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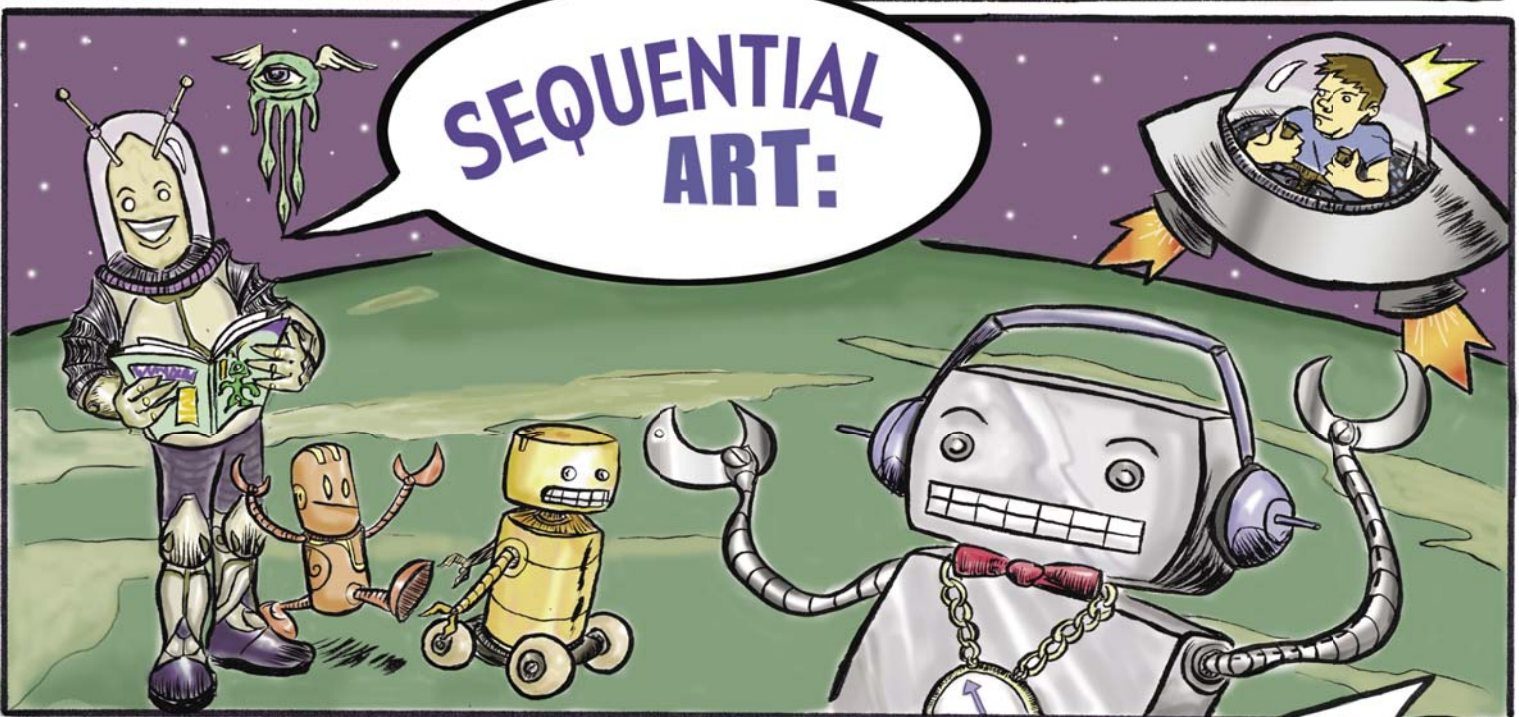
FORUM

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THE
COMICS!!



Phi Kappa Phi FORUM

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The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the staff of *Phi Kappa Phi Forum* or the Board of Directors of The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi.

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The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi was founded in 1897 and became a national organization through the efforts of the presidents of three state universities. Its primary objective has been from the first the recognition and encouragement of superior scholarship in all fields of study. Good character is an essential supporting attribute for those elected to membership. The motto of the Society is *philosophia krateitō phōtōn*, which is freely translated as "Let the love of learning rule humanity."

Phi Kappa Phi encourages and recognizes academic excellence through several national programs. Through its awards and grants programs, the Society each triennium distributes more than \$1,300,000 to deserving students and faculty to promote academic excellence. These programs include its flagship National Fellowship program for students entering their first year of graduate study, Promotion of Excellence grants for faculty-led projects, Study Abroad grants for undergraduates, and Literacy Initiative service grants. For more information about how to contribute to the Phi Kappa Phi Foundation and support these programs, please write Perry A. Snyder, PhD, Executive Director, The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, Box 16000, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70893 or go to the Phi Kappa Phi web page at www.phikappaphi.org.

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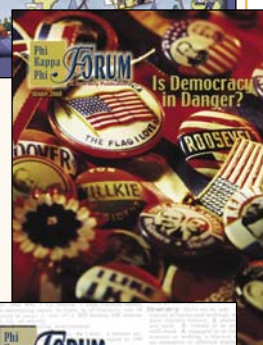
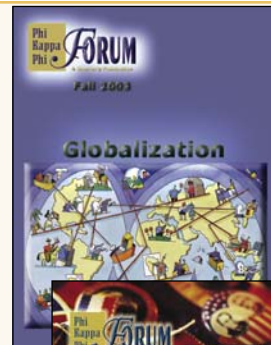
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Letters to the Editor

Phi Kappa Phi Forum publishes appropriately written letters to the editor every issue when submitted. Such letters should be no more than 300 words.

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A Note from the Editor



James P. Kaetz

IN THIS ISSUE

Okay, I admit it — I love comics. I indulge myself these days primarily in comic strips because I can access so many of them online (that is, for free). Every day as I eat my lunch, I look at my regular strips — around twenty all told. I love comic books, too, but I am way too cheap to buy them at today's prices (yes, I can remember when they were 25 cents), so I sneak a look at them in the bookstore when I can. Speaking of bookstores, if my wife ever loses me in one, she knows that if she goes to the "Humor" section, there I probably will be, engrossed in an old *Doonesbury* collection, or *Calvin and Hobbes*, or *Bloom County*, or *Far Side*, or whatever else I can get my hands on. Yes, I am a 47-year-old man with a comics fixation. I do not apologize for it.

As soon as I learned how to read, I read the comics — before that, I forced my parents to read them to me. I have vivid memories of waiting in agony as my father, who always got the Sunday comics first (or as we called them, the "funnies"), pored over every panel as if each contained some complex code. It always seemed as if it took him forever to finish with them, though in reality it probably was no more than twenty minutes. I even taught myself to read upside-down so that I could read the strips as he was looking at them. In terms of comic books, I was always a DC man — Superman, Batman, Green Lantern, and the Justice League (multiple superheroes for the price of one!). Marvel was good, but for my simple tastes its heroes suffered from too much angst — plus, Marvel's stories were almost always "to be continued," and I could never count

on our local drugstore to get the next installment.

So this issue has been especially fun for me. Leading off the issue is one of the most notable scholars of comics and popular culture, Thomas Inge. Professor Inge discusses the comics as art, looks at comic milestones in the twentieth century, and examines how the comics can refer to themselves much like metafiction or metacriticism. Next, in a first for the *Forum*, Matt Bors has drawn an original comic that is both fun and educational (how often have you heard that phrase?). Mr. Bors introduces us to Fredric Wertham, the man who was most responsible for cleaning up (or as some would term it, censoring) the comics by helping to create the Comics Code in the 1950s.

Next, Paige Braddock, creator of *Jane's World*, talks about the difficulty of being a cartoonist who happens to be a woman in a male-dominated field. Though her tone is humorous, her message is serious, and it is part of the ongoing theme of women making inroads into fields formerly the exclusive realms of men. Dave Kellett then relates how difficult it is to succeed with a newspaper strip. With the comics pages dominated by just a few strips, some of which might have passed their prime, and with fewer than a dozen new strips launched each year, it is easy to see why so few cartoonists actually make a living at it.

Lucy Shelton Caswell then introduces us to the extensive and important collections to be found at the Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library. From original artwork to correspondence to business papers, the collection houses material from many of the best-known figures in the world of cartooning of the past

century — and the collection is growing all the time.

Next comes our interview with Stephan Pastis, whose strip, *Pearls Before Swine*, just won the 2003 Reuben Award, given by the National Cartoonists Society, for Newspaper Strip of the Year. Mr. Pastis tells us how his strip originated, how he comes up with his ideas (a process that includes reading Hemingway), and who inspired him to persevere in becoming a full-time cartoonist. John Lent then discusses the Japanese comic style known as manga, and how it is coming to dominate the comic world. And we finish up with another interview, this time with Greg Evans, creator of the popular *Luann* strip. Mr. Evans was just awarded a 2003 Reuben also, this one as Cartoonist of the Year.

Note also that our cover has been designed and executed for us by another young illustrator just starting out, Adam Bastuscheck. If anyone out there would like to get in touch with Adam, contact us here at the *Forum*, and we will be happy to pass your message on to him.

We hope that you have as much fun reading this issue as we have had putting it together for you.

APPRECIATIONS

By the time this issue appears, several members of The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi's Board of Directors will be rotating off the Board, new members will be coming on, and current members will be taking on new roles. We want to thank the Board for its continued support of the *Forum* and for giving us the resources and freedom to turn out each issue. We also express our best wishes to those leaving the Board. We know that they will always remain active in the Society.

And thanks to all the members of Phi Kappa Phi for your perceptive and kind comments on each issue. We may have some exciting changes coming up in the next year with the *Forum*, and if those come to fruition, we hope that you will continue your support and let us know what you think.

Enjoy the issue!





Forum on

Education & Academics

Jennifer M. Stolpa

Math and Writing Anxieties

"I'm not a math person."

"Writing's just not my thing."

"No one in my family's ever been good at that."

By observing students in my writing courses and in a course that I teach on math and writing anxieties, and by listening to math and writing instructors at all levels, I have become convinced that one of the greatest issues facing education today is anxiety about and avoidance of math and writing.

Students who truly believe that they cannot succeed in math or writing often stop trying to learn these subjects at a very early age. Their anxieties are compounded as they struggle over the years; eventually these young people choose majors in college or career paths after high school that allow them to avoid the subjects as much as possible. Because skills in both areas are crucial to individual success in a multitude of careers as well as in life outside of work, such individuals are not able to fulfill their highest potential.

To discover the causes of math and writing anxieties, all of us — including parents and educators — must be willing to carefully examine our own attitudes. Children are not born believing that they are incapable of achieving something. That failure to believe in oneself is learned from the world outside.

"My mom told me that she always got low grades in English, too, so it's no wonder I can't do it."

Parents may unintentionally contribute to a child's anxiety about math or writing. When faced with a child whom they love and who is frustrated or upset because of difficulties with an essay or a math assignment, parents naturally want to comfort the child. Their response may be, "Don't worry. I never got algebra either," or "Math was never my strong suit in school." Parents may even confirm a student's sense of futility by suggesting that "no one in our family ever did well in English."

Students repeat these responses to themselves and to others. Unfortunately, those parents have just given their children an excuse to stop trying. They have planted a seed that may grow into a strong belief that "I was just born without the ability to do this subject." When that happens, the child gives up, sometimes for good.

"My history teacher told me in high school that some people just can't do algebra, that she couldn't do it in high school either."

Teachers also may unknowingly pass on their anxieties about mathematics or writing through simple statements about how "impossible" one or the other was for them. Trying to comfort a frustrated child, a teacher might say, "Maybe math just isn't your thing. You do well at so many other subjects, so don't worry." Once, an elementary school teacher said to me in front of a young student, "Her brother never could remember multiplication facts either, so it was bound to be a struggle for her, too."

How do I know teachers make these mistakes and feed anxieties about subjects? How do I know that we sometimes help to fuel the misunderstandings about the divisions between math/science and language? In large part, the reason is that I have done so myself.

As a graduate teaching assistant, I was naturally a little unsure of myself in front of students. When I would occasionally make a mistake in adding up points on a student's grade, I would say, "Well, now you see why I was an English major and not a math major." The students and I would chuckle and move on. Now as I look back, I am dismayed by what I said. In that instant, I was guilty of defining all of mathematics as simple arithmetic, of covering up my embarrassment over what is a natural mistake (because I am human!) by driving in the wedge between the two disciplines even further, and of validating students' beliefs that one is either gifted in one subject, the other, or neither.

It also was simply not the truth. I earned an "A" in first-semester calculus class and was a member of the math team all through high school. Had I felt inclined to be a math major, I could have been. Simple arithmetic mistakes, which math majors make all the time, would not have stopped me. But I was lucky. No one had ever given me a reason to believe that I could not succeed in one particular discipline.

Not all students are so fortunate. The fear of writing and math is so pervasive in contemporary American society that it is frequently found in television shows and movies. Sitcoms and comedians go to the easy joke about math's impossibility, and many people laugh. If a television show needs a metaphor for a student struggling at school, most often the subject chosen to typify those struggles is mathematics, and in the audience many nod their heads. Movies about mathematicians, such as *A Beautiful Mind* or *Good Will Hunting*, focus on the rare genius among us.

Recent films such as *Adaptation* and *Secret Window* depict the realistic struggles of professional writers during the drafting stages, but neither

(continued on page 5)

Forum on **Business** & **Economics**



Anthony J. Duker

The Value of a Brand

The obstruction of justice trial of Martha Stewart last winter generated a huge amount of media hype. Newspaper and television commentators focused not only on legal arguments and on what was permissible evidence but also discussed tangential issues such as the personal tragedy of Stewart's former secretary giving damning testimony despite having received a beautiful cake from her boss for Christmas. Even the business press analyzed the consequences of Stewart donning fur while exiting the courthouse on a warm New York day. Certainly much of the spectacle can be explained by her celebrity status. But unlike the celebrity trials of Michael Jackson or Robert Blake, the business press was very interested in the outcome of Stewart's trial. Of course, many business observers had an interest in the fall of the head of the \$250 million company, Martha Stewart Omnimedia. But it was more than Stewart, the person, on the verge of falling. It was Martha Stewart, the *brand*, that had the attention of so many Wall Street investors.

What exactly is a brand? What social value, if any, exists from the process called *branding*? And, how can Stewart's obstruction of justice trial be of any relevance to a brand?

Think of a brand as an image associated with some product, service, or organization. While the image might be associated with a product, the image itself lives in the minds of the consuming public. Across the world, for example, many associate Coca-Cola with the American way of life, its customs and traditions.

Despite existing mainly in the consumer's imagination, the presence of a brand is very real. Consider the following classroom experiment that I conduct with my undergraduate business students. I bring two two-liter bottles of cola, one of Coke and one of Pepsi, to class and ask students if they can identify the taste of either. Most are confident that they can because students believe themselves either loyal Coke or loyal Pepsi drinkers and that their loyalty is based on "real" factors, such as taste. Then each tastes a random cola and tries to identify the brand. In the end, the students are surprised to learn that statistically they do no better than random guessing. This informal experiment usually convinces students that their loyalty to either cola is based not on taste alone, but on some additional notion associated with the product.

Makers of consumer products develop and maintain a brand image through advertising, packaging, and the design of logos. As is evident from our highly commercial society, businesses benefit from the ability to brand their product. But how, if at all, do consumers benefit? Economists' positions on this question vary greatly because existing economic research is unable to fully disentangle all the dimensions of branding.

A benefit from brands is that they help consumers identify products. In a single product category, such as cars, so many alternatives are available that consumers have a difficult time finding the one best suited for them. The Lexus brand, for example, means wealth, luxury, and exclusivity.

Knowing this, a car buyer in the market for a practical, fuel-efficient vehicle could avoid a trip to the Lexus dealer.

Similarly in the market for commercial art, consumers can feel overwhelmed by hundreds of unknown artists and themes. However, by successfully branding himself as "the painter of light," Thomas Kinkadee helps people identify his luminous paintings and licensed products that depict home and serenity.

By establishing a solid brand, a business builds a base of loyal customers, which leads some to argue that branding has an anticompetitive dimension. Loyalty, by definition, makes customers less inclined to seek out alternative products. If Marlboro, for example, is branded as a cigarette for the strong and confident person and Camel for the hip and stylish, then smokers might choose their product based more on the branded image than on price. Consequently, Phillip Morris and R. J. Reynolds can charge higher than competitive prices.

Alternatively, some see a brand as a product in and of itself that has intrinsic economic value to the person consuming it. Viewing a brand in this way may explain why the Bayer Corporation, the inventor of aspirin, sells a bottle of aspirin at a higher price than the store brand, despite their chemical equivalence. To account for their willingness to pay more, users of Bayer cite "trust and confidence" in the safety and effectiveness of the pain reliever. The fact that people want to pay more for Bayer aspirin than for the grocery store's brand indicates that the Bayer brand of "trust and confidence" has value above and beyond the physical product. To strengthen this point, note that Bayer does not even manufacture its aspirin. Rather, it contracts with an outside manufacturer which makes its aspirin packaged for Bayer as well as for private-label brands sold in grocery-store chains and pharmacies.

Martha Stewart, like Bayer, sells something in addition to the product itself. For fifteen years, Stewart built a hugely successful business based on her sense of style, which in turn shaped a brand characterized by traditional, though not necessarily conservative, domestic perfection. While few

modern homemakers ever duplicate Stewart's elaborate creations, they buy into the hope that one day, perhaps, they will be able to do so. Access to such fantasies was provided by the Martha Stewart brand via her magazines and television shows, which contribute to more than three-quarters of Omnimedia's sales. The willingness of advertisers to pay premium rates to reach her readers and fans reflects the value of the brand.

Unfortunately, a scandal associated with greed, prison, and lies is inconsistent with Stewart's perfectionist image. Investors believed that the brand was corrupted and that patrons of her media products, and consequently advertisers, would lose interest. The 23 percent drop in the stock price of Martha Stewart Omnimedia on the day of her conviction reflected the loss in value of the brand. While it is conceivable that investors were concerned that a jail sentence would jeopardize the management of the active business, by the time of the trial, it was well known that she had stepped out of this role months earlier.

While the value of Martha Stewart, the brand, may have faded, Martha Stewart, the person, probably will not. Her business sense and drive extend well beyond the perfectionist brand of style and good taste that originally catapulted her to success. As she collects herself in the months after the scandal, we can expect to see her again as a prominent business leader, but this time with a new brand.



Anthony J. Dukes is an assistant professor at the School of Economics and Management, University of Aarhus in Denmark. He holds a PhD in economics from the University of Pittsburgh and conducts research concerning the economics of advertising, marketing, and commercial media.

(Math and Writing Anxieties continued from page 3)

writer is in any other way to be considered a model that we are asked to follow. Too often, television programs show students putting off that term paper or avoiding it altogether.

It is no wonder, then, that students laugh when I ask them to consider themselves as writers. It is not surprising when students believe that because they are not themselves geniuses, mathematics will always be beyond them.

Since at least the 1970s, books have been appearing that strive to educate the public about our inherent abilities with language and numbers. Books such as *The Math Gene* by Keith Devlin (Basic Books, New York, 2000) and the now-classic *Overcoming Math Anxiety* by Sheila Tobias (Norton, New York, 1978) attempt to persuade teachers, parents, and individuals in all careers that number sense is innate, that there is creativity in mathematics, and that persistent hard work can pay off for any child or adult in these disciplines.

Books such as Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way* (Tarcher, New York, 1992) or Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird* (Anchor, New York, 1994) convince readers that learning to write is like learning any other skill; it takes hard work to write well, not possessing a particular genetic code. However, most Americans remain unconvinced,

often unaware of the existence of such books.

Millions of teachers, parents, and professionals in all fields work hard to ensure that students do not place limits on themselves. Many educators and parents work carefully with students who are struggling in math or in writing, and as a result we see millions of children each year who come to believe that they too can achieve success in these areas.

However, too often as educators, parents, and members of society, we want to shield children from frustration, pain, and struggle. We forget that it is in the struggle that we learn. We also forget that our children are listening to everything that we say and learning their attitudes from our own.

We ignore the creativity of mathematics or we fail to teach children about the realities of the writing life — that becoming a professional writer does not mean that suddenly every first draft is perfect.

We must continue to examine the ways in which we all address these issues. We should not pass on to our students our own fears. We must not pass on to our children the limitations that we have placed on ourselves or that others have placed on us.



Jennifer M. Stolpa is an assistant professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Marquette, where she also teaches Spanish. She can be reached at jstolpa@uwec.edu.

Forum on Science & Technology



Evelyn Tiffany-Castiglioni

The Domestication of the Dog, Part I

Next week I shall take my dog to the veterinary clinic at Texas A&M University for her check-up. She is a black half-Labrador retriever with a little white on her muzzle and toes. Her mother was my neighbor's yellow Lab, and her father was a passing stranger. My dog has not had many health problems, aside from one recurring ailment diagnosed as "dietary indiscretion," though several years back she had an unusual dermal cyst. The latter condition is so breed-specific that it confirmed that her father was part Rhodesian Ridgeback. I had seen him in the neighborhood, a brown mutt with the hair along his spine growing forward instead of back, hence forming a "ridge." In the waiting room we shall see other dogs, possibly a small, trembling Chihuahua that nevertheless barks fiercely at us, possibly a large, muscular Rottweiler with hip problems.

