

## Chapter 5

### Historical Approaches

This chapter summarises various historical accounts of comics. It begins with a selection of publications that offer a global history of comics. It then examines scholarship that has documented the development of comics in particular regions (Europe, America, Asia, and Africa). The concluding section on transnationalism considers publications that have explicitly focused on the links that have developed between regions.

#### Global

Roger Sabin's *Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels* (1996) sets out a coherent and extensive historical view of comics, describing the 'rise, fall and resurrection of the medium' (1) across generations, primarily focused on Britain and America. While Sabin notes the presence of sequential art and comics antecedents in the Middle Ages, his analysis really begins with the invention of the printing press. He analyses early predecessors such as 'penny dreadfuls' (cheap popular serialised pamphlets that told lurid tales) and magazines such as *Punch* and *Ally Sloper* (and their American equivalents *Puck*, *Life* and *Judge*). He considers early woodcut illustrations, noting the use of modern comics conventions such as word balloons, speed lines (streaks that give a sense of speed) and juxtaposed words and images. Sabin storifies comics' pre- and early history as a process of reorientation that, from around 1930, reframed low-quality satire as brightly coloured slapstick, transforming comics' audiences from adults to children. Sabin's subsequent chapters explore the emergence of new titles and genres, including adventure stories, television/film

adaptations, the superhero comics that took America by storm after *Action Comics* #1 launched 'Superman' in 1938, and the 1940s controversy over American crime and horror comics. Other chapters also consider the history of British girls' comics, which Sabin combines with a discussion of Wonder Woman.

Sabin draws attention to the backlash against early comics (as vulgar, coarse, and gauche) and their transition into newspaper strips, and the subsequent attacks on the comedy publications as violent and illiterate. He flags up that the discourse around comics has frequently been contradictory, as comics are often both sentimentalised and criticised: tolerated as humorous or childish entertainment but deemed not respectable. He claims children's comics have never escaped this set of contradictions until the present moment, the pathway to which is traced through the book's latter chapters, beginning with the emergence of underground comix in the 1960s and then the attempts of the comics industry to revitalize itself and the ways this has shaped the fan market that exists today. From *2000AD* and *Heavy Metal* to *Watchmen* and *The Dark Knight Returns*, and the subsequent emergence of companies such as Image Comics and titles such as *Raw*, *Maus* and *Love and Rockets*, Sabin traces how the industry has tried to bounce back and fight against the restrictions and assumptions that have historically been directed at it. Although not truly global in its scope, Sabin's history puts British and American comics in dialogue with each other within a coherent timeline and draws conclusions based on detailed historical knowledge and analysis of the styles and subjects that comics were offering at various points.

Other works such as Paul Sassienné's *The Comic Book* (1994), or Ron Goulart's *Comic Book Culture: An Illustrated History* (2000) offer similar histories but have slightly different emphases. Both seem aimed at comics collectors or

enthusiasts. Goulart's book focuses on the American industry, starting with 'Famous Funnies', and with its main emphasis on the golden age and the superhero genre. There are chapters devoted to key creators, the impact of the war, artistic style, and a section on collecting that closes the book. Sassienne's book has four sections, which cover comics history, comics culture, comics collecting, and grading and assessing the value of comics. The historical section focuses almost entirely on America (plus a small section on Britain's golden age) and takes us through the dates when key titles and characters first appeared. It contains many cover illustrations but no reprints of interior pages. Sassienne's history is informative but largely descriptive: summarising content or tone but without analysis or reflection. His practical advice on collecting is now somewhat outdated, but his comments on unscrupulous dealers gives an interesting picture of the exploitation that was common in the 1990s comics market, which (due to the well-publicised sales of a few *Action Comics* #1) preyed on gullible collectors and amateurs unable to distinguish between a good and bad investment. The second half of his book is devoted to an index of creators, listing their date of birth and their best-known work, a glossary of terms, and an extended index of comics titles and their publishers, which contains a large number of imprints or subsidiaries although its time period is not well delineated.

More recently, Tim Pilcher and Brad Brooks' *The Essential Guide to World Comics* (2005) and Paul Gravett's *Graphic Novels: Stories to Change your Life* (2005) offer more truly global histories of comics. Pilcher and Brooks' *World Comics* is aimed at the casual reader or fan and aims to extend their knowledge beyond the basics (which they define as American superheroes, British humour titles, a smattering of continental books such as *Tintin* or *Asterix*, and the use of manga as a

catch-all term). Although it suffers from space limitations, this book considers many countries: Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, China, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Korea (and the work of cartoonists who have fled from areas such as Vietnam and Cambodia); the Netherlands, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Spain, and Portugal; the smaller comics cultures of Eastern Europe (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Central Europe, and Poland); South American countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Cuba; Scandinavia; Australasia, and the development of homegrown comics in India (which it claims began in 1969), and Africa (where the industry has struggled due to a lack of finance, poor distribution, and negative perceptions). While many of its sections are very brief, *World Comics* does well to address so many underwritten regions. It does not provide much analysis of individual titles, but instead summarises the historical development of the comics industry in each country, noting major publishing houses and the names and works of the most famous creators.

Paul Gravett's lavishly illustrated *Graphic Novels: Stories to Change your Life* (2005) explores the historical development of the comics medium from the perspective of the recent graphic novel movement. Gravett explains the development of the term, analysing its connotations and responding to common 'things to hate about comics'. He goes on to discuss different aspects of the medium, with each chapter focusing on pages and extracts from key texts. His book covers a great deal of ground, from superheroes to underground to autobiography to crime and many more genres and key texts. While the main case study of each chapter is a well-known text, Gravett also offers multiple 'following on' suggestions of lesser-known works: bringing in comics from all over the world and in many different styles and formats. These extracts are all annotated: explaining plot events but also drawing the reader's attention to moments where the medium is used effectively, or giving

additional information about the style, language, or artwork. As such, the book provides analysis as well as acting as a reference book or cultural history.

Most recently, Gravett's *Comics Art* (2014) explores and explains the diversity of styles, media and approaches now possible in comics. It flags up the intersections of comics and fine art through key figures such as Picasso and Dali and then investigates the particular properties of comics (speech balloons, panelling, etc), noting that the medium's flexibility makes it difficult to arrive at a clear definition, which has consistently led to debates about 'the first comic'. These stylistic features structure the rest of the book, as subsequent chapters examine silent comics (which have a much larger presence in countries such as Germany and with independent publishers); the use of page layout, panel composition and reading order (to affect pace, mood, and meaning); the tensions and controversies that have arisen around the medium (such as accusations of classist, racist and sexist stereotyping); and the strengths of comics' treatments of genres such as autobiography. The final two chapters analyse the breadth of possible artistic styles and techniques, and the impact of the digital revolution on comics. The book is an engaging combination as each chapter explores comics history alongside a different aspect of the medium's formal properties, using anecdotal background combined with close analyses of individual titles that demonstrate the points being made.

Gravett's *1001 Comics You Must Read Before You Die* (2011) also deserves a brief mention. It is obviously and deliberately global in its scope, compiled by sixty-seven experts in twenty-seven countries. While it does not offer any critical commentary or analysis, it is a fantastic list of titles that new (and old) comics readers should make themselves aware of. These include brief summaries and accompanying illustrations of selected titles which are arranged historically (in

chapters such as 'Pre-1930', '1930-49' and so forth, up until '2000-Present'), and so this book can also be read as providing a historicist summary of the development of the comics medium, although there is no linking narrative.

In addition to the above critical resources, Dan Nadel's richly illustrated volumes *Art Out of Time: Unknown Comics Visionaries, 1900-1969* (2006) and *Art in Time: Unknown Comic Book Adventures, 1940-1980* (2010) reprint often forgotten comic strips and stories. These volumes are a precious source of material that often remains overlooked by comics histories. Additional reference books include Dan Mazur and Alexander Danner's *Comics: A Global History, 1968 to the Present* (2014). Finally, the *Bibliographies and Indexes in Popular Culture* series published by Praeger includes a number of 'international bibliographies' of comics compiled by John Lent, beginning with *Comic Art of Europe: An International, Comprehensive Bibliography* (1994), *Animation, Caricature, and Gag and Political Cartoons in the United States and Canada: An International Bibliography* (1994), and *Comic Books and Comic Strips in the United States: An International Bibliography* (1994). These were followed by *Comic Art in Africa, Asia, Australia, and Latin America: A Comprehensive, International Bibliography* (1996), followed by a subsequent set of six volumes covering the period up until 2000 in Europe (two volumes), the USA/Canada (three volumes), Africa, Asia, Australia/Oceania, and Latin America/Caribbean (one volume). These books are hard to get hold of and are not discussion-based, but instead are lists of critical citations relating to comics published in these countries (and taking in animation, caricature, strips, gags, political cartoons, magazine appearances, and so forth). They include citation details for scholarly pieces as well as news articles, reviews, magazine features, fanzines, and so forth. Although no detail, summary or analysis is given of any of these pieces,

the lists may provide a useful (albeit dated) starting point for those needing to research a topic to its fullest.

## Europe

David Kunzle's *History of the Comic Strip* (two volumes, 1973 and 1990) is a landmark text in the historical analysis of comics, although sadly out of print and hard to obtain. In Volume 1 (*The Early Comic Strip*) Kunzle examines comic strips taken from European broadsheets between 1450 and 1825. He defines 'comic strip' as a sequence of four or more images with accompanying text conveying 'moral' or 'topical propaganda'. These subjects include religious propaganda, crime and punishment, public vices and follies, and additional chapters focus more closely on various countries such as France, the Netherlands, and England, and on artists such as Hogarth and Goya.

