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Neither Surrogate Nor Complement: The Long Life of Visual Narratives

Ann L. D'Orazio
University of New Mexico

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Ann D'Orazio

Candidate

English

Department

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:

Jonathan Davis-Secord, Chairperson

Timothy Graham

Anita Obermeier

Daniel Worden

**NEITHER SURROGATE NOR COMPLEMENT: THE LONG
LIFE OF VISUAL NARRATIVES**

by

ANN D'ORAZIO

B.A. English, University of Colorado at Boulder, 2005
M.A. English, University of Colorado at Boulder, 2010

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ABSTRACT

Visual narratives are contested territory. They require tools from a variety of academic disciplines, and in some ways, they defy the usual sets of interpretive strategies and systems of nomenclature available in traditional humanities disciplines. This dissertation fills in one of the missing approaches to visual narratives; that is the long historical, interconnected view that renders visible significant connections among graphic narratives from the medieval manuscript to the contemporary comic book and graphic novel. The project articulates a theory of the long material and cultural life of visual narratives in a variety of media forms, including the manuscript, the early printed book, the lithograph series, and the comic book. The project records and embraces the preponderance of narrative images in a variety of media forms, and in doing so, argues that visual narratives are both typical methods of storytelling, and that their ubiquity has been used to create and disseminate narratives to larger groups of the public rather than small coterie groups. This attempt to connect to larger groups occurs detectably in

implied intent and recorded effect of most visual narratives. The typically popular and topical, and sometimes didactic nature of visual narratives makes them especially suited to a sort of populist politics even before the introduction of print and the advent of postindustrial mass culture. This project advances an understanding of all producers of visual narratives as laborers in a persistent mechanism of collective production, which remains present throughout all of the media examined in the dissertation.

The dissertation covers a temporally wide range of materials not only to prove the pervasiveness and intelligibility of narrative images across a variety of eras and media forms, but also to demonstrate repeated, often recursive, patterns of making and dissemination common to these different periods and forms. The geographic and cultural range is not as wide, owing much more to the time and space limitations of the dissertation rather than anything else. The project examines commonalities not to make a flattening gesture, but to reverse the institutional tendency of literary studies to undervalue or ignore typical, common works. By pushing back against this tendency, the work herein redraws the boundaries among Humanities scholars in different disciplines, makers of visual narratives, and those who consume visual narratives.

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Introduction: There is No (New) “Pictorial Turn”

“All images are narrative.”—Angel Chen, cartoonist.

“What changes forces itself far more on the attention than what remains the same. That is a general law of our intellectual life. Hence the perspectives which come from the experience of historical change are always in danger of distortion because they forget the hidden constants.”—Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.

Medieval, Modern, and Somewhere in Between

In the author’s note to *The Great War*, cartoonist and comics journalist Joe Sacco makes a profound connection between his own work in the twenty-first century and medieval pictorial art. His depicted subject is World War I, specifically, the Battle of the Somme and the days leading up to it, but Sacco was inspired by the techniques of rendering narrative in the Bayeux Tapestry:

The model that Matt [Sacco’s editor] had in mind for this book was Mateo Pericoli’s wordless *Manhattan Unfurled*, a beautiful, accordion-style foldout drawing of the city’s skyline. As a comics book artist, however, I felt impelled to provide a narrative, so the Bayeux Tapestry, which tells the story of the Norman invasion of England, was my touchstone. In the interest of making the drawing compact, I referenced medieval art in other, stylistic ways, namely by dispensing with realistic perspective and proportion. Thus a few inches in the drawing might

represent a hundred yards or a mile of reality. However, I have tried to get the details—the field kitchens, the horse ambulances—right.¹

Sacco's choice to use medieval art is telling, though he attempts to illustrate with a degree of accuracy. The pictorial narrative-making techniques he uses have a long history, and work effectively to imaginatively yet faithfully narrate an event in space and time. Sacco does not set up a hard binary between the drawings that he makes of war in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, past and current wars documented in the medium of comics, and the artistic depiction of the Norman Conquest of England as woven into the Bayeux Tapestry. The textile and the comic are different media; however, for Sacco, their powers of image-based storytelling are much the same.²

Sacco's graphic narrative of the Battle of the Somme and the Bayeux Tapestry are powerful examples of the range of visual narrative. Yet, the textile and the accordion-folded comic do not comprise the only examples of visual narratives that connect across the Middle Ages and the twenty-first century at the level of content, theme, and the use of pictorial storytelling. R. Crumb's *The Book of Genesis Illustrated* links contemporary comics with the medieval illustrated manuscript, not only in methods of graphic storytelling, but also in content. Crumb even provides a preface to explain and

¹ Joe Sacco, "On The Great War," in *The Great War* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 1. See also image appendix, figure 1.

² I discuss the Bayeux Tapestry briefly in Chapter One to dispute Scott McCloud's notion that it is a comic, and lay out territory for a genealogy of codex-bound visual narrative. The tapestry was reproduced in a series of drawings by Charles Stothard. These drawings were printed in book that contained separate plates for each drawing, which was quite popular. See C. A. Stothard and Alfred John Kempe, *The Monumental Effigies of Great Britain; Selected from our Cathedrals and Churches for the Purpose of Bringing Together, and Preserving Correct Representations of the Best Historical Illustrations Extant, from the Norman Conquest to the Reign of Henry the Eighth*, (London: J. M'Creery, 1817); see also Rachel Dressler, "'Those effigies which belonged to the English Nation': Antiquarianism, Nationalism, and Charles Alfred Stothard's *Monumental Effigies of Great Britain*," in *Correspondences: Medievalism in Scholarship and the Arts*, *Studies in Medievalism* 14 (2005): 145.

justify his artistic choices and the translations from which he drew for the narrative, hearkening back to medieval content in another noteworthy connection.³ The fourth chapter of the comic, following Genesis, depicts Cain's murder of Abel, though the drawings provide more elaborate, emotive detail, especially in Cain and Abel's respective facial expressions and postures.⁴ The upper middle and right panels differentiate Cain and Abel in occupation and character; Abel appears youthful and innocent, tending his flock in a pastoral scene. In contrast, a bearded, hirsute Cain toils over the ground, farming under the hot sun. The brothers' personalities are further opposed, both visually and verbally, in the illustrations of their offerings to God. Where Abel remains calm and gracious, Cain sweats and grits his teeth. Crumb focuses upon the same aspects that medieval artists did when illustrating the famous fratricide: the brothers' different labor, their offerings to God, the sheer horror of the murder, Abel's gruesome headwound, the "crying out" of Abel's blood,⁵ the ensuing infertility of the earth, and God's cursing of Cain. The narrative pacing differs, as each plot point and piece of dialogue receives a treatment in its own panel; however, the overall effect remains the same.

Comics is a highly mutable and varied medium, and one form in a long history of visual narrative, as the above examples demonstrate. Both Sacco and Crumb are prolific writers and illustrators of contemporary comics; yet their intentional use of older topics, historical and religious, and their evocation of medieval and early modern art must be

³ Robert Crumb, "Introduction," in *The Book of Genesis Illustrated* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009).

⁴ Crumb, *The Book of Genesis Illustrated*, Chapter Four. See image appendix, figure 2.

⁵ See Chapter One on Cain's murder of Abel in the Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, London, British Library, Cotton MS Claudius B. iv and in the Junius Manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11. See Chapter Two on the murder in the Holkham Bible Picture Book, London, British Library, MS Additional 47682.

more than arbitrary stylistic choice. Rather, the connections Sacco and Crumb form through their comics and source material across time (real time and time in the graphic narratives) as well as aesthetic and semiotic strategies embody a palpable history of visual storytelling. For example, Sacco's and Crumb's treatments of violence, history, and religion can neither be understood in a context of strictly twenty-first century popular culture, nor can they be understood as shadows or secondhand stand-ins for their source material. Instead, they must be read as iterations informed by a broad and deep system of signification. The illustrated medieval manuscript, in essence, is the foremother of later material iterations of popular, collectively produced visual narratives such as the comic book. Upon examination for constants, these cultural objects of the medieval era exist in a rich relationship to the objects of the present, one in which older media provide a ground or basic set of functions carried forward and complicated by newer media. This project does not aim to find an origin point for the medium of comics. Rather, this project establishes the ubiquity of popular visual narrative across time and media, ultimately advocating for a model of assessing visual narratives, especially comics, outside of narrowly conceived disciplinary boundaries.

Media, Story, and The Eye

The medium, as scholars from Marshall McLuhan on have told us, not only affects the message, but *is* the message. McLuhan's once-revolutionary-feeling proclamation about the early days of television—now taken somewhat for granted—should be revisited in the days of seemingly ever-changing media. As the above epigraph from Gadamer reminds us, focusing solely upon the ruptures and upheavals erases the constants, thereby obscuring productive recurrent relationships among different time

periods and modes of artistic production. In light of the idea of these hidden constants, we cannot restrict McLuhan's dictum to the latter half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. McLuhan himself noted that our perspectives on the past are always invented by the present—that later eras turn preceding eras into “art forms.”⁶ The plasticity and complexity of his deceptively simple and potentially clichéd statement, “the medium is the message,”⁷ lies in its applicability across various media and their physical delivery systems in many eras; the codex, the broadsheet, the magazine, the comic book, the television, the tablet, all of which rely upon images to varying degrees. McLuhan conceives of new technologies and media as forces to aestheticize and temporalize what previously existed: “Each new technology creates an environment that is itself regarded as corrupt and degrading. Yet the new one turns its predecessor into an art form. [...] What we are considering here, however, are the psychic and social consequences of the designs or patterns as they amplify or accelerate existing processes.”⁸ The eternally-existent process, to this project, is the act of making and disseminating narrative through collectively-produced narrative images. McLuhan's later qualifier that “the medium is *socially* the message”⁹ places the medium back into the realm of real, material effect and physical production. In other words, this point avoids the hyper-abstraction that removes narrative—in this case across a variety of media and technologies—from its material contexts and constraints, and simultaneously allows

⁶ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press, 2003), 13.

⁷ McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 19.

⁸ McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 18, 20.

⁹ McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 22, emphasis mine.

creators and audiences to retain a stake in the production and consumption of said narrative.

Before examining the primary texts, I must articulate the broadly hermeneutic nature of my project as well as a definition of my most basic and vital primary terms: narrative, visual narrative, narrative image, popular, and collective production. The “authorship” of the producers whether in church, laity, or secular becomes vital to the productive and reproductive labor involved in creating/authoring and disseminating/redisseminating narrative through images. In conceiving of *narrative* as the most central and essential unit of human meaning-making, I dispense with questions of visual narratives’ hybridity and replace it with an examination of story and polyvocal creation. Many studies of visual narrative take a semiotics-based approach that deploys Saussurean linguistics and seeks to read the visual as a series of regular scientific systems, linguistic signs, and related phenomena. The long-held approach to visual narratives in literary studies follows the semiotic (and text-specific) approach closely, treating the signification at work in visual narratives as a set of discreet iconic units, a kind of hybrid in which image and text complement or repeat one another, or even as an aesthetically embellished text in which word dominates image and the impulse to story. While useful at times, these techniques present problems when it comes to reading visual narratives outside of a logocentric and print-biased perspective.

In *A General Theory of Visual Culture*, art historian Whitney Davis articulates the embodied, constitutive, and circular nature of the visual: “Indeed, a recursion or feedback loop seems to operate when we use pictures, for in seeing a picture, we must see it as having configurative, historical, representational, and cultural styles, what I will call

forms of likeness.”¹⁰ Davis discusses *all* pictures here, and though I am concerned only with saliently narrative images—as opposed to portraits, which arguably are also narrative through impositions made by the viewer though they have historically been categorized separately from narrative images, but that lies outside the scope of this project. Davis’ assessment perhaps unwittingly reveals the potential gap in taking a solely semiotics-based or logocentric approach to narrative images. Narrative images induce the observer to make the connections that Davis explains; that is, narrative images provide the aforementioned “forms of likeness” that the viewer can readily recognize because of experience, a shared cultural vocabulary, or other developed responses to visual stimuli and storytelling patterns. Narrative images themselves inherently contain these connections so that they can be culturally sense-making, and audiences use narrative as the process to make sense out of those images. Narrative images also cue readers through ocular inducement and arrangement in recognizable patterns. To avoid the potential tautology of the claim that our eye makes vision/vision makes our eyes/these things make a never-ending loop of meaning, as Davis cautions against,¹¹ I would here again call upon the process of narrative-making. The investigation demands a hermeneutic approach in order to see how such narrative-making *persists* across time and bookish forms of media. Gadamer responds to the question of hermeneutics in understanding works of art, including literary texts: “[...] the real problem of hermeneutics is quite different from its common acceptance. It points in the same direction in which my criticism of the aesthetic consciousness has moved the problem of aesthetics.”¹² In fact, hermeneutics would then

¹⁰ Whitney Davis, *A General Theory of Visual Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 6.

¹¹ Davis, *A General Theory of Visual Culture*, 12, 108.

¹² In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer’s “criticism of the aesthetic consciousness” problematizes Kant’s philosophy of aesthetics and counters the sealed autonomy Kant ascribes to art. Gadamer’s asserts that

have to be understood in so comprehensive a sense as to embrace the whole sphere of art and its complex of questions. Every work of art, not only literature, must be understood like any other text that requires understanding, and this understanding has to be acquired. This gives to the hermeneutical consciousness a comprehensiveness and breadth that surpasses that of even aesthetic consciousness. Aesthetics has to be absorbed into hermeneutics.”¹³ A great deal of Gadamer’s criticism relies upon the truth that there are no pure stimuli and proportionately pure responses without meaning making,¹⁴ therefore any conception of an aesthetic consciousness without an interpretive, hermeneutic framework cannot account for meaning making on the part of the creator or the audience. The simultaneous distance and closeness a hermeneutic approach affords allows larger, clear patterns of signification methods to emerge within and alongside particularities in labor practices, material culture, and the lived experience of actual people. Physical making, aesthetic response, and narrative understanding become equally important through such an approach.¹⁵ I name the project broadly hermeneutic, not because it interprets text in isolation/texts-as-such, but because it creates an intelligible trajectory of the making and effects of visual narratives in codex-forms without the ahistorical

“What Kant sought to justify by his critique of aesthetic judgment was the subjective universality of aesthetic taste in which there is no longer any knowledge of the object, and in the area of the ‘fine arts’ the superiority of the genius above all rules of aesthetics,” Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Garret Barden and John Cumming (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 39.

¹³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 146.

¹⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 81-3.

¹⁵ Benjamin C. Withers, in his monograph on British Library Cotton Claudius B. iv, *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch*, elegantly articulates a similar approach to his object of study: “It [the manuscript] deserves to be read in terms of the elements it shares with all living books. By focusing on large-scale patterns created by the relationships of text and image, how the spaces of the manuscript create other, temporal ties that bind together the historical past and the reader’s present, this study’s true subject is the book: how it lives and breathes in times and space, operating as a physical environment for acts of reading and viewing, and providing a cognitive landscape that organizes perception. It is the structure of the manuscript, not just its content, that permits the reader and the viewer to link the distant past to their own experiential horizons,” *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch Cotton Claudius B. iv: The Frontiers of Seeing and Reading in Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 16.

flattening of a reading of form or aesthetics in a vacuum. Thus, my account remains grounded in processes of meaning-making.

Narrative Function

Narrative, simply put, means intelligible story. As John Niles writes, “All stories, it can be said, are a form of mythopoesis. Whatever else in the realm of culture that we value is to an important degree dependent upon the stories that people tell.”¹⁶ Niles’s assertion is useful here because it relies both upon the act of telling/transmitting and the concept of cultural meaning-making. To the linguist, meaning breaks down into smaller component parts than *narrative*, the potentially nebulous and vastly-encompassing term I use here; however, each of these smaller component parts (the phoneme, the morpheme, the grapheme, and other syntactic and grammatical units) can be understood through a story-making process that moves in concept, image, and time.¹⁷ In other words, no matter how small or seemingly contained the element may be, narrative comprises a salient framework in which said elements exist and are made intelligible. Paul Ricoeur

¹⁶ John D. Niles, *Homo Narrans* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 2.

¹⁷ De Saussure articulates the basic ties among spoken language, linguistic signs, and acts of graphicizing them: “Moreover, linguistic signs are, so to speak, tangible: writing can fix them in conventional images, whereas it would be impossible to photograph acts of speech in all of their details. The utterance of a word, however small, involves an infinite number of muscular movements extremely difficult to examine and represent,” *A Course on General Linguistics*, ed. Bally et al, trans. Roy Harris (Chicago: Open Court, 1983), 16. Here, de Saussure analyzes alphabetic letterforms in written language versus the physical acts involved in sounding the word; however, even in this account, a series of narratives (the structures that turn the images into conventional images) attached to images and embodied acts remains absolutely central. In a contrast to the focus on spoken language, language systems, and alphabetic letterforms that has come to dominate accounts of pictorial and illustrational works, W. J. T. Mitchell offers both an alternative account of a pictorial turn in the last couple of decades and a warning against relegating too much to semiotics: “Although I have great respect for the achievements of semiotics, and draw upon it frequently, I’m convinced that the best terms for describing representations, artistic or otherwise, are to be found in the immanent vernaculars of representational practices themselves,” *Picture Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 14, 15 n. 10. Jessica Evans, like Mitchell, problematizes overreliance on linguistics: “It is important to avoid the literal application of structural linguistics to the visual image” ed. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall, *Visual Culture: The Reader* (London: SAGE Publications, 1999), 12.

explains the process of narrative as a function of human existence in time: “[... the] basic hypothesis that between the activity of narrating a story and the temporal character of human experience, there exists a correlation that is not merely accidental but that presents a transcultural form of necessity. *Time* becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a *narrative mode*, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of *temporal* existence.”¹⁸ For Ricoeur, all culture-making and interpretive activity revolves around narrative. Even our basic understanding of human time (and arguably time upon both larger epochal and smaller, more finite scales) depends upon the mutually interdependent and co-creative elements of time and narrative. Through the inextricable elements of story and temporality, we understand time, emplotment, and events, no matter how abstract. As Ricoeur continues, “To understand story is to understand both the language of ‘doing something’ and the cultural tradition from which proceeds the typology of plots.”¹⁹ I would add apprehending the conceptual to the idea of “the language of ‘doing something’,” as narrative assists us in rendering intelligible what is conceptually disordered or highly abstract. Narrative forms the dialectical force that undulates back and forth among discourse and experience, expression and perception.

Ricoeur proposes that the intelligibility of narrative comes out of the triangulated relationship among temporality, plot, and representation, i.e. his three subtypes of mimesis. The first subtype constitutes and establishes the relationship between the “real domain covered by ethics” and the “imaginary domain covered by poetics,” thereby expressing the dialectical process at work in artistic composition, which Ricoeur frames

¹⁸ Niles, *Homo Narrans*, 52.

¹⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 57.

as poetic composition,²⁰ but I claim its applicability to pictorial art as well. The second mimesis subtype functions as and through mediation and configuration, and Ricoeur calls it “the mimesis of creation.”²¹ The relationship between the first and second subtypes presents the process of creation; the addition of the third subtype, the necessity “of the spectator or reader,”²² fully completes the process of meaning-making and reception.²³ The third subtype of mimesis encompasses Gadamer’s hermeneutic principle of “application”²⁴ in which human time (and to Aristotle the emotive experience of the audience) meets and process the art—the tragedy, poem, drawing, etc.—and “marks the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader.”²⁵ This process helps concretize links in visual narrative among pictures, story/plotment, production concerns, and reception. Furthermore, these concepts link time, representation, and perspicuity.

Visual narrative encompasses a variety of sight-oriented, pictorial storytelling modes, but stands out in its iterations of images arranged to tell a story that typically, but not always, contains adjacent writing and script in the form of a coterminous narrative, commentary, elaboration, and/or captions around and within the images. Explanations of visual narrative that rely upon the notion of hybridity tend to binarize word and image in service of an analysis that frequently privileges, intentionally or not, word or image over one another. The pedantic adherence to an imagined essential character of any medium or art form, and therefore any mixture of them as a dilution or crossbreed, wrecks an

²⁰ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 46, 54-64.

²¹ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 46, 64-70.

²² Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 46.

²³ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 46, 48, 70-76.

²⁴ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 70.

²⁵ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 71.

effective yet versatile definition of visual narrative. The concept here is not terribly radical, but remains consistently pushed out of regular practices within literary studies and art history. Mitchell poses the question of “Why does the image/text seem to [be...] a historical *a priori*?” And answers thusly: “[T]he purification of the media in modernist aesthetics, the attempt to grasp the unitary, homogeneous essences of painting, photography, sculpture, poetry, etc., is the *real aberration* and [...] the heterogeneous character of media was well understood in premodern cultures.”²⁶ C. R. Dodwell’s commentary on pictures in manuscripts reinforces sentiments such as Mitchell’s: “The concentration in this book on the paintings of manuscripts would have been incomprehensible to a medieval observer who would have considered it a form of visual dismemberment.”²⁷ By conceiving of narrative itself as the ur-process or basic unit of human expression, visual narrative becomes more than a problematic shuffling between literacies (oral, verbal/written, graphic) or discreet units (speech acts, alphabetic systems, pictures). Indeed if narrative comprises the dialectical force joining, splitting, and rejoining the pictorial and the discursive *within* visual narratives, then visual narratives are formally and aesthetically different manifestations of a process that is artificially fragmented by the atomization of academic disciplines and our roughly two-hundred-and-fifty-year-old hangover from Gotthold Lessing’s *Laocoon* and its split of the visual and verbal arts.²⁸ Rather, visual narrative forms a sensory, and sensuously apprehended, conjoined complement to oral narrative and a point in the expanding feedback loops of media, forms, and techniques of human artistic expression and culture-making.

²⁶ Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, 107.

²⁷ C. R. Dodwell, *The Pictorial Arts of the West 800-1200* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

²⁸ Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 70, n. 33.

Pictures in Books

The act of telling stories through pictures certainly predates the book, as a variety of wall-paintings, relief sculptures, scrolls, and rolls can attest, but the rise of the codex made a saliently different process in visual narrative emerge. Particular and lasting instantiations occur when pictorial narrative meets the media form of the codex not only because of the necessity of design changes and the format of the rectangular page, but also because of large changes in the western episteme. Otto Pächt writes:

[...] the change from roll to codex coincided with a shift in intellectual outlook, in the values attached to the experience of the physical world. Criteria based on perception were devalued, and this undoubtedly has the most intimate bearing on visual art. In the coastal regions of the eastern Mediterranean, the shift led, as is well known, to a positive hostility to figurative art. Even in less extreme circumstances in the West, there was a growing inclination to regard external reality as a transient metaphor for the true, primary and invisible, transcendental world. A distinction began to be made between outward and inward looking. [...] As the pictorial language of art was suddenly perceived to be inwardly related to the sign language of the book, the barriers fell between the two domains that had up to now been heterogeneous and in Antiquity fundamentally distinct. Wide perspective opened up for a fruitful and creative interplay between word and picture, letter and figure, the arena of script and pictorial space.²⁹

²⁹ Otto Pächt, *Book Illumination in the Middle Ages* (London: Harvey Miller, 1986), 27-8.

Pächt's assessment of the sea change from Antiquity's primary media to Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages' primary medium (and perhaps even the primary medium from Late Antiquity until the last decade) makes a sweeping and correct account of the change. Yet, without the small caveat he makes on the persistence of cyclical pictorial narratives in Christian texts,³⁰ one could easily read the transition in technology and expression as a hard break, a total split from past methods of narrative making, without any lingering influence from Antiquity. More accurately, the change constitutes a rupture; significant change occurs, but the shifts recursively carry forth some older strategies of depiction into a newer medium. The iconoclasm of the Eastern Church aside, much of the figural, stylized nature of medieval pictorial art arises from the epistemic change Pächt discusses. Shifting understandings of bodily and spiritual sight, conceptions of apocalyptic time, and the persistent medieval paradoxes of the transience of life and matter but the necessity of safeguarding it from sin and sinful influence all combine in the visual narrative cycles that accompanied biblical texts, psalters, and, more rarely, nonbiblical medieval works. The rise of the book, its concomitance with the expansion of Christianity, and the growth of visual narrative in illustrated medieval manuscripts cannot be understated. Narrative images' nascent, protean existence before their growth and refinement in the codex format, however, cannot be totally forgotten.

Narrative images, the units that make up visual narratives, tell some kind of a story, often but not always cyclically, episodically, or sequentially. They often exist in a non-subordinate relationship to text, which can be mutually constitutive, translating, conversational, revisionary, or even slavishly repetitive. One of the most important

³⁰ Pächt, *Book Illumination in the Middle Ages*, 29-31.

aspects of narrative images is the way in which the viewer gets cued through space and time.³¹ Commentators ranging from philosophers, art historians both traditional and less conservative, theorists of narrative, literary scholars, and scholars of the comic book and graphic novel dispute what exactly constitutes a visual narrative, let alone narrative images. One point of clear agreement stands out, though, and that is the importance of the viewer/reader's relationship to the pictorial image as one of inducement and engagement.³² Generally speaking, all sensuously apprehended art can fall under the inducement claim, *but* sequential art, pictorial narratives, narrative images—however one wants to term these works—have special status in that the necessity of cueing and directing the eye shows itself more strongly and differently than in other art forms. Music relies on a more limited or constrained form of temporality; imageless narrative relies on the linear, directional reading practices of the authoring and receiving culture; sculptural friezes on the movement of the body along or around them.³³ Kurt Weitzmann, in his *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination*, explains the still-ongoing methods by which early book illuminators rendered narrative images: “The method of illustrating

³¹ Anticipating the unimaginative objections of those who see linguistic and imagistic activity as wholly separate or separable, W. J. T. Mitchell writes, “Perhaps the best answer to the purist who wants images that are only image and texts that are only texts is to turn the tables and examine the rhetoric of purity itself. In painting, for instance, the notion of purity is invariably explicated as a purgation of the visual image from contamination by language and cognate or conventionally associated media: words, sounds, time, narrativity, and arbitrary ‘allegorical’ signification are the ‘linguistic’ or ‘textual’ elements that must be repressed or eliminated in order for the pure, silent illegible visuality of the visual arts to be achieved. This sort of purity, often associated with modernism and abstract painting, is both impossible and utopian, which isn’t to dismiss it, but to identify it as an ideology, a complex of desire and fear, power and interest,” *Picture Theory*, 96. The very notion that time, narrativity, or any allegorical or analogical features could be removed from images, no matter how abstract, seems difficult to accept. Within the realm of narrative images, even in the more stylized examples found in the Junius Manuscript or the Harley Psalter, the “purity” of vision does not apply. Medieval theories of optics, as discussed below, also foreclose this possibility.

³² For a small mountain of surprisingly similar accounts of “inducement” in visual narrative, see Davis, Dodwell, Thierry Groensteen, Catherine Karkov, Mitchell, Pächt, Weitzmann, and Withers. For “inducement” functions in narrative and their relationship to temporality, see Gadamer and Ricoeur.

³³ Otto Pächt, *The Rise of Pictorial Narrative in Twelfth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), 2-3.

such literary texts [classical texts on papyrus, a romance from the second century and a Heracles poem from the third] was quite consistent: the illustrator rendered as many events as possible in concise, frameless scenes which follow each other in quick succession *so that the beholder is induced to move from one to the next* [emphasis mine]. This general principle survived in many codices and is still widely used in the modern comic strip.”³⁴ Weitzmann’s examples include a variety of texts that carry a range of cultural capital from the popular and entertaining to the rhetorical and legal, but all of them display a kind of intelligibility in which the reader, or even perhaps illiterate observer, knows how to move through the images. Their intelligibility relies in great part upon the use of visual narrative, and Weitzmann’s use of “is induced” highlights not only the physical movement of the eye, but also the ability for the observer to understand the progress of the narrative through visual as well as lexical elements.

As pictorial narratives rely on depictions of both space and time, the cyclical and apocalyptic time of early Christianity may have driven the temporal marking and patterns in the medieval works I discuss below. In assessing the productive tension between cyclical and episodic, more linear-feeling narrative, Ricoeur finds “the correspondence between beginning—Genesis—and end—the Apocalypse” and all temporal events in between to be a major template for understanding the confrontation between consonance and dissonance, and *distentio* and *intentio*. The biblical model is, of course, not the only one, but the discord exhibited by the linear form of the codex and the cyclical nature of the time in the stories it represents bear examination. Pächt characterizes the potentially

³⁴ Kurt Weitzmann, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination* (New York: George Braziller, 1977), 10.

paradoxical status of the depiction of time in early Christian and medieval pictorial art as being “in a particularly delicate position. For, the necessary requirement of all narrative—to incorporate the elusive element of time—now clashes openly with the basic postulate of an extramundane art that all things should be viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*—which implies the elimination of all references to time.”³⁵ The cyclical nature of Old Testament pictorial art, and generally more episodic graphic narratives in the psalters, all seem to embody this paradox—the need to avoid references to time, but the simultaneous reliance upon it for narrative ordering. Pächt also says the “desecularization,” or turning from the world, and the “dematerializing,” or turning from matter, specifically in a monastic context,³⁶ appear to directly contradict the reckoning of time and space in relationship to Christian doctrine. Yet, the way a codex works forces some linearity but not totally. Cyclical illustrations in a linear media format that focus largely upon Old Testament stories in a figural sense join the circular time, always pushing toward the end to begin anew. At the same time they formally and aesthetically recall older illustrations and motifs, thereby solving or at least productively inhabiting the paradox inherent in ascribing narrative time and visual space to Christian doctrine.³⁷

³⁵ Pächt, *The Rise of Pictorial Narrative*, 3.

³⁶ Pächt, *The Rise of Pictorial Narrative*, 3.

³⁷ Pächt connects the growth of Christian visual narrative, largely expressed in Old Testament stories, to origins “in Judaeo-Christian communities of Oriental, rather than Classical, or even properly Christian character, and that they have been conceived as simple and even naïve illustrations of biblical stories and apocryphal Jewish legends designed in the spirit of popular picture chronicles. It was this pre-Christian legacy of Christian art which was transmitted to the converted barbarians of Western Europe and there finally engendered new forms of pictorial narrative,” *The Rise of Pictorial Narrative*, 4. There are three standout points here that are extremely important to my project. First, Pächt’s assertion that the exemplars for these illustrated medieval works were popular in nature demonstrates a sense of the popular contra Habermas, as I discuss below. Second, the manner in which the exemplars spread but were made anew rather than copied in the strictest sense shows technological and cultural recursion at work. Third, the repetition and revision of an ongoing tradition saliently demonstrates a metonymic and synecdochic principle of meaning-making that dovetails with other scholars’ explanation of these tropes in artistic production.

Popular Objects

Popular is a thorny and nebulous term. It frequently crops up either in terms of industrial and post-industrial mass culture, especially to refer to commodity objects, or it appears in discussions of folk or vernacular culture, in pre- and post-industrial culture. I see and deploy two principal threads of the term. First, popular simply means of, from, or for people; even in a restricted or cloistered context, popular productions existed and were shared. Second, there is the post-print and more broadly post-industrial sense of popular as mass or non-elite. I contend that sacred texts are, in intention, execution, and at times but not always in use and reception, an ultimate form of popular visual narrative. The early modern and Enlightenment-era turn away from sacred texts and towards realism and secular topicality forms the *link* between contemporary visual narratives and medieval visual narratives rather than the origin point of the impulse to contemporary visual narrative itself, but more on that later. The realm in which the so-called Habermasian public begins to emerge is not quite post-Gutenberg, but still in the era of manuscript production, albeit in an increasingly secular, professional, and specialized division of labor. Habermas locates the incipient public within the very infancy of capitalism, and “the traffic in commodities and news created by early capitalist long-distance trade” beginning in the thirteenth century,³⁸ but sees the clearest manifestation post-feudalism and in the development of the public/private split realized in the eighteenth century.³⁹ There exists a scholarly commonplace that illustrated medieval

³⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 13-14.

³⁹ Habermas contends that “Only after national and territorial power states had arisen on the basis of the early capitalist commercial economy and shattered the feudal foundations of power could this court nobility develop the framework of a sociability—highly individuated, in spite of its comprehensive etiquette—into that peculiarly free-floating but clearly demarcated sphere of “good society” in the eighteenth century. [...]”

manuscripts, especially those with extensive programs of illustration, are prestige objects—singular, aberrant, rare—made for and consumed by an elite and select few.⁴⁰ Cultural productions such as these seem to be the exact opposite of what one might call a popular text or popular work of art. The very word “popular” calls to mind public communication and consumption, the mass market, accessible information and signification, and a degree of openness and even excess, indeed, products made for the secular “public” of Habermas’ eighteenth century and onward. That definition of popular, however, suffers from a post-print, post-industrial revolution, and indeed post-Habermasian “public” bias. Habermas’ distinction of the popular as the realm of the secular public distorts the primacy of the Church in the Middle Ages. We must keep in mind that the medieval Church effectively pervaded secular culture despite statements like Dodwell’s that “The primary function of the monastery had never been a cultural or artistic one.”⁴¹ Thus, our Habermasian-informed conflation of “popular” with “public” has relatively little bearing on the thread of popular narrative images I analyze here beyond serving as a model against which to define “popular.”

The split offered by Habermas precludes an understanding of an ongoing, popular kind of narrative activity, which arguably undergirds all of human expression and finds a

Now for the first time private and public spheres became separate in a specifically modern sense. [...] ‘Private’ designated the exclusion from the sphere of the state apparatus; for ‘public’ referred to the state that had in the meantime developed, under absolutism, into an entity having an objective existence over against the person of the ruler,” *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 10-11. Habermas’ conception of popular as public rules many contemporary explorations of popular culture, and the binarization of public and private that took hold in the nineteenth century fabricates a set of temporal blinders we must remove in order to see the overarching patterns (and at times, ruptures) in the persistence of collectively-produced visual narratives.

⁴⁰ There are some manuscripts, such as the *Canterbury Codex Aureus*, that readily fit this description because of their use of gold leaf, purple dye on vellum, and other rare or costly pigments. The primary works I examine here, however, are not prestige objects in the same sense.

⁴¹ C. R. Dodwell, *The Canterbury School of Illumination 1066-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 113.

particularly lasting iteration in the form of narrative images exhibited in codices and bookish objects. This same split also ignores the movement in visual narrative from a kind of enclosed, contained popularity (in the monastic context) to an expansion via reading communities that coincides with a growth in pictorial narrative and less expensive devotional materials beginning in the twelfth century and continuing on to the rise and spread of printed books. There was a growth in illustration and manuscript production outside of monastic scriptoria in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as Jonathan J. G. Alexander asserts: “increasingly, we begin to hear of lay illuminators who are professionals working directly for a stipend in cash or kind.”⁴² The expansion of labor outside of the strictly monastic context may indicate a growth in popularity of illuminated manuscripts. At the very least, a new pool of laborers introduces a new author-artist function and a new dimension into the collective production. Conversely, since relatively few illustrated manuscripts survive, this shift may not indicate much beyond the professionalization of a new class and the growth of artisan labor outside of the church. A large part of the above assertions relies upon intent and effect rather than actual, documented audiences. Medievalists generally sit comfortably with a great deal of uncertainty via nonexistent or incomplete records, manuscript fragments, and lost objects. Yet, an elitist strain remains in the seeming certainty around the audience of relatively higher cultural productions such as the Harley Psalter, for example, and their counterparts. I am concerned with intent, effect, and the plausibility of a variety of context-specific popular forms rather than an exact identification of the audience.

⁴² Jonathan J. G. Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators and Their Methods of Work* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 12.

In this dissertation, the term popular encompasses productions for and of the culture of the people. Such productions later become the “mass” in the mass culture of the Frankfurt School’s, Birmingham School’s, and Marshall McLuhan’s examinations because of changes in technology and shifts in the topicality of particular primary works, but not because of a lack of popular forms in pre-industrial societies. Additionally, in a more nuanced sense, popular also encompasses works that clarify or make more accessible specific forms of knowledge and wisdom in sacred texts, especially regarding medieval monastic culture with attendant levels and forms of literacy, which varied widely even within the ranks of the monks and nuns themselves. This is not to say that productions of the elite power holders always already contain the seeds of their own subversion. Rather, the intention and quite possibly, within certain parameters, the effect, reverberate beyond commonly held understandings that a manuscript or codex cannot be conceived of as a popular production because only a small group of educated clergy members saw it, or as in some cases, few beyond the producers may have seen it. As scholars of literacy and language in Anglo-Saxon England tell us, not all monks and nuns were Latin literate, or even literate at all.⁴³ Though the likelihood of verbal literacy was higher within the monastery, it is a mistake to conceive of a monolithic level of learning among a given monastery’s inhabitants.