All this variety raises questions. How can these dogs with such pronounced differences in size, weight, coat, body shape, and disposition be the same species? And, how did humans and dogs form the unique and varied inter-species living arrangements that we have now? For thousands of years we have manipulated dogs' genes, first to domesticate them from their wild ancestors, and then to produce specialized breeds. The ancestral wolf, the concept of species, and a modern reenactment of domestication are the focuses of this column.

IS THE WOLF THE SOLE ANCESTOR TO THE DOG?

With all of the variety in dog breeds today, did dogs have single or multiple ancestral populations? It may seem intuitive that any

domestic species must be derived from selective breeding of a handful of founder animals, because multiple derivations would require that later in their natural history the separate lines would still be similar enough to be the same species. However, such is not the case with pigs (*Sus scrofa*), which were domesticated separately in Europe and Asia about nine thousand years ago, and horses (*Equus caballus*), which appear to have been domesticated from two or more separate wild horse populations about six thousand years ago. In dogs, the idea of multiple ancestors (including both wolves and jackals), or at least multiple independent domestication events from one species, is attractive because it seems compatible with the diversity of modern dog types. Nevertheless, powerful new genetic approaches provide a firm answer that dogs were domesticated from wolves in a single event.

Evolutionary biologists have long favored the idea that the ancestor of dogs was the wolf (*Canis lupus*), though until very recently, the idea could not be ruled out that other members of the dog genus, such as jackals, were part of dog ancestry. However, in 2002, Dr. Peter Savolainen at the Royal Institute of Technology in Sweden and his colleagues presented unusually strong evidence (*Science*, Vol. 298, p. 1610) that dogs were domesticated from the grey wolf in Eastern Asia, possibly China, about 15,000 years ago. The group counted mutations in mitochondrial DNA, which is found in the energy-generating structure in the cell called the mitochondrion and is inherited only maternally. They studied DNA samples from 38 Eurasian wolves and 654 dogs from Europe, Asia, Africa, and Arctic America. The

founders of all modern dog species were probably three female wolves.

The date is significant because dogs were widespread around the globe by nine thousand years ago, as evidenced by prehistoric art and fossil remains, and therefore had dispersed rapidly after their domestication, presumably because of their usefulness to migrating human populations. No new domestication event of dogs took place in the New World, according to Dr. Jennifer A. Leonard and Dr. Robert K. Wayne at UCLA and Dr. Carles Vilas at Uppsala, Sweden (*Science*, Vol. 298, p. 1613; 2002), who studied DNA from ancient dog bones taken from archeologic sites in Mexico, Peru, and Bolivia. Therefore, dogs may have accompanied human colonizers of the Americas as early as 12–14,000 years ago. New Eurasian dogs were later brought to the Americas by colonists, but those dogs still were of Eurasian wolf origin. Subsequent breeds of dogs have arisen all over the world, mainly in the last few hundred years, by intensive selective breeding for desired traits, but all the breeds are still one species.

HOW CAN CHIHUAHUAS AND GREAT DANES BE ONE SPECIES?

Species is a human, not a canine, concept, and it is defined in the simplest terms as a group of animals that can interbreed to produce fertile offspring. Chihuahuas and Great Danes are the same species because they can readily interbreed to produce fertile offspring, whereas horses and donkeys are different species because they produce infertile mules if they interbreed. It is easy to explain why such crosses between dissimilar dog breeds are fertile: they carry the same genes, and their chromosomes look identical. It is likewise easy to explain why mules are infertile: their parents do not have matching chromosomes. Horses have sixty-four chromosomes, and donkeys have sixty-two that are structurally rearranged compared with the horse. As a result, mules cannot make eggs and sperm that are fertile.

More puzzling is that dogs and wolves have nearly identical genetic material and identical chromosomes, and they can interbreed to produce fertile offspring, yet we classify

them as different species. Indeed, all members of the dog genus — dogs, wolves, coyotes, and jackals, — have seventy-eight chromosomes and can interbreed to produce fertile offspring. The definition of species among animal behaviorists additionally includes the likelihood that groups of animals would naturally interbreed, which may be limited by geographical isolation, differences in social behavior, and the incongruity of their reproductive cycles.

The reasons that dogs and wolves generally live as different “species” are perhaps their very distinct habitats and behavioral characteristics. Wolves live in the wilderness in packs, have a hierarchy — one alpha male and one alpha female in a pack — and breed seasonally. In contrast, dogs live with humans and can breed more often. These behavioral differences, together with physical variations, have led scientists to classify dogs and wolves into different species. Under discussion is the idea that dogs should be classified as a wolf subspecies, *Canis lupus familiaris*. The analysis of the dog genome is nearly complete. DNA-sequence data in the dog would perhaps be a good starting point to verify whether dogs and wolves are different species, or just different breeds, and indeed will help refine our concept of species.

IS THE DOG JUST A TAME WOLF WITH FLOPPY EARS?

If the wolf and dog are genetically similar, why not call a tame wolf a dog? There is a difference between taming an individual and domesticating a species. The Latin root of the word “domestic” is *domus*, or house. Domestication means cultivating through generations of selective breeding animals that live with humans and serve human purposes. On the part of the animal, it means adaptation to a captive environment by an accumulation of genetic changes spanning several generations. Domesticated species have the common characteristic that they are tolerant of humans and often dependent on them. Their “fight or flight” adrenal response in the presence of humans is muted.

A remarkable study of the Siberian silver fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) reenacts

how domestication may have taken place. The study was initiated in the 1950s in Russia by Dr. Dmitri Belyaev and is being continued by Dr. Lyudmila N. Trut (*American Scientist*, Vol. 78, p. 160; 1999). The project started with thirty male and a hundred female foxes from commercial farm stock that had been bred for fur for more than fifty years. These animals were therefore tolerant of caging and isolation from other foxes, but they were very afraid of humans, difficult to handle, and therefore still wild foxes.

During a period of forty years, researchers selectively bred farm foxes for a single characteristic: friendliness to humans. Monthly, beginning at one

generations, 35 percent of the animals were Class IE, and after thirty-five generations this proportion rose to 70–80 percent. In all, the experiment has involved 45,000 foxes.

Though breeders were selected for tameness alone, an astonishing result of the farm-fox study was the appearance of phenotypic, or physical and biochemical, changes in some elite animals. Some of these foxes were spotted or patched black and white (piebald, see Figure 1) or had a white star on their foreheads. In addition, many of the new, unusual physical traits in the elite foxes appear to be the retention of kit-like characteristics in the adult, such as barking, floppy ears, tails that curve over the back,



Figure 1. The appearance of a novel coat color, piebald, in a fox after eight to ten generations of breeding for friendliness to humans. Belyaev, D. K., “Destabilizing Selection as a Factor in Domestication,” *Journal of Heredity*, 1979. Vol. 70: 301–308. By permission of Oxford University Press.

month of age, the fox kit was tested for its reaction to an experimenter, who offered it food and attempted to pet or handle it. Animals were categorized at seven to eight months of age as Class III if they tried to bite or flee, Class II if they allowed themselves to be touched but were not friendly, and Class I if they were friendly with the experimenter. Only the tamest animals were bred, which even in 1999 was less than 5 percent of males and 20 percent of females. After six generations, a new class emerged, Class IE, the domestic elite, who sought out human attention, licked the experimenters’ hands, and wagged their tails in a dog-like fashion. After twenty

broader heads relative to length, shorter snouts, and smaller skulls. This phenomenon is called pedomorphism and is believed to be a feature common to many domestic mammals. These characteristics, rare in the fearful fox population, increased in numbers in each generation as the experiment progressed. Reproductive behavior also changed, with elite foxes reaching puberty earlier and having longer breeding seasons.

The physiological basis for these changes is the subject of ongoing study by Russian investigators, who have shown that the foxes’ endo-

(continued on page 9)



Andrew Wheeler in a scene from *Embedded*, written and directed by Tim Robbins. Photo: Michal Daniel

***Embedded*: A New Satire Explores The Art of War**

In November of 2003, Los Angeles had the exceptional good fortune of being the birthplace of a riveting, raucous, satirical new play entitled, *Embedded*. Written and directed by Tim Robbins, and presented by The Actors' Gang, the L.A.-based theater of which Robbins is a co-founder, *Embedded* played to sold-out houses in Los Angeles through February 2004. The production then moved to The Public Theater in New York City, where the run was extended three times and the play performed twice a night on some nights of the week.

Embedded conceives of a world in which the United States is at war with an oil-laden, fictional Middle Eastern country called Gomorrah. The action of the play moves nimbly among three sets of characters: the cabal of neoconservative government officials who have created the war, the embedded journalists allowed to live with the military, and the sympathetically portrayed soldiers being sent to war.

A biting satirical and entertaining play, *Embedded* is also instructive. The playwright brings into focus the ideas of the neoconservative philosopher Leo Strauss (1899–1973) in a hilarious, yet chilling, manner. In brief, Leo Strauss believed that an elite few in society should know the truth. These elite few may have to tell lies to the uncomprehending masses. He believed also that, “because mankind is intrinsically wicked, he has to be governed.” This governance can be established only “when men are united — and they can only be united against other people.” Following

Machiavelli, Strauss felt that if no external threat to a nation existed, then one had to be manufactured. This notion underlies the most biting-satirical scenes, as the grotesquely masked cabinet members build a war from the safety of their offices. This cabal of neocons, with such names as Pearly White, Gondola, Rum-Rum and Woofy, chant incantations and light candles to Strauss at the end of each cabinet meeting. The satire becomes especially pointed with the knowledge that members of the current administration’s cabinet have been students of Strauss himself, or students of his students.

The vignettes depicting the journalists who are to be “embedded,” defined as a media representative remaining with a military unit on an extended basis, are educational. With a sharp, humorous edge, the play shows the procedures through which journalists are allowed to see, or not see, certain events and the process through which their copy must pass before it is approved. Quickly, during a hilarious journalists’ bootcamp scene, these journalists learn what they cannot, should not, and must not say. The scenes carry a certain validity after CNN’s Christiane Amanpour admitted that CNN “was intimidated” by the current administration into “a climate of fear and self-censorship.”

Least satirical, and most touching, are the scenes depicting the young soldiers being sent off to war. The sorrowful parents at the airport tell their daughter Jen-Jen how sorry they

are that they were not rich enough to send her to college. Later, the cute, blond Jen-Jen is injured and sent to a hospital in Gomorrah, where her life is saved by a Middle Eastern doctor. However, the cabinet, and then the press, need a hero so, for the sake of nationalism, they turn Jen-Jen into one, much against her protestations against the twisting of the facts. In a wrenching scene, her mother and father tell Jen-Jen that her memory of the facts is wrong, and they tell her the official story, told to them by officials. The family has been offered a large sum of money for the rights to a television version of this official story. They need the money, and the Straussian elite has decided that America needs a hero.

The atmosphere at The Actors’ Gang during the Los Angeles incarnation of *Embedded* was celebratory. When the play first opened, it was unusual to hear any critique of the United States’ involvement in Iraq from the corporate media. Further, it was unusual to hear any criticism of the corporate media’s lack of rigor on this subject. For those accustomed to reading the foreign press or following the liberal media, the ideas that the American public had been deceived into believing that we should go to war and that the administration had control, of some sort, over the corporate media were not new. What was new to these audience members was the opportunity to hear these ideas expressed in a public, communal forum. The energy exchanged between the grateful audience mem-

A scene from *Embedded*, written and directed by Tim Robbins.
Photo: Michal Daniel



Toni Torres in a scene from *Embedded*. Photo: Michal Daniel

bers and the talented, dedicated cast created an electric atmosphere. For audience members to whom these ideas were new, the satirical nature of *Embedded* removed the events of the play from reality just enough to allow audience members to think about the play's ideas in isolation from the emotional fervor that surrounds any mention of U.S. involvement in Iraq.

At its best, the theater presents its audience with ideas to be pondered. These ideas ideally lead to a dialogue through which audience members are enriched, enlightened, or educated, or presented with an alternate viewpoint of world events to consider. As spectators left The Actors' Gang after delivering a lengthy standing ovation, their

conversations were firmly embedded in the ideas of the play. "Is that really true?," or "I am so glad someone is finally telling the truth!" or "Have you ever heard of Leo Strauss before tonight?" or "I heard a discussion of that on Democracy Now!" are just a few of the comments made by patrons lingering in the lobby after the show. The Actors' Gang had plastered the lobby walls from floor to ceiling with newspaper articles from around the world and across the political spectrum. People huddled close to the walls, reading glasses were brought out, and perfect strangers talked to one another about what they read there.

It is likely that *Embedded* will have closed in New York by the time that this column is printed. However, the thousands of spectators who saw the show in Los Angeles and New York have had an experience that has informed their thinking and will, no doubt, given the intensity of the conversations heard in the theater lobby, inform the thinking of thousands of others.



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(The Domestication of the Dog, Part I *continued from page 7)*

crine (hormone-secreting) systems and brain chemistry have changed. Elite foxes have lower stress-hormone levels than fearful foxes, and their brains have higher levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin, which is associated with calmness. In selecting and breeding animals that were friendly to humans, the genetic pool has become skewed towards a different response of the adrenal cortex towards humans. The wonder is that this process took only thirty to thirty-five generations of foxes and forty years of human time.

To become the commensal species that dogs and humans are, that is to

say, species that live together to their mutual benefit, an event unique in natural history took place. Our human forebears and dogs' wolf forebears must have been resourceful beings to establish this enduring relationship. The relationship is still evolving, and with recent revelations from canine genomics, it is evolving in unforeseen ways. In my next column I shall discuss two topics: speculations on how wolves became proto-dogs and the creation of pure breeds. Purebred dogs have been created by generations of tightly regulated breeding to a conformational standard. The offshoot of this activity seems to be new models for human hereditary diseases. I'll be back in six months with more.



Evelyn Tiffany-Castiglioni, PhD, is associate dean for Undergraduate Education and head of the Department of Veterinary Anatomy and Public Health, College of Veterinary Medicine, Texas A&M University. She conducts research on the neurotoxicity of environmental contaminants. She is on the editorial boards of Neurotoxicity and the International Journal of Developmental Neuroscience.

Authors Note: I thank Dr. Bhanu Chowdhary and Dr. Kimberly Greer at Texas A&M University for providing information about canine genomics and evolution.

WHEN YOU ARE AFRAID OF THE DARK

— For Mary, who hid beneath my coat on the Older Adult Unit

When you are afraid of the dark,
The light switch wags its tongue
At you, the windows fill with water
And the ceiling, the sky's emissary,
Exists only to impress you
With the degrees of darkness.

When you are afraid of the dark,
Memories dance in the corners of the room
And twist into the figure
Of your dead husband in the doorway,
Leaves stuck to the bottom of his shoes.

When you are afraid of the dark, Jesus blushes
From his frame on the wall beside you
In the rosy light of your beating heart,
And the crucifix is a flurry of birds
Rising at once from the dividing line
Between yes and no.

When you are afraid of the dark,
You know darkness
Has only begun to warm up to you,
And morning is just an idea,
Like love,
Or faith.

When you are afraid of the dark
It is so dark shadows are lost,
Blackness weighs like grief
On your chest and you would take
Up any offer:

A nightlight, a searchlight,
The bones' dull white,
Even the flickering sight
Of a once young girl
Gliding through
A house of mirrors.

MELINDA S. WOLF

Melinda S. Wolf is a social worker at Aquinas College where she also has taught English part-time. She has had poems published in a variety of literary magazines including *New York Quarterly*, *American Literary Review*, *Kalliope: A Journal of Women's Art*, *Mudfish*, *Anthology of Magazine Verse*, and *Yearbook of American Poetry*.

M. Thomas Inge

What Are the Comics?

For as long as we have been recording our history, humankind has been telling stories and jokes through the combination of words and pictures. But it was not until a little more than a hundred years ago that we began to produce in the newspapers a distinct art form that permanently wedded the two in a way that would engage and entertain millions of people the world over. Although few have recognized the cultural and aesthetic values of the comic strip and its partner, the comic book, the time has come to acknowledge that these are no ephemeral forms of entertainment, as temporary as the cheap paper on which they are usually printed. Rather, they are a significant part of America's cultural heritage to be cherished for their enduring artistic and social importance.

Comic art has much in common with all other forms of literary and visual communication of the modern world. As in fiction, the elements of narrative, characterization, and setting are important in accomplished comic art; and as in poetry, ideas must be developed within a very short reading time, a few seconds for a comic strip and fifteen minutes or less for a comic-book story. As in drama, a story or incident must be staged before our eyes within the artificial strictures of a box-like frame and with all the limitations of a play in terms of compressed time, dialogue, and plot development. As in a motion picture, visual devices such as cutting, framing, close-ups, and montage are used by the comic artist, and the point of view is free to roam the world over to places both known and fantastic.

THE UNIQUE ART OF COMICS

Although the comics share a good deal with other forms of artistic expression, they differ in distinct ways and provide a method of communication that is ultimately unique. For one thing, to be effective comics depend on a balanced combination of word and picture, the one depending fully on the other for maximum effect. Thus, some commentators have suggested that in the best examples of comic-strip art, if either the picture or the text is not essential to understanding, then a proper balance is lacking. In the best work, extraneous text and nonessential pictures are avoided in favor of fully integrated narratives in which words depend directly on the image, and vice versa, for the most successful results.

Several essential features of comic art distinguish it from other art forms. For example, comic strips appear daily in newspapers delivered to homes, while comic books appear monthly in special serial publications sold at newsstands or comic-book shops (and more recently at bookstores). Both are usually printed on inexpensive paper, and while comic books generally appear in color, comic strips have traditionally been in color only on Sundays. These forms of publication are not conducive to appreciation or

preservation. Only on rare occasions are comics carefully printed on high-quality paper stock, as happens in France with popular comic albums.

Another distinguishing feature is that most comic strips and books feature a set of recurring characters with whom the reader becomes familiar over time, with an occasional retelling of their histories in capsule form. Readers gain cumulative familiarity with the characters' developing personalities during several months or years of reading experience, although many characters remain essentially the same throughout their lifetimes. Especially in humor, stock and stereotyped players are essential to the daily comic routines, formulaic repetition being one of those techniques that most often makes people laugh (as in Charlie Brown's unsuccessful attempt to kick the football held annually by Lucy).

Time is also treated differently in that it generally has no effect on the lives of characters in the comics. They do not grow old chronologically (with the notable exception of Frank King's *Gasoline Alley*, in which several generations of a family have grown old along with the readers, and more recently Lynn Johnston's *For Better or For Worse*.) The dramatic narrative is open-ended, and the action, whenever the reading experience begins, is always *in medias res*. Thus, comics characters inhabit a world that has no beginning and no end, that remains constant and is shored up against the usual influences of change and deterioration. Only in the case of politically satiric strips, such as Gary Trudeau's *Doonesbury*, Aaron McGruder's *Boondocks*, or the late Walt Kelly's *Pogo* are immediately contemporary events and personalities reflected or depicted in the comics.

Because comics characters inhabit a world of static silence, resulting from the restrictions of the printed page that cannot allow for motion and sound, dialogue and noise require a special set of conventions. Words are usually spoken in irregular ovals called balloons, a technique that descends from early illustrated broadsheets and political cartoons. Because of the limited amount of space in a panel, dialogue must be kept to an absolute minimum and the joke or story told with the fewest words possible, a continual challenge to the skills of the writer. As for sounds, comic artists must resort to the poetic device of onomatopoeia, and while many traditional words such as 'slam,' 'bang,' 'sock,' 'smash,' or 'bump' will serve the situation, new word coin-

ages have proven necessary. Thus the comics have enriched American English by such contributions as 'wow,' 'plop,' 'zowie,' 'bam,' and 'whap.' To convey ideas that cannot be expressed with words, comic artists also have developed a vocabulary of visual symbols, such as bubble balloons for silent thoughts, stars to show pain, drops of water to express labor

or worry, or radiating lines to convey pride or enlightenment. These visuals are just some of the features with which many associate the comics, and any article or news story about them inevitably uses a headline with such words as 'sock,' 'bam,' or 'zowie' in it somewhere. It is remarkable how effective these conventions are in

creating the impression of a loud, noisy medium.

While we can discuss comic art in general theoretical terms as mentioned above, it is also necessary to point out that comics are richly diverse in style and content. Styles vary from pure fantasy and surrealism to the studied posing of fashion-plate art and the gritty details of realism in the mean city streets and battlefields of the world. The content embraces all the genres found in fiction, drama, and film — domestic conflict, comedy, war, the western and frontier experience, adventure, espionage, mystery and suspense, crime and detection, the world of the child or teenager, the professions, nature, animal fables, satire, politics, social reform, science fiction, fantasy, and the absurd. The development of the comics in the United States may be viewed as a continuing series of innovations in style and subject matter that have in turn shaped new traditions to follow.

The development of the comics in the United States may be viewed as a continuing series of innovations in style and subject matter that have in turn shaped new traditions to follow.

