of the play, albeit one that uses the visual modality quite differently than Greenberg's version.

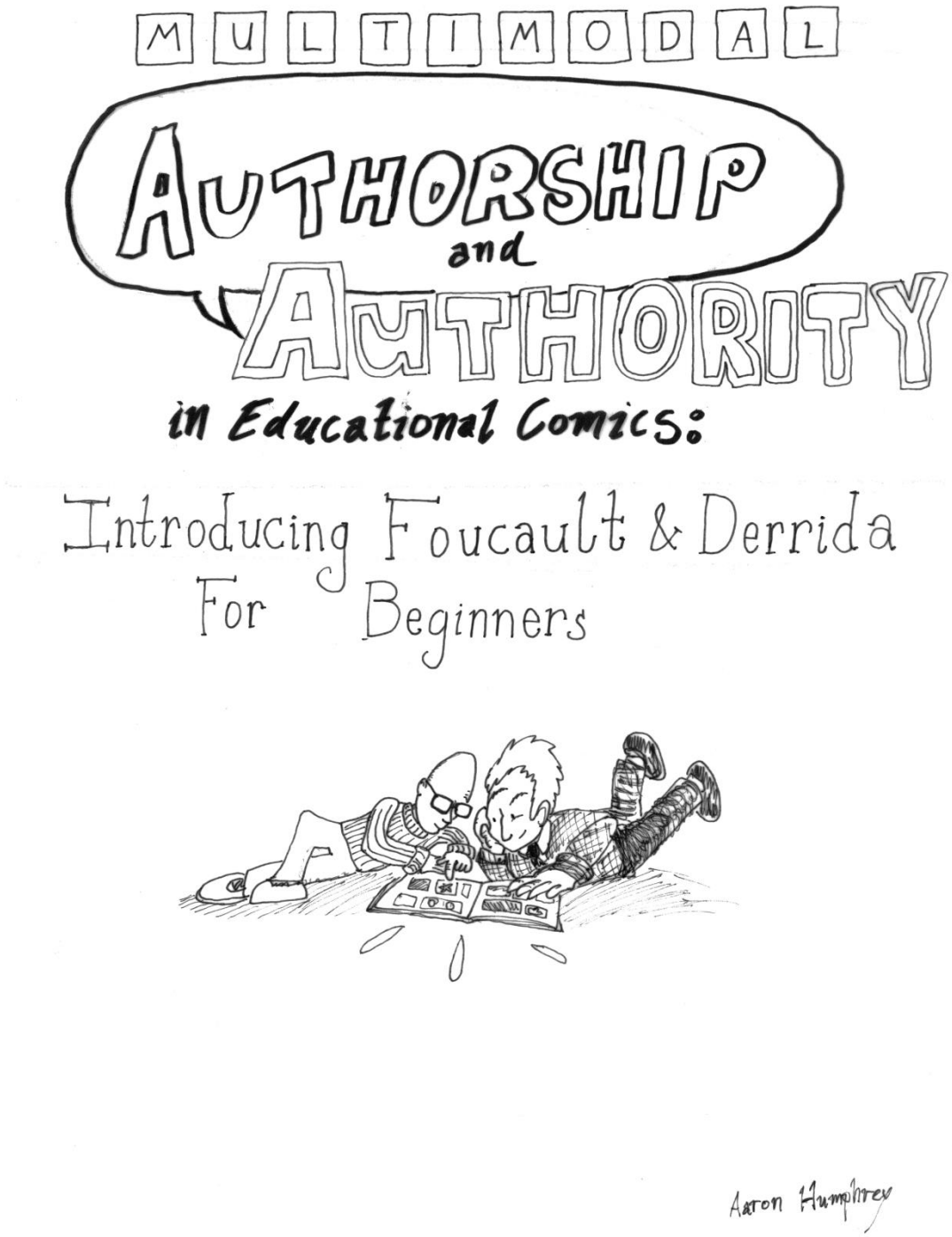
The scope and ambition of Greenberg's version of *Hamlet* separates it in some ways from previous "bardbiz" adaptations of the play. It can be considered part of a larger trend of recent book-length educational comics that have been authorized by the acceptance of graphic novels as an authored form of literature and the redefinition of literacy as multimodal. As comics are being taken more seriously as educational texts, it becomes increasingly important to evaluate them from a pedagogical perspective, and this case study of comic book versions of *Hamlet* allows the opportunity to demonstrate how different design strategies can affect their effectiveness. In addition, it suggests that the relationship between the educational "content" of a comic, and the multimodal way that content is inscribed can be helpfully understood as a performance.

Using Biggs and Tang's framework of curriculum alignment, these performances can be evaluated in terms of how well they allow readers to envision roles or actions that are similar to the content that is being taught. Greenberg's performance of *Hamlet* succeeds in this area more than previous comics adaptations through the way its multimodal design encourages readers to adopt roles as both co-actors and co-directors of the play, and to question how the context in which the play is "staged" relates to the "integrity" of the linguistic text itself. This is accomplished through multimodal resemblances to theatrical performances, visual abstraction that gives readers room to fill in the blanks with their own emotions and ideas, and a kind of notation that facilitates an ease of reading and interpretation.

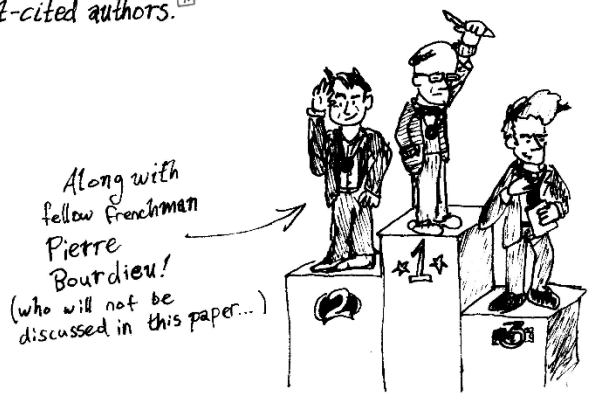
As the next chapter will explore, the distinctions between authority and performative adaptation are not always as clear as they are in these relatively straightforward examples of Shakespeare adapted into comics. As the relationships between authorship and inscription/performance are

crucial in how multimodal design is composed, the similar relationships discussed in this chapter between the cultural authority of Shakespeare and those who are adapting his work into comic book form make it easier to see how different performative approaches can change their pedagogy.

Chapter 9 – Multimodal Authorship and Authority in Educational Comics: Introducing Foucault and Derrida for Beginners



Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida are legendary figures in the humanities and are among the field's *most-cited* authors.[1]



With cultural capital like this, was there any doubt that they would eventually become the subjects of COMIC BOOKS?



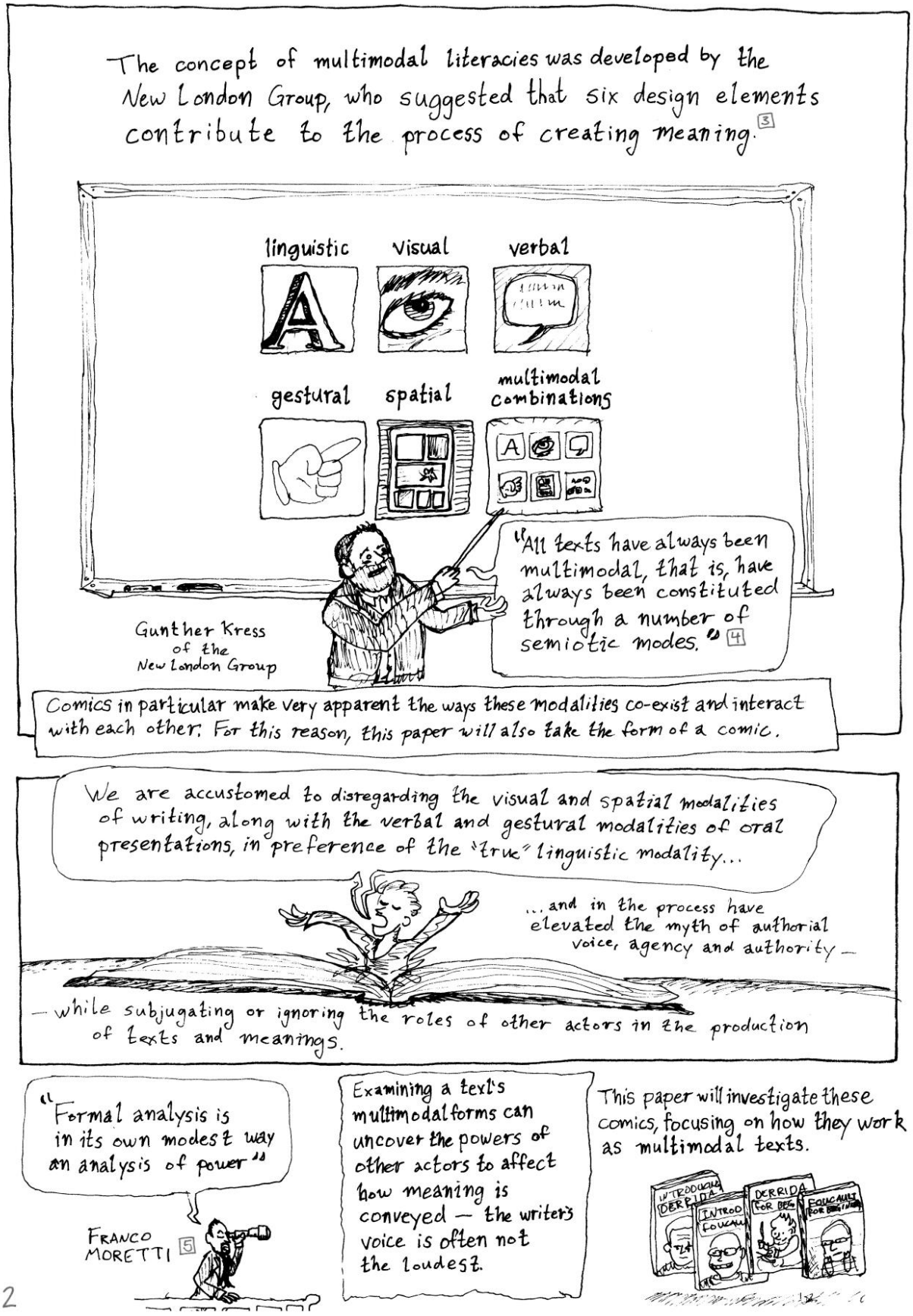
Namely, these comic books:

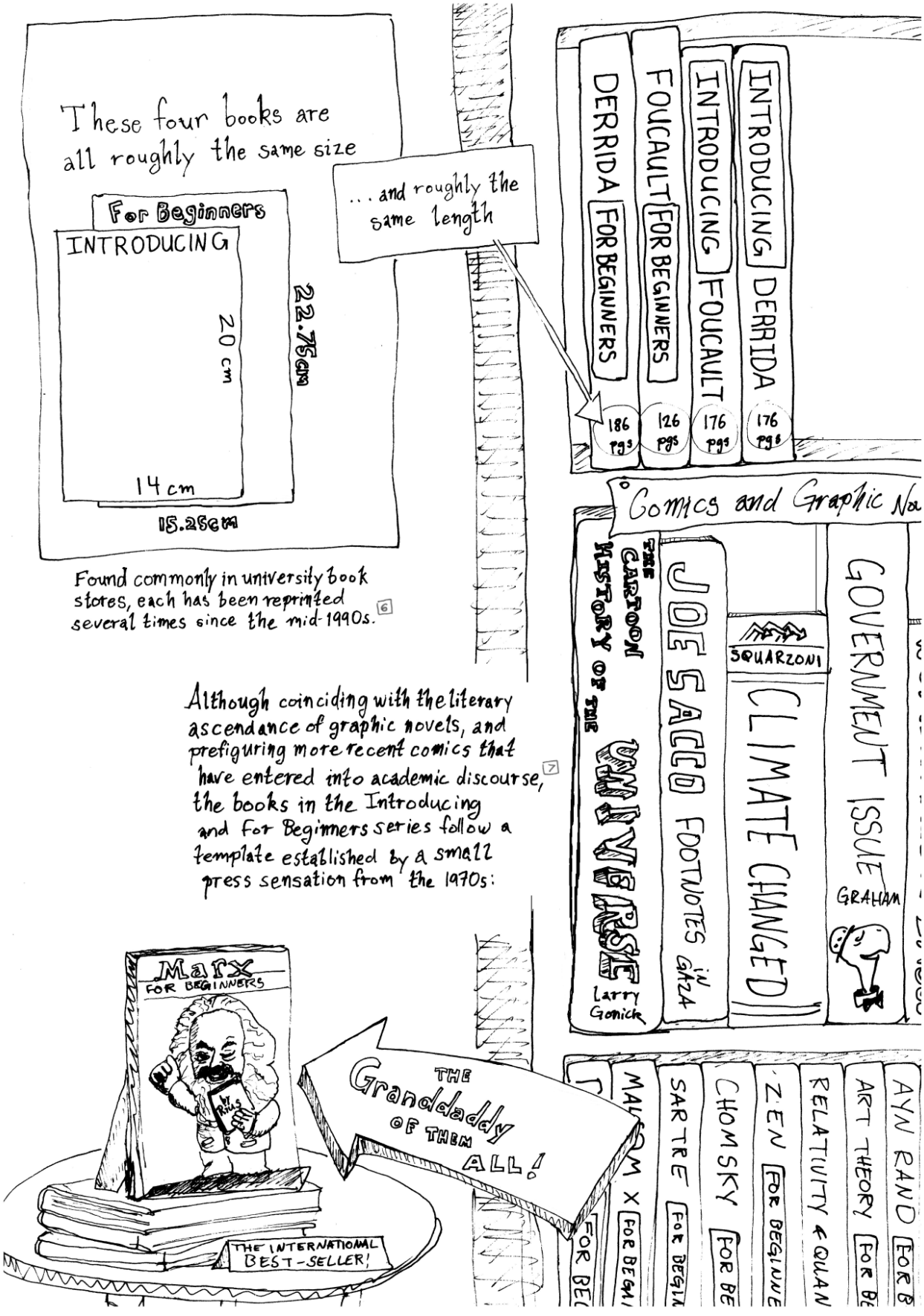


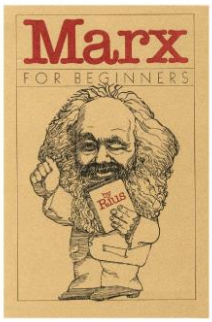
These comics discuss the theoretical work of Foucault and Derrida visually and spatially, as well as by using conventional 'alphabetic' text.[2]

The arguments they make are MULTIMODAL . . .

1


The concept of multimodal literacies was developed by the New London Group, who suggested that six design elements contribute to the process of creating meaning.[3]
linguistic
visual
verbal
gestural
spatial
multimodal combinations
"All texts have always been multimodal, that is, have always been constituted through a number of semiotic modes."[4]
Gunther Kress of the New London Group
Comics in particular make very apparent the ways these modalities co-exist and interact with each other. For this reason, this paper will also take the form of a comic.
We are accustomed to disregarding the visual and spatial modalities of writing, along with the verbal and gestural modalities of oral presentations, in preference of the "true" linguistic modality...
...and in the process have elevated the myth of authorial voice, agency and authority –
– while subjugating or ignoring the roles of other actors in the production of texts and meanings.
"Formal analysis is in its own modest way an analysis of power"
FRANCO MORETTI[5]
Examining a text's multimodal forms can uncover the powers of other actors to affect how meaning is conveyed – the writer's voice is often not the loudest.
This paper will investigate these comics, focusing on how they work as multimodal texts.
INTRODUCING DERRIDA
INTRODUCING FOUCAULT
DERRIDA FOR BEGINNERS
FOUCAULT FOR BEGINNERS
2


These four books are all roughly the same size
For Beginners
INTRODUCING
22.75cm
20 cm
14 cm
15.25cm
...and roughly the same length
INTRODUCING DERRIDA
INTRODUCING FOUCAULT
FOUCAULT FOR BEGINNERS
DERRIDA FOR BEGINNERS
186 pgs
126 pgs
176 pgs
176 pgs
Found commonly in university book stores, each has been reprinted several times since the mid-1990s. [6]
Although coinciding with the literary ascendance of graphic novels, and prefiguring more recent comics that have entered into academic discourse, [7] the books in the Introducing and For Beginners series follow a template established by a small press sensation from the 1970s:
Comics and Graphic Nov
GOVERNMENT ISSUE
GRAHAM
CLIMATE CHANGED
SQUARZONI
JOE SACCO FOOTNOTES IN GAZA
THE CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE
Larry Gonick
AYN RAND FOR B
ART THEORY FOR BE
RELATIVITY & QUAN
ZEN FOR BEGINNE
CHOMSKY FOR BE
SARTRE FOR BEGIN
MALCOM X FOR BEGI
FOR BE
Marx FOR BEGINNERS
THE Granddaddy OF THEM ALL!
THE INTERNATIONAL BEST-SELLER!



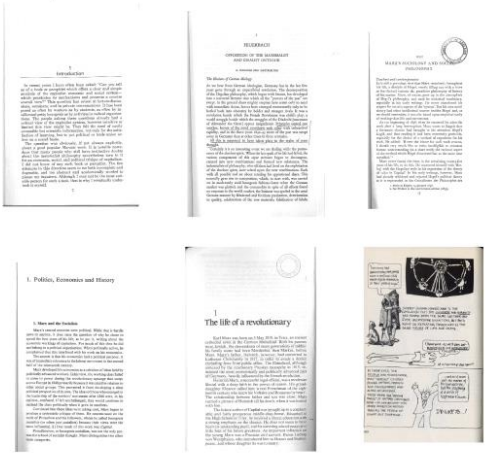
Marx for Beginners (1976) was the second book by the Mexican cartoonist **Rius** to be published in English, following *Cuba for Beginners* (1971).

An incredibly prolific and popular cartoonist in Mexico, Rius is now in his eighties and has published more than 50 books, the most recent in 2014. [8]



Very few are available in English.

Rius' use of cartoons and hand-written text makes his work stand out compared to other paperback books about Marx from the 1970s. [9]



Today, his approach remains iconoclastic...

"I don't like using the computer to design the page layout because it homogenises everything. It's a globalising format."

-interview, 2002 [10]



I've found that composing this article with just pen and paper has required a different kind of thinking than writing with a word processor and citation software.

4

Throughout Marx for Beginners, Rius uses his own handwriting instead of typesetting...



... that is, except for when quoting passages directly from Marx or other sources. As a result, the experience of reading these quotes is distinct from that of reading Rius' own words. This is fundamentally different from most academic and educational texts, where quoted material is visually identical to the surrounding text, almost as if these sources had been completely absorbed into the voice of the author.

Other voices come from his little cartoons, which do not represent distinct or recurring characters, but still manage to argue with each other.



There appear to be two distinct levels of authority— that which comes from the typeset text of Rius' sources, and that which comes from his own pen.*



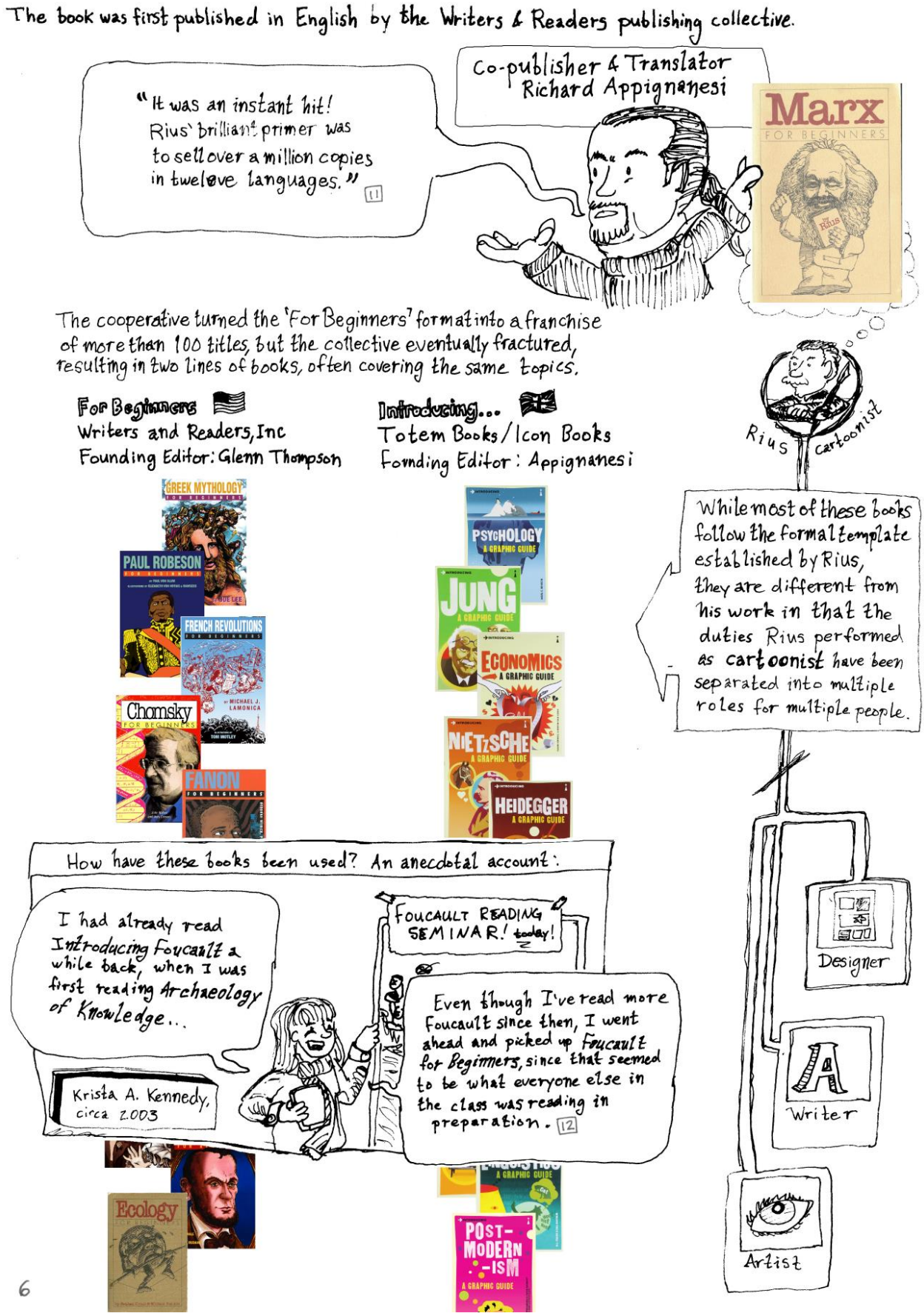
The books about Foucault and Derrida, which are the work of multiple people, complicate this issue even further.

Where can we find authority in a book with multiple authors working in different modalities?



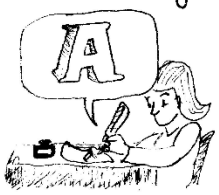
*The fact that the hand-written English translation comes written by a different hand than Rius' emphasises that all "authorial authority" is a construct.

5

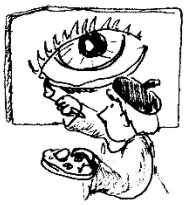

The book was first published in English by the Writers & Readers publishing collective.
"It was an instant hit! Rius' brilliant primer was to sell over a million copies in twelve languages." [11]
Co-publisher & Translator Richard Appignanesi
Marx FOR BEGINNERS
The cooperative turned the 'For Beginners' format into a franchise of more than 100 titles, but the collective eventually fractured, resulting in two lines of books, often covering the same topics.
For Beginners
Writers and Readers, Inc
Founding Editor: Glenn Thompson
Introducing...
Totem Books / Icon Books
Founding Editor: Appignanesi
Rius cartoonist
While most of these books follow the formal template established by Rius, they are different from his work in that the duties Rius performed as cartoonist have been separated into multiple roles for multiple people.
Designer
Writer
Artist
How have these books been used? An anecdotal account:
I had already read Introducing Foucault a while back, when I was first reading Archaeology of Knowledge...
Krista A. Kennedy, circa 2003
FOUCAULT READING SEMINAR! today!
Even though I've read more Foucault since then, I went ahead and picked up Foucault for Beginners, since that seemed to be what everyone else in the class was reading in preparation. [12]
GREEK MYTHOLOGY
PAUL ROBESON
FRENCH REVOLUTIONS
Chomsky
FANON
PSYCHOLOGY A GRAPHIC GUIDE
JUNG A GRAPHIC GUIDE
ECONOMICS A GRAPHIC GUIDE
NIETZSCHE A GRAPHIC GUIDE
HEIDEGGER A GRAPHIC GUIDE
Ecology
POST-MODERN-ISM A GRAPHIC GUIDE
6

Our understanding of the division of labour in books is often related to the divisions between modalities...

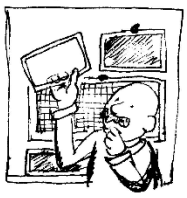
Writer / linguistic



Artist / visual



Designer / spatial

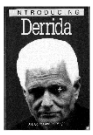


However, in the books themselves, these modalities are merged together, creating meanings which are multimodal and often cannot be separated cleanly as the work of "just" the writer, "just" the artist or "just" the designer.

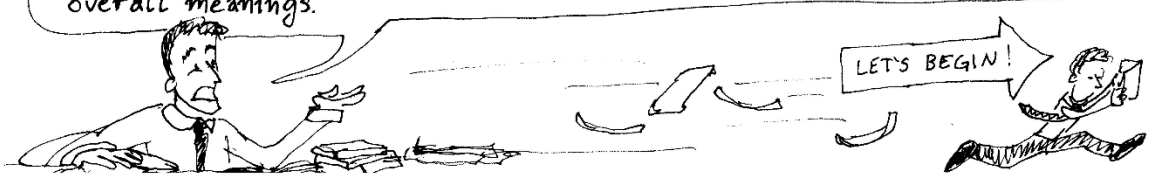


Each of these books constructs the relationships between modalities differently, as well as constructing different models of collaboration between writer, artist & designer

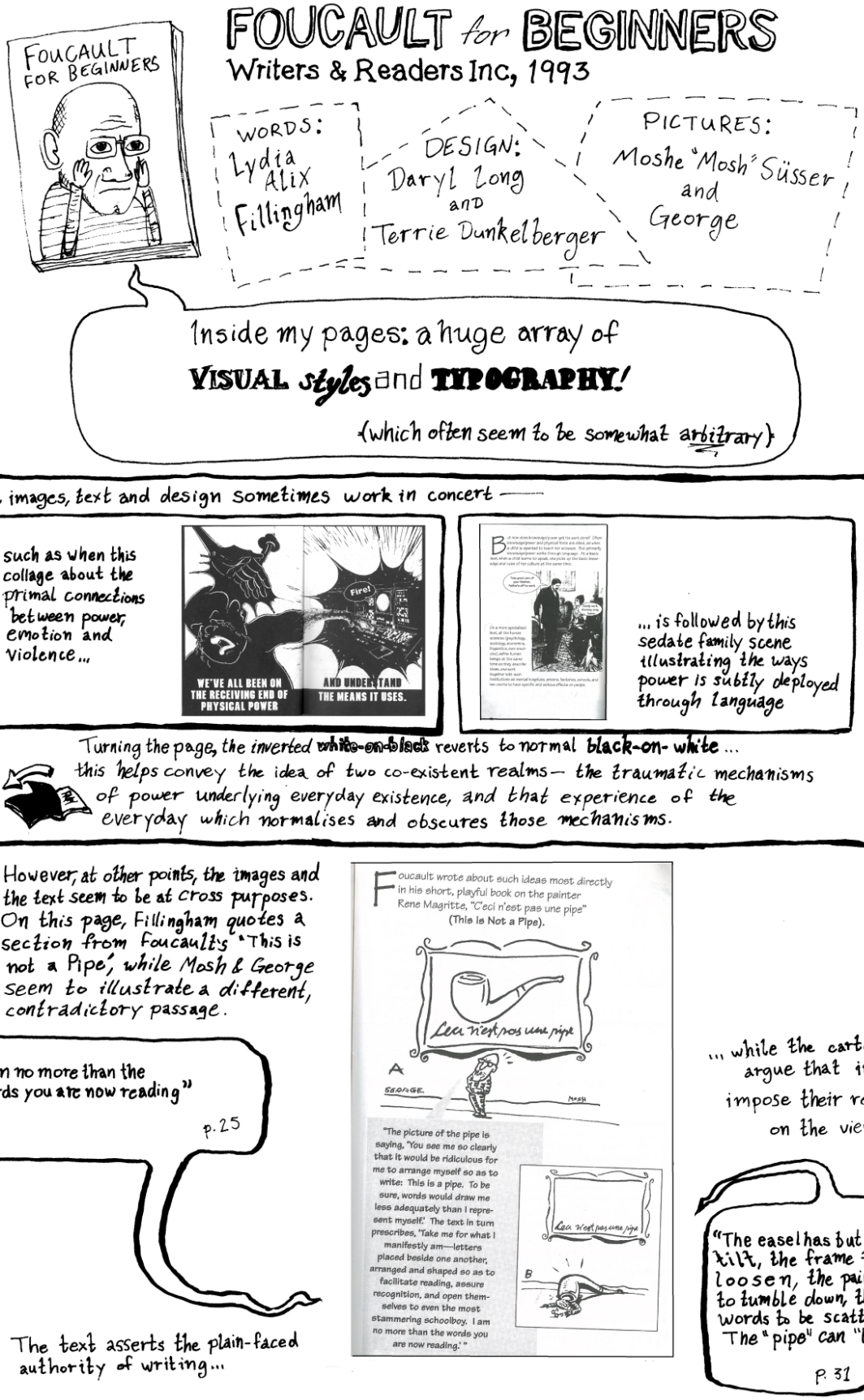
This paper will examine these books in order of a decreasing number of authorial collaborators, and an increasing complexity in the multimodal collaborations between modalities.

				
credited collaborators:	1 WRITER 2 ARTISTS 2 DESIGNERS	1 WRITER 1 ARTIST 1 DESIGNER	1 WRITER 1 ARTIST	1 WRITER 1 ARTIST
linguistic/ visual relationship	 ARBITRARY	 PARALLEL	 TANDEM	 FUSED

This investigation will be focused on the different types of relationships that are constructed, and on the ways these multimodal relationships themselves relate to the books' overall meanings.



7


FOUCAULT for BEGINNERS
Writers & Readers Inc, 1993
WORDS: Lydia Alix Fillingham
DESIGN: Daryl Long and Terrie Dunkelberger
PICTURES: Moshe "Mosh" Süsser and George
Inside my pages: a huge array of VISUAL styles and TYPOGRAPHY!
(which often seem to be somewhat arbitrary)
The images, text and design sometimes work in concert —
such as when this collage about the primal connections between power, emotion and violence...
Fire!
WE'VE ALL BEEN ON THE RECEIVING END OF PHYSICAL POWER
AND UNDERSTAND THE MEANS IT USES.
... is followed by this sedate family scene illustrating the ways power is subtly deployed through language
Turning the page, the inverted white-on-black reverts to normal black-on-white ... this helps convey the idea of two co-existent realms — the traumatic mechanisms of power underlying everyday existence, and that experience of the everyday which normalises and obscures those mechanisms.
However, at other points, the images and the text seem to be at cross purposes. On this page, Fillingham quotes a section from Foucault's 'This is not a Pipe', while Mosh & George seem to illustrate a different, contradictory passage.
"I am no more than the words you are now reading"
p. 25
The text asserts the plain-faced authority of writing...
Foucault wrote about such ideas most directly in his short, playful book on the painter Rene Magritte, "C'eci n'est pas une pipe" (This is Not a Pipe).
Ceci n'est pas une pipe
A
GEORGE
Mosh
"The picture of the pipe is saying, 'You see me so clearly that it would be ridiculous for me to arrange myself so as to write: This is a pipe. To be sure, words would draw me less adequately than I represent myself.' The text in turn prescribes, 'Take me for what I manifestly am—letters placed beside one another, arranged and shaped so as to facilitate reading, assure recognition, and open themselves to even the most stammering schoolboy. I am no more than the words you are now reading.'"
B
... while the cartoons argue that images impose their reality on the viewer. 13
"The easel has but to tilt, the frame to loosen, the painting to tumble down, the words to be scattered. The "pipe" can "break"
p. 31
8

Other battles for control over the meaning of the book can be found in the representations of Fillingham, who seems to have asked her collaborators to draw her into certain passages, as if to assert her authority over the book's VISUAL DOMAIN as well as its TEXT ——

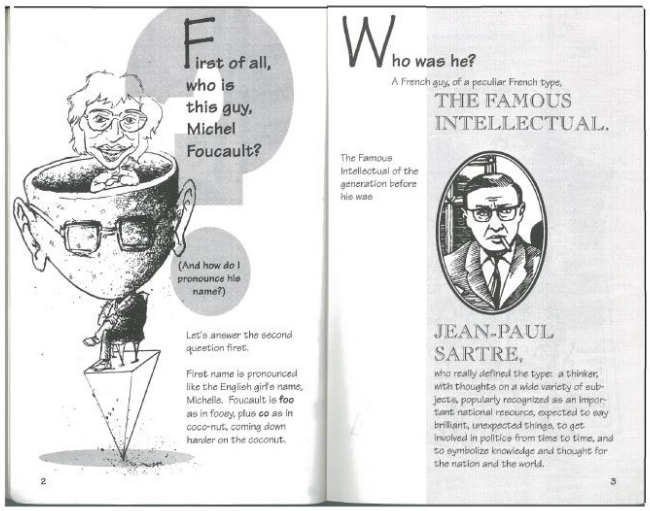
She appears on this first page, emerging from Foucault's head like Athena from Zeus!

but her authority over her own words is undermined by Long and Dunkelberger's design

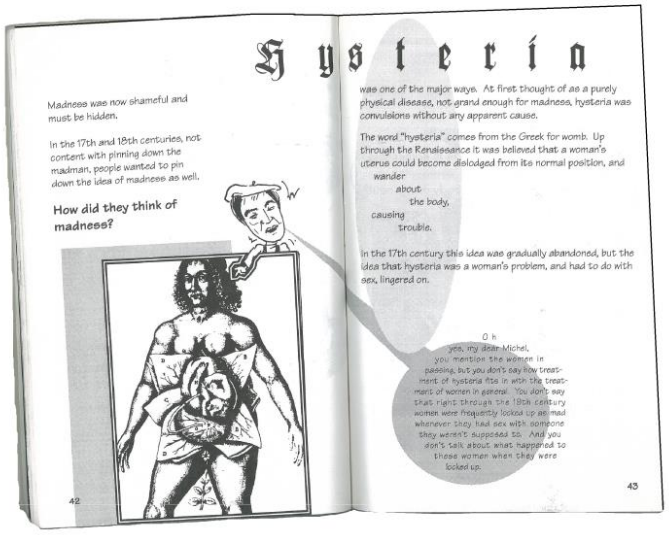
Reading just the largest words, an unintended message emerges:

First of all, who is this guy, Michel Foucault?

Who was he?
THE FAMOUS INTELLECTUAL
JEAN-PAUL SARTRE



In a later passage, she appears on one page while . . . . . her words are printed across the page divide, seeming to flee from their own word balloon



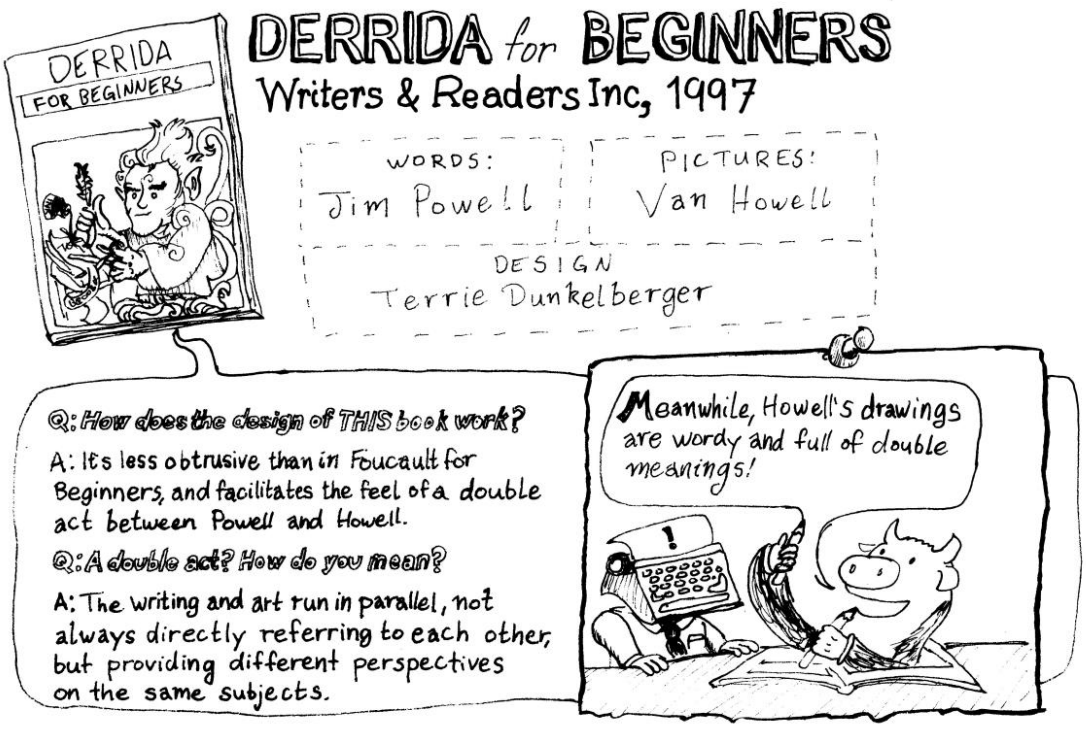
And how are we meant to take the fact that Mosh & George draw the writer so inconsistently?