⁴³ Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe discusses Latin and Old English literacy as they relate to writing, copying, and recording spoken language, and the profound differences between Latin literacy and Old English literacy detectable through scribal practices, in *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). William Noel postulates that the literacy levels of artists and readers of The Harley Psalter probably varied, *The Harley Psalter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1995), 58-9, 168-69. In writing on larger works of art like paintings and sculptures versus illustrated manuscripts, Mary C. Olson asserts that “they [pictures in manuscripts] were probably seldom seen by the non-literate,” *Fair and Varied Forms: Visual Textuality in Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 39. For more on links and fissures in oral and textual cultures beyond the solely Anglo-Saxon context, see Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

Popular works, then, are not just ephemeral products of consumer culture. Rather, they are cultural productions that contain narratives that can be or are intended to be understood, narratives of topical relevance to the people, or narratives that employ highly familiar stories and tropes. Even if their audience is relatively small (or ultimately somewhat indeterminate as is the case of the medieval manuscripts examined herein), a work can still be deemed popular. One of the foundational scholars of popular culture, Raymond Williams, defines the word as follows:

“Popular” was originally a legal and political term, from *popularis* (Latin, belonging to the people). An *action popular*, from C15, was a legal suit which it was open to anyone to begin. “Popular estate” and “popular government,” from C16, referred to a political system constituted or carried on by the whole people, but there was also the sense (see “common”) of “low” or “base.” The transition to the predominant modern meaning of “widely-favoured” or “well-liked” is interesting in that it contains a strong element of setting out to gain favour, with a sense of calculation that has not quite disappeared but that is evident in a reinforced phrase like “deliberately popular.” [...] The recent sense of “popular culture” as the culture actually made by people for themselves is different from all these; it is often displaced to the past as “folk culture” but it is also an important modern emphasis. The range of senses can be seen again in “popularize,” which until C19 was a political term, in the old sense, and then took on its special meaning of presenting knowledge in generally accessible ways. Its C19 uses were

mainly favourable, and in C20 the favourable sense is still available, but there is also a strong sense of simplification, which in some circles is predominant.⁴⁴

Williams' definition begins with the term's usage approximately some five hundred years after the oldest of the primary texts I examine here; however, the idea of "belonging to the people" resonates strongly with the illustrated medieval manuscripts examined in Chapter One. I am not as concerned whether these cultural productions passed through the hands and eyes of common laypeople. Instead, what is at stake is that the narratives contained therein probably opened up accessibility within their contexts of creation (in the scriptorium and the monastery) and provided the *possibility* of illuminating the works for those who could not access or understand the particular manuscripts and their narratives. Even if laypeople, illiterate monastics, or less literate monastics never saw these works, each manuscript still contains and embodies recognizable visual schemata and iconography and provides evidence of multiple producers.

Not-So-Lonely Genius

Manuscripts, like comics, are typically collective productions; that is, each manuscript results from the labor of those who make the parchment, ink, and physical materials as well as the labor of those who prick and rule, sew gatherings, translate, copy, author, rubricate, and illustrate. Applying the term "collective production" to manuscripts and early printed books is certainly not controversial; however, further levels of collectivity exist that decry the existence of the individual genius of Romanticism and High Modernism. Engravers and etchers depended upon printers; comics writers and

⁴⁴ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1976), 198-99.

artists work together, typically, in a team that is not unlike the division of labor in medieval and early modern book production. In other words, most, if not all, art is the product of collective labor, and medieval manuscripts are not only physically (obviously) collective productions, but constantly reference a larger tradition of codex-making and Christian narrative—the popular culture of the day. Later visual narratives continue to reference and reiterate a long tradition of physical making, even while embodying innovations in technology and cultural shifts. This collectivity and recursive nature can be tracked across the visual narratives of later eras, production technologies, and media, such as the printed book, the etching series, and the comic book. The following chapters substantiate this genealogy of graphic narrative. The project examines primary works from the eras of manuscript, early print, later print, and the contemporary comic book. The first chapter focuses upon three Old English Christian manuscripts, two in the vernacular and one in Latin in order to demonstrate how early graphic narratives that appear to be exceedingly rare and aberrant do in fact evince typical semiotic, aesthetic, and temporal strategies germane to visual narrative. The second chapter mines later manuscript and early print culture, focusing upon two bible picture books and examples of *Bibliae Pauperum* to look at sequential emplotment, the development of image-heavy narrative, and the primacy of page layout in the *Biblia Pauperum*. The third chapter turns to the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries to join the eras typically credited with the birth of modern visual narrative to the preceding eras. In doing so, the dissertation pushes back against the historical amnesia and print culture-bias often held by comics scholars. The fourth chapter approaches highly typical works, in the form of genre comics, to illuminate how the most ubiquitous manifestations of the medium of comics not only

function like their predecessors, but also form part of an expanding matrix of narrative possibilities within the specific manifestation of the comic book.

Chapter One

The Old Testament, the Psalter, and the Rare Object as Popular Visual Narrative

Part One: Background

McCloud and the History Problem

Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* was something of a sleeper outside of the comics world. In the early '90s, comics creators praised McCloud's acumen for enlightening both makers and audiences of comics—someone finally created a comprehensive guide to what comics are and, importantly, where they came from. As the burgeoning field of Comics Studies picked up steam in the late '90s, McCloud's book became and still is a touchstone for researchers and teachers of comics and graphic narratives. Indeed, McCloud's book contains useful information, especially in terms of a nascent Comics Studies vocabulary. Like many optimistic and high-flying accounts of the general history of a medium, though, there are some significant gaps. For example, McCloud's work touches on early forms of visual storytelling, but focuses more on the artificial word/image binary, and names pictographic systems as related to the letters of verbal language only rather than something imbricated in visual meaning-making. Oddly, he leaves illuminated manuscripts out of the conversation,¹ which is a glaring omission in a history of comics. Instead, McCloud looks first to an accordion-folded single-panel Pre-

¹ Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (New York: William Morrow, 1994), 143. McCloud mentions illuminated manuscripts in a half-sentence footnote.

Columbian manuscript, the Bayeux Tapestry, and an Egyptian wall-painting.² These examples certainly can be classed as graphic narratives and contain narrative images. But the textile and the wall-painting lack specific spatial and temporal qualities of codex-bound, page-governed visual narratives, namely, the ability to convey contained and episodic narrative alongside the cyclical or ongoing narrative, and the bodily relationship of the reader/observer to the work of art. In other words, the reader must physically move around the textile and the wall-painting, thus experiencing the narrative-making process differently; as a reader or viewer turns the page of a book, she must hold information and synthesize it even as it disappears from view, thus participating more fully in making the narrative.³ Because of this omission, McCloud's work fails to account for the uniquely and particularly fruitful combination of codex technology and the narrative image before the advent of print.

² McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 10-13. The manuscript, which appears to be an Aztec epic, is one long accordion-folded page, essentially one panel as well. There are some vertical dividing lines that may indicate episodic breaks, just as there are some similarly functioning vertical elements such as trees and architectural structures in the Bayeux Tapestry. These formal elements function differently enough from the break in physical continuity caused by the cut page and the panel that I would not, as McCloud does, proclaim "Is it comics? You bet it is!" (10). That is not to say that McCloud's examples do not evince some kind of sequential quality or pagination, but that wall paintings and tapestries are significantly different because the viewer must move around them bodily rather than turning the pages. More importantly, though, the Nahuatl (Aztec) manuscript, an epic about the hero 8-Deer Tiger's Claw/Ocelot's Claw, see 10-11, that could be drawn from the Zouche-Nuttall Codex, has much more in common with the primary works I examine here than McCloud's other examples of the Bayeux Tapestry and the Egyptian wall-paintings because the viewer need not move around it. (See image appendix, figure 3.) Richard Gameson also comments on the importance of the book as a material vehicle versus other art objects, writing that "in comparison with the medium of a wall or a wall-hanging, the structure of a book did have an advantage of its own: the reader was naturally and inevitably led from one depiction to the next in a controlled order as he read and turned the pages," *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 110. To Gameson, this gave book illustrators "greater compositional flexibility" (111) than fresco painters and tapestry weavers, and meant that the pictorial narrative can move in any direction. This is true, but it should not reduce the importance of inducement as a principle of visual narrative and, typically, significance when the events buck left-to-right and top-to-bottom reading order.

³ McCloud calls this process "closure," *Understanding Comics*, 63-73. Thierry Groensteen describes the process as a constant gathering and synthesizing of information and also discusses closure as a function inherent to comics, *The System of Comics*, trans. Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 40-3.

Later in *Understanding Comics*, McCloud attempts to find the origin of pictorial art and account for how various methods of writing and technologies of physical production eventually displace works that give word and image equal status, or works that value images more than words, from cultural prominence. To restore cultural capital to images, if one assumes that older age can be automatically conflated with higher quality, he begins with the cave paintings and pictographic languages,⁴ early attempts at mimesis, symbolic-totemic representation, and visualization of verbal sound systems. These examples confuse the issue, though, as they uphold a word-image binary that does not advance investigations of the form, material, and function of narrative images.⁵ McCloud's desire to begin at the origin of art stems from a right-thinking critical impulse—to understand the word-image split seemingly common in Western culture, and to find and connect the forbears of the particular media one makes and studies. Yet, these early works of art do not have the same *effect* as illustrated manuscripts created after the transition from scrolls to codices (nor do they display similar intent), as they do not render an interdependent dialectic of space and time or word and image. I fully realize the gamble of discussing intentionality, but intent remains particularly important to this discussion. The nature of the medium and form of codex-bound and book-like visual narratives allows observers to deduce intent and patterns of usage more readily; the

⁴ McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 141-2.

⁵ W. J. T. Mitchell writes against the comparative method, which relies upon adherence to the word-image binary: "One can and must, however, avoid the trap of comparison. The most important lesson one learns from composite works like Blake's (or from mixed vernacular arts like comic strips, illustrated newspapers, and illuminated manuscripts) is that *comparison itself is not a necessary procedure in the study of image-text relations*. The necessary subject matter is, rather, the whole ensemble of *relations* between media, and relations can be many other things besides similarity, resemblance, and analogy," *Picture Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 89. I would further add to Mitchell's points that the ensemble can be understood within assemblage-logic, that is that elements within media and relations among media, makers, and audience are equally important to the conversation.

specificities of the medium make the creators, the medium, and the consumers ever-present in the moment of reception. Arguably, all works of art evince some kind of intention, which may be most usefully understood as implied intention—an intention detectable through the material forms, the context of creation and reception, and the images' spatialization of time. I am not attempting to lay claim to absolute, unimpeachable empirical knowledge, but rather to clarify implications and signification within visual narratives contained herein.

Codex-bound, collectively produced visual narratives, frankly, do something different in all stages from production to consumption. These works, dating from the late tenth to mid-eleventh centuries, comprise my starting line. I have selected the three primary works in this chapter because they are representative of larger patterns at work in medieval visual narratives—patterns that persist in later eras and across various technologies. They manifest a vernacular translation of the Old Testament (the Old English Hexateuch), a vernacular poetic paraphrase (Junius 11), and a collection of the psalms (the Harley Psalter), all with accompanying frame-governed pictorial narrative.⁷ Though there are certainly other salient examples of illustrated medieval manuscripts

⁷ There are other manuscripts that would fulfill some of the criteria I lay out here for what constitutes a popular, collectively-produced visual narrative, such as the illustrated *Psychomachia* (three manuscripts and one fragment), the Tiberius Psalter, the Eadwine Psalter, the Leiden Macabees, and the illustrated Beatus apocalypses produced in Spain. The *Wonders of the East* in BL Cotton MS Vitellius A.xv contains illustrations, though it lacks the cyclical and episodic nature of works examined in this chapter and the works named above. The vernacular works I examine here and the Harley Psalter evince qualities in page layout, primacy of the frame or panel, narrative technique, and what I define as popular that connect even more saliently to later blockbooks, lithographs, and eventually comic books. Furthermore, I have selected the particular primary texts in this chapter because scholarship usually discusses them as aberrant and exceptional; however, when viewed and valued for quotidian, popular elements contained therein, these works saliently represent the larger patterns that make the kinds of popular pictorial narrative that eventually become comic books and graphic novels. To include all of the illustrated medieval manuscripts that more or less fit my criteria would result in a very large catalogue. Rather than building a catalogue, my objective here is to advance an argument, using representative examples, to prove the ongoing patterns of physical and cultural making, which are by nature collective and typical.

containing narrative images, these three embody the particular qualities of popular, collectively-produced graphic narratives that eventually give rise to comics and graphic narratives. A careful interpretation of these works reveals that they should not be fetishized as singular rarities, as they so often are, but rather as works on a continuum, or objects in a larger media archaeology. This selection does not aim to nail down a specific origin point for graphic narrative writ large, but rather, to create and examine an archaeology of codex-bound, page-ruled narrative images beginning with instantiations that could readily be termed protocomics. Such an archaeology dispels the increasingly shaky commonplace that literacy and narrative are logocentric, and connects the popular threads running through the medieval manuscripts and other primary works I explore herein.

Against Unicorns: Medieval Authorship and Collective Rendering

The archaeology I build in this chapter also relies on the ways in which visual narratives establish and repeat material and semiotic processes of making from the Middle Ages onward. Like various digital technologies and computer coding, other processes of making various media forms—whether through a material process such as illustrating manuscripts with familiar visual tropes or using mise-en-page and page-like framing devices in more modern iterations of the codex—bring structuring principles from the past to their present instantiation, creating a link. This link forms one of the primary bonding principles that I envision as common to visual narratives from the Middle Ages onward. Visual narratives are dialogic and dialectical;⁸ their post-

⁸ “Recursive,” “dialogic,” and “dialectic” are all important terms in understanding narrative images. A variety of critics use these terms—Ricoeur evaluates verbal/written narrative in *Time and Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Niles talks about oral narrative as a dialectical process in

manuscript iterations can also be understood as recursive.⁹ In a sense, these methods are quotidian and ongoing at their core, which defies the aberrant, singular status often accorded to early visual narratives because of their relative age, value, or miraculous-seeming survival.

Homo Narrans: The Poetics and Anthropology of Oral Literature (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999; Kuskin discusses recursion as a materially and semiotically structuring principle in *Recursive Origins* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013). Groensteen applies the terms to his comics semiotics in the following statement: “Thus, one can define the authority of the relationship between the spatio-topia [the system that establishes how space functions within the realm of comics; like arthrology, the term is a neologism coined by Groensteen] and the arthrology as ‘dialogic’ and ‘recursive.’ Edgar Morin, from whom I borrowed these notions, defines them in the following way. The dialogic is ‘complex associations of necessary authority essential for the existence of a phenomenon.’ The phenomena of ‘reciprocal feedback’ can be qualified as recursive between the authorities that are ‘inter-regulated amongst themselves,’ such as that ‘the effects are at the same time causal and productive’,” quoted from Morin, *La Méthode*, in Thierry Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 23.

⁹ Largely focused on periodization as a misleading and inadequate measure of history, literary or otherwise, William Kuskin uses the principle of recursion to demonstrate the inaccuracy of the perceived hard break between late medieval manuscript production and early print throughout his book *Recursive Origins*. Kuskin defines recursion as “the process by which a system—a computer, the human mind—performs complex operations through self-reference: a recursive function calls upon itself. How does a robot count one hundred boxes if its program only states how to count one box? It keeps revisiting the problem, temporarily bracketing (‘pushing’) the total number of problems so as to reduce each encounter by one (n – 1), time and time again (‘stacking’), until it can execute the task of counting one box. [...] The important point is this: the robot uses self-reference, but this only becomes recursive in the dynamic process of embedding and self-citation,” 29. Kuskin’s application of recursion to print technology makes sense; the incunable book references itself in its physical, book form (also in medieval manuscript form) while being the product of a new technology. Like Kuskin, I see a hard adherence to traditional periodization as limited in scope and usefulness; however, early codices do not necessarily reference their own material manifestation so much as they metonymically represent what they do. To view and read, to engage with the narrative is to interact with the book as metonym for the whole process it contains. After a fashion, *printed* visual narratives are recursive, but the elements of contiguity and continuity carried forth from medieval manuscripts are not necessarily self-referential, unless we argue that the book as physical object and container of culture always references itself. Metonymy becomes an extremely useful trope here because it forms a salient link among pre- and post-print visual narratives; books are metonymic in that viewers and readers experience them contiguously—the containing object (i.e. the book) stands in for the acts of viewing and reading; as the reader actively takes in visual and or verbal narrative, she or he participates in the creation of meaning; aesthetic choices, visual tropes, and style stand in for a variety of concepts and culturally specific norms or values. As Kuskin writes, “the codex creates the delicate connection between part and whole that we also see in metonymy: it holds everything together as it reveals that everything is discrete,” 21.

¹¹ See Chapter Four below on twentieth- and twenty-first-century comics and graphic narratives.

¹² It may be useful to understand the types of reproduction described above in a gardening metaphor: Rows in an organized garden plot require consistent space and shape; here, the rows, like multiple copies of one issue of a comic, almost never vary from one another. In contrast, the produce within the rows—the plant, even when of a single type—tends to vary within its single iteration. In a single given issue of a comic, the images of setting, character, etc. do vary. Protocomics, such as the manuscripts examined here, contain both of these differing axes of variety, the rows and their produce, so to speak.

The Ultimate Irony

We treat medieval manuscripts that are now publicly held (some of which were held in monastic or academic institutions in their own day) as privately owned objects, attached to individual names such as Cotton or Junius and referred to in the sort of single author shorthand that becomes a problem in literary studies and Comics Studies. In attempting to reconstruct the purpose and patterns of use of illustrated manuscripts held within medieval monasteries, critics frequently see either coveted art objects or inert, static materials that had a single use in the past and remain as a monument to a lost use. This way of thinking erases the reality of the manuscripts' use, instead creating an episteme in which their function, both real and potential, is subsumed under the names and presumed identities of their owners and collectors. Furthermore, the erasure of the variety of people in a monastery and the potential variety in their uses of devotional imagery and text negates the most probable uses of the manuscripts themselves. I do understand that part of the urge to shorthand¹⁵ grows out of shared nomenclature, such as the shelfmarks used to organize these manuscripts and their status as items within

¹³ Gameson, *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church*, 11.

¹⁴ This hierarchy stems from a modernist understanding of art, most notably advanced by Walter Benjamin in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" and the slight reworking of those concepts in "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility." See *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings et al., trans. Edmund Jephcott et al. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard, 2008). Medievalist David Areford takes issue with Benjamin's notion of the aura and cult value in *The Viewer and the Printed Image in Late Medieval Europe* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 12-13. As his work analyzes early print, I will give it more attention in the next chapter.

¹⁵ Comics have three major forms of shorthand: First, title and issue number (*Love and Rockets #1*), which remains most useful to organization, whether by readers, collectors, or retailers; second, writer name and title (Moore's *Watchmen*), penciller/primary artist name and title (Ditko's *The Incredible Hulk*), or in the case of equally famous writers and artists who typically work together, two names and title (Brubaker and Phillips' *Fatale*); third, title and story arc (*The Sandman: The Season of Mists*). Of course, we need terms and taxonomy to organize and examine anything, but literary studies has used the second major form of shorthand (writer and title) with a similar result of erasure.

collections bequeathed by antiquarian scholars such as Sir Robert Cotton and Francis Junius. I do not wish to diminish the importance of knowing who used the manuscripts and how that has contributed to their material and cultural lives. Rather, I wish to intervene in the flattening, obscuring gesture that occurs as a result of this subtle but stubborn kind of discourse. Private ownership certainly grew as labor patterns changed and books were more readily produced for less expense. Collecting and private ownership also delivered the manuscripts I discuss here from obscurity, but it tied the works up in particular kinds of agendas that would have most likely meant little to their creators, and continue to muddy the waters of interpretation today. The visual narratives in these works read as art created with a varied audience in mind, a popular impulse that reaches out to a viewing public. In the following sections, I will examine implied intent and actual effect, the role of reception, and the images themselves to solidly establish these narratives as a type of protocomics, collectively produced visual narratives made, conceptually if not concretely, for the use of many.

Part Two: Vernacular Illustrated Manuscripts

The Most Illustrated Biblical Manuscript in Western Europe

The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, London, British Library MS Cotton Claudius B. iv, contains the largest and most detailed program of illustrations in the Anglo-Saxon corpus, and renders the first six books of the Old Testament in both episodic narrative images and symbolic figures alongside a vernacular Old English translation. The Hexateuch is the most extensively illustrated manuscript of the Bible in existence, and contains “394 framed illustrations of some 500 narrative episodes, many of

which are incomplete.”¹⁶ *Claudius B. iv* is certainly a collective production because it comprises the culmination of the work of multiple translators, at least one compiler, two scribes and probably only one artist.¹⁷ Scholars understandably have held it up as a rarity, as it seems to stand out radically from its peers. Not only does it hold hundreds of colorful, detailed illustrations, but it also contains the most ambitious vernacular translation of the Bible before the fourteenth-century Wycliffite Bible.¹⁸ Yet, valuing the *Hexateuch* solely as a rarity obscures the typical nature of the manuscript itself, which is a translation, compilation, and reproduction (in its entirety as a reproduction of a portion of the Old Testament, and possibly from an exemplar in a great deal of the verbal text at least, if not also much of the program of illustration).¹⁹ The highly-planned, collaborative production program and complicated illustrations of the *Hexateuch* merit its examination not only as a piece of collectively-produced art, but also as a popular visual narrative. Furthermore, the manuscript’s incompleteness allows us to see its various phases of creation at work, the relationship of scribes to illustrator, and its development of a visual idiom that shares much with its adorned peers in vellum.

Monastic Popularity: Audience and Reception of the Hexateuch

¹⁶ Benjamin Withers, *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, Cotton Claudius B. iv: The Frontier of Seeing and Reading* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 4.

¹⁷ See Clemons and Dodwell’s prefatory material to *The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch: Cotton Claudius B. iv*, *Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile 18* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1974); Withers, *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch Claudius B iv*, 7-9, 18-27; Gameson, *The Role of Art in the Anglo-Saxon Church*, 41-2.

¹⁸ This point seems to be a scholarly commonplace, but it is expressed explicitly in the work of Peter Clemons and C.R. Dodwell, in the introductory material to the 1974 facsimile of the *Hexateuch*, and Benjamin C. Withers’ *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch Claudius B iv: The Frontiers of Reading and Seeing in Anglo-Saxon England*. Dodwell argues for the at least partial originality of the program of illustration, but concedes to some influence from earlier Christian art. See Dodwell, *The Pictorial Arts of the West 800-1200* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 118-19.

¹⁹ Dodwell supports the claim that the illustrations are essentially original in style, that is, without exemplar to draw from, but asserts that the text was most likely copied from an exemplar “after the text had been in circulation for some time,” *The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch*, 53, 61-5.

Many scholars have written about the question of audience and the Hexateuch, but until relatively recently, little of it contradicted Peter Clemoes' assertion that the manuscript "was made in direct response to lay needs."²⁰ The arguments for a monastic audience are compelling and well-founded, but a monastic audience does not necessarily equal a hermetically sealed, elite audience. In other words, the monastic context does not equal a context of perfect verbal literacy—in Latin or the Old English vernacular—nor does it mean that members of the secular clergy or lay population were not meant to have contact with the Hexateuch itself. Noting potential tension among the dedication from Abbot Ælfric of Eynsham to Ealdorman Æthelweard, which formed part of his "Preface to Genesis," and Ælfric's homilies and biblical paraphrases, Benjamin Withers writes, "With the realization that Ælfric himself conceived of the audience for his Old Testament accounts in diverse terms (of profession and gender), it becomes less important to identify one particular group as *the* one and only intended one. This identification loses even more consequence since monks, priests, and nuns more often than not belonged to the same families or at least the same strata as potential lay readers."²¹ Ælfric, a definite upholder of church hierarchy who focused much of his writing on correct interpretation and education, was perhaps more "populist" than many of his peers, especially church intellectuals like Byrhtferth of Ramsey,²² though this populism is certainly mediated and

²⁰ Clemoes and Dodwell, *The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch*, 58.

²¹ Withers, *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch* *Claudius B iv*, 178.

²² Stephenson's *The Politics of Language: Byrhtferth, Ælfric, and the Multilingual Identity of the Benedictine Reform* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015) creates a very clear distinction between Ælfric's writing and pedagogy and Byrhtferth's frequently more openly elitist ideas. Her work on the Ælfrician prefaces explains that "Even if it is accepted that Ælfric writes English homilies for the laity, this imagined lay audience almost certainly received his message only when mediated through an ecclesiast, *either* secular *or* monastic. In addition, the prefaces, unlike the homilies, conform to the expectations of a written genre generally intended for private contemplation," 156, emphasis mine. It is possible then, that the copied Ælfrician preface in the Hexateuch serves as a mark of authority on the vernacular iteration of the Old Testament, a direction to the mediator between the work itself and the lay audience. Stephenson

working fully within the strictures of the Benedictine Reform in the late Anglo-Saxon era.²³

Settling whether or not the manuscript was actually seen and used by a monastic or a lay audience does not concern me as much as understanding the implied intent and effect of the work. A modern, post-Habermasian²⁴ definition of “popular” would demand that the Hexateuch be classed as an elite cultural production; however, that classification misunderstands the popular nature of sacred texts and the workings of the early English Church. By viewing the Hexateuch or its contemporary manuscript productions in terms of a post-industrial and post-separation of church and polity popular culture, not only do we obscure its likely purpose, but we also skew our vision of the lived reality of its making culture. In fact, a reckoning of the probable makers, intention, and audience supports my contention that the Hexateuch constitutes a popular production at the very least in design, effect, and purpose, and at the very most a popular production full stop. Multiple scholars note that the verbal component of the translation shows clarity rather than rhetorical difficulty, underscoring the desire for a usable vernacular Bible rather than a prohibitive fear of translation.²⁵ This is not to commit anachronism and say that the

ultimately concludes that “Above all, scholars must consider the real probability that the main audience for all Anglo-Saxon writing, in either English or Latin, was in fact monks, who had access to libraries and both the leisure and requirement to read for their spiritual edification. This statement, however, should not be taken to dismiss the possibility of lay literacy or potential lay audiences for translated texts. Rather, I mean to suggest that we should temper the view that English is meant for the laity with the very real probability that many monks needed religious literature in their native tongue,” 189.

²³ Stephenson, *The Politics of Language*, 27-33, 135-57

²⁴ See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), as quoted in the introduction to the dissertation, note 34. The works I examine within this chapter predate such a split and give material evidence about particular reading/viewing publics. The early Anglo-Saxon church, even within monastic contexts, was so enmeshed in the everyday workings of its contemporary society that such binaries do not hold up.

²⁵ Peter Clemoes notes the somewhat irregular quality of the vernacular that seems uninterested in an exact reproduction of the Vulgate, *The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch*, 118. Withers calls the text “simple, idiomatic prose” that “potentially made these beliefs, traditions, and myths accessible to a broad swath of

makers and viewers of the manuscript did not participate in or reinscribe religious hierarchy and the contemporary mores, but rather that their concerns were probably less about excluding certain audience members than they were about including them *correctly*.

Clemons and Dodwell theorize that the Hexateuch was made for laypeople partially on the basis of stylistic grounds, that the manuscript does not show qualities of a production for “a royal or similarly high-ranking patron,”²⁶ evidence that it may have been a copy in the early stages of an Illustrated Hexateuch series,²⁷ and partially on evidence from Ælfric’s “Preface to Genesis,” which contains a dedication to a layman.²⁸ Clemons and Dodwell’s estimation of the manuscript’s workmanship, an underestimation of its quality I believe, undervalues the stylized, spare aesthetic and the significant amount of labor required to carefully plan and create a manuscript with such a large program of illustration, especially one generally contained within panels of relatively consistent size. This judgment falls prey to the conflation of realism and delicate detail with quality, and, intentionally or not, it reinscribes the supposedly nonexistent, doggedly persistent boundary between the premodern and modernity. Their commentary on the workmanship does speak to the lack of sumptuous ornament—the Hexateuch lacks gold

the Anglo-Saxon population,” *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch*, 182, and warns against reading the Anglo-Saxon monastics, Ælfric included, as uniformly against translation. Withers’ work on the Ælfrician section of the Hexateuch, Christopher Jones’ “Ælfric and the Limits of ‘Benedictine Reform,’” *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 68-71, 95-99, and Stephenson’s *The Politics of Language*, 137-46, 188-89, though conflicting in their assessment of Ælfric’s positioning himself in relation to the vernacular, all agree upon the subtlety of Ælfric’s treatment of the vernacular and Latin. He was invested in a closed, monastic elitism, though most likely less than his peers, such as Wulfstan Cantor and Byrhtferth. At the same time, he also feared misinterpretation and adornment in language that could distract from apprehending doctrinal truth.

²⁶ Clemons and Dodwell, *The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch*, 58.

²⁷ Clemons and Dodwell, *The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch*, 56-8

²⁸ Withers, *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch Claudius B iv*, 178.

illumination and all the illustration functions rather than solely embellishing—and the real practical visual if not verbal literacy that potential audience members most likely had. More importantly, the Ælfrician dedication to the partial Genesis translation, the rhetorically straightforward vernacular translation, and specifically Anglo-Saxon visual tropes demonstrate the high probability of a heterogeneous intended audience. As the uncompleted manuscript apparently remained at St. Augustine’s until the dissolution of the English monasteries, it is difficult to tell with complete certainty who would have actually used and seen it. The manuscript is now on display in the Sir John Ritblat Treasures of the British Library Gallery, which remains open to the public and carries no admission fee. Claudius B. iv, also digitized and accessible via the internet, remains open to those with nonspecialist knowledge, and physically shares a space with relics both of monarchic authority and empire and of popular, twentieth-century mass culture. Rebecca Barnhouse and Benjamin Withers comment on the valuable yet vexing cultural place of the manuscript:

For modern audiences, the manuscript’s importance has been acknowledged through the fact that for at least the last hundred years it has been exhibited to the public in the British Library alongside the Magna Carta and, more recently, the Beatles’ manuscript lyrics of “Let it Be.” In this context, the manuscript represents the longevity and transmission of English culture. Despite its prominent display, the manuscript has received *relatively little attention from scholars*. [...] Even though its pictorial cycle is of potentially great interest to art historians, the manuscript was not published in facsimile until 1974. When the manuscript has been published, it is often as counterpart or comparison to another

well-known eleventh-century illustrated text of Genesis, the poetic version preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11. The greater modern interest in the illustrations and poems in Junius 11 disguises the fact that the text preserved in Claudius B. iv was more influential in the eleventh century, judging by the survival of so many manuscript versions.³⁰

Barnhouse and Withers' assertions corroborate the notion of the Hexateuch as a relatively popular work.³¹ The illustrations themselves were not reproduced outside of the print and digital facsimiles, but the text certainly was, and visual tropes and motifs in the Hexateuch occur and recur amongst other manuscript counterparts I examine herein. The following images support the likelihood that the Hexateuch's compilers, scribes, and illustrator may have imagined a diverse audience in their own day.

Key Images in the Hexateuch

Folio 2r³² is the first illustration and takes up an entire page. Unaccompanied by text, it still communicates a familiar story: the expulsion of Lucifer and the rebel angels from heaven and down into the gaping open mouth of a monster, the entrance to hell. Thick lines border the image, creating a rectangular frame that both encases the image as a narrative episode and separates (through a faint horizontal midline) the upper and lower halves of the scene. The composition cuts itself into permeable halves, previewing the

³⁰ Rebecca Barnhouse and Benjamin C. Withers, eds., *The Old English Hexateuch: Aspects and Approaches* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), 3.

³¹ Their observations also exemplify the dissonance between what is perceived as high and low culture and the wide varieties in effect and use that the manuscript has had. Scholarly attention to the Hexateuch has grown only recently despite the fact that the manuscript immediately influenced its contemporary culture. The Hexateuch is institutionalized yet publicly held. All of this points to a wide variety of uses, whether or not the effect grows out of the original makers' intentions.

³² See the image appendix, figure 4.

panel-like structure that will appear throughout the majority of the manuscript and dividing the frame between the heavenly host and those cast out. God sits inside of a mandorla in the center of the top half, a still anchor in an otherwise teeming, energetic composition. The obedient angels flanking God at left and right have large hands and human faces with consistent expressions, which are the same characteristics used throughout the Hexateuch and repeated as a motif in other peer manuscripts,³³ showing evidence for a typical Anglo-Saxon visual trope.

Though unconcerned with a mimetic representation of bodies, the artist clearly renders a sense of physical motion through space and time via undulating lines in the background, the twisted bodies of the angels (both obedient and rebellious), and an overall dynamic downward force in the composition that induces the eye to move towards Lucifer and the open-mouthed monster. The angels in the top half of the page, winged and robed in rich greens, blues, and reds, create a marked contrast from the tumbling bodies of the fallen, who lack any kind of adornment, wings, or clothes. Lucifer, tipped on his head in the bottom left corner, also lies inside of an oval mandorla, but the open-mouthed monster seizes the edge of the mandorla in its teeth, crushing

³³ Such a rendering of faces and bodies was not only common to manuscripts produced at St. Augustine's monastery in Canterbury, but also to other Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and textiles produced from the very late tenth through the twelfth centuries. For example, the Bayeux Tapestry; the four Anglo-Saxon illustrated *Psychomachia* (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 23, London, British Library, Cotton MS Cleopatra C. viii, Additional MS 24199, Cotton MS Titus D. xvi); the famous image of Christ and Dunstan in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. F. 4. 32; Junius 11; the Tiberius Psalter (London, British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius C. v); and other pictorial narratives dating from this time all show saliently similar human and anthropomorphic figures. See Clemoes and Dodwell, *The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch*; Catherine Karkov, *Text and Picture in Anglo-Saxon England: Narrative Strategies in the Junius 11 Manuscript* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Mary C. Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms: Visual Textuality in Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts* (London: Routledge, 2003); Otto Pächt, *The Rise of Pictorial Narrative in Twelfth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962); Withers, *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch Claudius B iv*. The consistency in the hands and faces is remarkable, considering that different artists produced most of the aforementioned works. This consistency occurs frequently enough across a variety of manuscripts produced in this time to be classified as a visual idiom.

Lucifer's former status-symbol. Strong visual cues, including the downward force of the composition and repetition of key pictorial elements, make the narrative intelligible even to those unfamiliar with the story. This extra-biblical episode was particularly popular in Anglo-Saxon England, so much so that it appears in a variety of works, including the Tiberius Psalter, the vernacular poem *Genesis A* (which details the rebellion and its aftermath at length), and a full-page drawing from the Junius Manuscript, examined later in this chapter. The episode's appearance as the first image shows that the illustrator was not merely repeating a text set out before him, but had a degree of familiarity with the well-liked extra-biblical subject matter. This often-repeated image, alongside other panel-encased narrative images, comprises one of many early examples of what comics semiotician Thierry Groensteen calls "iconic solidarity," defined as "interdependent images that, participating in a series, present the double characteristic of being separated—this specification dismisses unique enclosed images within a profusion of patterns or anecdotes—and which are plastically and semantically over-determined by their coexistence *in praesentia*."³⁴ In other words, comics and their ancestors perform a paradox unique to the medium in order to contain and express their very form and function: Images are simultaneously split and conjoined. Furthermore, through this imbricated relationship of interdependence and independence, graphic narratives knit together the coexistence of the cyclical and the episodic,³⁵ as well as momentum across

³⁴ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 18.

³⁵ One of McCloud's fundamental tenets of comics is that they are composed of "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence," *Understanding Comics*, 9. Groensteen, admittedly much less interested in sequentiality, counts sequence as a level of meaning-creation, but not an absolute necessity for comics or narrative intelligibility: "[...] my provisory conclusion will be that if we do not dismiss the hypothesis that an isolated image can be intrinsically narrative—this aspect will be taken up again later—we can, correlatively, be certain that the juxtaposition of two images, taken in a rapport of transformation does not necessarily produce narration," 106. Syntagmatic relationships build narrative intelligibility in "a triad composed of the panel that is currently being read, the panel that preceded it, and the panel

space and time. Sequentiality, difference, and repetition comprise the “over-determined” quality to which Groensteen refers in such an effective way that disentangling it in order to define it pushes one close to tautology, yet “iconic solidarity” represents one of the most fundamental principles of visual narrative. Take, for example, the ubiquitous image of the fall of the rebel host; it makes sense in a narrative manner not only because of the story-elements it contains, but also because of the aesthetics, conventions, and images that follow. Though occupying a single, halved panel, the fall picture forms a kind of iconic solidarity with not only other manuscripts representing the same image, such as Junius 11, but also the typically panel-governed narrative images that follow in Claudius B. iv and repeated images within the picture itself,³⁶ such as the falling figures of the rebel host.

Folio 15r³⁷ depicts a simple, unframed illustration of Noah’s ark with a raven on the prow eating a corpse’s head. Viewed in isolation, the picture shows a typical Anglo-Saxon motif—the raven as a carrion-eater that consumes corpses after battle, or in this case, a catastrophic event. The raven’s appearance is remarkable in and of itself because there is no direct textual precedent; the artist most likely added it on his own volition.³⁸ In

immediately follows it,” and sequential relationships build larger blocks of narrative synthesis and intelligibility,” 111. Observation of images that are ordered or implied juxtaposed or otherwise linked produces an overall narrative effect as well. See note 53 below for more on the syntagm, and note 64 below on David Joselit’s “varied mode of looking.”

³⁶ Groensteen tends to focus on comics post-Rodolphe Töpffer (nineteenth century and later), but his vocabulary and highly developed system of reconciling the spatial and temporal elements (and the paradoxical simultaneity and sequential nature) of comics have yet to be substantially improved upon.

³⁷ See image appendix, figure 5.