COMICS MILESTONES

It was the adventure comic strip that gave birth to the comic book. When Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, two Cleveland high school students, teamed up to create the character of Superman in 1933, they first tried to market it as a comic strip, but it was not until 1938 that a perceptive publisher of comic books saw its potential and made it the lead feature in the first issue of *Action Comics*. Since the appearance of the first comic book in 1933, *Funnies on Parade*, the small magazines had been devoted primarily to reprinting newspaper comic strips. With the enormous success of the Man of Steel, however, the main focus of the comic book on superheroes

was established. Soon their pages were rife with jumping, flying, and fighting figures, with secret origins and mythic appeal for the American imagination — Batman, Wonder Woman, and Captain Marvel among them. After a period of unpopularity among parents and reformers who suspected them of contributing to juvenile delinquency in the 1950s [See Matt Bors's "Fredric Wertham" in this issue. — Editor], they were revived in the 1960s, along with a new breed of superheroic figures from the fertile mind of Stan Lee, ones who experienced personal and social problems and setbacks, such as the Fantastic Four and Spider-Man.

Another important event of the 1960s was the publication of adult-oriented comic books that, along with the underground "comix" movement, inspired the publication in the next two decades of lengthy works of fiction in comic-book form, which have come to be called "graphic novels." The most successful efforts in this direction have been Will Eisner's moving stories of ethnic urban experience in the 1940s, *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories* (1978); Frank Miller's controversial reinterpretation of the Batman as an aging reactionary vigilante of the future in *The Dark Knight Returns* (1986); Harvey Pekar's thoughtful and painfully autobiographical sketches about the mundane life of a misfit in Cleveland, *American Splendor* (1986); and Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' existential meditation on the fate of the superhero in an increasingly anarchic society, *Watchmen* (1987).

The most serious and potentially consequential of these works may be Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1986), a treatment in animal fable form of the fate of his parents during and after the Holocaust. Depicting the Jews as mice and the Nazis as cats does not trivialize the story, but makes the subject even more terrifying because of the incon-

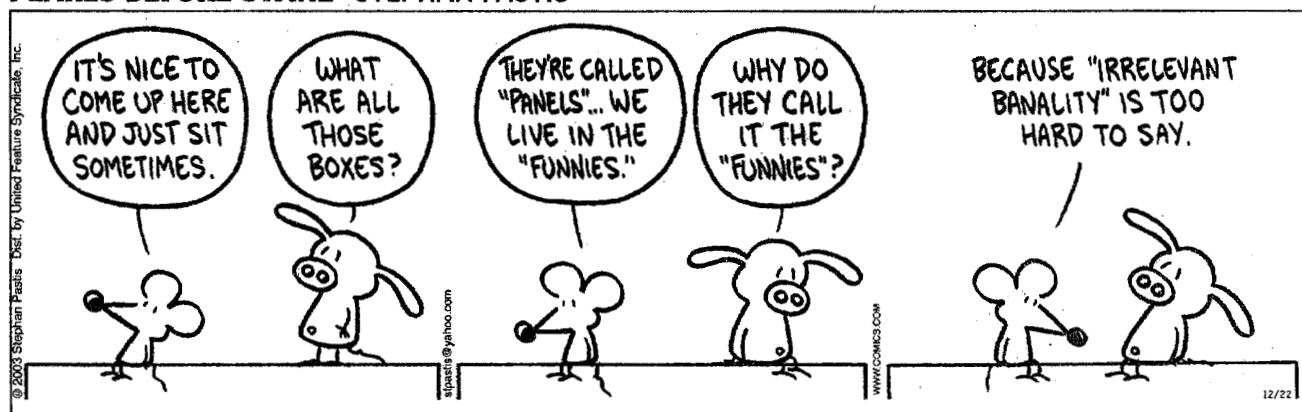
gruity between theme and visual imagery. It also provides an aesthetic distance that enables the reader to deal with this century's most disturbing tragedy. *Maus* was nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award in biography, the first comic book ever to be nominated for a literary prize, and it received the Pulitzer Prize.

When Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth* appeared in 2000, it promptly established itself in the world of the graphic novel as the counterpart to James Joyce's *Ulysses* in fiction. Complex, unconventional, and difficult to understand or appreciate, at the same time that it shattered conventions, it opened up new ways to tell stories through the unique possibilities of visual/verbal narratives. It is a comment too on the failing values of tradition in the modern world, among other things. But the influences between comic art and fiction flow both ways, as witnessed by Michael Chabon's remarkable recreation of comic-book history in his Pulitzer Prize novel of 2000, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* [See a review of Chris Ware's work in the Summer 2001 issue of the *Forum*, and of Michael Chabon's book in the Winter 2002 issue. — Editor].

In the world of the novel, a mark of maturity was reached when a work of fiction reflected on or took as its subject matter the nature of fiction itself. Henry James, Joseph Conrad, Marcel Proust, and Virginia Woolf were among those writers who produced such self-reflective works; more recently, authors such as John Barth, Donald Barthelme, and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., have almost established a tradition of novels that use the nature of fiction as a structural or thematic principle. John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) was a popular novel in this category of what has come to be called "metafiction."

Figure 1. An example of metacomics, with the characters commenting on the page on which they exist.

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE STEPHAN PASTIS



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE reprinted by permission of United Feature Syndicate, Inc.

The comics have witnessed a similar development in recent years, and one frequently sees what may be called “metacomics,” that is, comic strips and books which take the nature of the art form as their subject matter and self-consciously joke about the limitations and conventions of the comics (see Figure 1 on page 13). Early in the comics’ development, however, artists would sometimes have characters speak directly to the reader, thus suspending any degree of belief in their reality. George McManus, in his *Bringing Up Father*, often had characters playing with the panels and technical conventions of the comic strip. It is not unusual today to see characters from one strip appearing and being satirized in another or to hear them discussing the conventions of their world. In some 1988 examples, Jim Scancarelli provided a historic overview of the comic strip in a Sunday *Gasoline Alley* strip; Stan Lee’s Spider-Man found himself ridiculed in a comic strip (within a comic strip) called *Spidery-Sam*, which satirized his exploits; and Bill Watterson’s Calvin of *Calvin and Hobbes* sometimes imagined himself in the role of a caped crusader, only to be vanquished by his arch nemesis, Mom-Lady. One Sunday *Donald Duck* approached the metaphysical in a series of panels in which Donald and his Uncle Ludwig are trapped by an invention that instantly replays the comic strip sequence in which they appear, on into infinity we assume. Metacomics demonstrate a high degree of awareness of the conventions of the form on the part of the artists and a sophisticated effort to comment on the nature and function of these conventions through the comic strip itself.

We are living in a century in which most of the information that we need is conveyed to us in a visual form — by way of the television, film, or computer screen. That being true, the comics are admirably suited to engage the interests of people with a cultural experience that satisfies both emotionally and intellectually. With the comics in hand, we will remain verbally and visually literate.



M. Thomas Inge is the Robert Emory Blackwell Professor of Humanities at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Virginia, where he teaches and writes about American literature, William Faulkner, and Southern culture. In addition, he frequently writes about popular culture and American humor, especially comic strips and comic books. His publications on the latter include *Comics as Culture* and *Anything Can Happen in a Comic Strip*. He is also chief editor of the recently published four-volume reference work *Greenwood Guide to American Popular Culture*. He is currently working on books about Walt Disney and connections between American literature and the comics, as well as a biography of Faulkner.

ON REQUEST

He complains I'm cold,
 so I become a fire,
 follow him upstairs
 to heat the air while he showers,
 singe the towel he grabs
 from me then hover
 above his black duvet,
 tend and stoke his sleep
 where he dreams of camping
 and sparks two twigs
 that seed a forest fire.
 The mountain swallows
 itself and he awakens,
 runs to the beach
 complaining I'm too hot.
 So I become the wind
 and blow the greasy hair
 of the men warming
 their fingerless gloved hands
 at the trash-can flames.
 He sprints past the guys
 to the ocean's dark lip
 where waves chomp the sand.
 Conch shells smash under the foam
 and he complains my howling
 is too rock-band loud
 So I become the ocean,
 and he wades into me
 up to his waist, complains
 I smell like dying grunions,
 so I become a tide pool
 as placid as tofu soup,
 and he complains
 I'm not very deep
 so I become a sunken pirate ship
 laden with jewels and gold.
 He complains he can't relate
 to such lavishness,
 and so I become a shark.
 I never sleep and
 have two sets of teeth.

ANNE SILVER

Anne Silver has been a poet since 1968 and holds two Masters degrees — poetry and psychology. Her current book, *Bare Root: A Poet's Journey through Breast Cancer*, is available at her website: www.annesilver.com. She is an international expert witness in handwriting issues in Chinese, Hebrew, Farsi, and English. Anne co-hosts Moonday on Montana in Santa Monica. Anne's elegy "Simple Dress" is to be included in *Death, Be Not Proud*.

FREDRIC WERTHAM

AN INFOTAINMENT SPECTACULAR!

NOTHING HAS HAD A MORE PROFOUND EFFECT ON AMERICAN COMICS THAN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMICS CODE IN 1954. AND NONE WERE MORE INSTRUMENTAL IN BRINGING THE DEBATE ON COMIC CENSORSHIP TO THE FOREGROUND THAN DR. FREDRIC WERTHAM. WITH THE PUBLICATION OF 'SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT,' HIS ANTI-COMIC MANIFESTO, AND HIS TESTIMONY IN FRONT OF SENATE HEARINGS HE IS ALMOST SINGLE-HANDEDLY GIVEN CREDIT FOR THE ANTI-COMIC HYSTERIA THAT STIFLED THE INDUSTRY FOR YEARS.



WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY MATT BORS

FREDRIC I. WERTHEIMER WAS BORN IN GERMANY MARCH 20, 1895. WERTHEIMER EARNED HIS MEDICAL DEGREE IN GERMANY AND DID POSTGRADUATE WORK IN PARIS AND LONDON BEFORE COMING TO AMERICA IN 1922. AFTER BECOMING A CITIZEN IN 1927 HE CHANGED THE SPELLING OF HIS NAME. HE SERVED AS THE CHIEF RESIDENT OF PSYCHIATRY AT THE PHIPPS CLINIC IN BALTIMORE FOR EIGHT YEARS AND ALSO TAUGHT AT JOHNS HOPKINS MEDICAL CENTER SCHOOL.

WERTHAM EVENTUALLY BECAME THE SENIOR PSYCHIATRIST FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HOSPITALS IN NEW YORK CITY WHERE HE STUDIED VIOLENT BEHAVIOR AND THE EFFECT MASS MEDIA HAS ON US. HE BECAME A RESPECTED PSYCHIATRIST, THE FIRST EVER TO BE AWARDED A FELLOWSHIP BY THE NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL. HIS PUBLICATION 'THE BRAIN AS AN ORGAN' BECAME THE LEADING TEXT-BOOK OF ITS KIND AND HE IS CREDITED WITH THE DISCOVERY OF A MENTAL DISEASE.

FOR ALL HE ACCOMPLISHED HE WILL BE REMEMBERED AS THE MAN WHO TRIED TO DESTROY COMICS. I'LL LET WERTHAM EXPLAIN HOW IT ALL STARTED.



*ALL WERTHAM'S WORDS ARE ACTUAL QUOTES

THERE WAS CLEARLY A LINK BETWEEN COMICS AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR, BUT WERTHAM WAS SHOCKED WHEN HE LOOKED INSIDE THEM.

YOU KNOW, I ALSO THOUGHT THAT COMIC BOOKS WERE FILLED WITH RABBITS AND ANIMALS AND NICE FAIRY STORIES, BUT THEN I READ THEM AND I THOUGHT... WHY, THESE GIRLS HAVE NEEDLES STUCK IN THEIR EYES!

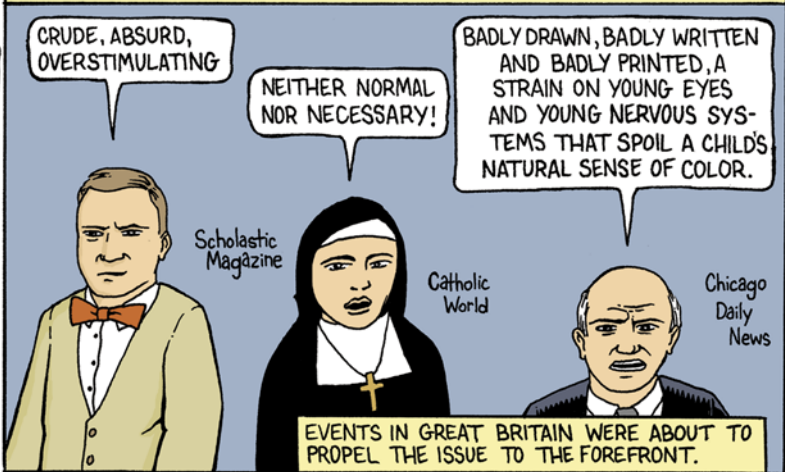


WERTHAM NOT ONLY DISAGREED WITH COMICS CONTENT, BUT THOUGHT THE MEDIUM ITSELF WAS BAD FOR CHILDREN.

THEY'RE VERY BAD FOR READING. THERE HAVE BEEN IMPORTANT SCIENTIFIC STUDIES MADE. I GET LETTERS FROM COMIC-ORIENTED PEOPLE AND THEY'RE ALWAYS FULL OF BAD SPELLING...



HE WOULDN'T BE THE ONLY ONE CONNECTING THE DOTS BETWEEN COMICS AND ILLITERACY. TEACHERS, PARENTS, AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS BEGAN TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST COMICS, FOLLOWED SOON BY THE MEDIA.



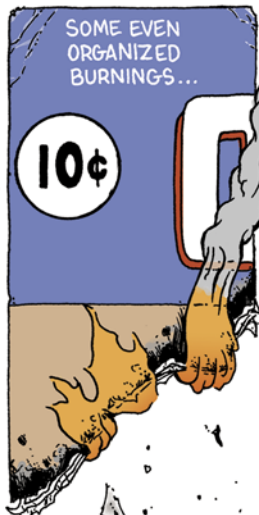
IN NOVEMBER OF 1948, AT DAWSON CREEK, TWO BOYS - AGES 13 AND 11 - DECIDED TO PLAY HIGH-WAY RIFLEMAN. THIS IS THE GAME WHERE YOU SHOOT AT PASSING MOTORISTS WITH A STOLEN GUN. JAMES W. WATSON WAS KILLED.



AN OUTRAGED PUBLIC DEMANDED ANSWERS. AN IN-DEPTH INVESTIGATION LED TO A STARTLING REVELATION...



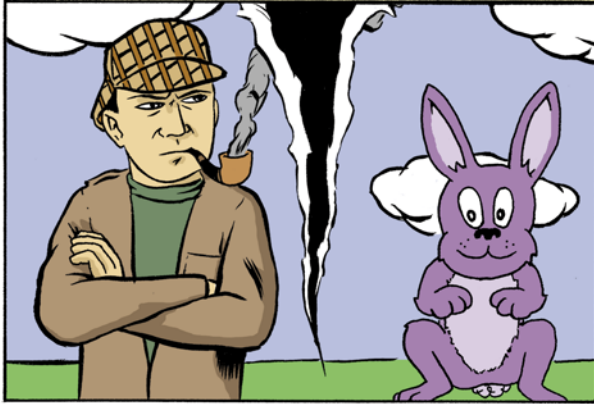
IN POST-WAR AMERICA COMICS WERE THRIVING, WITH 15 MILLION BEING SOLD EACH MONTH. PARENTS WERE BECOMING CONCERNED WITH THE INCREASING AMOUNT OF TIME CHILDREN DEVOTED TO THEM. MOST THOUGHT THEY WERE SIMPLY A WASTE OF TIME, WHILE WERTHAM (A PARENT HIMSELF) BELIEVED THEY ACTUALLY CAUSED DELINQUENCY. HE WROTE ABOUT THIS IN THE 1948 ARTICLE 'HORROR IN THE NURSERY.' AS THE FEAR SPREAD PARENTS BEGAN COMPLAINING TO COMIC VENDORS AND PREVENTING THEIR KIDS FROM BUYING THEM.



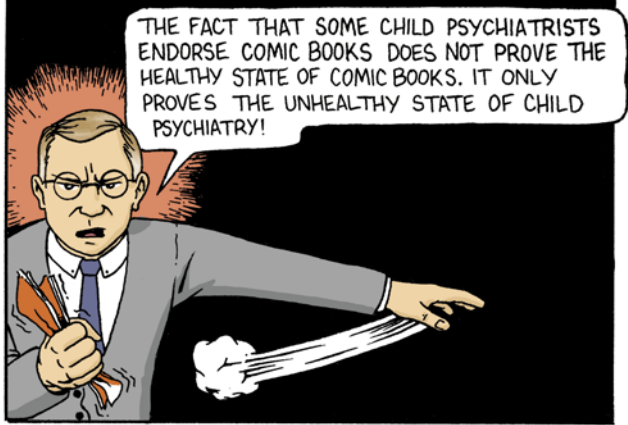
THE THREAT OF BOYCOTTS LED PUBLISHERS TO ADOPT A COMICS CODE IN JUNE OF 1948. THE ASSOCIATION OF COMICS MAGAZINE PUBLISHERS WAS FORMED AND A COMMITTEE WAS CHOSEN TO REVIEW BOOKS BEFORE PUBLICATION. AMONG THE RULES WERE NO DEPICTIONS OF DIVORCE, DETAILS OF A CRIME, DISRESPECT TO AUTHORITY, OR SCENES OF TORTURE.



AS SOON AS THE ACMP GOT STARTED IT BEGAN TO FALL APART. MANY PUBLISHERS DROPPED THE CODE CITING THE COST AND TIME OF THE REVIEWS AND RESTRICTIONS OF THE CODE. OTHERS DIDN'T WANT TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH PUBLISHERS PRODUCING MATERIAL FOR CHILDREN.



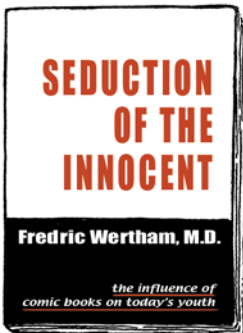
WERTHAM CONTINUED PUSHING FOR LEGISLATION AGAINST COMICS. HE THOUGHT THE CODE WAS TOO LENIENT AND KNEW MOST PUBLISHERS IGNORED IT. HE WANTED SALES TO CHILDREN BANNED AND REFUTED ANY OPPOSING VIEWPOINTS.



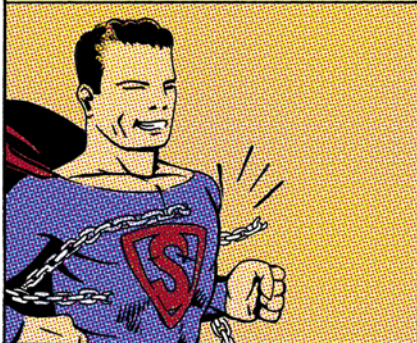
1954

WOULD BE THE YEAR THAT CHANGED COMICS FOREVER. BY THIS TIME THE PRE-PUBLICATION REVIEW PROCESS HAD BEEN ABANDONED AND ONLY THREE PUBLISHERS WERE STILL ADHERING TO THE CODE. WERTHAM STUDIED ALL FORMS OF MEDIA INFLUENCE, BUT BECAME INCREASINGLY OBSESSED WITH COMICS. IN '54 HIS NOTORIOUS BOOK 'SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT' WAS PUBLISHED.

'SEDUCTION' WAS WERTHAM'S VEHICLE FOR PUSHING HIS BELIEF THAT COMICS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR JUVENILE DELINQUENCY. IN IT HE PRESENTED CLIPS OF VIOLENT AND SEXUAL IMAGES, SHOWN LARGELY OUT OF CONTEXT. IN THE CHAPTER 'I WANT TO BE A SEX MANIAC' HE WRITES " I HAVE HEARD FROM QUITE A NUMBER OF YOUNG ADULTS WHO TOLD ME THAT THEIR CHILDHOOD EMOTIONAL MASTURBATION PROBLEM WAS STARTED OR AGGRAVATED BY COMIC BOOKS."



WERTHAM TOOK PSYCHOANALYZING TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL. HE CLAIMED SUPERMAN WAS A COMMUNIST -



- WONDER WOMAN WAS A SADISTIC FEMINIST -



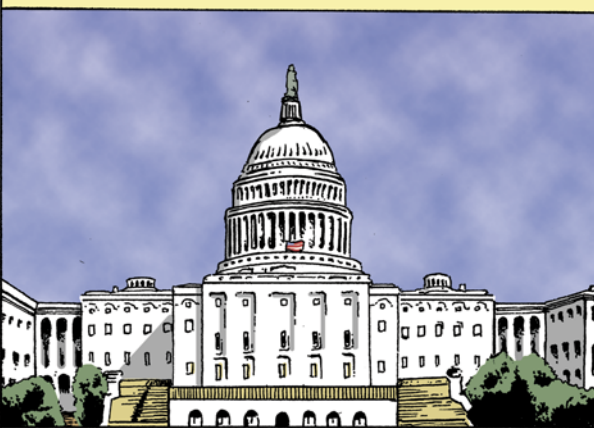
- AND BATMAN AND ROBIN WERE THINLY VEILED HOMOSEXUALS.