Volume 2 (*The Nineteenth Century*) then considers the period 1827-1896; an endpoint that emphasises Kunzle's key argument, which is that European comics far predate the 'first' American strip of 1896. While the book has a strong focus on Western Europe, it also incorporates some insights on developments in other countries such as Russia, Spain, Italy, and Austria. Kunzle examines the work of Swiss artist Rudolphe Töpffer, the French artists Honoré Daumier, Cham (Charles Amédée de Noé), Gustave Doré and Léonce Petit, and the German artist Wilhelm Busch. He takes the contexts of industrial and social revolutions into account and argues that the work of many of these artists makes social comments, for example by mocking social norms (Töpffer), addressing propaganda (Doré), articulating a clash between the bourgeoisie and the peasants (Petit), or satirising religion (Busch).

Kunzle's history contends that processes of cultural exclusion led to the

development of the political cartoon, morality tales, and the association of caricature with humour and lower prestige. He stresses, however, that the comic strip audience intersected generations and social classes. He also uses his analysis to deconstruct the development of visual language in comic strips, identifying the appearance of elements such as the depiction of motion (for example the presence of speed lines in the earliest works from Töpffer), oscillation and rotation, and the employment of different angles of perspective or framing choices. He also discusses the changing relationship between image and caption (initially duplicative, but in more satirical works sometimes contradictory for humorous effect). Overall, his survey demonstrates the emergence of new formats and the crossing of different styles between countries. Both books are oversized hardbacks, packed full of detail of different artists and titles, including numerous extracts and illustrations.

Kunzle's emphasis on the development of comics vocabularies in the light of the burgeoning nineteenth-century visual culture make his book particularly exciting. It can be complemented by art historian Patricia Mainardi's work on the rise of the illustrated press in France and Britain in *Another World: Nineteenth-Century Illustrated Print Culture* (2017). Mainardi's art-historical perspective, however, often overlooks important details regarding the transformation of comics culture. In contrast, Thierry Smolderen's *Naissances de la bande dessinée* (2009), translated by Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen as *The Origins of Comics: From William Hogarth to Windsor McCay* (2014), covers a temporally and geographically broader slice of visual culture with a strong focus on comics. This includes the relationships between comics and early instances of caricature and other undisciplined drawing: Smolderen draws connections with the graffiti that appear in some of Hogarth's masterfully drawn prints and with the rise of caricature. He also uncovers the implications of



drawing styles and their relationship to their cultural and media contexts. While comparable in its contextually detailed and embedded nature to studies such as Ian Gordon's *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture* (see below), *Origins of Comics* stands out in its focus on the visual nature of comics drawing. Smolderen also introduces the concept of 'polygraphy', a graphic pendant to Mikhail Bakhtin's 'polyphony', the coexistence of multiple voices in the novel. For Smolderen, polygraphy is an indispensable part of comics vocabulary and highlights the complexity of the medium, particularly the historical and cultural depth of drawing and style as it references and reworks the connotations of other visual practices. The key message from these works is that comics develop and thrive in a rich constellation of cultural and media influences.

*The French Comics Theory Reader* (20214), edited by Ann Miller and Bart Beaty, reprints selected key articles and extracts, including some historicist accounts of French comics history. Gérard Blanchard's 'The Origins of Stories in Images' (a short extract from his 1969 book) seeks to unmoor *bande dessinée* from a narrow Americocentric definition. He traces the pre-history of comics art back to its earliest days of prehistoric 'picture stories', noting the use of both 'art' (which portrays events and actions and things) and 'the sign' (which indicates words, thoughts, feelings) in these images and stating that these two main means of communication, the concrete and the abstract, promote a double reading and recur constantly through the history of stories in pictures. He extends this to pictographs and alphabetic writing, also taking in religious iconography and the Bayeux Tapestry (whose allegorical borders of scenes of Aesop's fables enhance the emotional meaning of its scenes). Medieval iconography, books of religious teachings, and phylacteria (speech scrolls used in art that contained scriptures, which Blanchard likens to speech balloons), are all

discussed as forerunners of the comic book. With the invention of the printing press and the emergence of woodcut religious tracts, these 'pamphlets' or 'episodes' become even more reminiscent of comics as Blanchard stresses that both needed an interpreter who 'knew' how to read them and could explain the story or fill in the rest from the fragment of scripture given. He argues that the subsequent emergence of printed books is significant in establishing certain patterns of reading, but also stresses the relevance of the stream of pamphlets, seditious songs, lampoons, and political and religious activism that developed alongside it. From medieval folklore to today's popular traditions, he argues, people's need for the supernatural has been ever-present and satisfied in one form or another.

In 'Graphic Hybridization' (2014), Thierry Smolderen looks back to the mid-nineteenth century to trace the evolution of modern comics. He calls the comic strip an obvious example of graphic hybridization [...] the intersection of two artistic practices that had developed in unrelated environments: thus the ancient phylacteria grafted onto sequences of images inspired by the new technique of chronophotography, engendered, after a period of experimentation, an *audiovisual stage on paper* (47, italics in original).

Situating this new format within the visual culture of the period allows Smolderen to consider the ways in which early cartoonists incorporated 'new ways of seeing (the Daguerre plate, the view through a microscope, instant photography, the kinoscope, X-rays, the artistic avant-garde, Japonism, etc.)' into the language of their cartoons (48). In 1857, *The Illustrated London News* printed a woodcut of the view through a microscope and in 1870, its competitor, *The Graphic*, published a parody piece, 'Pantomime Microscope', offering similar examples based on the telegraph, the X-Ray, and electricity (where the electric wire becomes the panel

border). Smolderen explains 'how the image of the cartoon worked, how the familiar and the new mutually illuminated each other, producing meaning by means of an image that is all the more memorable for being unexpected – because it is created by *hybridization*' (51). He stresses that the result is not merely an observation of contemporary society and its new technologies, but rather an application of its techniques to visual style, enlivening the medium, and empowering the public to play with these ideas.

Other articles in *The French Comics Theory Reader* also consider the more recent history of comics publishing and its evolution in the twentieth century. Barthélémy Schwartz writes 'On Indigence' (1986) and notes the lack of author function in comics prior to the 1960s, when anonymous stories were published by stables such as *Spirou*, *Tintin* and *Mickey*. Continuing his racing metaphor, he then cites the numerous 'horses' that overtook the stables (such as Pratt, Tardi, Caza, and Moebius) and the 1970s boom in 'little magazines' such as *Charlie Mensual*, *L'Écho des Savanes* and *Métal Hurlant* which was then followed by market expansion. He thus denies the distinction between 'auteurist' and 'commercial' comics, claiming they are both cultural commodities and noting the rise of a market around this in the 1980s. He critiques artists who do not expect to be treated like workers and argues that the market is run by salesmen and thus accords with this ideology. His ideas echo Boltanski's (1975) sociological analysis of the expansion of the industry (see Chapter 4) in drawing attention to the troublesome position of comics as situated between artistic aura and commercial object.

Other scholars offer historical analyses that look at particular periods of significance in French comics history; for example Pascal Ory's book *Le Petit Nazi Illustré* [*The Nazi Boy's Own*] (2002) first considers the impact of American comics

on the French market during the 1930s when they were imported and distributed by Paul Winkler's agency Opera Mundi and their popularity heavily reduced the sales of French titles. The war itself then damaged sales of all comics and by 1942 the handful of surviving publishers had amalgamated their publications into just 15 or so magazines, with a notable drop in print quality and regularity. The content of the comics was also affected by wartime and nationalist ideologies, as American strips were banned, and in the early 1940s all the popular heroes (Tarzan, Mandrake) disappeared mid-action and without explanation, to be replaced by homegrown imitations. Ory looks closely at the historical figure Marshal Pétain (who stands for both the Empire and rural France) and the magazine *Benjamin* (launched July 1940), self-described as a 'Completely French Magazine'. He demonstrates how these nationalist characters and publications led to comics such as *Le Téméraire* [*The Bold One*] (41 issues, 1943-44) which was the sole children's magazine published in Paris at this time. Ory gives data on the fascist ideologies found in the various pages of the magazine and exposes the private funding through which the German occupying power controlled the media and notes the employment of local artists and writers.

Along similar lines, Erwin Dejasse and Philippe Capart explore the Belgium comics market via what they term the 'loss of serialisation' from publishers Dupuis and Lombard. Noting the pre-1960s incarnations of strips such as *Spirou* or *Tintin* in two-page instalments within a bigger comic, they argue that this created 'a mode of reading that was essentially fragmentary' (313). The gap in time and space between each issue contributed to comics as 'an art of discontinuity' (314) that stimulates the reader's imagination between panels and between issues and offers a 'live' experience of reading the strip. *Tintin's* move to 'maxi chapters' of around ten pages each in 1969 had consequences for the creators (who could not produce material at

this rate) and the publication (which could not print its 'star' strips in the same issue any more due to limited pagination). While there were positive benefits (space to develop sequences that would have been compressed in the old format) this change 'broke up an almost biological rhythm' (317) and destroyed the ritualistic element of its audience's habitual reading. Subsequent collection and republication, and the dominance of the forty-eight or sixty-four page album placed artificial breaks into the narrative, leading Dejasse and Capart to conclude that the album itself is now a fragment and that the readership has been conditioned to accept the restrictions of format offered, no matter how unsuitable they might be.