³⁸ Olson notes that the raven may also be a relatively well-known Christian allegorical figure. She writes, “Milton McC. Gatch points out that while the translation follows the Latin, the illustrator departs from it. The verbal text says that the raven went out and did not return. McC. Gatch’s study of exegesis on the passage shows that in common allegorical interpretation, the raven represents a number of negative types of Christian. [...] The fact that the illustration departs from the verbal text suggests that the illustrator is calling upon a familiar allegorical tradition that the audience would be expected to recognize,” *Fair and Varied Forms*, 126. Whether the familiarity is due to Christian allegorical tradition or the trope of heroic

other words, the bird shows inventiveness and a sense of collective artistry while localizing the narrative. The bird as carrion-eater also appears in the text of *Genesis A* in Junius 11, but not the illustration. The raven demonstrates implied intention at work rather saliently, as Charles D. Wright points out: “The question of the poem’s sources is a special case, for a poet’s response to an established external source *is* a kind of internal evidence. It is evident, for example, that the poet was paraphrasing a Latin version of the book of Genesis, even if there is some doubt as to the exact nature of the version he consulted. We can also be sure that he was familiar with non-biblical traditions because some of his elaborations on the Genesis narrative (such as the raven of the ark feeding on corpses) are widely paralleled.”³⁹ In the Hexateuch, the raven actively scavenges from the dead, pictorially, while in Junius, the same corvid only eats corpses in the text, and is left out of the illustrations. When viewed in relationship to the previous three pages and the following page, we see that the vernacular motif blends with biblical tradition to form an account that is both episodic and serially linear, and displays a highly culturally-specific device. Of the five paintings of Noah’s ark during construction, after the animals are on board and when the ark makes and ends its journey, four are enclosed in panels. These four follow the text and the biblical material, while the unpanelled page shows the raven munching the corpse’s head. The first image, on folio 13v,⁴⁰ shows two events in one panel; first the deity talks to Noah, labelled for clarity by a twelfth-century hand,⁴¹ and instructs him to build. The ark occupies the center of the panel, and slightly to the

verse, the illustrator authored these images and added another layer of signification onto the narrative through a highly recognizable trope.

³⁹ Charles D. Wright, “Genesis A ad litteram,” in *Old English Literature and The Old Testament*, ed. Michael Fox and Manish Sharma (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 126.

⁴⁰ See image appendix, figure 6.

⁴¹ The label is one of many later additions in the form of labels and *tituli*, or explanatory captions. See Clemons and Dodwell, *The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch*, 42.

right, Noah, labelled again, works away at his boat. The picture on folio 13v clearly renders movement through time and space, as God and Noah first appear on a little squiggly hill, and when Noah appears again he and the ark are larger and slightly overlapping the panel, bringing the narrative forward in space and time.

The following folio, 14r,⁴² contains a full-page illustration of two large panels with some text. In the top panel, Noah converses with God again, his hands in a lively upraised gesture, while the deity holds onto the same book that he held on the previous folio. The bottom panel provides an interior image of the ark; Noah and his family are stowed in the top portion and the various pairs of animals occupy the middle and bottom of the very Anglo-Saxon and somewhat Scandinavian-looking monster-prowed ship. This image of the ark provides a little more momentum, as the consistently-rendered pairs of animals look in different directions and the prow stretches outside of the boundaries of the panel.⁴³ So far, folios 13v and 14r show a combination of repeated visual elements and movement through space and time. In slight contrast, folio 14v depicts the exterior of the ship. Taken in relation to the previous and subsequent pages, the outside view of the

⁴² See image appendix, figure 7.

⁴³ Asa Simon Mittman and Susan M. Kim, "Anglo-Saxon Frames of Reference: Framing the Real in the *Wonders of the East*," *Different Visions: A Journal of New Perspectives on Medieval Art* 2 (2010): 1-25. Mittman and Kim's work on the function of frames in the illustrations of *The Wonders of the East* points to the tension between the frame's separative, containing function and its vital, coextensive function as part of the illustrations themselves, 4-5. Comics Studies scholars often use panel borders, or sometimes simply panel, as the term for both the frame, as in the boundary containing and separating visual narrative content from text boxes or other panels. The panel, as in a single unit of pictorial space, refers to what is inside the frame or panel borders and the whole entity in and of itself. Mittman and Kim's assessment of the frame draws upon concepts that are commonplace in Comics Studies, which makes extensive use of the meaning of the panel and the spaces between panels, often called gutters, in order to understand how the medium manipulates time, space, and emplotment. Scott McCloud defines the framing function, or the role of the panel, as "a general indicator that space and time is being divided," *Understanding Comics*, 99, which partially depends upon the conjoining done by the reader/viewer, other images and panels, or text. Will Eisner defines the panel or frame: "To deal with the *capture* or encapsulation of these events in the flow of the narrative, they must be broken up into sequenced segments. These segments are called panels or frames," *Comics and Sequential Art: Principles and Practices from the Legendary Cartoonist* (New York: Norton, 2008), 39.

ship (again in a panel) continues the narrative momentum; however, on its own, admittedly, it does appear to be static. The lack of dynamic elements in the composition represents the journey as written in the vernacular text above, a list of minor events that occurred on numerically ordered days. The previously mentioned hungry raven appears on folio 15r, accounting for the raven's failure to find land and connecting that narrative moment with the eventual success of the dove and the happy disembarking on folio 15v.⁴⁴ Folio 15v is paneled again, though the people and creatures spill over the borders. The picture here repeats earlier dynamic elements as the pairs of animals and humans rush out of the ark and the dove flies close to Noah, branch in mouth. Of course, the Noah story does not end here, but the interrelated and repeated visual elements from folios 13v to 15v form a salient narrative arc, expressing and enveloping the flood story.

This selection of images from the Noah story, through their treatment of spatialized and narrativized time along with a combination of repeating and non-repeating visual details, demonstrates another two of Groensteen's core principles unique to comics: "general arthrology" and "restricted arthrology."⁴⁵ General arthrology consists of the sequential joinings of "translinear or distant relations,"⁴⁶ which can include links among text and image, within images, or visual tropes and motifs. More importantly though, general arthrology consists of connections among physically or conceptually distant elements, emerges via page layout, and draws bonds within and across pages and panels. For example, the images within folios 13v to 15v link aesthetically and narratively to the images before and after; the viewer or reader interprets and carries

⁴⁴ See image appendix, figure 8.

⁴⁵ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 22.

⁴⁶ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 22.

along the significance of earlier images in the Noah story to those presently observed in order to make sense of them. Beginning with God's instructions to Noah and Noah's building on 13v, the observer receives visual cues (the repetition of the deity as a hand or anthropomorphic figure, Noah carrying out his orders, the ark itself, Noah's family, and the animals) that grow from the earlier pictures and push forward to the next. In this particular case, the text provides forward narrative momentum, but the story is perfectly intelligible without text as a small narrative and a building block within the larger narrative of the Old Testament *because* of the aspects that we can classify under general arthrology.

In contrast, restricted arthrology consists of sequential links, "relations of the linear type,"⁴⁷ which build meaning within narrative breakdown, or operations of the narrative, through orderable "linear semantic relations."⁴⁸ Restricted arthrology effectively expresses the smaller links in the narrative chain; however, it is no more or less important than general arthrology to building intelligible temporality within narrative. It may be helpful to think of restricted arthrology as observable connective tissue; it is functional not just because of proximity, but because of its simultaneously connective and separative function. Returning to the Noah story, on folios 15r and 15v, the appearances of the feasting raven and the successful dove create narrative momentum because of two major factors. One of these is their isolation: They are on different pages separated by text; the birds look and behave differently; the raven perches alone on the exterior of the ark, performing its role expressed in extra-biblical lore by eating a

⁴⁷ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 22.

⁴⁸ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 103.

decapitated head; the dove flies close to Noah and a flock of happy creatures. The second is their connection: The illustrations follow one another sequentially; both images depict the ark; the two birds are actors in the plotment; the pictures take up a great deal of the page, producing a nearly identical layout that gives equal credence to each part of the narrative. Though these images are not juxtaposed immediately as are some of Claudius B. iv's other pictures—and many later visual narratives through gridded panels—this example still demonstrates both levels of orthology at work.

The raven as a disobedient corpse-eater is not the only culturally-specific visual trope. In an equally particular portion of the narrative illustrated on folio 8v,⁴⁹ Cain's murder weapon of choice is the jawbone of an ass. The text-heavy page contains two panels side by side, which depict Cain and Abel bringing offerings to God and Cain slaying his brother. In the left panel, God again holds the golden book and gestures toward Cain. The sequentially following panel shows the famous fratricide, rendered in Cain's raising of a large, blunt weapon over Abel's cowering, naked body. Though the pictorial style lacks a contemporary sense of realism, it still manages to convey the violence of the scene through its expressive, gestural style. Cain stands on one of Abel's twisted legs and grips his arm, while Abel covers his face. The weapon, a jawbone, reiterates a verbal element now quite commonplace as an element of biblical storytelling and allusion. Meyer Schapiro first noted, and Dodwell and Clemoes later reinforced, that there was no visual predecessor for the ass's jawbone. They agree that it seems most likely a purely Anglo-Saxon invention resulting from a play on the vernacular word for jawbone. Schapiro explains: "In the oldest Anglo-Saxon reference to Cain's use of the

⁴⁹ See image appendix, figure 9.

jaw-bone, the Anglo-Saxon prose *Solomon and Saturn*, it is called the *cinbán* (chinbone or jawbone). Now Cain in the same literature is called the *bana*, i.e. the slayer or bane of his brother. When he uses the sword to kill him, Cain is the *ecg-bana*, or ‘sword-bane’ of Abel. Is it not likely that the words *Cain bana* suggested *cinbán*?”⁵⁰ Scholarly opinion on this matter conflicts: For example, Charles Wright, citing George Henderson and A. A. Barb, asserts that the image stems from an established “early Insular tradition”⁵¹ that depicts the jawbone as Cain’s weapon. This assertion would account for its use in the earlier text of *Genesis A*, discussed in the section on the Junius Manuscript below. Far from being characterized as an error, and whether or not one agrees with Schapiro’s assessment or Wright’s via Henderson and Barb, this image showcases a larger creative process of cultural adaptation. It may have stemmed from a reasonable play on words or a misreading, or, perhaps more likely, from a visual tradition or exemplar. Regardless, the bone-as-first-murder-weapon becomes folded into the visual narrative and extended by later versions of the story and references to it.⁵²

The murder scene appears immediately after and adjacent to another panel in which God instructs Cain and Abel, underscoring its taboo nature and its brutality. The

⁵⁰ Meyer Schapiro, “Cain’s Jaw-Bone That Did the First Murder,” *The Art Bulletin* 24 (1942): 210.

⁵¹ Wright, “The Blood of Abel and the Branches of Sin: *Genesis A*, *Maxims I* and Aldhelm’s *Carmen de Virginitate*,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 25 (1996): 18 note 58.

⁵² Cain’s choice of murder weapon became common enough that it appears in a wide variety of works, visually and verbally. Schapiro cites the following manuscripts and early print books: London, British Library, Cotton MS Nero C. iv (the Winchester Psalter); New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 43, fol. 8 (the Huntingfield Psalter); Leiden, University Library, MS lat. 76 (Psalter of St. Louis); Dyson Library Perrins Collection, MS I, fol. 9; Dyson Perrins Collection, Oscott Psalter, fol. 16v; Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, De Brailes Psalter; Eton College, MS 177, fol. 2; Cambridge, St. John’s College, MS 231 (Psalter); London, British Library, Royal MS 2 B. vii (the Queen Mary Psalter); London, British Library, Additional MS 47682 (The Holkham Bible Picture Book); London, British Library, Yates Thompson MS 14 (the St. Omer Psalter, formerly Additional MS 39810); New York, Public Library, De la Twyre Psalter; woodcut in printed Bible, Day and Serres, 1549; New York Public Library, Stuart Collection, English printed Bibles of 1572 and 1578 (n. 8, 205-06). The jawbone also makes its way into Shakespeare; Hamlet references the murder in the graveyard scene (V.i. 3418).

image of Cain using the jawbone functions as a syntagm⁵³ in the Hexateuch because its contents contain their own meaning and make additional meaning when juxtaposed with the previous panel. The murder itself is bad enough, yet its immediacy and defiance only come through the relation to the previous image of instruction. Such a rapid overturning also speaks to the anxiety over interpretation, and the possibility of an audience in need of didactic material. The picture itself, interpreted literally, demonstrates the violence and error of murder, especially kinslaying; interpreted allegorically, it shows the entrance of violence and sin into the larger world and the sacrificial figure eventually represented by Christ. Rebecca Barnhouse, writing on pictorial exegesis, asserts that “at the same time they (the images) illustrate the text literally, they also remind their audience that people and events in the Old Testament prefigure those in the New Testament.”⁵⁴ Catherine Karkov sees images of teaching in Claudius B. iv as “designed primarily to humanize or contemporize the biblical text,” which “make it clear that as in the homilies of Ælfric, the biblical story forms a moral exemplar whose message the pictures help to illuminate.”⁵⁵ Besides its specificity to the Hexateuch, this image informs the larger body of Cain and

⁵³There are many examples of syntagmata throughout the manuscript, but the Cain and Abel scene compresses so many important aspects of the Hexateuch’s narrative function, issues around audience and intention, and comics functioning in general just within its two small panels, that I thought it best to introduce the concept here. I use “syntagm” here in the Saussurean sense, 120-23, of a unit containing other units in sequence and after Umberto Eco, Christian Metz, and Roland Barthes via Groensteen, 26-7, 90-1, 126, 129, 131. Metz defines the syntagm as “a set of elements which are comanifest in the same fragments of texts, which are already *next* to each other before any analysis,” *Language and Cinema*, trans. Donna Jean Umiker-Sebeok (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), 165. This image of Cain is already “next to” the cowering Abel, who is about to be slain, and proximate to the previous panel in which God holds the book and gestures towards Cain.

⁵⁴ Rebecca Barnhouse, “Pictorial Exegesis in the Illustrated Old English Hexateuch,” *Publications of the Medieval Association of the Midwest*, 6 (1999): 112.

⁵⁵ Catherine Karkov, “The Anglo-Saxon Genesis: Text, Illustration, and Audience” in Barnhouse and Withers, *The Old English Hexateuch*, 228.

Abel narratives building a paradigm,⁵⁶ connecting it to a later, lasting tradition and forming a point of recursion via content.

Folio 8v contains another culturally unique image within the same panel, in which the Hexateuch's artist depicts a tree sprouting from the blood streaming from Abel's head. There is no verbal textual precedent for the gory tree in Claudius B. iv, but the vernacular poetic *Genesis A* (rendered in Junius 11 and discussed in further detail below) includes the tree of evil as an outgrowth of the first murder in its verbal text.⁵⁷ Though perhaps rudimentary-looking to twenty-first-century eyes, the forceful, bright orange-red vertical lines extending above and below Abel's head depict an embodied, physical violence unmatched in the illustrations of the rest of the manuscript.⁵⁸ The artist's focus on both the visceral and the spiritually significant qualities of the Cain and Abel episode graphically exhibits its importance to a potentially varied audience. The scene not only clearly accounts for and admonishes against violence, but also manifests influence from popular extrabiblical lore, vernacular poetry,⁵⁹ and perhaps even the Anglo-Latin verse of

⁵⁶ Here, I use paradigm in Metz's sense of "a unit of potential relationship," one that may not be immediately and concretely apprehendable, but is nevertheless real. See Taylor, "A Note on Terminology," in *Film Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), x. Metz defines the paradigm as "a class of elements only one of which figures in the text (or at a given point in this text). It is thus characteristic of the paradigm that it is never entirely exposed at the textual level; the analyst alone may exhibit it by commuting the fragment of the text considered with fragments of other texts (or other fragments of the same text) [...]," *Language and Cinema*, 165. The Hexateuch's treatment of Cain and Abel functions as both syntagm and paradigm.

⁵⁷ Wright, "The Blood of Abel and the Branches of Sin," 10-12, 14-19.

⁵⁸ According to Wright, the artist "seems to have gone out of his way to show the red streams of Abel's blood spraying the tree, a detail unparalleled (as far as I have been able to determine) elsewhere," 18. While this may be a moment of the artist's individual style and invention, it still connects to a larger verbal tradition, as Wright discusses throughout "The Blood of Abel and the Branches of Sin."

⁵⁹ As Wright points out, *Genesis A* is not the only verbal work to depict tree growth as the spread of evil or sin or Abel's blood effectively watering and fertilizing violence. He cites the writings of Gregory and Cassian, and the vernacular works, *Beowulf*, *The Prose Solomon and Saturn*, and the Old English *Maxims I*, 10-12. I would point out, furthermore, that the art of the Hexateuch is visual vernacular and fits into the patterns discussed above.

the poet Aldhelm.⁶⁰ At the level of general arthrology, Abel's bloody headwound and the evil tree form distant links among extratextual elements—both verbal and visual material. At the level of restricted arthrology, the blunter and more clearly popular elements emerge in a clearly linked form. In other words, narrative intelligibility emerges from the visually directed sequence from left to right, and the movement from Cain's raised weapon to the resulting crushed head and blood-fed tree of sin. Cain reappears on the subsequent folio, but Abel, of course, does not.

Folio 38r⁶¹ details Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac from the outset of their journey with two servants all the way to the angel's intervention that saves Isaac from death. This page provides a particularly salient example of the illustrator's negotiation of space and time, as it details a major narrative arc within one frame, in contrast to the depictions of Noah's and Cain's stories. In this fashion, the full-page panel repeats the tendency of antique visual narratives to depict an episode yet looks forward to the ways in which other forms of pictorial story will negotiate space and time in the form of single-frame broadsheets or splash pages in comics. What makes this page so fascinating is that it simultaneously follows previous pages' patterns of emplotment through space but intentionally bucks the directional order that follows the left-to-right reading pattern required by the text and many of the other pictures.⁶² This feature values the space and time of the story over the page itself, another feature that becomes prominent in later visual narratives. As Withers observes, "Assembling scenes together into a continuous

⁶⁰ Wright, "The Blood of Abel and the Branches of Sin," 18-19.

⁶¹ See image appendix, figure 10.

⁶² Catherine E. Karkov calls the illustration "an interactive visual gloss, rather than a literal and passive illustration of the text," *Text and Picture in Anglo-Saxon England: Narrative Strategies in the Junius 11 Manuscript* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 14.

narrative on one folio, the artist magnifies their dramatic effect; by reversing the standard expectations of reading and viewing, he allows the viewer to participate mimetically in Abraham's journey to the top of the mountain."⁶³ Abraham, Isaac astride a mule, and the two servants appear at first in the bottom left corner, looking and moving toward the right, as indicated by their faces and a directional line representing the ground. The next progression above them moves from right to left; this section, in the middle of the page, shows a similar ascending directional line under the figures. The same four figures appear, only at this point Isaac is carrying firewood, Abraham holds a sword, and the two young men appear to be assisting with the mule. At the top of the panel, the ram hides in a thicket and another rising directional line leads the eye to Abraham, sword raised, holding Isaac down for the sacrifice. The patriarch looks up and to the left, completing the final upward directional force and directing the viewer's eye to the angel who will stop Abraham from sacrificing his son.

The scene depicting Abraham's journey up the mountain displays a rich microcosmic example of the aforementioned principles of iconic solidarity, general arthrology, and restricted arthrology. It also depicts the possibility of using the repetition of a figure in combination with a dissonant element, the counterintuitive reading direction, to clearly communicate directional/spatial and narrative/temporal flow.⁶⁴ The

⁶³ Withers, *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, Claudius B iv: The Frontiers of Reading and Seeing in Anglo-Saxon England*, 35.

⁶⁴ This strategic combination of repetition and dissonance requires what art historian David Joselit would call a "varied mode of looking." See *After Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 39. Joselit works with twentieth- and twenty-first-century art and architecture, and his work concerns what images do once they are in circulation, even if they are outside of a place-based or originary context. His observations have a particularly strong resonance for the manner in which visual narrative requires participation for the viewer or reader to organize the work at hand, especially images or image sets like the Abraham picture with its repeated elements and the balance of dissonant and harmonious viewing practices it requires. Sherrie Levine's 2000 installation work *Postcard Collage # 4, 1-24* displays twenty-four of the same postcards framed and hung in identically sized frames and spaced evenly. Levine's work has nothing in

all-at-once-ness of the story, encapsulated within a single panel, also conveys a sense of linear temporality because of visual narrative's unique combination of iconic solidarity, directed viewing/ocular inducement, and the simultaneous conjoining and splitting of units of signification. We see the sequence of events in a kind of consecutive order that corresponds with the verbal text while the large panel frames and encloses them—the events occur sequentially and simultaneously in the eyes of the viewer. The multiple Abrahams, Isaacs, servants, and animals, separated by three lines representing the ground, showcase iconic solidarity (the present, coexisting yet visibly separate images) as they interact on the page. General arthrology manifests in the appearance of the angel and the continuity of another story about a biblical patriarch; also, the size of the panel and its encasing function⁶⁵ highlight the tale's importance. The smaller details, the sequential temporalizing of space that follows Abraham's journey up the mountain and the page, manifest restricted arthrology.

Together, these aesthetic and formal elements create an episode that conveys literal and allegorical time through drawn space. The qualities inherent to visual narrative dovetail with the levels of literal and allegorical meaning at work in the Abraham and

common aesthetically with the Abraham image or with most of the narrative images I examine in this project; however, the images in her work make the viewer do something very similar because of their repetition and sequential layout. In other words, the images function similarly in regards to the inducement of viewer-made narrative. Joselit explains, "the work's power lies in its staging of a performative mode of looking through which the single image and the network are visible *at once*. In other words, as recalcitrant as it may seem, Levine's work requires *narration*," 39. *Postcard Collage* behaves like a protocomic or comic insofar as the images are always separate yet interdependent. Though protocomics and comics typically contain clearer cues to guide and induce the eye and the story-process, they insist upon a similarly "varied mode of looking."

⁶⁵ Benjamin Withers asserts that the frames perform a "crucial role ... in the story-telling process," and that "the artist relies on the consistency and neutrality of these frames to define illustrations of several different types as narrative units: a single act of God's creation (the creation scenes on folios 2v and 3r), an isolated full-page scene (the covenant of circumcision on folio 29r), or a multi-episodic composition (Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac on folio 38r)," *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, Claudius B iv*, 35. As stated above in notes 6 and 41, the frame is a crucial unit of meaning and organization for visual narratives, and the frame's, and the panel's, primacy is a commonplace in Comics Studies.

Isaac story. On the one hand, we view father and son undertaking the journey—this is the literal picture that physically links the patriarch with his journey upward. On the other hand, we view a path that demands potential sacrifice and loss, which prefigures God sending Christ to crucifixion, connecting Old and New Testaments, and dramatizes the path of a faithful adherent—this is the allegory at work. This allegory itself resonates with the particular visual sleight-of-hand at work generally in comics and graphic narratives, which Thierry Groensteen explains as follows: “The panels return nothing but the fragments of the implied world in which the story unfolds, but this world is supposed to be continuous and homogenous, everything transpiring as if the reader, having entered the world, will never again leave the image to which he has been offered access. The crossing of frames becomes a largely unconscious and mechanical operation, masked by an investment in the virtual world postulated by the story. This diegesis, this fantastic virtual image, which comprises all of the panels, transcends them, and is where the reader can reside. If, according to Pierre Sterckx’s term, I can build a nest [*nidifier*] in a panel, it is because, in returning, each image comes to represent metonymically the totality of this world...”⁶⁶ We see this process at work across the *Hexateuch*, but hyper-concentrated in the Abraham and Isaac episode, especially because of the story’s variety of literal and allegorical meanings.⁶⁷ Though Groensteen refers to a fictive diegetic space, I think the principles apply equally to a diegetic space considered historical, didactic, or doctrinal by its audience because of the ubiquity of narrative images’ function. Furthermore, this

⁶⁶ Sterckx quoted in Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 11.

⁶⁷ David F. Johnson cites Hrabanus Maurus’ commentary on Genesis to discuss the allegorical interpretations of Abraham known to the contemporary audience, writing that “Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac, of course, prefigures the Crucifixion.” See “A Program of Illumination,” in Barnhouse and Withers. *The Old English Hexateuch*, 192. Charles D. Wright echoes the Christological content of the story and adds that the story centers on “the theme of obedience,” “Genesis A ad Litteram,” 151.

particular narrative image also concentrates the larger project of the Hexateuch⁶⁸ and, probably, other vernacular translations and paraphrases of the Old Testament; in other words, it renders disparate elements and multiple levels of meaning into a clear, intelligible plot that remains visible to a variety of readers.

The Junius Manuscript: An Outlier or Another Popular Work?

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11, also known as the Junius Manuscript or (formerly) the Cædmon Manuscript, contains vernacular poetic renditions of selected books of the Old Testament—Genesis, Exodus, and Daniel—in book one and *Christ and Satan*, a poem containing New Testament material, in book two. Like the Hexateuch, the illustrations were never completed, and a number of blank spaces left in the manuscript attest to that; however, Junius contains a much smaller program of illustrations than the Hexateuch at forty-eight images and approximately ninety blank spaces left for illustration. Also like the Hexateuch, the manuscript is a collective production, involving two artists and four scribes.⁶⁹ Frequently held up as a rarity, the Junius manuscript not only puts biblical stories into the vernacular, but adapts them into verse and is the only one of the four major Anglo-Saxon poetic codices to contain a program of pictorial

⁶⁸ Olson defines this larger purpose through Ricoeur: “Narrative ‘grasps together’ things which are disparate and unifies them ‘into one whole and complete story’ (Ricoeur *Time and Narrative*, 1: x). The writers of the Hexateuch have grasped together events in Israel’s past and juxtaposed them as parts of an entity, a discourse of destiny. In particular, the redactor of the Pentateuch has formed a group of texts, episodic in themselves, into a work whose theme of covenant is never lost sight of. [...] Episodic writing is seen as typical of oral cultures. Biblical writing is indeed episodic, but the theological and political agenda of its writers ensure that a kind of unity prevails,” 129-30. Olson’s assertions seem correct, but I would add that the simultaneity of the episodic and the unified, and the Hebrew past and Christian present, are especially noteworthy in visual narrative form because of the nature of the medium. In other words, the qualities that she finds most important in the Hexateuch’s narrative are thrown into sharp relief by their expression in graphic narrative—a form and medium that readily encapsulates and creates from this seemingly paradoxical place of simultaneous separation and conjoining.

⁶⁹ Karkov, *Text and Picture*, 2-3.

narrative.⁷⁰ Catherine Karkov comments upon overarching perceptions of the work: “The majority of scholars today would agree that the manuscript was deliberately compiled according to a predetermined plan in order to create a narrative centred on the theme of Fall and Redemption.”⁷¹ Such a narrative pattern would have been not only familiar to Anglo-Saxon audiences of the time, but also well-known in the Christian culture at large. In terms of conceptualizing Junius as a popular production, the creators shape the adaptations of the biblical material into a poetic, dramatic narrative, which most likely appealed to the audience for its expressive as well as its religious and didactic elements.⁷² Old English verse and prose expanded greatly during the latter part of the tenth and early eleventh centuries, contemporary with Junius 11’s probable date of production between 950 and 1000.⁷³ Junius 11, as a poetic codex with illustration, is often set up as a more prestigious or difficult book, though that stance may stem from the association of poetry with opacity and occult meaning, a remnant of early twentieth-century high modernism.⁷⁴

Conversely, the kind of triple reworking of biblical material into the vernacular, poetry, and visual narrative seems to have more in common with the manuscripts

⁷⁰ The *Beowulf* Manuscript contains illustrations in *The Marvels of the East*, a prose work, but not in the other poems or prose works.

⁷¹ Karkov, *Text and Picture*, 2.

⁷² Vernacular Old English poetry stems from a long, popular oral tradition, and its use as a tool to adapt biblical narrative into a written document strikes me as an audience-expanding rather than an audience-limiting move. On the popular nature of Old English verse, see Donald G. Scragg, “The Nature of Old English Verse,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 55-58 and Stephenson, *The Politics of Language*, 5-6, 28-30. For more on this topic see Niles, *Homo Narrans: The Poetics and Anthropology of Oral Literature*, 12-13, 29-30, 144.

⁷³ See Karkov, *Text and Picture*, 2; Leslie Lockett, “An Integrated Re-examination of the Dating of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 31 (2002):141-73; Stephenson, *The Politics of Language*, 27-30.

⁷⁴ The association of poetry and poetic diction with difficulty has a longer lineage than the high modernists as well, as one can see in the differences between, on the one hand, the relatively clear writings of Bede, Alcuin, and Ælfric, and, on the other, the rhetorically dense writings of Aldhelm and Byrhtferth. See Stephenson, *The Politics of Language*, 16-20, 158-59.

examined here than not. Junius 11 and the Hexateuch especially share a great deal of visual idioms and showcase the same systems of iconic solidarity. The manuscript's existence as one of multiple vernacular paraphrases also makes its generally accepted status as an aberrant work rather shaky. In *The Medieval Popular Bible*, Brian Murdoch discusses the popularity of vernacular biblical paraphrases and commentaries in verse and other nonprose forms, especially Genesis, noting the probably real heterogeneity in audiences for such materials: "[I]n the Middle Ages we may take as basic material a variety of different kinds of vernacular writings. Some of these may again be learned, such as chronicles, [...] and in the earlier period some may be expressly monastic texts, though even here, those in the vernacular were probably intended either for novices, or slightly later, for the convent. But many vernacular writings were accessible to or designed for lay audiences, [...] although in some cases we have to think of a lay *aristocracy* as that audience."⁷⁵ Murdoch's claims put Junius 11 back in the running, so to speak. It may have been commissioned by a member of the elite in its own time; however, that does not mean Junius 11 is not popular, unless one anachronistically imposes a post-Habermasian sense of popular as in the product of a secular postindustrial public, as I have discussed above in regards to the Hexateuch. The Junius manuscript carries forth the popular impulse I read in the creation and form of Claudius B. iv precisely because, as Rebecca Stephenson posits, Junius 11 is a product of "the flowering of vernacular literature, accessible to a broad range of people, and not limited to the Latin-educated clergy."⁷⁶ Furthermore, the artists preoccupy themselves with visually

⁷⁵ Brian Murdoch, *The Medieval Popular Bible: Expansions of Genesis in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 4.

⁷⁶ Stephenson, *The Politics of Language*, 27.

representing their contemporary audience, especially when it comes to the tools and crafts of genealogically important figures. Writing on the culturally-specific objects, dress, and style in pictures of the descendants of Adam, Karkov asserts, “The most likely reason for the unusual iconography in Junius 11 is that the men and women are meant to reflect the world of their Anglo-Saxon audience. [...] It is possible that the descendants of Cain are meant to reflect the workers, one of the three orders of society elaborated in the writings of Alfred and Ælfric.”⁷⁷ This three-estate system—consisting of laborers, fighters, and clerics—was a common conception of an ordered society.⁷⁸ The artists combine a pervasive social concept with a stylized, contemporary vision of their religious lore, which employs the topical and the familiar.

Audience remains an important factor in assessing the manuscript as a popular production, a kind of protocomic. Yet style, especially in terms of the vernacular poetry and culturally familiar illustrations in Junius 11, is an even more important factor. Mary Olson asserts that the pictures in graphic narratives and the process by which they are made comprise “an operation of the imagination informed by the cultural and bodily experiences of the image-maker [...] These models are cultural maps of social relationships, the religious or scientific structure of the cosmos, understanding of time, and the familiar loci of daily life.”⁷⁹ Olson sees these cultural factors made manifest in visual and verbal tropes, negotiation of space, and mise-en-page in all Anglo-Saxon manuscripts she examines, whether or not they contain expressly pictorial narrative.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Karkov, *Text and Picture*, 82.

⁷⁸ Karkov elaborates on the significance of which descendants fall into which orders, according to the Junius artists, in *Text and Picture*, 81-8, citing Ælfric’s *Catholic Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church* and the Old English Hexateuch on the three-estate system, 81-8.

⁷⁹ Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, 51.

⁸⁰ Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, 51.

The levels of ubiquity at work within the Junius manuscript—these include vernacular poetic tradition, the fall and redemption story, and imagery that combines quotidian dress and tools with allegorical figures—render a complex but intelligible narrative focalized through the producing culture’s aesthetics and values.

Catherine Karkov postulates that Junius 11’s relatively higher degree of poetic refinement may indicate a slightly different expected audience than the Hexateuch because “the individual poems as well as the text and illustrations relate to each other in complex ways, clearly indicating an educated, literate audience. Moreover, the poems are interpretations of, or glosses on, the biblical texts, rather than paraphrases of them.”⁸¹ This assertion is problematic in that it negates the complexity of the Hexateuch’s illustration and translation—paraphrases and translations are interpretations, too, as are programs of illustration. When Karkov goes on to describe the images as complements, there is a sense of completing the narrative, but the idea of narrative images as complements and not narratives in their own right is perhaps not quite right in these works. She does typify the images as “a form of translation rather than mere illustration.”⁸² Junius 11 does contain perhaps relatively more stylized, less detailed illustrations, so the complement hypothesis is understandable. A close examination of the pictures, though, will show that they share not only formal and narrative features with Claudius B. iv’s images, but also embody the dialogic and recursive nature of comics.

Key Images in Junius 11

⁸¹ Catherine Karkov, “The Anglo-Saxon Genesis,” in Barnhouse and Withers, *The Old English Hexateuch*, 207.

⁸² Karkov, *Text and Picture*, 36.

Much like the Hexateuch, page 3 of Junius 11⁸⁴ contains a full-page image depicting the fall of Lucifer and the rebel angels into an open-mouthed creature, again showing the popular extra-biblical narrative of the fall. Rather than sitting inside of a closed frame split in half, architectural columns border this picture, effectively creating a four-tiered architectural structure, and a paneled division to order the image spatiotemporally. The top two tiers, one panel, depict the rebellious host readying itself for battle, and carrying helmets or crowns of some kind towards Lucifer, slightly larger and wearing a helmet, who stands on a raised platform to the right of a building with a throne-room inside. The building and the throne-room effectively represent the seat of authority that Lucifer and the rebels wish to overtake. Multiple angels stand to Lucifer's left behind the building containing the throne and Lucifer's right, on two tiers, moving towards him and the throne-room in gestures of supplication, carrying crowns or helmets. Lucifer gestures with his right hand, clearly pointing to the throne-room, which seems to indicate that it is the object to be taken. In his left hand, he holds a "spindly scepter," which "also contrasts with the rich, feathery leaves of the palms held by the angels [in the second and third panels] and the massive scepter (or scroll) held by God [in the fourth panel], and provides a visual sign of Lucifer's difference prior to his fall."⁸⁵ In this top panel, there occurs less dynamic downward visual and physical force and more of a sense of reading left to right and top to bottom, following the logic of a verbal page. The artist clearly marks out Lucifer, though, and his position at the top and bottom of a full-page illustration does help to emphasize the gravity of the fall.

⁸⁴ See image appendix, figure 11.

⁸⁵ Karkov, *Text and Picture*, 50.

The second panel clearly depicts a second event within the narrative, both because the frame cordons it off from the above panel and we see a ground on which the figures stand. Here six obedient angels gather around a central figure, probably the archangel Michael, with their faces turned towards him and feathery palm branches in their hands. All of the angels wear the same garments, and the artist's rendering of details such as their hair, hands, and facial expressions indicates their uniformity and shared purpose. They contrast with the rebel angels above not in dress so much as posture and the differences signified in the objects they carry—palm branches versus helmets or crowns, symbols of peace and martyrdom versus symbols of warlike behavior and monarchic authority. The obedient angels also carry and gesture differently, that is, their hands clasp around the palm fronds in a prayer-like gesture, and the two angels to the immediate left and right of the archangel hand their palm fronds to him. These details create “intervisuality,”⁸⁶ that is, they stylistically recall other peer manuscripts⁸⁷ while, on a level more immediate to the narrative, they organize the figures, emplotment, and diegetic content for the reader.

⁸⁶ Karkov, *Text and Picture*, 17. Karkov uses this term coined by Michael Camille, which is employed as “a visual parallel to the intertextuality of literary texts,” 17.

⁸⁷ Olson notes aesthetic similarities and shared “visual schemata” among Junius 11 and the illustrated *Psychomachia* manuscripts, *Fair and Varied Forms*, 42-4. Karkov notes aesthetic similarities among Junius 11, the illustrated *Psychomachia* manuscripts, Claudius B. iv, the Benedictional of Æthelwold, the Royal Bible, the Odbert Psalter, the Tiberius Psalter, the *Encomium Emmae*, and the Red Book of Darley. See *Text and Picture*, 8, 17, 35-6, 47, 102-03, 149-51, 172. Karkov identifies a process of “metonymic compilation” of texts, illustrated texts, and other visual art, “which creates a dialogue that echoes back and forth throughout the manuscript, while also making reference to a series of other related texts and images that would have been familiar to an Anglo-Saxon reader,” 17. She uses Michael Camille’s term “intervisuality” to “refer to images that call to mind ‘other images that are formally similar, but which have different contexts and thus different connotations’ (Alexander 156), as well as images that may have different meanings or connotations in different contexts,” 17-18. Shared visual motifs and iconography in peer manuscripts constitute this relationship.

The third panel depicts God in the center, again flanked by angels, but here the martial nature of the narrative becomes clearer. The deity holds a scepter, the marker of authority, in his left hand, and three spears in his right hand. The obedient angels' postures and gestures convey a similar level of devotion to the archangel and God that the rebels have to Lucifer. A slightly more dynamic energy reverberates through the angels in the third tier; the angel immediately to God's right stands with hands⁸⁸ outstretched while the one immediately to God's left points to his spear-hand. The spears come close to the bottom border, which obscures the lower halves of the figures and creates a conceptual distance from the fallen angels, Lucifer, and the monster hellmouth in the bottom section. God's eye-line and the spears also strongly direct the viewer from the third panel to the fourth. Furthermore, the clear lines that keep the first three panels separate from the bottom function to simultaneously split and link the narrative moments in space and time, demonstrating restricted arthrology at work. Because of the relative geometric clarity and simplicity of the architectural-style frame, most of the composition retains the feeling of being suspended above the pit-like space depicted at the bottom. There is no line or border at the page's vertical end to indicate enclosure, so the monster-mouth's body and the fallen angels run off the page, reinforcing the sense of both the rebels' fall and punishment, and the suspension of the heavenly host above the pit. The last panel details the throne and building from the first panel broken apart, the rebel horde's twisting, falling bodies, and the hellmouth creature munching on a bound, struggling Lucifer. The

⁸⁸ Karkov points out that hands are particularly significant in the manuscript, noting that "The texts of the Junius 11 poems also place a great deal of emphasis on hands and the ability or inability of the protagonists to use them effectively, making the image of the hand one of the most important of the recurring motifs in the manuscript," *Text and Picture*, 49.

frenetic sketchy lines and the lack of clear frame at the bottom underscore the gravity and the length of the fall, not only spiritually, but also conceptually and spatially.