WERTHAM COULD FIND PERVERSITY IN A BRICK WALL. HE MUST HAVE LIVED A TORTURED LIFE, SO IN TUNE WITH THE VIOLENT PSYCHOSEXUAL SYMBOLISM ASSAULTING OUR MINDS EVERYDAY.



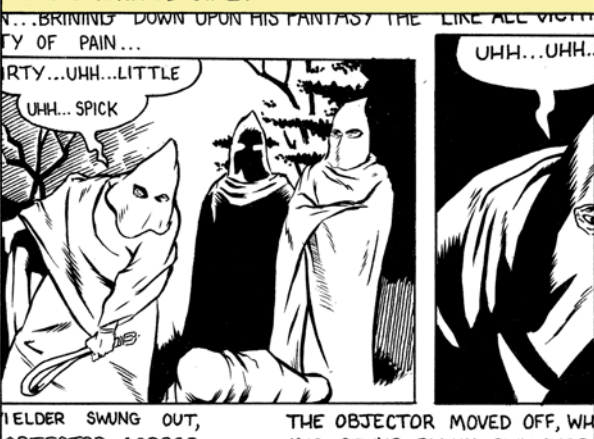
1954 ALSO BROUGHT THE SENATE HEARINGS ON JUVENILE DELINQUENCY (DUE TO POPULAR DEMAND). ITS PURPOSE WAS TO DISCUSS THE EFFECTS OF MASS MEDIA ON CHILDREN. THE FIRST HEARING WOULD FOCUS ON COMIC BOOKS.



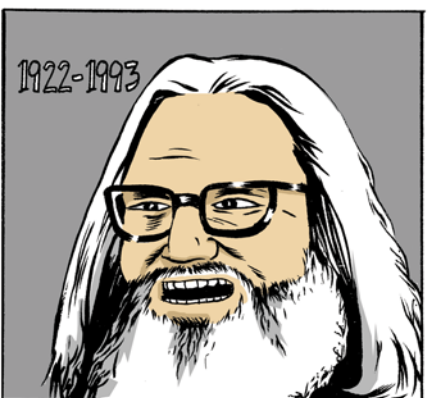
WERTHAM WAS CHOSEN TO TESTIFY BECAUSE THE COMMITTEE CONSIDERED HIM AN EXPERT ON BOTH COMICS AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY. HE OPENED HIS ARGUMENT WITH HIS MOST FAMOUS LINE:



HE WENT ON TO FURTHER DEMONIZE COMICS, CITING A COMIC ENTITLED "THE WHIPPING" WHICH SHOWED MEN IN KLAN OUTFITS PLOTTING TO KILL A MEXICAN FOR DATING A WHITE GIRL.



WILLIAM GAINES DEFENDED HIS COMIC IN FRONT OF THE COMMITTEE, EXPLAINING HOW THE PLOT HAS AN ANTI-RACIST MESSAGE IN THE END WHEN A MAN INADVERTENTLY KILLS HIS OWN DAUGHTER.



GAINES WAS THE PUBLISHER OF E.C. COMICS WHICH PRODUCED 'CRIME SUSPENSE STORIES' AND 'VAULT OF HORROR' AMONG OTHERS. HIS COMICS WERE A LIGHTNING ROD FOR CRITICS OF CRIME AND HORROR STORIES. HE DIDN'T DO MUCH FOR PUBLIC PERCEPTION WHEN THIS EXCHANGE MADE HEADLINES.



WHEN THE DUST SETTLED THE INDUSTRY CREATED A NEW CODE AND THE COMICS MAGAZINE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA WAS FORMED. ALL COMICS ADHERING TO THE CODE WOULD BEAR ITS SEAL OF APPROVAL.



THE NEW CODE HAD EXTREMELY STRINGENT RULES THAT LEFT ARTISTS FEW OPTIONS WHEN CREATING A STORY. HERE ARE SOME OF THE BEST:

General Standards Part A

3. Policemen, judges, government officials and respected institutions shall never be presented in such a way as to create disrespect for established authority.

6. In every instance good shall triumph over evil and the criminal punished for his misdeeds.

General Standards Part B

1. No comic magazine shall use the word 'horror' or 'terror' in its title.

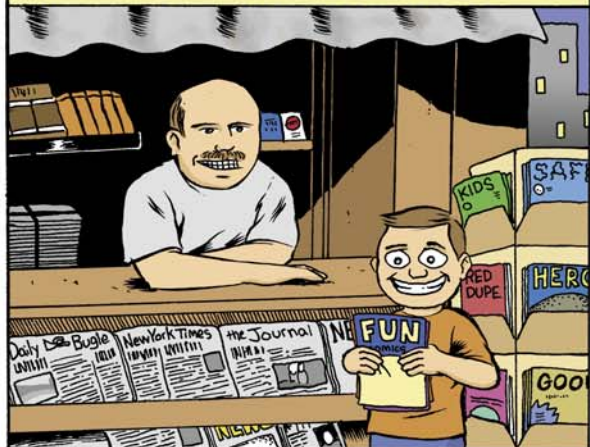
5. Scenes dealing with, or instruments associated with walking dead, torture, vampires and vampirism, ghouls, cannibalism, and werewolfism are prohibited.

Marriage and Sex

1. Divorce shall not be treated humorously nor represented as desirable.

5. Passion or romantic interests shall never be presented in such a way as to stimulate the lower and baser emotions.

THE CODE WAS ENFORCED BY PUBLISHERS NOT THE GOVERNMENT. IT WAS NOT MANDATORY DUE TO THE FIRST AMENDMENT, BUT MOST RETAILERS WOULD ONLY CARRY COMICS APPROVED BY THE CMAA.



THE COMICS INDUSTRY LAUNCHED A MASSIVE P.R. CAMPAIGN TO CLEAN UP THEIR IMAGE. PART OF THIS WAS ACTUALLY ASKING WERTHAM TO BE THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE CODE. HE DECLINED AND JUDGE CHARLES MURPHY WAS CHOSEN. WERTHAM CONTINUED ARGUING FOR LEGISLATION THROUGHOUT THE 50'S AND 60'S. HE WROTE 'A CIRCLE OF GUILT' (1956) AND 'A SIGN FOR CAIN' (1966) REINFORCING HIS STANCE AGAINST COMICS. THESE BOOKS TOOK A MORE SCHOLARLY APPROACH THAN 'SEDUCTION...' IN TRYING TO CONVINCE THE PUBLIC REGULATING COMICS WAS A SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY.

IT IS THE DUTY OF ANYONE CONCERNED WITH CHILDREN TO AVOID FALLING FOR THIS LATEST STUNT OF SUPERMAN.

A LAW TO PROTECT CHILDREN IS NECESSARY.



HIS EVIDENCE FOR CONNECTING COMICS TO VIOLENCE WAS LARGELY ANECDOTAL, BUT HE WAS THE FIRST TO BRING ATTENTION TO THE INTENSE STEREOTYPES IN COMICS. VILLAINS WERE OFTEN ETHNIC, PRIMITIVE, AND DEMONIZED WHILE HEROES WERE WHITE, ATHLETIC, AND ATTRACTIVE.



WERTHAM DENOUNCED THE COMIC CZAR, MURPHY, AS AN EMPLOYEE OF THE INDUSTRY AND SAID NOTHING WOULD CHANGE UNDER HIM. HE WAS WRONG. MURPHY WAS A PUBLISHER'S WORST NIGHTMARE, HE STRICTLY ADHERED TO THE CODE AND EMPLOYED ONLY FEMALE REVIEWERS BECAUSE "THEY WERE MORE SENSITIVE." DURING HIS TWO YEARS AS ADMINISTRATOR HE RETURNED 5,656 PAGES TO BE ALTERED OR REDRAWN AND OUTRIGHT REJECTED 126 STORIES.



UNDER THE CODE WILLIAM GAINES COULD NOT USE THE WORDS 'TERROR', 'CRIME', OR 'WEIRD' WHICH WERE USED IN THE TITLES OF HIS COMICS. HE REFUSED TO JOIN AS LONG AS HE COULD, BUT EVENTUALLY CAVED IN DUE TO PLUMMETING SALES. GAINES'S ASSOCIATION WITH THE CODE WOULD BE SHORT LIVED. THE MOST FAMOUS INSTANCE OF MURPHY'S RUTHLESS (AND ILLOGICAL) CENSORING TECHNIQUES WOULD LEAD GAINES TO DROP THE CODE AFTER A DEBATE OVER A STORY SUBMITTED FOR 'INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION' (FORMERLY 'WEIRD SCIENCE FANTASY'). THE APTLY TITLED 'JUDGEMENT DAY' INVOLVES A SPACE TRAVELER WHO VISITS A PLANET INHABITED BY ROBOTS WHO LIVE IN A SEGREGATED SOCIETY BASED ON THEIR COLOR. NEAR THE END OF THE STORY THE TRAVELER REMOVES HIS HELMET AND REVEALS HIMSELF TO BE BLACK. CLEARLY THIS STORY HAD AN ANTI-RACIST MESSAGE, BUT NOT TO MURPHY. HE TOLD GAINES TO REMOVE THE SWEAT FROM THE BLACK MAN'S FOREHEAD, DEEMING IT RACIALLY INSENSITIVE. GAINES HAD

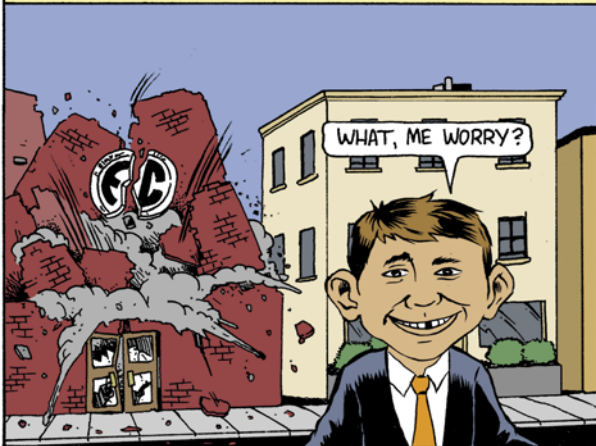


ENOUGH. HE THREATENED TO SUE AND MURPHY CAVED, LETTING THIS HIGHLY OFFENSIVE IMAGE SEE PRINT AND FOREVER WARP OUR MINDS.



pictured here, a perspiring afri-naut

GAINES WITHDREW FROM THE CODE. HIS CRIME AND HORROR COMICS WOULD GO UNDER, BUT HE WOULD GO ON TO BE A PART OF THE WILDLY SUCCESSFUL MAD MAGAZINE.



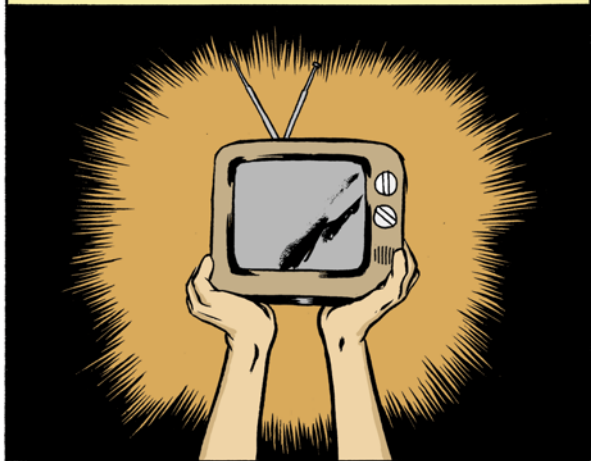
ALFRED E. NEWMAN AND 'WHAT, ME WORRY?' ARE © AND TM MAD MAGAZINE

PUBLISHERS LAUNCHED A SMEAR CAMPAIGN TO DISCREDIT WERTHAM. DESPITE HIS OPINIONS ON COMICS HIS SOCIAL VIEWS WERE CONSIDERED LIBERAL FOR THAT TIME AND HE WAS MADE OUT TO BE A COMMUNIST. WERTHAM CLAIMED PEOPLE WERE FOLLOWING HIM AND INVESTIGATING HIS PERSONAL LIFE-

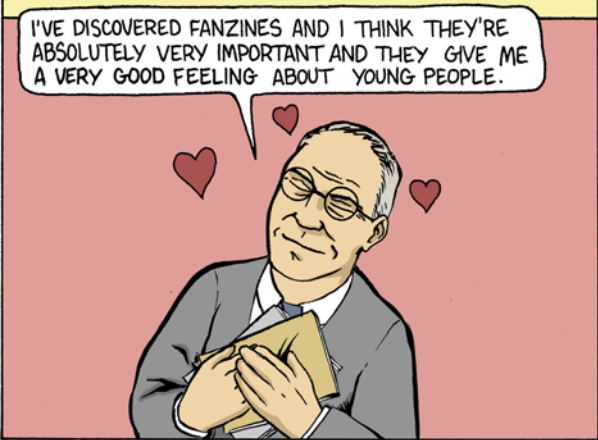


- HIS BRAIN MAY HAVE BEEN WARPED FROM TOO MANY CRIME COMICS.

BY THE LATE 60'S WERTHAM BECAME MORE INTERESTED IN TELEVISION, WHICH BY NOW WAS EXTREMELY POPULAR. HE SAW THE ABILITY IT HAD TO SHAPE OPINIONS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY CHILDREN.

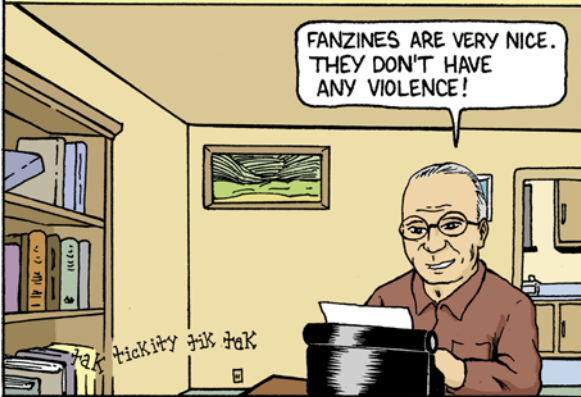


WERTHAM WOULD ONLY TOUCH ON COMICS ONCE AGAIN IN HIS LIFE. IN THE EARLY 70'S HE BEGAN RECEIVING 'FANZINES' IN THE MAIL. THEY WERE SELF-PUBLISHED COMICS AND MAGAZINES FREE FROM INDUSTRY STANDARDS AND CENSORSHIP.... AND HE LOVED THEM!



I'VE DISCOVERED FANZINES AND I THINK THEY'RE ABSOLUTELY VERY IMPORTANT AND THEY GIVE ME A VERY GOOD FEELING ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE.

HE SAID THEY FELT NO NEED TO CREATE SENSATION-ALIST SEX AND VIOLENCE BY EXISTING OUTSIDE OF THE PROFIT-DRIVEN MARKET. SOMEHOW, THESE COMICS WERE INHERENTLY GOOD. HE LOVED THEM SO MUCH HE WROTE THE ONLY BOOK ON THE SUBJECT IN 1973 'THE WORLD OF FANZINES: A SPECIAL FORM OF COMMUNICATION.'



'FANZINES' WAS A STRANGE BOOK. WERTHAM WAS NOT AN EXPERT ON FANZINES AS HE WAS THE TOPICS OF HIS OTHER BOOKS, SUCH AS 'THE BRAIN AS AN ORGAN.' APPARENTLY HE WAS SO ENAMORED OF THEM HE SIMPLY WANTED TO WRITE A BOOK PRAISING THE AMAZING IDEA OF HUMAN BEINGS CREATING ART, COMMUNICATING WITH ONE ANOTHER, AND NOT HAVING THEIR MINDS WARPED IN THE PROCESS. THERE IS NO MENTION OF 'SEDUCTION' OR HIS COMIC CRUSADE ANYWHERE IN THE BOOK AND IT IS WRITTEN RATHER UNPROFESSIONALLY IN COMPARISON TO HIS RESEARCH WORK. ONE REVIEWER CALLED IT "REPETITIOUS, BELABORING THE OBVIOUS, AND POORLY ORGANIZED."



AS A JOKE HE WAS INVITED TO THE NEW YORK COMIC ART CONVENTION TO MEET HIS 'FANS'. THE AUDIENCE BECAME IRATE WITH HIS PRESENCE AND WERTHAM OPTED TO LEAVE.



THE CODE HAMPERED CREATIVITY FOR DECADES CREATING AN INDUSTRY BASED ON SUPERHEROES TRIUMPHING OVER EVIL AND REINFORCING THE NOTION THAT COMICS WERE KIDS' FARE. IT HAS ONLY BEEN UPDATED TWICE, IN 1971 AND 1989, TO SUIT CHANGING SOCIAL TRENDS. RECENTLY MARVEL HAS DROPPED THE CODE, BUT DC COMICS USES IT TO THIS DAY.

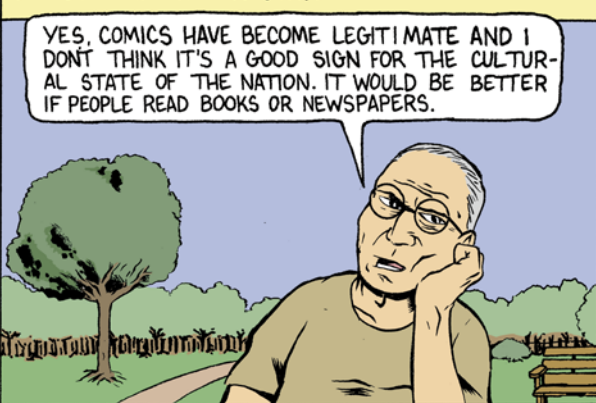
AS TIME PROGRESSED MORE MATURE MATERIAL MADE ITS WAY INTO THE MAINSTREAM, WHILE UNDERGROUND COMICS SHOWED THAT THE MEDIUM WAS ABOUT MORE THAN SUPERHEROES AND SCIENCE FICTION. BOOKS LIKE CHRIS WARE'S 'JIMMY CORRIGAN' (2000) AND ART SPIEGELMAN'S PULITZER PRIZE WINNING 'MAUS' (1992) HAVE BECOME ACCEPTED AS LITERATURE.

WERTHAM MAINTAINED THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE THAT HE WAS NEVER FOR CENSORSHIP, BUT MERELY WANTED TO PROTECT CHILDREN. HE WOULD LIVE ON IN COMICS FANS' MINDS AS THEIR OWN REAL LIFE VILLAIN.

WITH THE ADVENT OF COMPUTERS AND NEW BREAKTHROUGHS IN PSYCHIATRY WERTHAM'S WORK WAS ALL BUT FORGOTTEN, EXCEPT OF COURSE, FOR HIS CRUSADE AGAINST COMICS. HE DIED IN RELATIVE OBSCURITY IN 1981.



I'LL LEAVE YOU WITH ANOTHER PRECIOUS QUOTE, MADE IN HIS OLD AGE, HAVING REALIZED THAT COMICS WERE HERE TO STAY.



Matt Bors is a freelance artist living in Ohio. He self-publishes comics and is the creator of the weekly political cartoon 'Idiot Box.' For more go to www.mattbors.com.

Paige Braddock, Creator of *Jane's World*

Women in Comics

If asked to write a piece about women in comics, the first issue you have to address is, why aren't there more comic strips by women? Is it that women just aren't funny? Is it a result of women's roles in our current culture?

Maybe more men are doing comics simply because they have a help-mate at home who makes sure that the kids are fed and the laundry gets done. That is assuming of course that despite the demands of a career in comics, all those guys whose strips appear on the comics page do in fact have families and lives outside of their cartooning.

I knew that I wanted to be a cartoonist by age seven. It seemed like a simple dream. The Sunday comics were full of others who had charted the same career course. But if I had been paying attention to the Sunday comics, I would have noticed that hardly any female creator names appeared next to the titles.

In fact, Dale Messick, who created *Brenda Starr*, used an androgynous name so that readers would assume she was male. At least that is the story that I heard. Dale's career started a long time ago, before *Cathy*, when there were even fewer female creator names on the comics pages.

Even as a dumb kid, I must have had some sense of the gender rules at play in the comics. All the characters I created up until high school were male. Uncoordinated superheroes and cowboys tromped through my sketchbooks. It wasn't until I met a professional cartoonist, Dave Graue, who worked on *Alley Oop* for more than forty years, during my junior year in high school that I ever really stopped to think about why I chose only male leads for my comic creations. Dave asked me why I didn't use a woman as my main character, and I answered that I just figured a male character would have more options.

I had made that decision intuitively, not understanding why. After that realization I started to look at comics in a different way. I started to notice the cultural subtexts and the gender politics of the comics page.

Basically, it goes something like this: Male cartoon characters can be goofy, funny, slapstick, or humorously deformed. They can be doctors, lawyers or even barbarians. Female characters, on the other hand, have to be cute — preferably with sex appeal, Barbie figures, and great hair. Their entire world must revolve around their male costars.

Think for a minute about *Blondie*. Now think about *Beetle Bailey*. Miss Buxley? Okay, so maybe the chicks in *B.C.* don't have great hair, but they have boobs for days. You could even say the same for *Hagar the Horrible*.