The pages themselves are the site of a power struggle where meanings are contested.

The authorship of the pages themselves is unclear..

Fillinghams 'VOICE' is at times drowned out by the 'NOISE' of her fellow collaborators.

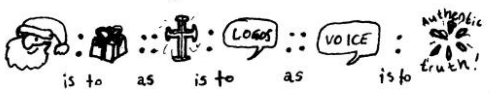
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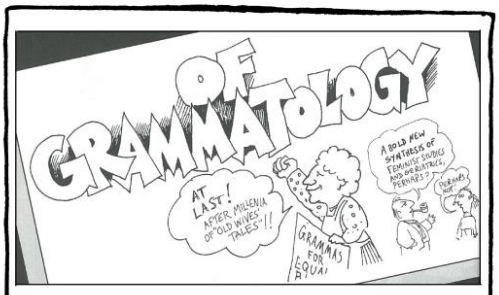


Howell's cartoons frequently combine both visual and verbal puns to create what Derrida might call an 'undecidable' argument.



Here, Howell compares Derrida's concept of the metaphysics of *'presence'* to yearning for *presents* at Christmas, and parallels this pun with another: John's gospel identifies Jesus as 'Logos' - The Word of God, so Howell turns Derrida's 'logocentrism' to 'logos-enterism', or the coming of Christ.





In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida explored 'logocentrism,' the bias for the spoken word over the written word. Howell plays with this by drawing a sound-based pun: a 'Gramma' (Grandma) protesting oral traditions ('Old Wives Tales') with a written sign

but she's also protesting with her 'voice' ... and the joke requires both visual AND verbal literacies

The jokes and meanings of Howell's cartoons can only be understood multimodally, and rely on the space of play between speech and text that Derrida was interested in.

10

Meanwhile, Powell's text is structured as a Socratic dialogue



between two characters which straddle the space between

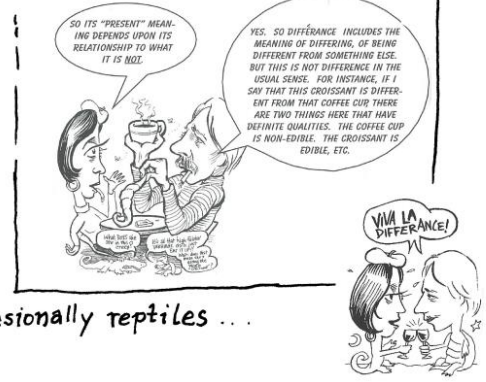


typographic characters

Q: And that takes time! It's like the definition of a word in a dictionary. "A" says the dictionary, "is the first *letter* of the English alphabet." But to know what "A" is you have to know what "letter" is. And to know what "letter" is ("any *character* of the alphabet") you have to know what "character" means, etc. The meaning of "A" never arrives. It is always put off till later—**deferred** till later.

A: Yes. So ***différance*** includes not only the meaning "to **differ**"—to be different from something else—but to **defer**, to delay, to put off till later.

and cartoon characters

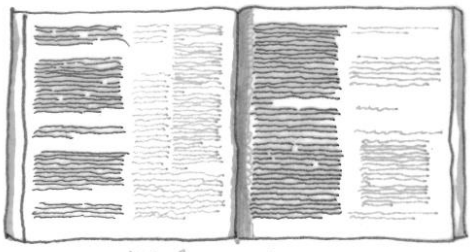


and shift between letters, people, and occasionally reptiles . . .

. . . as well as hybrid forms, such as in the following passage, where the letter forms come alive to animate a discussion of Mallarme's *Mimique*, and Derrida's conception of imitation:



The book as a whole highlights the ways writing (linguistic meaning) and drawing (visual meaning) overlap, making the text self-consciously 'slippery.' Like Derrida's *Glas*, it presents two different kinds of narratives running side by side, sometimes bleeding into each other.



"Glas"

11



Introducing Foucault

Totem Books, 1997

WORDS: Chris Horrocks

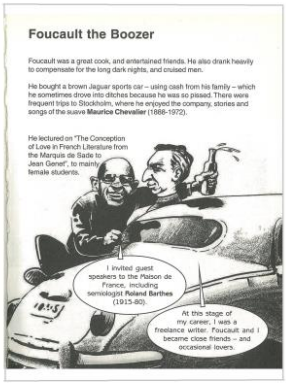
PICTURES: Zoran Jevtic



Interested in the order of things in Foucault's life and work? You'll find it here, organised (mostly) chronologically, and within a (mostly) consistent visual structure! OBSERVE!

Jevtic draws Foucault as the focal point of most pages, sometimes moving surreally through his intellectual life, sometimes in mundane scenes from his personal life (plenty of lovers show up).

The result is that even passages describing Foucault's theories have a biographical feel. Foucault appears as an actor in both mind and body.

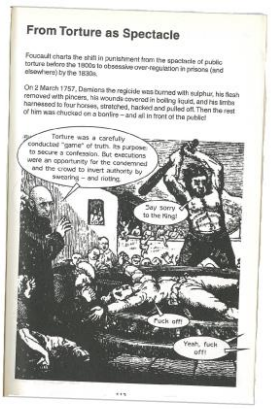


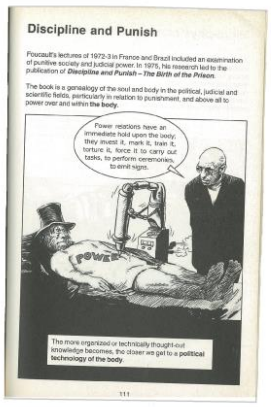
Foucault palling around with Barthes c. 1955

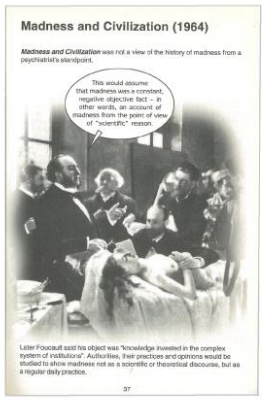


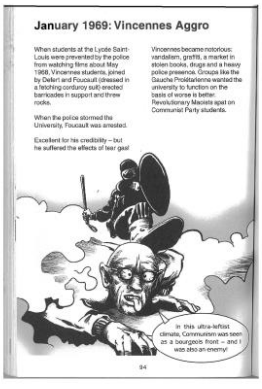
Foucault's archaeology as a seaside excavation overseen by Marx & Freud c. 1965

Just as representations of Foucault's body are braided throughout the book, so is the repeated motif of bodies under surveillance, analysis and/or investigation.









the gaze is omnipresent

Under Investigation

This motif is echoed in the visual structure of the pages themselves, where images presented before us are discussed by the text.

Unlike in the other three books, there isn't much intermingling between WORDS and PICTURES



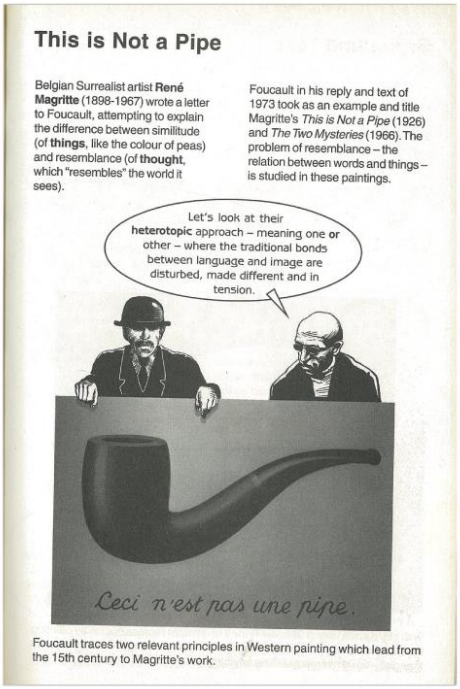
In some ways, this mirrors how Foucault's 'This is Not a Pipe' describes Magritte's paintings, but barely ventures into their visual realm.



"...dividing the pipe floating in its imagistic heaven from the mundane tramp of words marching in their successive line." [19]



But even as this division is mostly maintained, the distinction between speech and text is made ambiguous, along with the division between quote and paraphrase...



Word balloons are meant to signify a closeness between a 'speaker' and their words... but this is not a quote.

Foucault never wrote anything like that in regards to Magritte's work.

Yet in other places, the text in word balloons DOES come from direct quotes.

This book has no system of separation for these different kinds of 'speech.'

13



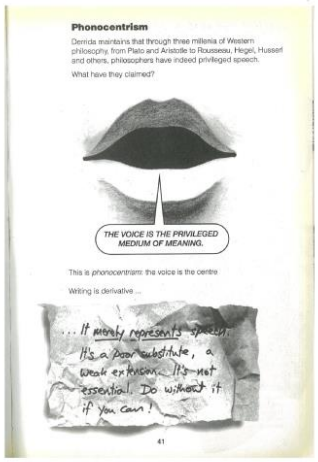
Introducing Derrida

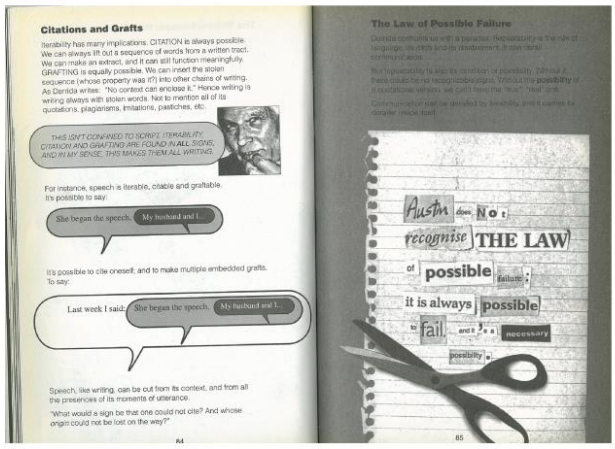
Totem Books, 1996

WORDS: Jeff Collins

PICTURES: Bill Mayblin

The roles of writer, illustrator and designer are fused in this book more than in any of the others





On pages like these, the various visual forms of the words carry as much meaning as the words themselves, calling into question the roles of writer and illustrator.

Did Mayblin the illustrator hand-write that note?

Did Collins the writer establish the visual way those balloons are nested?

Who is responsible for the words in this ransom note?

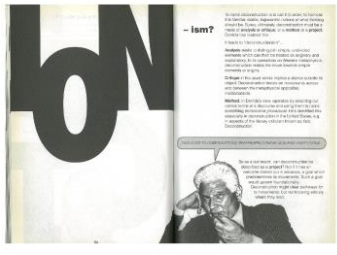
As in *Glas*, the book's physical codex form is used as part of its argument — In this section, a word with larger-than-life status in Derrida's oeuvre is spread over six pages.



flip the page



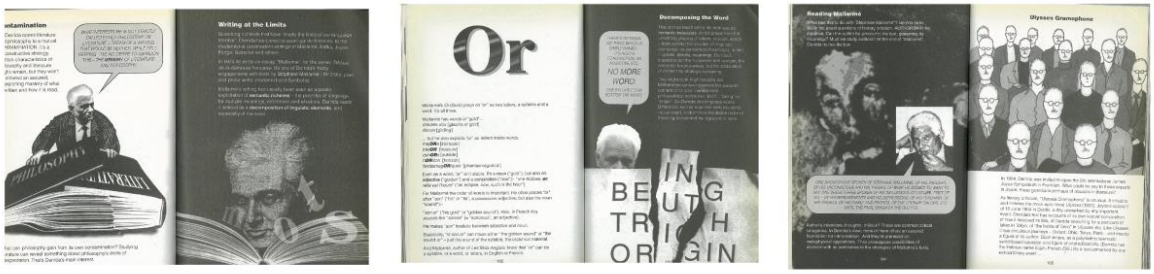
flip the page



The term cannot even be read without physical effort — and it might not even be a single term,,, does the last page's tiny '-ism?' count?

14

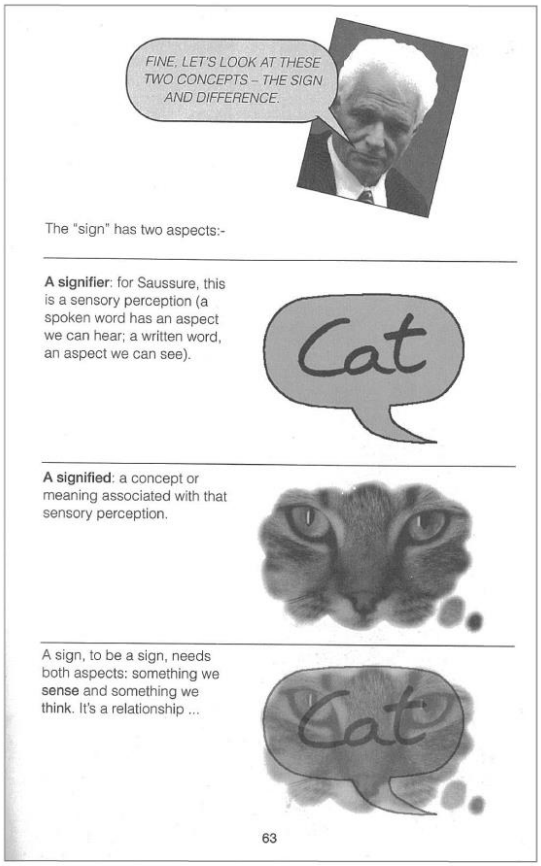
The complexity of the design is at times dazzling, but in places falls into the same trap as Foucault for Beginners, where **The design 'speaks' LOUDER than anything else on the page!**



Linguistically, these pages are about Derrida's critique of binary systems of thought, a reversal of the idea that meanings are either/or.

Yet the visual form of these pages, shifts constantly from black on white to white on black, subtly reinforcing the idea of binary opposites.

The meanings of these two modalities are not aligned.



Similarly, this page misrepresents Saussure's classic construction of signifier and signified:

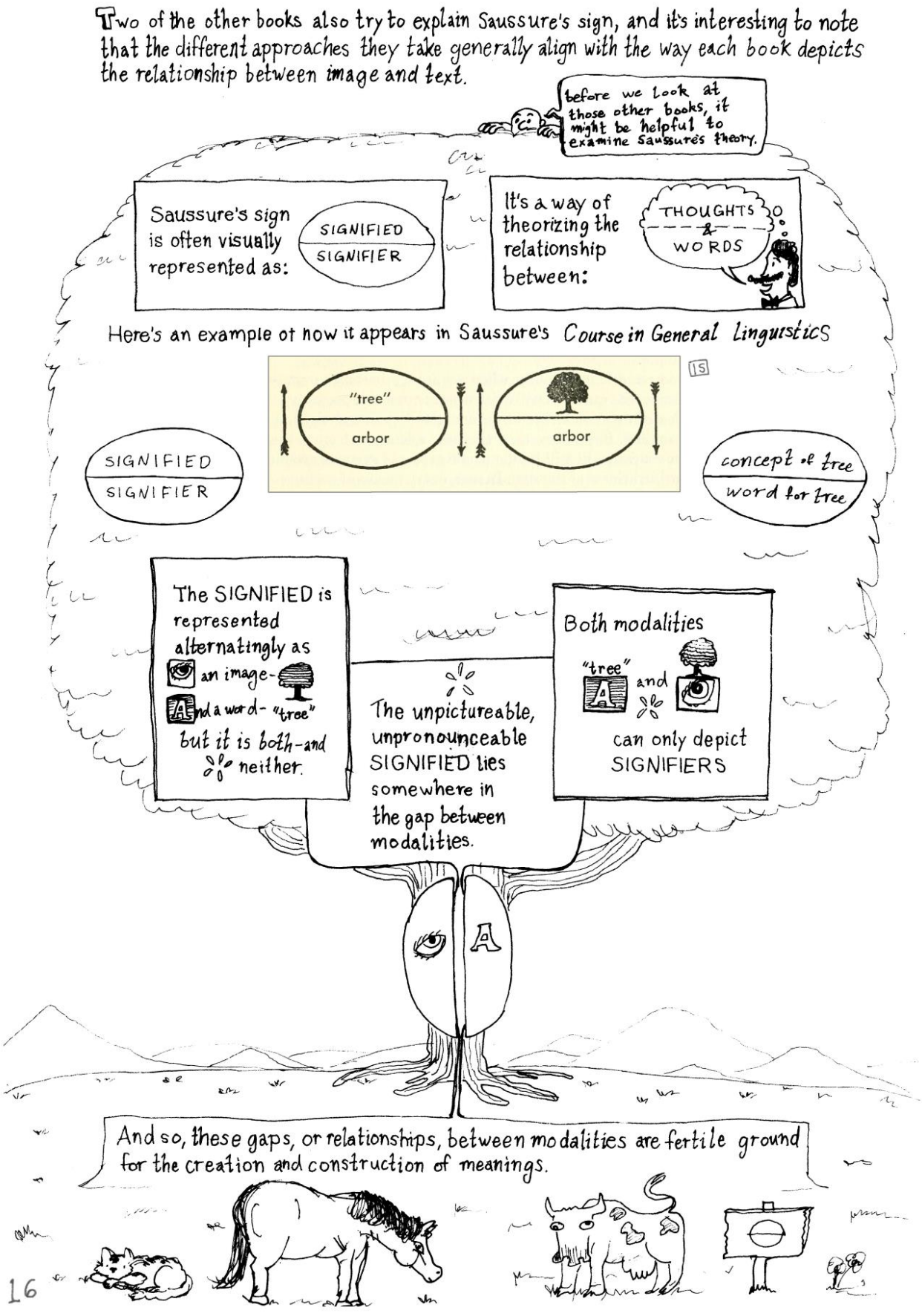
Introducing each element individually, like steps in a process, undermines Saussure's central premise that in a sign, signifier and signified cannot exist independently of each other – they are two sides of the same coin.

Furthermore, representing the 'signified' with a close-up photograph implies that it has an external, sensory quality; Saussure's idea was that the signified was entirely mental and internal.

As a result, instead of showing Saussure's theory of signs made of signifying sensory experiences (sound images) linked to signified mental conceptions...

the page shows how images and words can be combined to form multimodal signifiers.

15


Two of the other books also try to explain Saussure's sign, and it's interesting to note that the different approaches they take generally align with the way each book depicts the relationship between image and text.
before we look at those other books, it might be helpful to examine Saussures theory.
Saussure's sign is often visually represented as:
SIGNIFIED
SIGNIFIER
It's a way of theorizing the relationship between:
THOUGHTS
&
WORDS
Here's an example of how it appears in Saussure's Course in General Linguistics
15
"tree"
arbor
arbor
SIGNIFIED
SIGNIFIER
concept of tree
word for tree
The SIGNIFIED is represented alternatingly as
an image-
and a word- "tree"
but it is both-and neither.
The unpictureable, unpronounceable SIGNIFIED lies somewhere in the gap between modalities.
Both modalities
"tree"
and
can only depict SIGNIFIERS
A
And so, these gaps, or relationships, between modalities are fertile ground for the creation and construction of meanings.
16



They started by resurrecting the work of **Ferdinand de Saussure** (1857-1913), a theorist in the emerging field of linguistics, who had been largely ignored until the 50's and 60's.

In any language, the relationship of **signifier** to **signified** is arbitrary.

The collection of sounds and letters that make up the word "horse" (the signifier) do not in themselves have any connection to the animal we see cantering about a field (the signified). A "horse" is called, around the world, "cheval" in French, "pferd" in German, "farasi" in Swahili, "hest" in Norwegian, "konj" in Serbo-Croatian, "coffy" in Welsh, "at" in Turkish, "caballo" in Spanish, and could just as easily be called a "glymph" in any of these languages (and it still would smell as sweet). The answers to how meaning works lies not in these sounds and letters, but in the whole system of language.

Saussure looked at language as a whole, to see how it worked, rather than focusing on the details of individual languages.

82

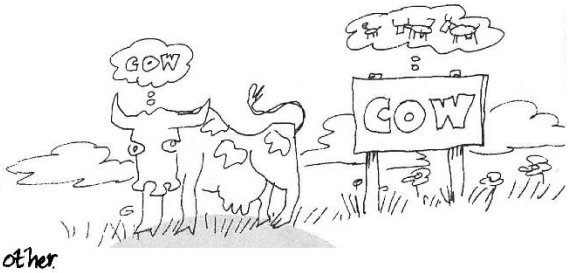
For example ~

Foucault for Beginners explains the arbitrary nature of the relationship between words and their meanings in a passage accompanied by a picture of dozens of Chinese words pointing to a horse, as if to illustrate that any of those words could have an equal (and equally arbitrary) claim to signify the animal.

But the reappropriated horse acupuncture chart is not referred to in the text. It is unclear who drew the picture, or who decided to include it in the book. Like many other images in the book, it has an arbitrary relationship to the text.

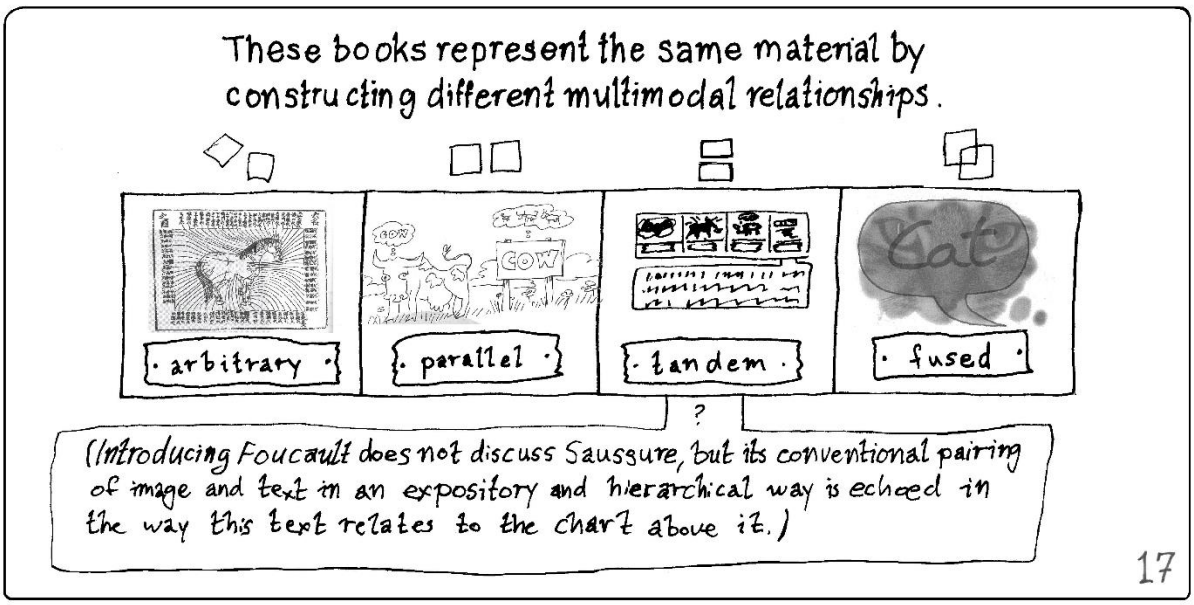
Although the two modalities are not clearly linked by authorship or subject matter, meaning can be constructed from their spatial order & proximity.

In *Derrida for Beginners*, the discussion of signifier/signified is illustrated with several cartoons, of which this is the most simple and direct →



The abstracted cartoon drawings combine Saussure's  and "tree" onto a unified canvas while still holding the visual and linguistic modalities at a distance to each other.

In the same way, throughout the book, words and images inter-relate and refer to each other without interacting directly.




As I've tried to show in this analysis of all four books, and in the construction of this paper itself, meanings in a text are reliant on multimodal relationships and combinations.
Comics theorist Thierry Groensteen calls the visual/spatial mesh that contains these relationships the SPATIO-TOPIA, and explains:
Meaning is braided throughout the network of a comic. [16]
(a paraphrase)
The boundaries between modalities and the categorisations I've used here to describe relationships are not solid, but shifting
Nevertheless, observing and thinking about the ways modalities combine and relate to each other can be illuminating ...
Within this spatio-topia, modalities interact and meanings bounce off of each other to construct an argument which is larger than, and different from, our sense of a book's purely linguistic meaning.
18

Even arbitrary images or questionable design choices contribute to this multimodal argument.

And even texts without pictures construct multimodal arguments.

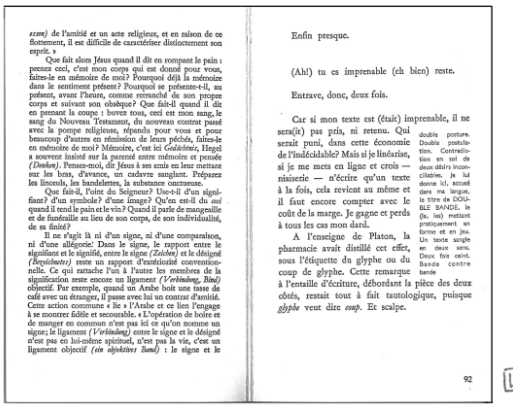
Most academic publications assume a fairly uniform multimodal structure ... and this is part of their argument —

I belong to, act like, and look like other academic discourse.

But as Rius and the books he inspired have shown . . .

... a globalising format...?

There are other ways of making, and of thinking about, theoretical arguments.



Enfin presque.

(Ah!) tu es imprenable (eh bien) reste.

Entrave, donc, deux fois.

Car si mon texte est (était) imprenable, il ne sera(it) pas pris, ni retenu. Qui serait puni, dans cette économie de l'indécidable? Mais si je linfastise, si je me mets en ligne et crois — naisiserie — n'écrire qu'un texte à la fois, cela revient au même et il faut encore compter avec le coût de la marge. Je gagne et perds à tous les cas mon dard.

A l'enseigne de Platon, la pharmacie avait distillé cet effet, sous l'étiquette du glyphe ou du coup de glyphe. Cette remarque à l'entaille d'écriture, débordant la pièce des deux côtés, restait tout à fait tautologique, puisque *glyphe* veut dire *coup*. Et scalpe.

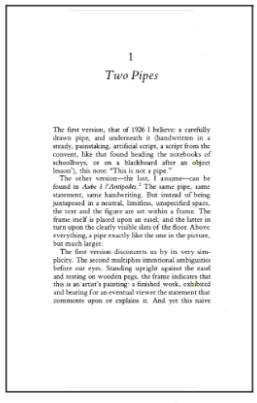
92

17

Derrida's *Glas* is an obvious example of a book that makes its visual and spatial modalities explicitly part of its argument. {... an analysis of its spatiotopia would be revealing... }

And Foucault's *This is Not a Pipe* must be understood in terms of its multimodal forms, as a 'mundane tramp of words'.....

. . . . that is presented entirely separate from representative images of Magritte's work...



1
Two Pipes

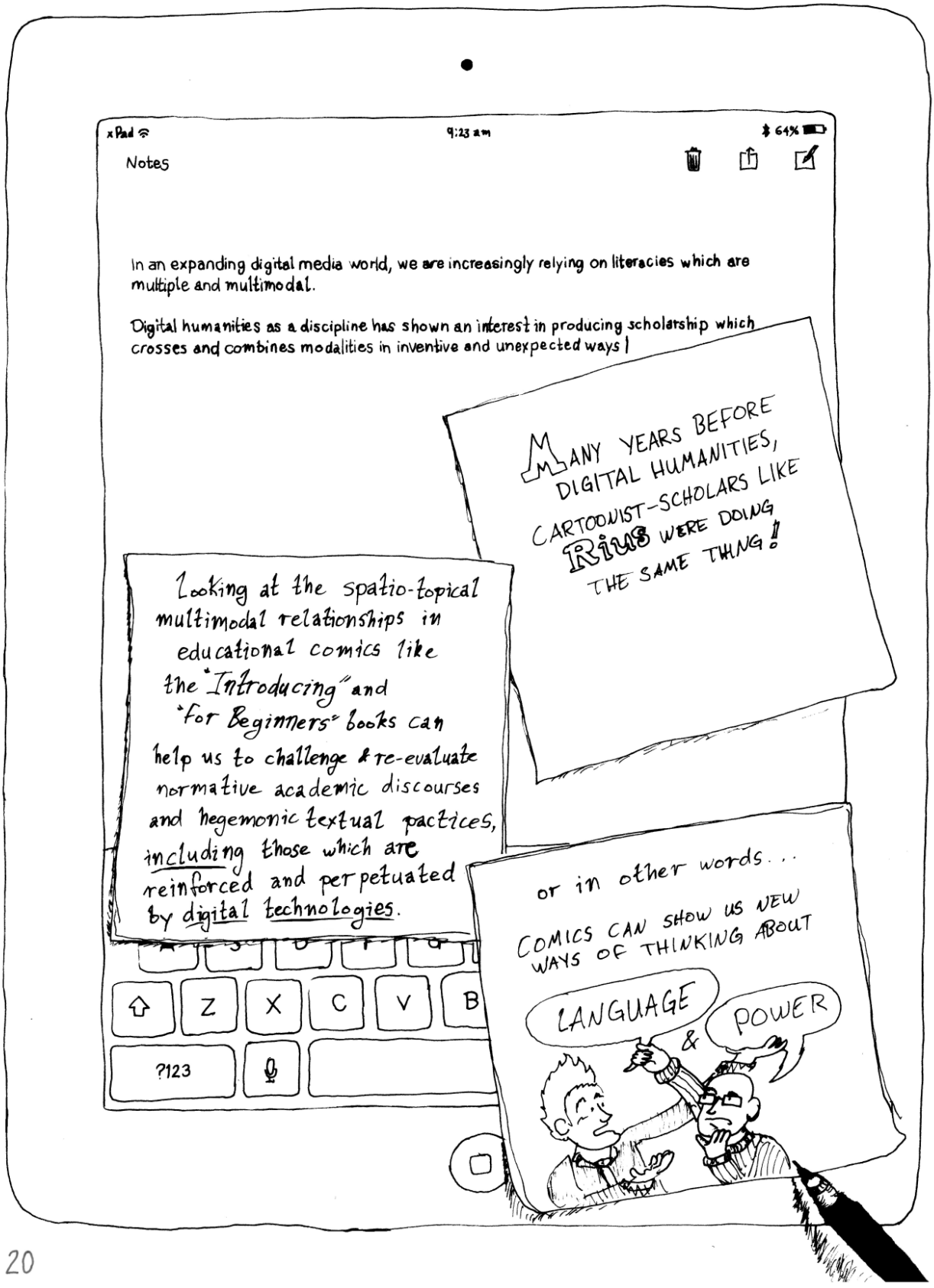
The first version, that of 1926 I believe: a carefully drawn pipe, and underneath it (handwritten in a steady, painstaking, artificial script, a script from the convent, like that found heading the notebooks of schoolboys, or on a blackboard after an object lesson!), this note: "This is not a pipe."

The other version—the last, I assume—can be found in *Aube à l'Antipode*.[2] The same pipe, same statement, same handwriting. But instead of being juxtaposed in a neutral, limitless, unspecified space, the text and the figure are set within a frame. The frame itself is placed upon an easel, and the latter in turn upon the clearly visible slats of the floor. Above everything, a pipe exactly like the one in the picture, but much larger.

The first version disconcerts us by its very simplicity. The second multiplies intentional ambiguities before our eyes. Standing upright against the easel and resting on wooden pegs, the frame indicates that this is an artist's painting: a finished work, exhibited and bearing for an eventual viewer the statement that comments upon or explains it. And yet this naive



19


iPad
9:23 am
64%
Notes
In an expanding digital media world, we are increasingly relying on literacies which are multiple and multimodal.
Digital humanities as a discipline has shown an interest in producing scholarship which crosses and combines modalities in inventive and unexpected ways |
MANY YEARS BEFORE DIGITAL HUMANITIES, CARTOONIST-SCHOLARS LIKE Rius WERE DOING THE SAME THING!
Looking at the spatio-topical multimodal relationships in educational comics like the "Introducing" and "for Beginners" books can help us to challenge & re-evaluate normative academic discourses and hegemonic textual practices, including those which are reinforced and perpetuated by digital technologies.
or in other words...
COMICS CAN SHOW US NEW WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT
LANGUAGE
&
POWER
?123
20

Chapter 9 References

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19. The term 'alphabetic text' comes from Jacobs, D 2013, *Graphic Encounters: Comics and the Sponsorship of Multimodal Literacy*, Bloomsbury, New York, London.
20. New London Group 1996, 'A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures', *Harvard Educational REview*, vol. 66, no. 1, pp. 60-92.
21. Kress, G 1996, 'Representational resources and the production of subjectivity: Questions for the theoretical development of critical discourse analysis in a multicultural society.', in CR Caldas-Coulthard & M Coulthard (eds), *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis*, Routledge, London, pp. 15-31.
22. Moretti, F 2000, 'Conjectures on World Literature', *New Left Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 54 - 68.
23. A decent chronology of the various printings and editions of these books can be found on their GoodReads pages:
    a. <http://www.goodreads.com/work/editions/170812-introducing-foucault>
    b. <http://www.goodreads.com/work/editions/590245-introducing-derrida-beginners>
    c. <http://www.goodreads.com/work/editions/3494271-derrida-for-beginners>
    d. <http://www.goodreads.com/work/editions/170811-foucault-for-beginners-writers-and-readers-documentary-comic-books-62>
24. Humphrey, A 2014, 'Beyond graphic novels: illustrated scholarly discourse and the history of educational comics', *Media International Australia*, no. 151, May 2014.

25. Díaz, Jose Antonio Gaspar 2014, 'Rius cumplirá 80 años este viernes '.
26. The books pictured here reside on the same shelf at the University of Adelaide's Barr Smith Library. From left to right, top row followed by bottom row, they are:
    a. Jalée, P 1977, *How Capitalism Works*, Monthly Review Press, New York.
    b. Marx, K & Engels, F 1970, *The German Ideology*, Lawrence & Wishart, London.
    c. Marx, K 1963, *Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*, trans. TB Bottomore, Pelican Books, Middlesex, England
    d. Harrison, J 1978, *Marxist Economics for Socialists/ A Critique of Reformism*, Pluto Press, London.
    e. Callinicos, A 1983, *The Revolutionary Ideas of Marx*, Bookmarks, London.
    f. Rius 1976, *Marx for Beginners*, trans. R Appignanesi, Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative Society Ltd, London.
27. Priego, E 2002, 'The history of mankind for beginners. (Interview: Rius/Eduardo del Rio) ', *School Library Journal*, vol. 48, no. 4, Apr. 2002.
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Chapter 10: Compassion and Propaganda: Visual Authority and Anonymity in Asylum-Seeker Comics

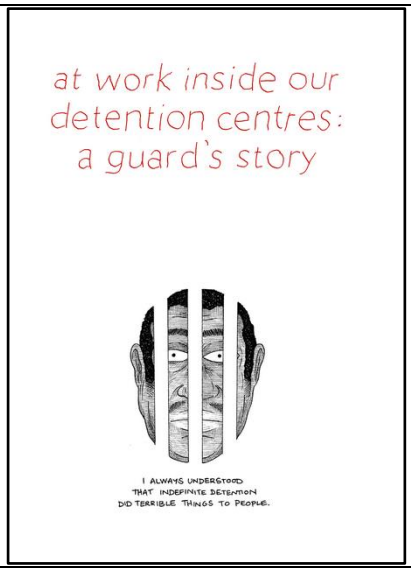
Introduction

The previous two chapters have been case studies examining educational comics where authorship is complicated by the work of multiple creative collaborators. This chapter will continue this investigation by focusing on two comics that deliberately use the multimodal, collaborative construction of comics to obscure the identities and voices of their 'authors.' These two comics both deal with Australia's controversial policies of detaining asylum seekers attempting to migrate to the country. Like the comics of Rius and the work Eisner and others carried out for *P.S. Magazine*, the pedagogies of these comics are explicitly political.