In terms of Nordic comics, Fredrik Strömberg's *Swedish Comics History* (2010) surveys this industry's development from around the end of the eighteenth century (although also touching on much earlier examples such as Viking stone etchings), with numerous translated examples and lavish illustrations. Numerous books exist focusing on other European countries, ranging in style and approach. For example David Roach's *Masters of Spanish Comic Book Art* (2017) briefly summarises the history of Spanish comics and the main agencies and publishers, but then takes a primarily biographical approach, showcasing the work of the many significant artists who contributed extensively to British and American comics.

One notable text here is Santiago García's *La novela gráfica* (2010), translated by Bruce Campbell as *On the Graphic Novel* (2015), which is one of the few histories to put European and American history in dialogue. Discussed in Chapter 3, it draws parallels between the changing cultural positions of comics in Spain and America in particular. Moving on to consider the Russian context, two key works are José Alaniz's *Komiks: Comics Art in Russia* (2009) and John Etty's *Graphic Satire in the Soviet Union: Krokodil's Political Cartoons* (2019). While Alaniz

provides a history of Soviet and post-Soviet comics that explores their varying fortunes during the turbulent collapse of the USSR, Etty nuances the propagandist image of the long-running illustrated satire magazine *Krokodil*.

Finally, the Internet also contains some historical summaries of individual countries' comics industries. Marcos Farrajota (2015) summarises the development of Portuguese comics, arguing that the industry has not developed in a smooth and linear manner, but through a series of starts and interruptions, beginning with Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro's satires, albums, and autobiographical cartoons (1881) and the work of his contemporaries such as Carlos Botelho. Magazines such as *Visão* (1975–76) and *Lx Comics* (1990-91) picked up the baton after the April 25 Revolution, but for Farrajota the Portuguese industry today is characterised by individuals working in isolation and a lack of interest from the public at large.

Turning to the UK, scholarship on early comics is limited. Books such as Denis Gifford's *Happy Days: A Century of British Comics* (1975) are predominantly collections of illustrations (in this instance taken from comics between 1870-1970). Gifford's short introduction names *Funny Folks* (1874) as the first British comic, although this accolade remains in dispute.<sup>1</sup> Joyce Goggin's chapter 'Of Gutters and Guttersnipes: Hogarth's Legacy' (2010) in *The Rise and Reason of Comic and Graphic Literature* looks closely at the commercial underpinnings of Hogarth's work, arguing that it stands as both high and low culture, thus resolving issues of commerciality that have been problematic for comics theorists.

James Chapman's *British Comics* (2011) traces the development of the

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<sup>1</sup> Gravett (2014) also notes the Lucca Comics Festival's 1989 attempt to define the first comic as 1896, using the *Yellow Kid*, and the dispute from historians such as Denis Gifford. Other contenders for the title of first comic include *The Glasgow Looking Glass* (1825), an 'illustrated newspaper' that contained a comic strip in its fourth issue.

British comics industry from the late nineteenth century to the present day. He is particularly concerned to situate the country's most famous titles in their cultural context and covers a diverse range of publications and genres in individual chapters: Ally Sloper; the *Eagle*; anthology cartoon comics (*Beano*, *Dandy*); girls' comics (*Girl*, *Bunty*, *Misty*); boys' adventure and war stories (*Battle*, *Action*); science fiction (*2000AD*) superheroics (*Marvelman/Miracleman*, *Zenith*); and the adult and alternative (*Escape*, *Viz*, *Warrior*). Chapman argues that British comics and characters strongly reflect their culture and eras, although he only describes the British cultural moment in the broadest of strokes and his theoretical backing is mostly implied; instead, he supports his claims with numerous comparisons to film, television and literature.

Chapman opens by considering comics' redefinition from adult to child literature in the context of the world wars, using the primary case study of 'Jane' in the *Daily Mirror*. Subsequent chapters also provide a contextual focus as he examines the ways in which the British censorship campaign set the stage for more moral titles such as the *Eagle*, and the rise of domestic television in the 1960s as evidence of an overarching visuality in entertainment media at this time. His focus in early chapters is on the adventure comics of this time and the ways in which they redefine masculinity: as sports comics exploit the rhetoric of Empire-building and British dominance and war comics demonstrate the 'pleasure culture of war' (cited from Paris 2000). This is contrasted with the marketing of girls' comics through processes of differentiation rather than with ideological motivations. Chapman puts the comics within this genre in dialogue with each other, for example citing *Bunty's* lower-class protagonists and social plotlines as a response to titles such as *Girl* and *School Friend*. He also considers the controversy over the content of titles such as

*Action* and offers a detailed account of the British anti-comics campaigns. The rise of behemoths such as *2000AD* is contextualised against the backdrop of dystopian cinema, and he also considers the British superhero and alternative comics. An overarching argument that the failure of the British adult comix market led directly to imprints such as DC Vertigo links the last few chapters.

While other books such as Graham Kibble-White's *The Ultimate Book of British Comics* (2005) are more encyclopaedia-type reference books that list titles along with summaries of their creators and content, Chapman's book is the first analytical history to focus exclusively on British comics. It does an admirable job of covering much ground while still giving detail through case studies and reprints of primary material. Chapman draws on theses from UK academics and offers clear cause-and-effect arguments that are retrospectively apparent for many of the changes and notable trends, although some of his claims, for example about adult/child readerships, are disputed. Although *British Comics* does not move far beyond the areas already covered by Sabin (see above in this chapter) and Barker (see Chapter 3), it does offer both range and depth.

Other books that focus on particular aspects of British cartooning history include Nicola Streeten and Cath Tate's *The Inking Woman* (2018). This illustrated hardback shines a light on female creators working in particular subgenres and at particular times, with chapters dedicated to artists such as Mary Darly and Marie Duval, and others on more general topics like 'Women's suffrage in cartoons', Zines/DIY, postcards, and groups such as Laydeez do Comics. Each chapter is made up of short biographies and summaries of the work of relevant female creators, accompanied by full-colour illustrations of their art (women comic artists are discussed further in Chapter 6).



## North America, Canada, and South America

Historical surveys of American comics generally keep a tight focus on a particular time-period or aspect of the industry. Les Daniels' *Comix: A History of Comic Books in America* (1973) is an illustrated summary of the development of the industry in North America, beginning with Outcault's *Yellow Kid* in 1896. Subsequent chapters discuss the creation and emergence of comic books, dating back to *Funnies on Parade* (1933), and then examine in turn the 'funny animal' comics and strips; EC Comics, and the pre-Code horror comics; the Comics Code controversy; the subsequent 'New Direction' comics; Marvel Comics; and the underground (see also Chapter 10). Daniels combines wider anecdotal summaries of the industry with close textual analysis and reprints of full stories. He concludes that comics' mixed media and fantastic subject matter have led to them being marginalized and treated condescendingly, but that their freedom of form and content makes them key to the American character.

Other writers have examined overlooked aspects of the North American industry's development, such as Trina Robbins' *From Girls to Grrrlz: A History of Women's Comics from Teens to Zines* (1999). Robbins summarises the (often forgotten) range of titles aimed at women, such as the teen titles that grew from the success of *Archie* in the early 1940s and the subsequent boom in romance comics. All these female titles, however, fell victim to the slump of the late 1950s, and although the 1960s saw the romance comics try to cash in on rock and roll and the hippie movement, they struggled to engage with women's liberation and by 1964 superhero titles dominated.

Robbins then considers the following two decades, explaining how an explosion of feminist underground newspapers all over America in the 1960s led to her own involvement in creating *It Ain't Me, Babe* (1970). This was the first all-women comic to take on the mostly male world of underground comics and was followed by many more, dealing with themes such as liberation, masturbation, menstruation, abortion and, a few years later, lesbianism. Robbins notes that attempts to put out anthologies dealing with women's sexuality were always problematic and attracted censorship and outrage, even against the taboo-exploding backdrop of the male underground. Her final chapter, on the 1990s, summarises the mainstream's continued divergence from political and underground work. She bemoans the lack of comics for children or women and discusses some self-published 'zines and a few outstanding examples of romance comics, alongside the formation of initiatives such as the Friends of Lulu. Throughout, Robbins' book combines brief plot summaries and direct quotes, and is liberally scattered with colour illustrations of pages and covers, giving a strong sense of what these comics were about.

Jumping forward, several more recent books have surveyed the development of the North American industry from various angles. Jean-Paul Gabillet's *Des Comics et des hommes: histoire culturelle des comic books aux États-Unis* (2005), translated by Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen as *Of Comics and Men: A Cultural History of American Comic Books* (2009), focuses on the social and economic relationships that have structured the development of the American comics industry. Gabillet considers both internal and external types of consecration and explores their contribution to the visibility, recognition, and cultural legitimacy of comics. In summarising, he points out that, while the graphic novel format has shifted comics

towards the field of adult culture, the inertia of the monthly market has simultaneously trapped the medium in adolescent culture.

Gabillet's book remains one of the most thorough historical accounts of American comics from the mid-nineteenth century until today. The first and longest part of the book covers the rise of comics and comic books from the mid-nineteenth century until the early twenty-first century. The second section discusses comics creation and publishing as well as comics readers. The book's final section considers the issue of comics legitimization. *Of Comics and Men* also provides a bibliographic essay that covers archives and databases as well as thematic and historical studies. While Gabillet moves through the nineteenth century and early twentieth century fairly quickly, Ian Gordon's *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture, 1890-1945* (discussed further in Chapter 7) focuses on a shorter period to draw out the extent to which early comics were embedded in an expanding commodity culture and contributed to it. Often resorting to popular, well-known comics such as *Buster Brown* and *Gasoline Alley*, Gordon also explores the European influences on American comics, the interrogation of the supposed Americanness of comics and their racist imagery.

