

Afterword: Framing, Unframing, Reframing: Retconning the Transnational Work of Comics

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“To read,” according to Roland Barthes, “is a labor of language. To read is to find meanings, and to find meanings is to name them; but these named meanings are swept toward other names: I name, I unname, I rename: so the text passes: it is a nomination in the course of becoming, a tireless approximation, a metonymic labor.”¹ Whatever its merits may be for a phenomenology of literary appreciation, Barthes’s beautiful description of the reading process is limited in its ability to account for comics and graphic narratives, where reading is not *just* a labor of language. In comics, because of the central collusion between verbal and visual forms, it is not just naming but also *framing* that enables the passage of the text; visual, material, and narrative frames of various scales and orders irreducibly structure graphic texts, parse their units of significance, and condition the dynamics of their reading. The act of reading a graphic narrative involves the reader in a process of *articulation*, which prior to (and as a condition of) “expression” also implies both a drawing of distinctions between parts and, simultaneously, an act of joining them together—that is, a double determination of borders, both as points of contact and of separation. The frame of the panel is the most obvious unit of such articulation, but as I shall endeavor to demonstrate, the borders at stake in the act of reading graphic narratives stretch from intrapanel frames, such as those demarcating speech balloons, to the macro-scale borders between nations and national traditions. The creation and appreciation of meaning in graphic texts depends crucially on interactions, exchanges, and movements between the frames defining all such scales. Thus, to rephrase Barthes’s observations on reading for the visual-verbal medium of comics: “I frame, I unframe, I reframe: so the graphic text passes” from panel to panel, page to page, across medial boundaries, and—by means of this same inherent dynamic—across national and cultural boundaries as well.

This afterword aims to articulate a framework that explains the transnational work of comics and graphic narratives—their propensity toward various acts of border-crossing, adaptation, and reimagination—as a more or less natural extension of volatile core processes at work in the act of reading comics. Grounding my efforts in a consideration of comics’ formal techniques of visual and narrative framing and sequencing, I seek here to identify a set of crucial liminalities and reversible oppositions—for instance, between the inside and outside of framed panels, between the temporal and spatial orderings of sequences—that are centrally at work in, and perhaps even partially constitutive of, the medium of comics.² At the limit, this formal-phenomenological investigation suggests that liminality or marginality pertains not only to the “internal” relations or constitution of the medium, but that it is also a basic fact of comics’ “external” relations to other media and the world at large. Above all, the serial forms typical of comics’ narration witness the medium positioned in an emphatically plurimedial field, where boundaries are continually negotiated, annexes claimed, and permeable borders policed. The figures that populate ongoing comics series, in particular, move between diegetically closed narrative worlds, the integrity and continuity of which is often highly strained, and open multiverses that encompass not only alternative realities *within* the medium of comics but also alternative existences in *other media* as well. Attention to the way that serially and plurimedially instantiated figures (superheroes such as Batman and Superman, but also iconic figures like Frankenstein or Tarzan) negotiate the relations between diegetically open and closed serialities promises, finally, to shed media-theoretical light on the social question of the dynamics of comics’ transnational proliferation and reception—which involves superheroes and other comic figures in both global and local contexts, in internationally standardized forms and national or regional adaptations.

In a different context, Benedict Anderson has identified a competition between “bound” and “unbound” serialities at work in the modern constitution of nations as “imagined communities”—a competition, that is, between the totalizing closure of a territory and numbering of its occupants as effected by a national census, as opposed to the categorically open and ongoing iterability and reproducibility of events as modeled in the media of newspapers and photography.³ Refocusing Anderson’s perspective onto comics’ serial and plurimedial negotiations of “bound” and “unbound” formations—understood in relation to the marginalities and reversible boundaries that mark the frames, sequences, and media of popular culture generally and graphic narratives in particular—this chapter links comics’ plurimedial relations and their

transnational imaginings through the emergent seriality of framing, unframing, and reframing as a locus of ambiguous intersection and border-crossing.

