THE
ART of COMICS
A PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

EDITED BY
AARON MESKIN AND ROY T COOK

The Art of Comics

New Directions in Aesthetics

Series editors: Dominic McIver Lopes, University of British Columbia, and Berys Gaut, University of St Andrews

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Foreword

Comics are a strange beast. It's a strange attractor of an artform, and almost everything that sticks to it is a source of continual argument, including the term "comics." From one perspective, comics take things from all other artforms and sew them together into a weird hybrid animal. Comics comprise illustration and prose and theatre and sloganeering and graphic design and any other damn thing you want to sling into the pot. From another, it's the first and simplest way we did visual narrative. Cave paintings are sequential art. So is the Bayeux Tapestry. Someone once argued that the Stations Of The Cross constitute a comic strip.

Comics have been around for so long that no-one can find a convincing start point for them anymore. In the West they're considered a niche art at best, but there's a comic packed into every airplane seat in the world that explains how to not die if the damn thing catches fire. Comics are often regarded as fringe-y and "alternative," and yet the US Army used them for operating manuals and the CIA dropped them on unfavoured countries to teach dissent to their populations. As pervasive as air and yet somehow as shameful as crack, comics win literary prizes and reshape the cultural landscape at the same time as we're told that comics are "just movies on paper," and therefore unworthy of special or separate consideration as an artform.

That last one … that's been sticky, that epithet. Like all genuinely ignorant comments, it seems to have a half-life that outlasts more aware and less toxic observations. The shaky development of comics criticism and theory from inside the field has been too scattershot, too stop-start and often too fraught with industry politics to make any real headway against statements like that.

Which is just one reason why I'm so pleased to have this volume in my hands. In many ways, it feels like a fresh start for comics theory. Its strong and reasoned explanation of why comics are *not* paper movies alone make it a valuable contribution, and represents the sort of accessibly-presented clarity

the field's been crying out for. Even when arguing that comics are the best material for film adaptation due to their similarities, there is a sharp understanding of what separates the two arts.

It's the book I would have wished for twenty years ago, when I was just entering the field, and the last in a depressing series of false starts for the medium as an intellectual art (or even as provider of half-smart entertainment) was burning away again. A rock-solid collection of thinking about what defines the medium and what it's capable of, and a fine foundation for building a new critical and theoretical language to explore comics' corridors. To have been able to place this book in front of people who didn't even understand why I'd want to involve myself in a thing like comics: that would have been delightful.

This book is a wonderful reader, and a superb set of argument-starters and positions that reveal intent and rigorous thinking about my medium. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

Warren Ellis
England
Hallowe'en 2010

The Art and Philosophy of Comics: An Introduction

Aaron Meskin and Roy T. Cook

1 Introduction to the Introduction

You hold in your hands (or view on a screen) the first-ever anthology of essays on the philosophy of comics written from the perspective of Anglo-American philosophy. An introduction to any such volume is intended to give the reader an overview of the subject and a feel for what is to be found in the remainder of the volume. Being the first anthology of this sort, however, places additional burdens on an adequate introduction. In addition to sketching what it is that we shall be doing in the remainder of the book, it will also be useful to indicate why the time has finally come for such a volume and how the essays contained in it connect to larger themes within research into both art in general and comics in particular.

   With this in mind, this introduction will be structured as follows. First, we shall outline, in Section 2, what we take to be the subject matter of the philosophy of comics and of this volume, and why these issues and questions should be of interest to philosophers of art, philosophers more generally, and comics fans and scholars of all kinds. Once we have a better idea of what our target questions and controversies are, this introduction will take a somewhat historical turn. Although there has been little philosophical work until now on comics within the analytic Anglo-American tradition, both comics and comics scholarship have histories that inform the essays in this volume. Thus, we shall provide a short history of comics in Section 3, one that emphasizes aspects of that history that are relevant to the tasks at hand; and in Section 4 we shall provide a brief overview of recent comics scholarship with a particular

emphasis on the small amount of pre-existing philosophical work on comics within the Anglo-American philosophical tradition. The introduction will then conclude with an overview of the contents of the volume, summarizing each essay and forging links, when possible, between these essays and the larger picture sketched here.