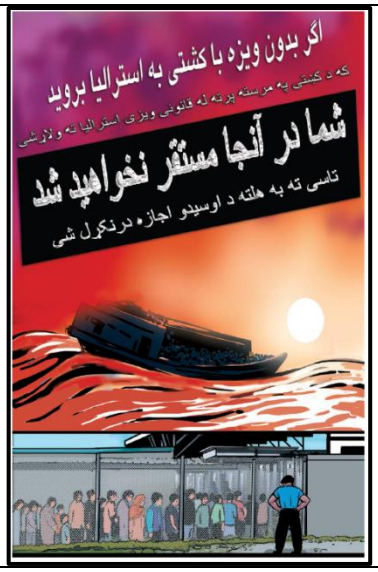
One of the comics, published by the Australian government's Customs and Border Protection Service (CBPS), is a piece of propaganda that uses the non-linguistic modalities of comics to threaten potential asylum seekers with an implied promise of misery if they attempt to migrate to Australia. This is an example of comics in the service of the dark side of educational, the literal opposite of Freire's "liberatory pedagogy." Although I was not able to examine the way the comic was received by its initial intended audience of potential refugees, I was able to track how Australian readers reacted to the comic, and this chapter shows how their responses serve as an example of how readers construct meanings through comics. The other comic discussed in this chapter, "At Work Inside Our Detention Centres: A Guard's Story," was critical of the government's policies. Published by news website *The Global Mail*, "A Guard's Story" features first-person narration and sketchy, impressionistic cartooning style that can be seen as a descendent of the pioneering comics of Rius.

Both comics were produced through the work of many people, and they bare the qualities of being both anonymous and highly authored. A comparison reveals that the two comics contrast not only in their politics, but also in their visual styles, and how they position readers phatically in

relationship to their semi-anonymous authors/graphiauteurs. Both comics use the multimodal structures of comics to create a sense of authority while simultaneously concealing the "voices" of their authors. In "A Guard's Story," which was based on an anonymous interview, this is done to affect a kind of emotional authenticity but protect the identity of its source. The largely wordless CBPS comic, the reliance on non-linguistic modalities has the effect of rendering the comic as a slippery kind of statement which clearly has an intended meaning, but cannot be pinned down, easily debated or discussed within conventional political discourse.



A Guard's Story, first page.



CBPS comic, front cover.

These comics are also an example of the trend in recent years for educational comics to have a digital presence, either in lieu of, or supplementing a printed publication. As they remediate older traditions of educational comics previously discussed, these online comics exemplifying Jenkins' paradigm of "convergence culture" where "old and new media will interact in ever more complex ways" (Jenkins 2006, p. 6):6). This chapter will explore how these comics were read by Australian audiences online, and in the context of social media.

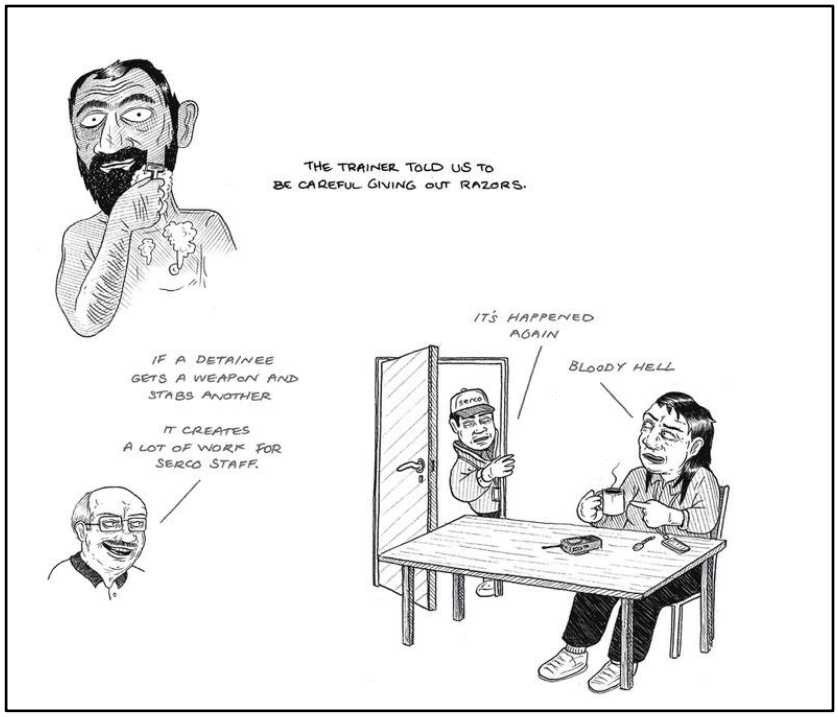
Chapter Eight argued that readers of Greenberg's version of *Hamlet* are authorised to act as "co-actors" and "co-directors" because the design of the book encourages readers to invest their own emotions, experiences and creativity into the performance. However, an analysis of a text on its own can

only go so far. As Wolfgang Iser argues, if "a text can only come to life when it is read … it must therefore be studied through the eyes of the reader" (1993, p. 4). This chapter will examine online reader responses that to the CBPS comic and "A Guard's Story" to understand how readers have interpreted and contributed to these texts by looking at responses that have been posted online and in social media.

Authorship of "A Guard's Story"

Newspapers have been publishing comics designed to educate readers about social ills at least as early as *Punch*'s 1843 cartoon "Shadow and Shade" discussed in Chapter 2. In the 21st century, online news outlets have published longer narrative comics like "A Guard's Story" to considerable acclaim, including Safdar Ahmed's 2015 Walkley Award-winning comic "Villawood." Ahmed's comic, which is also about Australia's immigration detention centres, was inspired by 2014's "A Guard's Story" (Castle 2015). It's worth noting, however, that this is still a developing area in Australian journalism. *The Global Mail* had published many innovative and interactive pieces of journalism, and was lauded for the quality and depth of its reporting (Wake 2014), but "A Guard's Story" was the site's first attempt at a comic.

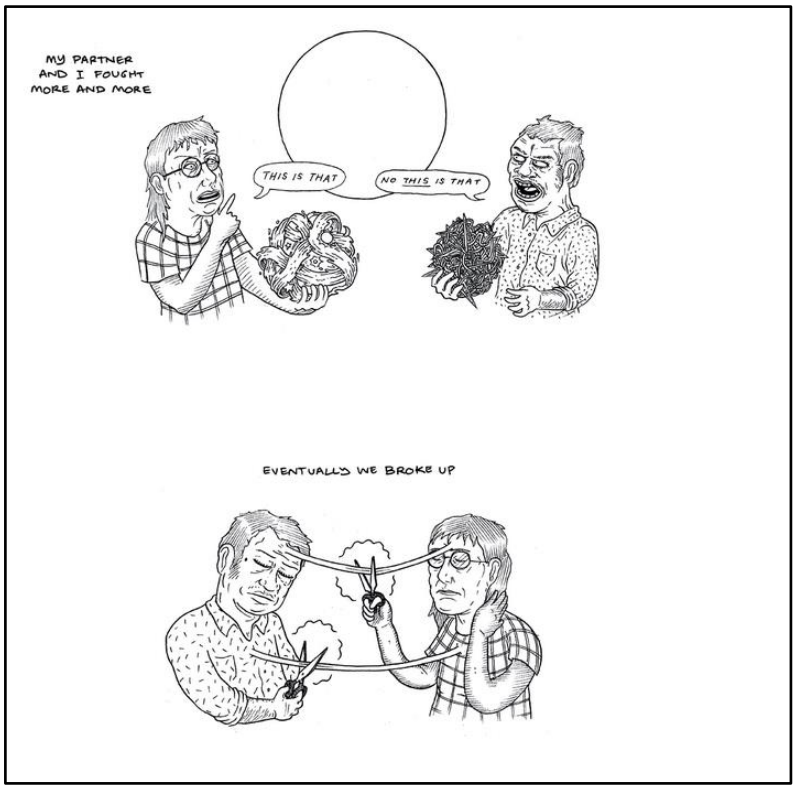
The comic grew out of journalist Nick Olle's contact with an anonymous source who had worked in a detention centre, a story that would have easily worked as a traditional news feature. However, *The Global Mail's* interest in "project based" journalism led to a discussion of how to best present it. The staff debated whether to use video, graphics or another format before settling on the style of a graphic novel, as suggested by Ella Rubeli. As with the "Missed It" article in *The Annals of Internal Medicine*, the cultural authority of "graphic novels" helped sway the *Global Mail*'s decision to publish a comic. (Fisher 2014)



This excerpt from "A Guard's Story," shows multiple levels of narration – the interviewee's voice, the recalled voice of his trainer, and dialogue from a vignette.

Like many of the educational comics discussed in this thesis, "A Guard's Story" was a collaboration between several people working in different modalities. Pat Grant, whose graphic novel *Blue* was published to critical regard in 2012 (Flynn 2012; Mills 2012; Scott, R 2012) was the first cartoonist *The Global Mail* approached. He drafted a visual structure for the article, and suggested Sam Wallman as the project's cartoonist. Olle, Grant and Wallman worked to develop the comic, with Grant and *Global Mail* designer Pat Armstrong providing the final design and editing (Fisher 2014; Grant 2015). All four are credited on the story, along with producer Sam Bungey, developer Mark Finger and editor Lauren Martin. The source of the interview, whose multimodal "voice" the comic was intended to convey, remains anonymous. The comic tells the story of the time he spent employed at Serco, a multi-national services company that runs Australia's mainland detention centres. Although initially motivated by a desire to help detainees from inside the system, after witnessing their mistreatment and psychological distress, his own mental wellbeing and personal relationships begin to deteriorate. Eventually he surrenders and gives up the job. The story

ends on a note of ambiguous hope, with a silent sequence depicting him encountering two former detainees at a shopping mall.



This excerpt from "A Guard's Story" shows its use of facial expressions and visual metaphors to communicate multimodally.

Reader Responses to A Guard's Story

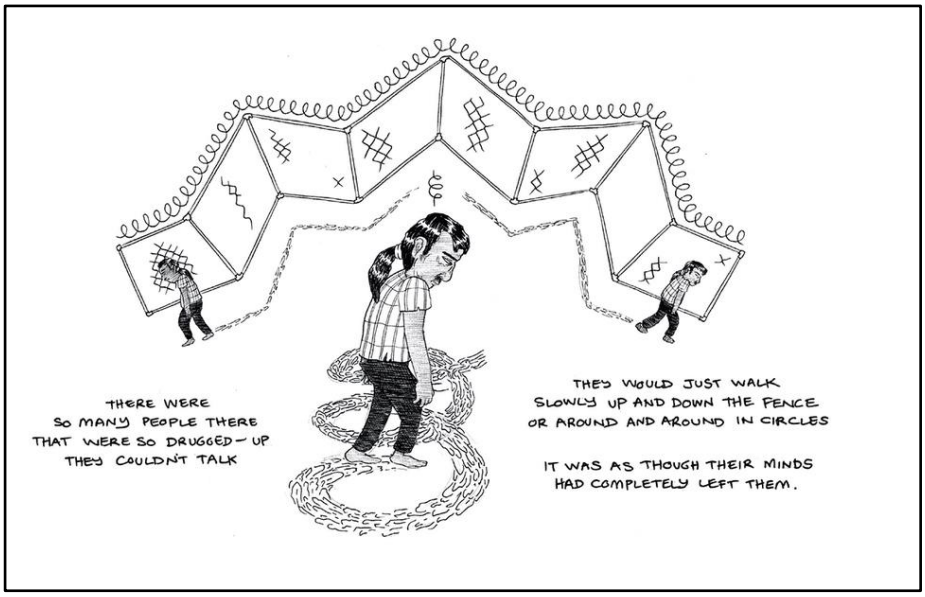
Published in February 2014, on the day that *The Global Mail* closed, "A Guard's Story" became the site's "biggest story ever" (Fisher 2014), despite the fact that it was uploaded while the staff of *The Global Mail* were leaving the building. In the wake of the site being defunded by its sole benefactor, Graeme Wood, almost exactly two years after it had launched, *The Global Mail*'s website was not updated to mention the comic that it now hosted, not even with a single hyperlink. However, someone on *The Global Mail*'s Facebook page was able to post a link to the story. Within a fortnight, the page had been shared on Facebook more than 50,000 times (Fisher 2014); before the *Global Mail*'s website was shut in early 2015, that number grew to more than 64,000. Its actual readership would have been several times larger. As a point of comparison, *The Global Mail* reported that when it closed the number of unique visitors to the entire site in a fortnight averaged around

120,000, with a subscriber base of about 18,600 ('The Global Mail STAFF STATEMENT' 2014). In other words, in the fortnight that it was posted, the number of people who liked "A Guard's Story" on Facebook was nearly half as large as the number of people who read *any* story on *The Global Mail*'s website the previous fortnight.

Clearly, online readers found this anonymous story to be emotionally engaging. Readers posted comments on *The Global Mail*'s Facebook like "That moved me to tears," and "Print it! Print 1,000s of them I'll hand them out on street corners!" ('Serco is the private company...'). Whether negative or positive emotional responses to online content are more likely to motivate readers to pass it on has been debated by researchers who study the role of emotions in media that goes viral, but recent studies suggest that the type of emotions are less important than their intensity – the higher, the better (Nelson-Field, Riebe & Newstead 2013). In a similar vein, Henke posits that the contributing factor is high levels of reader engagement, characterised as flow (Henke 2013). Although it is impossible to know just how precisely readers responded to 'A Guard's Story', the fact that it was so widely shared online suggests that it was emotionally affecting and engaging for many readers.

McCloud (1993) and Groensteen (2007) have suggested that comics are particularly effective at engaging readers and eliciting emotions, primarily due to two formal properties: visual abstraction and fractured narratives. Both of these qualities contribute to what McLuhan would consider the "coolness" of comics, where the comics are brought to life through the readers' own emotions and memories, which is the kind of emotional engagement that can help web content to go "viral." For example, Scott McCloud's theory of "masking," discussed in Chapter 8, posits that that simplified drawings of faces, like those typically used in comics, serve as masks which readers project themselves into, essentially allowing the reader a high level of identification with the character and allowing them to in a sense enter the world of the comic (McCloud 1993).

According to Wallman, not knowing the person whose story he was illustrating in "A Guard's Story" helped to make the comic more universal, and relatable, since "all the workers in the centre could be reduced to one character... When you read kids' books, the characters' faces often have really simple, minimal features, they're just vessels so the kid reading the book can project onto this character. Not knowing a lot about the informant meant I could make it more about what they were going through, and the experiences of the asylum seekers" (Fisher 2014). As Wallman only had access to the ideas and emotions of the guard's story, he used the languages of facial expressions and visual metaphor to build his interpretation of the story.



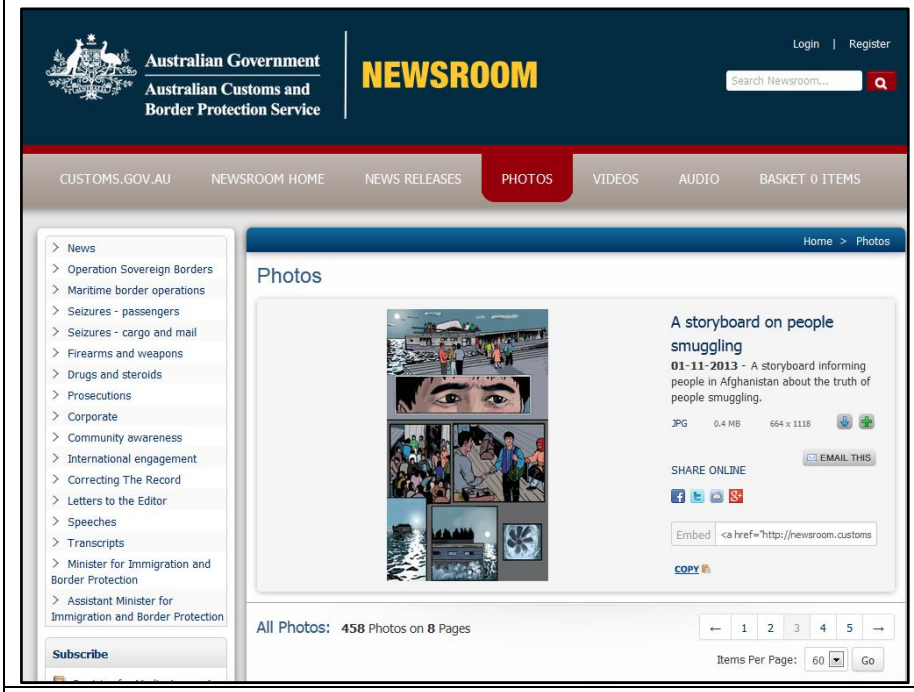
This excerpt from 'A Guard's Story' shows Wallman's use of comics to universalise the plight of the detainees.

Authorship of CBPS comic

The CBPS comic used many of the same multimodal design strategies as "A Guard's Story," including a reliance on facial expressions and visual abstraction to universalise the story. However, where "A Guard's Story" was designed to invoke empathy in readers, the CBPS comic was intended to teach its readers a Joe Dope-esque lesson about what not to do. In many ways it is a continuation of the propaganda comics developed during World War II (discussed in Chapter 3). Unlike the Joe Dope comics in *Army Motors* and *P.S. Magazine,* it does not use a humorous visual style to appeal to its readers.

Instead, it creates a serious tone, and uses a generic visual style that seems devoid of personality, even as it depicts extreme emotions.

Australian readers were apparently not its intended audience, but the Australian public reacted very strongly to this comic. The first public acknowledgement of the CBPS comic appears to be a photo that was posted in early November, 2013 on the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service's website with an image from a comic book intended to deter potential immigrants from travelling from Afghanistan to Australia through unofficial channels (*A storyboard on people smuggling* 2013), along with a photo of a child in Sri Lanka reading 'a similar product in his native language' (*Sri Lankan child* 2013), indicating that this sort of campaign may have been used in several countries.



The Photos section of the CBPS website showed a page from their comic, which was labelled as a "storyboard." (*A storyboard on people smuggling* 2013)



Another photo on the CBPS website (*Sri Lankan child* 2013) shows a child reading a different comic that does not appear to have been posted online in any form. The caption does not label this publication as a "comic" or even a "storyboard," but simply "a similar product" to the page shown in the previous photo.

A PDF file of the full comic was also published on the CBPS website, although it is difficult to know if this was posted before or after the photo. Both the comic and the image were posted without any kind of authorial credits. Notably, where other organisations have used the "graphic novel" moniker to ascribe cultural authority to comics they publish, the CBPS used the term "storyboard." This term notably does not have the same connotations of personal expression or individual authorship that are implied in the term "graphic novel," suggesting that the CBPS did not see their comic in those terms or did not want it to be understood in that way.

Although the comic does originate from the Australian government, its authorship is unclear. While "A Guard's Story" used the comics form to generate an emotional avatar for its anonymous narrator and used Wallman's idiosyncratic style to give it a human, individualised presence, the style of the CBPS comic is inscrutable and detached. Like the drawings found on airline safety cards, it has been scrubbed clean of personal touches or artistic flourishes, and is presented essentially an un-authored document. As "A Guard's Story" so capably demonstrates, drawings have the abilities to convey personality and subjective experience. In an attempt to depict the plight of the fictional characters in the CBPS comic as objective truth, the uncredited creators of that comic adopted a more "neutral" and "realistic" diegetic style.



Excerpt from "A Guard's Story"



Excerpt from CBPS comic, page 5

A close examination reveals the constructed and artificial nature of this 'realistic' style. In contrast to the intimacy conveyed in Wallman's fluid pen lines, the CBPS's garish colouring and strange compositions give it the look of a document clearly produced with computer software.



Figure 1: excerpt from CBPS comic, page 8 -- the plane in panel 1 is a resized copy of the plane in the second panel. The panel borders overlap oddly, and are of uneven weight. The background in the bottom panel has had details crudely added – just how are those buildings supposed to work?





Figure 2: excerpt from CBPS comic, page 13 -- The fence in the background looks as if it had been edited after being initially drawn -- Notice how the lines are uneven in the background. The hazy artefacts around the guard's hands also indicate that it has somehow been moved or changed from its original composition.

While examining the comic closely may reveal a particular ineptness in graphic design, it also reinforces the feeling of a "made-by-committee" sensibility, the hand of a collective, corporate "author" who transcends individuality. Instead of authenticity, this is the visual style of bureaucratic authority and anonymity. The comic also reflects this pedagogically, as its message is both authoritarian and dehumanising.

Australian Reader Responses to the CBPS comic

The images of comics on the CBPS website went largely ignored by the public, until February 2014 when the CBPS rolled out a media campaign on its website to support its new immigration policies, focusing on the slogan "No Way. They Will Not Make Australia Home." Journalist Oliver Laughland reported on this new campaign for *The Guardian* in a story that also uncovered the existence of the PDF version of the comic book on the CBPS website. The digital version of the comic was obscurely tucked away on the Dari language section of the CBPS's website (*Operation Sovereign Borders* 2014), and Laughland seems to have suspected that its public availability was an accident, writing on Twitter that "elements of the campaign" were "seemingly accidentally launched" (Laughland 2014b), and later: "have been asking department for hours to give any comment on it & will give nothing. Has defo (sic) not been officially launched"(Laughland 2014c).



The 'No Way' campaign image from CBPS website, as excerpted in Laughland's article

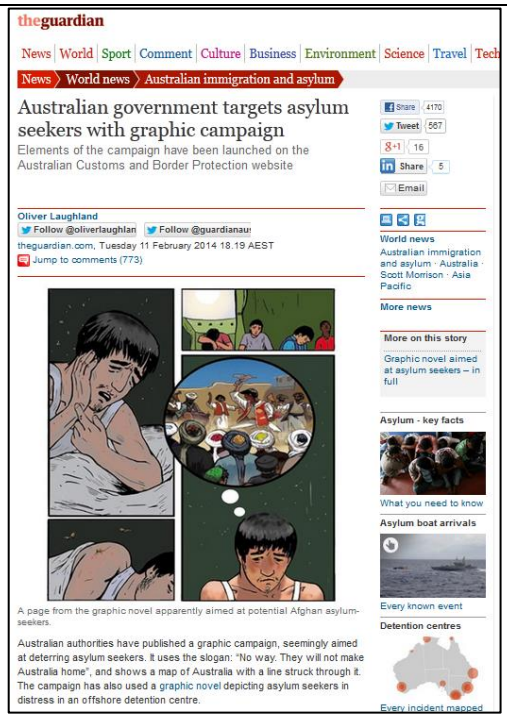
Although the 'No Way' campaign itself was criticised, journalists and commentators seemed particularly intrigued by the comic. Laughland and

other journalists sought comments from immigration officials about why the comic had been developed and how it was intended to be used, but few details surfaced beyond a statement from a spokesperson for Immigration Minister Scott Morrison in the Sydney Morning Herald: "[The comic] has been part of offshore anti-people smuggling communications campaigns. It has also been distributed in the period since the federal election. It has been on the Customs website since last year." (Whyte 2014b). While the CBPS had only called the comic a 'story board,' Laughland described it as a 'graphic novel' in his story, a terminology that was widely adopted in later public discussions of the comic.

As with 'A Guard's Story,' the visual narrative of the CBPS comic seems to have played a significant role in why it attracted attention. Except for discussing and showing images from the comic, Laughland's article was broadly similar to a *Guardian* article six months earlier by Helen Davidson (Davidson 2013) which covered the unveiling of the Rudd government's own 'By Boat, No Visa' asylum seeker media campaign. However, Laughland's story was shared over ten times more on Twitter (562 compared to 45) and nearly 20 times more on Facebook (4169 compared to 225).



Davidson's article, November 2013



Laughland's article, February 2014

Laughland's article also attracted 773 reader comments, more than were received by 96.5% of The Guardian's 670 stories that were tagged as relevant to "Australian immigration and asylum," between May 27, 2013 and May 1, 2014, a period which saw changes to Australia's immigration policies, deaths of several asylum seekers, accusations of mistreatment in detention centres, more than one international incident, and a federal election where immigration was made into central issue. The article also received more comments than any of the other 300 articles with Oliver Laughland's by-line on The Guardian's website from the previous 24 months, with the exception of two live group blogs, about the new Egyptian government's violent crackdown on demonstrators on August 14, 2013 (Murray et al. 2013), and about the United States' attempts to extradite Edward Snowden (Laughland et al. 2013).

The story was quickly picked up and disseminated by Australian news media, including SBS (Cox, G 2014), the Murdoch press (Piotrowski 2014), and Fairfax Media. It also received attention from viral portals like BuzzFeed (Guillaume 2014), where it garnered more than 54,000 page views, and became a topic of discussion on social media. An article in the Sydney Morning Herald, picked up 308 reader comments (Whyte 2014b).



Figure 3: CBPS comic back cover, with text in both Dari and Pashto, and the seal of the

Australian Government.

In contrast to the number of words spent discussing it on Australian websites, CBPS's comic itself is almost entirely wordless. There are two notable exceptions: the back cover includes the words "Australian Government" printed in English next to the Australian coat of arms, while the front cover contains one sentence, printed in two different languages, Dari and Pashto. The meaning could be translated into English as: "If you go to Australia without a visa on a boat, you won't be settled in Australia" (Piotrowski 2014), a slogan which aligns with an earlier media campaign targeted at asylum seekers during Kevin Rudd's time as prime minister (Kenny 2013), which was dubbed in the press as "By boat, no visa" (Davidson 2013). The silent nature of the document makes it difficult to summarise, but it might briefly be described as the story of a young man who attempts to migrate from Afghanistan to Australia, and but instead ends up placed in an island detention centre.

Similarly to "A Guard's Story," emotions and facial expression are also central in the CBPS comic, where they are often the most clearly communicated elements on the page.



Excerpt from CBPS comic, page 9.

The clarity of these constructed emotions is one of the few things readers of that comic were able to agree upon, as commentary from readers within Australian media was marked by a number of different narrative interpretations.

Highlighting just how large a role personal interpretation played in Australian readings of the CBPS comic, Australian readers had no problem reading and forming opinions about the comic despite the fact that most of them were inadvertently reading it backwards. The order in which rows of comic panels are read generally corresponds to the direction that text is read in the language they are published in. For English comics, this is left to right, but this is flipped in comics published in languages like Japanese or Arabic, which read right to left. Although the CBPS comic is mostly silent, it was designed for readers of Dari and Pashto, languages that are read from right to left. Most Australian audiences, conditioned to read comics in English, would have read the comics from the other direction and thus read some sequences in the CBPS comic out of order. Despite this, the wordless nature of the comic, and the way narratives in comics are read through gaps, meant that Australian readers were able to construct a story braided through the comics' panels, without realising that they were technically reading the comic "wrong."



Excerpt from CBPS comic, page 4: Read from left to right, like a comic in English, the character boards the bus in panel one, then is walking toward it in panel two. Read from right to left as intended, he approaches the bus in panel one and then boards it in panel two. This narrative problems with reading this sequence and many others as if the comic were in English was not noted by commentators in Australia.

The fact that Australian readers did not notice that they were reading each row of panels "backwards" can be explained by McLuhan's theories about the "cool" qualities of the comic book medium. Unlike the "hot" mediums of text and film, narratives in comics do not unfold in a linear fashion. Lisa Freinkel notes that "comics' narrativity depends on the 'gappiness' of the narration. Narrative meaning leaps across and is founded on the gutter that separates one panel from the next" (2006, p. 251). According to Elisabeth El Refaie, "many of the inherent features of comics, such as the gaps between panels and the semiotic tensions between words and images, work to encourage the critical mental involvement of the audience" (2012, p. 206). The process of braiding meaning through these gaps inherently involves a level of interpretation and invention on the part of the reader, which this thesis has argued can lead to a greater engagement in the work through action and reflection or what Freire calls praxis (Freire 1972). However, while these aspects of comics have been lauded for involving the readers' imaginations, they becomes hugely problematic in cases like the CBPS comic, which is essentially a statement of government policy. Here we might expect that CBPS's authority to be undermined by the comic's failure to provide a clear meaning. However, the CBPS's position as an authoritative agency was upheld by the fact that the lack of a demonstrable meaning meant that Australian readers were unable to speak back to the comic. In the absence of a certain meaning, readers were left with the *phatic* experience of having reading the comic, which in this case was a bruising depiction of the government's authority.

An analysis of how journalists and bloggers have described the comic demonstrate just how unstable its meaning has been for Australian readers. Much of the discourse focused on strong emotions engendered by the CBPS comic, with Laughland initially calling it a "a graphic novel depicting asylum seekers in distress" (Laughland 2014a). Other writers have described it as showing that "refugee claimants will be treated like garbage by Australian authorities" (Chalk 2014), and will be "haunted by memories of home and surrounded by people in the clutches of despair" (Cussen 2014). These

emotions, overwhelmingly negative, appear in almost every news story about the comic.

While commentators could agree on the broad strokes of the emotions in the comic, they agreed less on its details. On Buzzfeed, Jenna Guillaume described the comics as telling "the story of a young man, dreaming of a better life," but none of the thought balloons with idyllic images of Australia in them emanate from the main character – instead, they seem to be the thoughts of a father figure. Writing for *The Conversation*, Elizabeth Macfarlane's more comics-literate interpretation of the story was that the man was "persuaded by his family to use their savings to seek asylum in Australia" (MacFarlane 2014).



This excerpt of the CBPS comic (page 2) shows the domestic situation of the protagonist, but Australian readers disagreed on how to describe the situation it depicts.

Daniel Piotrowski's summary of the comic for news.com.au starts out more straightforwardly: "Meet our protagonist. He's an asylum seeker. He lives in squalor and works as a mechanic" (Piotrowski 2014). However, even this simple description is difficult to substantiate based on what is shown in the comic, and other accounts have contradicted every aspect of this

description. Online commentators have debated whether the protagonist is an illegal immigrant, asylum seeker or political refugee, and the comic omits any context of the character's political or economic situation that might allow for a compelling argument one way or the other. Indeed, interpretations of the specifics of the man's situation have been rather varied. Instead of the squalor described by Piotrowski, Abdul Karim Hekmat of New Matilda argued that the comic paints a deceptively "rosy picture" of Afghanistan compared to its current instability (Hekmat 2014).

Later in the comic, the protagonist boards a boat that is, presumably, headed toward Australia. It is subsequently boarded by uniformed men who are, presumably, from the Australian Navy. The passengers are taken to an island detention centre. But descriptions of this story disagreed about just what happens to the boat: SBS reported that the comic "appears to contain the first official concession that the Australian Navy has been ordered to turn back the boats" (Cox, G 2014), while AusOpinion's interpretation was that the "boat appears to have entered Australian waters and, as such, *isn't* turned back to Indonesia" (Fletcher, M 2014) (emphasis added).



Excerpt of the CBPS comic, page 12. Is the boat turned back or not?

Regardless of what happens to the boat, the protagonist ends up in a detention centre, where readers have observed him experiencing a shifting

set of maladies, with one diagnosing homesickness (MacFarlane 2014), another depression (Cox, G 2014); where one reader sees dental problems (Fletcher, M 2014), another notes the discomfort of being "forced to live in hot, crowded tents" (Chalk 2014), and one writer cites just one danger: "being attacked by mosquitoes" (Whyte 2014b).



Excerpt of the CBPS comic, page 16: what's wrong with this man, and who's doing the dancing? Note the large, clip-art style mosquitos in the below left panel.

The mosquitos are depicted as unnaturally large in one sequence, as if to emphasise their importance in the message the CBPS was trying to send. Most commentators took this to simply signify unpleasant insect bites, but several days after Laughland's story broke, human rights advocate Ben Pynt suggested that they were connected to the fact that several cases of malaria, a disease spread by mosquitos, had been reported on the Manus Island refugee detention centre in the previous year. Pynt argued that the connotations of malaria in the comic were essentially a veiled threat of biological warfare, and "that Australia is well aware of the risks of sending vulnerable people to be indefinitely detained on an island with endemic tropical diseases" (Whyte 2014a).

In another striking case of visual codes that were significant to some commenters but dismissed by others, blogger Eliza Cussen was one of few Australian critics to call attention to the ethnic codes in the characters, writing, "what stuck out instantly was that the man was drawn to deliberately look like a Hazara – a member of an ethnic minority which suffers horrendous persecution in Afghanistan" (Cussen 2014). Picking up this thread in March, human rights activist Haider Ali in accused the comic of "Trying to depict terrorism-stricken Hazaras as economic migrants" as part of "a misleading message being propagated by Australia across the globe" (Ali 2014). The scene at the end of the comic where the protagonist sadly thinks of a dance back in Afghanistan has been interpreted by some commentators as depicting homesickness. However, a review of the comics on hazara.net notes that the dance shown in this scene is typical of the rival Pashtun tribe, something the reviewer notes is like "rubbing salt in very deep wounds of the Hazara nation" ('Refugees' 2014). Is this a cultural mix-up on the part of the comic's editors, or a sign that the character is actually supposed to be Pashtun? Is what some Australian commentators assumed was homesickness actually a regretful envy, a sense that the Hazara protagonist's home is now occupied by rival Pashtun revellers? The comic's title is in both the Dari language spoken by Hazaras, and Pashto, which is spoken by Pashtun people.

Messages in any text are always dependent on individual readers' interpretations, but in a document that presents itself as a dramatization of actual government policies, details like this may have significant political implications. It matters a great deal, for example, whether the Australian government is warning potential asylum seekers that malaria is being spread in Australian detention centre and whether the government is actively targeting Hazara people in Afghanistan with this message.

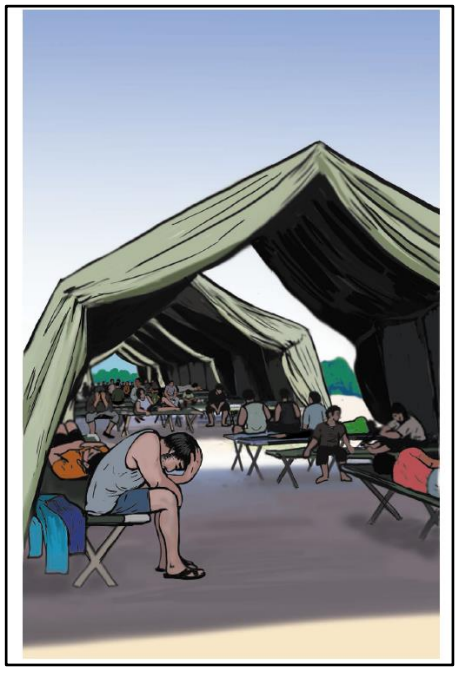
From looking at the discourse within Australia, the meanings of these details do not seem to have been firmly established. This is a comic that seems to encourage an emotional response, but these emotions mask any authoritative statement about specific government policies. Pedagogically, the comic presents no material lesson beyond its linguistic threat that "if you

go to Australia without a visa on a boat, you won't be settled in Australia." No explanation for this policy is given, and no alternatives are offered. The visual narrative exists to teach its readers that the Australian government can exert absolute authority over the protagonist. In this way, its pedagogical function is to teach obedience and the threat of violence, reiterating the chalk-drawing of the lecturer with his cane shown in Chapter 1.



The lecturer with his cane: a symbol of the act of communication as a means of control.

However, a strange aspect of the CBPS comic, is that in telling the protagonist's story, it must depict some of the emotional cost of the government's policies. These emotions were what Australian readers highlighted as affecting them the most about the comic, and this emotional connection, along with the active participation of readers in interpreting the story, may help to explain why the CBPS comic went viral.



Excerpt from the CBPS comic, page 17: this camp looks miserable, but we are given few clues to its wider context: where is it? How long do people stay there? Are there other tents outside of the frame?

Fletcher denounced the comic as "the world's first propaganda campaign in which the country producing it is portrayed as the villain"

(Fletcher, M 2014), and MacFarlane noted, "it is a strange kind of propaganda which paints its own government as such a menacing and threatening presence" (MacFarlane 2014).



Excerpt from CBPS comic, page 11: is the Australian government presenting its navy as dark and sinister?

But this is a threat from the government that cannot be quoted or repeated back in any authoritative way. Any accusations that could be pointed at the Australian government on the basis of this comic vanish as soon as they are made; there is no definitive desperation, no proof of mistreatment, no evidence for the need of asylum. Fletcher (2014) sees it as depicting a "dark and sinister navy," but squint a bit and the dark and sinister part nearly disappears, or at least, it can't be proven. This is not to say that the comic has no distinct meaning, but that because of the way it is presented, its meaning is one for which it is difficult to hold the government accountable. The readers are the ones responsible for saying what they have been shown.