*The Rise of the American Comics Artist* (2010), edited by Paul Williams and James Lyons, assembles essays that explore the development of the industry through various lenses, including the figure of the creator and the changing contexts of creativity, publication, and reception. It is split into five sections. The first considers how publishing and branding developments such as the creation of the 'graphic novel' format and an influx of international creators have been used to enhance the cultural capital of the industry. Stephen Weiner explores the history of the 'graphic novel' concept, which was famously claimed as inaugurated by Will Eisner, although

clearly apparent in the works of predecessors such as Rudolphe Töpffer. Julia Round examines the material and connotative value of this term and the way it has been used to reshape the American industry, and Chris Murray argues that the 'British invasion' of US comics in the 1980s was also, in many ways, a 'lit invasion'. (This concept of a 'literary invasion' foregrounds the emphasis that was placed on British writers, although later work from scholars like Murray, Isabelle Licari Guillaume, and Christophe Dony, conceptualises this period more as a moment of transnational exchange.) The collection's second section explores the dialogue between American comics and international events, with chapters on civil liberties (Murphy) and political journalism in the work of Joe Sacco (Rosenblatt and Lunsford). Section three sets up and explores the dichotomy between employee and artist and associated cultural capital, while section four considers the politicization of identity in comics, examining depictions of national and gendered identities and sexuality in key underground texts. Finally, section five analyses the continuing legacy of landmark works such as *Maus* and the continued novelistic ambitions of comics as displayed in titles such as Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*. While this collection does not offer a historical timeline, it does engage with many issues that are key to understanding the development of American comics and their relevance to the contemporary cultural moment.

In *Demanding Respect: The Evolution of the American Comic Book* (2014), Paul Lopes directs his gaze firmly at cultural significance: presenting an evolutionary narrative of American comics, which have developed from an industrial age into a 'heroic age' (Bourdieu), whereby comics generate their own autonomous principles. His book takes us chronologically from comics' early years up until the late 1980s. Lopes emphasises that comics exist in the real world of cultural production,

distribution and consumption and explores how comics creators and publishers have adapted the industrial logic of the culture industry to fit specific circumstances. For example, he looks at comics' pulp roots, arguing that early comics followed the same publishing model of assembly-line production, and contextualising this against emergent moral panic and the Comics Code. The subsequent remodelling of the superhero genre is thus defined as part of comics' 'Late Industrial Age' in which the figure was made socially relevant, alongside the adoption of comics by the underground and by a left-wing college readership.

Lopes then focuses on the role of fandom in leading comics towards their 'Heroic Age' and shaping their creation, production, distribution and reception: for example by seeking out and extolling the auteur creator, resulting in better deals for writers and artists, creating the direct market, and privileging collection over consumption. In particular, he details the creative and critical work from artists such as Will Eisner, Scott McCloud and Art Spiegelman, alongside scholars such as Kent Worcester, Ray Mescallado and Charles Hatfield, and the role of publications such as *The Comics Journal* in arguing for a new definition of comics as Literature and Art. Lopes notes, however, that symbolic value was largely reserved for the graphic novel, and that alternative comics in general remained marginalized and excluded both from the mainstream comics readership and from high art more generally.

Lopes concludes by considering the impact of manga on American comics publishing, the boost that cinematic adaptations gave to the industry, changing attitudes of librarians and teachers, and the potential impact of the World Wide Web.

Overall, Lopes argues that comics' path towards the critical and commercial position that the medium holds today has been based on its development of principles of autonomy, and its interpretative communities. His cultural history points

primarily towards the ways in which comics fandom and the underground and alternative movements have repeatedly fought to bestow credibility on the medium. The changing priorities of creators and readers have established autonomous principles of comics storytelling, and led to changes in the creation, production, distribution, and consumption of the medium. While dividing American comics history into just two phases might seem reductive, this dichotomy lets Lopes consider the changes that have occurred as reactions to the previous status quo, rather than identifying a continuum of textual features that are superhero-centric (as in the more established terminology of golden age, silver age, etcetera). He argues that the tension that continues in today's comics between dominant fan pulp art appreciation and a more literary or marginalized appreciation is a state that also applies to fiction more generally, but is rendered more visible in this field due to its size and status.

John Bell has written several of books on the history of Canadian comics, including *Canuck Comics* (1986), *Guardians of the North* (1992) and *Invaders from the North* (2006). While *Canuck Comics* is a retrospective guide and price list (edited by Bell) and *Guardians* focuses entirely on the Canadian superhero genre, in *Invaders* Bell traces a fuller development of the English Canadian comics industry, from its claimed first comic *Punch in Canada* (1849). It opens with brief biographies of early practitioners, before moving to consider the 'Golden Age' of Canadian industry (1941-46), which is situated as a response to the import restrictions on American comics that were introduced in 1940. An examination of the superhero makes up the first few chapters of *Invaders*, beginning with characters such as The Iron Man and Freelance and noting their lack of any Canadian characteristics. He contrasts this with subsequent characters such as Nelvana, Johnny Canuck and Canada Jack, who respectively personified Inuit traditions (albeit whitewashed) and

national identity, although their popularity faded as the war ended. Bell then considers the next crop of emergent Canadian superheroes as responses to an increased sense of Americanisation that he finds in American silver age comics. He notes the comedic aspects of these first 'silver age' heroes (Captain Canada et al), followed by the emergence of more serious figures such as Northern Light, Captain Canuck, and the Alpha Flight team). Overall, Bell concludes that while the superhero dominated Canadian comics publishing for a time, creators have struggled with uncritical depictions of heroism, power, and patriotism, which has prevented a truly convincing character from ever emerging.

*Invaders from the North* also explores other genres of Canadian comics, putting together a narrative of the decades in which comics 'grew up'. This includes reprints of American crime and horror comics by companies such as Bell and Superior, the educational/promotional free comics produced in the 1950s and 1960s by Ganes Productions and Comic Book World (free tracts which warned of dangers such as alcohol, cigarettes, sexually transmitted diseases, etc), and the Canadian alternative scene that emerged in the late 1960s. While the Canadian underground paralleled the American comix, peaking around 1970 (see *The Canadian Alternative* (2017), edited by Dominick Grace and Eric Hoffman, for more on this), Bell looks more closely at 1975-88, which he argues could be characterised as Canada's own silver age in terms of the quality and quantity of titles, including cult series such as Dave Sim's *Cerebus the Aardvark*, and a revised *Captain Canuck*. Bell identifies this period as one in which English Canadian comics became a (contested) adult form amid great changes to their production, distribution, and content. The remainder of the book turns a spotlight on what Bell defines as the industry's three main areas: mainstream, alternative, and small press, and the key creators working in each field.

There is lengthy analysis of the career of Chester Brown, and of Chris Oliveros' founding and development of publishers Drawn & Quarterly. Bell's conclusion, echoing the narrative applied to many other countries, is that after six decades of struggle, comics in Canada have now finally come of age.

In *A Political History of Comic Books in Mexico* (1998), Anne Rubenstein examines Mexican comic books (*historietas*) in the cultural and political context of Mexico between the 1930s and the 1970s. In particular, she considers the relationships between comics' producers, audiences, and critics, and the Mexican government. As in other countries, Mexican comics grew from the Sunday supplements (*dominicales*) of the 1920s; the first comic book was *Adelaido el Conquistador* (1934). Rubenstein notes the diversity of the *historietas*, which were sold on newsstands and were popular with a wide and varied audience. They told melodramatic and adventurous stories set in a familiar world, without superheroes. Rubenstein argues that reading these comics felt like a patriotic act and uses close analysis of the content of key titles such as *Pepín* (1936-55) to demonstrate the variety of narratives, showing how these titles tried to connect to their readers by using 'generic stories, local settings, real people and events, and reader contributions' (27) – inviting audiences to imagine themselves as creators or protagonists.

Rubenstein situates the emergent comics industry in a cultural context of increased education and literacy, which connected modernity and reading (including comics) in the public mind. She points out, however, that cultural critics and ethnographers were still keen to frame comics reading as corrupting. Effectively, comics became the centrepiece of a bigger argument about modernity versus tradition that would end in stalemate for both sides – while paradoxically reinforcing



the positive aspects of both viewpoints. Rubenstein argues that the political discourses of modernity and tradition were enacted primarily through the *historietas*' representation of women. Comics first became central in shaping a narrative of revolutionary modernity and progress, for example by the creation of the stock figure of the *chica moderna*, or revolutionary girl. The moral panic of the 1940s, however, and the language the protestors used drew on the rhetoric of nationalist tradition and conservatism, in counterpoint to the modernising discourse that they claimed the comics represented, and mobilised the stereotype of the patient, long-suffering Mexican wife/mother. Rubenstein uses close analysis of story content to demonstrate similarities across titles and notes that both figures began as political tools, although today they have developed into stereotypes.