2 What We Are Doing, and Why

The first and most important aspect of saying what it is that we are doing in this volume is to first say what we are not doing. Philosophical writing on comics can mean many things, but there are two particular types of scholarly work that have become most associated with the conjunction of philosophy and comics[1]:

> *Philosophy in or through comics*: The study of philosophical themes and ideas as they are represented and explored within particular comics.
>
> *Philosophy of comics*: The study – primarily aesthetic, but also perhaps semantic, metaphysical, or epistemological – of the nature and functioning of comics.

Studying the existential themes expressed by Alan Moore's characterization of Dr Manhattan in *Watchmen* (1995) is an instance of philosophy in comics, while examining the collaborative nature of authorship within that same comic would be an instance of philosophy of comics. This volume is primarily concerned with the second of these tasks: the authors of the essays herein pursue the philosophical study of comics as an art form, and the analysis of how this art form works, how it connects to other art forms, and how it poses novel questions and puzzles for the philosopher of art.

This is not meant to imply either that the study of philosophy in comics is somehow inferior to the study of the philosophy of comics, or that the two philosophical approaches to comics can be sharply and completely separated. With regard to the first issue, it is worth noting that the publisher of the present anthology also publishes the well-received *Philosophy and Pop Culture* series of volumes that includes a number of volumes squarely within the philosophy in comics vein (including volumes on *Batman*, *Green Lantern*, *Iron Man*, *X-Men*, and *Watchmen*), and that one of the editors of the present volume has written a paper for one of these volumes (Meskin 2009). That being said, it is probably safe to say that most of the extant work in the philosophy in comics vein does not attempt to break new philosophical ground; rather, the goal of the majority of this work is to popularize philosophy rather than further philosophical research. With regard to the second issue – a sharp contrast between philosophy in comics and philosophy of comics – it is likely that there

are at least some cases where the philosophical themes explored within a comic will be relevant to examining, understanding and answering philosophical questions regarding that comic (or comics in general), and vice versa – *Watchmen* again comes to mind here, as do various experimental and avant-garde comics that explore arguably philosophical questions about the nature and limitations of the art form. (See Spiegelman (2008) and Molotiu (2009) for examples.) Nevertheless, the concerns of the essays collected in this volume fall for the most part squarely on the philosophy of comics side of the divide.

Note that we (and most of the authors included in this volume) simply assume that comics are an art form. This does not imply that that any of us think *all* comics are works of art, although some theorists might think so. Film is an art form, but not all films are art – the same goes for photography and painting. We think the same goes for comics – although many comics are art, at least some comics (e.g., various instructional comics, perhaps some crude pornographic comics) are not properly considered art. And, of course, even among the comics that are art there are many that are not very good.

Moreover, like film and photography, we believe that comics comprise a significant *category* of art – it is the sort of category that is invoked regularly in critical discourse. That is, critics and ordinary consumers appreciate, evaluate and interpret comics as *comics*. This supports the view that there really is an art form of comics, a view underwriting much of the work in this volume. In fact, we think this should be non-controversial – the existence of comics that meet the conditions for being art, and the further existence of a genuine, substantial category of art under which comics fall, is hard to deny (at least, by anyone who knows anything about comics and about art more generally). We are hard pressed to think of a reasonable theory of art that would necessarily exclude comics. But there has not been serious philosophical discussion of this issue, and we would not be surprised if there were skeptics about the art status of comics out there. (In fact we look forward to philosophical engagement with such skeptics!)

Thus, the topic of interest here is the philosophical – primarily aesthetic and metaphysical – study of comics as art. Unsurprisingly then, the essays largely fall into the sub-field of philosophy known as aesthetics (or the philosophy of art), especially where that domain of enquiry intersects with the sub-field of metaphysics. Hence many of the questions asked here will be of a familiar sort, similar to questions that philosophers have asked about other art forms, or concerning the connections that hold between comics and other art forms, such as:

> What makes comics art?
> How do comics relate to other art forms?

How does collaborative creation affect the nature of comics?
What can we learn about comics from the practice of adaptation?

Of course, given that comics are a distinct art form from those forms that have received extended and extensive attention from philosophers of art up to now, it should also be unsurprising that there are completely new questions that arise due to the unique characteristics of the comics medium itself, such as:

What are comics?
How do images and text interact to produce content in comics?
What role does printing play in the metaphysics of comics?
What different kinds of comics exist? How do these types differ?
What is the significance of sequence and serialization in comics?

As is often the case in philosophy, the distinction here need not be a sharp one. In particular, answers to questions in one of these categories may well be intimately connected to answers to questions in the other. We shall return to a more detailed examination of these questions and concerns in Sections 4 and 5 below.