Toward a media-theoretical backstory: The frame

What is the transnational work of graphic narrative forms? In one way or another, all of the contributions in this volume aim to answer that question or illuminate a particular facet of the answer. Due to the processual nature and flux of transnational encounters, and because these involve a dynamics of ongoing, open-ended, and qualitative change, it may very well be impossible to provide a comprehensive answer. Rather than attempting one, then, I will instead take up some of the leads provided in the various chapters of this volume and work from there to explicate a set of enabling conditions that are, I believe, of general relevance to the question of comics' transnational work. In effect, the goal of this afterword is to provide a sort of conceptual retcon, a broad media-theoretical backstory for the various case studies addressed throughout this volume. My overarching concern, specifically, is to provide a medium-specific link between content-level expressions of transnational exchange and the formal and material means of their representation in comics; between diegetic and extra-diegetic (including broadly social and cultural) phenomena of transnational interaction in and around graphic narratives; and between concrete cases of such interaction (including the transnational adaptations, influences, collaborations, and encounters explored by the contributors to this volume) and a more general potential or tendency of graphic narratives as a medium or set of medial forms toward entanglement in various transnational relations.⁴

Like Aryn Bartley, who in her contribution explores how a “narrative mobilizes the potential of graphic nonfiction to envision—quite literally—historical and present-day suffering,” I am interested in literal, material connections between the narrative content or expression of transnational encounters and the graphic-textual form of their presentation. While the literalness of vision afforded by pictorial illustration is amenable to a wide range of stylistic and thematic appropriations, the graphic quality of comics' images retains an irreducibly concrete materiality that persists quite apart from representational conventions, artistic intentions, or other discursive overlays and significances. As a result, the reader's encounter with the image is capable of being transformed into the site of a rich affective encounter (e.g. with subjects of “historical and present-day suffering”) that frames the transnational in terms that are not reducible to a

mere thematic treatment or commentary on border-crossing and cultural exchange. The reader's encounter with the image, that is, is not equivalent to the reader's encounter with the representational content of the image; relations between the two nevertheless obtain, and thus the concrete image is capable of imprinting itself upon the reader in such a way as to forge a material link between the reader's apprehension of the image and the political import of the narrative in which that image participates—for example, between the fear I feel as a reader upon encountering a subjectively framed image in which soldiers' guns are aimed at "me" and the many layers of historical, cultural, and national interactions involved in American and global mediations of a conflict such as that between Israel and Palestine. Similarly, the silent images discussed in the chapter by Georgiana Banita "cede the position of firsthand witness to the reader," such that "we engage in a dialogue of a material, somatological kind—not captioned, but lived."

This is one sense in which graphic narratives are capable of establishing concrete, literal connections—rather than merely abstract or allegorical ones—between the medial vehicle of the image and the verbal-visual representation of transnational exchange. At the same time, this visual (or visceral) "directness" of the image should not, as Florian Groß makes apparent in his chapter on the limit-case of wordless graphic novels, be mistaken for a quality of universal, transparent communicability. The links between images and their mediated contents and significances are much more complex, and this is in part due to a potential—which, as we shall see, is particularly heightened in graphic narratives—of images to vacillate phenomenally between perceptions of their representational objects, that is to say, of the objects depicted *in* images, on the one hand, and apprehensions of those same images *as* objects, on the other. This reversibility of the image is due to the fact of framing; a frame (whether physically manifest or only virtual, existing as a condition of perceptual selection) marks a boundary that defines the image as a unit, thus separating it from the space around it, but it also marks a zone of connection and in fact invites the viewer to cross its threshold, to pass into the territory it defines and behold it from an engaged—at the ideal limit, immersed—perspective. But just as it enables engrossment or absorption *into* the image, this possibility of the *Gestalt*-shift also opens up the image to the outside, where it is subject to the unpredictable vicissitudes of contextualization. The image, then, is rendered mutable, and this is not without consequence for the viewer, who is invested in the image by way of his or her perceptual intentionality. Indeed, here we may seek the deeper roots of the connections—as explored in the chapter by Elisabeth El Refaie—between the

fluidity of embodied subjectivity and graphic narratives' use of shape-shifting as a metaphor or instrument for the negotiation of transnational identities.

Perceptual multistability is not particular to comics, of course, but common to all visual media—and indeed perhaps to all media of any type, in so far as they are subject to framing of some sort. In his meditations on the “parergon,” Jacques Derrida connects the flickering dynamics of the frame with what he takes to be the outermost frame of human experience, that of *écriture*, and exploits the image of the frame for a wide-ranging deconstruction of Western philosophy. It would, of course, be problematic to seek a medium-specific link between comics' images and an alleged proclivity toward transnational exchanges at this level of generality, and yet the reversible dynamics concretely enacted by picture frames are an important key to understanding those connections. For the frame, as Derrida shows with the example of a painting, is hardly neutral in the reversals of inside (the painting's representational content) and outside (the painting apprehended as an object); instead, the frame takes on an uncanny substantiality as it alternates between two mutually exclusive positions: between (a) its function as the ground upon which the figure of the painting can emerge, and (b) its absorption into the figure when the painting is seen against the larger background of the wall. By opening a space *between* the inside and the outside, I suggest, the frame around a picture—whether a painting or a single panel in a graphic novel—institutes a dynamics of reversibility that is centrally at work in comics' negotiations of transnational relations.