"Cool," Anonymous and Emotional

The multimodal discourse that these comics generate has largely been silent, as the abstracted visual style of cartoon drawing, along with the fracturing of narratives into panels results in a text that is full of gaps. In "A Guard's Story," these gaps are used to conceal the identity of the story's source, while abstracting his emotions, creating reader engagement. In the CBPS comic these gaps essentially create government document that can be understood on an emotional level, but cannot be quoted in a spoken debate or even paraphrased in parliament. Its function is almost entirely *phatic*: it

exists to reiterate the fact that there is relationship between its readers and the Australian government, where the government, as author of the document, has final say in the actual terms of the relationship. The CBPS comic is a statement of policy that cannot be debated or called into account. Perhaps this is not surprising considering that immigration minister, Scott Morrison, when faced with allegations that its navy had mistreated asylum seekers, claimed that it was "not for the government to disprove the negative, it's for those who have allegations to actually prove the positive" (Farrell 2014).

By contrast, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, can, at least in principle, carry the weight of international law because it is in print and can be translated, reprinted and referred to by most of the world's citizens. This is helped by the fact that it uses simple language that is easy to understand, as can be seen in Article 14 of the declaration, which states that "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations" (UN General UN General Assembly 1948, p. 2).

In the wake of the Australian government's controversial "Operation Sovereign Borders" policies relating to asylum seekers, this article and other international treaties, including the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, have been cited by legal scholars as evidence "Australia's reported conduct under Operation Sovereign Borders clearly violates international law" (Watson, J 2014).

In contrast to the clear, language of these treaties, the Australian government for its part has issued few definitive statements of its policies and procedures regarding asylum seekers. A recent Human Rights Law Centre report on Australia's treatment of Sri Lankan asylum seekers found "secrecy and lack of accountability, transparency and oversight" to be one of the key problems with the manner in which Australia conducts its refugee

policies, noting that "Australia's cooperation with Sri Lanka to intercept boats is conducted under a shroud of secrecy." The comic discussed in this chapter remains one of the most explicit documents Australia's Customs and Border Protection Service (CBPS) has released regarding how asylum seekers are processed by Operation Sovereign Borders. This chapter has used the lens of Comics Studies to show how the comic functions, in McLuhan's terminology, as a piece of "cool" media that requires a high level of reader interpretation, in contrast to the "hotness" of policy documents. Although this comic is publically available on the CBPS website, its gappiness makes it difficult to ascertain its true meaning or level of authority, allowing the comic's role in public discourse to function as a 'shroud of transparency'.

Both "A Guard's Story" and the CBPS comic use the "gappiness" of comics (or coolness in McLuhan's terms) to bracket out crucial elements of their narratives. In the case of "A Guard's Story," this is done to protect the identity of the narrator, and to provide an abstracted visual representation of the detention centre. The CBPS comic, by contrast, presents fragmented emotions in the place of statements about policies and procedures that, if articulated clearly, might have been debatably at odds with international human rights treaties. This is potentially far more sinister than the horror comics that Wertham and other critics of the comic books feared would teach juvenile delinquency and sexual deviancy. The CBPS comic can be understood as anti-educational, as it hides meaning, rather than revealing it.

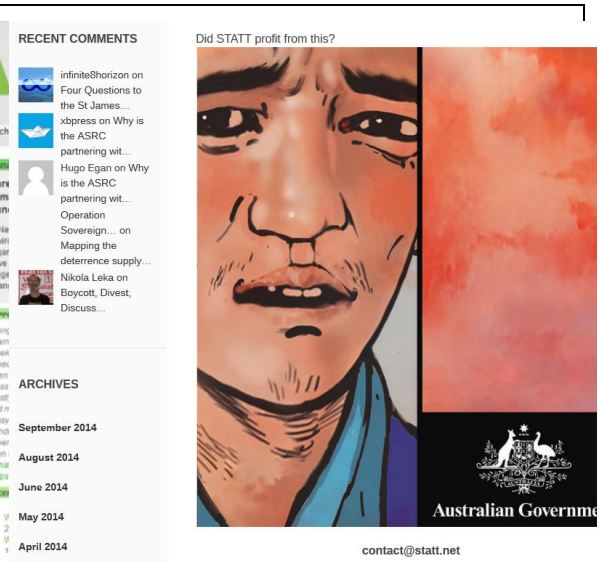
Multimodal Reappropriation

However, just as a teacher does not fully control what meanings students produce in a classroom, the Australian government did not have the final word in how the CBPS comic was understood. Despite its pedagogical problems, the CBPS comic was repurposed and re-authored by Australians in a variety of ways. For example, Green Left Weekly used an image from the comic to illustrate a story about the plight of asylum seekers that had nothing to do with the comic (Fletcher, J 2014), and the blog Crossborder Operational Matters, used a picture of the comic's distressed protagonist to ask who was

profiting from not just the creation of the comic, but the distress of refugees (xbpress 2014).



Green Left Weekly

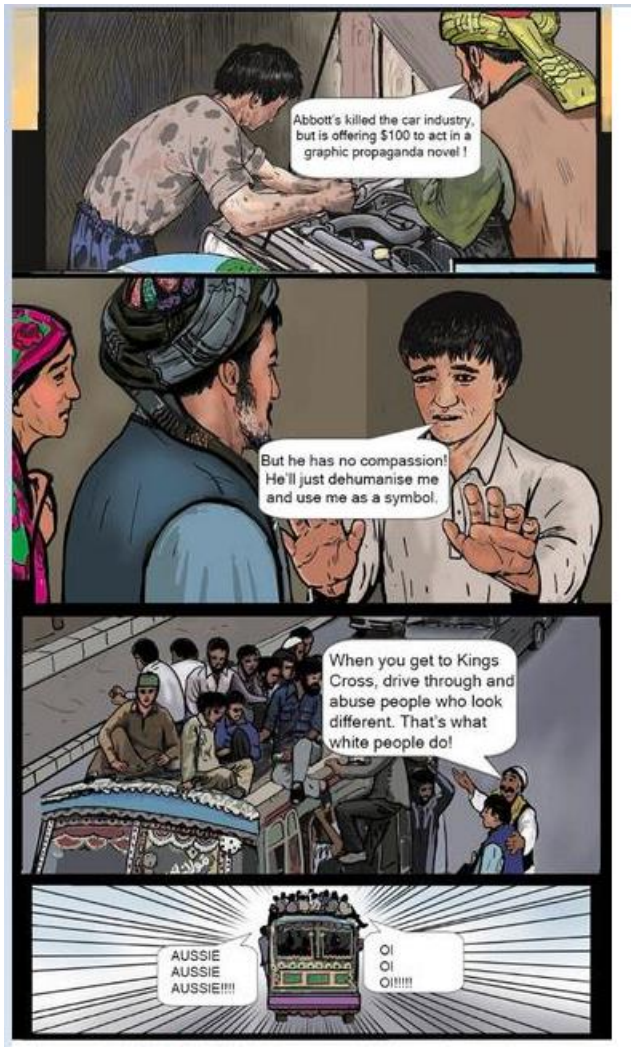


Crossborder Operational Matters blog

Some readers used image-editing software to add text or "re-mix" the comic. Panels from the comic have were edited into parodies with satirical captions (DeptofAustralia 2014; Pantsdown 2014), a way of readers using the linguistic modality to exert their own "authorship" over the comic.



Excerpt from DeptofAustralia parody comic



Excerpt from Pauline Pantsdown parody comic

Street artist CDH did not add or change the content of the comic, but printed it at a large size and pasted it up in a Melbourne laneway and claimed that this action "recreated the comic as a street artwork for an Australian audience" which was meant as "a criticism of the federal government" (CDH 2014). In this way, CDH "re-authored" the comic by simply changing its context. The CBPS comic was especially susceptible to these kinds of reapproprations because the comic made few claims about its own authorship. Its anonymous visual style and the ambiguous nature of how and when it was published allowed Australian readers to easily reappropriate it and claim their own authorship over its meaning.

In this light, it becomes apparent that although this comic cannot easily be debated with, argued against or called into account in the same

ways a written statement or verbal declaration, it can still be used in dynamic ways within the national discourse. The meaning of the comic can be called into question, and can be altered entirely by the way it is used and manipulated. Within the national dialogue about asylum seekers, this comic has played a silently dialectic role, opening up new meanings, framing dialogues and starting discussions. Some of these discussions, like the comic itself, have not been linguistic in nature, but have been conducted silently, as the images of the comic are reframed and recontextualised throughout the discourse, braiding meanings within the national spatio-topia.



Melbourne street art by CDH reprinted the CBPS comic in full as a paste-up.

The future of multimodal political discourse?

This analysis of the ways that both the CBPS comic and "A Guard's Story" were received by Australian readers online has shown how these comics work to draw on their readers' existing emotional and interpretative resources to fill in the many "gaps" in the comics. The visual "gappiness" of these comics and their ambiguous authorship are qualities that are shared by many forms of online communication, including emoticons, memes and some webcomics. These increasingly visual and multimodal modes of communication may be changing how political discourse functions.

Crucially, McLuhan implicated print historically as a catalyst for modern systems of government: "the hotting-up of the medium of writing to repeatable print intensity led to nationalism and the religious wars of the sixteenth century" and later to the American and French revolutions in the late eighteenth century (1964, p. 23). Similarly, Benedict Anderson has argued that print, combined with capitalism, "laid the bases for national consciousness" (1997, p. 62). Print is certainly as a foundation of modern democracies, with their constitutions, bills, treaties and declarations. If this "hot" medium of printed text, "cried out for nationalism" (McLuhan 1964, p. 49) different responses are authorised by the "cool" medium of comics, along with related forms of visual culture like memes, emoticons, and animated GIFs, as our culture moves from a print-centric society to one more focused on networked, multimodal digital displays.

The examples used in this chapter suggest that that comics are an increasingly popular way of educating the public about national policies. These comics both deal with the issue of asylum-seekers, which has been one of the most politically-charged and newsworthy topics in Australia for several years (Baume 2013), and were posted on well-funded national news sites, so the fact that they received a considerable audience is not remarkable on its own. However, both 'A Guard's Story' and the CBPS comic generated more attention online than most other stories about asylum seekers in the week they were posted. This chapter has argued that this interest was due in part due to their structures as graphic narratives. This is an example of the growing affinity between heavily multimodal texts and online communication.

As Internet technologies and communities increasingly authorise multimodal literacies, these comics might be considered examples of how political debate, propaganda and pedagogy will continue to be expressed in the form of comics and graphic narratives in the future. While this can result in creative and humanising discourse, as in the case of 'A Guard's Story,' it is important to be aware that, as in the case of the CBPS comic, it can also be used to support or shroud dehumanising actions, even while evoking strong

human emotions. While this thesis as a whole has examined the ways that educational comics can be used to benefit a student-centred pedagogy, the CBPS comic serves as a sobering reminder of how the ways that authorship and authority are destabilised in comics can also be used in potentially harmful means. This weighed heavily on my mind as I worked on the Intern Orientation Comic, a process that will be described in the following chapter.

SECTION (B)



PRACTICE

Chapter 11: Creating an Educational Comic – Creative Process and Ethnography

Introduction

As the previous chapters have demonstrated, educational comics have been created to serve a huge number of varied pedagogical purposes over the past century. However, possibly due to the general exclusion of comics from authorized discourses of literacy pedagogy, there have been relatively few published studies that have examined the effectiveness of comics as educational tools. The remaining chapters in this thesis attempt to address this deficiency through an applied case study investigating the application and efficacy of a comic created to support the goals of a postgraduate medical education curriculum.

Applying the understanding of educational comics developed earlier in this thesis to a practical scenario allows the opportunity to gauge the veracity of the conclusions of the theoretical approach. These final three chapters describe that stage of research: this chapter will present an auto-ethnographic account of my work creating an educational comic for medical interns at Mackay Base Hospital. Chapter twelve will then present that comic itself in full, and chapter thirteen will describe and analyse the results of surveys and interviews that were designed to test the pedagogical effectiveness of the comic.

Each of these chapters can be thought of as independent, but linked outputs of my research: first, an account of the process of creating an educational comic that targets particular pedagogical goals; secondly, an example of an educational comic that has been created according to the theoretical framework described in this thesis; and finally, a report on how effective the comic was at meeting its pedagogical goals. Before embarking on the auto-ethnography, however, it is worth examining how this particular piece of research addresses a gap in existing empirical studies of educational comics.

The gap in empirical studies of educational comics

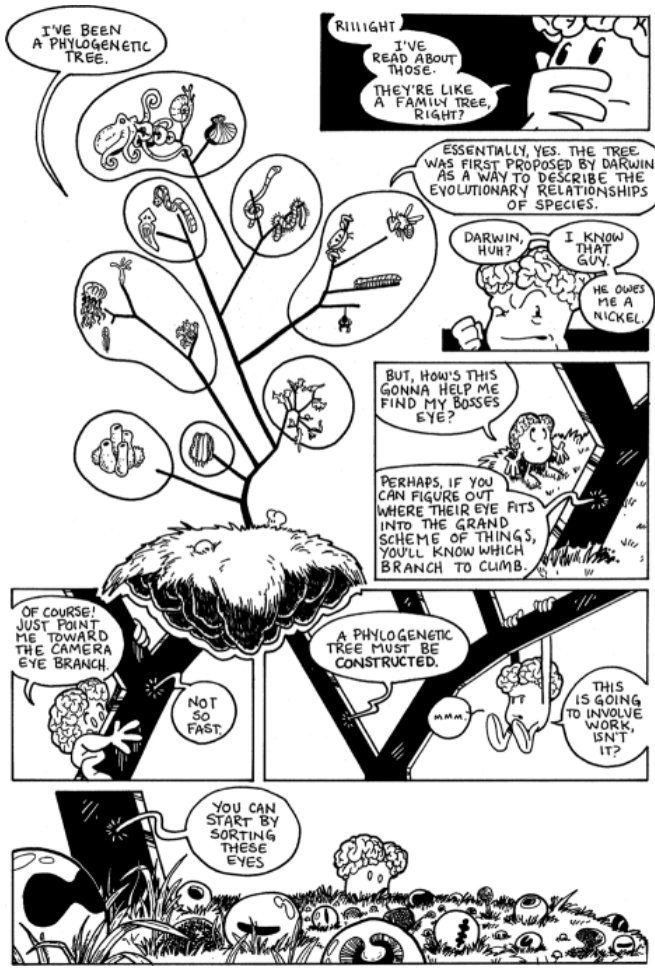
A few recently published empirical studies, which will be briefly discussed below, compare the effectiveness of comics with traditional educational texts in elementary, high school and undergraduate education. This study is unique in that it examines educational comics in a postgraduate, professional development context. Unlike previous studies it is not investigating how well comics can adapt existing linguistic texts, but how well comics can use multimodal composition to address learning objectives that are not being satisfactorily addressed with existing, traditional texts.

Gorg Mallia (2007) has compared how well comics helped fourth year primary school students learn about Maltese history by comparing the results of three groups of students who were each given a different style of document: one group received type-written pages to read, another received an illustrated version of the same text, and the third group received a comic, drawn by Maltese cartoonist Joe Mallia (not to be confused with the researcher Gorg Mallia, also a cartoonist). Mallia surveyed the students to assess their "(a) short-term recall, primary cognitive retention, and, to a lesser degree, (b) acquisition of knowledge, (c) comprehension of the text, and (d) imaginative application of facts acquired." He found that students who had received either the illustrated text or the comic performed better than those who had received the text-only version. He also observed that most students seemed happy to receive the comic, while some were disinterested in the text-only version. This lead Mallia to conclude that "comics are at a distinct advantage as attention grabbers and as ways of inducing reluctant students to become interested in and follow what is usually given to them in a "traditionally" text-based package" (Mallia 2007b).



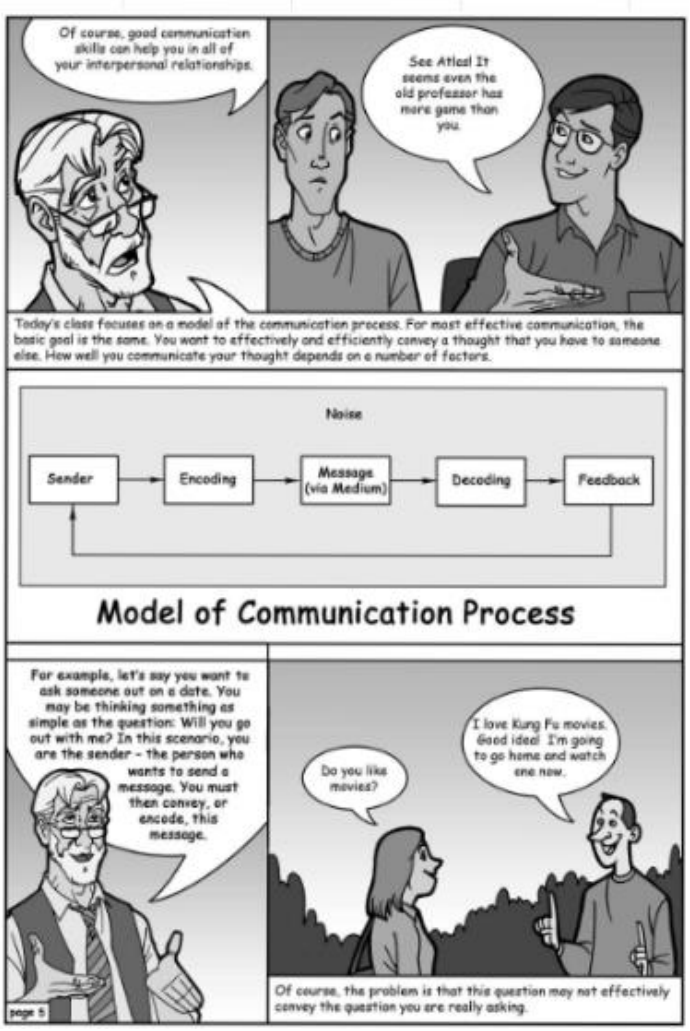
A page from Mallia's comic used in fourth year Maltese history classes (Mallia 2007).

A similar conclusion was found at the undergraduate level by Jay Hostler and KB Boomer (2011), who used the comic book textbook *Optical Allusions*, which was written and drawn by Hostler, in three undergraduate biology classes taught by Hostler at a small liberal arts college, with a fourth class that only used a traditional textbook acting as a control group. "A significant increase in the median content knowledge scores was observed in each of the four courses, suggesting that the comic book was as effective at conveying information in the three classes in which it was used as the more traditional textbook" used in the control group (Hosler & Boomer 2011, pp. 315-316). Furthermore, Hostler and Boomer noted that in students who were not biology majors, attitudes toward biology tended to improve in the classes that used the comic book, and were positively correlated with improved attitudes about comics. They concluded that "comic book stories lose nothing to traditional textbooks while having the added potential benefit of improving attitudes about biology" (2011, p. 316).



A page from Jay Hostler's comic *Optical Allusions* (Hostler 2013).

Jeremy Short, Brandon Randolph-Seng and Aaron McKenny compared two groups of management students, one in which students read a passage from the graphic novel *Atlas Black: The Complete Adventure* (which was critiqued in Chapter 6), and one in which students read a passage about the same subject from the traditional textbook *Principles of Management*, the study concluded that "students using the graphic novel textbook performed better on verbatim recognition of passages than those using a traditional textbook. However, no significant relationship was found between textbook format and recall and transfer ability" (Short, JC, Randolph-Seng & McKenny 2013, pp. 294-295).



A page from *Atlas Black: The Complete Adventure* (Short, J et al. 2011).

All three studies found that comics generally performed equally as well as the textbooks, and in some areas performed better. Mallia noted many of his students reacted more positively to being given a comic than being given typewritten pages, while Hostler and Boomer found that the use of comics improved non-biology majors' attitudes about biology. Interestingly, while both Mallia and Hostler & Boomer observed what could be considered improvements in attitude and emotion, Short et al. observed an improvement in a strikingly non-emotional domain: verbatim recognition of language.

Taken together, the three studies suggest that comics can help to improve students' feelings about course materials and to assist in students' recall of written material. In all three cases, because the comics were

benchmarked against traditional, written texts, what was being tested was primarily information conveyed by the linguistic modality. These studies demonstrated that students were able to comprehend this linguistic information equally as well whether it was delivered via textbooks or comic books. However, because comic books are more multimodally dense than traditional text books and have much more complex spatio-topias, they are also able to convey a considerable amount of information that can't be directly translated into linguistic text.

The studies of Mallia, Hostler & Boomer and Short et al show that there are benefits to using the multimodal properties of comics as a way of scaffolding linguistic messages and improving the way that students interact with these messages, but they do not consider whether the comics might be able to convey messages that cannot be transmitted through written text.

The Pedagogy of Storytelling?

Curiously, all three studies largely attribute the effectiveness of comics to the way that comics work as a device for telling stories. Mallia found that students reported that "the comic told a story in continuously paced pictures, and that they could see what the characters were talking about. This helped them remember more than just having pictures that described what was being read but did not tell a story" (Mallia 2007b). Hostler and Boomer came to a similar conclusion that "comics has the potential to go beyond the traditional textbook by weaving text and images into a story that can help generate coherence and context for the information" (Hosler & Boomer 2011, p. 310).

Short, et al extended this hypothesis even farther by deliberately constructing the graphic novel used in their classes around the concept of a monomyth, an archetypical story structure centred on a hero's journey. Their speculative analysis of the reasons why their comic was successful are almost entirely based on the abilities of comics: "the storytelling structure likely encourages the reader to become invested in learning" (Short, JC, Randolph-Seng & McKenny 2013, p. 296).

Other, non-experimental studies similarly emphasise comics' storytelling capabilities (Chaitra 2010; Montoya 2011; Schwarz 2002). However, this persistent theoretical framework seems to be based on very little data, aside from Mallia's interviews with his fourth-grade students. As demonstrated throughout this thesis, many educational comics, including those of pioneers like Ripley, Rius, Eisner, McCloud and Barry do not strongly feature narrative storytelling. Although storytelling can be a powerful pedagogical tool, the researchers of these studies may have overstated its importance to educational comics.

Another possible reason why comics have been successful in classrooms is suggested by Afrilyasanti and Basthomi (2011) in their study of the use of comics for teaching year ten Indonesian students studying English as a foreign language. Their study lacked a control group, which makes it difficult to quantify their results. However, they reported that students responded well to activities that used comics, and suggested that this might be because "these abilities are in agreement with what Rodgers et. al. (2006) believe that the hypertext minds of the 21st century learners crave interactivity, are good at reading visual images, have strong visual-spatial skills, tend toward parallel procession and inductive discovery, look for fast response times which leads to short attention spans" (Afrilyasanti & Basthomi 2011, p. 554). This hypothesis is closer to the argument for the value of multimodal literacy that had been advanced in this thesis; however, its argument that 21st century students are particularly attuned to comics cannot explain the successes of educational comics throughout the 20th century.

Opaque Creative Processes

All three of the empirical studies discussed above were conducted in classes that were taught by one of the researchers and using materials that the researchers helped to develop. There are many clear, practical and compelling reasons for the research to have been designed in this way. However, there is also a certain bias in this type of design, because it has at its centre the figure of teacher/researcher/comic-creator who must

negotiate these three roles and identities, which overlap and sometimes also conflict with each other.

In each of the three studies, the creation of the comic, and the negotiation of these roles, is left in an opaque black box. However, the way that these comics are created, and the pedagogical theories that underlie their design make a crucial difference to their success or failure as educational interventions. It is encouraging to note that comics can be as successful as traditional textbooks in the classroom. However, just as all textbooks are not equally as effective, different comics are likely to perform quite differently.

I hope that by including this chapter of ethnography in my study I avoid the opacity of previous studies by being transparent about my role as researcher and designer of the comic and hopefully shedding some light on the kinds of processes and decisions that go into designing an educational comic. This chapter might also provide a useful template for the process of how a cartoonist can work with an educational institution to craft a successful comic that stands a good chance at achieving its aims.

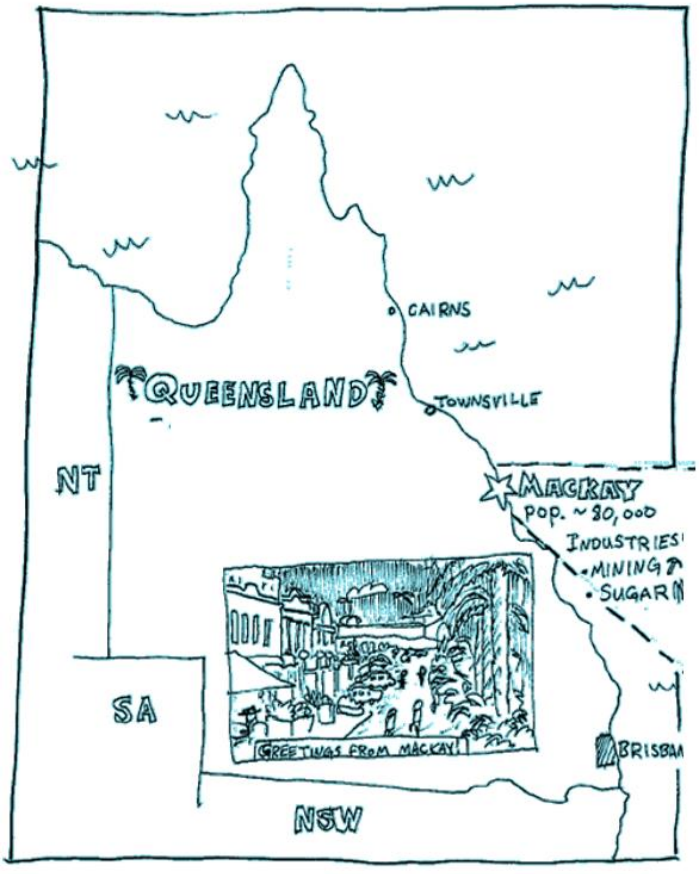
Shaping Multimodal Composition

Rather than simply the ability to tell stories, one of the great pedagogical opportunities offered by comics is the wide range of ways that the various modalities can be constructed to create different effects. The way meaning is braided multimodally through comics means that if any one of these modalities is out of sync with the others, it could endanger the overall effectiveness of the comic. Therefore, the visual, spatial, linguistic and other multimodal properties of a comic must be considered during the composition process.

In order to align these properties as much as possible with the comic's learning objectives, it is necessary to start the process of composition by first considering the context in which learners will engage with the comic. The next step is applying an understanding of this context and the learning objectives to determine the form that the comic will take. This process

involves a narrowing-down of the possibilities that shape the comic's modalities. Finally, after the context and canvas of the comic have been determined, the process of composing individual pages can begin. Accordingly, this chapter is organized roughly to mirror this nested process, moving from decisions about the context in which the comic will be used, to decisions about the format that the comic will take, and finally decisions about the content of individual pages.

Background: Mackay Base Hospital



A sketch of Queensland, showing the location of Mackay (original drawing).

This project received ethics approval from the University of Adelaide Human Ethics Research Committee (number H-2014-25) and the Townsville Hospital and Health System Human Ethics Research Committee (number HREC/14/QTHS/60). This research took place at Mackay Base Hospital in Mackay, QLD. Mackay is a 'major regional centre in north Queensland, 1,200

km north of Brisbane and 300 km north of the Tropic of Capricorn.' Hanson et al report that its population in 2001 was 128,000' (Hanson, D et al. 2008). However, The Queensland Government's Statistician's Office reported that this number had dropped to 115,960 by 2011 (Office 2014).

At the time I was working on this project, the Mackay Base Hospital was in the midst of an eight-year, $27 million redevelopment project, which began in 2008 and was scheduled to finish in 2016. One of the main aims of this redevelopment was to increase the hospital's bed capacity from 160 to 318 in order to meet the demands of a growing population. ('Australia - Mackay Base Hospital Project' 2013)

This redevelopment can be seen as part of a wider effort across Australia to expand health care services, which has also led to an increase in funding for medical education. The number of medical students graduating each year in Australia roughly doubled from around 1,400 a year in 2000 to 2,733 in 2010 (*Medical Training Review Panel: fifteenth report* 2012, p. 2). These graduates must then complete a year of internship in order to become licensed doctors in Australia.

According to Stephen Ducket (2012), director of the Health Program at the Grattan Institute, "Internships are primarily training positions, converting raw graduates into registrable professionals. So hospitals, even quite large ones, can function quite efficiently without this workforce category."

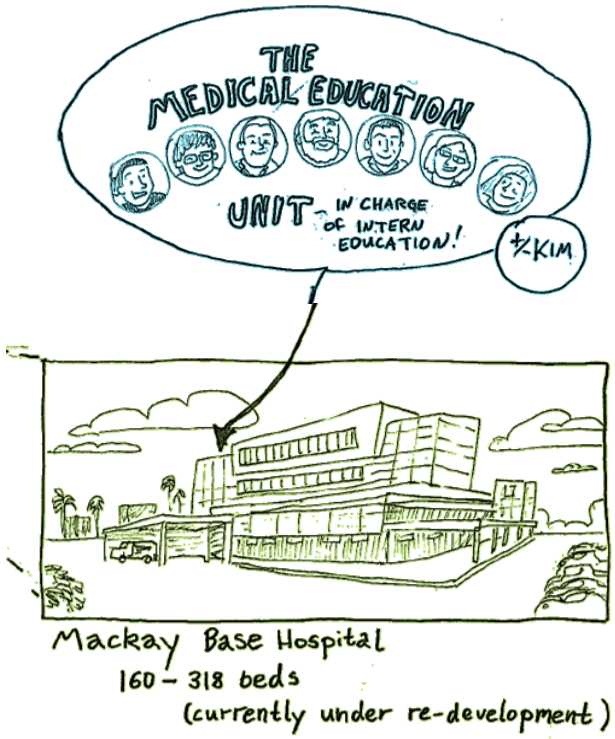
Although increasing the number of medical graduates will eventually lead to an increase in skilled doctors, which can help to manage the healthcare needs of a growing population, the increase in intern numbers actually has the initial effect of increasing the burden on hospitals, rather than relieving it. Properly training interns requires mentoring from more experienced, consultant doctors, who are currently in shortage in hospitals across Australia (Joyce 2013).

Intern training programs form a platform upon which the future of Australia's medical care will be built. Today's interns are tomorrow's senior

consultant doctors. However, interns and other young doctors face challenges and pressures that can affect their own wellbeing and their abilities to adequately care for their patients. A study by Beyond Blue released in 2013 showed that doctors report high rates of suicide and depression compared to the general population. Young doctors were particularly at risk, reporting some of the highest levels of suicidal thoughts (27.5%), high cynicism (37.8%), and "moderate risk drinking" (17.2%). Additionally, young doctors reported significantly higher levels of exhaustion and cynicism than their older colleagues, suggesting that the transition from student to professional is a particularly stressful one. (*National Mental Health Survey of Doctors and Medical Students: Executive Summary* 2013)

As hospitals are asked to train an increasing number of interns without a concurrent increase in resources, there is an urgent need for successful educational interventions that are both cost-effective and time-efficient, which will increase the awareness of young doctors about how to manage emotional and interpersonal challenges of being a new doctor.

At Mackay Base Hospital, intern education is run by the Medical Education Unit, which was staffed by eight people (seven FTE) in 2013. My wife, Kimberly, who is a doctor specializing in emergency medicine, held one of these positions during a six-month rotation as part of her training to become a consultant emergency physician; she helped to coordinate and deliver the intern education program, and was responsible for clinical and hands-on education of interns in the emergency department. Highlighting the difficulty hospitals face in shortages of experienced doctors to assist in the training of interns, the MEU was unable to find someone to fill Kimberly's role during the 2014 training year.



A sketch of the hospital and the Medical Education Unit (original drawing).

This location was chosen because as a smaller hospital I would be able to directly work with all concerned parties. Furthermore, not all hospitals of this size employ a dedicated Medical Education Unit (MEU), which demonstrates that Mackay Hospital has given intern education a certain degree of priority. The staff of the MEU expressed an eagerness to innovate and develop new strategies for improving intern welfare. As such, the aims of this hospital are in line with those of the proposed educational comic.

The growing acceptance of comics into the realm of literacy pedagogy, as outlined earlier in this thesis, certainly helped to convince the staff of the MEU that a comic might be worthwhile educational platform. However, my relationship with Kimberly, along with my university affiliation, provided bridging capital (Szreter & Woolcock 2004) that helped me to establish credibility for this project at the hospital. Some staff members later confided to me after the comic had been produced that they were initially very doubtful that comics were an appropriate way to communicate with adults. Although these staff members ultimately became enthusiastic champions of

this project, their initial scepticism highlights how comics still lack cultural authority in many quarters.

Advantages of working with interns.

From a pedagogical point of view, there were several advantages to working with medical interns. Most medical internships have a semi-structured educational program, but most training happens on the job, and interns to a large extent are expected to direct their own learning. This more self-directed style can be understood in terms of constructivist pedagogy, and seems to align well with the way comics allow readers to find multiple paths through a text.

Finally, as discussed above, previous studies have focused on comics that were designed in part by teachers of the classes that those comics were used in. This has the effect of in some ways mirroring the traditional banking model of education, where the teacher is the central figure of the classroom, passing knowledge down to their students. The success or failure of the comics in these studies could then be seen not just as a trial of the comics themselves, but of the researcher/teacher's own knowledge, as contained in the comics. As I do not have a medical background, creating a comic in this area meant drawing from the knowledge and experiences of others, rather than my own existing knowledge. Similarly, the interns who would receive the comic had a level of medical knowledge that I will never have, so I was conscious while creating the comic that it needed to not work as way of delivering knowledge (since I would not be able to represent that knowledge authentically), but be able to function as a site of praxis, a place for action and reflection (Freire 1972).

One metaphor that emerged while discussing the potential of making this comic with the Medical Education Unit was the idea of different forms of media as "vehicles," which could do different things. It was important to me that if this comic was a vehicle, it was not one that would drive its readers to a particular destination, but one that they could steer themselves.

Pitching the idea

After determining that an intern handbook would fit the goals of this thesis and could potentially make a contribution to the wellbeing of young doctors, the next step was meeting with the Medical Education Unit to gauge their interest in the project. This kind of consultation is crucial for any cartoonist wishing to work with an educational institution. For me, the process of engaging the Medical Education Unit was smooth and straightforward, possibly because I possessed "bridging social capital" that helped connect me to the MEU.

Hanson et al (2008)have highlighted the need to cultivate 'bridging social capital' across healthcare networks in order to create positive social change. Bridging social capital can be understood as horizontal relationships between disparate social groups who have similar social standing. Equally important is "linking social capital," which is understood as vertical relationships that connect groups who occupy different places within the hierarchies of power, wealth of social standing. (Gittell & Vidal 1998; Narayan-Parker 1999)

In the case of this project, my relationship with Kimberly, as well as my university affiliation, helped to contribute to the "bridging social capital" that I needed to facilitate bringing the project to Mackay's MEU. I e-mailed the MEU director, Dr. Dale Hanson on Wednesday, September 18, 2013, and received a response the following Friday, September 20:

> … *We are intrigued by your idea.*
>
> *My personal view is there are a number of aspects to life (including life as a doctor) that aren't well dealt with by intellectual knowledge presented as facts to be remembered. Specifically there is important emotional content to being a doctor that I recon (sic) would be better explored by other forms of communication (including the arts).*
>
> *Interns undergo an important role transition from student to professional that would be a very worthy topic…*
> (personal correspondence)

Institutional Context and Hidden Curriculum

We had a meeting at the MEU offices on the following Tuesday, which was attended by myself, Dr. Hanson, and four other MEU staff members, including Kimberly. With permission from all participants, I recorded this discussion, which began with Dr. Hanson stating that he thought that "there's a lot more to being a doctor than can be meaningfully communicated with a series of facts." It quickly became clear that he felt that creating a comic offered the possibility of expanding the curriculum to include aspects of internship that frequently went unsaid, or were in a way "unsayable." Dr. Hanson felt that those aspects were not so much about particular knowledge, but related to issues of identity, emotion and responsibilities:

> *There is an important lifestyle component, an emotional intelligence component and even an emotional challenge of being an intern. If I were to summarize what I think the role of an intern is, it's not so much new knowledge, it's applying knowledge that they have. … It's a really important role transition, which is to go from being a student to being a professional. So a student is sort of outside, watching, thinking this is exciting, whereas a professional steps up to the plate and starts to assume professional responsibilities and make decisions. And those role transitions are really important and not necessarily straight-forward.*

Dr. Hanson also discussed the possibility of using comics to address what Frederic W. Hafferty (1998) has described as the "hidden curriculum" of medical education, which can be understood as things that students learn which are not formally taught, or "cultural mores that are transmitted, but not openly acknowledged, through formal and informal educational endeavours" which may often be at odds with an institution's stated values (Hafler et al. 2011, p. 440).