My friend Dave told me at that first meeting that the understood law of comics is that male characters can be drawn humorously, with embellishments such as huge feet and big noses, and that female characters should always have small feet, hands, and waists. The female characters should always be attractive, he said.

You might think that he was overstating this rule, but when I started to pay attention, I had to admit that he was right. The one exception was *Cathy*, but I think that it is an anomaly. *Cathy* was meant for “women readers” because all she ever talks about are dieting and dating, buying swimsuits, and conflicts with her mother. I mean, what else is there if you are a woman?

I am looking over my own shoulder as I write, and I am thinking that I sound pretty negative, but I’m really not. As a matter of fact, I am one of those annoying folks who is terminally optimistic, but even the optimistic must face facts.

While it is hard to be a woman in comic strips, it is even harder to be a female comic-book character. Comic books are a whole different ball game, but some of the same rules apply.

Nowadays if you are a female comic-book character, you have to look like Lara Croft and be a black belt. Am I the only one who has noticed that the trend in comic books (and movies) is toward women who act like men, but come in a package that is every single teenage boy’s fantasy?

I am not saying that I don’t like it. I loved both Lara Croft (*Tomb Raider*) movies and the revamped, updated *Charlie’s Angels*. What’s not to love?

So here’s the deal. I don’t know how this trend will ever turn unless more women start drawing comics. *Cathy*, while she’s had a good run and broken down some doors in the “old boys’ club,” can not possible speak for all of us.

Personally, I do a comic called *Jane’s World*. In the first collection of the strip into book form, I wrote in the introduction that Jane was goofy, self-absorbed, and basically just another “B” cup gal trying to figure life out.

I actually showed *Jane’s World* to a newspaper editor once, and he told me that he would not run it because it was not gender-specific enough. Okay, I’m a woman, drawing a comic about a woman. How much more gender-specific can you get? But see, what he was saying was what I had intuitively figured out at age seven. Female characters in newspapers have to worry about dishes, dating, and dieting, because that is what male newspaper editors think women worry about.

Until there are more of us out there telling a different side to the story, the comics pages will continue to be dominated by the old boys’ club.

Thank goodness for Lynn Johnston, who created *For Better or Worse*, which is not a radical view of womanhood, but at least it is about compelling

female characters who sometimes take a nontraditional path despite their conventional lives.

Does it sound like I am being negative again? Well, let me throw this out for the listening audience. Every year the National Cartoonists Society has a black-tie awards dinner and bestows the Reuben Award for Best Cartoonist of the Year. Originally they would meet in New York City and have *Playboy* host the parties, but that was back in the 1950s before some of the guys got married, and now their families want to attend the awards dinner. So they have toned it down a bit in the last fifty or so years. In addition to the coveted Cartoonist of the Year award, the NCS also has category awards for cartooning in several divisions: greeting cards, book illustrations, panel cartoons, comic strips, comic books, animation, editorial cartoons, and newspaper illustration. This year not one woman was nominated in any category.

Not to minimize the talent of those fellows who were nominated, but isn’t this sort of like calling the World Series the “World” series when really it is just a baseball playoff between the National League and the American League?

While I may sound dissentient in this little rant, I have taken a different approach in my comic work. I have decided to poke fun at the whole genre. A few months ago a male character in my strip hired an outside cartoonist to ghost the strip, and the result was that the “ghost cartoonist” embellished the bust lines of all the female characters. Then the male characters lobbied to change the name from *Jane’s World* to *Juggs World*. Of course, Jane did not stand for that and promptly regained control of the strip.

Needless to say, *Jane’s World* is a modern comic, which appears online and in book form. The female characters never try on swimsuits; they embrace high-cal carbs; and their lives don’t revolve around their boyfriends. Some of them don’t even date guys.

The world has changed greatly in the last fifty years. It would be nice if the newspaper comics page would catch up.

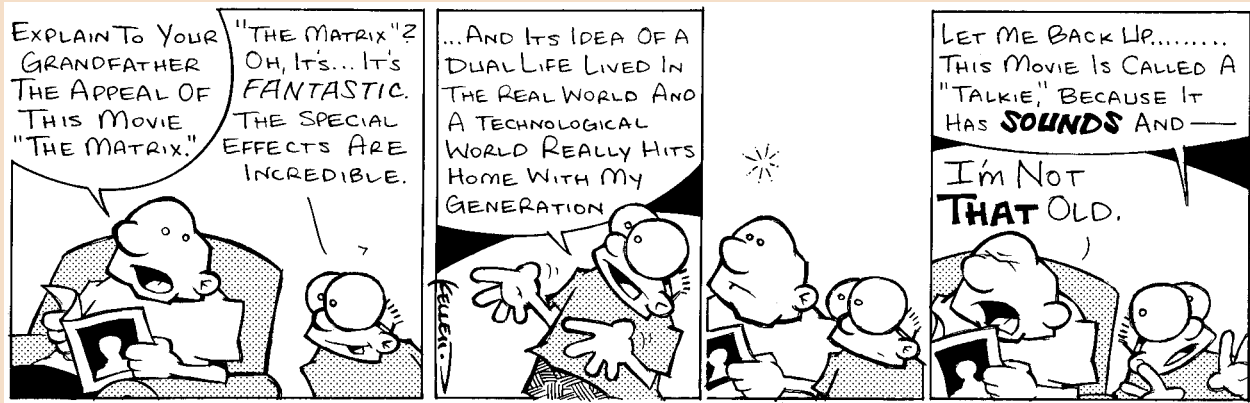


Paige Braddock graduated with a degree in fine art from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. After working as an illustrator for various newspapers, including the *Chicago Tribune* and *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Paige accepted the position of Creative Director at Charles M. Schulz’s studio in California. While acting as Creative Director for *Peanuts*-licensing world wide, Paige also publishes her own comic book title, *Jane’s World*, which can be found on the web at www.JanesWorldComics.com.

Dave Kellett, creator of *Sheldon*

The Business and Art of the Comic Strip

Sheldon



© 2004 Dave Kellett.

Comic-strip cartoonists are often asked why we don't compete more often in professional body-building contests.

It is easy to see why, just by looking at us. Being the tall, well-tanned, gigantically muscular raconteurs that we are, it is understandable why folks assume that our looks are the central focus of our lives. But we are so much more than that — so much more than our stunningly attractive visages would have you believe.

Oh, who am I kidding? The sad truth is, we comic-strip cartoonists are a weird, solitary bunch. Wonderfully warm and effusive in person, true, but weird and solitary nonetheless. This phenomenon is probably the result of spending too much time alone in a room, hunched over a drafting table in a never-ending race against deadlines. Or perhaps it's the lingering result of our adolescent shyness — a shyness that, frustratingly, kept us from asking anyone out on a date until, oh, let's say, our thirty-second birthday.

Hence, the doodling. Lots and lots of time for doodling.

I caught the cartoon bug early and started creating comic strips almost as soon as I could hold a pencil. Comics, especially Sunday color comic strips, have a magical appeal for children, and I was no exception. My earliest memories are of reading the Sunday funnies, belly-flopped on my grandmother's hardwood floor, with my chin in my hand and a gigantic smile on my face. They absolutely captivated me. And with good reason: the way a cartoon simplifies and exaggerates the world makes sense

to a child's mind. It is an extension of the way the human brain tries to make sense of the surrounding world. Of course, as a kid, I didn't care about any of that. Comics made me laugh.

My own early cartoons were met with some rave critical reviews. The lunch lady called them "bold, innovative, world-changing cartoons from a boy with his finger up his nose." Crudely drawn and clearly cribbed from tracings of *Garfield*, they were bad in almost every respect. But having started down the path of a cartoonist, it was a passion I could never seem to shake. There is something addictive about drawing cartoons. Something in the way the pen feels against the paper. Something about the minimalism of the art form, of creating characters slowly, over years, in fifteen-second installments. Something about making people — all sorts of people — laugh. It really is a magical art form.

It wasn't until my college days that my cartooning began to find its stride. When I began my college comic strip, I had the artistic prowess of a three-year-old, with clumsy dialogue and one-dimensional characters thrown in for good measure. But you can truly learn by doing, and by the end of my college years, the grind of daily deadlines and the in-your-face campus feedback that I received had honed my cartooning skills to a point at which the strip became surprisingly popular. In fact, by my senior year I had so many requests for a book collection of my work that I ended up self-publishing a collection of my college strips. Happily, the book sold out three printings and ended up paying for grad school. It was my first wonderful taste of art as commerce,

and I knew without a doubt that I wanted to live the rest of my life working as a cartoonist.

As I ventured out into the world though, I would come to find out that the professional world of cartooning is not quite so welcoming as I had hoped.

THE BUSINESS OF THE COMIC STRIP

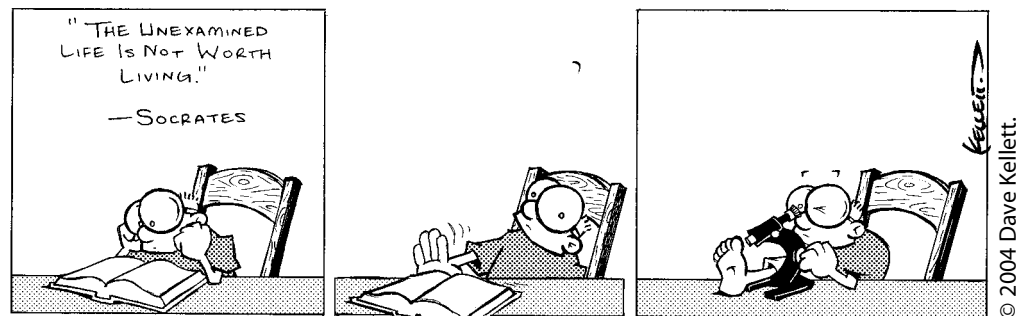
For all the joy that comics bring both to their creators and to readers, the comic-strip business is incredibly competitive. The reasons for this are twofold: limited space in newspapers and a glacially slow turnover rate of strips on the comics page. In terms of space, we are experiencing the long, slow decline of the American newspaper market. Both the number of newspapers and the space that newspapers can offer to comic strips have greatly diminished in the last two decades. Very few cities now have more than one daily newspaper, and those papers that have survived face uncertain advertising revenue and are sensitive to spikes in newsprint costs. Most papers choose to limit rather than expand their comics pages.

Because space is so limited, the business of comic strips is a zero-sum game. For a new comic strip to appear in print, an old one must leave the page. Often, new comic strips have to wait until an older creator retires or dies. And unfortunately, even that doesn't guarantee an available spot. Some comic strips, having established their toehold on the comics page sometime during the Taft presidency, are kept on life support by the creator's children and grandchildren and by the corporations that live off the strip's licensing. This is, in part, greed, but it is also a reflection of the love that people have for their favorite strips. Once you become attached to your favorite strips, they become friends from whom you never want to part. As a reader, it is tricky to give up your daily conversation with old friends, for some new strip you have never "met."

The marketing, promotion, and sale of new strips is handled by five major newspaper syndicates. These companies act as agent, manager, and distributor for cartoonists, keeping in turn 50 percent of all income earned. It is a tradeoff that cartoonists have come to live with: the logistics and far-flung geography of the newspaper world mean that a creator simply cannot sell to and manage the diaspora of newspapers on his or her client list. To make a living as a comic-

strip creator, cartoonists must distribute their work to hundreds of papers. To do that, cartoonists must work with a syndicate.

The syndicates each receive between 2,000 and 5,000 submissions each year from people wanting to break into the comic-strip business. From these, the combined syndicates generally launch five to fifteen new strips annually. Most of these new strips will fail in the market within the first few years. Over a three-year period, maybe three to ten strips survive from the initial fifteen to forty-five that were launched.



All of this information demonstrates how tricky it can be to land a career as a comic-strip cartoonist. It is a tough, tough career to make for yourself. But if you beat the odds and your strip is one of the lucky few to survive, then you have found a creative outlet that is unique and incredibly rewarding.

CREATING A COMIC STRIP

In an age in which nearly all of our mass-media productions are team efforts or the result of corporate testing and massaging, the comic strip is a wonderful throwback to the solitary arts. No one else but Charles Schulz could have created Charlie Brown. No one else but Bill Watterson could have written for Calvin's imagination. That personal touch makes the comic strip so approachable and so especially lovable. The comics page is a solace for the newspaper reader who, feeling lost among the headlines of major events and catastrophes in the day's news, drops in to visit old friends for a bit of individually crafted joy and laughter.

Comic-strip cartoonists wear a lot of hats in their work. In the cinema or the theater, it takes the collective efforts of a writer, casting agent, costumer, choreographer, and director to bring their art to life. In the comic strip, all those positions are rolled into one. A comic strip is a tiny "play," in which the cartoonist gets to act out all the roles. Comic-strip cartoonists populate their world, give their characters voice, tell them where to stand and what to do, and

even add the special effects when the characters get hit with an anvil.

Writing a comic strip is as much like writing a poem as it is anything else. Each phrase must be condensed until the meaning has the most potency and the humor the most impact.

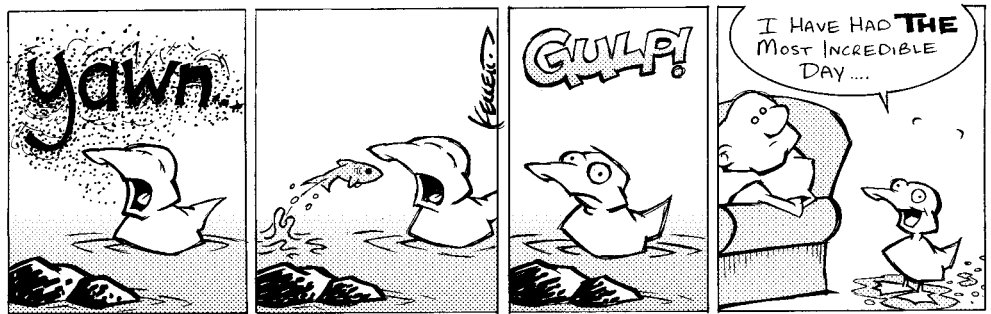
Cartoonists have to be aware that readers see their characters for insanely brief, fifteen-second durations over the course of decades. The writing has to match those restrictions with the power of haiku: intense meaning in minimal expression.

For that reason, a comic-strip cartoonist is a writer first, an editor second, and an artist third. The evidence for this can be seen on the comics page. You can have a gorgeously drawn strip that will nevertheless fail because the writing is sub-par. Yet you also can have a horribly drawn cartoon that has a following of millions because the writing is so sharp. The *idea* of the comic strip drives it — the concept, the punchline do the bulk of the work.

Cartooning is a form of writing where you want to express yourself in as few words as possible — and if it can be done, with none at all. Approaching comic strips like a writer, you have to see your characters, your place settings, your icons and props as your vocabulary. And like your text, these are used best when used least. It is an art of potency through simplicity.

Cartoonists are often asked, “Where do you get your ideas?” Fighting the urge to be sarcastic and say, “Des Moines,” cartoonists usually shunt the question aside with vague pleasantries. The truth is, it’s impossible to say with any definitive answer where creativity comes from. The cartoonist is no different from the painter, the musician, the entrepreneur, or the scientist. We get our ideas from everywhere. Once you begin to train your eyes to see them, humorous cartoon ideas pop up from all sorts of places, situations, and personalities around you. My own bad luck as a cartoonist is that I have a horrible memory, so I’m constantly in search of little pieces of paper to write down ideas as they come. Thus, I have found that the trick to cartooning lies not so much in finding ideas, but in finding a workable bit of paper in my pocket on which I can jot down a punchline.

It is high time I bought a little notebook, now that I think about it.



© 2004 Dave Keltt.

But there are times when the ideas won’t come. No matter how hard you try to avoid it, writer’s block comes to everyone. It’s the bane of all artists who are regulated by deadlines. The editor is eagerly awaiting the next installment, and there you sit, staring at a white piece of paper — willing it to spring forth with illuminated genius. And sometimes that works: there are joyous moments when the ideas do pour out of you, and you happily jot them down as fast as you can. But there are also times... when the ideas... parse... themselves... out... like... Oliver Twist’s... porridge. When that happens, the best approach is to put the pen down and walk away. You have flooded the engine that is your brain, and all you can do is go somewhere else, leave it alone, and wait. Because as creative as cartoonists are, the true trick to their work lies not so much in the act of *creation* as in the act of *observation*. If a cartoonist doesn’t periodically go OUT into the world — to sit and people-watch, to study how the world works, to read up on ancient philosophies and new ideas — then those ideas dry up.

The deadline clock is always ticking, though, so all cartoonists must have their bag of tricks to stir up new ideas when writer’s block hits. Some simply begin doodling until something funny occurs. Others flip open an encyclopedia to a random page and start reading. Still others turn to their “idea” file, or try random combinations of concepts until one stirs a joke. The methods are as different as the cartoonists. But we all have our tricks. Daily deadlines require you to have tricks.

Because the nature of the comic-strip business requires an unceasing stream of daily strips, a curious thing begins to happen in the mind of the cartoonist. Not able to rest on their laurels, comic-strip cartoonists often judge themselves to be only as good as their last completed cartoon. If the one drawn on Tuesday was brilliant, then Wednesday is the happiest day of your life. If Thursday’s cartoon stank to high heaven, you want to crawl under a rock and never draw again. Never mind that you won the Pulitzer last week: if the toon you penned yesterday was awful, you’re miserable. Cartoonists can’t look back on the strip that we did on May 23, 1999, and say “Aha! That was a brilliant strip!

What an unmitigated genius I am!” We just don’t have time: we are worried about producing tomorrow’s strip. And it is due in twenty-five minutes.

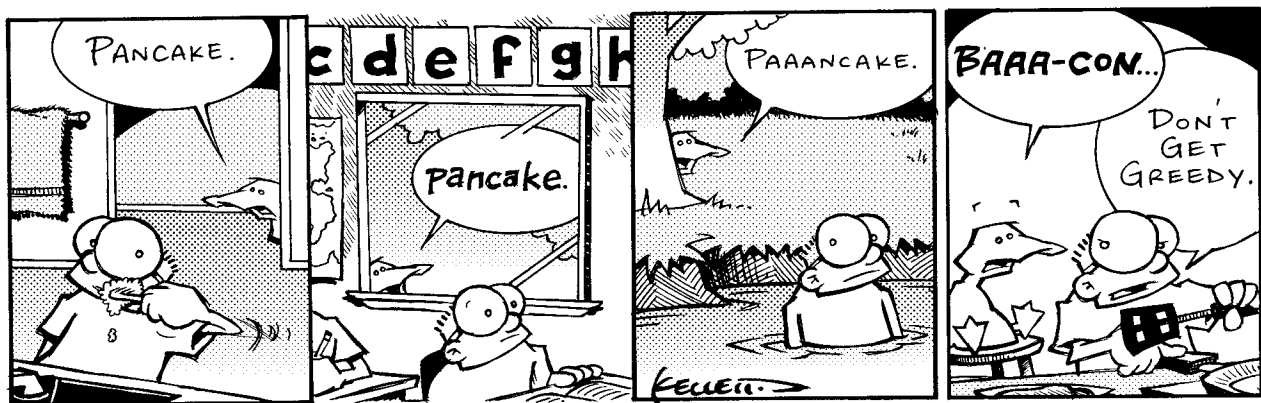
And that’s the rub: the deadlines for the comic-strip cartoonist never go away. Never. Not when you are sick, or when your new baby is teething, or when a spouse dies, or when you break your leg, or even to allow for vacation. The deadlines are always there, regardless of your physical or emotional state. That inevitable, relentless deadline means you never have the sense of completion or accomplishment that comes when you finish a project. So cartoonists find joy in the process, in the love of sitting down and producing this little work — this wonderful mix of words and art — every day, for the rest of their lives. Looked at this way, you begin to see the true genius of a man such as Charles Schulz, who produced a new *Peanuts* cartoon every day for more than five decades.

And joy is really what it comes down to. Joy is the product that the comic strip is selling, the end goal of what we do. And what a fantastic business that is, to be given the opportunity to sit and talk with hundreds of thousands of people every day. To tell them a little story, a little insight, a little joke that brightens their day. There isn’t a better job in the world.



Dave Kellett is a southern California native who grew up laughing at *Bloom County*, *The Far Side*, and *Calvin and Hobbes*. He creates the daily comic strip, *Sheldon*, which can be read online at sheldoncomics.com. He’s also stunningly attractive and not at all putting on weight as he moves into his thirties. Not at all.

Sheldon strips used with the permission of Dave Kellett.



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Lucy Shelton Caswell

The Funnies and More: The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library*



William Charles, *The Comfort and Convenience of Tight-Dresses*. Hand-colored engraving published January 1, 1801. Hale Scrapbook, Draper Hill Collection, The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library.

Milton Caniff's mother was a packrat. She almost never threw away anything related to her beloved son, and later on his wife shared this proclivity. As a result, the founding collection of The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library (designated as CGA on OSCAR, the University's online library catalog at <http://www.lib.ohio-state.edu/>) is unusually deep and rich. The astonishing range of materials provided a firm foundation for the library's development. Included were Caniff's original artwork from his Boy Scout days to *Terry and the Pirates*, *Male Call*, and *Steve Canyon*, plus his fan mail, research files, business records, and papers related to the founding of the National Cartoonists Society (Caniff was its second president) and of the Newspaper Features Council (which he also assisted in founding). Caniff, known as the "Rembrandt of the Comic Strip" because of his artistic excellence, is one of the most honored and respected cartoonists in history, with awards ranging from two Cartoonist of the Year "Reuben" awards from his peers in the National Cartoonists Society to an Exceptional Service Award from the United States Air Force.