Though neither exclusive to graphic narratives nor sufficient for comics' transnational proliferations, the multistable frame is, I contend, an enabling condition or catalyst that lays the ground, in miniature form, for the sorts of interchanges between the dual perspectives juxtaposed by Lukas Etter in his chapter on *Berlin*—namely, for an alternation between the series' diegetic *address* of transnational exchange (its thematic concern with multiethnic characters in an emphatically and in many ways plural metropolis) and its more-than-diegetic *illustration* of transnational influence and transfer (its incorporation of various nationally inflected stylistic influences, as well as its embodiment, on the levels of material production and reception, of networks of global interconnections). Somewhere between address and illustration—which, thus conceived, together generate a volatile, self-reflexive bond between content-level and formal enactments of transnationalism—there is the multistable frame, operating from a liminal position, serving as a transducer between insides and outsides, enabling passage and exchange. But how, exactly, do we get from the small-scale instantiation of these dynamics in the single framed image to the high-level

relations and processes identified by Etter? The link between these levels, if it indeed exists, can hardly be of a simple nature. The task of locating it will require us to go beyond the common ground that comics share with isolated images and visual media in general; we shall have to reinsert comics' panels back into the strips, sequences, and series from which they have been abstracted. When we do so, however, we find that the multistable reversibility of the framed image, far from being annulled or arrested, is in fact exacerbated in the medium of comics, where it is essential to the production and legibility of narrative meaning.

Of sequences, series, and states: Unframing and reframing

I began this chapter with a passage from Roland Barthes, which I reformulated for the purposes of understanding the reading process specific to graphic narratives: "I frame, I unframe, I reframe: so the graphic text passes." What this indicates, in the alternation between moments of framing and unframing, is that the multistability of the frame is essential to the emergence of sequentiality—essential to the very ability to cross the boundaries between panels and perceive them as sequences.⁵ Philosopher David Carrier has asked: "How, from discrete images, do we generate a continuous narrative?"⁶ Following Scott McCloud, who speaks of "closure" as the inferential activity of the reader who supplies a causal link between panels, Carrier claims that the gutter, the space between panels, is "not always a mere background, [but] may become an active part of the image."⁷ I would go one step further and claim that the gutter is never a *mere* background, as it is always caught up in the flickering of the frame between ground and figure and thus constantly alternating between passive and active functions. The panel border must be permeable, the site of functional reversals between, on the one hand, defining and focusing a certain view of the diegetic world and, on the other hand, being absorbed into the panel-as-figure so that it can stand side by side with another panel or set of panels against a larger background, constituted by a higher-level frame. The sequence takes shape in this back and forth, this oscillation of views between looking *through* the panel frame onto the story world, then seeing a set of framed units, before zooming back into the next frame, and so on. An *emergent seriality* takes root, as these oscillations continue at the level of pages and at the level of books. In each case, a gap between discrete units is bridged or made passable, "closed" by means of an alternation between a view of the unit in isolation and its reframing as part of a group, apprehended as a series. The passage from one issue of a comic book series to the next depends,

therefore, on the same dynamics of framing, unframing, reframing that drives the passage from one panel to the next.

But especially at higher levels of serialized framings, where it is no longer possible to survey a complete set of units in a single view, discrepancies inevitably arise as a result of the recursive nestings of frames and the multilevel multistabilities at work. Various frames and frame levels conflict with one another and fail to mesh, especially in long-running and multiple-author series. The technique of retcon, which retrofits the series with continuity by means of a revisionary view of past events, provides an answer to this problem that itself depends on the nonabsolute, negotiable character of multistable frames. And the proliferation of frames goes in the other direction as well, as alternative universes and what-if scenarios reframe characters in several diegetic realms, several slices of the multiverse at once. Significantly, many comic book characters are themselves designed as multistable frames in their own right; the superhero, in particular, follows a long-established pattern of serialized narrative forms by endowing the central figure with an alter ego that brokers traffic between otherwise separated, disparate times and spaces (e.g. between a criminal underground or a world of mythical powers and the world of normal, law-abiding citizens). Such figures therefore constitute a thematic embodiment of the medium's formal dynamics of the multistable frame, but they also mirror the structural logic at work in the consumption of serialized media such as comic books: Such serial forms are medially mobile forms, discretely packaged and consumed in a variety of times and spaces (at home, on the subway, etc.), consumed episodically but synthesized into overarching spatiotemporal continuities or diegetic universes (which, however, regularly defer completion and resist coherence as a result of their multistable framing). Serialized characters with liminal, hybrid, double, or secret identities therefore embody a relatively high-level frame that repeats the low-level oscillations between discontinuous framings and continuous sequences.⁸