Standout images in Junius 11 negotiate space and time similarly to Claudius B. iv's treatment of Abraham's sacrifice; that is, the images disrupt left-to-right, top-to-bottom reading order in order to highlight mimetic directional movement and the importance of maintaining cosmic order while spatializing time. The most salient example of this appears on page 20,⁸⁹ on which Satan's messenger ascends to earth to cause trouble in the Garden of Eden. The messenger's ascent begins, temporally, at the bottom of the page; a polygon frame encloses his large, visually central figure in the fiery pit while his body stretches outward, up and to the left to emerge from the boundary. The artist repeats the messenger's body, in a smaller version, ostensibly to show him penetrating the border between hell and earth. The multiple messengers both recall the multiple Abrahams and Isaacs (in the Hexateuch), moving up the page and the mountain, and pictorialize iconic solidarity—the messenger, who looks like other fallen angels and a bit like Satan himself, appears again, allowing the reader to track the narrative through a repeated character without necessarily using the verbal text. In this way, the demon's movement transgresses normal reading direction. The artist repeats both the herald and Eve, indicating the sequence of events, but perhaps also expressing their shared status as tools of Satan. Karkov writes, "In the battle between Satan and Adam, Eve is secondary, merely a tool through which the deception of Adam can be achieved."⁹⁰ The composition's overall curved directional force forms an arc from bottom right to top left,

⁸⁹ See image appendix, figure 12.

⁹⁰ Karkov, *Text and Picture*, 69.

emphasizing the movement from hell to earth and the messenger's physical transformation from demon to snake. Here, the repeated trees also serve as a spatiotemporal device: The messenger-as-snake wraps around a tree while talking to Eve, who holds a tree that separates their discussion from her subsequent leading of Adam to the tree of knowledge, which appears in the upper right corner and completes the narrative arc.⁹¹

The portrayal of the Cain and Abel story on page 49,⁹² like the Hexateuch's depiction of Abraham and Isaac, lays out events in sequential order and repeats key figures in order to indicate movement in time and space. The Junius artist mostly follows traditional reading order rather than reversing it, and relies upon sketchy linework to delineate panels that separate events within the larger overall frame that encloses the picture. The first panels at left represent the one instance of disrupting regular reading order. Both the upper and middle left panels show Cain and Abel at work separately, farming and herding respectively.⁹³ The artist's choice to render the two brothers and their occupations in similarly-sized panels on top of one another rather than side by side, most likely not a compositional accident, appears to present simultaneity and lend an

⁹¹ Richard Gameson writes on the various shifts in shape that the artist gives to Satan's messenger: "Interestingly, in one respect, these images can be seen to interpret the written text, bringing out an element which is present but ambiguous there: namely the treatment of the Devil's emissary when he is in Eden. The poem *Genesis* twice describes the fiend as serpent, but the nature of his speeches and certain phrases suggest that he is also thought of as an angel, particularly by Eve. This dichotomy can be traced both to St. Paul and to the apocryphal *Uitae Adae et Evae* (the *Apocalypsis Mosis*). The illustrator, who could not be comparably subtle and ambivalent, gives the fiend a sequence of forms, as we have seen, implying a series of physical transformations—demon, serpent, angel of light, demon—which effectively impose a reading on the text. The narrative effect of the final transformation is particularly dramatic. The juxtaposition of an angelic figure encouraging Eve as she gives Adam the apple, with a demon gloating over them in their sorrow not only advances the pictorial narrative but also highlights its sinister significance," *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church*, 45. Gameson's assertions support the complexity of the visual narrative and its relationship to the text, and indicate how the artists participated in the authoring function.

⁹² See image appendix, figure 13.

⁹³ Herbert R. Broderick, "Observations in the Method of Illustration in MS Junius 11 and the Relationship of the Drawings to the Text," *Scriptorium* 37.2 (1983): 172.

equal importance to their work, especially since the fruits of their labor are brought to the sacrifice at the immediate right.⁹⁴ Below the sacrifice scene, Cain murders his brother, and to the bottom left, Abel, in a pool of his own blood, stretches his arms and hands out in a gesture of prayer to God. This final panel depicts a scene often called the “Voice of Abel’s blood crying to the Lord.”⁹⁵ The composition of this narrative arc evinces the coextensive linking together and breaking down characteristic of visual narrative. For example, the artist’s placement of Cain and Abel’s labors alongside the sacrifice link their work to the act of sacrifice; yet the visible separation of their labors simultaneously emphasizes their different character and, when read in terms of the entire page, their different fates. The top-to-bottom order of events on the right—sacrifice, murder, Abel’s blood communicating—exist on the page as contained moments, but also appear as a causal chain, inseparable in terms of the narrative and the effects of both men’s actions and fates.

This particular illustration relies rather more heavily on restricted orthology through the rough panel structure, relatively orderly visual direction, and the repetition of Cain and Abel’s figures. The artist draws the frames with a jagged thin line instead of the architectural structures or geometrically regular frames seen elsewhere in the manuscript, providing the simultaneously connecting and separating function through a frenetic

⁹⁴ Though verticality often denotes hierarchy, the two left panels’ immediate spatial and sequential narrative relationship to the panel on the right (depicting the sacrifice) seems to indicate more about the relationship of events to the sacrifice itself and, later, the effects of Abel’s death on the earth than the valuing of each brother’s labor. Karkov corroborates this: “The earth that was once fruitful for Cain will henceforth be barren, and there is a marked contrast between the productive earth tilled by Adam and Cain and grazed by Abel’s flocks (the earth from which both Cain and Abel bring their offerings in top half of the picture), and the barren earth beneath the body of Abel in the lower half of this picture and beneath the feet of Cain on page 51,” *Text and Picture*, 81.

⁹⁵ Broderick calls this panel a motif, and cites the work of Israel Gollancz in the introduction to *The Caedmon Manuscript of Anglo-Saxon Biblical Poetry* and of Barbara Raw in “The Probable Derivation of Most of the Illustrations in Junius 11 from an Illustrated Old Saxon Genesis,” 161-62, 172.

vehicle. The line quality matches the roughness and disorder of the events. Elements of general arthrology are at work, too, particularly in the tension between the verbal text and the imagery of Abel's death—they do not echo each other exactly—and the gesturing hands throughout the panels. Cain and Abel both have dynamically gesturing hands, as do other people and entities in the manuscript, and the pointing hand of God makes one of many appearances in the upper right panel of page 49. Karkov explains the significance of hands and pointing fingers in the manuscript as a whole: “More than anything else, the pointing finger and gesturing hand are used to provide the figures in Junius 11 with a sense of action and interaction, and the drawings with a sense of both life and the progress of the narrative. The extended right hand of God serves as a form of punctuation from the beginning to the end of the completed drawings.”⁹⁶ The gesturing hands cross diegetic levels, reminding the audience that they are viewing a series of events that not only has occurred already, but also has been ordered according to Christian time and the Deity's authority. The hands, whether divine or human, additionally mark out narrative pacing and provide moments of visual recall, which upholds their significance throughout different narrative episodes.

The artist's approach to the Cain and Abel story bears examination not only for the comics-semiotics at work in its composition, but also for its breaks from *Genesis A's* verbal text, and adaptation of a variety of popular extrabiblical materials. Here, the artist avoids the jawbone-as-weapon; instead Cain uses a tree branch or wooden bludgeon, possibly the same wooden object Abel holds while tending his livestock. The composition emphasizes the severity of Abel's headwound similarly to the Hexateuch;

⁹⁶ Karkov, *Text and Picture*, 42.

though the Junius artist lacks the bright color palette of the Hexateuch artist, the size of the pool of blood under Abel's head is significant. In another marked contrast to the Hexateuch, no tree sprouts from Abel's blood. Rather than emphasizing a growth of evil or violence, the artist underscores ruination, a lack of the ground's ability to produce where Abel's blood falls. The intentional break demonstrates collective production at work; the artists also have inventive, authorial power, rather than merely mindlessly reproducing text in their images. By avoiding the depiction of the tree, the artist breaks with the verbal poetic text and provides another set of extratextual and intratextual associations. Charles Wright connects the image of Abel's blood spilling over the ground sans growth to Jewish, Old English, and Irish folkloric and textual influences; he cites "a Jewish legend" and the *Prose Solomon and Saturn*, in which the places Abel lived and dwelt in become barren upon his death, and "the Irish *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* states that stones are not fruitful because Abel's blood fell on a stone."⁹⁷ Wright also points out that Meyer Schapiro connected Abel's blood striking a rock, in the Junius illustration, to the theme of infertility found in the Irish narrative—all subsequent stones fail to produce because the blood of this tradition's first murder victim touched this particular stone.⁹⁸

The illustrations on pages 41 and 44 result in a double,⁹⁹ or quadruple emphasis on divine authority through the visually repeated images of the deity and a double, or quadruple emphasis on the depth of Adam and Eve's shame through visually repeated images of the couple hiding their bodies. There are four Gods, two Eves, and two Adams within the two pages. Iconic solidarity appears here clearly alongside both general and

⁹⁷ Charles Wright, "The Blood of Abel and the Branches of Sin," 11.

⁹⁸ Wright, "The Blood of Abel and the Branches of Sin" 11 n. 24.

⁹⁹ See image appendix, figure 14.

restricted arthrology. The reader can observe repeated tropes, characters, and techniques of emplotment pages apart, which emphasize the concurrent splitting and connection of the scenes. On page 41, we see God sentencing the snake to a lifetime of belly-dragging. In the top half of the panel, God points to the reptile, who stands upright, and through his cursing, the snake is reduced to slithering away down and to the left. This scene, like the messenger's ascent from hell, denies traditional reading order but remains clear, guiding the eye to the next episode in the bottom half of the panel in which God begins his judgment of Eve and Adam. Like the messenger demon's transgression of an orderly page and virtuous behavior, the snake too disrupts, appearing twice to indicate the physical transformation of its curse as well as movement through the story-space. The twice-appearing snake essentially causes the reader to double back to witness the results of its punishment and the "marginal wilds it is henceforth doomed to inhabit."¹⁰⁰ God's centrality in the top and bottom halves of the image, relatively larger size, and higher degree of detail reinforce his authority and the real severity of the ensuing expulsion from the Garden. In both appearances, God holds the authority-signifying book and gestures with his right hand, indicating judgment and a meting out of punishment. In the bottom half of the image, Adam futilely gestures up to God as he and Eve clutch leaves to cover themselves. This image narrates and initiates the continuation of Adam and Eve's sentencing on page 44 and expulsion on page 45.

On page 44, two Gods appear back-to-back, one admonishing Eve to the left, and the other admonishing Adam to the right. Double-God stands on higher ground above the tree, higher than his creations, looking and pointing downward while separating the pair.

¹⁰⁰ Karkov, *Text and Picture*, 76.

Arguably, the repetition of the deity figure indicates omnipresence and omnipotence; however, it also cues the reader to follow emplotment and correctly interpret God's divine authority as the highest, regardless of the rebellion or other instances of disobedience. The artist here highlights the hand gestures¹⁰¹ again and emphasizes the separation and shame Eve and Adam experience after the realization of their nakedness and transgression. As an example of general arthrology, the repeated appearance of hands and connections to behavior create an overarching structure regardless of the distance between pages. As an example of restricted arthrology, the appearance of hands and emphasis on hand gestures combine to inform the viewer that each individual instance of judgment is important and connected to others in the narrative for their core similarity and figural nature. Various tales of divine judgment structure the Old Testament stories and look forward to later figures and events both in the Old and New Testaments. The repeated appearances of hands are also important for their differences, though they are visually subtle. Each tale and its visual expression remains somewhat unique to the particular characters involved without disturbing the overarching similarity of the function of hands and the expression of divine power.

Following the punishment of Adam and Eve and the murder of Abel, we encounter the descendants of Seth, one of whom is Enoch. The two images that illustrate Enoch and his ascension, on pages 60 and 61 respectively,¹⁰² provide a fairly

¹⁰¹ See note 86 on hands. The repeated emphasis on hands forms a recursive element and comprises an instance of intervisuality and metonymic relationship among other works that also emphasize hands and gestures. The prominence of hands builds a topically dialogic element as well, reminding the reader to connect the other instances of judgment and conflict with the current episode she/he is reading. This mechanism echoes comics' functioning as a simultaneously connective and separative narrative medium with the ability to express both the episodic and the cyclical.

¹⁰² See image appendix, figure 15.

straightforward narrative; however, the spare aesthetics and clear emplotment should not obscure the complexity of each image taken both in isolation and in relation to one another. The first of these two images depicts artistic invention/collective authorship, as it provides extrapoetic detail about Enoch that sets him up as a Christ and as a warrior figure. These visual and symbolic attributes encode culturally specific, arguably popular, extratextual information into the narrative. The artist depicts Enoch “haloed, holding an open book and standing on a dragon”¹⁰³; none of these details occur in the poem. Karkov asserts that the visual differences function to “address the text and the audience in different ways”¹⁰⁴ rather than simply complementing or disobeying the text.¹⁰⁵ Enoch stands near the bottom left of the frame, holding a book with marked pages, crushing the aforementioned dragon, and looking up toward an angel. The angel occupies the upper right corner of the frame, but a shared directional gaze and expressive hand gestures indicate that the angel and Enoch interact, rather than having a watcher/watched relationship. Karkov accounts for the extrapoetic and culturally specific visual details as follows: “All three details, however, help to identify Enoch as a type of Christ, and to establish the relationship of this episode to the Harrowing of Hell and the Last Judgement, New Testament events that are both foreshadowed in verbal and visual motifs throughout the Old Testament poems of Junius 11 and recounted at length in *Christ and Satan*. Enoch stands over the dragon as does the Christ prefigured in Psalm XC who

¹⁰³ Karkov, *Text and Picture*, 9.

¹⁰⁴ Karkov, *Text and Picture*, 9.

¹⁰⁵ Temple assesses the Junius illustrations in three major types: “The miniatures include vast monumental representations, often in strip narrative of Late Antique inspiration; some reflect the tradition of the fifth-century Cotton Genesis (cf. Henderson, 1962) or adapt early Christian iconographic themes to the expanded text of the poem (cf. Ohlgren, *Mediaevalia*); others suggest acquaintance with apocryphal or Anglo-Saxon literature (cf. Gollancz p. xxxiv) while a few, which closely follow the Old English Genesis text, are entirely the invention of the two English illuminators” (76).

tramples on the beasts, an episode repeatedly linked to the Harrowing of Hell and the Last Judgement in Anglo-Saxon art and literature. Moreover, as a symbol of the devil and Antichrist, the dragon is a reminder that Enoch returns to earth to do battle with the Antichrist, at which time he will be slain and ascend to heaven for a second and final time.”¹⁰⁶

The halo, book, and subdued dragon mark Enoch as a special figure; through these tropes, the still figure on the manuscript page embodies multiple temporalities and figures across the tradition from which it springs. In other words, Enoch embodies a fusion of Old Testament and New Testament narrative and appears as an analogue to Christ.¹⁰⁷ The artist’s depiction of Enoch also exemplifies and recalls events at the beginning and end of Christian time. The images on page 60 and 61 create emplotment in relation to one another; Enoch stands apart as a chosen figure and he later ascends. The ascension also “repeats the linking of beginnings and ends that form a recurring pattern throughout the Junius manuscript”¹⁰⁸ in its verbal and visual content. Here we see another microcosmic example of how the page-governed visual narrative demands a sense of repetition, recursion, and sequentiality in order to form continuity; the example of Enoch seems extra-concentrated as it expresses and plays with time on a variety of levels, linear and cyclical, immediately from page to page and distantly as an artistic interpretation of

¹⁰⁶ Karkov, *Text and Picture*, 9.

¹⁰⁷ Charles Wright disagrees with Karkov’s connection in *Text and Picture* of Enoch with Christ, maintaining that “the ‘linking of Enoch’s birth to his death [*sic*], or ascension,’ associates him with Christ, but the poet’s insistence that Enoch did *not* suffer death (lines 1205-6) instead dissociates him from Christ. (...) I do not believe that the poetic paraphrasis for Enoch’s birth (his mother ‘brought him to men,’ line 1213) is intended to suggest the birth of Christ, as Karkov suggests” (“Genesis A ad Litteram,” 133, n. 5). I agree with Karkov’s assessment, as she examines the visual and verbal narrative in concert, and makes a convincing argument that the image on page 61 of the Junius manuscript has multiple parallels in Anglo-Saxon artistic depictions of the Ascension of Christ, and is most likely modelled upon those depictions (88).

¹⁰⁸ Karkov, *Text and Picture*, 86.

the religion's different epochs. Both Karkov and Carol Farr interpret the images of Enoch as the poet's and artist's expression of links among not only the past and future, but also of the present, thereby framing religious and historical time in the same way.¹⁰⁹ As a drawn visual narrative, the images render this understanding of time spatially and symbolically.

Both images provide a salient example of how visual narrative paradoxically works in simultaneous isolation and connection. The first image could be perceived as static, though arguably still narrative, as Enoch and the angel clearly interact. Of course, narrative occurs as a result of the proximity of the image on page 60 to the previous and subsequent images. The full-page image on page 61 portrays sequential narrative in and of itself because it shows Enoch's ascension, but also connects to the previous image, which helps to explain Enoch's heightened status. Here reading order and page layout are crucial because the picture induces the reader's eye to move from bottom to top, mimicking the ascension visually, just as the observer's eye follows Abraham and Isaac back and forth along the switchbacks and up the mountain on folio 38r of Claudius B. iv. The space and time of the story necessitates its visually vertical composition. At the bottom of the page, Enoch looms larger than the human figures to his left and right, and two angels, equal in size to Enoch, flank him on either side. The image carries the most visual weight at the bottom, not only because of the number of figures crowding the bottom of the frame, but also because of the artist's rendering of the ground under the men's and angels' feet. The ground appears to run off the edge of the page, further

¹⁰⁹ Karkov, *Text and Picture*, 87-8.

creating a sense of gravity. A variety of visual elements defy this gravity and order vertical reading. All fifteen of the figures at the bottom of the page turn their faces upward toward Enoch and toward heaven. Above this scene, the angels carry Enoch upward, and his body is obscured from the waist up by zig-zagging lines representing heaven. These lines function polyvalently: They depict heaven and communicate Enoch's rising, but they also obscure Enoch and heaven from the reader, the non-ascendant participant. The frame also colludes in this process; where the ground runs off of the bottom of the page, the frame stops the composition at the top rather than allowing the lines of heaven to radiate off of the top of the page. The lines and the frame work in isolation and connection both on the page and, in a way, off of the page, while self-consciously rendering boundaries of the page and the book—much like comics do. The linework, the frames, and the actual edges of the page work to construct the narrative—the symbolic space of diegetic and nondiegetic elements—and the physical materiality of the manuscript itself.

In addition to elements of page layout, linework, and narrative space, examples of restricted and general arthrology appear throughout these two images. Hands, as noted above, function as both general and restricted arthrology in a few primary ways. They convey a variety of human gestures and divine activity, in the forms of punishment, communication, and reward, across the manuscript and its stylistic peers. These repeated gestures create a recognizable and consistent set of distant relationships throughout the narrative, building a network of general arthrology by using a typical Anglo-Saxon aesthetic that the Junius artists make great use of throughout the manuscript. Karkov underscores the importance of hands: “More than anything else, the pointing figure and

gesturing hand are used to provide the figures in Junius 11 with a sense of action and interaction, and the drawings with both a sense of life and the progress of the narrative.”¹¹⁰ The overarching sense of action and interaction that Karkov describes occurs in the visual narrative because of general arthrology, among other types of functional relationships in pictorial narrative. The hands also perform restricted arthrology, as seen in the repetition of hands in Enoch’s interactions with the angels and his human relatives. Within these two images, the outstretched hand of Enoch and the pointing hands of the angel on page 60 create a sequential relationship to the similarly gesturing hands of the figures on page 61. The hands underscore interaction among the various characters and reinforce Enoch’s special role—he opens his right hand to the angel on page 60 and opens both hands up to the heavens on page 61 before his ascension, in the same gesture of prayer that Abel makes on page 49. This change in gestures signals temporal and narrative progress between the two frames specifically, creating immediate narrative links in the story of Enoch, and reiterating an earlier visual trope in the form of the prayer posture.

Like the Old English Hexateuch, Junius 11 contains a program of illustration that is explicitly narrative, collectively produced, and avoids slavish repetition of the text. Both manuscripts’ programs of illustration negotiate space and time like present-day comics and graphic narratives, so much so that these two examples constitute protocomics. They are rare as individual material objects; however, they are not aberrant when it comes to their means of meaning-making and physical production. Junius 11 and

¹¹⁰ Karkov, *Text and Picture*, 9.

the Hexateuch both rely upon culturally specific visual tropes, biblical and extrabiblical/poetic textual and extratextual elements, and frame-governed images that create a sequence of narrative images. Collectively-produced, popular, and explicitly narrative, these two manuscripts exemplify the tenets of comics' methods of story making: inducement of the reader's eye; page layout and breakdown; the independence and interdependence of frame-governed units; images' complex interaction with text; iconic solidarity and general and restricted artology. As both of the manuscripts examined above are vernacular works, it is important to include a product of Anglo-Latin culture to demonstrate the pervasive qualities of protocomics in medieval manuscripts of this period. In order to fully analyze the shared visual idiom and showcase the true ubiquity of the narrative methods herein, I now turn to a manuscript that scholarly consensus tends to class as a product of high culture that contains a generally nonnarrative program of illustration.

Part Three: Visual Narrative in the "Nonnarrative" Psalter

The Harley Psalter

The Harley Psalter, London, British Library, MS Harley 603, is one of the most extensively illustrated psalters extant from Anglo-Saxon England. It contains Latin text of 143 of the 150 psalms (137 Roman and 6 Gallican), and a significant program of illustration including one full-page drawing and 112 partial-page multicolored line drawings, based upon the Utrecht Psalter. I include it as a primary text in this study because it was produced in the *lingua franca*, but evinces equal allegiance to its exemplar and to the visual vernacular of its producers. Karkov corroborates this notion: "The influence of illustrated psalters on other types of manuscripts is undoubted, and many of

the details in the Junius 11 illustrations, along with other eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, have been traced back to the Carolingian Utrecht Psalter, but there was also an Insular tradition of symbolic psalter illustration that seems to have been equally influential.”¹¹¹ Richard Gameson discusses the psalter as a collective production and attests to the importance of the psalter’s visual component and the enduring popularity and multivalent nature of the psalter: “A range of quite different techniques was applied to this one work—occasionally even within a single copy. If, on the one hand, this reflects the poetic character of the text and the variety of approaches that had been taken to illustrating it in previous centuries, on the other, it attests to the continuing primacy of the psalter in contemporary religious life and thought.”¹¹² The evident intervisuality among the three primary texts analyzed here and other illustrated manuscripts of this era, psalters and non-psalters alike, highlights the interplay of production and reproduction. Harley 603 comprises a particularly complex yet strong example of how a de luxe manuscript perceived to be rigidly institutionalized and “presumably treasured”¹¹³ can actually also function as popular visual narrative. When considered through Joselit’s concept of a varied mode of looking, the Harley Psalter emerges not so much as a mere copy or an aberrant rarity, but rather as a peer to the more explicitly narrative manuscripts examined in this chapter.

According to William Noel, Harley 603 is the product of twelve hands; there were eight artists, two artist-scribes, and two scribes, one of whom is positively identified as Eadui Basan,¹¹⁴ a rare master scribe whose name was actually known. The psalter

¹¹¹ Karkov, *Text and Picture*, 8.

¹¹² Gameson, *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church*, 53.

¹¹³ Gameson, *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church*, 18.

¹¹⁴ William Noel, *The Harley Psalter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 18-20.

certainly qualifies as a collective production on these grounds alone, but is particularly important for this study because it “was executed over a period of more than one hundred years”¹¹⁵ and evinces a remarkable degree of aesthetic consistency. The Harley Psalter is certainly not a serial production; however, its various scribes and artists working in the same period, plus later artists working across more than a century, brings to mind newspaper comic strips and comic books that continued with the same aesthetic despite changes in artists. There was a time in comic books’ production in which consistent style was very highly valued, not only in terms of the “house style,” but also in terms of following exemplars.¹¹⁶ This is, again, not to say that xerographic consistency was a goal in Harley 603 or in some of the later visual narratives governed or heavily influenced by a preexisting style. The Harley artists and artist-scribes worked in anonymity from an exemplar manuscript, but they still added discernible aesthetic and narrative flourishes to their parts of the psalter, especially Artist F.

Sometimes conceived of as a *copy*¹¹⁷ of the Utrecht Psalter, Harley 603’s art diverges significantly from its exemplar in particular details, but strongly adheres in most of its construction and execution. Unlike the previous manuscripts examined here, the Harley Psalter is in Latin and it had an exemplar, the Utrecht Psalter, on which scholarly

¹¹⁵ William Noel, *The Harley Psalter*, 6.

¹¹⁶ Johnny Craig, Frank Frazetta, and Jack Kamen illustrated various EC Comics titles and became exemplars for the company and other comics artists even though EC avoided pushing a “house style” on its artists. Jack Kirby’s work on early Marvel titles, such as *The Fantastic Four*, constitutes an exemplar that later artists working on the series strove to maintain.

¹¹⁷ Noel elaborates on the inadequacy of the word copy, asserting that some quires of the manuscript are faithful reproductions of Utrecht with different stylistic flourishes while others seem to be quite different, *The Harley Psalter*, 6-9. Gameson remarks, “In attention to pictorial content and layout much of their work is more aptly described as a facsimile than a copy; however, they had to modernize the ninth-century drawings and all but one of them substituted the coloured-line technique that was currently fashionable at Christ Church, Canterbury, for the monochrome of the model,” *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church*, 12-13. Furthermore, as I note above, the modern binary between production and reproduction is inadequate for my purposes. The Harley Psalter can be understood as both.

consensus agrees. I maintain that it still shares a significant popular impulse with its peers in the vernacular because of its status as a psalter—a very common genre and form,¹¹⁸ which typically “underwent very hard use,”¹¹⁹ as opposed to a vernacular translation of the Hexateuch or a vernacular poetic biblical paraphrase—and one in the *lingua franca* at that. I find two major commonplaces about the Harley Psalter to be very problematic: one, that it is, strictly conceived, an elite cultural production, and two, that its images are wholly nonnarrative, that the pictures serve to decorate, repeat, or complicate content that could only be intelligible to a Latin-literate readership. The psalter was central to medieval Christian society as an object of practice, story, and embodied ritual. It was popular; many knew the content of the psalter even if they were literate only in the vernacular or not verbally literate. The Harley Psalter itself most likely did not have an audience outside of a monastic context; however, it still constitutes a popular production because the illustrators took a prominent role in interpreting and rendering the psalms. Also, the centrality of the psalter to monastic, secular clerical, and lay life casts the work itself as useful to a portion of the public. Rosemary Muir Wright describes psalter illustration as “responsive to the needs of the reader,” especially because “the psalter served a dual purpose, as a prayer book and as a primer for learning letters.”¹²⁰ Since the Harley Psalter was never completed and probably remained in the scriptorium of the monastery that produced it until the dissolution of the monasteries, it remains a somewhat

¹¹⁸ Adding to the evidence for classing psalters as popular productions, M. J. Toswell asserts that “Psalters almost certainly constitute the single most populous collection of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, both among those surviving and probably among those lost to the constant use they endured in the early medieval period (as evidenced by the number of psalter fragments extant) and to later depredations,” *The Anglo-Saxon Psalter* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2014), 33.

¹¹⁹ Toswell, *The Anglo-Saxon Psalter*, 21.

¹²⁰ Rosemary Muir Wright, “Introduction to the Psalter,” in Rosemary Wright and Brendan Cassidy, eds., *Studies in the Illustration of the Psalter* (Stamford, UK: Shaun Tyas, 2000), 1-12.

conceptual though not purposeless work. As Olson comments, “the intended reader can be no more than a phantom, since he or she never received it. We have, therefore, to deal with at least two sets of hypothetical expectations: those of the writers and illustrators for the intended reader, and those of the actual readers.”¹²¹ In other words, the discernible implied intention of its creators matters here more than proving exactly who the audience was. The artists and scribes intended certain uses—prayer, devotion, meditation, learning to interpret text and images, learning Latin—and audience, but because it remained incomplete, it did not become a cultural object of a particular class, hermetically sealed off from other users.

A significant swath of the public, including monastic, secular clerical, and lay persons, used psalters in a variety of ways. M. J. Toswell puts it quite succinctly: “Overlapping uses were common, whether originally intended by the compiler or not.”¹²² Regarding post-Benedictine-Reform monastic identity, Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe writes, “In the most general sense, such an identity is textual in that its corporate performance is driven and judged by a written Rule (a portion of which was recited daily), centred on the voicing of sacred texts in the round of monastic liturgies and on the reading and hearing of scripture and religious writings.”¹²³ This self-conception is the identity of those who made and many of those who could have used the Harley Psalter, and O’Brien O’Keeffe’s definition of a textual identity, which builds a textual community, ties itself to acts of interpretation at a variety of levels and stages, depending upon the education and experience of the reader or listener. Noel reminds us that a

¹²¹ Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, 69.

¹²² Toswell, *The Anglo-Saxon Psalter*, 3.

¹²³ Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe, *Stealing Obedience: Narratives of Agency and Identity in Later Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 97.

community made and consumed the manuscript, writing that “We should understand the Harley Psalter as being read by, as well as designed by, members of the Christ Church community who knew the Psalms well. [...] We have evidence that they [the illustrations] were studied for over a hundred years. The monks might not have feasted on the illustrative subtleties of Utrecht and Harley in private, but they did in the scriptorium.”¹²⁴ Communal design and communal use form the textual identity here, and the images are inseparable from that. Most importantly, though composed in Latin and ultimately unfinished, this book comprises another collectively-produced, effectively popular work with images that generate story. Furthermore, hearkening back to the idea of intent versus effect, the illustrations serve the complex yet not altogether opacity-making function of narrativizing a popular devotional practice for a reading public.

Despite Harley 603’s general lack of explicitly rendered panels and frames, the tricolonnar format of the text and particular elements in the images, such as the drawing of trees, the ground, and small architectural structures, govern the illustrations in a fashion similar to the panels,¹²⁵ creating elements of arthrology through landscape. In addition to the above framing devices, the Harley Psalter contains a regular pattern of ruling in which the space for images was left unrulid. Noel explains the significance of the ruling in text-only areas:

¹²⁴ Noel, *The Harley Psalter*, 196.

¹²⁵ See Clemons and Dodwell, *The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch*, 70-3; Gameson, *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church*, 8-20; Withers, *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch*, 23, 63-7; Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, 43-6, 63; Pächt, *The Rise of Pictorial Narrative in the Twelfth Century*, 9-11 on the relationships in imagery, style, and visual devices among the Bayeux Tapestry, the illustrated *Psychomachia* manuscripts, and the manuscripts examined in this chapter.

[T]he ruling goes out of its way not to intrude upon the illustration area. There are parallels for this procedure. The same phenomenon of ruling on both sides of the folio, with care taken to avoid the illustration space is seen in the eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon Prudentius manuscripts [...]. Another remarkable parallel is found in the Old English illustrated Hexateuch [...]. Clemoes noted that the ruling in this manuscript avoids the illustration spaces, and that ruling was executed on both sides of the folio. Since it was not an aesthetic requirement that illustrated folios should be left unruled, since ruled folios did not present problems for the artists, and since this phenomenon occurs in a group of manuscripts with very complex relationships between text and image, it would seem to be the case that the ruling of these manuscripts was an integral part of their planning, and their complex formats were, in large part, marked out before anything was drawn.¹²⁶ The highly-planned page layout not only corroborates the integral nature of the images within the manuscript, but also forecasts the areas of later visual narratives marked out for images and text boxes or captions. Five of the manuscripts' quires, those most likely planned and ruled by the artists and artist-scribes, strictly adhere to a careful ruling scheme accommodating to the illustration program.¹²⁷ Conversely, the quires most likely planned and ruled by the scribes occasionally show areas in which the artists drew outside of the planned illustration areas because of inadequate ruling.¹²⁸ These invisible panels are vital to the coherence of the manuscript.

¹²⁶ Noel, *The Harley Psalter*, 29.

¹²⁷ Noel, *The Harley Psalter*, 28-38, 42-52, 59-68, 73-75.

¹²⁸ Noel, *The Harley Psalter*, 76-79, 85, 88, 94-100, 120.

Scholars contend that the manuscript's images are nonnarrative,¹²⁹ emphasizing visual syntax, schemata, and abstraction over a system of sequential emplotment. Gameson typifies the images in Harley 603 as "literal illustrations" and graphic translations of "poetic, non-narrative text into an elaborate series of literal word illustrations."¹³⁰ This may be a semantic argument; however, part of the plasticity of visual narratives is the ability to induce the viewer to both follow and make an orderly account of the images and their significance, typically in sequence and often, though not always, in relation to text. The relatively clear visual narrative techniques in the vernacular works examined above also appear in the Harley Psalter, but in a different guise. Unlike the dramatic renderings of Old Testament stories and paraphrases in the Hexateuch and Junius 11, which map on to a protocomics model so neatly, the psalter lacks obvious blendings of the cyclical and the episodic. This is not to say that the illustrations entirely lack discernible emplotment, but rather that the illustrations engage more so in a subtle metonymizing of their textual counterpart. This particular set of relationships among text and image establishes contiguity with a verbal text that presents concepts and maxims rather than, like the Hexateuch and Junius 11, stories of particular events and people. Harley's drawings still present an intelligible narrative; that is, the images impel the viewer or reader, through means of visual narrative and symbolism, to understand the meaning-making at work. There can be no *institutionally sanctioned* understanding of the psalms' images without a knowledge of the Latin text. Yet, the

¹²⁹ See Noel, "Medieval Charades and the Visual Syntax of the Harley Psalter," in Wright and Cassidy, eds., *Studies in the Illustration of the Psalter*, 34-6; Noel, *The Harley Psalter*, 168-69; Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, 74; Gameson, *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church*, 49.

¹³⁰ Gameson, *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church*, 48.

sense of emplotment that the drawings show, even if these images depend more heavily upon their accompanying text (understood aurally or graphically) in order to create meaning, suggests that a novice could interpret them relatively clearly, especially if that person was singing and/or hearing the psalms. Noel claims that unless readers were already versed in the psalms, they could not fully understand the images in Harley or its exemplar: “As we have seen, the images could be interpreted without a knowledge of the text, but only if the text is known already can they become visual interpretations of the words and phrases of the text itself in the eyes of the viewer.”¹³¹ In other words, unless people already possessed knowledge of the text in front of them, they could not understand the images as a graphic embodiment of the verbal text. When thinking of a regularized, codified Benedictine monastic interpretation, that statement is true, but it also reveals that the human mechanism of narrative-making to understand something¹³² remains at work. This is in large part because of the way that the images compel the viewer to move around the page and respond. Ocular inducement combines with a process of metonymic relation-building, in which the graphic element communicates both on its own and in relation to the text, and joins with the audience’s participation to make narrative. If taken in combination with a viewer’s knowledge gleaned from song or aural participation in the psalter, a viewer could interpret the drawings without being adept in the verbal component. Though the images in Harley 603 tend to be somewhat more conceptual than the images in Claudius B. iv or Junius 11, they still make meaning through a process that is ultimately narrative.

¹³¹ Noel, *The Harley Psalter*, 196.

¹³² See the sections on John D. Niles, *Homo Narrans*, in the introduction.

A Study of Key Psalms

Preceding Psalm 1, fol. 1v contains a full-page drawing encased in a large frame.¹³³ The illustration consists of a four-part visual scheme in which the top left and right quadrants contain two architectural structures opposed to each other in design, placement, and contents. They are also visually linked by their compositional balance and the two figures in between them who could be the Psalmist and a female figure,¹³⁴ as the figure on the right holds a book, though their identity is uncertain. Both figures gesture as if contemplating the men within the buildings. At left, a studious man sits under a domed building, contemplating an open book with an angel at his back; he is most likely the blessed man of the first Psalm. At right, a man sits in a decorated throne, which van der Hoerst, identifying iconography in the Utrecht Psalter, calls the “chair of pestilence,” a direct translation of the Psalm’s text “*cathedra pestilentiae*.”¹³⁵ He is flanked by soldiers and a figure with snakes for hair and ragged clothing, which Olson calls “retainers and a demon.”¹³⁶ Already we see a narrative scene, though one more concerned with concept than a human sense of orderly time. The two men in the center observe the *beatus vir* and the *impii*, and in the bottom two quadrants of the page, the reader sees the results of the two different men’s behavior and a manifestation of the Psalm’s words. On the lower left part of the page, the artist depicts the blessed man sitting by a blue river and a blossoming fruit tree, connoting abundance and prosperity as just reward. At the lower right, a gestural green line encloses the next scene in which demons force the violent and wicked

¹³³See image appendix, figure 16.

¹³⁴ Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, 78; Koert van der Hoerst et al., *The Utrecht Psalter in Medieval Art* (London: Harvey Miller, 1996), 56-7. The veiled figure also recalls the veiled figure of Sapientia in the illustrated *Psychomachia* manuscripts.

¹³⁵ van der Hoerst et al., *The Utrecht Psalter in Medieval Art*, 57.