The library opened in 1977 in two converted classrooms in the Journalism Building. In 1990, it moved to its current state-of-the-art facility with secure access and carefully controlled environmental conditions. It is located physically on the University's Columbus campus in the Wexner Center for the Arts complex, which was designed by deconstructivist architect Peter Eisenman. Administratively, it is one of five rare-books/special-collections libraries that are part of the University Libraries system. As a result, it is supported by superb general and fine-arts reference collections, extensive microform holdings, and large subject-area holdings in related fields such as journalism.

THE LIBRARY'S MISSION

CGA's mission is to build a comprehensive research collection of materials that documents American printed-cartoon art (comic strips, editorial cartoons, comic books, graphic novels, sports cartoons, cartoon illustrations, and magazine cartoons) and to organize and provide access to these materials. Animated cartoons are collected only as they relate to the library's printed-cartoon holdings. Beyond this exception, CGA's definition of its collecting mission is broad; it includes all aspects of cartooning, from collections related to comics artists and writers to those related to syndication and publishing of cartoons and licensing of cartoon-related products.

International materials are acquired selectively with the assistance of language- and area-studies bibliographers at Ohio State University Libraries. For example, long runs of major international serials such as *Punch*, *Fliegende Blätter*, and *L'Assiette au beurre* are held. The largest foreign-language collection is of manga, Japanese comics that cover virtually any and all subjects from Buddhism to science fiction. A keyword search of OSCAR using the term "manga collection" results in more than 2,300 titles, some of which have a hundred or more volumes. Most of the manga-cataloging records include English-language plot summaries linked to the title.

Also collected selectively are engravings and other prints that might be described as precursors of what we know today as editorial cartoons and social commentary (or "gag") cartoons. Many examples of these works may be found in the Hale Scrapbook, which includes English work dating from the 1740s to the 1830s [see preceding page].

The library has an active exhibition program to highlight materials from its holdings. *The American Comic Book* (1985) is believed to be the first exhibit devoted exclusively to this genre, and *Women*

Practitioners of the "Ungentlemanly Art" (1989) was the first exhibition featuring the work of several women editorial cartoonists. Catalogues from other previous exhibits such as *Cartoons and Ethnicity* (1992) and *Peanuts* (2000) may be ordered at <http://www.lib.ohio-state.edu/cgaweb/publicat.htm>. *Calvin and Hobbes: Sunday Pages 1985–1995*, the only exhibit devoted to Bill Watterson's very popular comic strip, was featured at the library in the fall of 2001. *Arnold Roth: Free Lance* celebrated the fifty-year career of this remarkable cartoonist and was seen from 2001 to 2004 at venues in Philadelphia; New York City; San Francisco; London, England; and Basel, Switzerland, in addition to its run at CGA.

HOLDINGS, EXHIBITIONS, AND EVENTS

Current holdings of the library include more than 250,000 original cartoons, more than 25,000 books, more than 14,000 serial titles, and more than 2,800 linear feet of manuscript materials, plus several hundreds of boxes of cartoon-related products. A clipping file includes biographical information on more than 3,000 cartoonists. Clipping files also are maintained by subject (such as ethnic-stereotyping cartoons, or women cartoonists) and topic (such as cartoons about Theodore Roosevelt or boxing).

A variety of finding aids assists researchers in locating materials of interest. Catalog records for published works may be searched via the World Wide Web on OSCAR. Finding aids for some collections are linked to collection-level OSCAR records, and other collections have paper finding aids for use in the library's reading room. A still-growing database of the library's original cartoons may be searched at <http://www.lib.ohio-state.edu/cgaweb/db/>. This database is searchable by creator, title, date, and place of publication as well as by subject (what the cartoon is about, such as arms control or Social Security) and what is shown (Henry Kissinger, for example, or a jeep or cactus).

The Robert Roy Metz Collection, CGA's largest single gift-in-kind, includes 83,034 original cartoons by 113 different cartoonists. Donated in 1992 by United Media, its appraised value at that time was \$9.1 million. Among the sub-collections within the Metz Collection are 1,350 editorial cartoons by Bill Crawford and almost 4,000 examples of *Our Boarding House*.

Known for his fanciful comic strips and virtuoso artistic technique, the early cartoonist Winsor McCay influenced many generations of cartoonists, including Bill Watterson. CGA holds the largest publicly available collection of McCay's work, including

a complete run of *Little Nemo in Slumberland* tear sheets [see below].

In 1984, Will Eisner, creator of *The Spirit* and the dean of American comic-book creators, contributed materials documenting his career. The Walt Kelly Collection was donated by his widow, Selby Kelly, in 1986. This collection includes letters from *Pogo* fans, business records, and information related to Kelly's membership in and presidency of the National



Winsor McCay, *Little Nemo in Slumberland*. Tear sheet of the Sunday, February 17, 1907, comic strip. Woody Gelman Collection, The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library.

Cartoonists Society. The *Pogo* Collection finding aid describes numerous original *Pogo* comic strips and other artwork by Kelly acquired from a number of other sources.

Nicole Hollander, creator of the feminist comic strip *Sylvia*, contributed her papers that include original art, published works, and business records. *Tales from the Planet Sylvia: An Exhibition of Cartoons by Nicole Hollander* was featured in the library's reading-room gallery in late 1997.

In 1998, CGA acquired seventy-five tons of material from Bill Blackbeard, founder of the San Francisco Academy of Comic Art. The heart of this collection is approximately 2.5 million comic-strip clippings. With the support of the Getty Foundation, an online finding aid was created for these clippings, and it is available at <http://dlib.lib.ohio-state.edu/cga/>. The San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection also includes more than 600 bound volumes of historic newspapers, which are cataloged and available for researchers' use.

The development of professional associations for cartoonists in the United States is documented through the archives of the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists and those of the National Cartoonists Society, both held at the library. Also at the library is the Ron Wolen Memorial Archive of the Cartoonists Guild. In 1997 the library acquired the archives of the Newspaper Features Council (known as the Newspaper Comics Advisory Council when it was founded in 1955).

Another type of collection at CGA focuses on a particular episode within a comic strip. For example, Tom Batiuk contributed all of the original drawings, reader correspondence, and related materials for his 1986 *Funky Winkerbean* series on teen pregnancy. Lynn Johnston, who writes the daily strip *For Better or For Worse*, donated both the original art and the letters that she received from readers relating to the death of Mrs. Baird, the Patterson family's elderly neighbor, as well as that of the demise

of their dog, Farley. The Lynn Johnston Collection also includes materials relating to her 1992 series on child abuse.

The library is the repository for several complete exhibitions, including *American Cartoonists Celebrate the First Amendment*, *The Fine Line in Central America*, and *Pork Roasts*, a feminist cartoon show. *Humor in a Jugular Vein: The Art and Artifacts of MAD Magazine* was donated by Mark Cohen and Rose Marie McDaniel in 1999.

The Toni Mendez Collection documents her long career as a licensing agent representing cartoonists such as Bernard Kliban (creator of the famous Kliban cat, the first cat-cartoon licensing phenomenon), and features such as *Tom Corbet*, *Space Cadet*.

Richard Samuel West contributed the records of two political-cartoon publications that he edited, *The Puck Papers* and *Target*. This collection includes West's audiotaped interviews with cartoonists such as Bill Mauldin, Jeff MacNelly, and Gerald Scarfe. The library also has West's books reprinting collected editorial cartoons, the largest such collection in the nation.

Extensive, virtually complete runs of historic serials such as *Puck*, *Judge*, and *Cartoons Magazine* are held in addition to contemporary publications such as *Comics Journal* and *Cartoonists PROfiles*. Albert J. Simpson donated the only known complete set of the German-language *Puck*, once the property of its publisher Adolph Schwartzmann.

The Festival of Cartoon Art has been held triennially since 1983; it attracts participants from around the world. This event is a forum in which cartoonists, scholars, students, and the public exchange ideas related to presentations and exhibits focused on a particular theme. The topic of the 2004 Festival of



F. M. Ashe, "A Woodland Paean to the Easter Sun." Tear sheet from the *New York Herald*, March 19, 1899. The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library.

Cartoon Art, scheduled for October 15 and 16, is "Deletions, Omissions, and Erasures," and all of the speakers and exhibits will address censorship issues. Details about the conference may be found at <http://www.lib.ohio-state.edu/cgaweb/FCA/index.htm>.

USING THE LIBRARY

Because the Cartoon Research Library is an archival facility, materials from its collections must be used on site. None may be borrowed for personal use outside of the library's reading room. Researchers are required to register on their initial visit, and call slips must be completed for materials to be retrieved from the closed stacks or vault area.

Because it is often possible to prepare for researchers' visits before their arrival by pulling in advance the items that they wish to use (thereby saving a considerable amount of their time), we recommend that scholars make advance arrangements by calling or e-mailing the library. Many of CGA's oversized volumes, such as bound newspapers, are stored off site at a remote book depository. Using these volumes requires advance arrangements because they must be transported from the depository to the CGA reading room.

CGA provides a full range of photographic and scanning services, provided that written evidence of copyright permission is on file. A limited variety of research services is available to off-site users. Details about both may be found on the library's Web site.

A frequently asked question is, who uses the Cartoon Research Library? In fact, the library's users are as varied as its holdings. Copyright inquiries come from publishers around the world. Teachers seek editorial cartoons to make high school history classes come alive for their students. Graduate students have written theses and dissertations on topics

as varied as theatrical productions based on comic strips (*Annie* being one example) and Walt Kelly's views of environmental issues as reflected in *Pogo*. One scholar studied the depictions of Canadians and issues related to Canada in late nineteenth-century American periodicals. The library's mission supports interdisciplinary research, and its exhibitions and programming seek to promote this goal.



Professor Lucy Shelton Caswell is the founding curator of The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library. Her teaching specialties are the history of American comic strips and editorial cartoons.

* The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library, 27 West 17th Avenue Mall, Columbus, Ohio 43210-1393, USA; telephone 614-292-0538; fax 614-292-9101; e-mail cartoons@osu.edu; Web site: <http://www.lib.ohio-state.edu/cgaweb/index.htm>. The library's regular hours are 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. Monday through Friday. It is closed on national and university holidays. Hours vary in the summer and between terms. Researchers are asked to make advance arrangements before visiting the library.



John T. McCutcheon, "Have you noticed the new styles in Spring hats?" Original artwork for *Chicago Tribune* editorial cartoon, ca. 1910. John T. McCutcheon Collection, The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library.

POETRY FINAL

[1]

Describe the sound when a penny drops into a wishing-well. Consider the relevance of the following factors: acoustics, knowledge of wells, odds of fulfillment, presence of stars. To be written from the coin's point of view.

[2]

Imagine gravity traded as a commodity. From a bird's perspective, make a case for public ownership, apportioned by weight. Set on an uninhabited island.

[3]

Explain the attraction of the moon. In no more than thirty-two lines, suggest a new name for the number *zero*. Combine the responses in a 12-line pantoum.

[4]

Establish a seamless association between the following: an executioner's birthday party, fractal geometry, attention deficit disorder. Result must be tacitly non-judgmental, and be suitable for a sixth-grade audience.

[5]

Bonus question — substantiate your findings.

ALEX GRANT

Alex Grant was born in Greenock, Scotland, and currently lives and works in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He is a 2004 recipient of Western Michigan University's John Woods scholarship and the 2004 winner of WMU's Pavel Srut Fellowship in Prague. His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Sycamore Review*, *Poet Lore*, and *Midwest Quarterly*.

Forum Interview with Stephan Pastis, Creator of *Pearls Before Swine*

P*earls Before Swine* is a daily newspaper strip that features a self-centered, rude, sometimes violent Rat, a dimwitted but good-natured Pig, a Zebra who is constantly trying to make peace with the lions and alligators to keep them from eating his relatives, and assorted supporting characters. The strip was just awarded a 2003 Reuben for Best Newspaper Strip of the Year by the National Cartoonists Society. Mr. Pastis kindly took part in a telephone interview for this issue.

Forum: Were you interested in comics and drawing more than the average kid, and did you have some idea early on that you might want to be a cartoonist?

Pastis: Since I was a little kid I wanted to be a cartoonist, mostly from reading *Peanuts* books. So I drew from a very young age; when most other kids were out playing, I was probably in my room drawing. Though I always wanted to be a cartoonist, I never thought it was a realistic goal, so I went to law school and became a lawyer. But it was definitely something that was always my dream.

Forum: Did you have any formal training in art or drawing or design?

Pastis: No. None. In college I was a Political Science major at UC-Berkeley, and then I went to law school at UCLA. When I got out of law school, I went straight into litigation, and I was a litigation attorney in San Francisco for almost nine years. So at no point did I take any lessons. If you look at the strip, it becomes apparent.

Pearls Before Swine



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE reprinted by permission of United Feature Syndicate, Inc.

Forum: At what point did you seriously begin to entertain the notion of doing *Pearls Before Swine*? How did it evolve?

Pastis: Well, in 1996, after I had put in about three years at a law firm, I was really tired of being a lawyer, so I thought I would try to create a strip and submit it to the five or six comic syndicates and see what happened. I knew that the odds were long. The big syndicates get around 6,000 submissions a year, and of those, they pick maybe three. Of the three, maybe one actually gets launched. In 1996, I submitted a strip featuring a rat and a pig to all of the syndicates. Or did it have the pig — no, it just had the rat. I expected rejections from everyone, but to my surprise, the people at King Features, while still rejecting it, were very kind about it and said that they saw something there. After that I submitted three more different strips, and they were all rejected. One of them was about a law firm. Because I kept getting nice comments, I created *Pearls Before Swine*. I drew two hundred of the strip in 1997. After I drew them, I put them up on my shelf and did nothing with them for eighteen months, until 1999.

Forum: Why?

Pastis: I didn't want to get rejected again. I thought the best way not to get rejected was not to submit; it was foolproof. I don't know what the triggering point was for me to get the strip off of the shelf, but in June of 1999, I took them into my law firm, all two hundred if you can believe it. I had people there vote on which forty they liked best, and based on their vote, I took those forty and sent them to the syndicates. Lo and behold, I had not just one, but three syndicates that wanted it. I chose United Feature Syndicate because it published my two idols: *Peanuts* and *Dilbert*.

Forum: A bidding war is always good.

Pastis: Yeah, that helps a lot. That's really rare. It's funny. It was either feast or famine. I mean, nothing else I sent got anything.

Forum: How soon after that did you segue out of the law?

Pastis: It was a long road. First, you go through what they call development, which is where you keep producing strips so that they see whether you can keep doing it. After all, they don't know whether you spent twenty years coming up with the funny ones that you submitted. They also have other launches that are scheduled. So after signing around the beginning of 2000, it wasn't until January 2002 that the strip was actually launched into newspapers. I kept my law job

until August 2002, so I remained a lawyer for another eight months while the strip ran in the newspapers. Now I'm out of the law entirely, and I sure hope I never go back.

Forum: How did you originally come up with the idea for the strip?

Pastis: Rat has been around since law school. From the moment I drew him, he had life because he spoke like I spoke, which I guess doesn't say much for me. But he seemed to have some honesty. It was sort of a new concept in comic strips. What would happen if you just draw this little guy and you have no action and no switching up of angles and the drawing is very crude, but he says stuff that rings true? But Rat needed a counterpoint; what better to counter a rude, arrogant, egotistical rat than a humble, dumb, sweet Pig? The two of them together seemed to have something. Then Zebra came along simply from one of the strips. He showed up at Rat and Pig's front door selling cookies to raise money to buy automatic weapons to use against the lions. People liked him, so I kept him in. Goat is just a much-needed straight man. Rat has a girlfriend named Farina, and Pig has a girlfriend named Pigita. I think the concept is very *Dilbert*-based; if you can write decently and produce a good joke, then people will let you get away with rather poor drawing. There's an old adage in cartooning, which is that good writing can carry bad art, but good art cannot carry bad writing.

Forum: You've mentioned *Dilbert* and *Peanuts* several times. Were those strips the two main influences in your desire to be a cartoonist?

Pastis: Clearly *Peanuts*. The rhythm of how to tell a joke in a strip for almost all of us comes from *Peanuts*. Schulz pretty much invented the form. I like *Dilbert* for the writing and the *Far Side* on just what humor is. I read a lot of *Doonesbury* when I was a kid, and I also read a lot of *Bloom County* and *Calvin and Hobbes*. But I say the big three would be *Peanuts*, *Far Side*, and *Dilbert*.

Forum: How many syndicates are there?

Pastis: There are really three big ones: United Feature, which has *Peanuts* and *Dilbert*; Universal Press Syndicate in Kansas City, which has *Fox Trot*, *Cathy*, *Doonesbury*, and *Boondocks*; and the really big one, King Features, which has all the old strips such as *Beetle Bailey* and *Hagar*. Then there are two or three smaller ones: Washington Post Writers Group, which had *Bloom County* and now has the new *Opus*; Tribune Media in Chicago, which

has *Mother Goose and Grimm*; and Creators Syndicate, which has *B.C.*

Forum: How do you generate ideas, get the creative juices flowing, deal with cartoonist's block, if that ever happens to you?

Pastis: My way is pretty unusual. I go into a spare bedroom in our house, and I lock the door, remove the phone from the hook, get a really large cup of coffee, turn off most of the lights, put on headphones, and listen to CDs that I've made myself from a collection of all the songs that I like (so that I don't have to listen to any bad songs). Then I pace around the room and drink the coffee for about an hour, and I read a lot of Hemingway. After about an hour of that, I start writing, and I generally keep going for about five or six hours.

Forum: Why Hemingway?

Pastis: Hemingway is tremendously helpful. A lot of people can't get past Hemingway the man. But if you focus on the writing, he's the perfect writer for a cartoonist because comic strips are all about economy of words, and that is what he is all about. I read the same short story every time; it's called "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place." Comics are all about the writing. If it were all about art, all of the big hits would come from art school graduates. But for example, Bill Amend, who does *Fox Trot*, was a physicist, and Scott Adams, who does *Dilbert*, was an engineer, and I was a lawyer.

Forum: Which is actually harder for you, the drawing or the writing? What do you start with?

Pastis: The drawing is harder because I'm less competent. People say that they like my strip's simplicity, but I'm doing the best I can to just to get up to that level. I'm not dumbing the art down. But the writing is clearly the best part. It's the most rewarding because it's like finding gold. I'm eager to write, put it that way. On a day when I have a lot of ideas, I have to stop myself from writing more and force myself to sit down and draw what I have. I prefer to put on the headphones and write because you never know what's there, and it doesn't tend to come twice. So you never know if you're passing up something good by not writing that day.

Forum: So many people have problems with writing of any kind; they get intimidated by what they are trying to say. It's great that the writing itself generates your enthusiasm for the strip.

Pastis: In high school and college, many people get tied up in the rules, and they cease to write

honestly. The truth is, people should put the words down in an order that hasn't been done before and make sure that the writing comes from the heart. In many respects, when you're doing a comic strip, it is more like writing poetry because of the space limitations. You have only so many words to say a full statement; much of the idea may have to be implied. The writing is all rhythm, too; you can hear if there is one syllable too many.

Forum: About how far ahead do you create your strips? What kind of stockpile do you need to have for your syndicate?

Pastis: You're obligated to be six weeks ahead on the dailies and eight weeks ahead on the Sundays, but as it turns out, I'm almost ten months ahead. I'm probably further ahead than anyone you would ever talk to. The only possible negative is that if something works today and readers like it and want more of it, if I do more of it, you won't see it for ten months. So sometimes I'll replace strips that I've already put in.

Forum: How many newspapers is *Pearls Before Swine* in right now?

Pastis: I'm in 130 now, which is pretty good, I'm told, for the end of the second year. And actually it was the worst two years in comic-strip history too, during 9–11. Literally all airline flights were stopped, so I had no sales trips for two weeks of my initial three-month sales period. It was also a little tough to run around selling a comic strip to newspapers during that period.

Forum: Whom do you admire among your contemporaries? What strips do you really enjoy reading and which ones do you wish that you could do?

Pastis: Well, a cartoonist doesn't actually enjoy another cartoonist's contemporary work. A cartoonist gets a bad feeling in his stomach if someone else does a good strip. I guess that's the biggest compliment I could give. But I do enjoy *Get Fuzzy*, *Speed Bump*, *Dilbert*, and *Monty*. Those are probably the main ones.

Forum: Are there other forms such as comic books that you enjoy?

Pastis: The only other creative form that I enjoy would be novels. I try to stay away from other humorous outlets because I don't want to mimic them. What goes in, comes out, and if what's going in is someone else's humorous written cartoon work, you may be derivative. If what goes

in is Hemingway or Fitzgerald, then what comes out might be more original.

Forum: If someone asked you how to get started as a cartoonist, what sage advice would you give them?