Precisely such resonances are at work in the case of *Spider-Man India*, in Spider-Man's manga adaptations and transcreations, and in the transnational proliferations of Batman, as examined in the chapters by Shilpa Davé, Daniel Stein, and Katharina Bieloch and Sharif Bitar. It is these dynamics, which trace back to the role of the multistable frame in both structuring and destabilizing comics' narratives, that also help make the superhero genre attractive for authors such as Warren Ellis, who—as Jochen Ecke demonstrates in his contribution—performs his authorial role in such a way as to institute “the permeability between the author function and his protagonists.” Accordingly, superheroes

constitute a natural site—though by no means an unproblematic one, as Stefan Meier demonstrates in his chapter on the Muslim superheroes of *The 99*—for various forms of transnational exchange, staged in such a way as to connect Etter’s levels of diegetic “address” and extra-diegetic “illustration,” hence irreducible to a merely thematic concern with cross-border encounters. And this is especially true in an era of increasingly global networks of media production, distribution, and reception, accompanied by convergence trajectories that situate superheroes in cross-media and transmedial settings.⁹ Comics’ serial figures, which already occupy the threshold between various diegetic and nondiegetic realms, have long demonstrated facility in migrating from comics to a variety of other media, including radio, television, film, and video games. Such a figure is itself a locus of intersection between various medialities, each framing their own serial progressions that alternately mesh and fail to mesh with one another, articulating diegetic universes that respect, fail to respect, or marginally respect the framing boundaries of diegetic continuity. This plurimedial expression, which continues to resonate with the low-level multistabilities of the frames and sequences that structure the medium of comics, serves in turn as a catalyst for the even higher-level acts of framing, unframing, and reframing that constitute the transnational negotiations of imagined communities in the reception of comic book series and characters.

The social question, therefore, of the dynamics of comics’ transnational proliferations and exchanges—which involve superheroes and other comic figures in both global and local contexts, in internationally standardized forms and national or regional adaptations, and in cross-border networks of influence and collaboration—cannot legitimately be divorced from formal questions concerning the means and modes by which serially and plurimedially instantiated figures negotiate the relations between diegetically open and closed serialities. These resonate, I suggest, with comics fans’ transnational renegotiations of the boundaries at stake in the imagination of “nation”—in the establishment and negotiation of national borders as themselves multistable frames. Whether or not such borders are fixed along natural boundaries (such as rivers, mountains, and coastlines), they also encompass a cultural imagination that is far less determinate, and that is subject to a variety of forms of mediation. As I mentioned at the outset of this chapter, Benedict Anderson has linked the institution of the nation to the concept of seriality, and specifically to a competition between what he calls “bound” and “unbound” serialities. The former aims at the totalizing closure of a territory, and it is mediated paradigmatically by a national census, which numbers and categorizes the occupants of the territory. Unbound

seriality, on the other hand, refers to a categorically open and ongoing iterability and reproducibility of events as modeled in the media of newspapers and photography.¹⁰ Comics, which are closer to the latter—in Anderson’s view more democratic—media of unbound seriality, probe the bounds of national, ethnic, and cultural difference in transnational appropriations such as *Spider-Man India*, transnational reimaginings such as *Batman Incorporated*, or the transnational migrations of producers and products as exemplified in the British invasion or in the global explosion of manga. Clearly, though, such exchanges are inherently ambivalent, never clearly and necessarily liberating but always also potentially at the service of ethnocentric nationalisms and the neo-imperialist tendencies of globalized capital. In this regard, comics’ transnational relations attest to the inseparability of bound and unbound serialities, as put forward by Partha Chatterjee against Anderson’s one-sided championing of the latter.¹¹ What we see here, in effect, is a sort of transnational multistability—a flickering of the border frames of nations as imagined communities, a multivalent dynamic by which national borders are both questioned and reinforced, alternately and unceasingly, in the exchanges between real and imagined geographies as they take shape in and around the medium of comics.