¹³⁶ Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, 78.

into hell and a giant hungry monster's mouth. Olson analyzes the artist's use of directional force: "The line formed by the course of the river and the downward movement of the wicked creates a strong pull towards the pit. The tree with its narrowing trunk and crown of leaves counters this force, creating an upward pull. [...] Hell is outside these boundaries but within the outer frame, which bounds a larger spiritual area. Only two levels, this world and Hell, are represented in this illustration, emphasizing the duality of the psalm."¹³⁷ Duality certainly permeates the composition, but the image of hell also disrupts the orderly unity of the frame, breaking its inner edge and violating the enclosure of the story. It appears aesthetically as well as spiritually threatening.

The drawing showcases a complex system of tropes in even the smallest of its details, such as the style of the wicked man's chair and the fruitfulness of the tree,¹³⁸ yet in unravelling these symbols, it is easy to lose sight of the clearly sequential nature of the composition and its use of restricted orthology. The bottom half follows left-to-right reading order and visually links the top two figures with the bottom two results. Both the tree and green line serve as panel divisions between the blessed man's reward and the wicked man's punishment; the river serves as both a directional force, an extra detail to induce the eye toward the corner, and as another boundary splitting the virtuous from the reprehensible. The top half of the drawing functions like a splash page or splash panel in a comic— it contains a moment rather than a progression, but it links said moment to a progression and emphasizes the importance of its contents because of its size and visual dominance on the page. In this case, it emphasizes the binary being drawn between the

¹³⁷ Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, 79.

¹³⁸ Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, 80-1.

two men and, conceptually, the importance of understanding that binary, as illuminated by the two observers and the rest of the images below them. Though the spatiotemporal scheme in Harley, which Olson calls “cosmic,”¹³⁹ differs from its more obliquely linear counterparts, the viewer enters into this scheme through participating in the visual components of the psalter.¹⁴⁰

The illustration for Psalm 13 on fol. 7v,¹⁴¹ depicts the destructive forces at work against “insipiens,” the fool who lacks faith, and the ensuing violence and disorder that befall the unfaithful. This approximately half-page image also depicts the Psalmist staring up at God,¹⁴² enthroned within a mandorla and flanked at either side by a company of angels. To the right of the destruction around and below the fool, soldiers charge toward a group of people looking up toward a single figure on a hill, who appears to be the fool, spreading doubt and iniquity to the chaotic mob below. Artist A, who was responsible for the illustrations in the first quire,¹⁴³ brings frenetic energy to the composition and embellishes upon the levels of violence and corruption found in the exemplar’s illustration of the same psalm. Below the domed structure where the fool sits, two men attempt to saw a woman apart.¹⁴⁴ Further emphasizing the psalm’s warning, “A far more insidious and complex relationship is struck up between the snakes and *insipiens* in Harley. One is polluting his mind by whispering into his ear, and the other is polluting his

¹³⁹ Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, 83,85.

¹⁴⁰ See Groensteen’s comments quoted above on pp. 38-39 about the manner in which the reader navigates the sum of a graphic narrative through its parts. This navigation happens microcosmically in Harley, as each illustration appears before its corresponding psalm and the psalms generally lack an events-based focus.

¹⁴¹ See image appendix, figure 17.

¹⁴² Noel, *The Harley Psalter*, 56.

¹⁴³ Noel, *The Harley Psalter*, 18.

¹⁴⁴ Noel, *The Harley Psalter*, 53.

sight by staring into his eyes.”¹⁴⁵ The prolonged eye contact and the serpentine form represent danger, specifically the danger of devilish influence.¹⁴⁶ Like Psalm 1’s illustration, this picture manifests specific words and phrases from the verbal text while creating a sense of narrative within the image itself. Again, this is not an episodic tale, but rather, a compressed sequence divided by two primary forces: a sketchy brown line encloses the fool and the ensuing violence underneath him, creating separation, while the movement of the violent towards the repeated figure of the fool shows a change in scene. The Psalmist and the divine figures lend a still point in the composition, observing and governing the surrounding events.

The illustration to Psalm 37, fol. 22r,¹⁴⁷ provides evidence of popular and perhaps vernacular visual tropes at work, as well as artist B’s subtle but noticeable interpretation and revision of the Utrecht Psalter’s depiction of Psalm 37. Karen Jolly indicates that though the demons do not appear in the text of Psalm 37, their visual appearance showcases non-Latin cultural elements and represent the acculturation process at work during and after Christian conversion.¹⁴⁸ The text and image of the psalm indicate that the Psalmist receives visceral punishment in the form of ill health, arrows shot by God, and a group of small demons accosting the Psalmist. In Harley, the demons hold open the Psalmist’s sack, pouring something from their own to add to his burden. As William Noel

¹⁴⁵ Noel, *The Harley Psalter*, 56.

¹⁴⁶ See Noel’s assessment of Junius 11’s treatment of similar imagery, *The Harley Psalter*, 56. Biernoff’s *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* elaborates upon the ocular gaze as a threatening transmitter and receiver.

¹⁴⁷ See image appendix, figure 18.

¹⁴⁸ Karen Jolly, “Elves in the Psalms? The Experience of Evil from a Cosmic Perspective,” in Alberto Ferreiro, ed., *The Devil, Heresy, and Witchcraft in The Middle Ages: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey B. Russell* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 20-1. Jolly focuses mostly on the Eadwine Psalter, but she groups the Utrecht, Harley, Eadwine, and Paris Psalters in a sort of manuscript family. Her comments corroborate the idea of a kind of visual vernacular at work; that is, a non-Roman/non-Latin set of visual tropes are folded into the Latin Christian tradition.

points out, proximity is not the only connection that artist B makes between the demons and the Psalmist: “Furthermore, unlike Utrecht, the Harley Psalmist himself is coloured in the same brown wash, with details of his veins showing, while every other figure that artist B drew is in outline only. It seems here that the illustrator was quite deliberately making a visual connection between the skin of the Psalmist and the demons engaged in stacking the sack carried on his back. The Psalmist is unhealthy because of God’s wrath, and his skin is likened to that of the personification of his sins, which inspired that wrath. The image is thus literal and more appropriate in its reflexive reference than that of Utrecht itself, which merely shows the Psalmist with sores.”¹⁴⁹ The visual equation of the Psalmist’s skin with the demons’ skin provides a readable outward sign of an inward, spiritual condition, and a causal link between the Psalmist’s actions and his affliction.¹⁵⁰ This subtle visual difference demonstrates a detectable interpretation of Psalm 37 and a set of events that show emplotment. In Noel’s identification of the image as literal and reflexive, he also implies, despite his commitment to the idea that Harley is nonnarrative, a kind of narrative activity at work. The image directs the viewer to connect the skin of the Psalmist and the demons, and to connect the arrows in the Psalmist’s body with the bow and arrow in Christ’s hands. His hand extended up and out and his eyes lifted in Christ’s direction, the Psalmist petitions for assistance textually and gesturally. Also, there are two groups on either side set against the Psalmist, *amici mei et proximi mei*, the

¹⁴⁹ William Noel, *The Harley Psalter*, 38-9.

¹⁵⁰ Karen Jolly views the small creatures besieging the Psalmist as “vaguely angelic” in the Utrecht Psalter and the Harley Psalter, but demonic and “with perhaps elfin characteristics” in the later Eadwine Psalter and Paris Psalter, 38. She attributes these differences to the illustrators interpreting and depicting different sections of Psalm 37, as well as the influence of the *Glossa Ordinaria* on the Eadwine and Paris Psalters, 37-41. She reads Eadwine as the standout psalter, but her comments on all four psalters demonstrate that the way each psalter’s particular artist illustrated Psalm 37 shows a particular interpretation of the interaction between the Psalmist and the demons and a focus on certain lines in the psalm.

Psalmist's friends and neighbors. Artist F highlights the Psalmist's isolation by using the landscape—the friends to the left are clustered in a group and separated by a line representing the edge of a hill or rock. The neighbors to the right, carrying weapons and looking to one another, appear in front of a walled building as if they are moving away from their homes and towards the isolated, outcast Psalmist. All of the figures' postures and the page layout take us through the position and status of the Psalmist, the conflict among the Psalmist and his friends and neighbors, and the controlling presence of the deity presiding over the composition.

Artist F's depiction of Psalm 37 does not showcase linear emplotment as obviously as the Hexateuch artist's depiction of Noah building and sailing the ark or the Junius artist's depiction of the temptation in and expulsion from the Garden of Eden. I would argue, though, that the picture remains narrative because of the specific meaning-making tools available to pictorial narrative. Like other compositions in the Harley Psalter, and indeed in other protocomics examined here, the visualization of space and time allows us to understand that a set of events have happened in order to bring the Psalmist to his current state. The psalter itself operates on an overtly different temporal scheme than the Hexateuch and Junius 11, emphasizing simultaneity, or as Olson puts it, "a timelessness which is inclusive for the reader's present."¹⁵¹ This timelessness, however, exists because of the paradoxically simultaneous weaving together and splitting apart unique to visual narratives; the same techniques occur in the peer manuscripts I have chosen, though they may emphasize different understandings of historical or allegorical time. Olson's identification of a timeless, multi-level cosmic structure in the

¹⁵¹ Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, 74.

Harley Psalter, as “focalized”¹⁵² through the reader’s or listener’s identification with the Psalmist’s narrative voice, creates an intelligible narrative, though perhaps one more concerned with the conceptual. The viewer, reader, or listener experiences a first- and third-person perspective throughout the psalms. Time does not receive a serial spatial treatment here, yet the illustration accompanying Psalm 37, as one example among many, does indicate a set of events.

The Psalmist occupies the center of the composition, cordoned off from other groups, and his gestures and posture indicate suffering. In this case, there is a cause-and-effect relationship implied through shared aesthetic qualities; minor repeated details within color washes on skin, the use of landscape, the frequently appearing building, and the weapons create a coherent image rather than a wholly conceptual or syntactic illustration. The relationship between the images in the Harley Psalter, particularly Psalm 37, and the viewer’s process of interpretation may be better understood as a metonymic relationship in which the Psalmist acts as both a character or guide and a stand-in for the worshipper hearing, singing, or meditating upon the psalms. Contiguous connections, those that focus on proximity and connection and linking what is distant or substituted, direct the viewer to make inferences about the diegetic space, and compress multiple functions into a single picture.¹⁵³ In Psalm 37, we observe a relationship of cause and

¹⁵² Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, 74.

¹⁵³ Olson reads synecdoche at work in Psalm 113, which depicts the exodus. She claims that it has narrative content, but that “the purpose of this narrative is not to tell a story, but to express a state of being. Because of the events of the exodus, those who believe themselves to be God’s people are able to live in a state of trust. Therefore, the illustrated event becomes, as in Mieke Bal’s example of Rembrandt’s etchings illustrating the book of Tobias, a synecdoche for a whole series of events (*Reading Rembrandt*, 70, 81). The reader is invited to participate in the event itself, not as a series of actions, but as a state of being delivered from troubles,” *Fair and Varied Forms*, 82-3. I class all of this as narrative, and see the myriad ways in which the illustrations operate as compressing these functions. This may be splitting hairs, but expression of the state of being *is* telling a story. Olson’s inclusion of metonymy and synecdoche alongside metaphor as consistent tropes in the verbal and visual components of the Harley Psalter indicates that discerning

effect not only in terms of correct worship and behavior, but also in terms of the relationship between the audience and the Psalmist, or the Psalmist's condition and voice. More generally, these connections demonstrate the qualities inherent in comics and graphic narratives that render time and space with plasticity and create an immersive story environment that simultaneously remains distant from the reader.

Conclusion

The Harley Psalter, Junius 11, and the Illustrated Old English Hexateuch share significant qualities among each other and later examples of graphic narratives, enough to be termed protocomics. They comprise a set of clear but complex, though not exhaustive, exemplars for the patterns of making and use that persist and inform later visual narratives. As a devotional text, a poetic biblical paraphrase, and a vernacular translation of the first six books of the Old Testament, respectively, these works do not necessarily make obvious candidates to be called protocomics. Viewed in a certain light, the primary texts examined in this chapter are certainly institutional, didactic, religious, and relatively singular. In calling these works protocomics, I am not attempting to dilute or ignore their probable original uses or contemporary contexts of creation, but rather to shed another light on the old, well-established ground these manuscripts occupy. By examining these three medieval manuscripts as protocomics, their collectively-produced, popular, multi-purpose, and self-consciously rendered nature emerges clearly. Their true ubiquity emerges from placement in a matrix of sorts. At first glance they are rare, aberrant, special prestige objects—yet keeping them stuck in a vacuum of accrued and imagined

information through a process of narrative is vital to understanding the pictorial program and the devotional content.

cultural capital can obscure their implied and detectable functionality both in their contemporary context and in the present. Situating these works, their peers, and later iterations of visual narratives into a larger matrix of making and function resists flattening and fixity, yet acknowledges the specificity of the works' social and material constraints. If one applies a new and "varied mode of looking" to these medieval productions, it is possible to trace their influences upon and breaks with graphic narratives made through different mechanical and technological means. Literary studies presents a series of obscuring gestures in which logocentric narrative and immaterial content (the conceptual rather than the perceptual, the meaning abstracted rather than the inducement or the affordance) are frequently rent from vital contexts of making and effect. I have read these works in terms of their visual narrative content in order to recover missing pieces in the manuscripts' lives not only in terms of labor and use, but also in terms of the larger historiography and archaeology of codex-ruled narrative.

Chapter Two

Continuity and Rupture in Bible Picture Books, the *Biblia Pauperum*, and the Transition to Typographic Print

Part One: Media shifts

As manuscript technologies developed and labor expanded out of the monastic scriptoria, demands for manuscript production grew. This is not to say that monastic scriptoria no longer produced manuscripts; they continued to do so until the dissolution of the monasteries, and friars continued to do so afterwards. Rather, a population of professional, specialized laborers working outside of monasteries increased, which produced manuscripts both in competition against and in cooperation with monastic and student labor. Verbal literacy and private book ownership grew alongside expansion in the mercantile class, sometimes understood as a rising bourgeoisie, and the rapid proliferation of a wide variety of books and images, in both manuscript and print form, occurred concurrently. The growth of print was slower in England than in much of continental Europe, so the coexistence of ongoing manuscript and print culture there bears particular examination.¹ Often the transition from late manuscript to early print

¹ See Alexandra Walsham and Julia Crick, "Introduction: Script, Print, and History," in *The Uses of Script and Print 1300-1700*, ed. Alexandra Walsham and Julia Crick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 5-7. Walsham and Crick point out that professional scribes, clergy members, and students all participated in the growing production of books, which was concurrent with the establishment and growth of universities and increases in private book ownership. They also demonstrate the falsity of the once strongly-held scholarly commonplace that print led to sweeping, immediate changes throughout Europe in a fairly regular and consistent fashion: "Compared with the highly decentralized culture of print which was the pattern in most Continental countries, its English counterpart was overwhelmingly concentrated in London with minor offshoots in the university towns of Oxford and Cambridge. [...] Traffic in printed materials, by contrast with scribal products, thus travelled largely in one direction: from the capital outwards. [...] More significantly for the preoccupations of this volume, they [legal and financial barriers to establishing printheuses] also helped to ensure that manuscript retained its vitality as a medium of communication long after the arrival of print" (5-7). Walsham and Crick's work is wholly logocentric, that

gets characterized, as with any significant material/technological shift, as a new media world severing ties to its older, less efficient media predecessor. This view is of course anachronistic, and the result of an imposed linear narrative of teleological progress.² Such a view underestimates the persistence of manuscript production, both in creating new works and in reproducing already existent works.³ Anachronistically applied long after the creation and establishment of print technology, this narrative obscures the continuity of visual narratives from manuscript to print. Visual narrative continues in print; it does not emerge from print. Those who maintain a view that erases the continuity of manuscript production and hybrid manuscript-print works often conflate the emergence of print with a sort of immaculate modern birth of mass media. Not only does the teleological progress framework misrepresent the manner in which newer print technology maintained physical/material aspects of manuscript technology, but it also hides similar labor practices. This model erases the ways in which narrative images, page

is, concerned with the production, reproduction, and transmission of writing. I maintain that their work remains applicable and valuable here because it shows patterns that were probably at work with any accompanying illustrations and the books that contained them. Their analysis asserts the mixture of continuity and innovation that we must acknowledge to have an accurate view of the period of transition in technologies of production and reproduction.

² Marshal McLuhan, for example, characterizes the emergence of the Gutenberg press as the era in which “Europe enters the technological phase of progress, when change itself becomes the archetypal norm of social life,” 155. McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962).

³ In *Divine Art, Infernal Machine: The Reception of Printing in the West from First Impressions to the Sense of an Ending* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), Elizabeth Eisenstein qualifies what many commentators have cast as a point of hard historical rupture characterized by a false binary: “Division of opinion over the invention [of printing] often gets concocted, seemingly out of thin air, with ‘triumphalist’ accounts set against imaginary ‘catastrophist’ ones. Of course, opinions were likely to vary depending on the position of those who expressed them. Churchmen, scholars, and book hunters were unlikely to share the same outlook as professional scribes and illuminators. The latter groups are often thought to be opponents of the new art on the mistaken assumption that printing deprived them of their livelihood. But, on the contrary, they were kept busier than ever. The demand for deluxe hand-copied books persisted, and the earliest printed books were hybrid products that called for scribes and illuminators to provide the necessary finishing touches,” 6. Eisenstein rightly demonstrates the continuity of manuscript production and professional scribal and illustration work; however, her account neglects to mention that it was not just deluxe books that accounted for said continuity, especially in England (see note 1 above).

layout, and aesthetic choices recur or self-replicate, according to the theory of recursion, while paradoxically seeming to innovate simultaneously.

William Kuskin articulates this specific transition from manuscript to print in terms of recursion,⁴ identifying the proposed transition to modernity and a mass medium as in fact simply another forward push on an arc of an already-established feedback loop. Kuskin's concept of recursion builds a useful model to problematize hard periodization and purist strains in codicology and media studies that present narrowly taxonomical ways of thinking. Yet at the same time, adhering too closely to a model of recursion, that is, one that depends upon and builds out from an originary point of self-reference, presents its own set of problems when considering the difficult, arbitrary nature of establishing an origin point and accounting for sites of rupture. Origins as such do not determine the ubiquity of visual narrative; rather, their persistence does, thus rendering the question of origin unimportant to this dissertation if not totally arbitrary. Thus, in some ways, a theory of recursion productively accounts for repeated physical, visual, and verbal elements within all literary production from manuscript to digital displays and e-readers. Kuskin addresses this issue as follows: "If we acknowledge that there are no absolute moments of origin, and that novelty ultimately finds its origins as a self-referential part of some larger sequence, then literary modernity cannot be premised on a historical break so much as local textual encounters in which the past is reasserted and made in the present."⁵ This account weakens the notion of printing as an unequivocal sign of modernity and effectively opposes the equation of visual narrative in print with a

⁴ See Chapter One, note 7 for Kuskin's definition of recursion and subsequent implications for textual production.

⁵ Kuskin, *Recursive Origins*, 48.

definitive origin of visual narrative, including the protocomic. Kuskin's account does not, however, treat moments of rupture as dislocations or true breaks. Instead of locating fissures from past methods of narrative production, Kuskin identifies "larger spirals of meaning that are productive rather than returning on themselves in closure."⁶ Recursion, as applied here, casts significant changes as a reworking of already embedded qualities in an assemblage that grows concentrically outward, metaphorically speaking. Though focused largely on verbal texts, this model of recursion relies upon the same physical and formal materiality of the book and the page that inform my study. Consequently, the paradigm of recursion illuminates the continuity and relatively consistent nature of page design and elements of graphic storytelling that make it a typical mode across media and time.

Recursion and its problem of originary self-reference cannot account for what is new, or what new growths arise incidentally. This requires another model—via evolutionary biology and architecture—that may clarify matters and at least circumvent if not eliminate the problem of an origin point. In "The Spandrels of San Marco and the Panglossian Paradigm: A Critique of the Adaptationist Programme," evolutionary biologists Stephen Jay Gould and Richard C. Lewontin borrow the term "spandrel" from architecture to explain that species' currently useful traits do not necessarily explain their origin. They advocate for a view of the whole organism comprised of interconnected traits, rather than a view of traits as a disembodied set of adaptations cut away from their relationship to other traits within the organism and its environment. Gould and Lewontin examine the physical spandrels in the basilica of San Marco in Venice and the evangelist

⁶ Kuskin, *Recursive Origins*, 48.

portraits upon them, remarking, “Spandrels—the tapering triangular spaces formed by the intersection of two rounded arches at right angles—are necessary architectural by-products of mounting a dome on rounded arches.”⁷ In other words, the spandrel is a functional outgrowth of necessary traits that can support a variety of uses; however, neither the spandrels nor the art on their surfaces are the primary reason for the design. The design forces the spandrel into existence; the spandrel arises from the physical constraints of the design. The evangelist portraits on the spandrels in the basilica of San Marco appear to be such a seamless and integral part of the design that an observer may, erroneously, take the mosaic portraits to be the catalyst for the whole construction—the cause of the trait—rather than the other way around.

In the history of the book, and more specifically, the theory of codex-based visual narrative as a broadly ubiquitous collective method of storytelling, we can use the concept of the spandrel to identify remnants of manuscript-making that may be natural by-products used to great effect. For example, page layout based upon manuscript ruling and gridding practices and visual choices based upon inducement persist into xylographic and xerographic printing. The persistence does not occur, or at least does not occur solely, because of highly particular, isolated design elements; rather, the whole construction of the pages individually and as a unit necessitates those particularities.⁸ Simultaneously, the advocacy for a view of an organism as an assemblage, a variety of

⁷ S. J. Gould and R. W. Lewontin, “The Spandrels of San Marco and the Panglossian Paradigm: A Critique of the Adaptationist Programme,” *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London, Series B: Biological Sciences*, 205, no. 1161 (1979): 581.

⁸ Spandrel-logic recalls some of Thierry Groensteen’s assertions about the paradoxically individuated but simultaneous traits of visual narrative in tressage and breakdown, and general and restricted arthrology. See *The System of Comics*, vii-ix, 21-3, 103-43, 145-49. The spandrel as a concept here deepens and more subtly shades a theory of the inextricably linked traits of visual narrative. It accounts for functional continuity without misapprehending the causes of said continuity.

characteristics in an integrated whole, avoids erasing elements that may better be understood as recursive qualities. Approximately two decades after “The Spandrels of San Marco,” Gould revisits and complicates the analogy, placing it in a larger context of intellectual inquiry: “Spandrelists, in strong contrast [to biologists who follow strict adaptationist modes of thought], generally share the evolutionary biologist’s traditional fascination for contingent details of history in individual lineages under study. [...] And even though the spandrels of San Marco must be built once the architects decide to mount hemispherical domes on four adjacently orthogonal rounded arches, we can only understand the basic blueprint that necessarily engendered the spandrels by studying the particular history of ecclesiastical architecture.”⁹ Gould illuminates the need to understand the impetus for a trait’s development, evolutionary or otherwise, in relationship to the effect or function of that same trait without collapsing it altogether and taking particular traits out of context. He suggests that one must know both the figure and the ground from which it springs to determine purpose and causality correctly. Gould explains that “the architectural concept stresses the same point of distinction between historical origin and later utility that has proven so troublesome in evolutionary theory,”¹⁰ and this point of distinction is tricky in studies of visual narrative as well. What we may identify as primary structural and formal traits in visual narrative—this issue is especially important when discussing continuity and rupture in print, including much later iterations of contemporary comics and graphic novels—may be exaptive but highly functional, i.e.,

⁹ Stephen Jay Gould, *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard/Belknap, 2002), 1054-55.

¹⁰ Stephen Jay Gould, “The Exaptive Excellence of Spandrels as a Term and Prototype,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, 94 (1997): 107-51. Exaptive as in having the quality of exaptation, which means “a trait, feature, or structure of an organism or taxonomic group that takes on a function when none previously existed or that differs from its original function which had been derived by evolution,” Merriam Webster, “exaptation,” definition 1.

a by-product put to a secondary purpose. This physical trait or aesthetic aspect, such as gridding, ruling, or styles of captions, may be so useful or smoothly integrated that it becomes difficult to see that the inclusion of the trait was a by-product, albeit a necessary one. These traits can be mistakenly identified as the defining characteristic of the form (or organism). For example, some comics scholars exhibit a near obsession with the panel as the most significant signifying unit of space or the gutters as the most important facilitator of narrative pacing and time rather than highly persistent and necessarily useful by-products of the form's structure. While I would never claim that these signifying units are not important, even fundamental, to graphic narratives, there is much more at work. Seeing certain aspects of visual narratives through Gould's spandrel-logic allows observers of protocomics and comics alike to identify functionality without mistaking it for causality.

Recursion demands an originary point without directing us to one; in contrast, the spandrel balances the need to negotiate the whole with its associated parts while leading to logical conclusions about origin through a sort of backwards engineering. Both theories are effective, so it may be much more of a chicken-and-egg question. Self-reference required by the theory of recursion potentially limits its applicability. Seeing through the spandrel has limits as well. Since many formal and aesthetic qualities in graphic narratives are not by-products, but intentional, primary traits, the evolutionary genius of secondary and coincidental functioning developed into persistent traits that seem primary but may not be so. A paradigm that keeps function, making, and reception at the forefront of the examination demands that we see the transition from manuscript to print and the fruitful combination of continuity and innovation through both concepts

without dogmatic adherence to either. We must combine recursion and spandrels to articulate the development of persistent strains in visual narrative; they both fundamentally point to the continued existence and coexistence of past and present *function*. In combining these approaches, we can account for the metonymic nature of codex-based/page-based visual narratives and their tendency to materially and semiotically communicate self-reference without having to identify everything as self-reference. We can identify the dendrites or branches that grow out, and branch *off* of Kuskin's model of expanding outgrowing concentric spirals. For example, the function of the frame and the panel and direction or inducement of reading order may follow spandrel-logic, but the book does also functionally reference itself, materially and formally. The book must be held in a certain way and read in a certain order. That some of the governing tropes here are rhetorical and verbal and that the codex was and is in many ways conceived of as a vehicle for the word may be why logocentrism is so hard to break away from, even when discussing graphic narrative, and why establishment of origin often distracts from use—real and intended—in the life of a narrative, especially a graphic narrative, protocomic or otherwise.

One of the great misconceptions in the history of visual narrative that I wish to disrupt, if not totally lay to rest, is that popular visual narratives emerge *ex nihilo* alongside the invention of typographic printing, and that the ubiquity of visual narrative arises in the era of xerographic reproduction through mechanical or technical means. That typographic printing is a marker of modernity erases the nascent protocomics nature of the manuscripts I examine in the previous chapter and their sometimes less stylized, more aesthetically detailed counterparts here. The continuity of manuscript production

alongside the development and expansion of print also places significant pressure on the idea that printing equals unqualified modernity and a hitherto unseen level of stability and uniformity.¹¹ The mere existence of the xylographic blockbook form itself, especially the examples that combined woodcut images and handwritten script, testifies to this erroneous conception. Furthermore, as print establishes the illusion of a smoother, more consistent completed product, collective production and the laborers' various roles and their aesthetic or interpretive freedom is often placed under erasure. As materials are more widely distributed, there is an identification of "popular" being concurrent with more materials and more consumption, which ties back to the misappellation of "popular" and its identification with novelty, mass production, and Habermasian understandings of a secular public sphere.

¹¹ In his comprehensive study of woodcuts (mostly focused upon single-leaf prints), *The Viewer and the Printed Image in Late Medieval Europe* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010), David S. Areford pushes back against these notions by countering the core assertions of Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Areford writes, "this book can be read in part as another challenge to his pronouncements concerning the 'aura,' but specifically in terms of the beginning of its supposed decline, that is, the very period elided in Benjamin's analysis: the fifteenth century, when the first printed images were introduced in the West. At the center of Benjamin's argument is the compelling suggestion that a radical shift occurred in the meaning of images as the result of new visual technologies. A careful exploration of printmaking's first century proves his argument ultimately to be reductive and anachronistic. [...] Benjamin's definition of the aura is multifaceted. The aura is that which emanates from the 'unique' handcrafted artwork. It is characterized by 'authenticity,' 'permanence,' and 'distance' from the viewer, as well as 'cult value' as a ritual object. These are the very qualities that seem to be disrupted with the advent of the printed image, and thus Benjamin's hypothesis seems reasonable. Because a depiction could now exist in hundreds of copies, circulating simultaneously amongst hundreds of viewers, there *must* have been a significant change in the perception of the image's value, status, meaning, and function," 10. Areford sets up the parts of Benjamin's argument that are the most cited and accepted, only to dismantle them through an analysis of the *Madonna del Fuoco*, a woodcut print that achieved remarkable cult and miraculous status even though there were hundreds of copies. In Areford's assessment of the prints, the "copies" have just as much sacred potency as the "originals," and their existence in fact seems to "extend the power of the original," 12. Areford concludes that the print and its copies carried a variety of purposes, and that they demonstrate that "a copy was seen as no less efficacious or meaningful than an original depiction" (12) even after means of production and reproduction began to change. He applies this analytical framework to incunabula as well, arguing that they have more in common with manuscripts than their later printed offspring. The significant takeaway of all this is that copies can be as powerful as originals, and that it is through a culturally particular lens that high value is accorded through rarity.

It would seem that text-heaviness grows with the ease of mechanically reproducing text, but that is not quite true, as earlier medieval manuscripts such as Claudius B. iv, Junius 11, and the Harley Psalter are relatively text-heavy. Their later manuscript counterparts examined here—the Egerton Genesis, dated to the third quarter of the fourteenth century;¹² the Holkham Bible Picture Book, dated to 1327-1340;¹³ in contrast, contain very little text. The manuscripts and blockbooks, both xylographic and xerographic, of the *Biblia Pauperum* are iconocentric and typically contain relatively little text.¹⁴ This may attest to a loosening of the institutional control that the Church exercised over textual production, and consequently a reduction in interpretive mediation between the user and the work; alternately, it may be a testament to the changing role of narrative in popular culture, the growth of private devotion, literacy, and a different set of acts in consuming and interpreting narrative, religious or otherwise.¹⁵ Perhaps even more

¹² See Mary Coker Joslin and Carolyn Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 1.

¹³ See Michelle P. Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book: A Facsimile* (London: British Library, 2007), 1.

¹⁴ The two *Bibliae Pauperum*, British Library Stowe MS 7, dated to the first half of the fifteenth century, and Additional MS 15705, a manuscript *Biblia Pauperum* with outline drawings dated to the fifteenth century contain very little text. I have excised sections of the main text below dedicated to them, and placed the text in a footnote because images did not arrive in time to expand the sections significantly. Also, outside of the British Library online catalogue records, the printed catalogue of the Stowe Manuscript collection, and a brief mention in a footnote, there appear to be no scholarly mentions of these two manuscripts. See *Catalogue of the Stowe Manuscripts in the British Museum*, Vols. 1 & 2 (Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms, 1973), Reprint of 1895 edition; see also “Detailed Record for Stowe MS 7,” in the British Library online catalogue; see also Alfred William Pollard, “On a Manuscript of the ‘Biblia Pauperum’,” *Bibliographica* 3 (1897), n. 1, 390.

¹⁵ Avril Henry corroborates the notion that medieval people were constantly surrounded by “fine imagery,” and rejects the necessity of didacticism as a requirement for iconocentric culture, but is careful not to fully conflate verbal illiteracy with total ignorance “in a world where it was common to acquire knowledge aurally” (18). Henry does submit that the *Biblia Pauperum* is a set of popular works, but not that they were for just anyone—here I contest her notion of the “comic strip mentality” (18), because comics, while typically very accessible, directed, etc., can require the experience of a comics initiate to sort out the form’s subtleties. Henry maintains that the *Biblia Pauperum* was for “initiates, not infants” (19). In other words, her argument has merit, but, like many that adopt “comic strip” as shorthand for “vulgar or stupid,” Henry seems not to identify the actual similarities among the works she’s comparing, especially when they are in the air of the culture. She asserts that the images in the *Biblia Pauperum* were too complex to have been understood by non-initiates, but submits that the imagery and the very concept of typology would have been quite familiar to the book’s contemporary audiences. In essence, ubiquity becomes the common

so, the relative image-heaviness of these extant works may attest to the prominence and potency of images and graphic storytelling, despite (or because of) cultural attitudes that ranged from extremes of iconoclasm to iconophilia and all positions in between.¹⁶ None of these possibilities necessarily negate or undermine the others; it seems that a rather large variety of factors contributes to the expansion in popular visual narratives from the fourteenth century to the inception and growth of print in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Relative text- or image-heaviness provides less insight into the function of and typical nature of the collectively-produced visual narrative than the actual form and function of the images and their use or detectable intention in their making. But, because

thread among these very different visual narratives (the *Biblia Pauperum* and comics). Reading comics can be easier for “initiates,” so to speak, especially in some of the more complex comic books like *Watchmen* or *Pretty Deadly* in which comics tropes and semiotic conventions are nested inside of one another in both self-referential and metanarrative and metavisual ways.

¹⁶ In “The Mediating Power of Images and Texts: The Dynamics of Sight and Insight in Medieval and Early Modern Literature and Art,” Veerle Fraeters and Jürgen Pieters examine the wide variety of views on images produced between 1150 and 1650: “In contrast to Judaism and Islam, Western Christianity, particularly in pre-Reformation times, as well as in the era of post-Tridentine Catholicism, has always dealt generously with the image and the imagination within sacred space. At the same time, the boundaries of the space that the image was allowed to occupy within the Christian project were continuously called into question and tightly checked. The history of medieval and early modern Christian culture can be seen as a continual oscillation between a paucity of images on the one hand and their proliferation on the other; between what Olivier Boulnois calls ‘la pudeur de l’image,’ and its counterpart, the joyful feeling resulting from the ultimate reward which the rightful use of images held in store. [...] These examples show that the tension between the two poles of the spectrum we just identified defined a number of prominent moments in the historical trajectory of the visual culture of the five centuries that define the chronological scope of the present volume: from heated polemics to actual wars, from the development of new artistic styles to the destruction of artworks that were considered to have transgressed the limits of the paradigm to which they were expected to belong. In times when such tension was low, Western European culture seemed to take a moderate attitude towards images, in which their value was appreciated while at the same time their limits and the dangers they represented were clearly recognized. This moderate iconophilic position formed a fertile breeding ground for an abundant production of images and the development of a variety of ways of interacting with them. However, even at such times, the image as a cultural phenomenon continued to exert its Janus-like force: every reflection on the power of images provoked a potential fear about the dangers inherent in them” (4-5). Fraeters and Pieters, “The Mediating Power of Images and Texts: The Dynamics of Sight and Insight in Medieval and Early Modern Literature and Art,” *Speaking to the Eye: Sight and Insight through Text and Image 1150-1650*, eds., Thérèse de Hemptinne, Veerle Fraeters, and María Eugenia Góngora (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 1-14. The scope that Fraeters and Pieters sketch out negates the exclusion of religious materials for which David Kunzle argues, supports a continuous production of images and graphic narrative across manuscript and print materials, and demonstrates that while rupture occurs within that continuity, images persist among different technologies and cultural mores, or different adaptive strains.

of a pervasive critical/cultural commonplace dominant in literary studies and elsewhere, the idea persists that expanding technologies have, until very recently, resulted in a primacy of verbal arts over visual arts or even the unhelpful splitting in the first place. The association of written language with progress, and pictorial or aural expression with the primitive or rudimentary is, of course, an unstable construction and an untenable position.

Changes in book production, in the structure of the church, and, more generally, in trade and economics, gave rise to greater need for inexpensive devotional and other reading materials. These materials were not limited to didactic or worship practice, but could also have constituted a form of entertainment, even among some of the religiously-themed examples. The *Bibliae Pauperum* enjoyed very wide circulation, and, though they were a complex typological book, people used them regularly, much like the psalter. The Holkham Bible Picture Book and the Egerton Genesis are unique, but in a similar way to primary texts discussed in the last chapter; that is, they are unique in their survival and perhaps in their aesthetic, but not necessarily in their semiotic techniques, narrative expression, and overarching design. The Egerton Genesis and the Holkham Bible Picture Book each demonstrate a distinct aesthetic—Holkham’s artist uses delicate lines and sumptuous details in the texture and color of clothing and backgrounds, while Egerton’s artist employs squat, rounded faces and bodies, which contribute to the manuscript’s overall cartoonish, at times farcical qualities. Non-devotional materials also grew in number and variety; for example, the Egerton Genesis is burlesque enough in content that it was unlikely to be a devotional book strictly conceived, and may be an early “funny book,” that is, a graphic narrative of social and religious satire.

The Holkham Bible Picture Book and the Egerton Genesis provide strong examples of popular visual narrative. Holkham's purpose cannot be immediately apprehended, but its effect ranges in functioning as a sort of devotional work and as an entertaining, richly illustrated narrative. This bible picture book may have begun life as an artist's pattern book, but still conveys a clear narrative.¹⁷ The Egerton Genesis certainly comprises a work of entertainment wrapped in devotional clothing, or a work of social satire imagined through religious material.¹⁸ These two examples are not extant objects in a large group of copies and editions/iterations such as the two manuscript versions and two print editions of the *Biblia Pauperum* I will examine in this chapter. They still build upon the established form and aesthetics of earlier biblical visual narratives, which include extensive use of the frame and gridded page, carefully planned page layout, ocular inducement, overt rendering of spatialized time and temporalized space, collective production, and employment of iconic solidarity and arthrology. They are also, upon first examination, oddities that verge on anomalies in comparison to other illustrated manuscripts that may share their aesthetics or narrative strategies, yet further examination shows relative continuity of the techniques employed to create such narratives.