Now that we have a bit of a better idea of what it is we are, and are not, interested in here, it is worth examining *why* we should be interested in these issues. The first cluster of issues motivating the philosophical examination of comics as an art form has to do with the fruitful connections that can be drawn between work specifically on the aesthetics of comics and important more general themes in the philosophy of art. The following four examples are typical of such connections, but by no means constitute a comprehensive list.

First, there has been a notable increase of interest in the study of *philosophies of arts*, rather than simply the philosophy of art, in recent years (see Kivy (1993) and (1997) for arguments in favor of this turn). In other words, philosophers have increasingly paid attention to the specific problems raised by particular art forms rather than concentrating solely on a monolithic account of all art. Moreover, recent research on the philosophies of film, literature, music, theatre, computer art, and videogames – research focusing in part on problems and issues that are particular to each of these art forms – has been among the most fruitful research in philosophical aesthetics. Not only has such work unearthed intriguing and distinctive issues raised by those art forms, but it has gone some way to counteracting a natural tendency – evident in ordinary discourse and to some extent in philosophy – to over-generalize about the arts. A philosophical focus on comics, which asks not just general questions about comics as one of many art forms, but which also focuses on those aspects of comics that differentiate comics from other art forms, fits

well with this developmental trend. In other words, a philosophy of comics that concentrates on the second kind of question alluded to above would constitute an additional important chapter in the increasingly central and increasingly important study of individual art forms.

Second, although traditional aesthetics tended to focus its attention on "high" or "fine" art, there has in recent years been an increasing amount of attention paid within academic philosophy of art to popular or mass art – see, for example, Noël Carroll's *A Philosophy of Mass Art* (1998) and Theodore Gracyk's *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock* (1996). This work has shown that careful attention to the popular arts can be philosophically fruitful – both in bringing to light previously unnoticed questions of philosophical interest and in providing a more accurate picture of the nature of – and our engagement with – the arts more generally. A philosophical focus on comics would constitute a significant contribution to this area, if only because comics arguably pre-date many of the other typical examples of popular arts, including film and television. In addition, comics are subdivided into a number of distinct, robust regional variants and traditions with, for example, Franco-Belgian and Japanese comics differing from North American comics and from each other both in terms of their production and, most importantly for the study of popular arts, in terms of their reception. The fact that reading comics has, traditionally, been a more socially acceptable pastime for adults in some parts of Western Europe and in Japan than it has been for adults in North America may be an important datum for the philosopher wishing to understand the "popular" in popular arts.

Third, comics promise to be a particularly important example of the notion of a hybrid art form. Jerrold Levinson defines hybrid art forms as follows:

> Hybrid art forms are art forms arising from the actual combination or inter-penetration of earlier art forms. (1984: 6).[2]

Although some comics scholars have explicitly rejected the claim that comics are hybrids (e.g., McCloud (1993) and Sabin (1993)), the comics art form is clearly a hybrid art form in *this* sense, since it arose from a combination of technologies and techniques associated with drawing and caricature, prose storytelling, and printmaking. Hybrid art forms raise questions about standard approaches to art evaluation and ontology which often seem to implicitly assume that art forms are pure (i.e., that they are not hybrid). The study of comics and their hybridity promises to shed new light onto these debates and issues.

Finally, comics are a particularly interesting instance of hybridity, since the result of so combining these pre-existing art forms amounted, in the end, to

something that is much more than merely the sum of its parts. In particular, as the comics art form evolved from its heterogeneous origins, a wealth of conventions evolved – conventions governing panel placement, panel borders (or frames), speech and thought balloons, narration boxes, sound effects, motion lines and other *emanata*, and a host of other characteristics. One underinvestigated, but particularly important, aspect of this phenomenon is the fact that these conventions vary considerably from culture to culture and from comics tradition to comics tradition (as anyone who reads both manga and western comics is aware). Arguably, comics are saturated with convention, and cultural variation of convention, to a degree unmatched by any other visual art form. As a result, philosophers interested in the role of conventions within art will not find a better test-lab than the comics.