Conclusion, or: To be continued . . .

With the figure of the reversible, multistable frame—which I have shown to play a dynamic, enabling role in the sequential structuring and readability of graphic narratives, and which continues to reverberate in higher-level serial and plurimedial formations and expressions—I have aimed to provide a sort of media-theoretical backstory to the transnational work of graphic narratives and to identify a mechanism for its execution that would connect the levels of form and content, diegesis and extra-diegetic reality, textual and sociopolitical articulation, as they are joined in the process of framing, unframing, reframing. In this way, I have been concerned to show that comics’ transnational work, as Michael A. Chaney puts it in the title of his chapter on graphic slave narratives, is “not just a theme.”

Finally, though, several loose ends remain to be tied up, and several potential objections remain to be answered. First, it must be clear that my “conceptual retcon” does not constitute a comprehensive answer to questions concerning the nature or possibility of transnational exchange in the medium of comics. In particular, it might be found objectionable that I have focused so extensively on

the superhero genre, thus belying my own roots in the culturally and nationally biased traditions of mainstream American comics. While claiming to discover dynamics inherent to the process of reading graphic narratives in general—reversible dynamics that link framed images into sequences, giving rise to series that stretch across pages, books, and even media—it is in fact questionable whether the analysis applies to national traditions that are less centrally invested in serialization. Moreover, with the rise of the graphic novel, which institutes structures of nonserial closure or collects previously serialized works into a total package (thus constituting a somewhat different sort of “bound seriality”), it is unclear that the strictures of national boundaries are still opened to interrogation in the same manner.

In response, I will not deny that the American mainstream is the graphic narrative tradition with which I am most familiar and that this experience undoubtedly informs my argument. However, I maintain that the figures populating long-running series in the traditions of Franco-Belgian *bande dessinée* and Japanese manga, for example, are just as fraught with the reversible potentials exhibited by American superheroes of alternately strengthening *or* destabilizing national imaginations. *Astérix*, for example, is a prime example of a figure who, over the course of his serialized adventures, explores national and cultural identities (Gallic/French, Roman, English, Belgian, German, etc.) as radically multistable potentials, in equal parts ridiculous and essential. A manga character like Detective Conan, on other hand, is an indeterminate amalgam of Japanese and Euro-American traditions, combining narrative and visual elements of an increasingly global media culture with the iconic recognizability of one of the best-known plurimedial serial figures: Sherlock Holmes. Such figures are no less capable than Spider-Man or Batman of highlighting and renegotiating the multistable boundaries of various transnational cultural geographies.

And even beyond such explicitly serialized graphic narratives, a form of emergent seriality remains inherent to the medium, no less present (though differently articulated) in closed volumes and nonserial graphic novels. Thierry Groensteen lays the groundwork for this recognition with his semiotic analysis of graphic narratives, which he subdivides into studies of “spatio-topia” and of “arthrology.” The latter term, which designates the system of interconnections between comics’ panels, from whence linear and translinear narrative significance emerges in the reading of comics, is of particular interest in the present context. Deriving from the Greek *arthron* (articulation), Groensteen’s concept emphasizes the formal connection that I introduced at the beginning of this chapter between framing and *articulation*—which reversibly combines the distinct but

interconnected processes of joining together and of parsing distinct units, and which I understand to be the most basic condition of multistability at work in the reading process of “framing, unframing, reframing.” In Groensteen’s system, the linear, sequential dynamics of panel-to-panel transitions are described under the heading of “restrained arthrology,” while a “general arthrology” describes nonlinear, networked relations between distant panels—linkages arising within the systematic deployment of nested framings, which put panels into relation with and across a variety of larger frames, including “hyperframes” (which encompass the panels on a page while typically preserving a *passepourtout*-like margin with respect to the page’s edge) and the “multiframe” (a term which emphasizes the fact that multiple images are simultaneously visible to readers, thus enabling connections between contiguous and distant images). Here, in the domain of general arthrology, Groensteen describes intrabook serialities that emerge through these translinear relations or “braidings” of distant panels—forms of seriality that are structurally homologous to the nonlinearly branching, plurimedial serialities that, as I have argued, leverage superheroes’ transnational potentials. Proliferating as a result of graphic narratives’ nested multistabilities, Groensteen characterizes this emergent seriality as a “supplementary relation” that is “inscribed like an addition that the text secretes beyond its surface.”¹² Thus, even within the covers of a single book, graphic narratives can be seen always vacillating between the linear narrative sequence and the translinear network, defining their seriality as a space of the in-between. As such, they remain poised for transnational interventions by preserving the margin of reversibility that articulates (in both senses) the borders of frames and of nations alike.