Drawing on censors' records and government documents, Rubenstein then explores the workings of the Comisión Calificadora de Publicaciones y Revistas Ilustradas, which has monitored Mexican periodicals and illustrated magazines for slang, crime, and sexual content since 1944, and analyses the comics publishers' range of responses to their actions. She argues that the commission unintentionally both enabled the incorporation of conservatives into the Mexican state and protected comics from foreign competition. She also looks closely at the wording publishers used to advertise their products and employs case studies to explore the ways they were enabled to flout the law (focusing on the Lombardini brothers) and the limitations placed on political expression (focusing on the work of Rius). Overall, Rubenstein's analysis gives a history of how the comics industry developed in Mexico, with a strong focus on the Government's involvement. Her argument is a broad cultural and ideological one that demonstrates how the Mexican comics industry became a central point of debate within the cultural struggle of modernity

versus tradition.

## Asia

The rise of manga over the past century has been both a Japanese and a global phenomenon. Frederik L. Schodt's *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics* (1983) was a landmark text in summarising the history and breadth of Japanese comics. Schodt notes the origins of the term ('man' meaning 'involuntary', and 'ga' meaning 'picture') and flags up manga's tendency towards the melodramatic, exaggerated and emotional in its drawn line; echoed in its experimental use of layouts and sound effects. He explores the development of Japanese pictorial storytelling over the past thousand years: from illustrated scrolls and religious texts, through simple four-panel newspaper strips, to longer serialized works. He stresses the impact of artists such as Osamu Tezuka (who provides a foreword to the book), who began publishing in the 1940s and whose popularity changed the face of the manga industry, which by the 1960s had assumed its present dominant position in Japanese entertainment culture. Schodt's discussion is contextualised with political analysis, which also informs his exploration of the popularity of themes and archetypes such as samurai, sports, and romance. He provides a clear introduction to the idiosyncracies of the genres, formats, and conventions of manga (such as enlarged eyes, inconsistent colouring, stereotypes such as the 'salaryman', and the extensive range of emanata – lines and squiggles emerging from a character or object – to indicate emotional states). Other chapters also discuss the mechanics of the industry, such as editorial processes, the emergence and contributions of female artists, the social standing of artists and their work, formats and additions, and the difficulties of translating and exporting manga. The book is illustrated throughout and

concludes with some longer extracts from significant works, reverse-printed and translated for the western reader.

Schodt continues his analysis in *Dreamland Japan* (1996), a more text-heavy book that focuses on the development of manga since the 1980s. As well as recapping the growth of the industry in the twentieth century, Schodt expands his focus to consider conventions (particularly those selling *dōjinshi*, or fanzines, which have an overwhelmingly female audience). He engages more closely with the socio-cultural backdrop to manga's success, alongside discussions of its fandom, the legislation and treatment of erotica, and controversy and stereotyping. Subsequent chapters look more closely at publications for younger male and female readers, with a particular focus on their use of franchising and multimedia. There are brief summaries of lists of titles, grouped by publisher, and fuller descriptions of major ongoing manga magazines, characters, and their creators. Schodt concludes with a discussion of manga's place in the English-speaking world, identifying the popularity of anime [animation], positioning of key publishers, and developing formats such as video cassettes as precursors to its initial success and successful emulation by Western artists (a subject that Casey Brienza picks up in subsequent work – see below).

In *Adult Manga: Culture & Power in Contemporary Japanese Society* (2000) Sharon Kinsella touches on many of the same topics as Schodt in a historical discussion of the development of manga in Japan from the 1960s to the millennium. Her methodology entails field work with official and more unofficial and less structured interviews with actors in the Japanese manga publishing business including publishers, editors and creators and she candidly introduces this research as a very immersive experience where she has spent large amounts of time in

editing offices. Kinsella also notes, however, a possible bias because big manga publisher Kodansha funded some of the research and allowed her into their publishing meetings and discussions. Kinsella provides insight into the history of manga in the time period and into some of the censorship discussions such as the otaku (nerd) panic and she comments on the *dojinshi* [fanzine] culture mentioned above. The post-World War 2 cultural landscape of Japan, Kinsella contends, saw a development of manga from an artistically and politically progressive medium to a more commercial and conservative business that linked Japanese “good” manga with the utmost in Japanese culture. This development was helped along by censorship and very active editors taking over much of the creative content and stylistic choices. *Adult Manga* provides a look into the business of manga publishing in an important period for the medium and offers some explanations for the way the Japanese manga scene looked in the early 2000s.

Paul Gravett’s *Manga: Sixty Years of Japanese Comics* (2004) addresses various aspects of this medium’s development in Japan. Each chapter opens with a short essay setting out its main point and arguments, followed by extracts from significant works, captioned with short creator biographies or descriptions of their relevance. Chapter 1 describes manga’s historical evolution into the formats available today and contextualises these against Japan’s culture and history. The second chapter explores the way in which the medium has developed Japan’s long tradition of narrative art, dating back to the twelfth century. ‘Father Storyteller’ Osamu Tezuka (1928-89) is the subject of chapter 3, which looks closely at his most famous works and their cultural and media influences. The next chapter explores the darker period of post-war recovery in the 1940s and the highly political publications of the 1950s, followed by two chapters that examine manga genres for boys and girls

respectively. Chapter 7 then explores manga created for an adult audience, considering tropes of sex and horror (and the strategies used to depict these), but stressing that such titles are not limited to these genres. Chapter 8 ('The All-Encompassing') extends the discussion into manga aimed at large demographics, such as older women, and chapter 9 complements this with a discussion of niche publishers, fanzines, and cult titles (while acknowledging that the borders between mainstream and underground are not terribly clear). The final chapter explores the country's attempts to export manga and attract international creators, which have resulted in a vibrant, transnational and post-imperialist publishing culture.

Moving beyond Japan, Paul Gravett's *Mangasia* (2016) is a more recent project with an impressive breadth that aims at surveying the history of Asian comics from "no further west than Pakistan and no further north than Mongolia and the very top of Japan". Gravett traces the development of manga from its roots in late nineteenth-century Japan through a wide range of different formats (comics, cartoons, animation). His history spans over a century but instead of a country-by-country geographical approach, it is organized thematically: "Mapping Mangasia", "Fable and Folklore", "Recreating and Revising the Past", "Stories and Storytellers", "Censorship and Sensibility" and "Multimedia Mangasia". This allows for comparative comments and the inclusion of national examples that are not as abundant as the dominant comics countries in the region. Although the cover boasts "The Definitive Guide to Asian Comics" the breadth of the survey necessitates a surface level dip into this part of comics culture, but its coffee table format and great emphasis on reproduction of a diverse set of samplings from so many countries not usually highlighted when Asian comics are discussed, function to give a visual impression of the many instances of comics from Asia that goes well beyond the Japanese manga,

Chinese manhua, and Korean manhwa often showcased.

Similarly, John A. Lent's *Asian Comics* (2015) covers material from regions other than Japan to highlight the diversity of publications beyond Japanese manga. It is divided into three sections considering East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia, with each chapter focusing on a specific country or region. The introduction gives an overview and pre-history, and the following chapters trace the historical development of comics work in each locality, drawing on creator and publisher interviews, analysis of strips, and extensive scholarly research. Lent has also edited a collection, *Southeast Asian Cartoon Art* (2014), which contains chapters on Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Singapore, Burma, and Malaysia. These cover multiple different themes and formats, including humour magazines, political cartoons, newspaper comic strips, comic books of many genres, and book-length comics or graphic novels. While individual chapters focus on different aspects, the collection as a whole traces a history from the late nineteenth century that engages with political struggle and censorship from authoritarian governments, economic problems, material issues such as newspaper publication, and themes of transnationality, national identity and chauvinism.

Turning to China, John Lent and Xu Ying's *Comics Art in China* (2017) draws on extensive interviews and existing scholarship to offer a historical overview of Chinese comics art and contextualise this with respect to politics, culture, society and economics. Lent and Ying take a broad approach to comics art, which includes *liánhuánhuà*, *xinmanhua*, *manhua*, comic books, newspaper strips, political cartoons, humour magazines, pictorial periodicals, and animation. They pose four main questions: (1) Are there common threads throughout the history of Chinese art? (2) What outside factors played roles in development of Chinese comics art? (3) How is

Chinese comics art linked historically to the country's wider structure of artistic and literary professions? (4) What is the relationship of Chinese comics art to society? They create a linear pathway through Chinese comics history that focuses primarily on the People's Republic of China. Early chapters explore the historical development of Chinese comics art, tracing the prehistory of caricature as far back as 5000BC and drawing attention to the debates and disputes in existing scholarship (Bader 1941, Parton 1877, Murck 2000). They also explore the history of illustrated and visual storytelling, tracing this back to 206BC, and note the Western influences that produced cartoon periodicals in the late nineteenth century, leading to the emergence of *liánhuánhuà* (palm-sized paperbacks presenting one image per page with accompanying text). The subsequent chapters explore 'Manhua's Golden Age' in the 1920s and 1930s, which saw the expansion of *liánhuánhuà* alongside the first successful newspaper comic strips, increased numbers of cartoon/humour magazines, attempts to professionalise comics art, and a movement towards a more precise definition of comics. The impact of the war, the rapid changes of the following decades, and the years after the Cultural Revolution are all discussed. These chapters focus on the ways cartoons were used for propaganda and resistance, the difficult circumstances of the cartoonists, and the attempts to open up comics art to a wider audience and circle of practitioners. The development of Chinese animation is also traced, from its handmade beginnings to a leading global industry.