For example, as part of an attempt to improve the disproportionately poor health outcomes of Indigenous Australians, the formal curriculum of Australian medical education includes content related to Indigenous culture, but there is little empirical evidence that it has been effective, which could be related to the fact that medical students have repeatedly reported that they feel this content is irrelevant to their education. Ewen, Mazel & Knoche (2012,

p. 201) argue that this resistance occurs because the hidden curriculum of medical education is misaligned with the Indigenous cultural content and "students value only curricular content that is supported by the institution's dominant tacit values, to which they must aspire in order to achieve."

Hafferty suggests that educators interested in uncovering hidden curricula should investigate four areas: policy development, evaluation, resource allocation and institutional "slang." He explicitly calls out faculty and student handbooks and procedure manuals as places where policy can be found, as these brochures 'not only detail the "rules of the road" and "key points of interest" … but also implicitly convey messages about what is and is not valued by the institutional community itself' (Hafferty 1998, p. 404).

Evaluation and resource allocation should be understood on a broad level, not just in an educational sense, because whenever "a medical school begins a new capital funding drive, announces a new initiative, erects a building or develops new policies … implicit messages are being disseminated throughout the community about what the institution considers important or not important," how it evaluates success and where it allocates resources (Hafferty 1998, p. 404).

Finally, institutional slang is something which Hafferty observed changing at his own hospital to reflect a more business-like approach to medicine, with talk of "'strategic investments' or 'ventures' with questions being raised about their potential 'return on equity'" (Hafferty 1998, p. 405). A comic book can reproduce linguistic slang, but the visual shorthand in comics can also function in a way as a kind of visual slang, a category of expression which also includes the pristine photos of medical equipment and smiling doctors found on hospital brochures, or the choices of fonts used on department memos.

Issuing a comic book-style handbook to all incoming interns at the hospital can be understood as playing a role within this hidden curriculum, which does not necessarily have any relationship to the content of the comic. The comic would indicate an unexpected use of resource allocation, and the visual slang of comics would also be unusual, which meant that simply

distributing the comic in an official capacity could disrupt the hidden curriculum in Mackay Base Hospital's medical education.

The emotional, interpersonal and lifestyle aspects of being a doctor that the Medical Education Unit staff discussed with me were issues that they felt were not really addressed in the formal curriculum, and I got the impression that they felt that the hidden curriculum of medical education often positioned these issues in ways that were detrimental to doctors. If the comic was to play a role in repositioning these aspects of medical practice for the incoming interns, the explicit curriculum of its content and the implicit hidden curriculum of its form and method of delivery would have to be aligned.

Delivery method: The Pedagogy of Zines

I felt strongly that using a "traditional" comic book format would not suit these aims, and I envisioned the form of the handbook taking its cues from the culture of self-published mini-comics and zines, which are usually printed on photocopiers and assembled by hand. Anna Poletti (2005, p. 184) has characterised zines as representing "a form of alternative media, a subculture of storytelling and knowledge sharing, engaged in what Neil Nehring (1993, p. 149) describes as a 'pedagogical exchange . . . of contumacious, critical response' to contemporary popular and subcultures, mixed with celebration and parody."

I have self-published zines and mini-comics in the past, so they represented a familiar format to me. More than that, however, I felt that in order for this publication to be successful, it needed serve as an antidote to the overload of "official," authoritative materials that interns were receiving during orientation. It needed to show a different view of working in a hospital, in the same way that *Punch's* parodist "cartoons" showed an alternative way of looking at the Westminster Hall exhibition. It needed to use hand-drawn cartoons the way that Rius had used them in *Marx for Beginners* to address his readers as their peer rather than their superior. I wanted the drawings in this comic to portray people and emotions in a

humanist way, similar to how *A Guard's Story* universalizes the emotions of both the guards and the detainees in Australia's refugee detention centres.

All of these touchstones share some similar qualities. *Punch* might be seen, in both form and content, as a "zine" of its day, while Rius is an iconoclastic cartoonist whose work prefigures the ethos and aesthetics developed in zine culture, and the cartoonists of *A Guard's Story* have predominantly self-published their work as minicomics. They also all relied on the visual language of simple, expressive drawing, printed in black and white. While colour printing may not have been possible for *Punch* or *Marx for Beginners*, its relative absence can be considered a deliberate creative choice in *A Guard's Story*, which was published online and could conceivably have been printed in full colour, or animated for that matter. Black and white drawings often have a more intimate, direct effect, which fits with the ethos of zines and self-publishing. Colour adds another "channel" that is braided into the spatio-topia, and a whole different layer of meanings. Sometimes these meanings can be informative, but at other times they can be unnecessary, or even distracting. For example: colouring the intern comic book would have meant choosing skin colours for each of the characters, which would potentially define them as falling within particular ethnic groups, something I felt was much better left up to the reader's imagination. Similarly, colouring the characters clothes would also define them along particular cultural lines that I felt were better left ambiguous.

Institutional Resistance to Inexpensive Presentation Delivery

Within the Medical Education Unit, there was some resistance to using the simple publishing style of a zine. Staff members suggested various, more elaborate modes of delivery. The idea of creating a website or posting the material on Facebook and creating social media integration was raised early on, with one staff member arguing that it could help build student "recruitment and profile and awareness," and another suggesting that "because of the 'likes' and that interaction it could be very powerful, and that's what you want to provoke a conversation."

This idea was ultimately discarded, as it would have added another data point that might complicate my research. However, almost as soon as the idea of putting the comic online was discarded, another suggestion was raised of making the comic more like a pop-up book, with flaps to lift and paper wheels to turn. This idea would have also added additional modalities and data points, along with complications in production.

Both the ideas of producing comics for the web and using more tactile comics, such as pop-up books, are in themselves, promising and could suggest further areas for research. However, I mention them here because they seem to me to be representative of the "hidden curriculum" in developing innovative educational materials in this particular setting, which is to make things bigger and more expensive. Early on in the conversation about the intern comic, it was decided that in order to legitimize the project, it would advantageous to seek grant money to fund it. Eventually it was determined that the best course of action would be to apply for a $5,000 grant from the Mackay Hospital Foundation, which was successful.

That extra money, another staff member suggested, could go to printing in colour. This led to the biggest disagreement in our initial meeting, as I strongly felt that colour was not necessary for this project, while the staff member felt that it could add a lot of value to the project. It would have certainly added cost to the project, in terms of both printing (since colour printing is many times more expensive than black and white) and creative effort. The terms of the grant that we received included funds to pay for printing the handbooks, and for my travel expenses. However, my understanding was that this particular grant could not be applied to pay for labour costs. I considered the creative work that I produced for this project to be covered by my postgraduate scholarship. However, without this scholarship it would have not been possible to produce the content for the comic.

The hidden curriculum of this grant, which was funded by the mining corporation BHP Billiton Mitsui Coal Pty Ltd (BMC), was one that emphasized consumable commercial services (printing and travel costs) rather than

creative work, such as the labour in designing and drawing the comic. In many ways, this is opposed to the DIY cultures of zines and mini-comics, where "value comes from the continued critique of the producer/consumer binarism of commercial culture as enacted through various forms of cultural independence, as well as more vigorous acts of resistance or protest" (Poletti 2005, p. 185).

The grant, which authorized spending money on consumable products, but not on creative work, emphasized how difficult it can be to produce truly educational materials within the confines of traditional, capitalist authority and its own hidden curriculum.

Multimodal Analysis of Existing Publication: Keeping Your Grass Greener

Part of my research involved reviewing existing publications which had been created to address wellbeing in young doctors. One of the few existing publications that tackled this subject was a 56-page colour brochure called *Keeping Your Grass Greener* (2011), which was published jointly by the Australian Medical Students Association and the New Zealand Medical Students Association. A multimodal analysis of how this publication constructs authorship and authority highlights some of the difficulties of producing truly student-focused pedagogical material within the current funding framework. Its inside cover displays the logos of nine "partners," including both non-profit and commercial organisations "without whom this guide would not have gone ahead."



The acknowledgements page of *Keeping Your Grass Greener* (2011).

The bulk of the guide is made up of short essays that have been provided by a variety of individuals and organisations. Most of these essays are written in a lecturer's voice, a construction that is supported by the visual and spatial modalities of the pages, which place the author's name at the top of the page, in bold. The content of the essays frequently remediates the

banking model of education, where the writers are positioned as knowledgeable experts who are passing on wisdom to the vulnerable medical students.



mental resilience

Dr Antonio Fernando

Mental resilience is very similar to being physically fit. Being resilient allows us to withstand the stressors, frustrations and annoyances that beset medical doctors. But more than that, when one is resilient, life takes on more meaning. Some researchers call this state of being "flourishing"! This is much more fun than just existing or surviving.

There has been a recent explosion in research on this area. You might want to research it yourself and Google "positive psychology". The good news is that many of us can change our attitudes and develop skilful means in order to flourish. The following are certain attitudes we can all develop:

1. Mindfulness.
It is a 2500 year old Eastern approach to daily living. A mindfulness practitioner pays attention to the moment, in a non-judgmental manner. One is not bogged down by all the "what if's" and instead savours the current experience. The overall effect is an attenuation of the sympathetic overdrive allowing the person to "chill" naturally. It can be an addictive state of mind!

2. Gratitude.
Learning how to be grateful for many things that we normally do not notice can change our perspective. A daily gratitude log where one lists things s/he can be thankful for at the end of the day has been shown to increase happiness and resilience after two months. This attitude is one of my favourites and one of the easiest to do.

3. Compassion.
All of us can actually increase our levels of compassion to other people, even the most annoying ones. By seeing that all of us, including those who pester us, are all the same, can make a difference in how we perceive others. Being conscious that all of us are actually very similar can make us feel connected and more forgiving. All of us actually want to be happy. All of us want to live in peace. Focus on how similar we are and not on the differences.

If you are interested in some of these techniques, please visit www.calm.auckland.ac.nz.

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preventing burnout: don't say yes

Maria Gardiner and Hugh Kearns
(ithinkwell.com.au)

A key cause of burnout and poor work morale is just being too busy - being overcommitted. Medical students in particular can be at risk of being overcommitted because not only do you have very demanding work, but you also have study. Before you know it you've signed up for a committee, been talked into taking on an extra work shift, committed yourself to chairing the fundraising group and squeezed in yet another last minute work request. Often it feels easier to agree and deal with the consequences later. It's hard to say no when someone is standing there in front of you asking (often pleading) for something. Often (well, sometimes) what they're asking for is worthy, fairly reasonable and absolutely plausible. However, as we like to say - even good things can kill you! For most of us it's very hard to say no.

Emotional reasoning
What happens in these situations is that we feel under pressure to agree. Under this pressure a part of our brain (the rational logical bit) goes absent without leave. The part that's left (the emotional bit) can tend to respond without thinking through the consequences. We often say that you shouldn't make decisions unless you have a consenting adult present.

Don't say yes
A useful skill to learn is to buy yourself some time - time for your rational brain to re-engage - a cooling off period if you like. And to do this you need to get out of the habit of automatically saying yes.

Some responses you can use instead of yes are

- I'll get back to you about…
- I'll need to check my diary before I can
- I'll need to check with my wife/husband/friend/border collie about what we're doing
- I think I already have something on then, but I'll check

While you are checking (and cooling off) you can be

- Really checking
- Thinking through if this is such a good idea
- Working out what else you can give up (hint: it's not family/friends! Or you!)
- Coming up with a diplomatic way of saying no. For example, 'I appreciate you asking me to… but right now is not a good time. Perhaps next week/month/year/never'
- Thinking of another option for them. For example, 'I can't do it, but I know Rodriguez is really good at doing that'.

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Excerpt from Keeping Your Grass Greener (2011).

Each of the essays offers advice on a different topic under the umbrella of "wellbeing," from time management to financial planning, although in some places the advice overlaps, and in other places it can seem contradictory. For example, many of the essays advise students that they need to have a social life outside of medicine and hobbies which they enjoy, while another essay warns that interns face peril when "more enjoyable activities frequently take precedence over important work" (p. 24). Each piece in the booklet seemed to have been written in isolation.

As a result, the overall effect of reading this booklet was something like sitting in a lecture theatre and having a parade of Poloniuses come in, each offering a litany of advice ("to thine own self be true;" "neither a borrower nor a lender be" ad infinitum). This effect is multiplied by the use of bullet points and numbered lists in most of the essays, reducing advice down to pithy, bite-sized bits of common sense, like "Set some clear, achievable goals to help you keep things in perspective" (p. 25) and "keeping

connected with people helps increase levels of wellbeing, confidence and opportunities to practice in physical activities" (p. 12).

Although there is some helpful information, large portions of the booklet seem designed to create a space for the writers to perform the role as 'experts' about wellbeing, regardless of how useful their advice may by to readers. In fact, many of the essays direct readers to businesses or websites run by these 'experts', furthering the booklet's function as a promotional tool, rather than an educational one.

The writers of these essays would have provided their work for free, either in exchange for the publicity or for a sense of gratification about helping the next generation of doctors. To the organisations that commissioned and published this booklet, the intellectual, creative work of writing the content of the booklet was undervalued compared to the physical, promotional act of the booklet itself.

The most interesting section of the booklet was a series of short, mostly anonymous autobiographical essays (p. 32-36) that were written by doctors and medical students about their struggles with mental health. Narratively, they all tell the same story: 'I thought everything was fine, until something bad happened and I realized I wasn't really coping, but then I got help and/or had an epiphany, and now things are better.' Individually, each of the stories is interesting, although not particularly instructive, as the actual process of learning is generally obfuscated. In one example, weeks in therapy are summarized in three words: "valuable lessons learned!" (p. 34). Taken collectively, however, a motif emerges: the dangerous tendency of doctors to take on as much responsibility as possible even when help is available, and the importance of asking for that help.

Content and Design: Conducting the 'Voice of the Intern'

As previously discussed, educational materials often implicate the voice of a lecturer or other authoritative figure. The comic provided an opportunity to show things from the perspective of interns, and the MEU considered the idea of using the "voice of the interns" to be central to the project of the Intern Handbook. This approach is supported by studies which

have shown that junior doctors judge their own preparedness and view the challenges that they face quite differently compared to the senior doctors who are their authority figures at the hospital tasked with evaluating their progress (Jones, A, McArdle & O'Neill 2001; Probert et al. 2003; Tallentire et al. 2011).

This posed two challenges: first, determining the content that would represent the interns' concerns, and then determining how to portray that content in the comics form.

Several strategies were employed to develop the content of the comic. The Medical Education Unit had recently gauged the interns' views on a variety of topics related to their training through a qualitative survey, which provided some insights into the content that would be most appropriate to cover. I also reviewed existing orientation materials provided by the MEU, including PowerPoint presentations on 'Surviving Internship' that were developed by past interns, as well as account from interns who had published their own experiences in blogs and online articles (e.g. (DoctorOnTheSide 2012; Kokkinn 2013; SurvivorDO 2013). Finally, I informally discussed the project with friends who had been interns and solicited their feedback and opinions.

This resulted in a lot of valuable information, which had come to me through a wide variety of modalities and different kinds of authorities. In order to best represent the plurality of opinions and feelings I had encountered, I felt that the comic would need to avoid using an authorial voice or telling the story of a particular character. Instead, like Greenberg's *Hamlet*, I wanted to present a variety of characters and situations in a way that would allow multiple voices to coexist, and give readers the opportunity to imagine themselves in different roles, using the avatars of the characters like masks to enter the world of the comic. I also wanted to design the comic in a way that would open up different routes for reading to allow the readers to act as "co-authors" of the comic.

I structured the comic around four intern characters – two men and two women – who traverse the challenges of internship together. Although I

designed each character to have a unique visual identity, I deliberately refrained from giving them definitive personalities or character traits. In this way, I hoped that interns would be able to locate themselves in the characters, and that the use of parallel characters would help to represent internship as a journey to be taken as part of a community, rather than as a sole traveller.

Drawing the comic: blue pencil and photocopiers

After determining the context, format and general organizational structure of the comic, it was time to begin drafting the pages, a process which took several weeks. I was fortunate to able to use a multi-purpose room near the MEU offices for this purpose, as this allowed me to quickly run ideas and sketches past the staff, and to be ethnographically embedded in the hospital environment where I could observe the culture and habits of the doctors and other staff members.

My process of developing the actual pages of the comic was iterative and progressive. I began by creating a simple prototype comic with the dimensions and number of pages that the finished version was intended to have. Dividing the book so that each two-page spread functioned as a unit, I began to loosely sketch out the themes and topics that would appear on each spread.

These sketches were then worked up further into more detailed "thumbnails," which were run past the MEU staff for suggestions and feedback. While cartoonists generally draw at a larger size than their finished art will be reproduced at, I drew these thumbnails straight onto the facsimile prototype, which allowed me to make sure that I was not packing too much detail or information onto any one page. It also allowed for this rough draft version of the comic to be easily flipped through and "read" by the MEU staff, and allowed me to test the flow and structure of the overall comic. After taking feedback from the MEU, which was largely positive, I created a second, more detailed prototype, before beginning the 'pencilling' stage of drawing the comic.

I used blue mechanical pencil to draw what would become the final version of the comic on thick paper that was about twice the size that the eventual comic would be printed at. This allowed me to add more details and be more precise than I could have been if I was working "at size." It also had the added benefit of making my mistakes smaller and harder to see in the printed version. These pencilled pages were circulated around the MEU staff for final corrections and additions.

The penultimate stage of producing the comic was inking it, which I did using a variety of black art pens. I had used blue pencil in the previous stage because it does not reproduce when photocopied. These pencil lines became a guide for me as I inked in the final dark lines that the readers would see in the final book. While pencilling can be a loose, improvisational way of drawing, where ideas can easily be changed or added, inking tends to be a more precise, "finishing" style of drawing. I personally find it to be the most challenging part of making comics.

The final stage was using the MEU office photocopier to print the final, bound copies of the comic book. I won't elaborate on the technical details in this process, except to note that because we printed directly from my drawings, the copied images were crisp and clean. Creating, assembling and printing the comic was done entirely without the assistance of computers, which is not the way that I usually work. I found it easier and more satisfying to be able to edit my work directly with pens and whiteout rather than scanning it into a computer program to edit it digitally.

Distributing the comic: a security blanket for new doctors

The comic was distributed to interns on their inaugural day on the job at Mackay Base Hospital, which was the first day of a week of orientation and training. The interns received these comics in their "welcome packs" along with many other brochures, printouts and schedules. This was done without fanfare, and I asked the MEU staff to refrain from drawing attention to the comics in order to allow the interns to form their own opinions about the material.

After the welcome packs were passed out, the interns took their seats in chairs arranged around the edge of a large classroom. While waiting for the education program to start, some interns began to flip through the materials they had been handed. Some overlooked the comic, but others immediately read every page. A few laughed or pointed out aspects to their new colleagues.

Later that week, the interns had their first placements on the wards of the hospitals, and it was reported back to me that a few interns had brought their copies of the comic there, clutching them like a security blanket as they were guided through their new workplace as they began their professional practice as doctors.

Conclusion

The creation of the Intern Comic, was informed by the theoretical framework developed earlier in the thesis. Of particular note is how comics represent the relationship between reader and author differently from traditional texts. In this case, being mindful of that relationship meant it was important to document my own place in the process, as both a cartoonist and a non-specialist in medical education, in the autoethnography of this chapter.

Constructing the comic meant considering how its multimodal expression would communicate a phatic relationship between is readers and its implied author/scriptor/graphiateur. The decision to use the style of a zine was crucial in determining the comic's pedagogical purpose, because format plays a large role in communicating this phatic relationship. As the non-linguistic components of publishing format can be considered part of the unspoken 'hidden curriculum' of education, the simple, hand-drawn zine format said as much to the readers as the content of the comic. This was a departure from previous guides to wellbeing, such as the *Keeping Your Grass Greener* guide.

Additionally, it was crucial that the voice of the interns was represented, rather than the voice of an expert educator. A variety of resources were used to discover the voice of the intern. This voice was

represented multimodally through a design strategy that allowed readers to situate themselves within the scenarios depicted in the comic, rather than being 'spoken' to by a particular character.

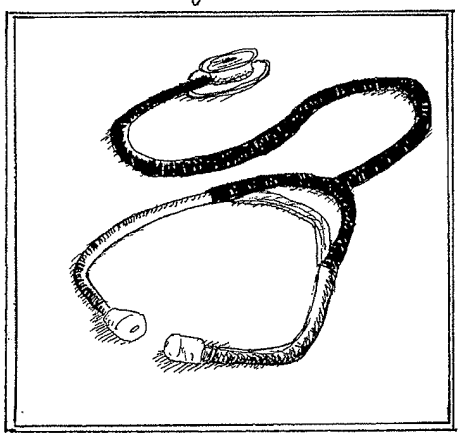
The ways that these format and style choices represented authorship and authority helped to shape the intern comic, which can be read in the next chapter, as well as the interns' responses to it, which will be discussed in Chapter 13.

Chapter 12: Intern Comic Book Handbook

A copy of the publication that was provided to the interns is included in an envelope attached to the back cover of the printed version of this thesis. For the ease of reading, scans of the publication are also included on the following pages.

MACKAY HOSPITAL & HEALTH SERVICE

some things to consider



before putting this on

2014 INTERN SURVIVAL COMIC BOOK

"all the other stuff"

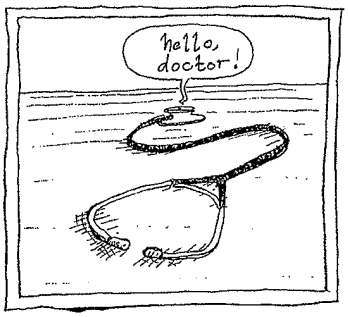
Dedicated to
Osamu Tezuka,
who finished med school
but never became
a practicing
clinician.

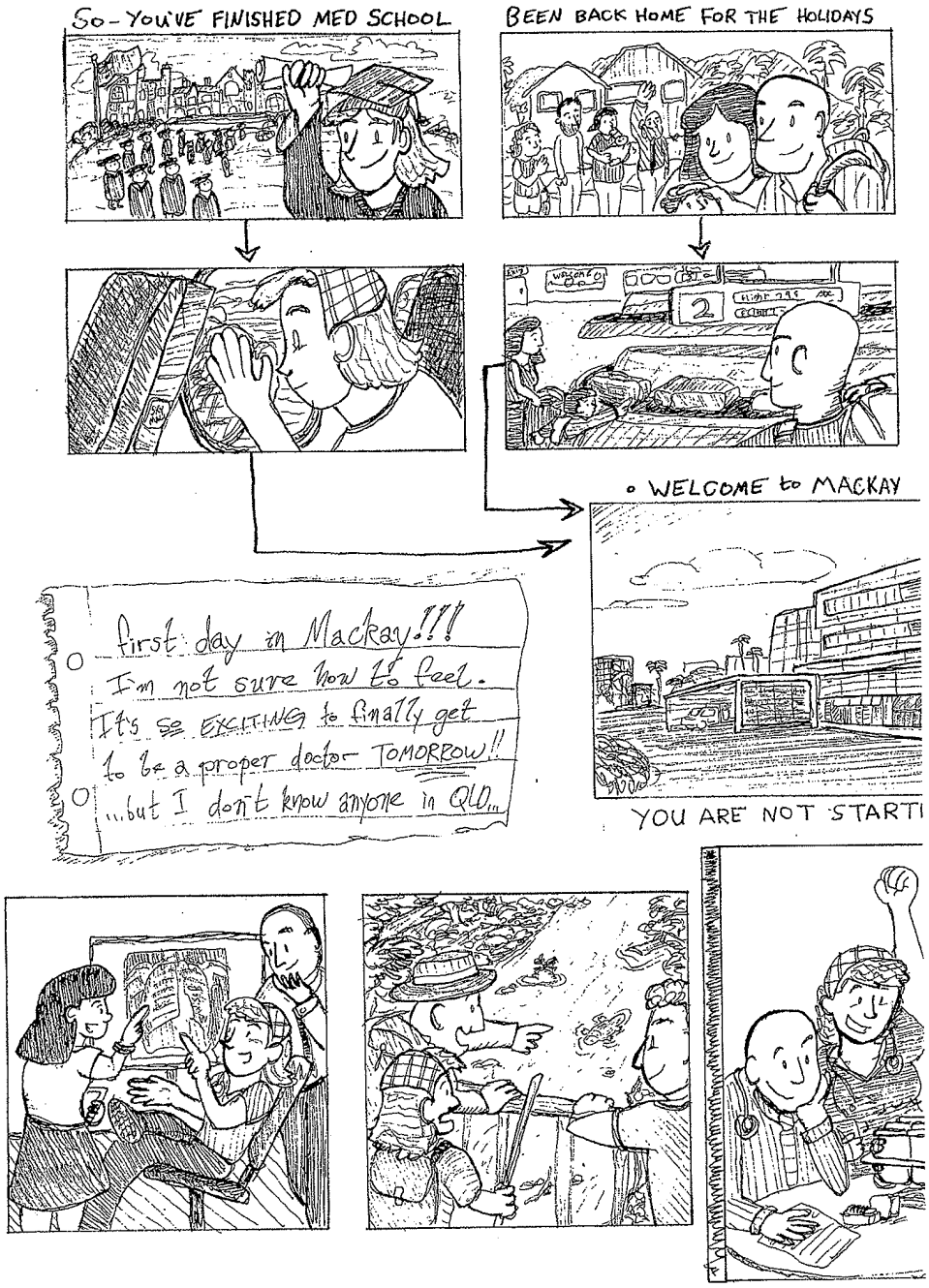
This Intern Orientation Handbook created by
Aaron Scott Humphrey
with support from:

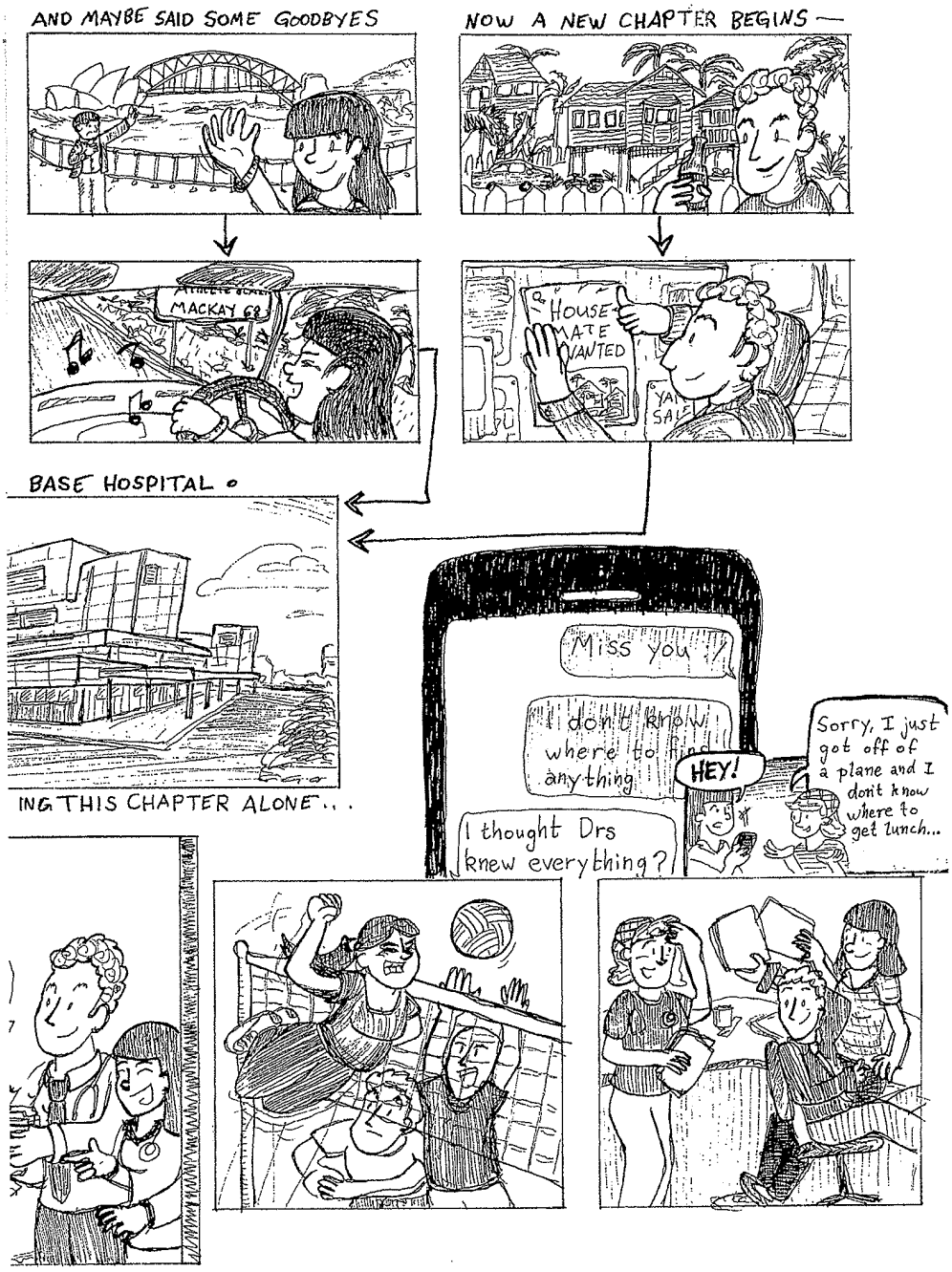
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- BHP BILLITON MITSUI COAL PTY LTD
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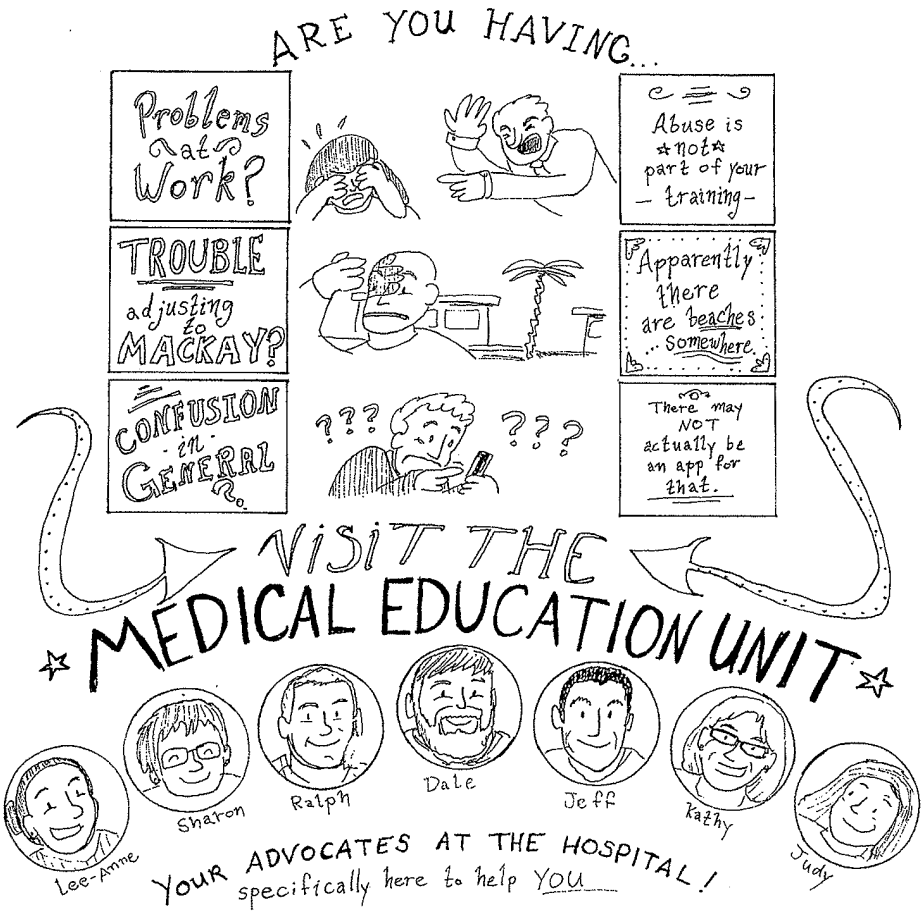
find out more about using comics to teach:
www.aaronhumphrey.com


hello, doctor!


So - You've FINISHED MED SCHOOL
BEEN BACK HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS
WELCOME to MACKAY
first day in Mackay!!!
I'm not sure how to feel.
It's so EXCITING to finally get
to be a proper doctor TOMORROW!!
...but I don't know anyone in QLD...
YOU ARE NOT STARTI


AND MAYBE SAID SOME GOODBYES
NOW A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS —
MACKAY 68
HOUSE MATE WANTED
BASE HOSPITAL o
ING THIS CHAPTER ALONE...
Miss you !
I don't know where to anything
HEY!
Sorry, I just got off of a plane and I don't know where to get lunch...
I thought Drs knew everything?

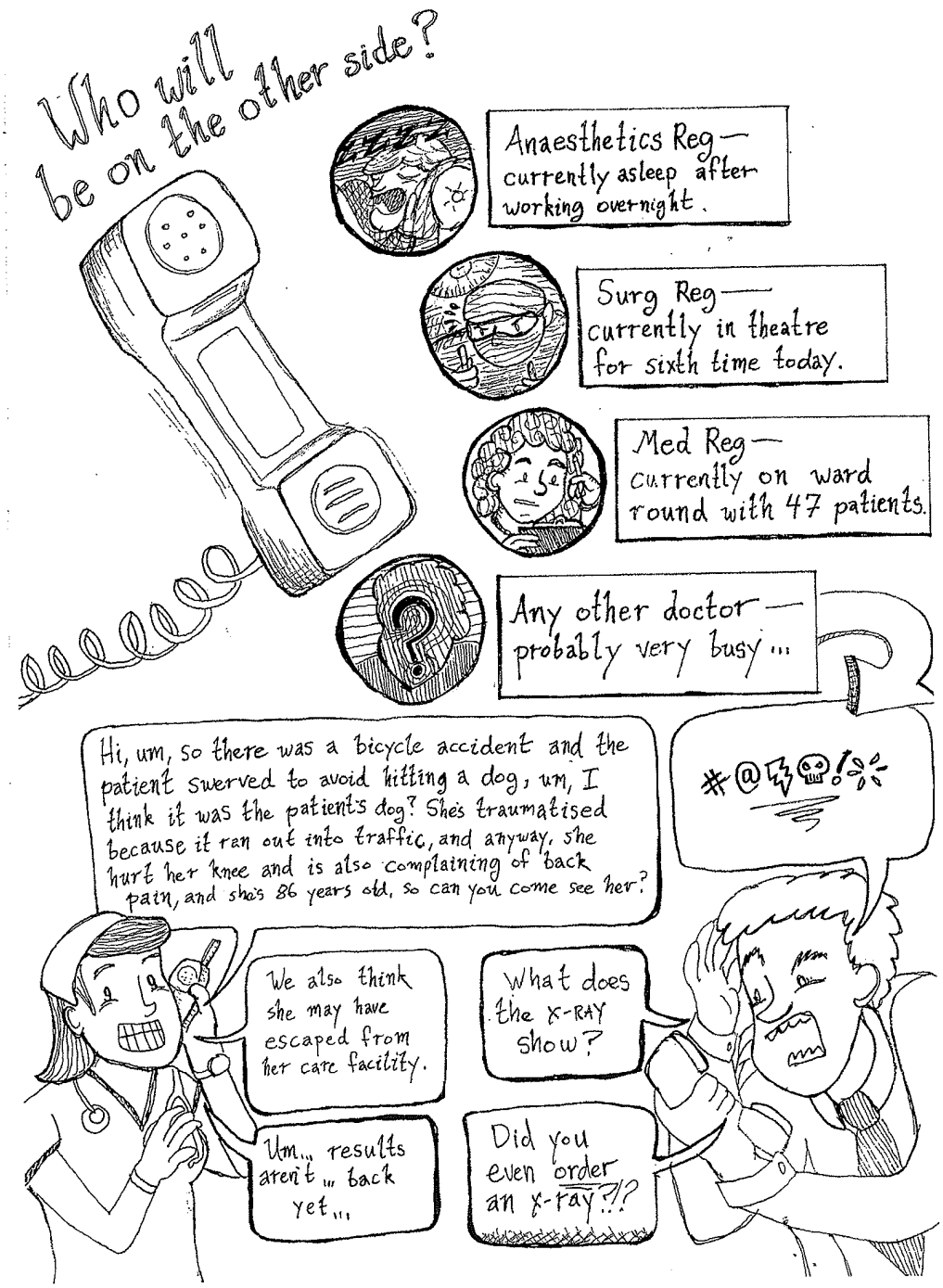

CONGRATULATIONS!
MED SCHOOL IS OVER! YOUR LIFE AS A DOCTOR IS HERE!
I'm NERVOUS! but so excited!
I'm not worried at all.
HEY! Why did you all want to be doctors in the first place?
For me, it was the privilege to be able to help people and to heal them.
HEALING WITH PAPERWORK, MAYBE! You KNOW, AS INTERNS WE'RE BASICALLY GLORIFIED SECRETARIES.
I DISAGREE - WE HAVE THE POWER TO MAKE THE WORST DAY OF SOMEONE'S LIFE A LITTLE BIT BETTER.
What I really appreciate are the intellectual challenges- solving problems and figuring things out!
Ha ha! Sounds like someone misses med school ALREADY!
I love that as doctors we never stop learning! And there are so many opportunites to learn during internship!
I'm not gonna lie— having a decent income was a big motivator for me!
A lot of the nurses make more than we will this year...
Who cares! I'm just happy to have a PAYCHEQUE! Coffees are on me!!
This is going to sound like a weird status thing, but I do like the importance of working in medicine.
Oh, the importance of being the lowest doctor on the totem pole?
Still – it's a THRILL that patients call US "DOCTOR" now!
Plus, we get med students!



