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Editorial

We live in an age when the mass media is increasingly interconnected through transmedia narratives and it has been suggested that a medium cannot be analysed in isolation. Like other media, comics can be viewed through their relationships with meta narratives in superhero franchises. They are often regarded as a source for ideas of the next Hollywood blockbuster. They are more than just sources for superhero stories, as we continuously reiterate in this journal. However, there are complex issues in dealing with comics as with any other media form. The multi modal aspects of comics makes it difficult to define just what a comic might be. Experimentation with narrative and form in the work of Chris Ware (whose work is discussed in the book review by Christopher Rowe later in this issue) and other like creators, pushes the boundaries of comics as a medium. Alternatively, comics might be considered as a discreet medium through their history, interdisciplinary applications and cultures as examined in John Michael Vohlidka's review of Matthew J. Smith and Randy Duncan's edited collection, *The Secret Origins of Comics Studies*. Developments in technologies also increase the blurring of boundaries between one form and another, for instance in differentiating between a digital comic and an animation. The articles in this issue tackle some of these problems for they cover specific aspects of the comics form in translation, the problems posed for classification and the diverse ways they can be analysed.

Jen Aggleton tackles a recurring theme in comics research of what constitutes a comic 'Defining Digital Comics: a British Library Perspective'. As she states, "Why another article about defining comics?" There are any number of articles and books about this topic – for instance, Hilary Chute's latest book, *Why Comics?: From Underground to Everywhere* which is reviewed in this issue by Thomas E. Simmons considers why comics have become considered a serious medium and why they deserve our attention. As Aggleton notes, we know what a comic is when we see it but once we attempt to theorise the specificities of the comic it becomes more complex. Aggleton chooses the more 'fuzzy' boundaries of what might be considered a comic, digital comics, to attempt her definition. Once digital comics introduce motion they make a complex definition even more confusing. Using her placement at the British Library in preserving comics as a starting point Aggleton states that the act of collecting digital comics within this context is 'an act of definition' influenced by the choices of a national institution. From an analysis of the British Library's classification of digital comics she develops a definition of digital comics which she suggests might still be controversial.

In 'Collaborative Self-Translation - Pizzeria Kamikaze as a Case in Point' Rachel Weissbrod and Ayelet Kohn examine the multi modal aspects of comics through the translation and adaptation of the graphic novel *Pizzeria Kamikaze* (2004). Etgar Keret adapted his story into a graphic novel with illustrations by Asaf Hanuka. This adaptation and collaboration, Weissbrod and Ayelet argue, produces a 'multidimensional work' which satirises Israeli society through comics and cinematic tropes.

The three remaining articles in this issue explore grandiose topics of the connections between political cartoons and comics, masculinity, power and repression and we finish with the analysis of what it means to be human in reflecting on issues arising from the funny animal genre.

Nicholas Labarre's article, 'Reading the 2016 US presidential election through *Transmetropolitan*' examines the growing interest in the 1990s satirical series since the election of Donald Trump. This interest Labarre attributes to the parallels between fact and fiction, truth and post truth, issues that are rife in present day political discourse.

The politics of freedom is debated in Michael W Pesses article "'You gotta be one of the good guys, son": Mobilities of Foucauldian ethics and freedom in Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon's *Preacher*'. Pesses suggests that white Protestant masculine repression through Christianity is overcome through the mythic power of the American West and a John Wayne *ethos* that will 'take no shit off fools'. Through mobility within the landscape, a subject such as Jessie Custer might become free within these power relations.

The final article examines notions of humanity through the focus on the funny animal genre. In 'Chickens Eating Duck: Animal Personhood and Multicultural Critique in Gerry Alanguilan's Graphic Novel *Elmer*' Lucas Tromly poses the huge question if an animal is intelligent how does this challenge traditional boundaries between animal and human? As Alanguilan points out that by ascribing sentience and language to animals, comics assume 'the subject is always human' (Wolfe 2003, 1). In *Elmer* chickens suddenly become sentient and intelligent and this prompts expanding classifications of what is animal what is human, what can and should not be eaten and racial aspects of human identity.

The issue finishes with book reviews on Ian Gordon's Book reviews *Kid Comic Strips: A Genre Across Four Countries* which, as Karl Ian Uy Cheng Chua points out, argues for a transnational approach to the analysis of comics. The issue finishes with Safiyya Hosein's review of A. David Lewis and Martin Lund's *Muslim Superheroes: Comics, Islam, and Representation* which covers an underresearched area outside of the more traditional notion of the white American male.

In sum, this issue has articles that raise intriguing issues of form, identity and politics.