The book's conclusion returns to its research questions, arguing that the many crises of twentieth-century China form a common thread in the development of its comics art, and have shaped its cultural position and purpose. Lent and Ying argue that Chinese comics art has repeatedly been used for propaganda and satire,

although at times creators have had to employ subtlety or restraint. They draw attention to additional outside influences, such as periodicals from other nations and other artistic media, and the manifestations of these, for example through comics' appearances in high culture magazines or defences of the medium. The relationship of Chinese comics art to society is thus characterised as tightly entwined, with cartoons taking on various roles (critic, watchdog, promoter) and directing their messages at mass audiences, adapting their formats and methods to gain greater reach. Lent and Ying conclude that while it is not the prerogative of the Chinese cartoonists to determine these social ills (which remains the role of the state), their work nonetheless comments on these perceived issues once the state has defined them. Overall, *Comics Art in China* is densely packed with historical information and offers an impressive attempt to create a linear narrative out of thousands of years of history, with its focus mainly set on the last century. The primary research is extensive (a complete list of interviews conducted is included at the end) and the scholarly research is equally wide ranging – the bibliography alone is an invaluable resource.

Other critics have explored aspects of Chinese comics art history, including the development of particular formats, styles or eras. Hwang (1978), Chen (1996) and Andrews (1997) trace the development of *liánhuánhuà* from the 1930s onwards, noting the format's evolution, such as the addition of speech balloons to emulate sound movies (Chen 1996: 66). Taylor (2014) considers the rise of newspaper strips, and Hung (1994) looks closely at wartime cartooning. These papers have a tighter focus on individual periods or features of Chinese comics art and demonstrate that the genre is fast gaining scholarly prominence.

Turning to India, comics began in the mid-1960s, developing from the



syndicated Western strips that featured in 1950s newspapers, with indigenous titles then appearing in the 1970s. English-language scholarship is limited, with key work coming from scholars such as Emma D. Varughese, whose book *Visuality and Identity in Post-millennial Indian Graphic Narratives* (2018) focuses on contemporary graphic novels from India. Varughese explores the intersections of visuality and Indian culture, particularly relating to notions of the inauspicious. Some chapters in edited collections also explore the Indian comics industry. Suhaan Mehta's 'Wondrous Capers: The Graphic Novel in India' (*Multicultural Comics*, 2011) examines the methods used by non-mainstream creators in a selection of contemporary titles to give a voice to those marginalised by caste or sexuality.

In *India's Immortal Comic Books* (2009) Karline McLain examines the history of the long-running series *Amar Chitra Katha (ACK)*, founded by Anant Pai in 1967 in response to reprint culture as an attempt to create a homegrown Indian comics series. McLain analyses the historical development of *ACK* to argue that Indian comics are a vital site for studying the ways in which ideological discourses of national identity are negotiated. She draws on interviews and surveys with company employees and readers to detail *ACK*'s publishing and distribution history and combines this with close analysis of the comics themselves. McLain demonstrates that Indian comics draw on long traditions of Indian visual culture, and frequently combine mythology and history, for example by recasting traditional Sanskrit narratives. She reads the comics as reflecting their surrounding context, for example initially de-emphasising religious miracles to accord with the new, modern India of the 1950s and 1960s, but subsequently re-engaging with spirituality after Pai realised his Hindu readership saw the comics as a legitimate source of spiritual material. Other chapters focus on significant figures such as Shakuntala, the first

female comic book heroine, the Warrior-King Shivaji, and Mahatma Gandhi. McLain notes the ways in which the treatment of these characters enacts the difficulties of negotiating history, mythology and tradition, for example regarding female suffering and martyrdom, accusations of religious or anti-Muslim propaganda, and the colonial narrative. Overall, McLain's study uses historical analysis of *ACK* to explore the relationship between media, religion and culture in South Asia, arguing that the series has established a canon of characters that define what it means to be Hindu and Indian for a vast middle-class readership throughout the transnational Indian diaspora.

Expanding the focus to the wider region, *Arab Comic Strips* (Douglas and Malti-Douglas, 1994) also takes a political critical approach: analyzing comics across multiple countries from this region as a response to imported materials from America and France. Despite its title it surveys Arab comics across all formats, noting the dominant form of the children's book. It observes that Arab comics exist in a vastly intersectional space, leading to multiple points of complexity. These include accessibility issues due to the range of spoken dialects, which means that the formal language *fushâ* is used in many – emphasizing their pedagogical potential. Douglas and Malti-Douglas analyse many examples, such as the UAE's *Mâjid* and Egypt's *Samîr*, grouping their discussion around key themes such as Disney imperialism, secular nationalism, subversion and state propaganda, censorship, Islamic movements, and the nuance needed to successfully blend religious and political elements and negotiate local and regional identities. A particular emphasis is placed on the depiction of women, which must draw from three competing visions (the leftist secular, the Islamic, and the Western). The writers foreground the unique position of Arab comic strips as an imported and adapted Western cultural product, yet one

whose place in the Arab cultural world is vastly different from their Western situation: Arab comics creators are integrated into a larger class of intellectuals, and many are established fiction writers, painters, or editorial cartoonists. Rather than belonging to popular culture, Arab comic strips thus straddle the elite world of art and literature, and that of journalism. They contain legitimising power by depicting state leaders and ideologies, although the strips in general cohere around consensus values (rather than propaganda) and more general ideological positions such as Arab solidarity, anti-imperialism and anti-Zionism, the glory of Arab heritage, and respect for Islamic legacy and morals. Overall, these scholars argue that the development of many contemporary Arab strips demonstrates that it is possible to sustain national identity and tradition without abandoning the modern world.

### Africa

Published scholarship on African comics is more common in French than English, presumably due to this continent's many Francophone countries such as Algeria, Congo, and Gabon.<sup>2</sup> Considering South Africa in general, a tradition of political and satirical cartooning dominates over graphic novels and more diverse genres. Andy Mason's *What's So Funny? Under the Skin of South African Cartooning* (2010) surveys the historical development of the country's cartoon industry, with a particular emphasis on the depiction of ethnicity and associated experience. The book is oversized and lavishly illustrated with the cartoons that he discusses. Mason looks back as far as the 1800s, bookending his study with George Cruikshank's 1819 depiction of cannibalistic natives, and Zapiro's notorious 'rape of justice' cartoon

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<sup>2</sup> See for example works by C. Cassiau-Haurie, S. Federici, J.P. Jacquemin, S. Langevin, H. Mbiye Lumbala, A. Marchesini Reggiani, and M. Repetti, not yet translated.

attacking presidential candidate Jacob Zuma (2008). In Part 1, *The Illustrated Other*, Mason takes a historical approach. His analyses are nuanced and contextualised, as he resituates the Cruikshank cartoon as political satire aimed at the British Government, rather than the racist stereotyping it is remembered for. He surveys a wide range of misleading images from the early 1800s, indicating that their inaccuracies constitute a kind of mythologising, as they often appeared in ethnographic books. He then discusses the emergence of new, more warlike, stereotypes after the arrival of the 1820 settlers, and the use of these by contemporary white Afrikaaner cartoonists who have revisited the country's bloody history and interrogated its telling. Mason draws attention to the predominantly white ethnicity of the South African cartoonists (with notable exceptions such as writer Alex La Guma, 1959) and the omission of black experience from these satirical strips. This leads him to discuss Len Sak's *JoJo* (created 1958) as a counterpoint that engages with a black everyman character, despite its use of visual stereotyping.

Mason takes care to situate the cartoons within their political and social context, offering revisionist readings of some, and acknowledging his own personal relationship with comics. The second part of the book explores the development of comics in the 1970s as a medium for protest and political propaganda. Mason's analysis characterises the subsequent decades as ones that saw the increasing publication of black writers and artists: to oversimplify, he argues that these black voices were often equated with realism while white liberal writers experimented with postmodernism, resulting in many political pamphlets and the return of stereotypes such as Hoggenheimer (a rich industrialist getting fat from the profits of the country). Thus a South African alternative publishing scene arose, based in Johannesburg, with the aim of reaching new audiences and sparking discussions about social

inequities. Mason contrasts this with the role of the mainstream press in shielding its audience from the realities of apartheid, and the rise of popular resistance in the 1970s: the violence of which informed the style of satirical artists such as Dov Fedler, Andy (Dave Anderson), Derek Bauer and the early work of Zapiro. Importantly, Mason draws attention to the continued lack of black South African cartoonists throughout the twentieth century, even in modern satirical works, and situates this against the explosion of black voices in other media (such as the poets, authors, dramatists, journalists, and musicians of the *Drum* generation). Mason concludes that the legacy of racism in comics has made it hard for this medium to gain any traction, alongside the financial difficulties of making it as a cartoonist.

Overall, Mason's analysis suggests that historically the denigration of black characters in cartooning is not a South African trait but emblematic of colonial attitudes across Europe. His consideration of contemporary cartoons demonstrates that the country's cartooning has focused on sharp political satire, although book-length publications are on the rise. His epilogue revisits the influence of British heritage on the country, via its links with his own ancestry, summarising the creation and development of imagery of the Other that has permeated its cartooning. Mason's revisionist approach chimes with some of the later comics scholarship surveyed in Chapter 4, which revisits the Comics Code and draws attention to the nuance and detail of its creation. He also combines the story of his own discovery and investigations into South African cartooning with analysis of the history and cartoons themselves: a personal approach also seen in much of the research discussed in Chapter 10 of this Guide.

While Mason's book gives a comprehensive overview, isolated articles exploring individual South African strips do also appear in some collections, such as

Feurle's examination of the highly successful strip 'Madam and Eve' (*Cheeky Fictions*, 2005), which explores its depiction of complex racial dynamics and the clash between old and new South Africa. Feurle points towards the ways in which the strip looks back to the country's history as well as forward, and creates humour by playing with stereotypes, flouting taboos, and foregrounding the nation's contradictions. She concludes that even if there is no shared national perspective, this laughter is unifying and a step towards democracy.