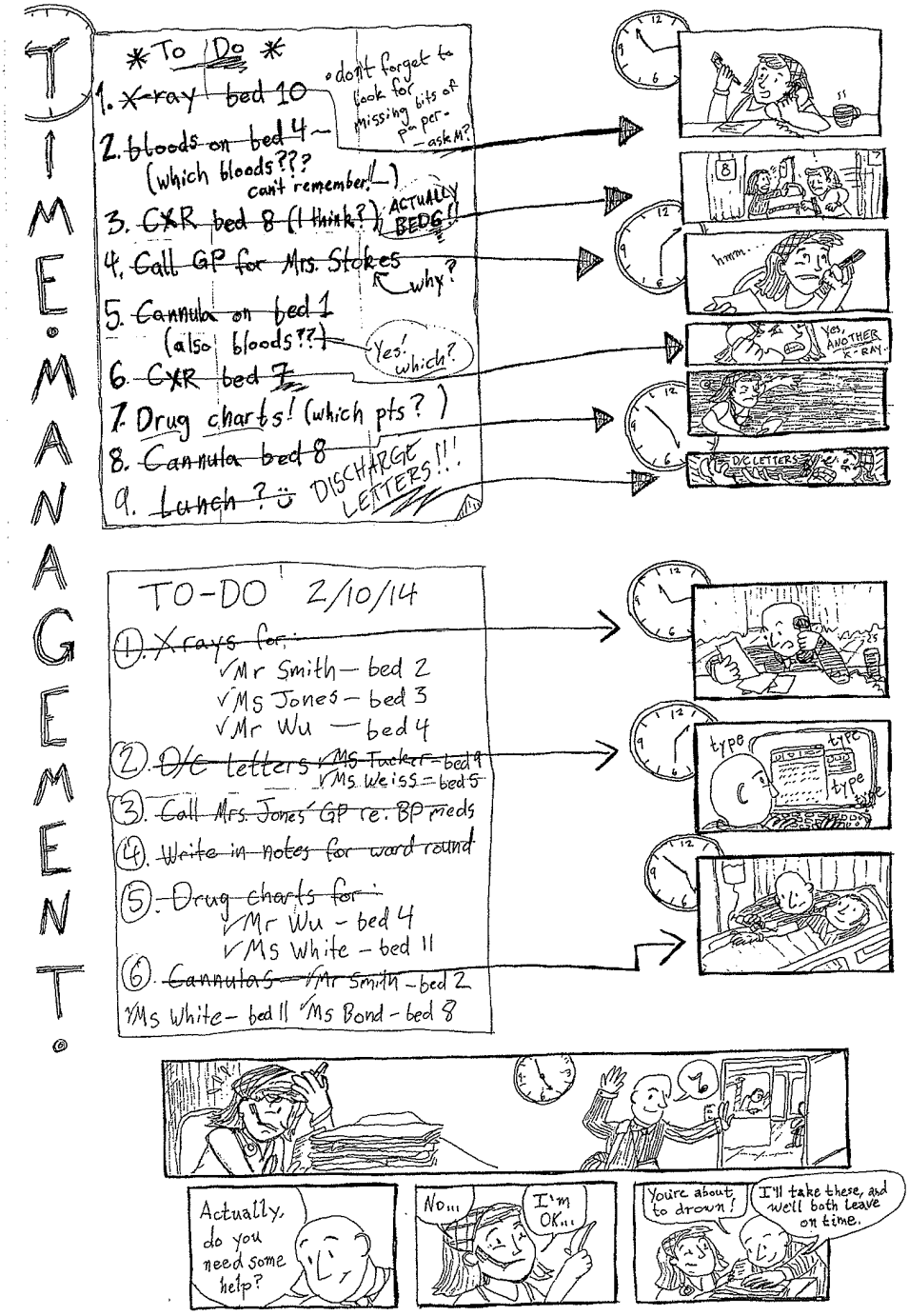
- Since they aren't your ward supervisors, they can provide objective advice and perspectives on work problems.
- They are experienced in assisting interns with many struggles.
- They know Mackay, Bowen & Proserpine very well.
- They are available just to talk if you need it.

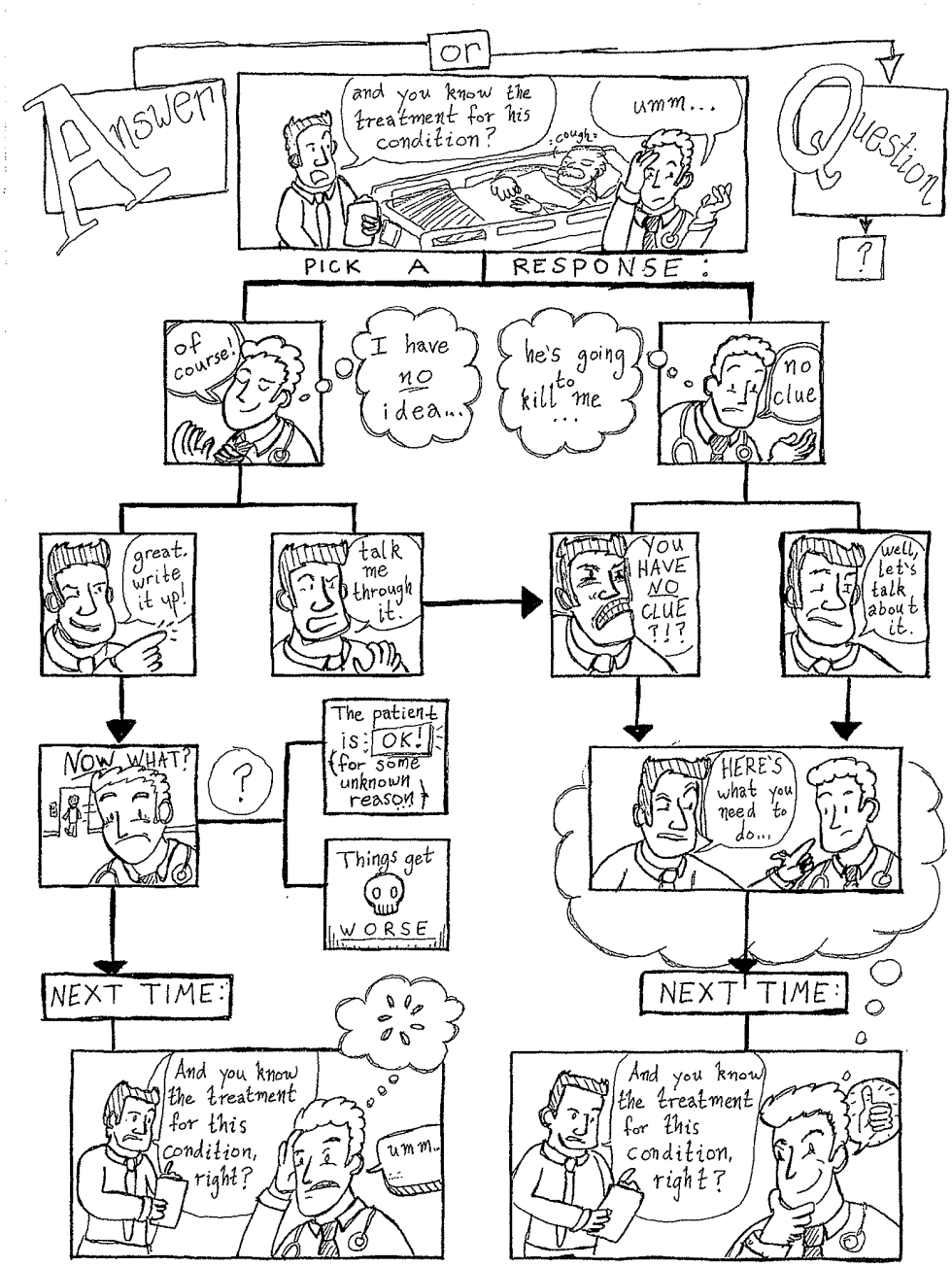
The MEU also runs:




Who will be on the other side?
Anaesthetics Reg— currently asleep after working overnight.
Surg Reg— currently in theatre for sixth time today.
Med Reg— currently on ward round with 47 patients.
Any other doctor— probably very busy...
Hi, um, so there was a bicycle accident and the patient swerved to avoid hitting a dog, um, I think it was the patient's dog? She's traumatised because it ran out into traffic, and anyway, she hurt her knee and is also complaining of back pain, and she's 86 years old, so can you come see her?
#@!
We also think she may have escaped from her care facility.
What does the X-RAY show?
Um... results aren't back yet...
Did you even order an x-ray?!?


Minimise your chances of this
•REFERRAL BLOWBACK•
HOW? HAVE A FRAMING STATEMENT
1. Who you are and what department you are in.
2. Why you are ringing.
3. What you need.
AND BE PREPARED to ELABORATE
1. Hi, it's Ed from the ED. 2. I've got a 76-year-old woman 3. who needs to be admitted for IV antibiotics.
She's hypoxic, her heart rate is 120, T 40.2, CREPS left base.
When you have all the information you need in front of you
LAB RESULTS
X-RAY
coffee?
Decision Rules app
then you can pick up the phone!
CASE NOTES
PATIENT NOTES (from actually seeing pt.)
And the results?
OK!
be right there
{well, you can't please everybody!}
... but 3/4 isn't bad!


TIME MANAGEMENT
* To Do *
1. ~~X-ray bed 10~~
2. ~~bloods on bed 4~~ (which bloods??? can't remember!)
3. ~~CXR bed 8 (I think?)~~ ACTUALLY BEDS!!
4. ~~Call GP for Mrs. Stokes~~ why?
5. ~~Cannula on bed 1~~ (also bloods??)
6. ~~CXR bed 7~~
7. Drug charts! (which pts?)
8. ~~Cannula bed 8~~
9. ~~Lunch?~~ ☺ DISCHARGE LETTERS!!!
• don't forget to look for missing bits of p^n per - ask M?
Yes! which?
Yes, ANOTHER X-RAY.
D/C LETTERS
TO-DO 2/10/14
1. ~~X-rays for:~~
√Mr Smith – bed 2
√Ms Jones – bed 3
√Mr Wu – bed 4
2. ~~D/C letters~~ √~~Ms Tucker – bed 9~~ √~~Ms Weiss – bed 5~~
3. ~~Call Mrs. Jones' GP re. BP meds~~
4. ~~Write in notes for ward round~~
5. ~~Drug charts for:~~
√Mr Wu – bed 4
√Ms White – bed 11
6. ~~Cannulas – √Mr Smith – bed 2~~
√Ms White – bed 11 √Ms Bond – bed 8
type type type type
Actually, do you need some help?
No...
I'm OK...
You're about to drown!
I'll take these, and we'll both leave on time.



If you ask questions, you never have to make the same mistake twice!


People at this hospital are driving me CRAZY!
You know YOU'RE also a person at this hospital, right?
My consultants have been blowing me off —
There's an urgent trauma on! Why is she asking me a question I've already answered twice today?
Nurses are always after me to do a million things —
family wants to talk
beep beep beep
That patient needs drugs!
we also need discharge letters!
I hate to nag, but if this doesn't get done, the whole department backs up. How can I say he needs to be organised?
My reg is running all over the place while I'm drowning in paperwork —
That new intern can handle ANYTHING! She never asks for help!

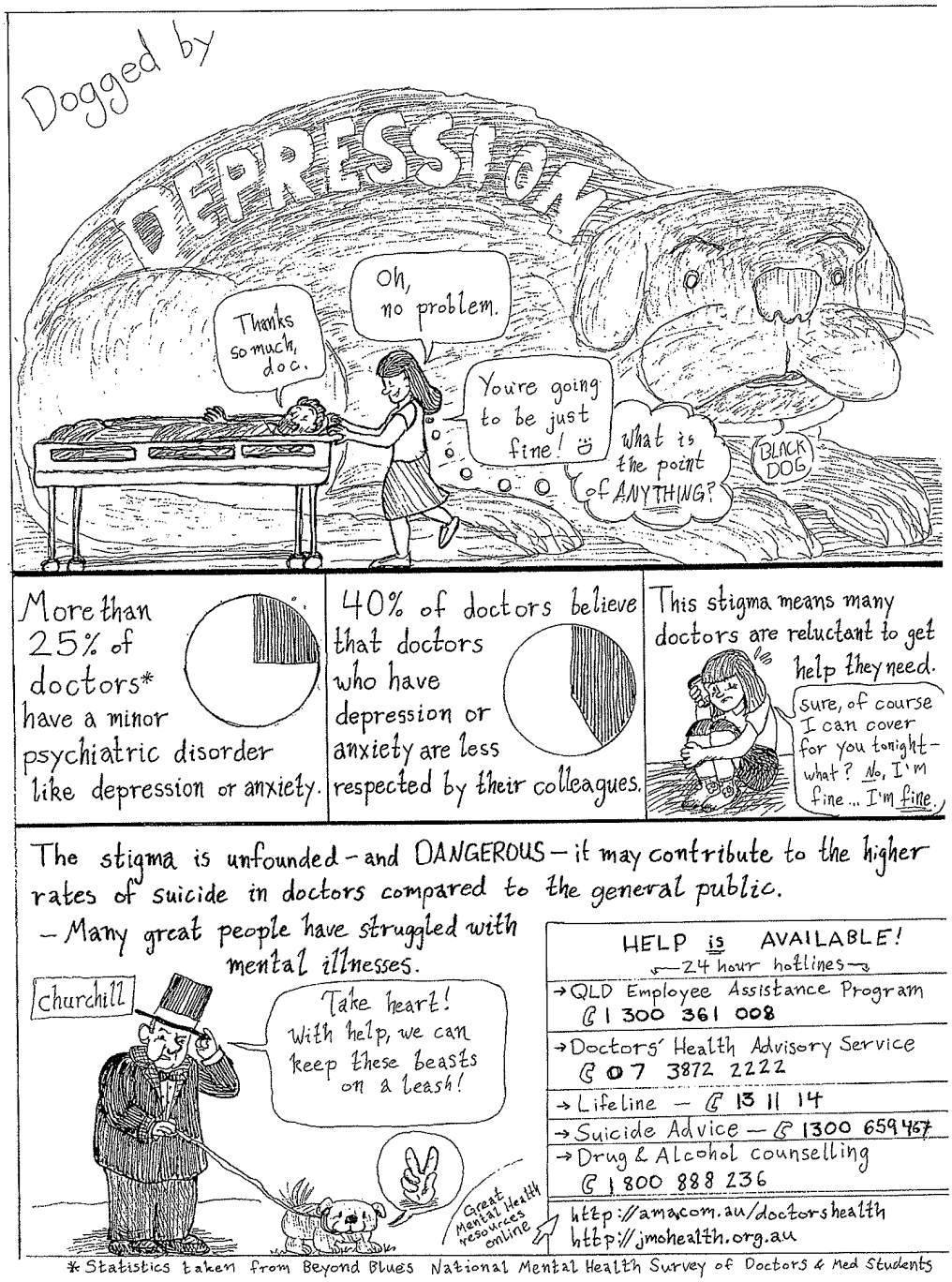

Some of the wardies look so grumpy- it must make patients so uncomfortable-
That intern looks at me like I'm invisible. He clearly thinks he's better than me...
The pharmacist keeps getting on my back about how I write up drugs —
My job is ten times harder when the new doctors refuse to treat me like a trained professional.
Radiology is always so obstructive —
WHERE IS MY X-RAY ?!
it's coming!
The images might be ready if I didn't have to keep answering the phone to get yelled at!
My patients keep finding reasons to stay in the hospital . . .
What a nice, young doctor! It's so good to have a real conversation for a change.


WHAT
I've written him up for 600 mg.
beep beep beep
30 minutes later
that was a lethal dose.!!
oh no
Y-you're ... OK ???
Yes dearie, feeling much better!
I got the dose adjusted for you.
Oh thank God!
Next time I'll double check!
I use the eTG and AM.H websites.
COULD
We're getting you a CT, but I'm sure you're not going to have anything to worry about.
BUT—
oh no
AND:
You said I would be fine!
I know but YOU SAID!
Mr. Clark is really upset, can you go and see him?
Sure.
*$#!
I don't blame that doctor...
I just don't know what I'm going to do...


GO
Her BP has dropped.
from BP 110 to 90.
No problem. Give her a 500 ml fluid bolus and I'll try to swing by to see her later.
beep beep
BUT LATER
hey... you know your patient...
Why didn't I just go see her?
She was already septic when she came in. What could you have done?
WRONG?
where is the vein?
Jab!
Jab!
Jab!
C'mon, doc! be more careful! I want another doctor!
There we are! First try!
His veins were impossible!
I used a warm glove!


BURNOUT/COMPASSION FATIGUE...
There is a huge emotional component to this job —
ugh, I HATE this!
UGH I REALLY HATE THIS!
Yeh... the pain is heaps bad.
Candy Crush
Thank you so much — Your team has been so kind...
JASON, SHUT UP AND LET THIS MAN PUT A NEEDLE IN YOU!!
NO NO NO NO NO NO NO
The first time a patient dies, you may cry...
Time of death: 16:15.
Oh my gosh, I have got to pull it together...
Hey, it's alright.
Your feelings are part of what makes you a great doctor.
I'm sure the family would prefer to know that his death mattered to you.
but am I upset that he died, or upset that we failed?
Eventually, you might be more depressed that —
Time of death: 17:16
— death sort of... stops resistering...


DX: Compassion Fatigue
meh.
can't sleep
don't care
not again
ENTRANCE
because the patients never stop coming and there is always something to care about...
meh
meh
meh
meh
Hey, when was the last time you saw daylight?
RX: O2 (at least) QID
You have to put on your own mask first.
You need a steady supply of positive energy in order to help others.
do what you love
exercise
see your friends OUTSIDE of work
LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER!
a bunch of us are getting brekky if you want to come!
get outside
volunteer
family +friends
Although the bag may not appear to inflate, oxygen is flowing


Dogged by
DEPRESSION
Thanks so much, doc.
Oh, no problem.
You're going to be just fine! :D
What is the point of ANYTHING?
BLACK DOG
More than 25% of doctors* have a minor psychiatric disorder like depression or anxiety.
40% of doctors believe that doctors who have depression or anxiety are less respected by their colleagues.
This stigma means many doctors are reluctant to get help they need.
Sure, of course I can cover for you tonight – what? No, I'm fine... I'm fine.
The stigma is unfounded – and DANGEROUS – it may contribute to the higher rates of suicide in doctors compared to the general public.
– Many great people have struggled with mental illnesses.
Churchill
Take heart! With help, we can keep these beasts on a leash!
Great Mental Health resources online
HELP is AVAILABLE!
←24 hour hotlines→
→QLD Employee Assistance Program
1300 361 008
→Doctors' Health Advisory Service
07 3872 2222
→Lifeline – 13 11 14
→Suicide Advice – 1300 659 467
→Drug & Alcohol counselling
1800 888 236
http://amaqcom.au/doctorshealth
http://jmohealth.org.au
* Statistics taken from Beyond Blues National Mental Health Survey of Doctors & Med Students


How to cope???
There are lots of ways to cope with stress, anxiety, burnout and depression, but some coping strategies only add stress!
SECRET WORK AFFAIRS → BAD COPING
shhh
ALCOHOL! - - - → BAD COPING
Why am I at work??
SITTING ALONE IN THE DARK → BAD COPING
STEALING DRUGS FROM WORK → BAD COPING
HOSPITAL
FIRED
also divorced
GOOD COPING STRATEGIES HAVE LONG TERM BENEFITS!
SPORTS & EXERCISE
MORE IMPORTANTLY
GUN
SHOW!
-SOCIAL
-MENTAL
-EMOTIONAL
STRENGTH
HAVE A HOBBY YOU ENJOY!
I've always wanted to try this...
PRACTICE MINDFULNESS
breath
breath
CENTERED AWARENESS
HAVE MED FRIENDS & NON-MED FRIENDS
UNDERSTANDING
You'll appreciate both kinds of friends more...
PERSPECTIVE
... if you have both of them!
This profession is very rewarding, but it can also be challenging. We are committed to look after others, but to do that well, we MUST also commit to looking after OURSELVES. Theoretically, doctors should be some of the healthiest people in our communities, but this is often not the case. Change starts with you!
→MAKE SURE YOU HAVE THE FOLLOWING←
A GOOD GP YOU TRUST
HOBBIES YOU LOVE
A SUPPORT NETWORK AT HOME
SUPPORT AT WORK


THE GHOST of MEDICAL FUTURE
I've finished my intern year and come BACK IN TIME to help YOU!
hey dudes!
TONS of EXPERIENCE!
You don't have to know every-thing!
it's OK to look things up!
r-really?
Asking questions is OK, too! You're here to learn!
No one cares how "important" you are—
—but they DO care how nice you are!
Make sure you take lunch breaks!
Taking care of yourself does NOT mean you are a slacker!
DON'T RUN!
You'll only cause an accident.


um and they need um...
Present with confidence!
if you want to do procedures, just ASK!
There are LOTS of people to help you make decisions.
NURSES
CONSULTANTS + REGISTRARS
OTHER INTERNS
Whether or not someone lives or dies will often not come down to you.
Appreciate your friends and colleagues and look after them. Help each other.
ENJOY your work! It is a privilege
ENJOY BEING A DOCTOR!
don't come to work drunk.
You CAN go for 13 hours without drinking, eating or going to the toilet, but no one will give you bonus points for it.
Enjoy the fact that you have less responsibilities this year than you will next year.
it will just make you cranky.
And nurses will assume you've been in the cafe all day anyway.
You will be really bad at cannulas, but that is OK. Eventually you get really good at them.
How do you know all this?
How do I know?
Because I'm you from the FUTURE.
Whoo aaaa aaa aaa OMG


MAGICAL ITEMS
to improve an intern's daily quest for survival.
LARGE H_2O bottle!
Easier than cannulating yourself.
cookies
YUMMM
COOKIES and other treats
Make friends thru baked bribery!
SURGICAL TAPE!
You never know when you'll need it.
SOAP + WATER & HAND SANITISER
Maybe you heard diseases live here?
COMFY SHOES
flat!
closed-toes!
Improving your day from the ground up.
HOUSE of GOD
A NOVEL BY Samuel Shem, M.D.
GOMERS go to ground.
Pocketable Snacks!
NUTRI-BAR
Nutritious + also delicious
Because not everyone will bring cookies.
OXFORD HANDBOOK OF CLINICAL MEDICINE
colour coded tabs!
Everything you need to know that's not in this comic.
Sharps CONTAINER
feed me!
Don't get stuck in the moment.
just a minute or two
(or more)
Spend it thinking, not rushing.
a Loaner pen
You don't mind sacrificing
...to save your good pen!
Because no one just "borrows" a pen.
PAGER
BEEP HI!!
beep! beep! beep!
Oh wait, this doesn't help — but you have to have it anyway...



Five rotations later — after hundreds of patients, zillions of cannulations, and a whole lot of paperwork... where will you be? how will you change?

STAYING IN MACKAY NEXT YEAR	☐	☐	☑	☑	
SERIOUSLY STRUGGLED WITH DEPRESSION	☐	☑	☐	☐	
SAW ONE* OF THEIR PATIENTS DIE *OR MORE	☑	☑	☐	☑	
BELIEF IN THEIR CHOSEN SPECIALTY REINFORCED	☑	☐	☐	☐	
CHANGED THEIR CHOSEN SPECIALTY	☐	☑	☑	☐	
BECAME A BETTER DOCTOR	☑	☑	☑	☑	





to learn more about this handbook and to
find out more about using comics to teach, visit

www.aaronhumphrey.com

Chapter 13 – Intern Comic Results, Discussion and Analysis

Introduction

This chapter describes and analyses the results of a series of surveys and interviews that were conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the Intern Comic Handbook, which has been discussed in the previous two chapters.

As most of this thesis has been primarily theoretical, based on the historical and cultural positions of comics and other educational texts, this final chapter may be seen as an attempt to move beyond the theoretical realm, to present empirical evidence regarding the use of comics form as an educational tool. However, while the empirical data that was collected largely supports the overall argument of this thesis, the data should still be understood theoretically, and historically, as representing the educational moment in which it was collected, and contingent on the conditions described in Chapter 11.

The surveys and interviews provided insight into the interns' experiences with the comic and their opinions of it. More broadly, the data show the interns' attitudes toward textual authority and suggest that they understand certain modes of "cut and dried" expression to be authorised in postgraduate medical education. The Intern Comic Handbook, which represented an alternative kind of expression, can be seen as a case study for how interns respond to information that is presented in a way that deviates from their expectations for educational texts.

Methodology

To discern how effective the Comic Handbook was in improving how prepared the young doctors were to face the challenges of their intern year, two cohorts of interns at Mackay Base Hospital were asked to answer an anonymous survey, which was administered in the final month of their training at the start of a weekly teaching session held at the hospital. The first cohort, which served as a control group, was made up of sixteen interns from

the 2013 intake, when the comic was not distributed. The second, experimental, cohort consisted of fifteen interns from the 2014 intake, who had received the comic during their first week of training as part of the structured orientation program. A series of short, semi-structured individual interviews were held at the hospital with nine members of the 2014 cohort, providing further qualitative data. The small sample size is a limitation to this research, but the use of interviews provides a depth of qualitative data that help to interpret the quantitative survey results.

As the survey was taken toward the end of the internship, it was designed to capture the interns' overall impressions of their training, and to reflect their memories of struggles and successes. There were two parts to the survey: the first section gauged how well the interns felt they had been prepared by the Medical Education Unit to deal with a number of issues; the second section asked how helpful and/or useful they had found different printed materials that they received during orientation. These surveys are attached in full in Appendix 1, along with information sheets that were distributed to the interns to describe the aims of the survey.

Despite the limited sample size, a statistically significant improvement was observed in the interns' feelings of being prepared to transition from students to professionals, using a ranked correlation test. Qualitative codes were also generated from an analysis of the survey data related to interns' perceptions of printed materials were found to correspond with codes generated in the interviews about the comic. Taken together, these data sets provide a detailed picture of the ways the intern cohort reacted to the Comic Handbook.

Survey Administration

The surveys were administered at the beginning of a weekly teaching seminar. This regularly scheduled seminar was part of the education program for all interns, although in practice only some of the interns were able to attend each week due to other work commitments. The 2013 interns received the surveys on Tuesday, December 12, 2013, in their last week of training, while the 2014 interns received them on November 18 and 19, 2014.

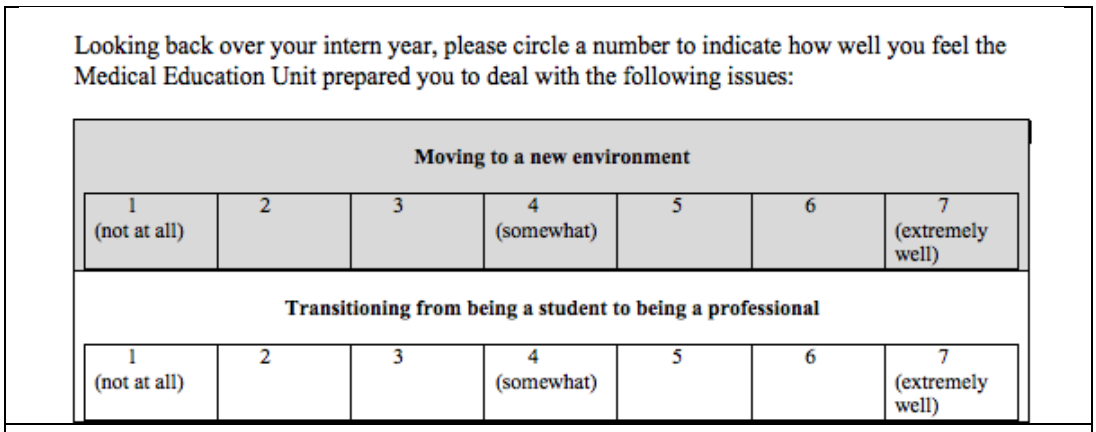
Practical circumstances meant that the surveys could not be held at exactly the same week in both years, but they were held in the same timeframe to reflect the final stages of the interns' training.

Preparedness Survey

The first section of the survey dealt with preparedness, and asked interns to rate how well the Medical Education Unit had prepared them in the following eight domains:

- Moving to a new environment
- Transitioning from being a student to being a professional
- Referring patients to senior doctors
- Managing my time at work
- Dealing with personal stress and/or anxiety
- Dealing with my own compassion fatigue
- Working with other staff members
- Communicating with patients and their families

Respondents were able to rank their feelings of preparedness on a seven-point Likert scale from 1 (not well prepared) to 7 (extremely well prepared).



Looking back over your intern year, please circle a number to indicate how well you feel the Medical Education Unit prepared you to deal with the following issues:

Moving to a new environment

1 (not at all)	2	3	4 (somewhat)	5	6	7 (extremely well)

Transitioning from being a student to being a professional

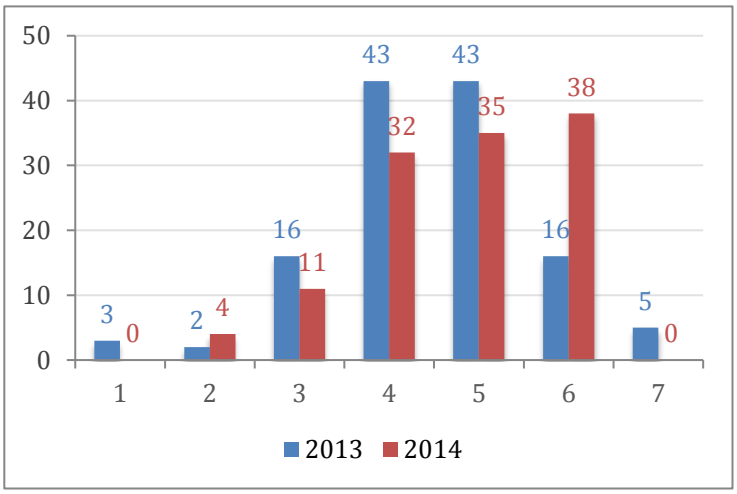
1 (not at all)	2	3	4 (somewhat)	5	6	7 (extremely well)

A sample of the Preparedness section of the survey. The full survey can be found in Appendix 1.

In these areas, the interns gave scores that generally reflected satisfaction with how well the MEU had prepared them, although the trial group's average feelings of preparation were higher than those of the control group. Across all domains, the mean average of the responses increased between 2013 to 2014, from 4.484 to 4.76. In addition, the standard deviation between respondents decreased from 1.184 to 1.106, representing a greater consistency in responses within the 2014 cohort.

Year	Mean (Aggregate preparedness)	Mode (Aggregate preparedness)	Standard Deviation
2013	4.484	4.5	1.184
2014	4.733	6	1.106

Score	*2013*	*2014*
1	3	0
2	2	4
3	16	11
4	43	32
5	43	35
6	16	38
7	5	0
Total	128	120



X axis: Scores selected on the survey, 1 through 7
Y axis: Number of times that score was selected

This chart shows how the number of times that the intern cohorts selected the scores of 1 through 7 in the preparedness survey, across all domains, in 2013 compared to 2014.

The above graph shows the combined number of times interns in each year selected each score (from 1 – 7). Although the responses from both cohorts are similar, although the median response from 2014 interns was higher in all categories. There was also a reduced variance of responses in the 2014 cohort, who ranked their preparedness entirely within the range between 2 and 6; in 2013 responses ranged from 1 to 7, with four scores of 7 (three from the same participant), and three scores of 1, indicating a more consistent and positive experience across the cohort.

The chart below displays the averages and standard deviations of each category, along with the results of a ranked t-test for statistical significance and effect size (Cohen's delta). Due to the small sample size, the ranked t-test cannot provide particularly significant results. However, it is worth noting that category which was shown to be statistically significant ($P<0.05$) and have the largest effect size was "Transitioning from Student to Professional," which was the theme that the MEU had identified as the most important pedagogical goal for the Comic Handbook.

Transitioning from Student to Professional				
	2013	**2014**		
Mean	4.625	5.20	**P-Value**	0.0152
Median	5	5	**Effect (Cohen's d)**	0.952
Std Deviation	1.025	0.775		

Referring Patients				
	2013	**2014**		
Mean	4.375	4.867	**P-Value**	0.0982
Median	4	5	**Effect (Cohen's d)**	0.637
Std Deviation	0.885	0.990		

Interacting with Staff				
	2013	**2014**		
Mean	5.00	5.20	**P-Value**	0.318
Median	5	6	**Effect (Cohen's d)**	0.379
Std Deviation	0.894	1.08		

Moving to a New Environment				
	2013	**2014**		
Mean	4.688	5.067	**P-Value**	0.369
Median	5	5	**Effect (Cohen's d)**	0.337
Std Deviation	1.138	0.884		

Dealing with Patients and their Families				
	2013	**2014**		
Mean	4.625	4.80	**P-Value**	0.448
Median	5	5	**Effect (Cohen's d)**	0.288
Std Deviation	0.957	1.207		

Managing Stress and Anxiety				
	2013	**2014**		
Mean	4.437	4.467	**P-Value**	0.793
Median	4	5	**Effect (Cohen's d)**	0.0980
Std Deviation	1.263	1.060		

Dealing with my own Compassion Fatigue				
	2013	**2014**		
Mean	3.687	3.80	**P-Value**	0.889
Median	4	4	**Effect (Cohen's d)**	0.0520
Std Deviation	1.815	1.320		

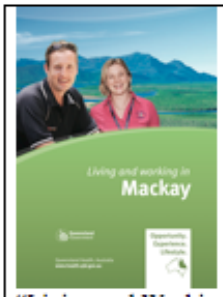
Managing my Time				
	2013	**2014**		
Mean	4.438	4.467	**P-Value**	0.919
Median	4	5	**Effect (Cohen's d)**	0.0379
Std Deviation	1.031	0.914		

The large effect size and statistically significant increase in reported preparedness for "Transitioning from Student to Professional," along with the observable, but not statistically significant, increases across all other categories suggest that the interns in 2014 were better prepared than the previous year's cohort.

There are obviously many factors that could have affected the cohorts, and it is not possible to control for any one variable. The second part of the survey attempted to observe one factor that may have contributed to the interns' overall feelings of preparedness: the publications that they received during orientation.

Publication Survey

The Publication Survey asked the interns to rank how useful and/or helpful they found several publications during their intern year. The covers of these publications were shown on the survey sheet, along with their titles. Interns were asked to rate, on a Likert scale of 1 to 7, how helpful and/or useful they found the materials. They were also able to indicate that they did not remembering having received the publication.



"Living and Working in Mackay"

I found this material helpful and/or useful during my intern year.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	

I don't remember receiving this material	

A sample of the Publications Survey. The full survey is included in Appendix 1.

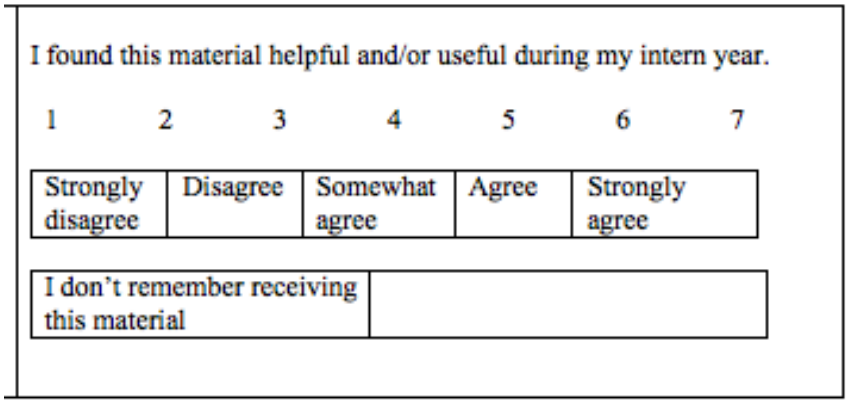
These publications had been made available at some point during their internship, generally during the first week, and these surveys were administered between eleven and twelve months later, allowing them to reflect back on their experiences and gauge how well they had been prepared for the challenges they faced. During such a busy and eventful year, it is not surprising that many of the interns did not remember receiving many of the publications in these surveys.