Thus, there are a number of interconnected reasons why comics should be of central concern to philosophers of art, to art historians, to art and comics critics, and to anyone interested in the nature and development of contemporary art in general or comics in particular. This volume will not merely serve the specialist scholar. We predict that it will be of interest to a wide range of comics readers and creators. To a large extent this is because philosophical questions and concerns are not just of interest to philosophers. One does not, after all, have to be a professional academic to be interested in the definition of comics or the status of comics as an art.

More specifically, the theoretical investigation of comics found in this volume, may help the reader, or the creator, to (among other things):

(1) Better understand the significance and potential value of various avant-garde strategies for making comics.
(2) Better understand the choices and difficulties involved in adapting comics to other art forms, or vice versa.
(3) Better understand the connections between comics and other popular art forms, and the much-discussed connections between comics and Pop Art.
(4) Better understand the nature of contemporary comics in virtue of their historical connection both to earlier comic traditions and to distinct, prior artistic traditions out of which comics developed.

This is clearly only a partial list, but it nevertheless suggests that the theoretical work carried out in the chapters below will help the reader or creator to form a richer picture of how comics work, and how they might work, and as a result should be of interest to anyone who takes comics seriously.

Of course, philosophical work on comics is not the only type of work that can illuminate the sorts of issues outlined above. In particular, there is a continuously growing literature on comics in fields other than philosophy, including work by historians, literary theorists, communications scholars, and

film theorists, that is relevant to many, if not all, of the topics discussed above. (For useful recent surveys of this literature see Chute (2008), Lent (2010), and Hatfield (2010)). We shall touch on such work in Section 4 below. Nevertheless, there has, until now, been a comparative lack of study of these issues from a *philosophical* perspective, resulting in a lop sided account. With this in mind, the present volume is not meant to answer these questions in full, nor is it meant to "fix" or replace pre-existing work on these topics by scholars from other disciplines. Instead, it is meant to provide insights, answers, and accounts relevant to these issues from the perspective of philosophers of art. We hope the comments above (and, more importantly, the chapters below) will convince the reader that this until-now under-represented perspective is worth the time and attention that we have devoted to it here.

3 A Short History of Comics

Our next task is to provide a brief, historically-oriented guide to the subject matter of this volume: comics. In general, we treat the term "comics" quite broadly, and understand this term to cover graphic novels, newspaper strips, single-panel gag cartoons, superhero comics, romance comics, western comics, underground comix, web-comics, manga, alternative comics, and a wealth of related phenomenon (this is not to say, of course, that every chapter below is intended by its author to address all of these sub-forms). Of course, treating the term "comics" as applying quite broadly is not the same as treating it as applying as broadly as is possible. Some art works, regardless of their superficial similarity to comics, are not, in fact, comics, and it will serve us well not to spread our net too widely.

Of course, it is difficult to draw a sharp line between those works that are comics and those that are not without a precise definition of "comic." The correct formulation of such a precise definition, however, is a matter of some contention, and is a subject addressed, either directly or indirectly, in a number of the chapters below. Here we shall take a different approach, and instead take a tour of the highlights in the history of comics-like art, looking at clear instances of comics but also at a few borderline cases, thus emphasizing the historical development of comics as they arose from pre-existing art forms (i.e., their hybridity) instead of attempting to demarcate their essential characteristics.

But where to begin? Scott McCloud (1993), emphasizing the sequential nature of comics, suggests that Egyptian tomb paintings from the thirteenth century BC are comics (1993: 12–15), and that the much more recent Bayeux Tapestry, which was created in the eleventh century AD, is also a comic (1993: 12–13). Inclusion of these examples on McCloud's part is as likely motivated

by polemical goals – to justify the cultural and aesthetic importance of comics by identifying, as comics, artifacts whose cultural and aesthetic importance is secure – than it is by any genuine commitment to these examples as genuine instances of comics (see Meskin (2007) for relevant discussion). After all, regardless of any superficial similarity between these art works and comics, there seems to be no substantial historical connections between these and modern-day comics (nor does critical practice seem to treat those art works as comics), and, as a result, many will find it difficult to take seriously the idea that the creators of these works were working within the same art form as Charles Schulz.

At any rate, immediately after discussing these examples, McCloud moves on to another topic central to the nature of comics – printing (McCloud 15). And it is with the invention of printing that we get the first genuine proto-comics – artworks that are (1) similar to comics, and (2) out of which modern-day comics traditions evolved. Between the fifteenth-century development of the printing press and the nineteenth century, a number of artists experimented with telling stories through a combination of drawings and text. William Hogarth's eighteenth-century illustrated narrative print sequences (such as *A Harlot's Progress* and *Marriage A-La-Mode*) are perhaps the best known of these precursors of modern comics although many would resist characterizing them as actual comics. (But there are conflicting views, see below.)