The late manuscript and early print books in this chapter sit together precisely because they comprise examples of when a rupture is not a rupture as such, but rather an expansion or a related though perceivably different point in a larger constellation. Also, if we think in terms of different genres of visual narrative, bible picture books comprise a

¹⁷ See Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 7.

¹⁸ See Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 9.

popular genre and they exert a great deal of influence on the prototypical manuscript *Bibliae Pauperum* and their later more regularized xylographic and xerographic print iterations. The primary works examined in this chapter demonstrate qualifiably significant patterns of continuity and shared pictorial narrative techniques even as their physical environments and means of production differ appreciably. A marriage of the theory of recursion as articulated by Kuskin with spandrel-logic shows us when a rupture is not a rupture as such, but an accidental outgrowth that becomes embedded in the overall scheme of production and reproduction, or iteration and reiteration. Not everything in these productions can be self-referential, nor can all of the persistent aesthetic and formal qualities be by-products. In this way, they are mutations that still evince recursion. Because the base properties are highly similar, if not the same, we can understand their variations as phenotypically, outwardly different, but not genotypically different. Thus, seeing the works herein through both theories together avoids flattening them into a narrative of pure continuity and clarifies how the works function.

In terms of popular productions, these manuscripts and early print examples were aimed at the “secular public” of their times. Michelle Brown describes the audience of Holkham as “the merchants, craftspeople and other workers of London, whose devotions would have been shaped by such sites [of commerce, entertainment, and worship among other social activities], by the preaching of the friars and other City clergy, by the visual and musical accompaniments to worship, and by the mystery plays that they themselves staged and performed.”¹⁹ Holkham’s audience encompassed a variety of people, including workers who were not necessarily illiterate but not necessarily educated either.

¹⁹ Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 24.

Gruesome entertainments and refined artistic work coexist within both Holkham and the Egerton Genesis, giving both manuscripts more common ground with their temporally distant graphic narrative offspring. The Cokers locate the Egerton Genesis more exactly as a book “meant for the entertainment of a middle-class patron and his friends. This patron relished the drama, made no pretence of scholarship or piety, and had an earthy sense of humour and a keen eye for human and societal defects.”²⁰ Their assessment of Egerton’s audience imagines a person, in contrast to Brown’s wider and perhaps more accurate estimation of Holkham’s audience. Both analyses, however, indicate readers that we can squarely locate in a secular, urban environment full of commerce and cross-cultural and cross-class exchange. Again, this is not secular in the post-Habermasian industrial sense, but secular in the contemporary sense of the later Middle Ages.

Like the bible picture books, *Bibliae Pauperum* were aimed at or at least probably consumed by a wide swath of people, as the variety in quality and means of making in the manuscript and print *Bibliae Pauperum* attests. Avril Henry articulates the real complexity of the typological content of the *Bibliae Pauperum*, which “initiates” or readers of Latin only could have understood; however, she also attests to their persistence, stating, “Whatever that now mysterious purpose once was, it must have been important and popular for the work has stood the test of time.”²¹ Here Henry implies the importance of effect over a narrow definition of intent regarding the work, and demonstrates the overall ubiquity of the *Biblia Pauperum* as a form and genre. The woodcut version “dates from about 1460 or a few years before, making it among the

²⁰ Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 9.

²¹ Henry, *Biblia Pauperum*, 4. See also note 16 above.

earliest books printed. But forms of it existed in manuscripts as early as the mid-thirteenth century, perhaps even as early as the twelfth century: the earliest to survive is a fragment c.1300,” and print iterations can be found dating all the way into the nineteenth century.²² David Areford adds that the persistence and popularity of printed images stems from their useful, accessible, practical aspects. Areford acknowledges that ephemeral images have a variety of purposes. They can be not only useful and aesthetically pleasing, but also evocative of devotion and sensual experiences; he describes the process of adding color or gold leaf to printed images to “simulate other media” such as illuminated manuscripts, and make “a more effective object.”²³ He primarily discusses stand-alone images, such as the bleeding heart in the Psalter, Egerton MS 1821,²⁴ but his investigation proposes a significant relationship among the different roles popular and devotional images perform, whether they are single prints, or images within a book context. Because of the importance of inducement in visual narrative, the viewer or reader and the effect or function of the work remain vital. Areford begins with a Barthesian formulation of the importance of the viewer and reception theory,²⁵ and asserts that “with the majority of fifteenth-century woodcuts and metalcuts, there is no author asserting a presence or a voice. Thus the role of the viewer becomes all the more essential. The study of such images demands not only a new methodology but a new theory of reception, one in which the viewers are the final arbiters or producers of meaning.”²⁶ The culturally shared and relatively institutionally regularized body of

²² Henry, *Biblia Pauperum*, 4.

²³ Areford, *The Viewer and the Printed Image*, 28.

²⁴ See image appendix, figure 19.

²⁵ Roland Barthes, “From Work to Text,” *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 155-64. See also “The Death of the Author,” 142-48.

²⁶ Areford, *The Viewer and the Printed Image*, 9.

knowledge from which these images, bible picture books, and the *Biblia Pauperum* stem builds a relationship with the viewer or reader. The multiple levels of reception and creation constitute further evidence for collective production. The processes involved—whether physical processes of making, institutional processes of learning, or the spectrum of highly individual devotional activities—guide and make suggestions to the viewer/reader but cannot exist without the viewer/reader.

Kunzle and the Erasure of Manuscripts

Art historian David Kunzle, perhaps the person who has written the most extensively, outside of the Franco-Belgian school, on early print as the origin era of the comic strip, sets out criteria for what constitutes a comic strip,²⁷ and entirely excludes religious visual narratives whether in manuscript or xylographic form. He claims that religious narratives are traditional and therefore cannot be topical. Much is wrong with that, including that it relies on novelty as a primary criterion, and misreads what constituted secular society at the advent of print. The claim also relies upon flawed logic to a degree: if the traditional cannot be topical, as Kunzle asserts, then the established tradition of pictorial narrative that exists coextensively with the expansion of codex technology and the spread of early Christianity does not represent topical visual narrative.²⁸ He does include religious propaganda, ironically, to set up a trajectory in which there is an originary moment in propaganda for the comic strip because the propaganda gives rise to what Kunzle considers to be topical and moral, but also secular.

²⁷ David Kunzle, *The History of the Comic Strip*, Vol. 1: *The Early Comic Strip: Narrative Strips and Picture Stories in the European Broadsheet from c.1450 to 1825* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 3-4.

²⁸ Fraeters and Pieters address the centrality of the image in western Christianity; see note 17 above.

This trajectory invites the question, if the religious propaganda constitutes an originary moment for materials that eventually become the comic strip, then why exclude earlier religious pictorial narrative? This not only erases a rather sizable group of early visual narratives—and ones that clearly use the sorts of comics semiotics Groensteen identifies and exemplify collective production—but also undermines some of the criteria Kunzle himself sets out for what can and cannot be an early “comic strip.” Some of his classifications can be made useful, but as he sets them out, they are too restrictive to encompass the longer history of collectively-produced popular visual narratives that comprise the body of my study. I place bible picture books and both manuscript and print *Bibliae Pauperum* alongside one another rather than separating them by media form or making technology precisely because they exemplify continuity, intentionally and incidentally, among early pictorial narratives I have classed as protocomics. These manuscripts and books also function as metonyms for the larger argument—that seemingly rare or aberrant works evince typical storytelling modes, design structures, aesthetics and formal elements across genre and methods of material production. Ultimately, these threads of continuity (and some clear ruptures, too) demonstrate how some of Kunzle’s more useful criteria apply to works he has rejected out of hand. Furthermore, these works trouble Kunzle’s four major criteria for what constitutes an early or prototypical comic, and reinforce the claim that the term “strip” itself eliminates a host of important early graphic narratives from the field of examination.

According to Kunzle, to be a comic strip, a work must meet the following four criteria: The work must contain “a sequence of images”; there must be “a preponderance of image over text”; the work must be in “a mass medium”; the work must contain “a

topical moral narrative.”²⁹ The sequential component may be the least problematic of all. Even if a work does not contain multiple sequential images on a single page, the larger body of the work and the reader or viewer’s process of moving through it and co-making narrative imposes a serial or sequential structure. Sequentiality, strictly conceived, does not have to be overtly present; often the reader or viewer imposes a sense of emplotment and order.³⁰ This visual emplotment, whether overtly rendered or imposed by the observer, occurs across a variety of works, from earlier biblical pictorial narratives to the bible picture books and *Bibliae Pauperum* examined here. “Preponderance of image over text” generally applies, but it is not a dogmatically necessary hard-and-fast criterion for what constitutes a comic or visual narrative. The text-heaviness of many illustrated medieval manuscripts,³¹ especially the overtly narrative examples of the Hexateuch and Junius 11, disrupt this argument. The primary works examined in this chapter evince a “preponderance of image over text,” but they function very similarly to the earlier works. Kunzle’s criterion seems to be more invested in upholding a verbal/visual binary than investigating how older pictorial narratives work and later inform the contemporary comic.

Kunzle’s third and fourth criteria present some problems, especially the third, “a mass medium.” The mass medium problem extends back and forward in time to manuscripts and underground comix.³² The core of Kunzle’s concept works for the scope

²⁹ Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip, Narrative Strips and Picture Stories*, 3-4.

³⁰ See note 62 in chapter 1 on David Joselit’s “varied mode of looking.”

³¹ There are many comic books that evince relative text-heaviness, for example, Chris Claremont and John Byrne’s *The Uncanny X-Men: The Dark Phoenix Saga*, see Chapter Four below, and some sections of Dave Sim’s *Cerberus*.

³² The term refers to underground comics, often tied to emerging counterculture, made in the 1960s and 1970s, which were not produced by any major publisher until tamed imitations were created.

he creates, effectively begging the question, because all of the materials he examines are the product of a reproductive technology that quickly became able to produce *en masse*.³³ If his third criterion is recast as popular in the pre-Habermasian sense, at least until the expansion of the mechanized press and the Industrial Revolution, it would make much more sense than demanding “a mass medium.” A popular medium includes those works pre-print and post-print that may not qualify as products of a mass medium, such as manuscripts and handmade comics, and avoids the slippery construction of mass medium in the first place. Different works arise from different media environments, so Kunzle’s third criterion is too limited in scope. His assessment of the role of participation and sharing through private ownership or group reading and ease of access seems correct, but he completely misses how a pre-print medium could be popular or how a small production run of something could be popular. Walsham and Crick attest to the much longer life of manuscript as a popular medium as print became more common—political tracts/manifestos, women’s writing, and medieval and early modern “ephemera” were produced in manuscript form, especially in England where print was not as widespread. Manuscript production continued across a variety of social groups, so this conception of “popular” again eliminates the need to imagine the popular as a product of a strictly secular, Habermasian public. Xylographic and early xerographically-produced print books satisfy these criteria in terms of their mechanical production and circulation;

³³ Thierry Groensteen critiques this, writing that Kunzle’s criteria are “normative and self-interested, each made to measure in order to support an arbitrary slice of history,” and “the third of Kunzle’s conditions only serves to justify that he chose the invention of printing as a starting point for *The Early Comic Strip*,” *The System of Comics*, 13. Bart Beaty critiques these criteria as well: “Kunzle’s definition, particularly the third and fourth requirements, is problematic from an analytical standpoint because it is easy to find examples of comics that have not been reproduced, including unpublished comics, and comics that are neither moral nor topical are also quite common,” *Comics Versus Art* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 32.

however, Kunzle's third criterion ignores the importance of implied intent, effect, and use. Popularity and ubiquity make sense as a criterion, but merely casting that criterion as how many copies were made of a given work or how reproducible and widely distributed the work was ignores too much that actually was and is definitively popular, such as religious narratives, satirical prints, and later, genre comics.

The fourth criterion, "a topical moral narrative," seems to arbitrarily exclude religious narrative, on Kunzle's basis that it grows out of a non-secular tradition and therefore cannot be topical. There are a few problems here as well. This criterion presupposes that the religious narratives could not evoke or analogize a topical subject, and that they could not be topical in and of themselves. A common mistake made by those who study post-medieval topics, the assumption goes that somehow religious materials are in a vacuum from lived experience of the populace, or that they are apolitical. This is not possible, especially during a period of time when the church wielded so much influence over people's lives. Also, western Christian narratives always carry the extemporal and cyclical alongside the linear in a manner that allows for the topical and seemingly above-topical to exist simultaneously.³⁴ The criterion asserts that "The essentially popular narrative strip does not have the recourse to the example of the Christian saint or the legendary hero, but rather presents identifiable contemporaries who may be actual political celebrities, or else fictional types in whom the reader can readily recognize himself and his fellow-men."³⁵ Kunzle instead uses examples of saints' lives to show that they cannot be deemed topical because they are fixed in an archaic tradition

³⁴ See the discussion in my introduction of Pächt's and Ricoeur's view on this temporal phenomenon in Christian time and narrative, including medieval pictorial art.

³⁵ Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 3.

and time; however, his assessment forgets the widely popular and extemporal sense of saints' lives, too. Furthermore, the self-identification urged by saints' lives, Christological stories, and the shared heritage or experience suggested by the *Biblia Pauperum*'s typological comparative layout of Old and New Testament figures and episodes alongside one another, consistently creates opportunity for the reader to contemporize the older material. Indeed, the process of reading allegory through the lens of figural exegesis forms a type of recursion. The embedded self-reference to the past in typology requires that the reader connect the distant past to the present. It seems that the delimiter "strip" holds this criterion together, and perhaps the larger part of Kunzle's requirements, and not much else.

Imperative to Kunzle's fourth criterion is "a call to personal or social action" embedded in the narrative itself. Again, this criterion could easily include a variety of fictional and devotional texts—personal action can be coextensive with religious practice even when attempting to behave more like an exemplar saint; calls to social action can result from visual narratives other than political cartoons and often depend on the text's use and effect. A variety of examples put pressure on this criterion. For example, the Old English sermon by Wulfstan of York, *Sermo Lupi*, is completely topical: though a verbal tract and not a visual one, it is religious and political.³⁶ Holkham expresses the contemporary growth in popularity of the Dominican Order specifically in London in the fourteenth century. The Egerton Genesis subtly includes contemporary political-religious issues such as the paying of tithes, "to which there was increased resistance in the

³⁶ See Dorothy Whitelock, ed., *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, 2nd edition (London: Methuen, 1952), 33-54.

fourteenth century.”³⁷ Though political cartoons in the broadsheet are a particularly important and expansive example of the form, and I do not want to downplay that, Kunzle’s somewhat arbitrary criteria clearly leave out a significant amount of material that can be considered both topical and influential on typical modes of graphic storytelling.³⁸ In summary, these criteria are somewhat useful, but not within the rigid frame that surrounds them. Kunzle’s work comprises a jumping-off point, from which we can extract an effective notion of what these pictorial narratives do. An examination of protocomics must trouble Kunzle’s notions of mass medium and his narrow scope of topicality. This way, works such as the bible picture books and *Biblia Pauperum* are not arbitrarily excluded from the continuum of what is typical in the mode of pictorial narrative just because they do not fall within the correct time period or conception of nonreligious, postindustrial secular culture.

Bible Picture Books

The Holkham Bible Picture Book: Artist’s Pattern Book and Protocomic

The Holkham Bible Picture Book, London, British Library, Additional MS 47682, like its predecessors containing visual biblical narratives, presents itself paradoxically. It seems and, in some ways, may be exceedingly rare; however, we can locate it within the realm of typical graphic storytelling because of its motifs, structure, and aesthetic and narrative elements. It was most likely produced in London in “the first half of the

³⁷ Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 79. See fol. 9r depicting Abraham and Melchisedek and a visual juxtaposition of gold coins with the Eucharist.

³⁸ Kunzle’s fourth criterion also forecloses the possibility of recognizing topical elements in twentieth- and twenty-first-century comics and graphic narratives that do not necessarily depict realistic or relatable types of people. For example, the *Civil War* series of Marvel superhero comics, which was very popular, directly responded to post-9/11 politics in America, and much of the story was created in response to the Patriot Act.

fourteenth century (probably around 1327-1340), on the eve of the Black Death.”³⁹

Unlike the manuscripts examined in the previous chapter, Holkham contains neither a translation of the Old Testament, a biblical poetic paraphrase, nor anything having to do with the psalter. Instead, the early fourteenth-century production “consists of some 231 images recounting episodes from the Book of Genesis, the Gospels, and the Book of Revelation/Apocalypse, accompanied not by the full scriptural text or an exegetical commentary, but by summary captions in Anglo-Norman French, partly in verse and the rest in prose.”⁴⁰ Its contents show continued investment in traditionally popular biblical material, the Old Testament and the Gospels, and inclusion of material that had grown in popularity on the continent and in England, the Apocalypse. The manuscript is the product of either one artist and one scribe,⁴¹ or one colorist, one draughtsman, and one scribe.⁴² Though it is predominantly in Anglo-Norman French, Middle English and Latin words appear occasionally.⁴³ Holkham mediates among a variety of classed languages: it employs a non-courtly French or “*franglais*”;⁴⁴ it evokes an older vernacular, and the language of religion and education, the *lingua franca*. Its planning and production are strange in that it was not the product of a professional experienced team, according to Brown, but rather the artist oversaw the layout and the scribe seems inexperienced.⁴⁵ It seems that the scribe wrote the verbal text after the artist drew the pictures; there are clear ruling lines, some of which may have been inserted after the drawings were finished and

³⁹ Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 1.

⁴⁰ Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 1.

⁴¹ Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 25-7.

⁴² Peter Flyvbjerg, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book Revisited: A Slow Look at a Quick Book* (Copenhagen: Department of English, University of Copenhagen, 1998), 11.

⁴³ Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 20-22.

⁴⁴ Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

before the text was written rather than at the beginning of the process.⁴⁶ The lack of conventional ruling and attention to hair-side/flesh-side leaf positioning may indicate “that it was not made by someone familiar with book production.”⁴⁷

The images range in size from nearly full-page with text boxes generally at the top to quarter-panels demarcated both visually and by separated text boxes. The illustrator used a wide variety of colors in the figures, objects, and backgrounds, creating an aesthetic that Michelle Brown links to the rise of painting and strong continental influence but also to a continuation of the style of drawing and color-washes that enjoyed popularity in the Anglo-Saxon era. Holkham may have been an artists’ pattern book⁴⁸ or reference book turned into a bible picture book, and this has much bearing on the style and its detailed opulence. The level of detail in backgrounds such as the grass, consistent use of red diaperwork, varied facial expressions, and styles of dress makes Holkham quite distinct. The spare, stylized visual idiom of Anglo-Saxon gesturing hands appears here, too, demonstrating continued use of a popular aesthetic device. The manuscript evinces a lot of visual and stylistic development, so Holkham may have had a significantly different purpose than the Egerton Genesis, for example. Like the evangelists’ portraits Gould and Lewontin observe on the spandrels of the basilica of San

⁴⁶ Flyvbjerg, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book Revisited*, 11; Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 7-8.

⁴⁷ Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 7.

⁴⁸ Brown interprets the unusual codicology as evidence for this: “The way in which the manuscript was prepared and put together—its codicology—is unusual enough to suggest that it was not made by someone familiar with book production. This implies that the project resided in the hands of an artist, rather than a scribe or stationer who would usually supervise the manufacture of a book. The artist was evidently not familiar with the processes of laying out illuminated manuscripts, for he or she does not leave adequate margins around the images to compensate for the fact that the inner margin on the spine edge will be diminished during binding. The inner margins therefore are unusually restricted throughout, and on f. 2 this has resulted in some of the artwork being obscured. The usual conventions for arranging hair and flesh sides of the skins within the gatherings of the book are also not observed,” *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 7-8.

Marco, Holkham may have begun life as an artist's pattern book, which effectively necessitated its functionally protocomic aspects. Thinking about spandrels, if Holkham was an artist's pattern book, the more sumptuous elements of the design are merely a reflection of that purpose while the core of the narrative activity is a by-product, albeit a visually and semiotically significant by-product.

Brown describes the narrative as "quite matter-of-fact and unsentimental," one that avoids exegesis, heavy-handed didacticism, or clear typological comparisons.⁴⁹ Made in an urban setting, Holkham evokes a crowded, busy atmosphere, and its purpose may have been, as Brown submits, "to tell a good story."⁵⁰ The pictorial narrative in Holkham displays moments of overt humor and depictions of legendary figures as fallible, such as Noah passed out drunk and half-naked as his sons and passers-by look away.⁵¹ The overt concern with providing entertainment seems to strike a different tone than previous works, but that perception may be due to our misconception that the Middle Ages was a time filled with grave solemnity or to a modern bias that religious audiences did not have affective responses to these narratives, which we know cannot be true. During the fourteenth century, Dominican friars made great use of images and apocryphal material in their preaching, which was quite popular, especially around London.⁵² Holkham remains notable because it works within the larger tradition of

⁴⁹ Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 21. These qualities make Holkham quite similar to the Egerton Genesis, as books organized around overt episodic and events-based narratives, and different from the *Bibliae Pauperum* because typology dominates their construction. The Cokers cast Holkham as more "pious" in content than Egerton, but the two manuscripts appear to share the lampooning, burlesque qualities seen in the depictions of Noah's drunkenness, for example.

⁵⁰ Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 21.

⁵¹ See fol. 9r. Brown points to this scene and the illustration of Joseph's friends mocking him as a cuckold on fol. 12r as examples of a literal, earthy comedy that would appeal to a variety of people, including what she deems "medieval cockneys," 2.

⁵² See Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 16-17. Brown also explains that the miniature portrait of the Dominican commissioning the artist may not have been a literal illustration of a particular English friar,

biblical pictorial narrative and familiar tropes, but overtly appeals to particular, even localizable audiences through highly affective imagery. The art exemplifies more flamboyantly expressive pictorial qualities—in color choice, line quality, gesture, and close attention to detail in clothing and setting.

Brown's comparison of a comic strip to a film is telling in the way that comics and visual narratives are often most valued when seen in terms of painting or film rather than the medium of comics. This comparison is also telling in that it values novelty and innovation over reworking or recursion—not to say that the comparison is totally wrong-headed, just that it reveals much about the way we assess visual narratives, such as these protocomics and their offspring, through a contemporary bias toward the current. In praise of the uniqueness and complexity of Holkham, she writes: "And yet, to view it as merely a religious picture book, designed to help instruct an illiterate audience in the basics of Bible stories, is to miss the point of a work that marks a radical shift in modes of communication. It is to mistake an early *Flash Gordon* comic strip for Lucas's *Star Wars* epic. For during the early fourteenth century, when the book was made, artists and spiritual directors were taking art into spheres as innovative as film would prove to be seven centuries later."⁵³ Why does critical praise of the work need to rely on an example

but rather St. Dominic himself: "The frontispiece to the Holkham Bible might therefore be understood as a devotional recognition that the Logos—the Creator, Redeemer, and Judge—was to be read as a book and taken as the model and focus of spirituality. It would have served to provide authority and justification for the artist's own ambitious project to produce a book in which the biblical narrative was recited primarily in images, with a secondary text added around the edges (so to speak), rather as in images symbolising the transmission of the Gospels in which the figural source of each evangelist's inspiration is depicted [...]. It does not necessarily mean that this actual manuscript was commissioned by a specific English Dominican to be shown to wealthy people" (10). See also Brown, "When Illuminated Manuscripts Are Not What They Seem: The Cases of the Holkham Bible Picture Book and a Newly Discovered Croatian Altarpiece," *Ikon: časopis za ikonografske studije = Journal of Iconographic Studies*, 1 (2008): 103.

⁵³ Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 1.

outside of the medium? The analogy of novelty and technical innovation makes sense on the one hand. Holkham was constructed differently and had a more expressive style in its illustrations than its predecessors or contemporaries. It shares concerns with representation that painting seems to have had at the time also. Yet, to fully invest in this analogy is to write recursion out of the picture, and to take Holkham out of its place as an example of drawn, rendered, visual narrative. It erases Holkham's prominence as a strong link on the media chain that joins forms of reproduction that seem to be opposed, or at the least, very different. Brown conflates the illustrations with film storyboarding—comics and graphic narratives also use storyboards, which function similarly to film storyboards in forecasting the trajectory and parameters of a given narrative in process. Vindicatingly enough, she later compares Holkham to a graphic novel in an article published a year later: "The Holkham Bible is, in effect, the first *Biblia Pauperum* ('Poor Man's Bible') and, like a graphic novel, conveys in 231 scenes the story of Genesis, of the Life of Christ and of the Apocalypse/Book of Revelation."⁵⁴ Brown's classification of Holkham as the first *Biblia Pauperum* clarifies the relationship of these later manuscripts to their early print counterparts, and ties the popular works together in terms of genre and medium. Her assertion that Holkham is "like a graphic novel" corroborates that whether or not Holkham began life as a pattern book or an aesthetic experiment, its expressive and story-making qualities place it squarely in the realm of the protocomic/popular visual narrative.

Holkham self-consciously builds upon the more extemporal stylistic elements found in earlier manuscripts to present a salient contemporary world, albeit through biblical story. This contemporizing technique also recalls the ways in which the

⁵⁴ Brown, "When Illuminated Manuscripts Are Not What They Seem," 104.

Hexateuch artists depicted specifically Anglo-Saxon forms of labor and dress. The approach locates the illustration very specifically in fourteenth-century England, especially with the inclusion of the Dominican portrait and depictions of Jewish people wearing legally mandated phylacteries on their heads.⁵⁵ The artist renders highly specific modes of dress and creates topical content—topical even by Kunzle’s standards—through these aesthetic aspects. Brown explains: “Dominican influence would also have fostered such an interest in Judaic practices,” as contemporary Dominican thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, and Raymond Marti wrote extensively about Judaism, often exemplifying and at times complicating contemporary attitudes about Jewish people as well as “social unrest and disaffection with government.”⁵⁶ There are more salient visual innovations, too, such as the influence of English drama on the rendering of scenes,⁵⁷ the relationship of textboxes and speech bubbles and the numerical ordering system, which assists the already strong inducement of the reader’s eye to follow a certain narrative track, while maintaining clarity in the order of speech. The device recurs, in Kuskin’s sense, in prints of later eras including Jacques Callot’s, broadsheets, and some newspaper strips. Through the combination of recursion and innovation—both seemingly intentional and incidental—we can read Holkham as an example of a visual narrative that exemplifies both recursion and spandrel-logic.

⁵⁵ Brown points out that though the Jews were expelled from England and France before Holkham’s production, “Many early fourteenth-century Londoners would still well recall the Jews and their distinctive religious ritual and garb, including the phylacteries—small boxes containing excerpts from Scripture—which were worn on the forehead as a sign of their Judaism as prescribed by English royal decree,” *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 2.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵⁷ Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 21-2. See also Flyvbjerg *The Holkham Bible Picture Book Revisited*.

Even more overtly than its Anglo-Saxon predecessors in biblical visual narrative, Holkham is a product of popular culture. We can see this through its aesthetics, its interpretation of biblical narrative, its intended audience, and a host of other factors. Whether the book was produced for a mendicant preacher, a private patron, or initially for an artist's own use, it emerges as a popular visual narrative. C. M. Kauffmann lays out the typical "three grounds" on which scholars typify Holkham as popular: "its rough style, its genre-like observation of contemporary life, and its many uncanonical scenes."⁵⁸ I agree with Kauffmann that the Holkham artist's inclusion of legendary, apocryphal, and other non-canonical scenes provides evidence to class it as a popular narrative,⁵⁹ and the combination noted above of extemporal and highly particular local aesthetic and semiotic elements must be included in this set of evidence. We see a similar set of "legendary, apocryphal, and noncanonical" materials in Claudius B. iv and Junius, too, but not to the degree that we see it in Holkham, or Egerton for that matter. This shift may reflect a larger interpretive community and a loosening or at least a growth in the variety of

⁵⁸ C. M. Kauffmann, "Art and Popular Culture: New Themes in the Holkham Bible Picture Book," in *Studies in Medieval Art and Architecture Presented to Peter Lasko*, ed. David Buckton and T.A. Heslop (Stroud, UK: Alan Sutton, 1994), 47. See also C. M. Kauffmann, *Biblical Imagery in Medieval England 700-1550* (London: Harvey Miller, 2003), 231-42.

⁵⁹ Kauffmann, "Art and Popular Culture," 49-50. Kauffmann brings attention to the difficulties faced in conceiving of and discussing what constitutes popular culture in the Middle Ages: "Medieval popular culture has recently become a much studied field, but a clear definition has proved elusive. As far as later medieval religious imagery is concerned, the definition proposed by Aaron Gurevich provides a suitable conceptual framework. Popular culture is created for the people by the literate classes with a view to 'popularizing cultural treasures for the populace', but it is infiltrated by folkloric culture, and there is a mutual absorption of the two. Above all, it is clear that there is no firm dividing line between high and low culture in the Middle Ages, or, it should be added, in any other time," 50. This model is especially effective because it accounts for the manner in which something with a dogma and—at least institutionally—rigid rules, such as medieval Christianity, becomes malleable and mutable through various artistic and cultural iterations created and shared by those who do not necessarily officially participate in making or disseminating the dogma. We can see a shift away from the "popularizing cultural treasures" approach that Gurevich outlines when mercantile capitalism begins to be an institutional force to rival and at times complement the authority and influence of the church. See also Karen Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Anglo-Saxon England: Elf Charms in Context* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), for an in-depth study of this kind of mutual absorption among officially sanctioned religious practice and popular practices within shared cultures.

institutional controls over how such materials were made and illustrated. Also, the two bible picture books create and allow for an atmosphere of ribaldry and play, even when observing sacred subjects.

Key images in Holkham

Folio 5v⁶⁰ depicts Abel's murder at Cain's hands. The picture upholds earlier tropes while making use of newer design elements such as the red diaperwork in the background and a highly detailed ground setting—a blue-green color gradient and hatching lines make the grass and ornate drapery with multiple color washes comprises the clothing—and Cain trying to conceal the murder by covering Abel with dirt. Michelle Brown notes that the detail of the dirt-covering appears only in Holkham and the Queen Mary Psalter, “a rare iconographic detail [...] inferred from Abel's voice ‘crying to the earth’ (Genesis 4:10).”⁶¹ There is effectively a panel-less panel structure at work here, much like the Harley Psalter, in which the flora⁶² help to create temporal sequencing and clear divisions among events. In the upper left corner, Cain attacks Abel with the now ubiquitous jawbone of an ass. Unlike previous depictions of the fratricide, small visual details make Abel look more holy and innocent—he wears a sheepskin, underscoring his role as a shepherd and his innocence and participation in the flock. The artist emphasizes Abel's bloody headwound in both the murder scene and Cain's attempt to cover it up below, in which he is either digging a shallow grave or tossing dirt onto Abel. The surrounding sheep seem to notice the omnipresence of the watchful God, who points to

⁶⁰ See image appendix, figure 20.

⁶¹ Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 36.

⁶² Natalie Crohn Schmitt notes the presence of these “scenic elements” that “mark time differences” in Holkham and the Queen Mary Psalter. See “Continuous Narration in the Holkham Bible Picture Book and the Queen Mary Psalter,” *Word and Image* 20, no. 2 (2004): 125.

his own eyes and points to Cain, as if to say, “I saw that. I can always see you.” This God is a clearly surveillant God and he visually dominates—the artist renders God approximately one-third larger than Cain and Abel in a bent, looming posture. The artist employs traditional tropes, such as the jawbone, gesturing hands, and running blood, while embellishing the images and, arguably, editorializing about Abel to underscore his victimhood.

Folio 8v⁶³ depicts Noah sending the dove and the raven forth from the ark. This scene is much more graphic than the ark scenes in Junius 11 and the Hexateuch, as we can see the floating corpses of a man, a woman, an ox, and a horse, all of which really look as if they are suspended in the water, lifeless and cold. The scene repeats pictorial elements of the aforementioned Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, but evinces other older artistic influences as well. Michelle Brown comments that the corpses “recall the bodies cast up by the oceans at the Last Judgement envisioned in mosaic in the twelfth century in the church of the island of Torcello in the Venetian lagoon. Both are probably ultimately indebted to Early Christian illustrations of the episode in Genesis cycles, such as that in the Vienna Genesis from fifth- to sixth-century Byzantium.”⁶⁴ Cementing its reputation as a carrion-eater, the raven munches on the horse’s eyeball, which appears to have been extracted from its socket. Rather than depicting the birds’ return and lack thereof, respectively, in a separate frame or on another page, the artist renders multiple birds, following the strategies of monoscenic narration, to indicate movement in time and the dove’s successful location of land. This choice in composition emphasizes the contrasting

⁶³ See image appendix, figure 21.

⁶⁴ Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 39.

nature of the birds, and the allegorical reading of the dove as the obedient person who follows tenets of the faith versus the rebellious person who acts out of self-interest or even violence. As far as the order of reading goes, the picture exemplifies another instance in which ocular inducement directs the reader away from left-to-right, top-to-bottom eye movement, instead clearly guiding the eye through multiple temporalities in the same space.

Like many examples in comics and visual narratives, this illustration collapses continuous narration and strictly conceived episodic narration. Critics such as Flyvbjerg and Natalie Crohn Schmitt would most likely attribute this to the influence of medieval drama and stagecraft on Holkham. Crohn Schmitt rightly views the repetition of figures within the same frame or ground as an indication of temporal, and occasionally, spatial movement, writing that “medieval viewers of continuous narration in the *Holkham Bible Picture Book* [...] were pretty surely intended to see not simultaneous actions but rather actions continuing over time, as in a play,” and that some of these devices can also mark distance.⁶⁵ While these devices may carry the influence of stagecraft, they clearly demonstrate techniques used in pictorial narrative. As in Groensteen’s concepts of arthrology and breakdown, the illustrations in Holkham use an overarching narrative means of linking and separating to create intelligible emplotment and temporal movement. The raven goes first and then the dove, but the picture makes it look like they are released simultaneously—there are visual cues for their respective journeys and returns or lack thereof, but not their departures. Arguably, everyone in Holkham’s audience, real or potential, would have known that the dove is released because the raven

⁶⁵ Crohn Schmitt, “Continuous Narration in the Holkham Bible Picture Book,” 124-5.

does not return; the story resonates all over medieval popular culture. The verbal text clears it up, but the shared knowledge of the audience and the makers probably prevents the need for the extra clarification from the verbal text. Furthermore, the departing and returning doves face in different directions, and the returning dove carries an olive branch, signaling to the reader changes in time and the order of events. In other words, stagecraft may have something to do with all of this, but we need not go to stagecraft to account for what is already inherent in visual narrative. Art never happens in a vacuum, so stagecraft most likely influenced the production; however, more attention to the actual workings of visual narrative explains a lot of this without the need for attributing all of it to a visual representation of stagecraft.

Some images in *Holkham* are numbered to clarify the order in which characters speak and contain scrolls that function as speech bubbles. The numbers were not part of the original design,⁶⁶ but they indicate use of the manuscript, perhaps reading aloud, and they constitute an early example of numbered sequencing that later graphic narratives use. The bottom half of fol. 11v⁶⁷ depicts Christ and Satan, and later, an angel and Mary engaged in conversation. Satan, Christ, and the angel gesture with fingers pointed at their speech-scrolls, which recall pointing fingers and gesturing hands in earlier Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, and Mary holds her hand open toward her scroll in a mudra-like gesture. This scene does a lot with time in a little space; it functions as a sort of flash forward or, at least, two characters surveying a different location from afar and seeing a future occurrence. Christ talks to Satan before he is physically born and, spatially, right before

⁶⁶ Brown asserts that the numbers were written in by “a later medieval hand,” *The Holkham Picture Book*, 44.

⁶⁷ See image appendix, figure 22.

the Annunciation is depicted. Brown observes: “The inclusion of Christ’s disputation with Satan which occurs before he is even conceived, serves to emphasize his eternal divine nature as well as predicting his humanity [...]”⁶⁸ In other words, the illustration fits a variety of temporal schemes, including the extemporal and the linear, into a hyper-compressed space while still making sense to the viewer. Christ speaks first in this scene, as denoted by the red number 2,⁶⁹ and a hirsute, monstrous Satan responds. The two face each other, and Christ faces away from the angel, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, and Mary, cuing the reader that the events are separate even though there is no panel border, tree, or architectural demarcation to indicate the distance in time or space.

Folio 14v⁷⁰ depicts events drawn from popular or at least apocryphal materials describing Jesus, Joseph, and Mary’s flight into Egypt, specifically the encounter with the sower and the miracle of the cornfield, in which Jesus makes just-planted corn grow to maturity as thanks for the sower’s protecting the Holy Family from their pursuers. According to C. M. Kauffmann, the episode has popular origins, but unlike the seven other episodes he lists that stem from popular material, the apocrypha, and a long-held but not entirely institutionally sanctioned classical tradition, the episode of the cornfield “has its origins in folk-tales” and persisted in “folk traditions in the nineteenth century throughout western Christendom, from Malta to Ireland and from Provence to England.”⁷¹ Brown finds a different origin for the episode, noting that it can be found in “Pseudo-Matthew and the Gospel of Thomas and in the second-century Egerton

⁶⁸ Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 44.

⁶⁹ The order of speaking could be determined as Satan responding to Christ if one can read the verbal text; however, the numbers make it much clearer because Christ is to Satan’s left, following regular reading order.

⁷⁰ See image appendix, figure 23.

⁷¹ Kauffmann, “Art and Popular Culture,” 55.