As interns would be relying heavily on their memories to complete this survey, it is possible that publications that may have contained useful information but were not especially memorable, would not be ranked highly. Likewise, publications that made a strong impression on the interns might be ranked highly, regardless of their actual content.

The other effect of relying on memories is that it should move the interns' assessment away from one based on an analysis of the supposed content of the materials to one more based on their remembered experiences of the materials. This is in line with a constructivist understanding that educational materials are only as useful as students make them.

The 2013 interns were asked their opinions on four different publications, while the 2014 interns were asked about seven publications, including the Comic Handbook. There were only three publications that were measured in both years. The Interns ranked the helpfulness/usefulness of these materials using ordinal categories, rather than scale with equal intervals. A score of 1 indicated strong disagreement, while 2 represented less emphatic disagreement, and 3 was on the border between disagreement

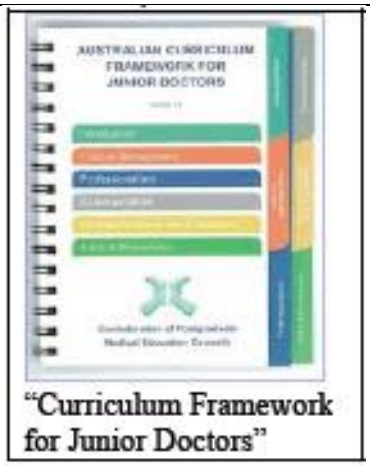
and slight agreement. A score of 4 indicated that the intern 'somewhat agreed', while 5 was clear agreement. A score of six was strong agreement, with a score of seven being enthusiastic agreement.

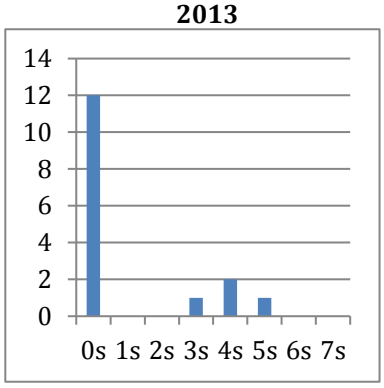


The scale used in the Publications Survey.

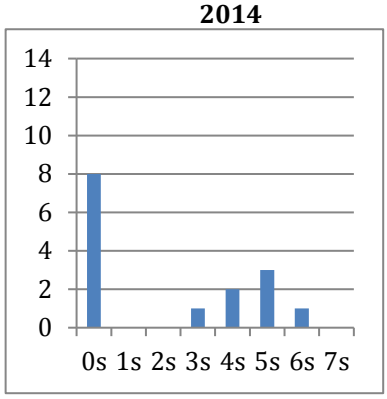
The following charts show the covers of the materials that the interns were surveyed about, along with a brief description of each publication, and a graph of the results of that year's survey. In the graphs, the possible survey responses are charted on the x-axis (a score of 0 represents an intern indicating that they did not remember receiving the publication), and the number of interns who chose that response is plotted on the y-axis. Because many interns did not remember certain the publications, an adjusted mean has been calculated for each publication alongside the overall mean. These adjusted means only take into account the responses of interns who remembered the publications.

Publications distributed in both 2013 and 2014



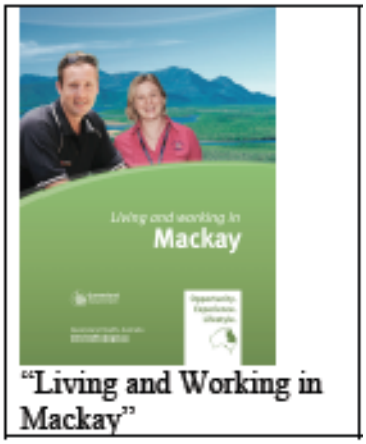


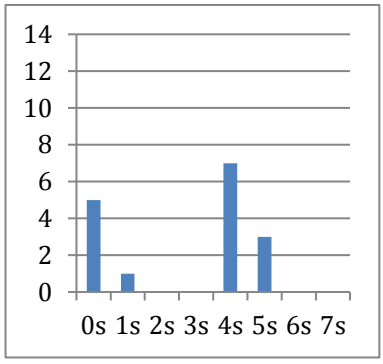
Mean: 1 /Adj Mean: 4
Standard Deviation: 1.8257



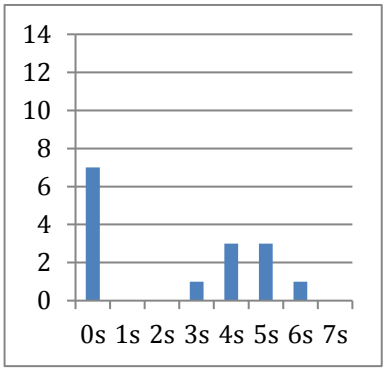
Mean: 2.13 /Adj Mean: 4.57
Standard Deviation: 2.4456

The Australian Curriculum Framework for Junior Doctors, a pocket-sized, spiral bound reference guide with practical information from the Confederation of Postgraduate Medical Education Councils. It covers three main areas: clinical management, professionalism, and communication. There are additional sections on clinical problems & conditions, skills & procedures. Four interns remembered this publication in 2013; seven remembered it in 2014.



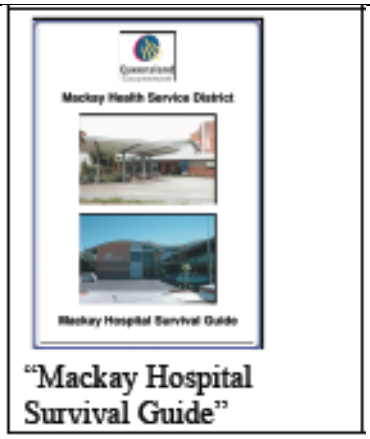


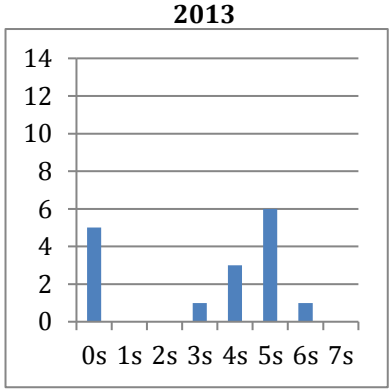
Mean: 2.75 /Adj Mean: 4
Standard Deviation: 2.113



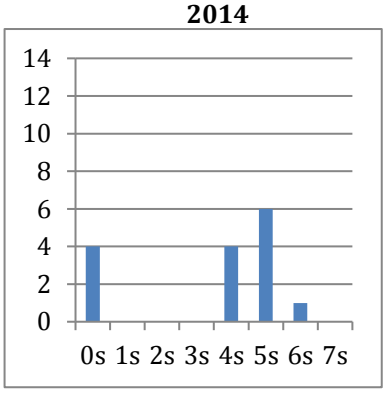
Mean: 2 / Adj Mean: 4.5
Standard Deviation: 2.4142

Living and working in Mackay, a 27-page, A4-sized pamphlet published by Queensland Health for new employees of the Mackay Hospital and Health Service Districts who have relocated to the area. It includes maps and information on housing and local services, such as transportation, schools, banks and attractions. Eleven remembered this publication in 2013; eight remembered it in in 2014.





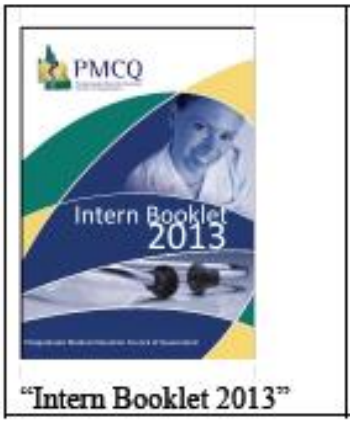
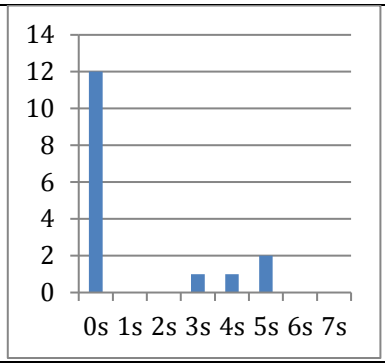
Mean:3.186 /Adj Mean: 4.25
Standard Deviation: 2.3157



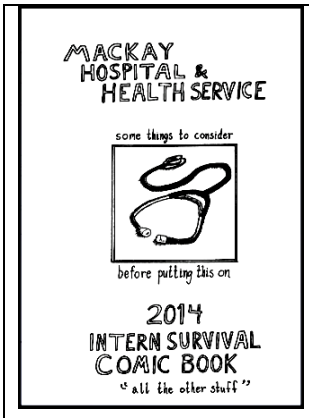
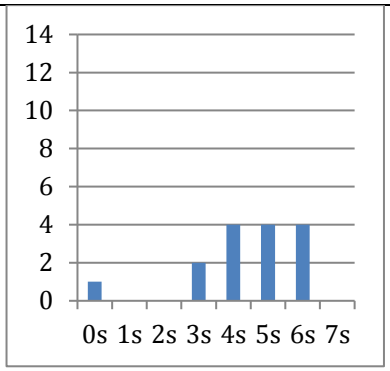
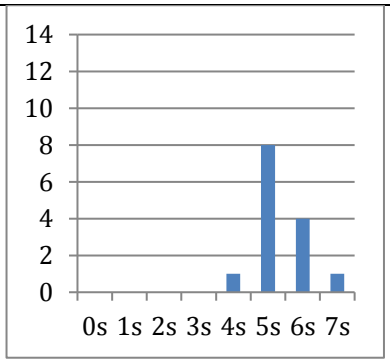
Mean: 3 /Adj Mean: 4.727
Standard Deviation: 2.2318

Mackay Hospital Survival Guide, a 17-page, A4-sized guide for new employees. Primarily an HR document, it contains information on safety, training, IT, mandatory reporting, rostering and similar topics. A short message from the CEO of the hospital appears on page three. Eleven interns remembered this publication in both 2013 and 2014.

Publication only distributed in 2013:

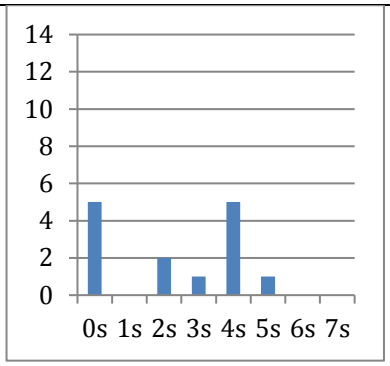
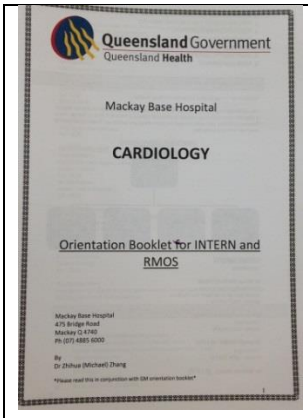
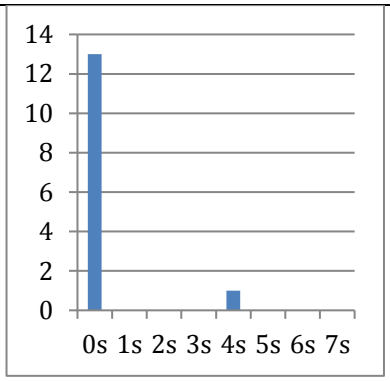
 "Intern Booklet 2013"	*Intern Booklet 2013*, a 24-page, A5-sized pamphlet published by the Postgraduate Medical Education Council of Queensland. It includes guidelines of what interns should expect during the year, addressing issues like professional accreditation, compulsory employment terms and education programs. **Eleven out of sixteen 2013 interns recalled this material.**	 Mean:1.063 /Adj Mean:4.536 Standard Deviation: 1.948

Publications only distributed in 2014:

 "Intern Survival Comic Book"	The Intern Comic Handbook **Fourteen out of fifteen 2014 interns recalled this material.**	 Mean: 4 /Adj Mean: 4.713 Standard Deviation: 1.5946
 "Intern Orientation Handbook 2014"	A twelve page, A5-sized orientation guide, which is includes a timetable of events scheduled during orientation week, names a pictures of the MEU staff, and a brief check-list of tasks the interns should complete during their unit orientation. **Fifteen out of fifteen 2014 interns recalled this material.**	 Mean: 5 / Adj Mean: 5.357 Standard Deviation: 0.7449

Mean: 5 / Adj Mean: 5.357

Publications only distributed in 2014 (cont'd):

 "Mackay Base Hospital is on the move"	A glossy pamphlet, A4-sized and folded into thirds, with maps and photos illustrating some of the changes happening to the hospital while it is under construction. **Nine out of fifteen 2014 interns recalled this material.**	 Mean: 2 /Adj Mean: 3.55 Standard Deviation: 1.9386
 "Cardiology Orientation Booklet"	A stapled, A4-sized pamphlet describing details related to working in the cardiology ward. **One out of fifteen 2014 interns recalled this material.**	 Mean: 0 /Adj Mean: 4 Standard Deviation: 1.069

Different publications clearly appealed to different individuals within the intern cohort to varying degrees, but most interns found the materials which they remembered receiving to be useful. The only score of "1" was delivered to the *Living and Working in Mackay* pamphlet by a single intern in 2013. The only scores of "2" in either year went to *'Mackay Base Hospital on the Move* in 2014. However, almost every publication received at least one vote of "3" or lower across both cohorts. *Living and Working in Mackay* did not score lower than a "4" in 2013, and the *Mackay Hospital Survival Guide* did not score lower than a "4" in 2014, but the *Orientation Handbook* was the only publication that every intern who remembered receiving it could "somewhat agree" was helpful.

Orientation Handbook

Before considering the reception of the Comic Handbook, it should be noted that the publication that interns ranked as by far the most helpful and/or useful publication was the Orientation Handbook, which was predominantly a schedule of the events of orientation week. This meant it was an immediately practical tool for the interns to have, but unlike the other publications, the information this booklet presented would have been largely meaningless after Orientation Week.

Interns were asked to rank the usefulness/helpfulness of these publications during their entire year, which makes their strong reaction toward the Orientation Handbook even more notable. Possible reasons as to why it was so well regarded:

1) Unlike the other materials, it did not presuppose their educational needs, aside from the need to know where to go and when to be there during orientation.
2) Although the interns could make it through the year without looking at the other publications, the schedules in this booklet would have been vital information during orientation week, making it crucially helpful to nearly every intern.
3) Unlike the other materials, which many interns may have simply glanced at or read through once, most interns probably referred to the daily schedules in this booklet several times during their five days of orientation. As the survey was largely based on memory, their estimation of this booklet's overall usefulness may have been amplified simply by having used it so many times.

4) In the interns' collective memory, the booklet may have come to represent in some way their experience of orientation. Their scores for the booklet might represent their feelings toward orientation in general, rather than the information contained in the booklet.
5) From a constructivist point of view, the actions and experiences of students are where the most valuable learning takes place. The content of educational publications is therefore irrelevant if it does not engender students' own actions and learning. The Orientation Handbook, more than any of the other publications, was designed to support the learning needs and actions of interns. Its content alone is not particularly interesting to anyone not actively participating in orientation, but its utility to interns during orientation week is more important than this content.

Intern Comic Book

The aggregate scores received by each publication on their own do not reveal very much. The surveys were collecting subjective, rather than objective data. For example, a score of "4" might have represented different things to each intern. Therefore, it's more helpful to look at interns individually, to see how they marked the Comic Book in comparison with the other publications. The small sample size makes this a fairly simple process.

Comparing the scores of all publications, it's possible to divide the intern cohort into four groups:

Resistant-- interns who discounted the comic due to its format

Sceptical – interns who saw some value in the comic's content, but found the format to be out of line with their expectations

Ecumenical – interns who tended to appreciate most publications, including the comic.

Enthusiastic – interns for whom the comic was the most helpful publication.

The following discussion will examine each group from the 2015 cohort, by analysing both the publication scores, and the intern interviews.

There was also one intern who did not remember receiving the comic. This intern only remembered receiving two publications: the orientation handbook and the hospital on the move brochure.

curriculum framework	living and working	COMIC	survival guide	orientation handbook	on the move'	cardiology
0	0	0	0	5	4	0

This table shows the scores given to each publication by the intern who did not remember the comic.

Resistant

For three interns, the comic was the publication they ranked the lowest. Two interns who gave the comic a score of "3," just inside the border of disagreement, while ranking all other publications that they remembered receiving at either a "4" or a "5." Another intern in this category gave the comic a "4," but ranked all other publications as a "6" or "7." It is clear that these interns found the comic less helpful than the other materials.

curriculum framework	living and working	COMIC	survival guide	orientation handbook	on the move'	Cardiology
5	5	3	5	5	4	0
5	0	3	4	-	-	-
6	6	4	6	7	0	0

This table shows the scores given to each publication by interns categorised as "Resistant" to the comic.

In the interviews, some interns expressed a dislike of the comic book format, which could have played a role in how they perceived and ranked this publication:

> *I just remember being like, wow this looks like it took a lot of time. And for someone like me who, it didn't interest me, or I didn't get anything from it, it just seemed like a waste of someone's time. But then talking to other people who – because I remember the next day coming back and people had mentioned it, and there were a few people who read it an appreciated it. So that's what I mean I'm not the right person, because I'm not a comic book fan. If it hadn't been in that form I'd probably be more likely to read it, I think. (I5)*

Furthermore, the comic format seemed to go against what these interns expected from a medical education publication, which resulted in them discounting its value:

> *Maybe I just, I guess I didn't take it seriously. The handbooks that were like 'here's what you need to know' seemed more like this is the information that I need to know, and this was more like just for fun. And I think that's kinda, that's maybe not necessarily true, but when I flipped through it, I was just like 'eh'. And it just seemed like it took too much effort to try and follow and read it to get the information that they're trying to get across. Like I still don't know, if it actually gives information, or if it's meant to be for fun. Like, is it? Now I need to go read it. (I5)*

This response can be understood in the context of the "hidden curriculum" of medical education authorising a certain kind of literacy: one that could be considered straightforward, directly stating "like 'here's what you need to know,'" in the words of this intern. Other interns expressed a preference for "cut and dried" information and bullet points. These are implicitly linguistic forms of communication.

Asked how the comic could be improved, one intern suggested:

> *Dot points would be the other thing. Dot points are fantastic. The medical industry is all about quick information and as concise as possible. (I3)*

Ambivalent

Between the other three interns who ranked the comic a '4', indicating that they 'somewhat agreed' that it was helpful, there was more variation, and the comic was part of a spectrum. The two interns who remembered receiving the Survival Guide ranked it as more helpful than the comic, and all of these interns ranked the Orientation Handbook higher as well. The 'Living and Working in Mackay' and 'Mackay Base Hospital is On the Move' brochures were each ranked as helpful as the comic by one intern, while two interns ranked the 'On the Move' brochure below the comic.

curriculum framework	living and working	COMIC	survival guide	orientation handbook	on the move'	cardiology
0	4	4	5	5	3	0
0	0	4	0	5	2	0
0	0	4	5	6	4	0

This table shows the scores given to each publication by interns categorised as "Ambivalent" about the comic.

There were a variety of reasons why the interns only found the Comic Book to be "somewhat" helpful. One intern somewhat appreciated the format of the comic, but felt that the content simply repeated things from the medical school curriculum:

> *I thought it was mildly entertaining. I enjoyed the way it was written and drawn. As far as whether it helped my year, I'm not really sure. A lot of the stuff it covered we discussed at the end of medical school anyway so for me personally, no. (I3)*

Information overload was a potential problem -- another intern said that she initially wasn't interested in reading the comic, after receiving so much information during orientation. She just left the comic on her desk for quite some time until she picked it up "late one night" and "read it randomly." She found it "quite humorous" and said that the content accurately reflected some of the struggles she was facing:

> *I guess the big thing is the lifestyle change, going from medical school coming into all the responsibility and dealing with those pressures, I guess. And this is just giving you simple messages I guess about how to deal with that, and if you need help get help. (I9)*

However, she thought it might be difficult to encourage other interns to read the comic:

> *I think just getting people to read it is going to be the struggle…. I guess it's a good tool, but it's just finding a way for people to read it, and to relate to it. It's obviously not going to relate to everyone, but if you can pick up a few people that helps. (I9)*

One intern who was able to relate to the comic called it "quite accurate," and liked how it depicted different opinions, but overall wasn't sure how well the format worked for him:

> *The comic book style is a different way of you know, kind of presenting this material. But I don't know I guess I'm more of a cut and dry kind of, you know just for that presentation of material, but that was really it. I think it just comes down to personal preference for that in the end. (I7)*

However, upon reflecting on the mental health issues covered in the comic, things that "they wouldn't say … in a regular orientation manual for sure," this intern revised his earlier comments. He felt that the mental health

aspects couldn't be dealt with as well in a "cut and dried" format as they were in the comic:

> *The comic book keeps it light that way with those sorts of issues, so it's really good for that. To have it like cut and dry, I don't know, I'd probably prefer the comic book for something like that… (I7)*

Taken together, these comments represent a range of opinions about the value of the content of the comic, between the intern who felt the comic only repeated familiar content compared to the two interns who felt that it was relevant to struggles that they were facing as interns. However, what they share is a hesitant scepticism that the comic format possesses the authority to be effective in post-graduate medical education.

Taking into consideration the opinions of some interns that the material which they found helpful in this comic could not be expressed as well in another way, this suggests that the Hidden Curriculum of post-graduate medical education teaches not only a resistance to non-linguistic pedagogies, but that by discounting alternative, multimodal pedagogies it is simultaneously discounting messages which cannot readily be reduced to words, such as the emotional components addressed in the *Intern Comic Book*.

Ecumenical

Four interns ranked the comic a "5," and amongst this group there was a broad agreement that most of the publications they received were helpful. They all ranked at least one other publication at a "5" or higher, and half of them gave the Orientation Handbook a "6," ranking it as the most helpful publication they received. These interns read most of the orientation publications, and were inclined to find most of them helpful.

curriculum framework	living and working	COMIC	survival guide	orientation handbook	on the move'	Cardiology
5	5	5	4	5	4	4
3	3	5	4	6	5	0
4	4	5	0	6	0	0
0	5	5	5	5	0	0

This table shows the scores given to each publication by interns categorised as "Ecumenical" regarding the comic.

In the interviews, this perspective was reflected in the thoughts of a number of interns who saw the comic's content and format as being a helpful addition to the orientation program. These interns did not articulate any concerns about the comic book format, and in fact contradicted some of the concerns expressed by the Resistant and Ambivalent interns:

> *I reckon a comic is a great idea. If you just had a list of dot points of what to do and what not to do, you're not going to remember it as much as this. And it's kind of got the emotional appeal as well, with all of the situations, especially in internship you get quite emotional and stressed when you get told heaps of stuff or someone gets cranky with you, so having this was I reckon one of the best forms, because it meant that everyone read it, and it's the only thing that I could really remember from orientation.*

These interns seemed to be open to multimodal literacy, and expressed an interest in absorbing whatever material was available. This was expressed in particular by one intern who stated, "I'm one of those people that read everything cover to cover, so I did read it cover to cover" (I2). The fact that this was distributed as part of their orientation gave the comic book sufficient authority for these interns.

Even though the comic book was an unexpected format to use for postgraduate medical education, these interns appreciated the visual style and the lighter tone of the comic:

> *I thought it was really clever, like I'd never seen anything like it before…. you get a lot of paperwork, like piles and piles of paperwork and this is just something extra that is pleasant and enjoyable to read, whereas the other stuff is all dry or it's all the same. (I2)*

…

> *I think [the visual, hand-drawn style] was good. It makes it a bit more engaging and interesting. It makes it a bit more personal I suppose as well. Yeah, it can have interesting facial expressions and stuff that add to the humour and communicate the experiences that people are having in the story, so I found that aspect of it was really good. (I8)*

For these interns, the comic was seen to add value to their orientation by addressing some emotional aspects that weren't covered elsewhere in the education program, but also by providing some humorous relief from the typical pedagogical structures.

> *I mean I can relate to some of the experiences they are dealing with in this. It also had humour, so that kept it interesting. Yeah, I enjoyed reading it, I thought it was useful and realistic in a lot of ways. Definitely worth considering giving it to next year's interns. If it was me, I'd decide to give it to them. (I8)*

Enthusiastic

Four interns ranked the comic a "6," which was the highest score given in 2014. Three of these interns found it to be the only publication that they "strongly agreed" was helpful. One intern ranked the *Orientation Handbook* as equally strong and did not remember the other publications.

curriculum framework	living and working	COMIC	survival guide	orientation handbook	on the move'	cardiology
0	0	6	4	4	4	0
4	0	6	5	5	2	0
0	4	6	5	5	0	0
0	0	6	0	6	0	0

This table shows the scores given to each publication by interns categorised as "Enthusiastic" about the comic.

Looking at the survey responses from these interns, it seems that the Comic Book helped them in ways that the other publications did not. During the interviews, one intern said that it helped to ease her anxiety going into internship:

> *This was awesome… I was really nervous when I first started, and it just helped to calm a lot of my nerves, especially the first day, even though it was pretty laid back and it was just*

> *orientation I still had a lot of nerves, so this was a good way to put things into perspective for me … it's got all the day to day things that you worry about and just puts it on a piece of paper and puts it in perspective that it's not that bad. (I4)*

Another intern reported that she found herself thinking back on the comic throughout the year for tips on how to deal with professional challenges:

> *I was happy to read through it, because there were little gaps of time. It was very amusing, and it was really quite true. I was very happy to receive it, rather than a wordy document… I would say it's very practical and relevant … It made me understand the teamwork and the little nuances you should use to get things moving. I think it's practical little tips on how to deal with nonmedical stuff. I didn't really refer to it as a handbook, but you know, I remembered reading it, it sort of gave me tips in certain situations. (I6)*

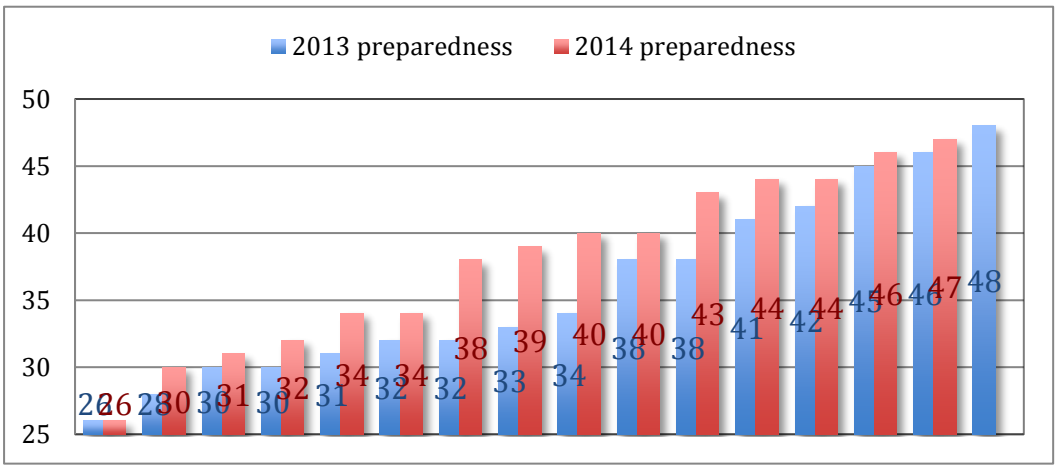
She felt that the visual format of the comic helped her to remember its content better, noting that, "It sticks with you longer. It's realistic, much easier to read… it's just, it's *good* you know."

This intern's only suggestion to improve the comic was to make it a more clearly authorised as a structured part of the orientation program.

> *I would just push for this to be more a formal document, and say 'this is part of your orientation handbook' and more people will get onto this … Do you think we could allocate maybe fifteen, thirty minutes, because in orientation it's all just medical things, medical training, what do you do in an emergency, so have a practical life tips session. Tell them: go through this book, how are you going to face waiting, pushing, doing administrative work. (I6)*

Preparedness compared to reception of comic

There were no significant correlations between interns' feelings of preparedness, which were measured in the first part of the survey, and their opinions about the publications they received, which were measured in the second part. This can be partially attributed to the small sample size. However, looking at individual interns, some interesting patterns emerge.



Each individual intern's total preparedness score is represented as a column on this chart. The scores are ordered from lowest (least prepared) to highest (most prepared). Comparing 2013 (shown in blue) and 2014 (shown in red), the scores are similar at the high and low ends of the chart, with the most variation in the middle range.

In the chart above, each column on the x-axis represents an individual intern's survey response, with their overall preparedness score charted on the y-axis. The columns are arranged on the x-axis in order of increasing feelings of preparedness. From this comparison it can be observed that although there is a slight increase between 2013 and 2014 in roughly the lowest third and highest third of scores, the increase in the middle third is generally much greater. This would suggest that while the intern comic may have slightly improved the preparedness of the interns who were already predisposed to feel well-prepared or ill-prepared, it was more effective in increasing the preparedness of interns who occupied the middle ground. Except for the score from the intern who felt the least prepared, which was identical in both years, and the intern who felt the most prepared over both years, the scores for the interns who felt either the most prepared or least prepared increased by between one and three points, while that scores in the middle of the chart increased the five or six points, with only one exception.

Interestingly, of the three interns who scored the comic as the most helpful publication they received, one intern reported the second-highest level of overall preparedness (46; the highest level reported was 47), while the other two reported the two lowest levels of overall preparedness (26 and 30, respectively). The next lowest levels of reported preparedness are from the two interns who rated the comic a "3" (31 and 32).

It is this lowest-scoring cohort that should concern medical educators the most. The interns at Mackay who reported the least amount of preparedness might be considered the interns who were least served by the hospital's education and orientation program or those who needed the most assistance. The divergence in opinions about the comic among these least-prepared interns might be theorised from the data gathered in the interviews, which suggest some of the interns who found the comic most helpful began the year feeling anxious or ill-prepared, while the interns who found the comic the least helpful were likely to have discounted it or not read it due to its format.

Conclusion

Overall, the effectiveness of the Intern Comic was confirmed through a variety of data. Six out of fifteen interns (or 40% of the cohort), said that the Intern Comic was as helpful as the most helpful publications they received, with three of those interns (or 20% of the cohort) calling it the single most helpful publication. In the year that the comic was delivered, interns were found to feel more prepared to transition from student to professional compared to the previous year to a statistically significant degree ($p=0.0152$) and with a high effect (Cohen's $d=.952$). Additionally, the interns broadly found the comic itself to be helpful and useful, and ranking it among most helpful printed materials they received during orientation. Qualitative interviews added a depth to these findings, and suggested that interns fell within four broad categories regarding their feelings toward the Intern Comic: Resistant, Ambivalent, Ecumenical and Enthusiastic. These categories represent different levels of acceptance of both the format of the comic, and its pedagogy. Interns who least liked the comic said that they would have preferred a more "cut and dried" approach where they were given authoritative knowledge to internalize, while interns who liked it the most said they appreciated how it helped them relate to situations and to put them into perspective. This case study supports the argument of this thesis as a whole, which is that comics can be complex and effective tools for teaching

and learning. It also suggests, as has been argued in earlier chapters, that the format of educational materials cannot be separated from their pedagogy.

The success of this comic should be understood in light of the much longer history of comics being used for a variety of educational purposes. Its design was informed by many existing comics discussed in earlier chapters, including the work of Töpffer, Rius, McCloud and Greenberg, as well as by theorists of critical pedagogy, including Freire, Biggs and Tang, and the New London Group. Furthermore, the way that interns understood this comic was related to their previous experiences with both comics and education. While a minority of the interns were resistant to the idea of comics as educational tools, most were very accepting of the format. As comics become more accepted into the world of literacy, through graphic novels and other emerging forms (such as digital comics), and as education becomes more accepting of multimodal literacy, both students and educators are likely to increasingly view comics as a common tool for learning.

Conclusion: From lecturing to play and further directions

Introduction

The idea that comics have great potential as tools for teaching and learning seems to be a nearly foregone conclusion from the perspective of contemporary pedagogical philosophies such as multimodal literacy and educational constructivist. Specifically, multimodal literacy highly values comics' combination of visual, spatial and linguistic modalities, while educational constructivism argues that readers of comics draw on a "rich store of images and actions" to build meanings out of these combinations of modalities.

However, these perspectives generally only consider the formal properties of comics, and could be used to drawn similar conclusions about other multimodal forms of expression, such as infographics. Properly considering the place of comics within education also requires an analysis of their cultural and historical position. This thesis argues that that the visual styles and publishing formats used in comics should be understood in context of how they have often confounded traditional notions of authorship and cultural authority.

Comics have been used as educational tools since nearly their inception, but they have generally occupied a cultural space that has been defined by its defiance of educational expectations. Compared to traditional educational texts, comics are commonly thought of as visual instead of linguistic, childish instead of challenging, irreverent instead of authoritative, and the work of multiple scriptors instead of a single author. This thesis has highlighted examples that defy one or more of these categorisations, but these terms generally circumscribe how comics have historically been understood from a pedagogical perspective. During the 20th century, many educators argued that these qualities made comics detrimental to students' growth. I have suggested in this thesis that critical pedagogy supports the opposite conclusion. In light of the failures of authoritative, teacher-centric

education, the anti-authoritarian approach used in many comics can be a good fit for the student-focused pedagogy advocated by Freire.

The Legacy of Literacy

The long historical and cultural relationship between comics and education is still changing and evolving. In the study done at Mackay Base Hospital, some of the comments from interns and other staff members illuminated the current state of this relationship. Most of them accepted the comic as a piece of educational material, although some found it to be notably unusual and a few strongly resisted the idea that a comic had any place in serious education to the extent that they disregarded it entirely. These minority opinions can be seen as a continuation of the legacy of comics being excluded from many educational institutions since the early days of the medium. This lingering opinion may be part of the reason why educational comics are currently commonly regarded as a novel, innovative or potentially transgressive way of teaching. As shown in the earlier chapters, this novelty persists despite the fact that comics have been used as educational tools for more than half a century in a wide variety of contexts.

There are signs that this novelty may be wearing off, as negative opinions about comics become less prevalent and educational comics become more common. The broad acceptance of the intern comic at Mackay Base Hospital and its ability to attract funding and institutional support is just one example of how comics are being used at the highest levels of education, as the cultural authority of comics has improved since the late 20th century.

Graphic, but no longer novel

In 2000, McCloud acknowledged the potential for using comics in education, but reasoned that at that time, "that revolution has yet to kick in" (McCloud 2000). Fifteen years later, that revolution seems to be well and truly underway. Since I began this thesis in 2012, the number of projects and publications featuring educational comics seems to have increased substantially. In 2012 at least 30 educational "graphic novels" were published in the United States alone, and in May of that year, a crowdfunded Kickstarter project for a book called *The Graphic Textbook* raised more than

seventy-seven thousand dollars on the back of a media campaign that highlighted the potential of comics to teach children. The book was made up of short, unrelated chapters that spanned a variety of topics and disciplines, each by a different creative team. It was more of an anthology rather than a textbook and was eventually re-titled *Reading with Pictures: Comics that Make Kids Smarter* (Elder 2014). The "Graphic Textbook" idea seemed to captivate the zeitgeist of the early 2010s, when bloggers published articles with headlines like "Comics Instead of Textbooks?" (Devaney 2012) and "We should probably turn textbooks into comic books" (Dwyer 2013), and academic presses brought out anthologies like *Graphic Novels and Comics in the Classroom: Essays on the Educational Power of Sequential Art* (Syma & Weiner 2013) and *Class, Please Open Your Comics: Essays on Teaching with Graphic Narratives* (Miller 2015), along with several monographs on teaching with comics (e.g. Bakis 2014; Brozo, Moorman & Meyer 2013; Dong 2012; Novak 2013). The use of comics in education is no longer the novelty that it was only a few years ago.