There are also several very useful online resources. The 'Encyclopaedia of African Political Cartooning' (<https://africacartoons.com/cartoonists/map/south-africa/>) allows users to select individual countries from a map of the continent, then bringing up a list of creators from this area, with thumbnails and biographies where known. The 'Africa Comic' project (<http://www.africacomics.net/project/>) is a physical and online archive of the comics themselves, which began in 1999 and has since collected over 2500 drawings from all areas of the continent. Online users can search for keywords or browse the collection, revealing colour scans of the comics (mostly in French) that can be scrolled through. Each is accompanied by details of publication and creator, and a summary (in English) of its plot.

### Australasia

*Panel by Panel: A History of Australian Comics* (John Ryan, 1979) is the main historical survey of the development of Australian comics. The book proceeds chronologically through the history of Australian comics, showing how these developed in the pages of newspaper supplements and emphasising their popularity. Ryan pairs detailed description of the strips with biographical summaries of the main artists who created and worked on them, summarising debates about black-and-

white versus colour strips, imported versus indigenous, and the fluctuating formats of the newspaper colour supplements.

Part 1 focuses on the evolution of newspaper strips, and Ryan begins with forerunners such as *Melbourne Punch*, which printed four-panel strips as early as 1870, although he names the first recognisable Australian comic strip as Norman Lindsay's work in *The Lone Hand Magazine* (1907), followed by regular (and coloured) strips in the comic magazine, *The Comic Australian* (1911-13). Notably, male and female artists feature prominently in this early history: Hugh McCrae's work appeared alongside Nelle Rodd's in *The Comic Australian*, followed by May Gibbs' cartoons in the Perth *Western Mail*. These early strips were comedic, also giving way to more political fare in *The International Socialist*, and roughly drawn (excluding Lindsay's highly professional draftsmanship). The country's comics tradition began to consolidate in the 1920s in *Smiths Weekly* (launched 1919), which originally reprinted US strips and then initiated 'You & Me', a domestic humour strip originally by Stan Cross. Its success spawned imitators, and the format got another boost when 'Sunbeams', a children's supplement, was introduced into the Sydney *Sunday Sun*, and developed to include pages of comics from artists such as David Souter. 'Sunbeams' was the birthplace of some of Australia's most famous comics characters and the 1920s provided various additional news publications to further develop the comic strip format. Ryan examines how a syndicated market developed, along with serialised continuity strips and longer supplements, aided by the import restrictions that marked the start of World War II and prevented imported strips from taking over the market. He also explores the use of comic strips as propaganda, and the Australian underground comix scene, which emerged in the early 1970s.

In the second half of his book, Ryan examines the emergence of comic books, noting that before the 1930s this was dominated by material from the UK and claiming the first local comic as *Vumps* (1908), although this was drawn in a British style. *Fatty Finn's Weekly* began in 1934 and lasted until 1935. It was followed by *Wags* in 1936, which reprinted American newspaper strips, and during the 1930s other contemporary American titles made their way to Australia, alongside compendiums of comic sections from American Sunday newspapers. As Ryan summarises:

As Australia moved towards its involvement in World War II, the choice of comics lay between imported English comics, imported US ones, imported *Wags*, imported International Comics, imported backdated comics dumped on the market, and Fidgett Brothers' reprints of US strips. (154)

As with the newspaper strips, however, enforcement of import legislation gave local publishers an opportunity to enter the market, although it was often circumnavigated, for example by bringing US comics in via the UK, or licensing properties (K.G. Murray began releasing 'Superman' in 1947). Local heroes, however, were popular too (such as *The Raven*, 1946, *Jet Fury*, 1948; and *The Phantom*, 1948), and indigenous imitations of famous American titles also appeared, such as *The Phantom Ranger* (1949), based on *The Lone Ranger*, and *Yarmak – The Jungle King* (1949), based on *Tarzan*. Finally, Ryan considers the 1950s and the 1960s, in which the comic book industry followed a similar trajectory to the newspaper strips: experiencing censorship and financial problems (e.g. the rising cost of newsprint) in the 1950s, and stagnation in the 1960s.

Graeme Osborne's 'Comics Discourse in Australia' in *Pulp Demons* (1999) gives a short and digestible summary of the early history of Australian comics, which



dates back to the mid-nineteenth century when strips first emerged, and he summarises the main points Ryan raised. Osborne explains how, after Lindsay's early work, and following the First World War, the creations of artists such as Stan Cross, Charles Banks and Syd Nicholls grew wildly popular during the 1920s, faltered in the 1930s depression, but regained and increased its popularity during World War II, which restricted imports. During this time, Australian comics turned away from their original 'knockabout' humour and towards the American-style adventure strips. After the war, however, American strips again began to dominate, both as individual books and syndicated strips in newspapers, and this led, Osborne argues, to concerns and debates about comics' effects in the 1950s, in line with many other countries (see Chapter 4).

Amy Louise Maynard's 2017 PhD thesis, *A Scene in Sequence: Australian Comics Production as a Creative Industry 1975-2017*, is available online and contains a chapter focused on the historical development of the Australian comics industry which picks up where John Ryan's *Panel by Panel* ends. Maynard breaks this period into two distinct phases. She argues that the first period of production (1890-1960) was initially characterized by reprinted American fare or comics that were strongly modeled on these templates, which appeared in newspapers. These early comics publications first appeared in June 1915 and were self-published 'troop publications' circulated by Australian soldiers. Comics publications in wider circulation such as *The Kookaburra* then emerged from 1931 onwards. While production was focused around the cities, most stakeholders worked autonomously rather than as part of a production line as in the American industry. Maynard defines these two approaches as industrial (American) and artisanal (Australian). She notes that the Australian comics scene was largely imitative of American content and that

the controversies of the 1950s were thus shared in this country, with a distinct lack of political and cultural support for comics. Maynard then defines the 1960s-1970s as a 'period interlude' where both America and Australia turned their innovations to the underground, producing low-cost, socio-political and explicit content for adult readers. This underground 'magazine' movement in Australia, however, did not last beyond the decade and declined alongside its countercultural movement.

Maynard then explores the second period of Australian cultural production, commencing in 1975, which is characterized by fans becoming producers. She draws attention to two distinct schools of production: the Melbourne scene which followed the 1970s underground magazines and was characterized by adult themes and socio-political comment; and the scene that emerged in Sydney in the 1980s which was more closely inspired by the superhero and fantasy genres. Although Australian comics production still lacked a shop system and corporate publishers, distribution and networks emerged through regular meet ups which enabled collaboration through comics jams (Melbourne) and serial titles (Sydney). The 1980s then saw an explosion of comics shops and the emergence of comic-cons (annually, beginning 1979), leading to the international distribution of homegrown titles such as *Inkspots*. In the 1990s comics scenes began to appear more widely in other cities, although national distribution remained a problem. Since the millennium Maynard argues that there have been three key changes.

(1) Graphic novels have appeared from both independent comics publishers and larger book publishers, changing the cultural value of comics and their visibility.

(2) Software development and online publishing have allowed for increased production, distribution and marketing of indigenous comics, and media

convergence such as crowdfunding and social media has given creators more agency and control.

(3) Consequent diversity has moved comics out of a subcultural space and made them highly visible in literary festivals, galleries, institutions, and so forth.

Maynard's conclusion is that the Australian comics scene has adopted a creative industries framework that adapts international practice and develops indigenous production and circulation methods as a consequence of the divergences and time lag between these first and second periods.

Other specific historical sources include Philip Bentley's memoir *A Life in Comics* (2013), which reflects on the 1970s comics culture from the perspective of a writer, editor, and publisher. Bentley explores how Australian comics production during this decade challenged the cultural stigmas attached to comics and sought to compete with international comics. For more contemporary discussions of the Australian industry, websites such as *Comicoz* ([comicoz.com](http://comicoz.com)) and *Comics Down Under* ([comicsdownunder.blogspot.com](http://comicsdownunder.blogspot.com)) provide blog posts and news updates.

### Transnational

While the above sections have summarised works that analyse the development of comics in a particular place, several more recent collections have taken a global perspective. The four edited collections below draw particular attention to the interplay of ideas and practices that are shared between different comics cultures, and approach comics as a global, rather than national, industry. In this, they take a transnational approach; examining the interconnectedness of comics at the borders, interstices, and exchanges between different cultures (rather than an international perspective which would survey multiple distinct national entities).

*Transnational Perspectives on Graphic Narratives* (2013), edited by Shane Denson, Christina Meyer, and Daniel Stein, collects essays that chart the ways in which comics have been shaped by aesthetic, social, political, economic, and cultural intersections across the globe. The editors argue that it addresses a blind spot in comics studies, which often treats national comics industries as self-contained entities. They define their transnational approach as complementary to national and international analyses, and aim to go beyond simplistic assumptions that comics are predisposed to transnationality due to their combination of words and pictures, which aid understanding, and that transnational approaches can erode global hierarchies. Instead, the collection is divided into three parts that discuss different angles on cultural exchange, although these are all focused around American productions and genres.