This does not, of course, mean that this potential will necessarily be realized in practice—that the formal resonances will be activated, linking diegetic and nondiegetic negotiations of the transnational, aligning form and content in the execution of transnational performances, migrations, adaptations, or problematizations. If, as I suggested above, *Astérix* succeeds on some level in staging national identities as multistable, it is important to recall that the series largely failed to realize this potential outside of Europe, as Jean-Paul Gabilliet details in his account of “the disappointing crossing” to North America. What accounts for such failure, and what can explain the apparent successes documented in this book? I have been suggesting that formal or medial resonances play a significant role in the equation: Scott Pilgrim’s ability to “get it together,” as Mark Berninger’s chapter demonstrates, involves stylistic and content-level crossovers between increasingly converging cultures and media alike; in a very different way, as Daniel Wüllner shows, Warren Craghead III

also brings together cultural contents and media channels for the purposes of political expression; Frank Miller's silhouette aesthetics, as Frank Mehring argues, enact a multistable oscillation between "images *in* media" and "images *of* media" that set the stage for a transnationally articulated sort of remediation; and R. Kikuo Johnson's transnational perspective on Hawaii, as explored by Iris-Aya Laemmerhirt, is negotiated through an elaborate set of correspondences between the visual and verbal, material and diegetic, natural and social. But such correspondences may or may not strike a chord with audiences and hence continue resonating outwards across real and imagined borders. In any case, it has not been my purpose to describe the multistability of framing as a guarantee of the transnational effectiveness or relevance of comics. Based on the attention I have devoted to the border-crossing movements that connect framed images into sequences and series of panels, though, and coupled with my insistence that the links I have sought between comics' formal properties and their negotiations of the transnational are "literal," nonallegorical, and "not just a theme," it is easy to see why I might be taken to be guilty of the "vulgar deductivism" against which Michael A. Chaney rightly warns. However, the formal dynamics described here are not only far from constituting sufficient conditions, they are probably not even necessary conditions for the transnational exchanges that are possible in and around graphic narratives. What they are, though, are potent catalysts capable of accommodating and expediting a wide range of transnational relations in the medium of comics, proceeding from the deceptively simple act of reading: framing, unframing, reframing.

Notes

- 1 Barthes 11.
- 2 As indicated above, I think the relevant properties and dynamics can be found at every scale of graphic narratives' formal articulation, from the smallest to the largest. Thus, though I will not go into it in the present chapter, many of the observations I make here about panels and strips or sequences apply also at the level of the speech balloon. On the latter, see Carrier; Balzer and Wiesing.
- 3 See Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and *The Spectre of Comparisons*. I return to Anderson's ideas later in this chapter.
- 4 The attentive reader will notice that I alternate between the terms "comics" and "graphic narrative," and that I leave open questions of whether these are "media" or "medial forms." In fact, this is a principled sort of vagueness, as the relations between these terms are, in my view, neither completely determinate

- nor hierarchically ordered. In theoretical terms, I follow Niklas Luhmann's media theory (inspired by psychologist Fritz Heider), according to which medial substrates can become medial forms and vice versa depending on the observational frame. So for me, comics is a medium, while it may also be treated as a composite of other media (image and text, or even other components), and it need not necessarily serve narrative ends (though it usually does), whereas graphic narrative is also a closely related but not quite identical medium, and one that might also with some justification be claimed as the broader category, capable of subsuming graphic novels, comic books, comic strips, bandes dessinées, manga, and the like.
- 5 The argument put forward in this section has been made, with a somewhat different focus and framing (so to speak), in my "Frame, Sequence, Medium."
 - 6 Carrier 50.
 - 7 Carrier 51.
 - 8 The connection between a double identity and the recurring instantiation across a variety of media is typical of what Ruth Mayer and I call "serial figures." See our "Grenzgänger." For an application to the medium of comics, see also my "Marvel Comics' Frankenstein."
 - 9 See also Stein.
 - 10 See *The Spectre of Comparisons*, ch. 1.
 - 11 See Chatterjee.
 - 12 Groensteen 146–7.

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