Gospels” and “in the carol ‘The Miraculous Harvest’” in *The Oxford Book of Carols*.⁷² Much like images in the Hexateuch and images and text in the Junius manuscript, these illustrations demonstrate a matrix of influence, which includes popular and non-institutional forms of culture. The page is divided into two neat halves, each with a block of text above the illustrations, which are laid out vertically one on top of the other. The top half renders the Holy Family’s interaction with the sower “following a man who goads a horse pulling a harrow [a toothed farm tool used after plowing],”⁷³ and the bottom half depicts three armored soldiers looking very accusatorily at the sower. The text indicates that the sower answers the knights both honestly and in accordance with Jesus’s wishes, and his posture and hands stretched out toward the corn visually suggest tension while directing the reader’s eye to the miraculous corn. The repetition of the sower in the same posture and position on the page helps cue the reader to spatial relationships in time as well. Visually, the sower remains working where he was as the Holy Family leaves and the knights approach. The viewer understands that time has passed because of the verbal content and the knights appearing below where the Holy Family was previously, and the juxtaposition of the two scenes further highlights the miraculous appearance of the corn.

In addition to this episode, Kauffmann lays out seven other examples of events drawn from popular materials and “the earliest apocryphal texts written in Greek in the second century, the Protoevangelium of James and, particularly, the Infancy Story of Thomas, whose aim was to depict Jesus as an infant prodigy,” which was later “translated

⁷² Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 49.

⁷³ Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 49.

into Armenian, Syriac, Georgian, and Ethiopic with an illustrated Arabic version dated 1299, still extant,” and “expanded into the Latin infancy Gospels of Pseudo-Matthew.”⁷⁴ All of these episodes depict the infancy and childhood of Christ and range from generous miracles to slightly macabre punishments. Kauffmann makes the strong point that these stories are “truly popular in that they appear on all manner of artefacts and are by no means confined to the pages of devotional manuscripts,”⁷⁵ which supports Gurevich’s definition of mutual absorption.⁷⁶ The variety of influences found in Holkham exemplifies the liquid movement of popular and officially sanctioned institutional culture present in all the materials examined herein thus far.

The Egerton Genesis, a Gridded Bible Picture Book

The Egerton Genesis, London, British Library, Egerton MS 1894, contains a visual narrative consisting of “149 scenes, of the biblical Genesis, supplemented by legendary material.”⁷⁷ It was produced slightly later than Holkham, probably between 1350 and 1375,⁷⁸ and is unfinished. The Cokers theorize that Egerton gives “many indications that time and money were short,”⁷⁹ and that the lack of completion—and in some places, diminishing quality of the script and drawings, lack of color, loss of vermilion pigment use, which all seem to grow progressively more marked through the

⁷⁴ Kauffmann, “Art and Popular Culture,” 50, 55. Kauffmann lists the seven other examples: *The Holy Family is attacked by robbers on the Flight into Egypt*, fol. 14r; *The Miracle of the palm tree*, fol. 15r; *Miracle on washing day*, fol. 15v; *A Boy Falls from an upper window and is healed by four-year-old Jesus*, fol. 15v; *Jesus walks on water, mounts a sunbeam, breaks and mends pitchers*, fol. 15v; *Jesus turns Jewish children into pigs*, fol. 16r (this episode is tinged with horror); *The dyer’s vats*, fol. 16r, 53-4.

⁷⁵ Kauffmann, “Art and Popular Culture,” 58.

⁷⁶ See note 211 above.

⁷⁷ Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 14.

⁷⁸ Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 1.

⁷⁹ Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 16.

end of the manuscript—implies a rush to finish.⁸⁰ Despite being incomplete, the manuscript appears to have experienced, and perhaps suffered from, a great deal of careless use before it was purchased by the British Museum in 1860.⁸¹ Another collective production, it is most likely the product of one artist and “at least two” scribes,⁸² one of whom may also have done the drawing, color washes, and illumination; the “second author-scribe” also adds his own observations into the text as commentary.⁸³ Like Holkham, the pictures in Egerton make great use of popular material and expressive, emotive aesthetics in the faces and bodies of the human figures. Unlike the illustrations in Holkham, though, the overall pictorial scheme in Egerton relies upon smaller, scene-based vignettes in a four-paneled grid scheme. This layout is consistent throughout the majority of the manuscript, with occasional changes to a full-page illustration or a three-part grid with one larger rectangular panel and two smaller. The manuscript’s reliance on a fairly regular, rectangular grid looks forward to the regularized panel-system so often used to regulate the narrative pacing of later visual narratives.

Egerton constitutes another text that initially seems highly aberrant while also evincing typical qualities of graphic narrative. The manuscript may evince a somewhat different visual style than its peers, but it illustrates well-known figures and stories from the book of Genesis and repeats significant visual tropes and narrative techniques found in Holkham, Junius 11, and the Old English Hexateuch. Otto Pächt maintains that Egerton’s illustrations reference and rework a larger tradition, including the drawings

⁸⁰ Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 16-20.

⁸¹ Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 1.

⁸² Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 20.

⁸³ Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 16-20, 27.

found in Anglo-Saxon pictorial biblical narratives, while including an Italianate style.⁸⁴ George Henderson finds the same Anglo-Saxon style at work with additional influences from “late-antique picture cycle types,” noting that “the Egerton Genesis artist [...] must have seen and copied the San Marco mosaics, which he regarded as a modification of the Cotton Genesis tradition.”⁸⁵ The Cokers maintain that there is no bible picture book truly like Egerton, even the closely related Holkham;⁸⁶ however, this assessment ignores both the shared overarching aesthetic and semiotic techniques in the manuscript and the more particular qualities, such as the layout and the parodic characterization of major biblical figures. Egerton’s overall aesthetic appears less delicate than Holkham’s, with a more burlesque, cartoonish quality to the drawings, which corresponds well with the narrative’s overall emphasis on humanizing and lampooning. Holkham’s art also engages in parody and social commentary, though, and is not strictly a solemn devotional text. Michelle Brown notes, “the Cokers conclude [...] that it lacked the pious devotional and didactic function they attribute to the Holkham Bible on account of a literal reading of its prefatory miniature [of the Dominican].”⁸⁷ While it is true that Egerton contains some rare and unusual iconography, it evinces enough typical patterns of narrative, including choices about rendering time and space, that it shares more with the manuscripts examined herein than not. We can read Egerton as the product of a conglomeration of

⁸⁴ Otto Pächt, “A Giottoesque Episode in English Mediaeval Art,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 6 (1943): 57-9. See also Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 2-3.

⁸⁵ Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 3, citing George Henderson, “Late-Antique Influences on Some English Mediaeval Illustrations of Genesis,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 25 (1962): 172-98.

⁸⁶ After amassing a significant list of similarities and differences in the execution, style, and probable audience among Egerton and Holkham, as well as the Queen Mary Psalter, the Rylands Bible, and the Morgan Picture Bible, the Cokers conclude that “The Egerton Genesis differs radically from other bible picture books,” 9.

⁸⁷ Brown, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, 9.

local and continental influences, and a work that exemplifies the concerns of the larger genre of bible picture books, while also injecting its own visual style and social concerns.

The probable audience of Egerton coupled with growing dissent and change in the church, and the strongly implied intention to entertain accounts for the comedic digs it takes at sacred and authoritative figures. Egerton should be understood as a protocomic, and an overtly popular production from an established genre that makes use of well-known source materials including the Bible, apocryphal stories, Petrus Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* (a Latin textbook of sacred history), and Guyart Desmoulins's *Bible Historiale* (a loose vernacular translation and reworking of the *Historia Scholastica*).⁸⁸ The Cokers write a fairly exact description of the audience, and it imagines an emerging bourgeoisie that consumes entertainment as a product, notably, before the emergence and spread of the printing press: "The Egerton Genesis was made for the entertainment of a middle-class patron and his friends. This patron relished the drama, made no pretence of scholarship or piety, and had an earthy sense of humour and a keen eye for human and societal defects. The manuscript de-emphasises theology, though figural references to the deity in the visual narrative are always reverential. The artist offers amusement to a secular patron at the expense of the revered Genesis characters; indeed, he revels in their sometimes irresponsible or tawdry behaviour. Aware of contemporary social conditions, the artist dramatizes the problems of the beggar, the tithe payer, powerless women, and ordinary shepherds."⁸⁹ In the Cokers' estimation, both the audience and the creators of the manuscript balance a culturally appropriate amount of reverence with critique. Their

⁸⁸ Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 25-7.

⁸⁹ Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 9.

use of “secular” is significant here because they are referring to a patron who is not a clergy member, but who was definitely religious and familiar with the tenets and narratives of Christianity. This era edges closer to the beginnings of the popular as a secular, industrial, Habermasian public, but the church still comprises one of the major forces in public and private life. Though we do not necessarily need Kunzle’s comic strip criteria to hem in the discussion, Egerton fits the topical/moral criterion because it launches critique at contemporary social issues and biblical figures, including “powerful persons resented by the public—selfish tyrants, ineffectual monks and doctors, venal priests, greedy traders, and quarrelling sheep herders.”⁹⁰ Egerton may comprise the first example of something like overt biblical parody, thereby providing another example to complicate the hard divide Kunzle reads between traditional, i.e. religious or legendary, and topical materials.

Key Images in Egerton

The art in Egerton treats Noah’s release of the dove and the raven differently than Holkham or the earlier Anglo-Saxon manuscripts regarding the depiction of time and the importance of the *mise en page* in rendering time. Folio 3v⁹¹ contains a tripartite panel structure, with the two smaller scenes occupying the top half of the page and one larger scene occupying the bottom half. The first scene shows Noah releasing the raven from the ark, which floats on stylized waves represented by curved black lines and a blue wash. The second scene is nearly identical except the dove departs. The third scene, double in size of the first two, depicts the dove both plucking the olive branch and

⁹⁰ Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 250.

⁹¹ See image appendix, figure 24.

returning to Noah with it. These scenes are deceptively simple; however, they demonstrate a combination of two forms of expressing temporality on one page and carefully lend visual weight to arguably the most important part of the story at hand, which is the dove's return and subsequent signaling of the end of Noah's journey. First, the viewer sees the strictly panel-based, separate sequential order of narration in which the coextensively separative and conjoining features of the rectangular panel work to build sequence along with reading order and the repetition of Noah and the ark in each scene. Second, the viewer sees the dove fetching and returning the branch within one panel. We, of course, understand that it is the same dove moving through space and time, and the dove's flight path helpfully follows left-to-right reading order. Folio 3v demonstrates that the panel is important, but not the most fundamental unit of signification in graphic narrative. The three scenes also recall Groensteen's principle of restricted arthrology, the relationships of sequentiality often governed by "linear semantic relationships" of closely related elements, including utterables, syntagmata, and sequence,⁹² which are the detectable meanings in the image, semantic relations in immediate connection, and understanding an order to the meaning. Applying all of this to fol. 3v, the viewer gathers meaning from recognizable iconography, understands that the raven leaves before the dove because of the relationship among the images, and can follow the story temporally and spatially because of the images' placement on the page and division in panels.

⁹² Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 103, 111.

The first obviously comic vignette in Egerton appears on the top half, or upper left and right panels of fol. 4v,⁹³ rendering a drunken half-naked Noah, his leering son Ham, and his embarrassed son, Shem, who covers Noah in the second scene. The pair of scenes recalls the same illustration in Holkham, but focuses less on shame in front of others or reputation—there are no passers-by in Egerton, only the two sons—and more on the sheer ridiculousness of the episode. Like the first two panels on fol. 3v depicting the raven and the dove, the artist repeats much between the two panels here. The two brothers change positions as Shem moves from turning away in shame in the first image to covering Noah in the second image. Ham points and laughs in both images, and the high level of detail given to his toothy grin and narrowed eyes is unmatched in any of the manuscript's other depictions of facial expressions. Arguably, the emphasis on his pointing and laughing indicates that the viewer should also point and laugh at Noah's drunkenness and nakedness. The upper right image contains an impressively exact reproduction of the passed-out, exposed Noah, and read together, the two images indicate events passing in quick succession. The Cokers take “sequential actions” rendered with the repetitious background and flora as evidence of the influence of stagecraft and “the suggestion of a narrative played out on a stage.”⁹⁴ That certainly may be true, but two major points complicate their assertion: one does not need to resort to the aesthetics and influence of stagecraft to see a narrative pacing device that is plainly present in the majority of pictorial narratives, both from this era and before and after. Furthermore, even if the creators of Egerton were influenced by the aesthetics or staging of mystery

⁹³ See image appendix, figure 25.

⁹⁴ Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 50, 151.

plays and other forms of drama, the overall effect remains the same as a ubiquitous device in codex-bound, page-governed visual narratives.

Egerton differs from its peers in the amount of lampooning, satirical, and even scatological images contained in the narrative. Yet to take this as an unqualified sign of modernity, as in not medieval or pre-modern, is to mistake the context from which Egerton emerged and was originally used. In other words, Egerton comprises a strong example of late medieval popular culture, but not necessarily because of the ease with which a twenty-first-century reader can conflate its more comedic material with secular, post-Habermasian mass culture. Holkham and other manuscripts contain the same mocking of the drunken, half-naked Noah episode, though not rendering Ham and Shem in such great detail.⁹⁵ The art of Egerton seems to further emphasize illicit sexual imagery, for example, depicting the Sodomites graphically on folio 11r, complete with an image of homosexual activity that has been scraped away by a reader.⁹⁶ The art at times exudes licentiousness and a comedic sense that occasionally navigates a disquieting place between violence and humor. There is also uncomplicated violence expressed clearly in the pictorial narrative, for example, on fol. 3r depicting the deaths of Cain and the guide and fol. 17r depicting the rape of Dinah.⁹⁷ The Cokers aptly describe Egerton's qualities in this respect: "It is as though the psychological and social constraints which maintained

⁹⁵ These manuscripts include the Isabella Psalter, the St. Omer Psalter, the Paduan Bible in Rovigo, and the *Spiegel historiael*. Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 49.

⁹⁶ See image appendix, figure 26. The Cokers call this censor "a moralist-scraped," 6. They also claim that "In the story of Isaac and Rebecca the artist invests the story with sexual implications that the text does not warrant. On folio 12r, upper left, Abraham's servant pats Rebecca on the rump as he presents her to Isaac, implying the development of unsuitable intimacy between the two travelers during the long journey from Harran," 177. This image may depict illicit backside-touching, but it is admittedly difficult to tell. More importantly, if it does, then the illustration provides an example of the artist diverging from the text and the art showing consistent irreverence for sacred figures, which is highly probable.

⁹⁷ See image appendix, figures 27 and 28. Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 40-3, 115-16.

the boundaries between marginal and main imagery have collapsed. Not only has the marginal material moved into the centre, but it has been radically integrated into the biblical stories, in virtually unprecedented fashion. Biblical patriarchs and their wives frequently behave almost like the apes and grotesques in the margins of earlier manuscripts. Only God is respected.”⁹⁸ Egerton differs notably in the art’s frequent and overt depictions of sex and sexual violence, but the illustration of violence and cruelty has precedent in earlier manuscripts, and as the Cokers emphasize, there remains a baseline of reverence for God. Egerton’s aesthetic looks forward to graphic narratives that focus more saliently upon war and urban squalor while maintaining a very similar depiction of the flaws of humanity.⁹⁹

Sexual and violent imagery in Egerton is notable for not only its existence, but also how it participates in and even augments the narrative strategies at work. The sequence of events on the bottom of fol. 11r and 11v renders Abraham’s intercession for Sodom, the destruction of Sodom, and the story of Lot.¹⁰⁰ These events form a larger narrative arc, but make use of continuous and episodic visual narration, relying on one large scene depicting multiple interrelated events and two smaller connected scenes, also showing multiple events, but in quick succession and separated by the borders of the grid. The drawings also employ architectural and natural scenes to suggest spatial and temporal markers, and they repeat figures to imply their importance and create intelligible emplotment. In the first image, Abraham’s intercession for Sodom carries

⁹⁸ Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 177.

⁹⁹ The Cokers attribute this license to the artist’s possible Flemish origin and, more importantly, to the socially destabilizing effects of the Black Death and the greater license to criticize authorities that it may have granted the book’s creators, 250.

¹⁰⁰ See image appendix, figures 26 and 29.

most of its visual weight on the left half of the composition, suggesting that the licentiousness and violence of the Sodomites is the central focus. This illustration depicts a walled city full of debauchery: guards assault beggars outside the city's walls, and men have sex on the roof while another watches. The picture can be read from right to left, temporally, moving from Abraham's intercession to the depravity of the city. The direction of the gesturing hands of God, Abraham, and Lot all point to the city, directing the eye counter to the weight of the drawing. The Cokers describe the panel as containing "four episodes,"¹⁰¹ yet it also appears to be deceptively "monoscenic,"¹⁰² therefore relying on particular cues to direct the reader away from simultaneity and towards events in sequence.

Folio 11v illustrates the remaining events that concern Lot and his family, the first panel of which depicts two significant events, Lot's attempt to traffic his daughters and the striking blind of the Sodomites. The image in the upper left of the quadrant grid cues the reader to a change in location through architectural details, specifically "the corbelled, crenellated wall and a gabled roof with a ventilator panel"¹⁰³ of Lot's house. Lot offers his daughters to the visiting Sodomites, who wear head coverings and prominent codpieces as they did on the previous page. Both Lot and the lead Sodomite point at his daughters with the same gesture and appear to negotiate calmly; the daughters, on the other hand, wear fretful expressions and their eyeline points to the perhaps worrisome

¹⁰¹ Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 84.

¹⁰² Natalie Crohn Schmitt defines monoscenic images as "representing consecutively only a single moment in time" as opposed to "single images representing multiple times," and remarks that "Weitzmann sees a progressive development in visual narrative in ancient art away from" continuous narration in a single image and toward monoscenic images, "Continuous Narration in the Holkham Bible Picture Book," 135. Crohn Schmitt rightly points out that Holkham contains both types of images, 135, and I would add that Egerton does as well, along with many later examples in print.

¹⁰³ Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 88.

codpieces. An angel pulls the daughters back towards the house as the Sodomite on the left, “spread-eagled” and struck blind, “seen from the rear, feels his way along the walls of the house.”¹⁰⁴ The drawing positions and dresses the blinded man just like the Sodomite who stood outside the city walls on the bottom of fol. 11r, so the reader can instantly recognize him as a Sodomite even though his back is turned. The next panel in the upper right quadrant shows the angel ushering Lot and his daughters away from the ruins of Sodom, now destroyed, and Lot’s wife turned into a pillar of salt. The city lies in a small heap in the bottom left corner of the composition, and a green hill with a jagged bolt through it separates the ruins from the angel and the fleeing people. The Cokers theorize that the bolt represents, or is, divine lightning connecting to the bottom of the pillar of salt that was Lot’s wife.¹⁰⁵ There is textual precedent for this in Genesis, and the bolt neatly serves as a temporal marker, creating emplotment, and a force that punishes Lot’s wife and changes her form. Pointing hands again serve to connect plot point, as the angel points back to the bolt and the ruins of Sodom as if urging Lot and his daughters to get out.

The remaining two panels on the bottom half of the page depict Lot’s incestuous union with his daughters, and the amount of space given to narrating the union indicates a greater emphasis on it, though the scene oddly lacks the emphasis on illicit sexuality shown in the scenes of Noah’s drunken nudity or the cavorting Sodomites. Two panels depict one event here, in contrast to the previous three panels, which all rendered multiple important events in a compressed space; this places equal visual importance, if not

¹⁰⁴ Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 88.

¹⁰⁵ Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 88.

exaggerated time, on Lot and his daughters' acts. In the bottom left scene, the elder daughter climbs into Lot's bed while the younger daughter sleeps. Without knowledge of Genesis or the meaning made in relationship to the previous and subsequent panels, the reader would have no indication that anything was amiss here. Even the next panel makes it difficult to tell, as the disrobing daughter and the daughter blowing out the candle are visually interchangeable. Because the story would have been common knowledge, however, this is less of an issue, but worth considering because of the oddity of the incestuous union not being sensationalized. There are recognizable visual cues for the viewer to clarify, and space remains for text to be placed above the drawings. The Cokers explain that the object by Lot's bed in both images is a "wine vessel surmounted by an inverted bowl" indicating Lot's "drunken state," and the daughter removing her clothes in the bottom right image reuses a visual motif "common in English and Flemish manuscripts of the first half of the fourteenth century,"¹⁰⁶ including Holkham among others. This section of the pictorial narrative provides evidence for the depiction of time in compressed and elongated schemes and for the simultaneously connective and separative functions of the visual narratives. The Sodom and Lot story also demonstrates how a viewer or reader's body of knowledge functions constitutively as does the method followed by the maker or makers of the image, adding another dimension of collectivity onto the more materially tangible production of the artist or artists and scribe.

Generic Growth and Transitional Media: *Bibliae Pauperum* and Threads of Continuity among Technological Change

¹⁰⁶ Coker Joslin and Coker Joslin Watson, *The Egerton Genesis*, 90.

Biblia Pauperum is a dense signifier: It is at once a kind of book, the name of a genre, and the referent for a specific visual and narrative design that presents biblical stories in a typological relationship, often uniting figures or events along thematic similarities. Like the psalter, the *Biblia Pauperum* is a popular production (both as a genre and a specifically-functioning book) used by many people, though its reach and variety may not have been nearly as wide as the psalter's. *Biblia Pauperum* is also a somewhat misleading name appended to the genre anachronistically centuries after the first one appeared, as Avril Henry writes: "However inappropriate, the name is unavoidable. *Biblia Pauperum* has been the accepted title since Heineken first used it in print in 1769. [...] The misnomer has been approved by mere usage."¹⁰⁷ The *Biblia Pauperum* spawned a significant body of copies, and ostensibly a growth in the use of books as private devotional materials. *Bibliae Pauperum* exist on a large continuity of quality in materials, and there are manuscript, xylograph, and press-printed *Bibliae Pauperum*. London, British Library, Stowe MS 7 and Additional MS 15705 are both manuscript *Bibliae Pauperum*. Stowe 7 has a much more homemade aesthetic and contains some scribbling over the illustrations and text, practice of handwriting and letterforms, and some doodles in the margins and over the illustrations. Additional 15705 has more aesthetically refined drawings and a lot more text, but exhibits many signs of use as well. British Library Blockbook C.9 d.2 comprises one of many editions, called

¹⁰⁷ Avril Henry, *Biblia Pauperum: A Facsimile and Edition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 3. Henry writes many points against the name: "It means 'Bible of the Poor,' but is inaccurate, as well as being uninviting in its Latin. The *Biblia Pauperum* is not a Bible (or a substitute for one); clearly it was not for the simple poor, who did not buy books, let alone read Latin—especially heavily abbreviated Latin printed in black letter of peculiar illegibility. *Biblia Pauperum* is not even likely to have been the original name. It does appear on two medieval copies of the work, but so do other titles. On the other hand, the name seems also to have been used for any kind of selected, vaguely biblical material, for it is occasionally given to medieval Bible indices, selections, and interpretations," 3.

states, of the xylographic blockbooks of the *Biblia Pauperum*, displaying same images and very similar quality prints. The first xylographic printed *Bibliae Pauperum* comprise “a transitional form of publication between the production of manuscripts by hand and the printing of books by movable type,” and thus constitute an example of continuity (in collective production, use of iconography, and popularity of material) and rupture (employing systematized narrative strategies, changing technological means of production, and the new ability to have near exact reproductions of images and text). All the examples mentioned here, whether manuscript or early print, represent iterations of this very popular genre manifested through different technologies and different levels of quality. The manuscript *Bibliae Pauperum* represent the continuity of manuscript culture after the advent of print,¹⁰⁸ and the xylographic *Bibliae Pauperum* represent medial textual production. I have selected these three iterations to show the variety within what is typically understood to be a rigidly schematized book, and to demonstrate their

¹⁰⁸ British Library, MS Stowe 7, a hand-drawn manuscript *Biblia Pauperum*, was produced in England or the Netherlands, and evinces a stylized, spare aesthetic with colorful sketchy illustrations. It has a relatively complete custodial history, with named owners dating back to the fifteenth century, the century in which it was made. Unlike the xylographic and later print *Biblia Pauperum* it does not follow the twelve-part typological scheme, but the artist does pair Old Testament and typologically related New Testament scenes. The pictorial scheme combines the narrative strategies of the more sumptuously illustrated and explicitly narrative bible picture books with the typological framework of the later printed *Biblia Pauperum*. The overall effect is more briefly episodic than the bible picture books, but the typological connections help the reader to form theologically appropriate meaning while also creating a narrative and temporal scheme based upon the connection amongst the various figures and episodes of the Old Testament and New Testament. Often the Old Testament episodes are on a full page while New Testament episodes are set in a smaller frame surrounded by images of the heads of biblical patriarchs. The drawings and hand are quite different near the end: the hand has a more professional gothic blackletter appearance and the drawings are less sketchy and more carefully colored. In contrast, the hand from beginning to folio 53r appears to be less the product of a professional scribe and more quickly rendered. At folio 53v, there is a drawing of God looking over an architectural frame containing Job and his family, seated at a long dining table. Like Stowe 7, British Library, MS Additional 15705 was produced in the fifteenth century and is of either Dutch or English origin. Unlike Stowe 7, much of Additional 15705 follows an alternating pattern of leaves in which illustrated pages follow pages with text on them and lacks New Testament illustrations. The illustrated pages contain a mostly consistent framed grid in which eight heads border the page and two Old Testament episodes and two classically-influenced animal drawings sit in the middle in four frames.

pervasive popularity. There are also later xerographic, movable type-printed *Bibliae Pauperum* such as the eighteenth-century “Smaller Biblia Pauperum,”¹⁰⁹ which has a greater emphasis on the Gospels of the four evangelists, but are clear outgrowths of the original medieval *Biblia Pauperum*.

Before Metalcuts and Movable Type: The First Printed *Bibliae Pauperum*

The first series of printed *Bibliae Pauperum* were xylographic blockbooks made from an intaglio printing process using carved wooden blocks and ink to create an impression on a page. British Library Blockbook C.9 d.2 is one of a few surviving states of a forty-page version of the *Biblia Pauperum*.¹¹⁰ The blockbook with its distinctive page layout was the product of up to four people, in Henry’s estimation: “First, there is the person who invented the compositions (he might, for example, have provided rough drawings for the printing atelier, or he might have been simply the originator of a set of pictures used without his knowledge as source material). Second, there is the person who modified these originals for the woodblock, adjusting their proportions, removing any detail impractical in the medium. Third, there is the person who transferred the original designs to the block. Fourth, there is the cutter. These four might in theory be one and the same.”¹¹¹ As Henry’s list of one to four hypothetical makers attests, the changes in technology and production methods did not eliminate collective production, and it is probable that more than one person made or at least contributed to the making of the forty-page *Biblia Pauperum*.

¹⁰⁹ See image appendix, figure 30.

¹¹⁰ See Henry, *Biblia Pauperum*, 4; Alfred C. Labriola and John W. Smeltz, *The Bible of the Poor [Biblia Pauperum]: A Facsimile and Edition of the British Library Blockbook C.9 d.2* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1990), 4.

¹¹¹ Henry, *Biblia Pauperum*, 32.

Henry makes a strong case that the complex xylographic book was not for just anyone, yet she concedes that its purpose is very difficult to determine, and “Whatever that now mysterious purpose once was, it must have been important and popular, for the work has stood the test of time.”¹¹² Henry argues that the books were “for initiates, not infants,” and therefore could not have been used in an instructional capacity or appreciated by those who could not read the Latin or understand the complex typological relationships set into the narrative and the design scheme; yet, she concedes that medieval people were more likely to have habits of mind that assisted in interpreting the pictures and that the purpose behind the book is impossible to fully determine.¹¹³ The intentional complexity behind the design recalls the visual renderings of the more conceptual aspects of particular psalms in the Harley Psalter and looks forward to the narrative and aesthetic intricacies of grids in a variety of comics.¹¹⁴ The *Biblia Pauperum*’s purpose may be impossible to nail down; however, the reasonably detectable intention appears to involve meditating on the relationships among Old and New Testament narratives, most likely within a group of people, but perhaps alone for those who could afford a book.

¹¹² Henry, *Biblia Pauperum*, 4.

¹¹³ Henry, *Biblia Pauperum*, 17-19. Henry also argues that iconography grows from the literary and the written, displaying a logocentric bias that downplays the inexorably linked visual qualities of iconography and writing as the visual graphicizing of orality: “Far from being a substitute language for the illiterate, iconography in general and typology in particular has always been rooted in the literary; the Latin (and Greek) fathers *wrote*, so they were clearly not addressing the unlearned. That typological art was also found in public places does not necessarily mean that it was addressed primarily to the unlettered,” 10. I am not so much interested in whether or not the viewers were literate, or even if the narratives were made with the illiterate in mind, as I am in asserting that the popular and recognizable pictorial narrative strategies create emplotment and spatiotemporal meaning in such a way that a potentially highly varied audience could have appreciated some if not all of the narratives made in this fashion and in the manuscripts examined earlier.

¹¹⁴ See Chapter One on the Harley Psalter regarding conceptual and abstract aspects of the psalms rendered into concrete visual emplotted scenes; see also Chapter Four for analyses of uses of regular rectangular panel structures and gridded page layouts.

In contrast to Henry's reading, Christopher de Hamel characterizes the *Biblia Pauperum* as "a simple textbook," and "an album of Bible stories with pictures and quotations from the prophets,"¹¹⁵ which could have been used as an assistive device in religious instruction. Labriola and Smeltz corroborate Henry's assessment of the book's popularity, but speculate that the book could have had a variety of purposes: it may have fulfilled the needs of mendicant friars preaching to the verbally illiterate, reinforced Christian orthodoxy, aided in the efforts to convert Jewish people.¹¹⁶ Labriola and Smeltz also note that the book "was reproduced rapidly and inexpensively because of the entrepreneurial instinct of printers and booksellers who found a market for their products. Because it was easily produced from engraved blocks, the *Biblia Pauperum* may have been the popular (or 'poor man's') counterpart of the illuminated manuscript. A single set of blocks was used indefinitely and even transported from one country to another, so that reproduction became proliferation."¹¹⁷ The book may have been both a devotional item and an early commodity of popular piety, like the single-image religious prints Areford examines.¹¹⁸ Though in some ways an outlier because of its highly abbreviated Latin, the *Biblia Pauperum* still exhibits the necessarily interrelated elements key to making intelligible visual narrative. Henry writes that "Each page is like a series of chords—comprehensible only because based on recognized relationships, exciting in unexpected modulation by Prophecies and *tituli* [captions in verse in designated parts of the bottom

¹¹⁵ Christopher de Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts* (London: Phaidon, 1994), 227.

¹¹⁶ Labriola and Smeltz, *The Bible of the Poor*, viii, 5, 9. They write: "For us, the *Biblia Pauperum* is one example of a popular work in this tradition of visualizing and interpreting Scripture," 9.

¹¹⁷ Labriola and Smeltz, *The Bible of the Poor*, 5.

¹¹⁸ Areford, *The Viewer and the Printed Image in Late Medieval Europe*, 12.

of the page].”¹¹⁹ The *Bibliae Pauperum* do not render the same narratives as Holkham and Egerton, but they draw from similar sources and set events-based, episodic narration into larger relationships of meaning through the “chord-like,” structure that Henry sees. In this way, the *Biblia Pauperum* provides evidence of the cross-genre ubiquity of ongoing tropes and techniques in visual narrative and may also comprise an early example of visual narrative as a commodity form.

The Page Layout and the Narrative Scheme

The *Biblia Pauperum* differs aesthetically and formally from the bible picture books, biblical paraphrases, biblical narratives and psalters examined thus far, despite its similar emphasis on iconography and use of pictorial biblical narrative. This is true in all iterations of the *Biblia Pauperum*, but especially in the forty-page regularized xylographic blockbook and later print editions that derive from the blockbook. The most important among these differences is the particular design of its highly regularized page layout. The layout and interrelation the placement of the images and content produces the narrative scheme along with the verbal commentaries. There are twelve distinct yet interrelated elements on a typical xylographic *Biblia Pauperum* page, including text and image.¹²⁰ Throughout the book, the art depicts thematic pairs, with New Testament scenes (mostly from the life of Christ) rendered in forty Antitypes associated with Old Testament scenes or figures rendered in eighty corresponding Types.¹²¹ The *lectiones* in the upper left and right corners of the pages are basic verbal explanations of the

¹¹⁹ Henry, *Biblia Pauperum*, 17. Henry most likely describes these relationships as “chord-like” because they are interdependent and recognizable through mutual relationship, like the notes that make up a musical chord.

¹²⁰ See image appendix, figure 31.

¹²¹ Henry, *Biblia Pauperum*, 3-17.

relationship between the Types and the Antitype, which appear in the three large images at the center of the page. The Types lie to the left and right of the Antitype, and the three images form the primary visual culmination of interrelated textual and pictorial elements. The *tituli*, as mentioned above, at the bottom left, center, and right of the page, provide verse captions that Henry describes as “gnomic in compression, often punning, and usually meaning more than one thing at once.”¹²² The thematically-related Prophecies appear on four scrolls “emanating from the four demi-figures representing Old Testament authors,”¹²³ who appear within arcaded panels, two in the top center and two in the bottom center of the page. The arcades form an architectural element of the blockbook *Biblia Pauperum* pages, which also contain frames in the center containing geometric designs on the spandrels, to simultaneously split and join each part of the layout. These architectural elements do not control the pacing of the narrative in the same way that the buildings and columns did in Holkham and Egerton or the Anglo-Saxon-era manuscripts; however, they share an important, coextensively joining and separating function like those architectural elements and gutters in later comics and graphic narratives. Because the narrative scheme is wholly based in typology, its presentation of time is always multiple. There is the time of the Old and New Testaments, linked together by the pictorial elements on the page, but there is also the time of the reader, working to understand these elements in concert and his or her place within them. Additionally, there is almost another level of diegesis at work in the typological narrative because it reflects the Christian theological concept of God as multitemporal, seeing or existing in all times.

¹²² Henry, *Biblia Pauperum*, 8. Henry theorizes that 114 of the 120 *tituli* were written by the creators of the *Biblia Pauperum*, and that they may have been the product of the “picture-designer,” 8.

¹²³ Henry, *Biblia Pauperum*, 8.

To read typological narratives is, of course, to meditate on the interrelated meanings of the types and antitypes; yet, functionally, the reading necessitates a constant temporal negotiation not totally unlike the temporal negotiation required by other visual narratives.

Key images in Blockbook C.9 d.2

The narratives found in Blockbook C.9 d.2 occur in large part because of the relationships among recognizable iconography within typologically connected scenes. The temporal qualities of the narrative function somewhat differently than Egerton or Holkham because the *Biblia Pauperum* emphasizes the eternal and extemporal elements of Christianity, which Labriola and Smeltz describe as a “panoramic outlook—from the Annunciation to the Apocalyptic union of the blessed souls with the Lord,” and “a view whereby history unfolds *sub specie aeternitatis*, or under the eye of God and according to his plan.”¹²⁴ To an extent, all western Christian pictorial narratives carry this scheme, but many visual narratives such as Holkham and Egerton or Junius 11 and the illustrated Hexateuch balance clear movement in time with the sense of cyclical occurrences and timelessness because they rely on said movement for emplotment, visually and otherwise. The blockbook’s images highlight single events from different related eras, so the narrative emerges from the connections among events as the reader observes each of the intertwined elements on each page and the thematic bonds among different pages. The main triad of images, two Types and the Antitype, exemplifies Groensteen’s second plane of meaning in restricted (restrained) arthrology, the syntagm,¹²⁵ the relationship of the

¹²⁴ Labriola and Smeltz, *The Bible of the Poor*, 8-9.

¹²⁵ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 103.

current panel to the panel read immediately before and immediately after, which builds narrative coherence through the reader's acts of interpretation.

Page a's central image is the Annunciation,¹²⁶ flanked at left by the fall of Eve and at right by Gideon's military success and miraculous fleece. The *lectiones* assist in establishing the fundamental relationship among the images, and the Prophecies and *tituli* exemplify and extend the themes of the New Testament Antitype's relationship to the Old Testament Types, which in this case prefigure the Annunciation and Mary's newfound knowledge expressed in the central image. She sits in front of an altar, looking down at an open book, which could represent the Old Testament, while the angel Gabriel holds a lily and speaks to her via a speech scroll unwinding from his hand.¹²⁷ Above the two of them, the Trinity emanates from a cloud, and rays of light descending toward Mary imply the occurrence of the miraculous conception of Christ. The left Type depicts Eve up against the tree of knowledge, apple in hand, looking into the eyes of the very upright serpent. God pops out of the top of the tree, reiterating the surveillant role found in many other depictions of Eve's fall. Labriola and Smeltz read the difference in Eve's and Mary's postures as a reflection of their respective inner states;¹²⁸ Eve willfully disobeys and visually parallels the snake's posture, while Mary obediently sits and visually parallels Gabriel's posture. The right Type depicts Gideon on his knees, looking up to an angel, hands in a supplicating gesture. He has removed a piece of armor, and a pile of fleece lies on the ground in front of Gideon. According to Labriola and Smeltz, the fleece is wet while the ground is dry, and represents the humanity of Christ, the anointing

¹²⁶ See image appendix, figure 33.

¹²⁷ Labriola and Smeltz, *The Bible of the Poor*, 15, 57, 99, 143-44.

¹²⁸ Labriola and Smeltz, *The Bible of the Poor*, 144.

of Christ and Christ's blood. Gideon's weapons prefigure the *arma Christi*, signifying Christ's victory over Satan.¹²⁹ The miraculous fleece also represents Mary's being distinct from the rest of humanity, as she was conceived without sin.¹³⁰ The left Type overtly renders sin and the failure of the religion's first significant woman, which is offset or counterbalanced by the success of the Virgin Mary. The right Type depicts physical and spiritual victory, and previews victories to come, which can manifest only through the birth of Christ, thus forming a relationship with the center Antitype depicting the Annunciation. The verbal text assists in explaining the relationships at work, but the visual narrative implies connection on its own through tropes and iconography that would have been highly recognizable. The temporal element progresses and doubles back, as each image necessarily relates to the Antitype and invites such a reading. This directs the reader or viewer to recognize Mary as "the second Eve"¹³¹ and the progenitor of the sacrificial lamb who will be victorious in the future. On their own, each image depicts an important event, but read in juxtaposition, they form the typological relationship that comprises the central narrative force of the *Biblia Pauperum*.