Pastis: The only advice I could give is what I did, which is to find a cartoonist who is successful and study the writing (I took *Dilbert*, for example). Try to write a funny strip without adding drawing to it. Focus on your writing and see if it can stand on its own. I wrote two hundred strips not even caring about how the drawing looked to learn the economy of words. Learn the rhythm of humor. You could do that by watching stand-up comedians, too. Once you think you've got a handle on it, write a whole mess of strips and show them to people who don't particularly like you and who are willing to tell you the truth. See if they laugh. If you can't make the guy sitting next to you laugh, you probably can't make the eight million readers laugh either. Be honest with yourself. I would not worry about the drawing in the least. If you're a horrible artist, a syndicate can always pair you with an artist.

Forum: Is there anything that you want to tell our readers other than to go out and demand that their newspapers start running *Pearls Before Swine*?

Pastis: Yes. There are two *Pearls Before Swine* books, too. Go buy the books!



BIG BANG 3

This morning
traffic spaces itself out
with the random logic
of breaking waves

Last night I asked a young man
to turn down his music
the bass shaking
my windows and dishes
my concentration my heart

he was sitting on the steps
near his SUV with a woman
from the apartment building
and her young daughter

I didn't see them in the shade
I saw an empty black vehicle
vibrating the night off its hinges

He startled me, emerging
from shadow as I approached
I didn't understand how they could
sit so close nor how such a young man
could afford such an expensive vehicle

My wife thought it was coming
from an apartment, but I thought
it was a car. I was checking
so when I called the police
I could tell them what planet I was on

I've never made noise that loud
though maybe if I had hyper bass
I would've used it on occasion
when the world was a splatter or blur

This morning among the traffic waves
no sign of the SUV. Birds in the tree
out front squabbling over something.
So many languages I'll never know

I forgot to say he turned the music off
without a word. Not down, but off.

JIM DANIELS

Jim Daniels' most recent books are *Show and Tell: New and Selected Poems*, University of Wisconsin Press, and *Detroit Tales*, short fiction, Michigan State University Press, both published in 2003. He directs the Creative Writing Program at Carnegie Mellon University.



John A. Lent

Far Out and Mundane: The Mammoth World of Manga

Photo by Laura J. Kloberg.

A lonely high school girl who peels off her scabs and saves them in a journal... the cutest boy in junior high who turns into a rat when hugged by females... girls and young women having sex with a beetle, an octopus, or dragon... a scientist who specializes in scatology. These are some of the characters that make up the extremely lucrative and huge world of Japanese *manga* (comic book).

But many other characters help make up this galaxy: those who relate the history of Japan in forty-eight volumes, explain the intricacies of the Japanese economy, remember the horror and devastation of the U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima, teach a host of topics (including gourmet cooking), or provide romanticized histories of companies such as Sony or Honda.

Besides weird characters and plots and multiple functions, manga have other characteristics — in sales, size, genres, artistic styles, and audiences — that set them apart from comic books anywhere else in the world.

The industry is immense, cranking out and selling about two billion books and magazines yearly; in 1995, for example, sales of manga were \$6.7 billion. About 40 percent of all published materials in highly literate and well-read Japan are manga, and about a dozen manga magazines each have a circulation of one million or more, the most popular claiming 6.2 million readers — and that is weekly. Following global media trends, the manga industry is oligar-

chic, with just four companies controlling 75.3 percent of the market.

The spin-offs from manga account for billions of dollars more. *Anime* (animation), which gets most of its stories and characters from manga, was worth \$495 million in U.S. broadcasting rights alone in 2002; toys featuring anime characters brought in another \$4.7 billion in the American market. Additionally, Japan has huge manga retail and rental shops, substantial manga sections in other bookstores, and manga cafes; sports a number of elaborately designed manga museums; and hosts regularly scheduled manga conventions that can have as many as 18,000 booths. So many manga cartoonists are millionaires that there has been concern about the effects of wealth on their creativity. In 1994, Yoshiro Tagashi (creator of “Yū-Yū Hakusho”) made \$7 million, and at *Shōnen Jump* (the largest boy’s manga with a circulation of 5–6 million), eight of the twenty artists earn \$1 million each year.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MANGA

The typical manga has very little relationship to comics as understood in Europe or the United States. They appear in different intervals, but the major ones are weekly, as opposed to monthly U.S. comics. They can be as large as a large metropolitan telephone book, reaching 1,000 or more pages and featuring extended serialized stories, at least one of which, appearing in *Shōnen Jump*, lasted

MANGA FANS AND CRITICS

more than twenty years and more than a thousand episodes. Cinematic and iconographic, they allow both for focusing on the minutiae of daily life and for a quick read. A 320-page manga can be “read” in twenty minutes because of tighter pacing and an ability to show motion through static images. They are normally monochrome and are poorly drawn by American and European standards. Storytelling and character development are manga’s strong points. Unlike American comics, manga magazines usually are not kept and are not collected for future speculation.

Titles would boggle the minds of lexicographers if they tried to determine the meaning of “What’s Michael?” “Bubblegum Crisis,” or “Mobile Suit Gundam.” Many genres also are Japanese minted. They include *ju-ne mono* (love between gay men, popular among women), *rorikon* (Lolita complex, or kiddie porn in other contexts), *bishōjo* (beautiful young girl, popular with boys), *sarirīman* (salaryman, or white collar worker), *OL* (office lady), *ya-o-i* (no climax, no punchline, no meaning), the extremely popular *dōjinshi* (amateur), and pachinko and other comics related to games and sports. One of the best-selling titles in recent years, “Hikaru no Go,” revolves around a boy training in the traditional board game of Go, which has led to a rekindling of interest in the game. The genres reach the extremes, some, as already mentioned, emphasizing bizarre, distasteful human activity, others portraying normal people doing everyday things.

Although non-Japanese (and many Japanese) often associate manga only with violence and eroticism, other traits such as loyalty, intelligence, beauty, and cuteness (*kawaii*) are prominent in many books. Going back to the nineteenth century, but especially after Japan’s defeat in World War II, the Japanese have favored Western notions of beauty. Prominent manga author Frederik Schodt said that this tendency was most pronounced in manga, especially girls’ and women’s comics, where Japanese females are depicted as leggy, blonde, and big- and starry-eyed. Cuteness permeates many aspects of Japanese society, particularly manga and anime, where it is associated with good and is used for commercialization.

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The enthusiasm of the Japanese for manga is unbridled. Called *otaku*, fans are of all ages and unlike in the United States, include a large proportion of females. In fact, two specific genres for women and girls make up the largest numbers of the 265 manga magazines, fifty-two and forty-five, respectively. Largely responsible for the great appeal of manga to females has been the large number of women cartoonists successful in the profession, probably a number unsurpassed in the rest of the world.

Otaku “live and breathe” manga and anime, buying up books, magazines, and merchandise as soon as they hit the store shelves; hanging out in manga rental shops and cafes; using the Internet to set up Web sites, chat with other fans, and create their own online manga; and flocking to conventions where they devour anything about their favorite characters and stories and participate in ‘cosplay’ (dressing in imitation of manga/anime characters). One might even say that fans “sleep” manga, as late-night workers while away the time until they can catch the first trains in the morning at more than 2,500 manga kissa-coffee shops nationwide. For 1,000 to 1,300 yen, thousands spend at least five hours after midnight in these shops, reading from huge collections of manga (some consisting of 25,000 volumes), surfing the Internet, playing video games, sipping drinks, or sleeping in reclining chairs.

Although parents, teachers, and government officials have expressed some concern about possible ill effects of the fanatical behavior of otaku and the violent/erotic nature of some manga, it has not reached anywhere near the hysteria that Americans displayed relative to comics in the 1950s or to popular music later. In fact, when the first of a few anticomics movements occurred in Japan in the mid-1950s (probably as a result of Japan’s close alliance with the United States), it was as an afterthought of a larger campaign against cheap, erotic magazines. Again during the 1960s and 1970s, as sex, violence, and scatology came to manga, parent/teacher

associations and others voiced their condemnation of the medium, but to little avail. An interpretation of Article 175 of the nation's constitution of the 1940s had forbidden graphic depiction of sexual intercourse, adult genitalia, and pubic hair, although children's genitalia and "cartoony" renderings were permissible. Nevertheless, publishers of erotic comics thrived, using subtle techniques such as symbols and airbrushing. In the late 1980s, even these ineffective guidelines disappeared, and publishers outdid one another in sexual provocativeness. When a manga "addict" murdered three preschool children in 1988-89, there was another outcry, and the Association To Protect Children from Comic Books was started. By 1991, publishers recalled some of the most offensive manga and practiced self-restraint; the following year, however, top artists formed the Association To Protect Freedom of Expression in Comics as a countermeasure.

The entire controversy seemed to resolve itself with self-censorship, but when the ban on depictions of genitalia and pubic hair was removed in 1993, adult erotic manga were more graphic than ever. Undoubtedly, the issue has been an up-and-down affair, with the government generally keeping a hands-off policy while balancing the interests of the artists with those of the public. Some fear of another crackdown was evoked in early 2004 when a court ruled that a manga published by Shobunkan Co. was obscene.

In recent years, manga sales in Japan have dipped slightly, perhaps attributable to children's easy access to new media such as video games and the Internet, and, in the cases of *shonen* (boys) and *seinen* (young adult men), to a paucity of good stories, the latter blamed on passive editors who simply go through the motions of editing in large, for-profit-only corporations. Overall, manga are still extremely popular and cannot be discounted. They are ubiquitous, and the Japanese are obsessed with them. Manga represent every interest and aspect of Japanese society: they are used to train new bank customers, to keep alive classics of literature such as the eleventh-century *Gengi Monogatari*, to propa-

gate the notion of a U.S. conspiracy to keep the U.S. economy from sliding at the expense of that of Japan (a 2004 story of "Golgo 13"), or to promote pride for World War II militarist nationalism and rewrite history, as in the works of Kobayashi Yoshinori.

MANGA CONQUERS THE WORLD

Manga (and anime) have traveled well, in the past several years becoming a worldwide phenomenon. Usually in pirated versions, they found their way into Taiwan, South Korea, and Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s, while in the West, France received its first manga in 1978-79, very shortly after Keiji Nakazawa's personal account of the Hiroshima atomic bombing debuted in the United States. The big boost came in the early- to

mid-1990s when Japan's economic bubble burst and the country feverishly sought overseas markets. Simultaneously, a generation being nurtured on video games and online activity, tired of (or never having taken to) U.S. superhero comics, and impressed with the freshness and diversity of manga drawings and stories and often complex, but vulnerable, characters, furnished the global market.

The biggest overseas market is the United States, where three U.S. manga publishers (Viz, Tokyopop, and Dark Horse) issue hundreds of

titles yearly for a retail market that last year earned \$100 million, doubling the previous year's take. Mainstream publishers Random House and iBooks, Inc., also started their own line of manga in 2003, as did prominent U.S. comics company DC this year. At a time when book sales overall are growing 1-2 percent yearly, manga sales show triple-digit increases, and a few titles have even broken into mainstream best-seller lists. Manga are distributed widely in the United States, through online sites such as Amazon.com, mainstream book companies Simon & Schuster and Barnes and Noble, and outlets such as Wal-Mart, Target, Sam Goody, and video stores. General distribution of this type and highly acceler-

Manga represent every interest and aspect of Japanese society: they are used to train new bank customers, to keep alive classics of literature such as the eleventh-century *Gengi Monogatari*, to propagate the notion of a U.S. conspiracy to keep the U.S. economy from sliding at the expense of that of Japan (a 2004 story of "Golgo 13"), or to promote pride for World War II militarist nationalism and rewrite history, as in the works of Kobayashi Yoshinori.

ated commodification of the product are not likely to benefit the industry in the long run, but for the time being, manga rank among the most-read media in the United States.

Manga are enthusiastically welcomed all over Europe, in Canada and Australia, isolated parts of Africa and Latin America, and, of course, East and Southeast Asia. In France, where local comics (*bande dessinée*) are extremely popular and previously (in the late 1940s) were protected from outside competition, manga account for 30 percent of sales, having grown from six titles published by two companies in 1991 to 190 by seven companies in 1998. Likewise, the presence of manga at Germany's Frankfurt Book Fair in 2002 was credited with a 2 percent increase in attendance over 2001. In Canada, Indigo Books and Music, Inc., which controls about 85 percent of the Canadian retail market for books, stocks many manga, as do other chains. Canadian teenagers, like fans in the United States, are also snapping up how-to-draw manga books and even Japanese brush-tipped pens.

Manga have deep roots in East and Southeast Asia, where they have helped create a Japanese subculture, have taken readers away from indigenous comic books, and have changed drawing and storytelling styles.

In Taiwan, manga are part of a Japanophilia that has swept the island through Japanese trendy drama, anime, fashion, music and entertainers, and kawaii merchandise. As an example, Taipei now has four *dôjinshi* fairs yearly.

For about forty years, Taiwanese and Korean cartoonists railed against the unwanted competition that manga inflicted upon local comics production, often as their governments turned a blind eye to the importation of the banned books. A number of Taiwanese cartoonists quit drawing — some for twenty years — as a protest against the government's double standard of censorship favoring manga. In June of 1992, the government banned all pirated manga for good, but legitimate manga still command as much as 80 percent of sales. Similarly, Korean *manhwa* have been plagued by manga, despite government bans and censorship, cartoonists' protests, antimanga exhibitions, and public denunciations. Today, 44 percent of all comic-book titles and 62 percent of all copies circulating in Korea are non-Korean (mainly manga). In Hong Kong and throughout Southeast Asia, indigenous comics initially tried to fend off, and eventually gave way to, manga. The Indonesian comics business blames manga in part for its ruin, and Thai and Filipino comics have felt the wrath of this intruder. Malaysian and Singaporean bookstores have entire sections devoted to manga;

a 1999 survey reported that 77 percent of young Singaporeans (thirteen to twenty-nine years old) read manga regularly.

Comics publishers, cartoonists, and even fans in the United States and much of Asia are very much enamored of Japanese methods of drawing and presentation. In the United States, Marvel Enterprises, the leading American comic-book company, has embraced many art styles from Japan and has re-imagined its Marvel Universe (into Marvel Mangaverse) from a manga standpoint; in China, two art lecturers have gone to Japan to study the manga model in hopes of establishing a market for Chinese comics; and in Singapore, about ninety students have signed up at three centers to learn how to draw manga. Instructional books on manga drawing have become bestsellers; Japan's Graphic-Sha has translated more than forty such volumes into English with sales of more than a million.

On the one hand, the impact has been a god-send, reinvigorating some dormant comics cultures and showing that the medium has a future. In other instances, the vigorous introduction of manga has homogenized the look of comic books and almost obliterated traditional means of producing them. As examples, the distinctive-looking Malaysian humor magazines now clone manga, and in China, manga-like drawings and characters inundate the scene, brushing aside traditional painting and storytelling techniques.

Because of its increasing recognition and use by educational and other societal institutions, manga has reached the status of culture in Japan, serving as one of the most important dispensers of entertainment and knowledge, while turning whirlwind profits. At the same time, because of Japan's long tradition of borrowing the best from outside and giving it a Japanese feel, manga has been uniquely prepared to enter and dominate the global market. The end result is a medium that is different, yet the same; weird, yet ordinary; and Japanese, yet international.



John A. Lent is the founding editor-in-chief of the *International Journal of Comic Art*, founding chair of two international associations dealing with Asian popular culture and comic art, editor-in-chief of *Asian Cinema*, chair of the Asian Cinema Studies Society, and author or editor of sixty books, many dealing with cartooning.

Forum Interview with Greg Evans, Creator of *Luann*

Greg Evans was named 2003 Cartoonist of the Year by the National Cartoonists Society. *Luann* deals with the daily life and tribulations of 16-year-old Luann, her parents, her big brother Brad, and her various friends.

Forum: Tell our readers a little about your background. Were you interested in comics and drawing more than the average kid, and did you have some idea early on that you might want to be a cartoonist?

Evans: I was born with CD, Cartoonist Disease. All I ever did as a kid was sit in my room and draw cartoons. I grew up in Burbank, near Disney Studios, and I wanted to be an animator. In my teens, I discovered *MAD* magazine and wanted to work there. Then I fell into comic-strip reading and realized that a comic strip was exactly what I wanted to do. I submitted my first (lame) strip at age twenty-two.

Forum: Do you have any formal training in art or drawing or design?

Evans: I have a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in art and a minor in English.

Forum: Who or what inspired you to get into this field?

Evans: Ask comic strip artists who inspired them, and 99 percent will say Charles Schulz. No different with me. Schulz made it look so easy. We all admire his deceptively simple, expressive art, his deeply defined characters, and the humanity of his writing.

Forum: At what point did you seriously begin to entertain the notion of making this your livelihood? How long did it take you to get into the field?

Evans: I was serious at age twenty-two, but I wasn't ready. I didn't have the life experiences to season my writing and give it reality. So my first dozen or so submissions were lousy rip-offs and shallow, contrived "hook" strips. I didn't come up with *Luann* until age thirty-five.

Forum: How did you originally come up with the idea for *Luann*? Was it the first/only strip that you attempted?

Evans: *Luann* was around strip number twelve. Yet another one of my lame, contrived, rip-off strips had been rejected, and I was feeling pretty down. I decided to give it one last try, then move on with a "real" life. I was watching my nine-year-old daughter parade around in her mom's high heels and lipstick, and I thought, "Hmmm. Maybe a strip about a saucy little girl . . ." But as I began work, I realized that nine was too limiting an age, so I graduated my character to thirteen, and *Luann* was born. The strip was the first that came from my heart, my life, my experiences.

Forum: How has the strip evolved over the years?

Evans: When *Luann* debuted on March 17, 1985, she was thirteen, her parents were not shown, and the art style was very *Peanuts*-like. Since then, *Luann* has aged to sixteen (three years in nineteen — wish I could do that), and the art is more life-like. And the parents appeared late in the first year.

Forum: Was it a struggle to begin to get the strip into newspapers? How did you begin getting it placed?

Evans: The syndicate began selling it several months before the premier date. It launched in seventy-five papers. Now it is in 350. Adding new clients is always a struggle. I thank the sales staff every day for the work that they do.

Forum: Tell us about how you like to work — how do you generate ideas? What do you do to get the creative juices flowing? How do you deal with "cartoonist's block," if that ever happens?

Does the strip flow from the drawing or the writing for you?

Evans: I find that the calendar is the best boost to creativity. A looming deadline always gets the juices flowing. I really do not have a method or trick or system. I just sit and think. And the writing always comes first.

Forum: Which is harder for you — the drawing or the writing?

Evans: It varies. Some ideas flow right out, while others you have to pry with a crowbar. Some strips are fun and easy to draw, while others require liberal applications of White-Out.

Forum: How far ahead do you produce strips?

Evans: I stay two months ahead.

Forum: Whom do you admire among your contemporaries — whose strips would you just not miss?

Evans: I'll pass on this one. They're all friends, and I'm not willing to praise some and overlook others.

Forum: What forms of cartooning other than daily strips interest you — whom and what do you enjoy in the world of comic books, manga, and so on?

Evans: Some cartoonists who are brilliant: Sergio Aragones, Rick Geary, Mike Mignola, Mort Drucker.

Forum: If someone wanted to get started as a cartoonist, what sage advice would you give them?

Evans: Get a good education, read a lot, listen, observe. You need to fill yourself with life before you can put it down in ink.



***The Day After Tomorrow*, co-written, directed, and produced by Roland Emmerich, 124 minutes, 20th Century Fox, 2004. PG-13 for intense situations of climatological peril.**

Is there anything more exasperating than seeing your profession misrepresented on the movie screen? I'm a meteorologist; my wife is a climatologist. After gritting my teeth through the pseudo-science of *Twister* and *The Perfect Storm*, I braced for this summer's *The Day After Tomorrow* — from the same people who brought us (gulp) *Independence Day* and *Godzilla*. The special effects are indeed superb, and the actors are lovely to look at; but is any of it *true*? Roger Ebert said regarding *The Day After Tomorrow*, "Of the science in this movie I have no opinion," but here in the *Forum* you can get a science-based review.

This movie begins, or nearly so, with paleoclimatologist Jack Hall (Dennis Quaid) briefing scientists and politicians on how changes in ocean circulation resulting from melting ice sheets can cause rapid climate change. Good start: this is all true and depicted rather faithfully, complete with a simulation of the oceanic "conveyor belt." These ideas are only

now being incorporated into college meteorology textbooks, so director Emmerich is doing a considerable public service by injecting these cutting-edge ideas into public discourse.

Now, a brief word from the scientists. It was once thought by scientists that "rapid" climate change meant changes in average temperatures on the timescales of decades or a century. But recent research performed by past-climate researchers using ice cores obtained from Greenland — exactly the kind of work Jack Hall is doing in the opening moments — has revealed that climate can change dramatically and quickly.

How fast? Richard B. Alley's Phi Beta Kappa Award-winning book *The Two-Mile Time Machine* states that past-climate changes have happened over periods as short as the duration of "a congressional term," or less; the ice cores have a temporal resolution of one year, so we really do not know. The last major climate change caused by ice-sheet melting happened about 10,000 years ago, as the movie correctly states, so we have no historical precedents to go by.