Leaving aside Hogarth, the most notable of these proto-comics – and, according to many comics historians, the works that mark the first genuine comics in the modern sense of the term – are the picture stories created by Rodolphe Töpffer in the mid-nineteenth century (collected in Töpffer (2007). These stories introduced and standardized a number of innovations that would be crucial to comics as an art form, including panel borders and interdependent text and image – so much so that David Kunzle's critical study of Töpffer's life and work is titled *Father of the Comic Strip*: *Rodolphe Töpffer*. Similar early works were produced by Wilhelm Busch, Cham (Charles Henri Amédée de Noé), George Cruikshank, Léonce Petit, and Adolphe Willette (see Kunzle 1973: 1990) for details on the pre-Töpffer and early post-Töpffer comics tradition).

With the basic components of the comic in place, the art form developed in fits and starts until the late nineteenth century, where we can find a number of milestones leading up to the development of modern comics. The earliest of these was the development of the modern newspaper strip. R.F. Outcault's *Hogan's Alley*, featuring the Yellow Kid and first published in 1895, is traditionally credited with being the first modern newspaper strip, although other comics have also claimed this title. Outcault's strip is typically mobilized to defend the claim that the comic strip is an American invention

(see Harvey 1999), although serialized strips with recurring characters, such as Charles H. Ross's *Ally Sloper*, had appeared in magazines in Britain as early as 1884. Thus, the strip form is not an American invention, although the *newspaper* strip might be. Nevertheless, the inclusion of regular strips in American newspapers, which exposed the comics form to a much wider audience than it had been able to access before, certainly marks a watershed in the development of this art form (for an analysis of *Hogan's Alley* and the subsequent American newspaper comics tradition, see Harvey 1999, for discussion of *Ally Sloper*, see Sabin 2003).

From these fairly humble beginnings, the strip form eventually developed into a serious art in the first few decades of the twentieth century. Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo in Slumberland* and *Dreams of the Rarebit Fiend*, Lionel Feininger's *Kin-der-Kids* and *Wee Willie Winkie's World*, and George Herriman's *Krazy Kat* are all still recognized masterpieces. In fact, outside of Art Spiegelman and his *Maus*, it would be hard to find a comics artist more respected than Herriman and a comic more lauded than *Krazy Kat* (see Seldes (1924) and Warshow (1946) for examples of laudatory statements about the work).

The next major development in the art form was the invention of the modern comic book – a standardized booklet format for distributing comics. The first comic book is traditionally considered to be *Famous Funnies: Carnival of Comics*, a volume reprinting newspaper strips and published in 1934 by Eastern Color (although, again, there are competing claims for this honor, some tracing as far back as the book-length *The Adventures of Obadiah Oldbuck* in 1842, an unauthorized booklet-sized American reprint of one of Töpffer's stories). Shortly afterwards in 1935 Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson's company, National Allied Publications (now DC Comics), published *New Fun: The Big Comic Magazine* #1, the first comic book consisting entirely of original content instead of reprints of newspaper strips.

Roughly at the same time, a number of American artists – following the early twentieth-century example of Belgian Frans Masereel and others – began exploring the potential of wordless woodcut novels to tell serious (i.e., adult) stories. These works of pictorial narrative achieved a brief period of minor popularity in the 1930s, and although the genre has never been a central one, these artists did show the potential for comics to address "serious" social and political themes – something that was taken up by mainstream comics some decades later. Well- known authors of such works include Lynd Ward and Milt Gross.

At this point, all of the ingredients necessary for the development of modern mainstream comics were in place, except for their most famous subject matter – superheroes. Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster introduced Superman to comic readers in *Action Comics* #1 in 1938. Batman, created by

Bob Kane and Bill Finger, followed shortly afterwards in *Detective Comics* #27, published in 1939. In actuality, there were other, proto-superheroes published earlier, and recently collected and discussed in Sadowski (2009). Nevertheless, regardless of which character one counts as the first genuine superhero, there is no doubt that the near-simultaneous introduction of Batman and Superman by what would become DC Comics is the first important milestone in what would become the super-hero dominated mainstream comic book industry.