Even more recently, educational comics are also quickly expanding beyond the classroom and into related areas, such as journalism. As discussed in Chapter 9, the 2014 online comic 'A Guard's Story' discussed in Chapter 9 was *The Global Mail*'s first foray into comics journalism. Since then the number of comics on the topic of immigration alone has continued to expand. For example, in 2015, *The Guardian* published a three part series of comics depicting the Syrian refugee crisis (Dix, Pollock & Toubaji 2015), and Safdar Ahmed's webcomic *Villawood: Notes from an Immigration Detention Centre* (Ahmed 2015) won a Walkley Award for journalism, despite not being published through a traditional journalism outlet (Castle 2015). Another comic on the topic, Audrey Quinn and Jackie Roche's 'Syria's Climate Conflict' (Roche & Quinn 2014), went viral and was shared on many online portals, including *Medium* and *Mother Jones* and *Upworthy*. 'Syria's Climate Conflict' was co-produced by the television program 'Years of Living Dangerously' and *Symbolia Magazine*, one of many online publications dedicated to publishing non-fiction comics that straddle the line between journalism, activism and education, including *The Nib*, founded in 2013 and the Hague-based *Cartoon*

Movement site founded in 2010. As discussed in Chapter 9, comics seem to be a medium that is particularly attuned to attracting attention on social media platforms, which could explain the recent growth of comics as a form of online journalism.

Applied Comics and Graphic Medicine

The expansion of comics into the realms of journalism, activism and other areas of education has prompted the need for new philosophies of comics, and for cartoonists who are trained in communicating these kinds of messages. In response to these needs, a vocational field called Applied Cartooning developing, notably through a M.F.A. program offered at the Center for Cartoon Studies since 2014, which focuses on "how comics can be used in the fields of health, education, public policy, business and journalism" (Hanson, A 2014). Most of the comics examined in this thesis, from Texas History Movies to the Australian Customs and Border Security's immigration comic, can be considered examples of Applied Cartooning. Furthermore, the Intern Orientation Comic, as well as the two comics-style chapters in this thesis should be understood through the lens of this emerging discipline. The establishment of a graduate program in this area highlights the rapid growth of these kinds of comics.

The Intern Orientation Comic also falls under the umbrella of another rapidly developing field known as Graphic Medicine, which is an explicitly pedagogical exploration of "the interaction between the medium of comics and the discourse of healthcare" (*About Graphic Medicine*) which over the past five years has already produced a "heady mixture of art and literature, scholarship and practice" (Squier, S & Marks 2014, p. 149). One of the pioneers of this movement is Michael J Green, a professor in the departments of Humanities at Penn State College of Medicine, who teaches a course on comics for medical students. According to Green, reading and creating comics is pedagogically valuable, as "by critically reading visual texts, students become more careful observers" (Green, Michael J 2013, p. 474).

More specifically, he observed that when his medical students "interpret the incomplete visual data inherent to comics and transform this

into a coherent story, they mimic the diagnostic process in medicine—where the physician is supplied with amorphous information, and must make inferences and draw conclusions to produce an accurate diagnosis" (Green, Michael J 2013, p. 474). Suggesting that this approach does not only benefit medical students, Susan Squier has run a Graphic Medicine seminar for graduate students in other fields and found that it "left them better prepared, emotionally and strategically, to address health care needs in the future" (Squier, SM 2015, p. 22). This not only supports the argument of this thesis that comics can not only act as sophisticated tools for learning at high levels of education, but that in some circumstances they can perform substantially better than traditional educational materials and can address deficiencies in existing curriculums.

Feasibility of comics as a wide-scale intervention

The study of the intern orientation comic demonstrates how comics can improve educational outcomes when properly applied and pedagogically understood. One suggestion for further research then would be to expand this kind of work to determine where and how comics can best be used to improve the lives and educations of students of all walks of life. A potential first step would be to expand the use of the intern orientation comic to the whole of Australia. In 2015, there were approximately 3,600 Australian medical graduates, with the vast majority of these graduates looking to begin an internship in Australia. If the results from this trial study are maintained across a wider population, then we could expect the comic to be most useful to one intern out of five. This means approximately 720 interns in the incoming cohort would benefit most from this comic.

The cost to write, design and draw the comic would be about $250 per page based on the Australian Society of Authors published Guidelines to Comics Page Rates and Conditions, multiplied by 20 pages, or about $5,000 total. Printing and distribution costs would need to be calculated on top of this, and could be estimated at a further $5000, for a total project cost of $10,000. The cost to see a benefit in the preparedness of the projected 720 interns who would benefit most from the comic could then be estimated at

less than $14 per targeted intern. Considering that a doctor's experiences in internship can impact the rest of their career, the benefits of this intervention may in fact increase over time. This relatively low-cost and high-yield intervention is just one example of the potential comics have to benefit students and the population in general. However, achieving this benefit relies not just on using comics, but understanding the ways that comics depart from the banking/transmission model of education, and present us with an alternative way to envision the relationship between teaching and learning.

Student or author-driven comics?

As earlier chapters have discussed, since graphic novels are more closely aligned with traditional literacy practices, educational graphic novels have also inherited some of the downfalls of traditional literacy pedagogy. As a heavily authored form of literature, graphic novels, like lectures and textbooks, can become little more than performances of authority on the part of their authors and publishers.

For example, there is an increasing prevalence of educational comics that are organized around a 'lecturer-avatar' or which replicate the authoritative milieu of a traditional lecture-style classroom. This kind of design has its place (it works well in McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, for example), but it can also be a remediation of traditional lecture-style pedagogy. Its prevalence suggests that educators working in modern educational comics would benefit from a greater understanding of how comics relate to broader pedagogical theories.

Further directions

The current broad lack of understanding of how comics work pedagogically is a result of both the lack of acceptance of comics into the discourses of literacy and the discontinuity between various attempts at and traditions of educational comics since the mid-1950s. This has left the field of educational comics with neither a sense of history to learn from nor a set of theories to build upon.

This thesis is a step toward addressing that deficiency by placing educational comics within a historical and theoretical context focused on the themes of authorship and authority from a perspective situated at crossroads of media studies and critical pedagogy. There is more work to be done to help ensure the development of educational comics that can be strong pedagogical tools for students the 21st century. Some further directions suggested by this research include the fields of theory, history and pedagogy.

Theory

From a theoretical perspective, more study into the grammar and design of educational comics could yield instructive data for both cartoonists and educators. This thesis has been informed by the theoretical work of McCloud (1993) and Groensteen (2007) and other comics scholars who largely focus on narrative comics. Tackling comics from an educational perspective would benefit from further integration of theories developed in the fields of Information Design and User Experience Design. Additional interdisciplinary collaborations with the fields such as sociolinguistics and cognitive science may also be fruitful in determining the best uses and designs of educational comics.

History

From a historical perspective, in preparing this thesis I discovered many more attempts at using comics for education than I had initially expected to find. Time and length restrictions have meant that this thesis is only a cursory overview of the material that exists. More focused and in-depth study of particular time periods or bodies of work would be beneficial. For example, the publically available archives of *P.S. Magazine* present an excellent dataset that could be studied further to discover a wealth of information about changing educational philosophies and design strategies, to say nothing of cultural values and mores within the military. Similarly, the pioneering work of Rius, and its influence on educational comics in general and the Anglophone genre of "graphic guides" in particular has been under-studied by comics scholars. Educational and propaganda comics developed

during World War II deserve further study, as do the attempts from the post-war period until the modern day by government and non-government organizations to use comics in public information campaigns.

Pedagogy

While much work has been done analysing comics as literature, and this research has helped to legitimize comics in the academic sphere, there is a comparatively small body of work devoted to understanding historical or contemporary comics as educational tools or systems of information. The framework modelled in this thesis of combining multimodal analysis with constructivist theory, such as curriculum alignment, can be a useful way of understanding both historical and contemporary educational comics from a pedagogical perspective. This kind of analysis is increasingly important as educational materials become more multimodal and educational comics enter the mainstream.

Conclusion: From lecturing to play

This thesis has argued that the use of comics in education can be understood as part of a broader shift in cultural perceptions of educational discourse during the second half of the 20th century and into the early 21st century. One of the reasons why comics were excluded from discourses of teaching and learning for much of the 20th century was because they appeared to flaunt traditional, text-based authority. However, from the perspective of critical pedagogy, which has critiqued this traditional authority, comics' playfulness and irreverence can be seen as strengths.

Readers are encouraged to play with and co-create the meanings of comics in part because their formal properties, such as visual abstraction and fragmented narratives which mark them as "cool" media in McLuhan's terms. Comics can relate information in ways that are distinct from the paradigms of authority, authority and literacy that commonly characterized the mode of delivery used in lectures and textbooks. Educators and publishers created educational comics throughout the 20th century, but those comics could not

be easily conceptualized within existing frameworks of pedagogy that were built around the authority of the lecture and the authorship of the lecturer.

The more recent acceptance of comics in education is due in part to the fact that the philosophy of pedagogy built upon lecturing is eroding on several fronts. Critical philosophies of education, such as constructivism, have seen a shift toward understanding learning as student-centred. In addition, as the cultures and technologies of communication are becoming more visual, education is being increasingly understood as multimodal. Comics are a perfect multimodal publishing format for this shifting culture of education, and as this thesis has demonstrated, they have the potential to be transformative works at the highest levels of teaching at learning.

Appendix 1 – Surveys and Research Documents

1. Survey information and contact sheet
2. Preparedness survey
3. Publications survey 2014
4. Publications survey 2015 (two pages)
5. Interview information and contact sheets
6. Interview consent form

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The University of Adelaide
Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

This document is for people who are participants in a research project.

CONTACTS FOR INFORMATION ON PROJECT AND INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The following study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee and by the Townsville Hospital and Health Service Human Research Ethics Committee:

Project Title:	*Authorship and authority in educational materials: a medical education case study*
Approval Number:	University of Adelaide: **H-2014-25** Townsville HHS: **HREC/14/QTHS/60**

The Human Research Ethics Committee monitors all the research projects which it has approved. The committee considers it important that people participating in approved projects have an independent and confidential reporting mechanism which they can use if they have any worries or complaints about that research.

This research project will be conducted according to the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (see http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e72syn.htm)

1. If you have questions or problems associated with the practical aspects of your participation in the project, or wish to raise a concern or complaint about the project, then you should consult the project co-ordinator:

Name:	Assoc. Prof Michael Wilmore
Phone:	

2. If you wish to discuss with an independent person matters related to:
   - making a complaint, or
   - raising concerns on the conduct of the project, or
   - the University policy on research involving human participants, or
   - your rights as a participant,

   contact the University of Adelaide's Human Research Ethics Committee's Secretariat by phone (08) 8313 6028 or by email to hrec@adelaide.edu.au; or contact the Townsville Hospital Health Services Human Research Ethics Committee by phone (07) 4433 1140 or by e-mail to TSV-Ethics-Committee@health.qld.gov.au.

Looking back over your intern year, please circle a number to indicate how well you feel the Medical Education Unit prepared you to deal with the following issues:

Moving to a new environment

1 (not at all)	2	3	4 (somewhat)	5	6	7 (extremely well)

Transitioning from being a student to being a professional

1 (not at all)	2	3	4 (somewhat)	5	6	7 (extremely well)

Referring patients to senior doctors

1 (not at all)	2	3	4 (somewhat)	5	6	7 (extremely well)

Managing my time at work

1 (not at all)	2	3	4 (somewhat)	5	6	7 (extremely well)

Dealing with personal stress and/or anxiety

1 (not at all)	2	3	4 (somewhat)	5	6	7 (extremely well)

Dealing with my own compassion fatigue

1 (not at all)	2	3	4 (somewhat)	5	6	7 (extremely well)

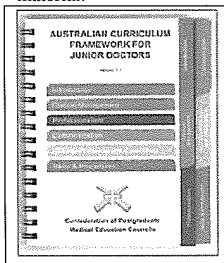
Working with other staff members

1 (not at all)	2	3	4 (somewhat)	5	6	7 (extremely well)

Communicating with patients and their families

1 (not at all)	2	3	4 (somewhat)	5	6	7 (extremely well)

Below are images of four of pamphlets and brochures that were distributed to new interns at the beginning of the year.
Looking back on these materials, please consider how useful or helpful you found them to be, and circle a number to indicate your level of agreement with the statement next to each image. If you do not remember receiving the material, instead of circling a number, circle the statement "I don't remember receiving this material."



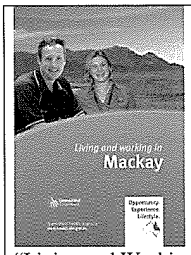
"Curriculum Framework for Junior Doctors"

I found this material helpful and/or useful during my intern year.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

I don't remember receiving this material	



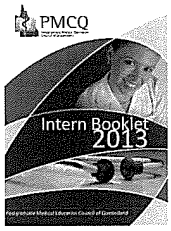
"Living and Working in Mackay"

I found this material helpful and/or useful during my intern year.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

I don't remember receiving this material	



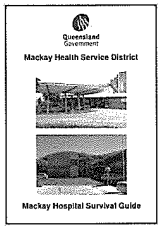
"Intern Booklet 2013"

I found this material helpful and/or useful during my intern year.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

I don't remember receiving this material	



"Mackay Hospital Survival Guide"

I found this material helpful and/or useful during my intern year.

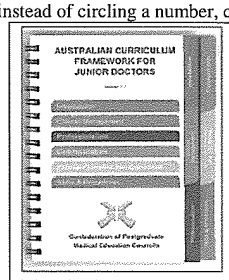
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

I don't remember receiving this material	

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Page 1 of 1

Below are images of four of pamphlets and brochures that were distributed to new interns at the beginning of the year. Looking back on these materials, please consider how useful or helpful you found them to be, and circle a number to indicate your level of agreement with the statement next to each image. If you do not remember receiving the material, instead of circling a number, circle the statement "I don't remember receiving this material."

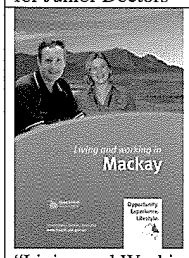


"Curriculum Framework for Junior Doctors"

I found this material helpful and/or useful during my intern year.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat agree		Agree	Strongly agree	

I don't remember receiving this material	

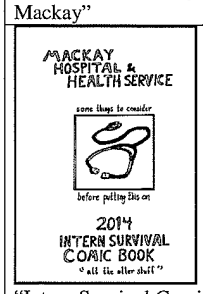


"Living and Working in Mackay"

I found this material helpful and/or useful during my intern year.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat agree		Agree	Strongly agree	

I don't remember receiving this material	

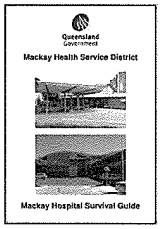


"Intern Survival Comic Book"

I found this material helpful and/or useful during my intern year.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat agree		Agree	Strongly agree	

I don't remember receiving this material	



"Mackay Hospital Survival Guide"

I found this material helpful and/or useful during my intern year.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat agree		Agree	Strongly agree	

I don't remember receiving this material	



"Intern Orientation Handbook 2014"

I found this material helpful and/or useful during my intern year.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	

I don't remember receiving this material	

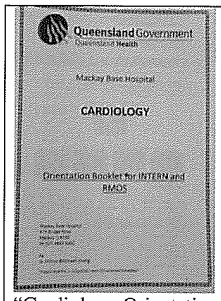


"Mackay Base Hospital is on the move"

I found this material helpful and/or useful during my intern year.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	

I don't remember receiving this material	



"Cardiology Orientation Booklet"

I found this material helpful and/or useful during my intern year.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	

I don't remember receiving this material	

Queensland Government

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Participant information sheet -- Interviews

Authorship and authority in educational materials: a medical education case study

What is the purpose of this study?

The goal of this research project is to examine how readers respond to different kinds of printed educational materials, and how well those materials achieve their intended aims. This particular study is looking at the opinions of doctors about the effectiveness of certain materials that they received during their intern year.

How am I being invited to participate in this research?

You are being invited to participate in a voluntary interview about your thoughts and feelings regarding the orientation materials distributed to interns at the beginning of the year. This would be a one-on-one interview held in one of the JCU classrooms at the Mackay Base Hospital. The interview will be conversational, and is not expected to exceed 30 minutes. Your participation is voluntary, and you may chose to not participate. If you do wish to participate, please fill out the attached consent form. Please be aware that while you will be anonymous for the purposes of this study, the interview will be recorded.

How will this information be used?

With your permission, the interview will be recorded. The recorded interview will be securely maintained to respect your privacy and ensure confidentiality. The interview will be transcribed into text and will be associated with a pseudonym so that your participation remains confidential. The research student conducting the interview will be the only person with access to the actual recording.

Information collected during this interview, including transcribed quotes, may be eventually be published as part of a research article in an academic journal or as part of a dissertation, in such a way as to maintain your anonymity. Due to the small size of the study, there still remains a small chance that you could potentially be identifiable.

What if I change my mind?

You may withdraw from the study at any time. If at any time you wish to lodge a complaint or query about the nature of this project it is within your rights as a participant to do so. Attached is a form which details the process for lodging such a complaint or query.

What if I have questions about the study?

If you have any questions after the survey has been conducted, please contact:

Assoc. Prof Michael Wilmore Associate Dean (Learning Innovation) Faculty of Health, Arts and Design Swinburne University of Technology AMDC Building 901b Melbourne, Victoria 3122, Australia	Aaron Humphrey Discipline of Media School of Humanities 926 Napier Building University of Adelaide South Australia 5005	Kathleen Gillespie A/HREC Administrator Townsville Hospital and Health Service PO Box 670, Townsville QLD 4810

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CONSENT FORM

1. I have read the attached Information Sheet and agree to take part in the following research project:

Title:	*Authorship and authority in educational materials: a medical education case study*
Ethics Approval Number:	Queensland Health: **HREC/14/QTHS/60** University of Adelaide: **H-2014-05**

2. I have had the project, so far as it affects me, fully explained to my satisfaction by the research worker. My consent is given freely.
3. Although I understand the purpose of the research project it has also been explained that involvement may not be of any benefit to me.
4. I have been informed that, while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will not be divulged.
5. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time.
6. I agree to the interview being audio/video recorded. Yes ☐ No ☐
7. I am aware that I should keep a copy of this Consent Form, when completed, and the attached Information Sheet.

Participant to complete:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher/Witness to complete:

I have described the nature of the research to _____
(print name of participant)

and in my opinion she/he understood the explanation.

Signature: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

If you have questions about this research, please contact the University of Adelaide's Human Research Ethics Committee's Secretariat by phone (08) 8313 6028 or by e-mail to hrec@adelaide.edu.au; or contact the Townsville Hospital Health Services Human Research Ethics Committee by phone (07) 4433 1140 or by e-mail to TSV-Ethics-Committee@health.qld.gov.au.

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Appendix 2 – Interview Transcripts

Interview 1

I wanted to get your opinion on the intern comic, what you thought was helpful, what you didn't think was helpful, any …

I'm going to have a look through it again, just as a refresher. Yeah, I remember it being like it kind of highlighted a lot of the issues that were going to come up during internship, kind of flagging them. That's helpful. You know, so that was good. Like, it's not the sort of thing that I referred back to over the year, but the ideas from it have been very practical and useful through the year.

Looking back, obviously it's been almost a year now, was there anything in particular that stood out or that you thought back on over the year from this?

Just looking through it again now, yep, having MEU to call on if I wasn't sure what to do was helpful. Referring over the phone, how to do that briefly and succinctly is always something it's difficult to do well when you're tired and you're stressed. Time management, writing lists, very, very helpful when I was on especially surge and med, with more things to do than time to do them in, so that's very practical and helpful there. And like, being confident to ask questions, that's one thing I've learned a lot this year. And especially telling people when you're finding things difficult or you don't know.

Do you think getting this at the beginning of the year was helpful in preparing you for those things?

It was helpful in saying 'these are things you're going to find over the year.'

Did you have any thoughts about the form of it, being a comic is a little unusual.

I reckon a comic is a great idea. If you just had a list of dot points of what to do and what not to do, you're not going to remember it as much as this. And it's kind of got the emotional appeal as well, with all of the situations, especially in internship you get quite emotional and stressed when you get told heaps of stuff or someone gets cranky with you, so having this was I

reckon one of the best forms, because it meant that *everyone* read it, and it's the only thing that I could really remember from orientation.

So you're more likely to read something if it's in a visual form, or is it the fact that it's just unusual to get something that has drawings in it?

Probably both, because you get so much paperwork, especially at the beginning that you get another bit of paper you just kind of zone out, whereas a comic book you keep reading just to see what it's like.

Was there anything you didn't like about it, or anything that could be improved?

Nothing that immediately comes to mind. No, yeah, I think it was good.

Interview 2

So you remember getting this at the beginning of the year?

Yeah, yup.

And what did you think about it when you got it in your orientation packet?

It's cool, got lots of little drawings, um, and it was interesting to read through, but I don't know where it is now. Like, I think I read it during orientation week and then put it away and never flicked back through it again. But I thought it was really clever, like I'd never seen anything like it before.

What did you like about it, or not like about it?

I didn't not like anything about it. I thought it was really well done. I thought it was really clever and really well done.

Did you read it through, or did you just have a flip?

No, I'm one of those people that read everything cover to cover, so I did read it cover to cover?

Was there anything in particular that you remember from it?

To be honest, no, there was nothing that I – like I didn't really refer back to it in my head or remember it.

Were there any of the materials that you got at orientation that you did refer back to?

Um, no I think I did refer back to the orientation manuals for each, so at the start of each rotation we were giving an orientation booklet, and I did refer back to that at the start and throughout the rotation, because they were specific to the unit.

So there wasn't anything in particular that you referred back to in this, do you think that it –

I guess I found it light and easy to flick through as like a point of interest, but then I didn't feel the need to look back on it. Like doing to do lists or ringing people, it's just more comic relief but not like hard information.

Do you think that it improved orientation for you, or do you think if it hadn't been there it wouldn't have made a difference?

It was a nice touch. Because you do, like I heard Kirsty say, you get a lot of paperwork, like piles and piles of paperwork and this is just something extra that is pleasant and enjoyable to read, whereas the other stuff is all dry or it's all the same.

So a point of difference then. Did you have any thoughts about the format?

I liked it, like I said it was – because it's visual and aesthetic and it was done really well and the pictures were really well drawn, so it was interesting to flick through.

Is there anything else that you wanted to add?

Nope, too easy.

Great, thanks NAME (redacted).

It was really good, like I haven't flicked through it since orientation, but just looking back on it, it's really clever so – you drew it all didn't you?

I did draw it yeah.

That's really well done.

Thanks, you don't have to say that.

It is though! I didn't think of it too much at the time, it was just another thing that I read, but it's actually really, really cool.

Interview 3

What I wanted to ask you about is this intern comic book

I remember it.

So I wanted to ask your opinions, what you thought, how it could be improved

I thought it was mildly entertaining. I enjoyed the way it was written and drawn. As far as whether it helped my year, I'm not really sure. A lot of the stuff it covered we discussed at the end of medical school anyway so for me personally, no.

Ok. Was there any kind of material that you think would have been helpful to have in a comic book form like this?

Nothing I can think of off the top of my head.

Do you want to have a flip through and let me know any thoughts that you have and let me know if there's anything that you think it does well or doesn't do well?

I think it did do well at explaining some of the issues that you can have between different people and departments, whether they be patients, admin or doctors. As I said, I did actually read through it, and I thought that it was written well except I'd already been exposed to that information before. I'm not sure what to add into it really. I can see that you've gone through all the departments. It's been a long time since I looked at it.

Does having it in comic format does that change the way that the information is organised or the way that you think about it, compared to if it's just typewritten

Yeah, I think so. It's always good to have a variety of ways to receive information. Quickly revising, I do remember that when I was reading it there was a lot of information, and just opening up to a random page it's a lot of information to read, so if anything I'd lessen that. I think most people can appreciate the one or two picture comics where you can just glance at it and get the point. Most people don't want to read lots of text.

Is there anything that you'd like to add?

Dot points would be the other thing. Dot points are fantastic. The medical industry is all about quick information and as concise as possible.

Interview 4

I wanted to ask you about the comic – any impressions that you had about when you got it, anything that was useful or could be improved?

I really liked it. I actually did mention to Kim as well as to the MEU staff that this was awesome. And I said that I was really nervous when I first started, and it just helped to calm a lot of my nerves, especially the first day, even though it was pretty laid back and it was just orientation I still had a lot of nerves, so this was a good way to put things into perspective for me. So I really found it really good. And I said to them at the time that you should do this every year.

What was it that you found calming or useful about it?

Just that it was a bit comical and sort of every day stuff that I'd seen from afar like as a student, and it sort of put it in a bit real, but not too scary. So yeah, I don't know how to describe it. It was light-hearted and yeah, like cannulas, x-rays, jugs, it's got all the day to day things that you worry about and just puts it on a piece of paper and puts it in perspective that it's not that bad.

Do you think that having it in the comic book form helped that?

Yeah, definitely. Yeah, I found it really good.

Was there anything that you remember having read in the comic and then thought back on during your intern year?

Um, not anything in particular, just like the concept of it. I actually gave a talk to the medical students recently, and I thought about this at the time, and I use lots of pictures in my pictures in my presentation and tried to make it a bit like this. It wasn't comical – I'm not that funny, but they seemed to appreciate that as well. I remember thinking back to this and just the whole concept of it and I felt like it worked.

Is there anything that you would improve or you think could be made better for interns in the future?

I don't know whether there was a bit about the paging system in there?

I don't think so.

Nothing in particular. One thing that I found overwhelming was how much that thing went off, so maybe a joke about that.

Thanks NAME (redacted).

Good work, I really liked it.

Interview 5

I'm talking to you about the comic, and I'm trying to get your impressions. Do you remember receiving it as an intern?

Yes

And what do you remember about it, or about receiving it.

I remember they handed it out with a whole bunch of other paperwork that we got. I don't think we really took time to look at it when we were here, I know it was something that when I got home and started looking at all the paperwork I had a flip through. I had a flip through it. I'm not a big comic book fan, so I really flipped it and was just like 'eh' and didn't think much more after that.

Did you read it or just flip through it and see it was comics?

I did read bits and pieces of it, I didn't read it front to back

Is there anything that you remember from reading it?

No, about the actual information, no. I just remember being like, wow this looks like it took a lot of time. And for someone like me who, it didn't interest me, or I didn't get anything from it, it just seemed like a waste of someone's time. But then talking to other people who – because I remember the next day coming back and people had mentioned it, and there were a few people who read it an appreciated it. So that's what I mean I'm not the right person, because I'm not a comic book fan. If it hadn't been in that form I'd probably be more likely to read it, I think.

If it had just been like typewritten

Yeah, or, I don't even know, because I say that, but then a lot of typewritten info I don't know how much … if it was really densely written I might not have been, but…

What kind of format would be more appealing to you?

I don't know, because I don't even know what the info is in here to be honest. Now I can't remember, like what type of information you're trying to get across.

I guess maybe a better question would be what kind of material would you be more likely to read as orientation handouts.

Well, I have to say that I read the other handbooks, like the Mackay Health and hospital handbooks. When I went up to Bowen they gave me a Bowen handbook and I pretty much read through most of that, so I think I'm more likely to read more like text with heading about, you know, the social, the this the this the this.

Why do you think that this one made you not want to read it?

I'm just not a fan of comics. I think that just kind of turned me off it to be honest.

If it was done in more of an infographics sort of style, where it doesn't look hand drawn but is still using images, do you think that would appeal to you more?

Eh…

Or is it the word balloons, the drawings? What is it about comics that you don't like?

I don't know. I don't know. I'm trying to think. I don't even know. Maybe I just, I guess I didn't take it seriously. The handbooks that were like 'here's what you need to know' seemed more like this is the information that I need to know, and this was more like just for fun. And I think that's kinda, that's maybe not necessarily true, but when I flipped through it, I was just like 'eh'. And it just seemed like it took too much effort to try and follow and read it to get the information that they're trying to get across. Like I still don't know, if it actually gives information, or if it's meant to be for fun. Like, is it? Now I need to go read it. But yeah.

Great, the only other question I'd ask is if you've read any comics in the past?

Occasionally. If I'm reading the paper, I'll flip and I'll read one or two comics. But I've never read a comic book or a comic.

Do you know anybody who does read comics?

No… I have in the past…? No one that I'm good friends with. I can't say I know anyone that goes out and buys comic books and reads them. I'm pretty sure some of the guys I know do have like comics kicking around, but no, definitely not.

As a kid?

I didn't as a kid. Oh, Archie comics, I think I read Archie comics when I was little. But obviously not a lot.

Interview 6

Can you give me what your impressions were when you got it as an intern?

I was happy to read through it, because there were little gaps of time. It was very amusing, and it was really quite true. I was very happy to receive it, rather than a wordy document.

So you liked the comic for? Did you find anything about it particularly useful or helpful?

Currently, I don't remember. (flipping through) I would say it's very practical and relevant. Now I remember yeah, now I remember these scenarios. Practical.

Do you feel that looking back, it's been almost a year, do you feel that getting this at the start of the year had any effect on your preparation to start the intern year or how things went during the year?

It made me understand the teamwork and the little nuances you should use to get things moving. I think it's practical little tips on how to deal with nonmedical stuff. I didn't really refer to it as a handbook, but you know, remember reading it, it sort of gave me tips in certain situations.

So it was like something you had in the back of your mind?

Yeah

And do you think that the visual format had any effect on how it was useful for you, compared to something that was textual?

I think definitely there is. It's better. It sticks with you longer. It's realistic, much easier to read. I think – did you draw it yourself?

I did yeah, but please don't let that stop you from—

No no, I know at the start of the year that you did this already. I think that I would much rather have this. I was one of those interns that actually read this during the breaks. I would just push for this to be more a formal document, and say 'this is part of your orientation handbook' and more people will get onto this and you will have more people

Do you have any suggestions on how it could be improved?

A little bit of colour, but that's not stopping it really. I'm just saying I think it would be great in colour but it's just, it's *good* you know. Do you think we could allocate maybe fifteen, thirty minutes, because in orientation it's all just medical things, medical training, what do you do in an emergency, so have a practical life tips session. Tell them: go through this book, how are you going to face waiting, pushing, doing administrative work.

So maybe some face-to-face teaching to go along with this?

Exactly, allocate some time, you know, using this book as a guide.

Someone else had mentioned that as well.

Yeah, hmmm.

Anything else you would like to add?

No, thanks for doing this. I don't know if any other hospitals are doing this.

So far I think it's just Mackay

Don't do it for the RAH (laughter) no, no

Don't do it for the RAH? Why not?

It's just, I'm from Flinders, I don't like the RAH (laughter)

Do it for flinders though, that would be OK?

Yeah, that would be great.

OK. Thanks, NAME (redacted).

We appreciate this. Hopefully we'll see you next year.

Interview 7

I wanted to get your feelings or impressions about the comic, what you thought was helpful or what could be improved?

Yeah, it's been so long ago, because I did read this at the start of the year, but it's been quite a long time.

Do you remember what you thought at the start of the year?

Yeah, I thought it was pretty decent, because it had different varying opinions about what we can expect through internship and like I do remember there's one grid that's toward the end that gave a brief insight about what to expect, and a lot of that was quite accurate, so I thought it was good in that sort of way. Yeah.

-Interruption by a nurse-

Yeah, I thought a lot of it was quite accurate. Looking through it retrospectively now, a lot of it was accurate to what we experienced in intern year, so I thought in that way it was quite good. It's definitely a different style of reading than you know, what you get with the other orientation manuals as well, because the other orientation manuals are more of a cut and dry bullet point, 'this is what you're expected to do, this is what you can expect from your rotation' and what not, but this one has more of the yeah, more of a different way of approaching that subject, and more of along the lines of lifestyle and like how it affects every day life which you know the orientation manuals don't do, so in that way … it's a different way to present it, so I thought it was good.

I'll have to re-read it again.

You mentioned that looking back you felt it was accurate. Did you feel that way at the start of the year? Did you feel that it helped to prepare you in anyway?

For doing these jobs as an intern?

Actually, as part of the other survey too, I was reading some of the questions, like 'how is this helpful in preparing you,' so I think a lot of it can't really prepare you for it. Like it will let you know that this is what you can expect,

but in terms of actually doing the jobs, like referring to another specialty, you know at the start obviously people are going to be quite terrible and quite anxious when they do that, but then it's more of an experience thing, like you know, it does touch on those issues and you say initially these are referrals and how you should do it and what you can expect from it, but I guess in the end it does prepare you a bit and kind of lets you know, it's just when you get into it and start doing it you kind of, that's when you get more of the learning and the information from it.

Was there anything that you didn't like about this? You ticked in the middle on the thing

I guess, yeah (flipping through). You know what I thought was that, I guess like people respond a bit differently, like I was saying earlier to different styles, so the comic book style is a different way of you know, kind of presenting this material. But I don't know I guess I'm more of a cut and dry kind of, you know just for that presentation of material, but that was really it. I think it just comes down to personal preference for that in the end.

So you'd prefer something that's more straightforward, written out—

Yeah, yup, um that's what I'd prefer, but it is, you know obviously everyone has a different way of learning and responding to things so it's for those that really appreciate this sort of thing it would work really well for them I would think.

Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

No, not really, yeah. Yeah, I guess just in general it's good to have, like I was saying all the different handbooks and the ways of presenting things because you can kind of pick and choose what you read and what you get out of it, so I think that's it.

Thanks, that was really helpful.

I guess maybe if it was earlier in the year you might remember it a bit more, but I guess at the end of the year you can look back more on it.

I guess the only other question that I would ask is if there was material that this covered that you didn't get in other ways?

There probably was, you know, I can't remember straight away. You know, like I was saying like that grid toward the end, a lot of people have different experiences during internship and a lot of it also has experiences that are outside of just doing your job and what the instruction manual says or the orientation manual says, like personal health issues. I think there was one thing in there that it affects people's mental health a bit because it was obviously a different change, so I think for some people, they wouldn't say that in a regular orientation manual for sure or anything about taking care of your own self and managing time effectively or what not, you know I think from what I can remember maybe, I think it's probably a good thing that that one that the comic book had in it.

Do you think that's something that could be conveyed in a cut and dried format, those sorts of issues?

That's actually a good question, because the comic book keeps it light that way with those sorts of issues, so it's really good for that. To have it like cut and dry, I don't know, I'd probably prefer the comic book for something like that as well, but yeah, because I think that was a big one. Like all these orientation manuals and other things from what I can remember don't really have anything on how to manage your time effectively while at work and how to work your work life balance in, that's what I think some interns still have some issues with as well, including myself on occasion, sometimes you know you stay way over you're scheduled time and then you get home and it's a bit different that way.

Interview 8

So I wanted to talk to you about this intern comic

Yeah, I remember it well

Can I get your impressions of it, when you got it, if you felt it was useful, kind of looking back almost a year later?

Yeah, definitely. I mean, I can relate to some of the experiences they are dealing with in this. It also had humour, so that kept it interesting. Yeah, I enjoyed reading it, I thought it was useful and realistic in a lot of ways. Definitely worth considering giving it to next year's interns. If it was me, I'd decide to give it to them.

How did you feel about the format of it, being a comic, or being visual and hand drawn?

I think it was good. It makes it a bit more engaging and interesting. It makes it a bit more personal I suppose as well. Yeah, it can have interesting facial expressions and stuff that add to the humour and communicate the experiences that people are having in the story, so I found that aspect of it was really good.

Interview 9

What were your feelings? Was it useful, could it be improved? What did you like, what didn't you like, etc?

Well, initially I didn't read it, but I read it a few months later. I kept it and left it lying on my desk and late one night I read it randomly. I found it quite humorous, I guess, but I can't remember much of the content actually because it was a couple of months ago. But it had some good content.

Was there anything about it that you found useful in particular?

I guess it's more about if you're struggling, seeking help. That was the main message I got out of it at that time. Not much more. I'm not sure how you could improve it. I think just getting people to read it is going to be the struggle.

Reading it in the middle of your intern year, did you find that it accurately reflected what you had been going through, or what your friends had been going through?

Um yeah, some of the elements hit the mark.

Anything in particular, or anything that seemed to not be representative

I guess the big thing is the lifestyle change, going from medical school coming into all the responsibility and dealing with those pressures, I guess. And this is just giving you simple messages I guess about how to deal with that, and if you need help get help.

Do you think this would have been better communicated in just a print form or a cut and dried form?

Probably not. I probably wouldn't read it.

But you did read this

Yeah, eventually. I guess the biggest thing in orientation week is you're getting all this information, so at the end of the day you don't want to go home – well, I didn't want to go home and read a comic after being bombarded with all this information.

You probably didn't want to go home and read anything

Yeah, pretty much. But yeah, I found it useful down the track.

Anything else to add?

I guess it's a good tool, but it's just finding a way for people to read it, and to relate to it. It's obviously not going to relate to everyone, but if you can pick up a few people that helps.

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