How soon could it happen? Nobody knows that either. Published research using computer models indicates that the circulation in the Atlantic Ocean could be significantly reduced because of global warming by the end of the twenty-first century. I am also aware of a rumor from the science gossip mill saying that ocean circulation changes are possible within fifteen years, but I was unable to confirm this prediction through interviews and a search of the scientific literature. In any event, models of ocean circulation are generally less reliable than weather-forecast models, which sometimes call for sunshine on a rainy day.

And how could the climate change in response to ocean-circulation changes? No one is totally sure about that, either. All in all, it is the perfect open-ended scenario for a summer disaster flick!

Back to the movie. After the first ten minutes or so, *The Day After Tomorrow* drops its scientific compass and lapses into summer-blockbuster syndrome, with forays into spectacularly bad science. Coinciding with ocean-circulation shutdown, Tokyo is pummeled with hail that looks like fast-food drink-dispenser clear ice. Planes are downed by severe turbulence, another unlikely proposition these days. Los Angeles is suddenly ravaged by unrealistic multiple tornadoes that seem to have been downloaded from the *Twister* special-effects computers. Then, in the “money shot” stolen from the much better 1998 disaster movie, *Deep Impact*, a snowy hurricane (?) somehow generates a huge ocean wave that rises up to the Statue of Liberty’s armpit and floods New York City.

The problem is, storms in the atmosphere do not cause solitary ocean waves 100 feet high that move inland. Meteor impacts can cause such waves, as in *Deep Impact*. But a hurricane’s storm surge is much smaller and is blown by ferocious winds onto the shore. In addition, according to the weather-satellite photos shown repeatedly during this movie, the storm that generates the big New York City wave actually would create winds in the wrong direction for a storm surge, blowing the water out to sea. Bad science.

The massive flooding of New York City traps Jack’s teenage son Sam (Jake Gyllenhaal) and his love interest (Emmy Rossum) at the New York Public Library. Like Elijah Wood and Leelee Sobieski in *Deep Impact*, the kids here come across as genuine and genuinely intelligent. Meanwhile, Jack’s wife, Lucy (Sela Ward, completely wasted) is a doctor who tends to a cancer patient left over from a thousand disaster films. Note to director: Sela Ward is a member of Phi Theta Kappa honor society, so why not write her character to be as independent and as intelligent as she is in real life, and as her doctor/scientist’s widow character surely would be?

Jack Hall and his paleoclimate computer model, reconfigured to make weather forecasts (more bad science), reveal that in the eye of the superstorms air will descend from the upper troposphere and flash-freeze the ground with temperatures of -150°F. Wrong, wrong, incredibly wrong. Air that sinks in the atmosphere is compressed by the weight of all the air around it. This compression causes the air to *warm* “adiabatically.” In truth, the air would be above freezing by the time that it reached the ground, not -150°F. So the entire premise for the second half of the movie is bogus. My eight-year-old son even noticed this error. After one character stated that temperatures were dropping ten degrees per second, my son exclaimed: “That’s 600 degrees a minute! That can’t happen!”

All of these problems might make you wonder about the credibility of the science advisor for this movie. Therein lies

a story all its own. The credits say that the science advisor is “Michael Molitor, PhD.” Press releases and interviews refer to Molitor as a “former climate change consultant” with “23 years in climate change” work with a PhD from Cambridge University. However, Molitor’s PhD is apparently in public international law. He also holds a B.A. from the University of Michigan and a Master’s degree from the London School of Economics. Why is he a *science* advisor to a major motion picture on the consequences of global warming?

Sadly, this unscientific science advisor is an example of an all-too-common occurrence in the climate-change debate on both ends of the political spectrum. Some global-warming advocates turn out to have degrees in political science; quite a few global-warming doubters hail from narrow backgrounds in theoretical physics. Both groups of pretenders could use more education in meteorology and oceanography. No wonder this movie is based on such bad science that it could not pass even an eight-year-old’s smell test!

The Day After Tomorrow concludes with Jack’s rescue of Sam and his friends at the New York Public Library, where they have been burning books to stay warm. Meanwhile, in the funniest and most spot-on societal-impact moment in the movie, desperate *Americans* flock to the *Mexican* border and cross illegally to escape the cold. Everyone lives happily ever after — south of the border because the ice and snow extend all the way into the Carolinas.

At the end, a Cheney Vice President apologizes in an international broadcast over The Weather Channel for not heeding Jack’s warnings earlier. It is a not-so-subtle bit of wish-fulfillment, as is the casting of a good-guy President who looks a little like Al Gore. That’s fiction, though, and so is much of the science in this movie. But if you remember nothing else, remember that rapid climate change has happened before and can happen again; that it involves interactions among the atmosphere, the oceans, and the ice sheets; and that ice melting due to global warming can cause it. And that whatever happens, it almost certainly will not cause snowy hurricanes and flash-freezes from above. If you learn that much, then *The Day After Tomorrow* will have educated you more than any other major motion picture this year.



John Knox is an associate research scientist and lecturer at the University of Georgia, and he received his PhD in atmospheric science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His post-doctoral work was performed at the NASA/Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York City, a world center for global-warming research. He is also a 1998 Phi Kappa Phi Fellow and a former *Forum* “Science and Technology” columnist.



Book Reviews

MICHAEL CHABON. *Michael Chabon Presents The Amazing Adventures of The Escapist, No. 1.* Milwaukie, OR: Dark Horse Books, 2004. 80 pages. \$8.95.

Imagining The Escapist

The Escapist is one of the oddest comic books I have ever read, and that is saying a lot from a fan who has collected comic books off and on for sixty years. It purports to be an anthology of early comics stories featuring one of comics history's most notable characters, and it possesses all the trappings of the conventional superhero genre — an idealistic and muscular costumed hero with a secret identity, a sinister international organization that plots to enslave humanity, and a colorful setting for the Escapist's adventures, Empire City in the 1940s and 50s, that matches up precisely with Superman's Metropolis or Batman's Gotham City. Furthermore, this first issue, "80 Pulse-Pounding Pages" splashed across its cover, leads off with the obligatory origin story that describes the mystical transformation of a crippled lad into the "Master of Illusion" who swears a sacred oath to "work for the liberation of all who toil in chains, whether of iron or ideas."

Why then "odd?" The answer lies in its provenance, hinted at by its full title — *Michael Chabon Presents The Amazing Adventures of The Escapist, Volume 1*. Chabon is the noted author of several novels including *Wonder Boys*, which was made into successful film starring Michael Douglas and Tobey Maguire, and the Pulitzer Prize winning *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*. In this latter book, set at the outset of World War II, Chabon has his two young protagonists, Joe Kavalier and Sammy Clay, create an exciting character and comic book named *The Escapist*, which quickly becomes a publishing sensation. Kavalier, who himself had just made a daring escape in a coffin from Nazi-occupied Prague, conceived of his title character as a liberator of the world's oppressed. Chabon explains that The Escapist "has been trained in the ancient art of escape and is a master of locks, chains, ropes, ties, knots, and fastenings of all kinds. Prison walls, iron bars, steel restraints, such things are child's play to him. In addition, thanks to the mystic power of the Golden Key (the symbol emblazoned on



his black costume), he has greater than normal strength and agility."

The novel is a knowing and fascinating look at what is known as the Golden Age of comic books (roughly 1940–60) when such classic superheroes as Superman, Batman, Captain Marvel, Wonder Woman, Captain America, Flash, and Hawkman were created, and their books dominated the industry. Millions of comics were published each month and, at ten cents each, were regularly devoured by America's youth. The vast majority were poorly written, and the artwork was often rushed and badly produced, although there were notable exceptions. Chabon wants us to understand that *The Escapist* was such an exception. Not only were the stories remarkable for their breadth of concern and depth of characterization, their visual representation made a dramatic breakthrough in comics storytelling inspired by the radical film techniques of Welles's *Citizen Kane*. This new graphic style is described in a text "history" of the early Escapist comics:

All of these forays into chopping up the elements of narrative, in mixing and isolating odd points of view, in stretching, as far as possible in those days of the limits of comic book storytelling, all of these exercises were, without question, raised far beyond the level of mere exercise by the unleashed inventiveness of Joe Kavalier's pencil. Joe, too, made a survey of the tools he had at hand, and found them more useful and interesting than he had before. But the daring use of perspective and shading, the radical placement of word balloons and captions, and above all the integration of narrative and picture by means of artfully disarranged, dislocated panels that stretched, shrank, opened into circles, spread across two full pages, marched diagonally toward one corner of a page, unreeled themselves like the frames of a film — all these were made possible only by the full collaboration of writer and artist together.

Well, this "history" is all well and good, except, of course, that it is entirely bogus. These graphic innovations were pioneered by either Will Eisner, the celebrated creator of *The Spirit*, a long-running newspaper comics supplement, or the legendary Jack Kirby, who gave visual expression to hundreds of superheroes from Captain America to the X-Men to the Silver Surfer. Joe Kavalier, after all, is a fictional character, and no *Escapist* comics or stories existed before this new volume was produced. I wonder what the casual reader will make of this subterfuge. Will one be led to seek out in comics shops or on e-Bay the rare and valuable early issues of "the lost superhero of the Golden Age"?

This first "new" book, a quarterly, is moderately interesting, though it suffers in comparison to the promise set out in *Kavalier and Clay*. The stories, mostly quite short, vary considerably in quality and interest, ranging from straightforward adventures to tongue-in-cheek satires and parodies. The artwork, supplied by some of comics fan favorites — Howard Chaykin, Kyle Baker, and others

— is widely disparate in character and effectiveness. Only “Reckonings,” with story, art, and lettering by the splendid Jim Starlin, meets the challenge offered by the contrived history of *The Escapist’s* achievements. It is a touching story of the effect of a mother’s death on a young girl and features not the Escapist but Kavalier and Clay’s other “creation,” the superheroine, Luna Moth. Virtually wordless, the story casts a mystical aura over the child’s encounter with death and unfolds in eight brilliantly rendered, magically composed pages. If all the stories had reached this sublime level, the arrival of *The Escapist* would be cause for celebration. Instead, what we have is merely an intriguing first outing. This book does have potential, and I will look forward to future issues with hope for a more consistent level of storytelling quality.



Robert Burns is a professor of architecture at North Carolina State University and a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. Professor Burns was selected as Phi Kappa Phi’s National Artist for 1998–2001 and was a “Forum on the Arts” columnist.

LYNNE TRUSS. *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation.* New York: Gotham Books, 2003. 240 pages. \$17.50

If Lynne Truss can make punctuation funny, as she does in *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*, then why can’t punctuation marks be comic-book superheroes (I wondered, trying to come up with a good reason to write a review about the book for this issue of the *Forum*)? Here we have our hero, the suave British full stop (known across the pond mysteriously as a *period*) that carefully controls our written language — lest the trendy dashes, “tricksy” hyphens, and ellipses go wild. Full stop is aided by the ever-trustworthy and serviceable comma, semicolon, and colon. The unreliable and often misused apostrophe flits in and out to keep things interesting (you never know when and where it’s going to show up). Exclamation points and *italics* are always drawing attention to themselves. Quotation marks live double and single lives. And what’s with that question mark, anyway? There’s enough grammatical action to keep readers enthralled for several issues!

After all these years of working with punctuation, I never imagined that it was funny — that it could take on a comic life of its own. As Lynne Truss says in her foreword to the American edition of *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*, no one ever expected the words “runaway” and “bestseller” to be associated with this book on punctuation. But it is climbing the bestseller lists here in the United States, and with good rea-

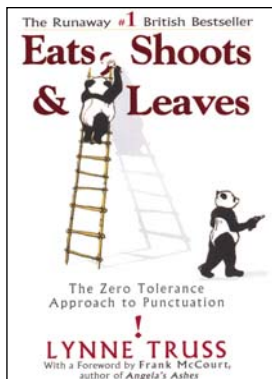
son. *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* is smart, witty, entertaining, and dare I say it: educational. Truly, a reader can revisit or perhaps even learn some important punctuation rules and have an exceptionally good time doing it. If you are, like Truss, a “stickler whose seventh sense sees dead punctuation,” then this book is the validation for which you have been waiting:

For any true stickler, you see, the sight of the plural word “Book’s” with an apostrophe in it will trigger a ghastly private emotional process similar to the stages of bereavement, though greatly accelerated. First there is shock. Within seconds, shock gives way to disbelief, disbelief to pain, and pain to anger. Finally (and this is where the analogy breaks down), anger gives way to a righteous urge to perpetuate an act of criminal damage with the aid of a permanent marker (1–2).

If you are now experiencing a moment of self-recognition of your inner stickler, then *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* is a must-read for you. All of this and a panda joke, too....



Stephanie Bond is an associate editor at the *Phi Kappa Phi Forum*.



**FORTHCOMING
ISSUES**

Fall 2004
PROFESSORS PROFESSING

Winter 2005
THE HUMAN BRAIN

Letters to the Editor

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

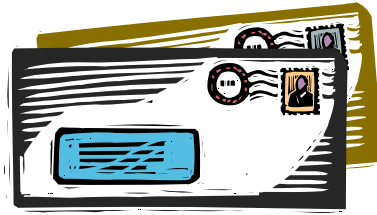
Roger Goldblatt, in a Fall 2003 letter ["Globalization," p. 46], complains about the "right-wing spin" of the news media, and writes "The myth of the liberal media is just that — a myth." Well, Mr. Goldblatt, many of us on the right have complained for years about the leftward tilt of the dominant media reporting, so I guess it should come as no surprise that those on the left would want to neutralize the criticism by claiming the exact opposite, hoping that the moderates will conclude that the news media must be fair and balanced if they are getting attacked from both ends of the political spectrum.

Evidence for the dominantly liberal view of the news media can be found, however, in the writings of the ABC News Political unit at this Web site: http://www.abcnews.go.com/sections/politics/TheNote/TheNote_Feb1004.html. A few excerpts are quoted here:

Like every other institution, the Washington and political press corps operate with a good number of biases and predilections.

They include, but are not limited to, a near-universal shared sense that liberal political positions on social issues like gun control, homosexuality, abortion, and religion are the default, while more conservative positions are "conservative positions."

They include a belief that government is a mechanism to solve the nation's problems; that more taxes on corporations and the wealthy are good ways to cut the deficit and raise money for social spending and don't have a negative affect on economic growth; and that emotional examples of



suffering (provided by unions or consumer groups) are good ways to illustrate economic statistic stories.

Interested readers can check out the ABC News Web site link for more details.

While the news may appear conservative to Mr. Goldblatt, it is because Mr. Goldblatt's own viewpoint is so far to the left of the vast majority of Americans.

Steven R. Snow
Gilford, New Hampshire

THE ESSENTIAL ROLE FOR NEWS MEDIA

“The Essential Role for News Media” includes clarifying for the public what words mean and when they are being spun (Deni Elliott, *Forum*, Winter 2004). Thoughtless use by the media of the phrase “Weapons of Mass Destruction” and the acronym “WMD” allowed the Bush administration and others pushing for war in Iraq to conflate mustard gas and hydrogen bombs. Chemical, biological, and radiological weapons (CBR) are nasty, but they are at worst lethal terror weapons. CBR weapons do not destroy things at all, much less massively (although a radiological weapon using, say, plutonium will render things unusable for a very long time); CBR weapons kill people — though usually less effectively than high explosives. As Gwynne Dyer has pointed out, “the anthrax attacks in the United States in 2001 killed five people” and the Aum Shinrikyo nerve-gas attack in the Tokyo subway in 1995 killed a dozen. The recent conventional bombings in Madrid killed 201. Preventing an attack on the United States with weapons of mass destruction — that is, as a practical matter, a nuclear attack — would justify the deaths of

more than 700 U.S. troops and several thousand Iraqis; slightly lowering the possibility of a CBR attack on an American city does not justify sustaining and/or inflicting more than a handful of casualties.

If a gassed Kurd wants to call sarin or mustard gas a “weapon of mass destruction,” I won't argue the point, nor would I push the issue with someone dying after an attack with militarized anthrax. Ungassed, healthy reporters, however — and their spinmeister sources — should have to argue that “CBR weapons are weapons of mass destruction because _____,” not sneak the assertion in under most people's critical-thinking radar.

Richard D. Erlich
Oxford, Ohio

FORUM ON THE ARTS

As an admittedly amateur musician (and certainly a person whose credentials are not worthy of mention, much less comparison to Mr. Thurmaier's) I must still take issue with his suggestion that “Instead of shying away from what is unfamiliar to us, why not embrace it?” [“New Music and the Wounded Dragon,” Spring 2004]. Eating dog food is unfamiliar to me, but I am definitely not going to embrace it. I am one of the individuals who is seemingly incapable of “embracing” music that seems not to be music at all. I believe that one of the primary functions of art is to entertain. I understand that not all artistic expressions are meant to entertain, but in the end art succeeds better when it does, at least on some level. (That's why I reluctantly concede that “rap” is a form of art. Don't call me close-minded.)

Mr. Thurmaier compared Bach's second *Brandenburg Concerto* with John Cage's *4'33"* as an example of two different types of music, both of which are deserving of critical acclaim (unless I completely misunderstood his point). I'm sorry, Mr. Thurmaier, but there is no way to call *4'33"* a work of art, much less a work of music comparable to ANY work composed by Bach. If *4'33"*

can be called a work of art, then I just finished one of the greatest performances of this masterpiece in its almost fifty-two year history! So did my cat! And I have some blank CDs of the performances to prove it.

Seriously — I contend that Mr. Bach put in a LOT more time, effort, and imagination in the writing of the *Brandenburg Concertos* than did Mr. Cage in the “composition” of 4’33”. And that sir, is why people would rather listen to Bach than “listen” to Cage. Simply, Bach demonstrated more discipline, more creativity, and crafted something that none of us today could do better than imitate. We cannot say the same for most contemporary music, in which even the composers cannot tell whether the musicians make a mistake.

I know that John Cage was making the philosophical “statement” that there is no such thing as silence. I know that this was a “turning point in musical theory.” But perhaps I (like many of the under-musically-educated masses) am simply like the boy who was unable to see the king’s beautiful new clothing. We will have to take the word of those who are far more literate in the arts than ourselves. And then, perhaps someday our great-great-grandchildren will sit around their stereos and listen to a brilliant performance of 4’33”.

Mike Jackson
Dacula, Georgia

LITERACY

Donna Clark Schubert’s view that “those that lack literacy skills are more likely than others to suffer from heart disease, diabetes and prostate cancer” [“Literacy,” Spring 2004] certainly has caught my attention. Let me get this straight: Had I only stayed longer in college and pursued a PhD instead of two paltry MS degrees I could have avoided prostate cancer? Not only that, but my obvious lack of literacy skills resulted in my incomplete understanding that prostate cancer, diabetes, and heart disease really have nothing to do with genetics, poor choices, or environmental factors? Perhaps the millions of dollars spent on medical research

could be better used for literacy programs. I guess I will now have to modify my life choices and upgrade my literacy skills. I know, while I am speeding around the countryside on my mountain bike, sipping on a V-8, I will listen to books on tape. Sound ridiculous? No more so than the conclusions drawn in Donna Clark Schubert’s article.

Jack Moroney
Colonel, US Army Special Forces
(retired)

What an illuminating issue on adult literacy, one of the skeletons in the closet of the United States. I would also like to draw your attention to the broader issues of worldwide illiteracy; many countries are quite a lot worse off than America. One of the reasons for this is the incredible diversity of languages in many countries of the world. Ghana, where I worked for eleven years, has about sixty languages, and that is not even close to the record. Of the approximately 6,800 languages in the world (see www.ethnologue.com), perhaps half still do not even have a writing system, let alone a core of fluent readers. (I do not say “alphabet,” because writing systems can include syllabaries and other systems as well as alphabets.) One of the organizations which is highly engaged in combating this is SIL International [formerly known as Summer Institute of Linguistics] (www.sil.org). In keeping with its work in language development, which also includes linguistic analysis and Bible translation, field workers with SIL to date have devised writing systems for more than 1,200 languages that were previously unwritten. They also have developed, in partnership with the local people, practical literacy programs that are adapted to local cultural conditions — perhaps one-on-one mentoring rather than classes, perhaps teaching by kerosene lanterns in the evening rather than day classes, respecting people’s busy farming seasons, and so on.

Complexities in writing systems abound, of course, but we have found that with a phonemically based system (approximately, one sound per symbol and one symbol per sound), it is often possible to teach people to read in months or

even weeks, rather than years as in English (for which we still have spell-checkers, spelling bees, and other manifestations of the hodge-podge that is English spelling!). We also have found, through much experience, that literacy is better taught first in the mother tongue. If it is taught in a major language instead, there are two huge steps — learning the language, and the mechanics of reading — instead of just the one very major step of reading.

Literacy not only connects speakers of these languages with the larger world, often protecting people from economic exploitation that may have gone on for decades, but it also can act to preserve the language and culture of the speakers of that language. The burden of illiteracy often falls disproportionately on women, and literacy is a step in raising the status of women in a particular language group (especially when the women are more keen to learn than the men, which not infrequently happens).

I do enjoy the theme issues of the *Phi Kappa Phi Forum*; keep up the good work.

Mike Cahill
Duncanville, Texas