The comic book industry passed through a number of distinct historical periods, or *ages*, over the next seven decades (The period dominated by newspaper comics strips, and comic books reprinting them – from roughly 1885–1938, is sometimes referred to as the *platinum age*) The *golden age*, roughly 1938 to 1945, was characterized primarily by the introduction of a pantheon of new superheroes and a solidification of the characteristics of the superhero genre, including secret identities, sidekicks, and superhero societies.

The post-war decade, called the *atomic age*, was characterized by a temporary shift away from superhero comics (although they never completely disappeared) and a proliferation of other genres, including romance, westerns, science fiction, and, notably, crime and horror comics. It is the horror and crime comics that proved to be the end of the atomic age, as the (alleged) excesses of sexual innuendo and violent content in these comics, along with the overblown rhetoric of anti-comics literature such as Fredric Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954), led, after hearings of the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency, to the voluntary creation of the Comics Code Authority (CCA) in 1954. The CCA strictly censored the content of comics created by participating publishers, although a few publishers, including Dell, who published the clean-cut Disney line of comics, managed to continue to operate independently of the CCA.

Although some publishers left comics to concentrate on other ventures (such as EC Comics famous shift to Harvey Kurtzman's humor publication *Mad Magazine*), most of the publishers that survived the backlash of attacks by Wertham and others continued to publish comic books, albeit comics that now met the stringent restrictions of the CCA. Without the ability to tackle serious, controversial, or "adult" issues or storylines, the comics of the subsequent *silver age* (roughly 1956–1969) often resorted to silly plot devices, but the results of the CCA-imposed limitations were not all negative. This period saw an increase in the mean level of both artistic and storytelling skill in comics, and perhaps more importantly it saw the rise of Stan Lee's Marvel Comics. Lee's engaging stories, more often than not illustrated by Jack Kirby or Steve Ditko, spearheaded a new and important trend in mainstream superhero comics: a focus on the problems and issues faced by superheroes when in their everyday (i.e., "secret identity") personas.

Over the next couple of decades, there was a gradual weakening of the constraints enforced by the CCA and as a result, comic book publishers attempted to address more serious themes. This trend culminated in the publication, in 1986, of three notable comics which were to profoundly influence the development of the art form: Alan Moore and Dave Gibbon's *Watchmen*, Frank Miller's *Batman*: *The Dark Knight Returns*, and Art Spiegelman's *Maus*: *A Survivor's Tale Volume* I: *My Father Bleeds History*. (*Volume* II: *And Here My Troubles Began* would not be published until 1991). The first two of these ushered in the *modern age* of mainstream comics, which continues into the present and is characterized by darker, more psychologically driven stories and by anti-hero protagonists that blur the line between hero and villain.

Spiegelman's *Maus*, on the other hand, which did not concern spandex-clad superheroes, eventually went on to win a Pulitzer Prize in 1992, and it would be hard to exaggerate its significance to the art form. There is literally a cottage industry of academic research on *Maus* (see Chute 2008), it appears on a variety of popular best book lists, and it is plausible that it has done more than any other work to establish comics as an art form worthy of serious study. In addition, the non-fiction nature and autobiographical elements of Spiegelman's comic have been tremendously influential – a remarkable number of the most lauded comics produced in the last two decades have followed Spiegelman in exploring both the documentary capacities of comics and the memoir form. It is widely claimed that the success of the three works that ushered in the modern age is responsible both for the widening popularity of comic books and their eventual inclusion in libraries and mainstream bookstores.

This brief history covers the development of mainstream comics – particularly superhero comics – but leaves out a number of equally important parallel developments. In particular, there are five additional traditions that are worth noting here: Underground comics, alternative comics, single-panel gag cartoons, webcomics, and manga.

First, there are the underground comics (or comix, or commix) that grew out of the counterculture scene centered in the San Francisco area during the late 1960s and early-to-mid 1970s, although not all of the comics produced as parts of this alternative movement were necessarily produced or distributed in San Francisco. A number of artists who were interested in the comics form but disillusioned by mainstream comics and, in particular, the tame comics being produced under the CCA seal, began to produce and distribute their own comics, often in the form of anthology series such as Robert Crumb's *Jiz*, *Snatch*, and *Zap Comix*, Jay Lynch's *Bijou Funnies*, and Trina Robbins' *Wimmen's Comix*. For the most part, the stories revolved around and glorified the concerns of the counterculture movement including sex, drugs, and