The first part, *Politics and Poetics*, examines the ways in which formal comics tropes are used to explore complex questions of identity and nation. Michael Chaney's personal and rigorous article 'Not Just a Theme: Transnationalism and Form in Visual Narratives of US Slavery' considers some of the fallacies of formalism (such as the tendency to privilege meaning in the gutter, or the imagined community of readers), using the depiction of the Middle Passage in children's books and comics. Chaney argues that it is this subject's potential as a catalyst for African American creative arts and its ontological ability to create new dialogues that is significant, rather than its transnational historical content. In the following chapter on Gene Luen Yan's *American Born Chinese* (2006), Elisabeth El Refaie also considers the unstable nature of formal analysis by exploring the use of shape shifting as a metaphor for transnational identity, arguing that this symbol aptly represents the instability of highly abstract notions such as cultural identity. El Refaie notes the

dominance of the shapeshifting trope across many genres of comics and visual arts history and argues that its potential to hold multiple meanings and connotations demonstrates that transnationality is complex and always more than the sum of its parts. The following chapters in this section continue this focus on the relationship between politics and formal storytelling strategies. Georgiana Banita examines the concept of 'graphic silence' in comics journalism from Guy Delisle, Joe Sacco, Jean-Philippe Stassen, and Ari Folman, creating a taxonomy of three different types of silent panel and exploring their significance for the ethics of the foreign gaze. In *Footnotes in Gaza* (2009), Aryn Bartley examines Joe Sacco's use of 'critical cosmopolitanism' (rather than empathetic transnational identification), arguing that Sacco does not abandon empathy or identification but pushes beyond these concepts to create a depiction that invites a historical, critical and agnostic dialogue about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Finally, Iris-Aya Laemmerhirt considers the unusual perspectives on Hawaii offered by R. Kikuo Johnson's *Night Fisher*, and Daniel Wüllner explores the presence of transnationalism in the comics of the American artist Warren Craghead III.

The second section, Transnational and Transcultural Superheroes, considers adaptations of these characters that problematize simplistic ideas of imperialism and subversion. Chapters 7-9 are analyses of Batman in a global context (Katharina Bierloch and Sharif Bitar), Indian reiterations of Spider-Man (Shilpa Davé), and manga versions of Spider-Man (Daniel Stein). In chapter 10 Jochen Ecke takes a different focus and examines the transnational author figure through a close consideration of Warren Ellis, engaging with theories of authorship and performativity. Finally, Stefan Meier analyses the Muslim superhero characters that appear in *The 99*, arguing that this narrative remains uncritical of the tropes of the

superhero genre, even as it achieves a significant success in presenting young Muslim cosmopolitans.

The third section, *Translations, Transformations, Migrations*, maps some of the changes that have shaped comics globally. Florian Groß examines the capacity of wordless comics to convey narratives of displacement. Using the works of Franz Masereel, Shaun Tan, and Joe Kavalier, Groß challenges the assumption that pictures are universally understood, and instead demonstrates that they require a form of reception that foregrounds the complex process of visual translations. Frank Mehring analyses processes of remediation and omission in Frank Miller's *Sin City*, whose silhouettes, he claims, create signs without referents, removing national associations. The two following chapters consider the qualities of cultural crossovers: Lukas Etter analyses the depiction of the city as plural and fragmented in Jason Lutes' *Berlin*; Mark Berninger explores the melting pot of national influences that inform Brian Lee O'Malley's *Scott Pilgrim*. Finally, Jean-Paul Gabilliet examines the reception of *Asterix and Tintin* in North America, arguing that the transnational marketability of commodities such as comics is directly related to the cultural proximity of the importing and exporting countries, and affected by dialectics such as upward and downward cultural processes. The collection concludes with an afterword in which editor Shane Denson argues for a critical framework that defines comics' formal properties (the panel/gutter tension; temporal versus spatial sequences and layouts; serial formats and so forth) as a set of oppositions that connote transnationality. He draws on the preceding essays to contend that the perceptual multistability that is created as images are framed, unframed, and reframed during the reading process is a catalyst for accommodating a wide range of transnational relations within the comics medium.

Casey Brienza has produced two books exploring the transnational nature of manga today. *Global Manga* (2015) analyses the emergence of 'Japanese-style' comics that today are produced in throughout the Americas, Europe, and Asia. Brienza explores the cultural conditions under which this 'global manga' has flourished, interrogating the identities of emergent gatekeepers and stakeholders, considering the implications for local creative economies and the ways the genre can mix with local cultural forms and influences, and reflects on conceptions of the 'Japanese' national identity of manga. In *Manga in America* (2016) Brienza takes a deeper dive inside the American industry, drawing on interviews with industry insiders to present a sociological examination of the processes of domestication used by American media producers of Japanese manga in English. Brienza argues that these manga publishing houses and their networks can be conceptualised as faithful yet dysfunctional family units whose success is reliant on both cooperation and conflict. Her study is situated against scholarship on the production of culture and gives a detailed history of the American manga industry's development, exploring its motivations, creative practices and use of new publishing models, and concludes by reflecting on how the American remediation of Japanese culture is manifest through unequal power relations and ultimately impacts back on the production of manga in Japan.

By contrast, the collection *Drawing New Color Lines* (2015), edited by Monica Chiu, 2015, explores the interpretative possibilities and limitations of transnational narratives. Chiu draws attention to the differences in interpretation that American and Asian readers might experience, and the collection investigates and interrogates comics' use of conventions such as stereotyping, asking what happens when national stories and conventions are rearticulated from a new standpoint. Similarly,

Binita Mehta and Pia Mukherji's edited collection, *Postcolonial Comics: Texts, Events, Identities* (2015), takes the standpoint that representations are necessarily always political, interweaving the production of Self and Other via discourse. This collection focuses on voices that have been neglected in discussions of the medium. They point out that there is comparatively very little criticism devoted to comics from places like Africa, India, and the Middle East, and that, even in transnationally themed collections such as those above<sup>3</sup>, most of the texts analysed come from American or European comics traditions. Instead, the essays in this collection are split into four sections: the first focuses on comics from Gibraltar, Malta, and Japan, the second on Francophone Africa (Algeria, Congo, Gabon), the third on India, and the fourth on the Middle East. As such it is a particularly useful resource for those wanting to find out more on these underwritten areas.

The collection *Cultures of Comics Work* (2016), edited by Casey Brienza and Paddy Johnston, turns its gaze to the people, rather than places, that have been overlooked in comics study. The editors argue for the importance of recognising the numerous invisible people who participate in comics production, and the breadth of essays they present offer a strongly transnational focus. Its first chapter is an introduction from Brienza and Johnston that points towards the problems with traditional auteur-based, formalist, and definitional approaches to comics analysis, and defines their term 'comics work' in counterpoint to this, referring to the myriad of activities required to create a comic book. The following chapters are split into three sections: the first, *Locating Labour*, examines the local and national contexts within which context work takes place. In chapter 2 Amy Maynard explores the Australian

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<sup>3</sup> Heimermann, M. and Tullis, B. (eds.) (2017) *Picturing Childhood: Youth in Transnational Comics*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, which is discussed in chapter 7, is also mentioned.



comic scene, arguing that its appeal is based on processes of cooperation and autonomy, rather than any financial gain. Jeremy Stoll presents a similar survey of underground comics in India. The fourth chapter examines cultures of Colombian comics, detailing events, publishers, artist collectives, and historically significant events. Chapter 5 is a close reading of the comic *Nuestro Futuro* with reference to its geographic, temporal, and political contexts of US/Mexican relations. Chapter 6 takes a similar perspective on Brazilian comics, and the final chapter in the section provides a case study of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* comics, a franchise that developed in opposition to mainstream American comics publishers' practices. The section offers an alternative to the auteur theories often applied to comics, by demonstrating that collaboration, community, and interaction are absolutely key to the production of these works, and that multiple cultures and production systems exist around them.

The second part of the book, *Illustrating Workers*, contains case studies of individual creators and collaborative practices. Wilkins and Gray explore the various forms collaboration might take. Subsequent chapters examine particular creators such as Guy Delisle, John Porcellino, Fabien Vehlmann, and also contain reflections on practice from practitioner-scholars such as Ahmed Jameel and an analysis of the documentary *Comic Book Artists: The Next Generation* by Benjamin Woo, which draws attention to the fictionalizing processes used to visualize comics work, and the problematic exclusion of workers who fall outside a white or Asian male demographic. The book's final section brings together chapters that aim to push the current boundaries of studying comics work. Pascal Lefèvre discusses the gatekeeping practices of French publishers; José Santiago examines manga publishing in Spain, David K. Palmer analyses the distribution practices of the

American industry, Alex Valente explores the translation of humour in Italian comics, and Zoltan Kacsuk concludes the collection by exploring Hungarian manga production. While the focus of *Cultures of Comics Work* is primarily on developing existing methodology, its transnational content makes it useful for anybody wanting to learn more about underexplored comics cultures or practices.

### Conclusion

While the existence of so many histories of the comics medium demonstrates the medium's breath and variety, such texts often follow similar debates or strategies, such as identifying the 'first' comic, and creating a subsequent timeline of development, using the contributions and biographies of key artists and publishers alongside contextual discussion of the country's industrial and political landscape. Most histories engage with publishing context to reflect on the ideological content of early comics, and the development of female characters in particular is a shared focus of writers across many different cultures (such as Mexico, Canada, India, the UK, and USA). Although comics scholarship has more recently aimed to move beyond a national and linear focus, an Anglo-American dominance remains. There seems a great need for further work in this area in the form of international and transnational collections that bring together historical analyses cohered around theme rather than geography: identifying synergies between diverse creative industries and analysing shared tropes.

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