Henry notes that the blockbook provides a series of thematic pairs; consequently, particular pages, such as a and b, should be read not only in sequence, but also together, two at a time.¹³² Page b's central Antitype depicts the Nativity, and again renders Mary looking down placidly into a book. In this picture, she lies on a birthing couch¹³³ with

¹²⁹ Labriola and Smeltz, *The Bible of the Poor*, 144

¹³⁰ See *The Protevangelium of James* in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, ed. J. K. Elliott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 58-9.

¹³¹ Labriola and Smeltz, *The Bible of the Poor*, 144. See image appendix, figure 34.

¹³² Henry, *Biblia Pauperum*, 4-6.

¹³³ Labriola and Smeltz, *The Bible of the Poor*, 16, 58, 100, and 145. Labriola and Smeltz describe a "chaise longue," but that is anachronistic, and ignores the iconographic precedent of prominent biblical women on birthing couches, often seen in the Old English Hexateuch.

Joseph at her side and the baby Jesus above her in a cradle being attended by an ox and an ass. The left Type depicts Moses witnessing the burning bush while tending his flock. Moses holds his hand to his face as if to shield himself from the light of the flames while God again pops out of the foliage, similarly to the left Type on page a. A shoeless Moses indicates that “the ground is holy. God then calls Moses to be his prophet.”¹³⁴ Labriola and Smeltz describe the burning bush as a type for the Virgin Birth, and assert a relationship between Old and New Testaments symbolized by the ox as an evangelist’s symbol and “sacrificial animal” and the ass as a key figure in the flight into Egypt and the return from Egypt, and Christ’s entry into Jerusalem.¹³⁵ The right Type illustrates Aaron and his sons performing priestly duties in front of a large altar topped with seven candles. Aaron holds a large round censer as his sons stand to the left of the altar. The central candle “contains Aaron’s sprouting rod, on top of which a dove has alighted,” which Labriola and Smeltz read as a parallel to Joseph’s staff, referencing an incident in the *Protevangelium of James* in which “God’s approval of Joseph [as Mary’s spouse] manifested by the emergence of a dove from his staff.”¹³⁶ Like the Types depicted on page a, the Types here create and participate in the same temporal framework in which the reader is expected to understand that the ancient events foreshadow the events in the central Antitype. The thematic pairing of the Annunciation and the Nativity completes two of the blockbook’s four depictions of Christ’s conception and infancy, and the combination of the visual repetition of Mary and the consistent and exactly reproduced page layout encourages the reader to read and interpret a and b together. Clearly, a

¹³⁴ Labriola and Smeltz, *The Bible of the Poor*, 146.

¹³⁵ Labriola and Smeltz, *The Bible of the Poor*, 146.

¹³⁶ Labriola and Smeltz, *The Bible of the Poor*, 146-47. See also *The Protevangelium of James*, 60-61.

different spatiotemporal scheme emerges here; arguably, the regular structure of the page layout and the typological format induces the reader to understand the way the blockbook renders time. Therefore, the narrative springs not only from the succession of typologically related events, but also from the audience's participation, which is induced by a cursory knowledge of the iconography and/or the ability to read the guiding text and interpret repetition in the visual narrative.

Conclusions

Even with a significantly different and new technology emerging alongside manuscripts, an integrated book culture persists. The invention and expansion of print was concurrent with continuity of manuscript production, and both media forms and technologies provided productive and reproductive platforms for popular genres. As print became more and more commonplace—and expanded through England, which was slower to adopt and spread the new methods of production than France, Germany, and the Netherlands—more materials of diverse themes and qualities, from the devotional to the burlesque and from the didactic to the political, were made and distributed widely. The image, in the graphic narrative and in its single-leaf forms, remains key in all of this. Because of the ephemeral and fragile quality of incunabula and single-image prints, a significant survival rate is highly improbable. Yet, the surviving examples from this transitional period continue to underscore the persistence of graphic narratives and the ubiquity of their methods of rendering popular materials, especially well-known extracanonical religious stories, even in more difficult texts like the xylographic *Biblia Pauperum*. In the repetition and proliferation of manuscript alongside the development and growth of print, we see an embodiment of continuity realized through the various

textual productions. The works herein are materially discrete but related in content and function; they represent a whole set of visual narratives through their individual extant editions. The printed *Biblia Pauperum* from this era attest to the continuity of visual narrative in print, not the establishment of visual narrative because of print technology. Print and innovations in printing methods do not produce visual narrative *ex nihilo*, though they eventually enable a speed of reproduction and quality of design that feeds into the era of broadsides, etchings, and caricature, which will be examined in the following chapter.

Chapter Three

When Is an Auteur not an Auteur? The Rise of the Single Author/Artist Model in Graphic Narratives from the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries

Part One: The Public Sphere and the Changing Market

Thus far we have seen the persistence of collectively-produced, popular visual narrative across changing technologies and methods of production and consumption. Print establishes itself and grows to be a dominant technology; within that technology, innovations in creating and printing illustrations, such as chemical etching and lithography, become more common. From the expansion of print to the eras of its regularization and consolidation, a sea change occurs in the financial and cultural capital of printing. These developments begin in the age of Absolutism, but the chaos of the Thirty Years War (1618-48), the English Civil War (1642-49), and other conflicts of the seventeenth century provides unstable economic ground for the proliferation and decentralization of print that begins in the eighteenth century and surges in the nineteenth. The flourishing of print in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries occurs coextensively with growing sociocultural emphasis on the individual in the European Enlightenment and Romantic eras.¹ S. H. Steinberg calls the period of printing from 1550

¹ I use these generally accepted names for historical periods to indicate a time spanning from the early seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century. The delineation of time here coincides with the start of Jacques Callot's professional career and extends to the end of Rodolphe Töpffer's career. Callot began illustrating and engraving professionally in 1608 or 1609; see Howard Daniel, *Callot's Etchings* (New York: Dover, 1974), xii, and Antony Griffiths, "Callot: Miseries of War," *Disasters of War: Callot, Goya, Dix* (Manchester: Hayward Gallery and Arts Council Publications, 1998), 12. Töpffer continued to produce illustrations and refine prints of them until the months preceding his death in 1846; see David Kunzle, *Rodolphe Töpffer: Father of the Comic Strip* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 130-33.

to 1800 “the era of consolidation,” as few technological innovations occurred, though trade and production roles changed markedly:

The book trade evolved towards its present shape as booksellers began to function as publishers, contracting with the authors and placing manufacture with printers, and sold their books direct to the public and wholesale through pamphlet dealers or chapmen. Tradesmen in the provinces and the colonies undertook all these activities and more besides, such as newspaper publishing and a wider range of retail selling than simply books. The professional author entered the arena as an independent force between the publisher and the public. The reading public widened considerably and in the process changed its character. Publishers and authors had to cater for new readers with new tastes, different from the fairly homogeneous public of churchmen, academics, and sophisticated gentry whom a Gutenberg, Aldus, Stephanus, or Caxton supplied with reading matter. The spread of literacy gradually induced new sections of the population to adopt the habit of reading. [...] The periodical and newspaper press became the chief vehicles of spreading knowledge among this new public.²

Steinberg does not mention engravers here, though many illustrated books were produced in this era, and engravers represent another significant part of the collective effort in production and distribution that he articulates. The public to which Steinberg refers is the secular bourgeoisie that Habermas identifies as a new social group of this time period, a

² S. H. Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, revised by John Trevitt (London: The British Library and The Oak Knoll Press, 1996), 74.

group created by capitalism, the decline of absolutist states, and the withdrawal of the Church from aspects of public life.

By the seventeenth century, the Church no longer comprises the central locus of institutional control over cultural production; monarchy, parliamentary government and bureaucracies, market forces, and a commodity-driven public audience also exert influence over cultural production. The waning of the Church coupled with an overtly nonreligious focus in many of the popular pictorial narratives of this period leads critics³ to typify protocomics as necessarily secular and popular in the contemporary Habermasian sense. That stance, however, ignores the popular pictorial narrative forms that came before the works of Jacques Callot, William Hogarth, Francisco de Goya, and Rodolphe Töpffer. The desire to excise popular religious material from the continuum of visual narratives that includes the works of those artists often stems from an anachronistic misunderstanding of religion and its place in both institutional and popular culture in earlier historical periods, especially the Middle Ages. The reticence of comics scholars to include religious materials may also be credited to the opinions in the eighteenth century that the printing press “would free humanity from subservience to any church that claimed to offer special access to the truth,” because “It held the promise of bringing about an ultimate triumph of reason over revelation, of science over superstition.”⁴ Such an historical precedent combines with commonplaces in humanistic scholarship that

³ David Kunzle rejects religious narratives in his criteria for what constitutes an early comic strip though he devotes an entire chapter to religious propaganda, as noted above in Chapter Two. See *The Early Comic Strip*, Vol. 1, 3, 11-39. Thierry Smolderen does not explicitly reject religious narratives as Kunzle does, but he conceives of comics as directly related to “literature and the modern press,” and more specifically the novel. See *The Origins of Comics from William Hogarth to Winsor McCay*, trans. Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 3, 9.

⁴ Elizabeth Eisenstein, *Divine Art, Infernal Machine*, 153-54.

binarize religion and reason, and seem to dovetail with the anti-establishment posture taken by many who write on comics.⁵ A defensive stance developed in early comics scholarship⁶ argues that comics and their immediate predecessors are always already on the outside of institutionally approved art or literature, which includes religious material. The idea that they are “inherently subversive is, of course, simply another in a long line of essentialist definitions of the form.”⁷ The turn, expressed explicitly in this era, towards realism and secular topicality forms the *link* between contemporary comics and medieval visual narratives rather than the origin point of the impulse to contemporary visual narrative itself or an overt rejection of accepted cultural forms.⁸

The combination of the receding influence of the Church with the rapid growth of an early consumer-capitalist market creates new social phenomena. Within the changing cultural landscape, there arises a much larger set of commodities and a consuming populace in the form of the expanding bourgeoisie. According to Habermas, this bourgeoisie emerges in the seventeenth century but truly cements itself in the eighteenth

⁵ I am not interested in sparking a debate about the value or lack thereof of religion; rather, I wish to stress that the imaginary binaries of medieval/modern, religion/science, “Dark Ages”/Enlightenment, etc., frequently tint our understandings of what constitutes popular culture and its relationships with institutional culture. Comics have a period of countercultural production and experienced institutional rejection in the United States, and to some degree, in the United Kingdom; however, they are no more inherently countercultural than the people who make them. Examples abound: The Church debated the place of images and popular piety, labeling some of its own heretics. Goya was a court painter who was critical of the monarchy. The beloved Belgian comic *Tintin* reads at times like imperialist propaganda. In other words, making a monolithic statement that a general *media form* is inherently rebellious, or alternately inherently servile to institutions, oppressive or otherwise, obscures the complexity and variety of said media form. In the case of visual narratives, such statements relegate important recurring and typical elements to obscurity and impoverish longer histories of the form from protocomic to comic.

⁶ Bart Beaty, *Comics Versus Art* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 46-8.

⁷ Beaty, *Comics Versus Art*, 46.

⁸ None of this is to say that pictorial narrative art was not satirical or openly critical of politics, religion, or, especially in the cases of Callot and Goya, warfare. Rather, the outsider status claimed as a mark of comics provides only one, albeit important but limiting, facet of twentieth- and twenty-first-century comics and graphic narratives, and obscures more expansive, productive discussions of the form and its ancestors. See note 5 above.

century as a group of participants in the newly created secular social space of the “bourgeois public sphere.”⁹ This section of society developed the institutionalized consumption and critique of art, including literature, pictorial arts, and the theater.¹⁰ It is tempting to find a sort of literary and artistic modernity here because, as Habermas points out via Raymond Williams, “‘art’ and ‘culture’ owe their modern meaning of spheres separate from the reproduction of social life to the eighteenth century.”¹¹ These two terms

⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 1-2, 11, 14-20. Habermas categorizes the middle class of the eighteenth century as significantly different from the guilds-based mercantile classes of the late Middle Ages and Early Modern period because of the following: This bourgeoisie occupied a space between the private concerns of the household and the territories of the state and the royal court, as their patterns of participation in public debate and civil society centered around purchasing commodities, cultivating taste, and gathering in public spaces such as “the coffee houses, the salons, and the *Tischgesellschaften* (table societies)” to discuss items of common interest, 29-30. Habermas typifies these cultural shifts as follows: “To the degree, however, to which philosophical and literary works and works of art in general were produced for the market and distributed through it, these culture products became similar to that type of information: as commodities they became in principle generally accessible. They no longer remained components of the Church’s and court’s publicity of representation; that is precisely what was meant by the loss of their aura of extraordinariness and by the profaning of their once sacramental character. [...] the same process that converted culture into a commodity (and in this fashion constituted it as a culture that could become an object of discussion to begin with) established the public as in principle inclusive. However exclusive the public might be in any given instance, it could never close itself off entirely and become consolidated as a clique; for it always understood and found itself immersed within a more inclusive public of all private people, persons who—insofar as they were propertied and educated—as readers, listeners, and spectators could avail themselves via the market of objects that were subject to discussion. The issues discussed became ‘general’ not merely in their significance, but also in their accessibility: everyone had to *be able* to participate,” 36-7. Of course, due to high rates of illiteracy and poverty, not *everyone* was able to participate, but a new class emerged with these principles of participation in mind. The ethos of participation in shared concerns led to a larger field of taste-making and judgment that did not necessarily require expertise. The lack of insularity Habermas points out shows that coterie culture did not hold exclusive ownership over these objects. As literacy and inexpensive print materials became more accessible in the nineteenth century, more citizens were able to become part of this public.

¹⁰ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 41.

¹¹ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 37. See also Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), xv-xvii. Williams defines “art” and “culture” as key words that profoundly changed in meaning by the eighteenth century: “From its original sense of a human attribute, a ‘skill,’ it [art] had come, by the period with which we are concerned, to be a kind of institution, a set body of activities of a certain kind. An *art* had formerly been any human skill; but *Art* now, signified a particular group of skills, the ‘imaginative’ or ‘creative’ arts. *Artist* had meant skilled person, as had *artisan*; but *artist* now referred to these selected skills alone. Further, and most significantly, *Art* came to stand for a special kind of truth, ‘imaginative truth,’ and *artist* for a special kind of person, as the words *artistic* and *artistical*, new in the 1840s, show. [...] *Genius*, from meaning ‘a characteristic disposition,’ came to mean ‘exalted ability,’ and a distinction was made between it and *talent*. [...] Before this period [1780-1950], it [culture] had meant, primarily, ‘tending of natural growth,’ and then, by analogy, a process of human training. But this latter use, which usually had been a culture of something, was changed in the nineteenth century, to *culture* as such, a thing in itself,” xv-xi.

also owe the meaning that begins to extract “art” and “culture” from their context of labor to the sociocultural and economic developments this century. The economic and cultural changes from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries represent a rupture with the past in terms of the reach and dissemination of verbal tracts and pictorial narratives. Art, news, and associated visual narratives circulate more widely and rapidly than ever before and begin to vary more in kind and quality. Increases in the production and availability of visual narratives made them commodities, and subsequently, a collector’s market emerges alongside the casual purchasers. Habermas identifies shared participation in taste-making and purchasing as a key feature in the new bourgeoisie, and after the turn of the nineteenth century, technological advances in printing and distribution enable a substantially wider audience to so participate. Steinberg credits the developments in printing during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for enabling a larger audience to participate: “[This stage in printing] was not a break but rather a sudden leap forward. It affected the technique of printing, the methods of publication, and distribution, and the habit of reading. Compositors and printers, publishers and booksellers, borrowers and buyers of books adopted, or were forced into, new ways of production and consumption.”¹² Steinberg characterizes this period as a growth rather than a hard break because increased mechanization did not destroy the role of the creator or craftsman, whether their role in labor was to make typefonts, illustrations, prints, or to distribute the printed materials.¹³ These significant changes in the physical making and dissemination of pictorial narratives maximized the audience and strengthened the economy

¹² Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, 136.

¹³ Steinberg describes the results of increased mechanization as a swelling of product, audience, and profit rather than solely as an influx of lesser-quality work. See *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, 136.

surrounding them. Yet for all the changes, the visual narratives examined in this chapter demonstrate a great deal of functional persistence in the collective means of production and typical semiotic, narrative, and aesthetic techniques found in the *Biblia Pauperum*, the Bible picture books, and the Anglo-Saxon illustrated manuscripts examined earlier in Chapters One and Two.

The Author and the Individual

Changes in both the culture and the market catapult the growth of single-artist/author figures, whose fame and attachment to shorthanded single names place the collectivity of their works under erasure. The shift from anonymous scribal work, authorship, and illustration to naming printer, publisher, author and illustrator to, ultimately, shorthanding into one name, occurs in large part because of the emergence of copyright laws,¹⁴ advertising, and the conflation of art and intellectual property with an individual person or name, especially the author or artist. As Steinberg explains:

The gradual divergence of printer, publisher, and bookseller can be traced through the various forms which the imprint has taken. All three agents still appear until the end of the seventeenth century. [...] It is a sign of the growing importance of the publisher over the printer that the latter's name most easily disappeared from the imprint. Both of these professions [of publisher and author] may be said to

¹⁴ The Copyright Act of 1709 benefited English authors and publishers, and established the author as a key figure in the trade, as did the French copyright law of 1793, eliminating older patronage-based systems. The trade in pirated books remained relatively brisk from the beginning of print to the nineteenth century. See Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, 97, 107, 110, 112-13, 148-49.

have become established in the modern connotation of the terms, so far as Great Britain is concerned as a result of the Copyright Act of 1709.¹⁵

Gradually the name of the author or artist takes prominence over the name of the publisher. It is important to remember, though, that publishers' names never disappear entirely from any published graphic narrative. Our shorthanding stems from institutional and market categories, and the present-day lens that also valorizes the single figure as a stand-in for their entire body of work. Roland Barthes asserts that "The author is a modern figure, a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual, of, as it is more nobly put, 'the human person.' It is thus logical that in literature it should be this positivism, the epitome and culmination of capitalist ideology, which has attached the greatest importance to the 'person' of the author."¹⁶ Increased legislation and bureaucratic interest in regulating trade combine with the cultural valorization of the individual and an audience made up of Habermas's bourgeois secular, taste-making public, moving toward a cultural environment in which the single name begins to carry the significant cultural capital it already did in political and economic venues.¹⁷

Comics scholars have dedicated a significant body of work to establishing William Hogarth and Rodolphe Töpffer as the individual progenitors of the comic strip,

¹⁵ Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, 106-07.

¹⁶ Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 142-43.

¹⁷ The New Critics of the twentieth century do a great deal to reinforce the notion of the solitary artistic genius, which maps on to academic comics discourse as the single-author/artist model or a credit only to one member of a collective that produces a graphic narrative. Barthes notes this in relationship to the personage of the author in "The Death of the Author," 143.

comic book, and graphic novel. These attributions probably occur because critics have long classified Hogarth's series as logical corollaries to the novel. Smolderen assesses these pictorial narratives as "readable images between the *news* and the *novel*—that is, between journalism and the new literary form that had begun in England and revolutionized novelistic writing itself."¹⁸ Hogarth himself was conscious of literary genres via subject matter as well as a connection to the theatre via the pantomime, or "dumb show," and stated that his serial images contain "something of that kind of connection which the pages of a book have."¹⁹ Scholars of Töpffer also maintain his comics' literary qualities. Töpffer himself forged such connections through his academic work, and called his own serial narratives "*histoire en estampes*," which Kunzle translates as "story in prints, picture stories." These works have subsequently been labelled as literary by critics, and folded into the rise of the novel and bourgeois culture. Jacques Callot and his art receive relatively less scholarly attention outside of art history, though his pictorial narratives represent significant documentation of war, and profoundly influenced Francisco de Goya, and, arguably, the whole genre of comics journalism.²⁰ While these artists' individual talents cannot be ignored, their classification as aberrant, individual geniuses obscures much in the way of understanding their works as points on a continuum of popular, collectively-produced, ubiquitous visual narrative. The lone genius discourse serves a particular institutional point of view, tied to the New Critics and the Enlightenment, a discourse that grants pictorial narrative value insofar as

¹⁸ See also Smolderen, *The Origins of Comics*, 3, 8-10.

¹⁹ Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 299.

²⁰ Comics journalism refers to documentary works of nonfiction investigative journalism in comics. This genre is a product of cartoonists in the 1990s, though its origins arguably lie with Callot. See Hillary L. Chute, *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2016), 39-42.

it is literary in a limited sense. There is nothing wrong with ascribing literary qualities to these or any other pictorial narratives per se; however, the attribution of literary qualities usually involves the conflation of visual narratives with the novel, an academically accepted literary form that emerges from the specific sociocultural grounds explored above. Reading typical modes of pictorial narrative in this manner excludes or at least downplays not only collective production, but also the mutability of the rendered²¹ graphic narrative. Such an approach also tends to privilege the verbal elements over the visual elements that create the narrative pacing and emplotment in the first place. The pictorial narratives of Callot, Hogarth, Goya, and Töpffer must be examined in terms of their material production, effect, and position in the social relations of their own time, and not just because they create a convenient (and imaginary) origin of literary modernity and intellectual secularity for the comic.

Part Two: Works of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Jacques Callot: Artist, Laborer

Jacques Callot's body of work comprises portraiture, landscapes, religious scenes, and a nascent form of pictorial reporting, which later becomes comics journalism, in *Les Misères et Malheurs de la Guerre*. *Les Grandes Misères de la Guerre* comprises a sequence of seventeen consecutively numbered images (eighteen including the title page), and *Les Petites Misères de la Guerre* comprises a sequence of six smaller plates, probably from an incomplete series, published posthumously. Together, these two series are referred to as *Les Misères et Malheurs de la Guerre*, hereafter *Les Misères*. Before

²¹ "Rendered" meaning drawn, painted, etched, printed, or digitally composed.

analyzing the particularities of the narrative sequence, it is important to recognize technological innovations that enabled Callot's prolific output, and his status as a laborer, and his relationship with publisher Israel Henriet, without whom Callot would have created and published significantly less. Callot "developed or adapted a special tool, known as the *échoppe*, which imitated the line produced by the engraver's burin [a steel cutting tool with a sharp point]."²² Callot's use of this tool enabled him to make plates at the rapid rate of etching while maintaining the detailed line quality of engraving. After learning engraving and printmaking in Rome, Callot worked for the Tuscan court until his return to Nancy, France in 1621 where he was slated to work for the Duke of Lorraine, but the Duke's financial assistance and commissions never materialized.²³ I include this biographical note because the situation allowed Callot to produce much more and independently from creating court propaganda,²⁴ which was important, as engravers did not command the same financial or cultural capital as painters and sculptors.²⁵ The return to Nancy also led to his financial and working partnership with Israel Henriet, who published, bound, and sold *Les Misères* in a variety of editions, ranging in cost. Callot's exceptionally prolific nature was important, but his relationship with Henriet was vital.

²² Antony Griffiths, "Callot: Miseries of War," *Disasters of War: Callot, Goya, Dix* (Manchester: Hayward Gallery and Arts Council Collection Publications, 1998), 12.

²³ Griffiths, "Callot: Miseries of War," 12.

²⁴ See Griffiths, "Callot: Miseries of War," 13, 18; Howard Daniel, *Callot's Etchings: 338 Prints* (New York: Dover, 1977), xviii-xxiii.

²⁵ Susanne Anderson-Riedel notes that "The acceptance of the practice of engraving by the *Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture* in 1655 [after Callot's death] failed to establish the graphic arts as a branch of the fine arts on an equal footing with painting and sculpture. Specifically, the position of engravers at the *Académie* was inferior to that of painters and sculptors, as graphic artists continued to be excluded from the more advanced academic training programs offered by the French government." "The Sojourn of Engravers at the French Academy in Rome, 1806-1824: Artistic Voyage and its Influence on Nineteenth-Century Engraving," *Interkulturelle Kommunikation in der europäischen Druckgraphik im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert / The European Print and Cultural Transfer in the 18th and 19th Centuries / Gravure et Communication Interculturelle en Europe aux 18^e et 19^e siècles*, ed. Philippe Kaenel and Rolf Reichardt (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2007), 271.

Through his own labor and financial backing, Henriette helped to cement Callot's graphic narrative as a popular work, in the Habermasian sense, in its own time.

Shock of War, Shock of the New

Scholarly consensus dictates that *Les Misères* contained a revolutionary approach, startling in its content and highly unusual, even rare in its aesthetic. For example, Antony Griffiths asserts that "No series of such a subject had ever been seen in art before, neither in printmaking nor painting."²⁶ Hillary Chute finds that the narrative "fully inhabits itself, instantiates itself as a work of witness to war: to war's unleashing of pervasive, ubiquitous violence for which no political framework can account. *The Miseries of War*, then, documents *and* witnesses."²⁷ Certainly, the delicacy of the composition's lines belies the weight of the subject matter, and fine detail, especially in some of the more violent landscape scenes, is used to great effect. The series depicts true innovation in some important respects, yet part of the novelty must lie in the fact that one who experienced the Thirty Years War renders political commentary through a topical, documentary-like vantage point rather than an allegorical, typological, or otherwise analogical narrative framework such as those favored by artistic depictions of violence in the Middle Ages. Rupture occurs in *Les Misères*, to be sure, but to read *Les Misères* as revolutionary protest art misses the more important aspects of the work and its context.

The pictorial narrative depicts the brutality of war, but not just in terms of violence done among soldiers. *Les Misères* renders in great detail the violence done to civilians at the hands of deserting soldiers, civilians avenging themselves against those

²⁶ Griffiths, "Callot: Miseries of War," 16.

²⁷ Chute, *Disaster Drawn*, 42.

same soldiers, and the public tortures and executions of the soldiers. Diane Wolfthal maintains that this last element indicates Callot's support of harsh punishments for those who committed such violence, as seventeenth-century thinkers were preoccupied by just and unjust war, and accordingly acceptable behaviors during wartime.²⁸ Katie Hornstein corroborates this point, and indicates that a wholesale denunciation of violence, one favored by some current interpreters of Callot, is anachronistic:

[T]o focus exclusively on violence as a general negative term in relation to the experience of war during the seventeenth century is to neglect its cultural and historical import during the early modern period. The spectrum of violence depicted by Callot does not provide an easy moral judgment against it but instead reveals the problematic and often contradictory discourses that enabled wartime violence, toward civilians and soldiers alike. What is truly remarkable about these depictions is not their so-called realism or fidelity to a historical moment but rather the extent to which they confound the slippery divide between people who enact wartime violence and those who suffer from it."²⁹

Callot's stance on this issue aside, the piece's effect displays the topicality Kunzle defines as central to the early comics strip. It is perhaps more recognizable to our twenty-first-century sensibilities, as Callot recreates scenes of war to narrate and interpret, and the narrative's preoccupation with vice and virtue is secular and contextualized. Kunzle asserts that "Callot's work is a reaction to the war as a whole" rather than a documentation of "a specific historical event" that can be seen in the peer work of an

²⁸ Diane Wolfthal, "Jacques Callot's Miseries of War," *Art Bulletin*, 59 (1977): 225, 232.

²⁹ Katie Hornstein, "Just Violence? Jacques Callot's *Grandes Misères et Malheurs de la Guerre*," *University of Michigan Museums of Art and Archaeology Bulletin*, 16 (2005-06): 33.

anonymous Dutch engraver's rendering of the siege of Heidelberg, which was another event in the Thirty Years War. This assertion may be splitting hairs though, as the French army invaded Nancy, Callot's home, and his reactions take shape in the "longer and much more inflected narrative" conveyed in *Les Misères*.³⁰

Elements of Continuity

Crucial aspects of *Les Misères* are relatively new, as demonstrated above; they are the "larger spirals of meaning"³¹ growing out of the recursive pattern Kuskin uses to account for moments of rupture within an already embedded system of signification in print. Seriality and sequential narrative comprise an element of continuity from older works. Callot himself serialized his depictions of war, employing a numbering system on each image before it was printed in order to grant coherence to the narrative. Each image contains explicit and implicit commentary on the nature of war without resorting to naming specific dates or events. Here narrative time steps away from earlier pictorial narratives' negotiation among biblical time, mortal time, and readerly time. Callot's work brings the audience into the tension between ongoing and singular events placed into a narrative series through a combination of monoscenic and sequential/episodic scenes. The overarching temporal generality of the narrative reaches beyond the reportage of the invasion of Lorraine and Nancy and into a kind of paradoxical negotiation of time: these are the events of the Thirty Years War, but they are also depictions of a more timeless "depth of concern for the tragedy of war" and "a way of life which threatened to destroy

³⁰ Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 80. Kunzle explains that "no German press was able to print pictorial reports of the desperate state to which starvation drove the inhabitants," thus the first report was made by an anonymous Dutch engraver, 80.

³¹ Kuskin, *Recursive Origins*, 48.

all social organization, by attack from without and by disruption from within.”³² The temporal plasticity of visual narratives remains key to simultaneously expressing historical reportage and a kind of extemporal narrative of violence.

Each page of *Les Misères* contains one rectangular scene, encased by the edges of the plate, which function as a panel boundary, simultaneously containing and separating each scene. As each image occupies one page, the pages arguably function in this combination of limiting and conjoining also. Some editions were stitched together unbound and printed without accompanying captions, while others were bound and contained six lines of verse “added by a specialist writing engraver added in the margins underneath the designs [...] said to have been composed by one famous collector, the abbé de Marolles.”³³ The numbered narrative conveys intelligible plotment and negotiation of time independent of the verse captions, but the captions add explanatory and dramatic moral commentary on each scene. The narrative tends toward the episodic, in which one scene corresponds to one event; yet, the pictorial composition and the sheer amount of detail and activity recall the monoscenic method inherited from antiquity and the Middle Ages. *Les Misères* constitutes a strong example of the levels of meaning that Thierry Groensteen finds within the image, the sequence, and the syntagm.³⁴ For

³² Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 80.

³³ Griffiths, “Callot: Miseries of War,” 13.

³⁴ Though the levels of the sequence and the syntagm have been discussed in previous chapters, it is worth recounting them here and explaining meaning at the level of the image. Groensteen explains the three planes of meaning as follows: “The image, seen by itself, outside of all context, is, as Deleuze rightly suggests, an utterable. I can translate or express what I see inside the frame (the *what* of the monstration) in linguistic terms. Sometimes, this virtual statement will be a straight narrative [...] [To draw examples from this and the previous two dissertation chapters: Noah builds the ark, Cain slays Abel, a deserting soldier is hanged, peasants avenge themselves against the soldiers who have killed and exploited them], whereas other times, failing to perceive a dynamic internal relation to the image, I have to content myself to name the object-sign (or object-signs) that it shows. Rather than an intrinsic narrative, I will employ a more neutral term, that of immanent significance. At this elementary stage, my job as a reader is simply observation and identification. The second plane is that of syntagm, limited, in occurrence, to the triad

example, each page contains an “utterable,” that is, an explicitly intelligible event or image. Each image holds its own meaning independently of the others, but when placed in the triad of syntagmatic meaning, the temporal movement and relationships of the read page, and the immediately preceding and following pages, emerge more clearly. When read in terms of the sequential plane, *Les Misères* depicts not only the events of war, but also the cyclical suffering inflicted and endured by the soldiers and peasants, as well as the victims of opportunistic criminals. With this plane of meaning in mind, one can see why *Les Misères* fits into the sequential graphic narrative mode.

Key Images in *Les Misères*

Of the seventeen images in *Les Grandes Misères*, all follow the episodic pattern of narration while echoing monoscenic compositions through the large amount of detail and activity in relation to their small size.³⁵ Antony Griffiths asserts that the sequence’s title is misleading, and that “many have suggested that the title really ought to have been ‘The Life of a Soldier,’ and in the inventory made after Callot’s death the plates are indeed listed as *La Vie de Soldat*.”³⁶ This assertion prompts Griffiths to compare Callot’s work with the morality tales of Hogarth, which depict the successes and failures

composed of the panel that is currently being read, the panel that preceded it, and the panel that immediately follows it. At this level, my reading of the panel is already forcibly different, informed before and after by other contents with which I construct (or verify) semantic relations, on the basis of a postulate of narrative coherence. Plainly, I am now involved in interpretation. [...] The third plane of meaning is that of the sequence. The semantic articulations of the story allow me to identify and circumscribe a story segment of any length, characterized by a unity of action and/or space. The sequence allows itself to be converted into a synthetic statement that, transcending the observations and constructions of the inferior level and stopping (at least provisionally) the work of inferences, produces a global meaning that is explicit and satisfying,” *The System of Comics*, 111. I would not, as Groensteen does, discount inferences in this process, as they are at times what makes the sequence, or at least specific details of the sequence, intelligible to some readers.

³⁵ Each plate, except the slightly larger title-plate, measures between 80 and 83 millimeters in height and 185 and 187 millimeters in width. See Daniel, *Callot’s Etchings: 338 Prints*, xxiv-xxv.

³⁶ Griffiths, “Callot: Disasters of War,” 16.

according to a protagonist's vice or virtue. The series' title could be explained as the overall narrative driver, though, insofar as the miseries of war affect more than just the soldiers, as the pictorial narrative explicitly shows. The second large plate³⁷ (to distinguish from the smaller set of six) depicts an enlistment scene. Like all of the compositions in *Les Misères*, this scene is crowded. In the foreground at bottom right, soldiers approach an enlistment table under an enormous tree that casts a long shadow, extending almost to the other side of the picture. The image conveys military organization, as large groups of men holding pikes and muskets stand at attention. The figures are visually light; the enlistment table and the central battalion give the picture most of its visual weight. There is some attention to architectural detail near the left and right boundaries of the plate. At left, a castle or walled city sits in the distance and at right, military tents stand in the background. The relative calm of this scene dissipates completely in the next plate. The stark contrast this juxtaposition creates explicitly expresses not only movement in time, from enlistment to war, but also shatters the earlier calm rendered in the previous plate. The composition changes radically; the once clear sky is filled with billowing clouds of smoke and dead men and horses are strewn about the ground. The soldiers in this scene are visually heavier, that is, they appear in darker shadows and heavy blacks, making a mass of indiscriminate destruction. The verse captions make it unclear whether or not war is being glorified, or if it is a virtuous activity, but the following five scenes clearly indicate that state-sanctioned violence can inspire bloodthirstiness.

³⁷ See image appendix, figure 35.

Plates 4-8³⁸ convey the soldier's vices and cruelty, extending the violence of the battlefield into the town, farmland, and the church. Eventually the verse captions on plate 9 indicate that the soldiers are degenerate deserters, but one cannot help connecting the brutality in plate 3 to the violence in plates 4-8 because of the plates' sequential juxtaposition along with the visual repetition of the soldiers' garb and weapons. Plate 4, "looting an inn,"³⁹ creates visual chaos, as the composition induces the eye to scan left to right and then back to the center. The soldiers run out from an inn, as they drag out patrons or perhaps employees and kick one to the ground. A soldier, heavily shaded in black, runs all the way to the border of the plate, blending with the shadow of a tree, while others run in all directions in front of the inn. Perhaps the most disturbing elements of the print are the two sets of bystanders. A group of soldiers on horseback near the background of the image wait calmly, while closer to the foreground and cut off by the right edge of the plate, another group of soldiers points their pikes toward the people being assaulted. Reading plate 4 at the level of syntagmatic meaning makes the violence of plate 3 resonate all the more. Arguably, any triad in this sequence continues to amplify the violence, as the syntagmatic relationships in each triad consistently weighs the violence more heavily, both visually and in the amount of time devoted to its depiction. When juxtaposed with the preceding images of brutality, the second and last plates seem like a set of hollow gestures of nationalism and, at the end, empty court posturing.

Plate 5 further compounds the atrocities, as the domestic space of a farmhouse is violated by the soldiers' acts of rape, murder, theft, and torture. Plate 5 carries the overall

³⁸ See image appendix, figures 36 and 37.

³⁹ Kunzle, *The History of the Comic Strip Volume One: The Early Comic Strip, Narrative Strips and Picture Stories in the European Broadsheet from c.1450 to 1825*, 85.

effect of expressing episodic narrative qualities, as the previous plates do because they are all organized around a single event (enlistment, battle, looting, attacking). Yet the multiple events encapsulated in the panel also nod to monoscenic narration as the action in the image reads as simultaneous yet slightly staggered in time. The semi-monoscenic quality may be a combination of the effect of the graphic violence and how the scene negotiates space. Also, it is difficult for the observer to take in all of the acts of viciousness at once; the eye must track the details separately despite their common visual enclosure. This image makes use of highly contrasting, heavily shadowed areas and bright lights; the thieving deserters do their work in shadowed areas of the page while the rapists, murderers, and torturers are all highly visible. At right, the hearth appears almost completely blacked out with only enough light to see that thieves are taking plates and other household objects. The shadow from the hearth extends to an island in the middle of the room, also heavily shadowed, from which thieves take food. In between this heavy darkness, a bright white space with thinly lined figures shows a man bound and hanged by his feet over a fire while his tormentors look on. One of them slits a man's throat. In the middle background, behind the food theft, multiple soldiers commit rape. Another scene of rape and murder appears in the left foreground, out of the shadows. The ugliness of the scene is amplified by the careful detail with which the household space is rendered. The whole composition exudes a claustrophobic sense of violation, as there is only one way out and the soldiers block it. Regarding narrative time, this scene presents two equally compelling reading possibilities: Either we are to understand all of the events as one episode encased by the plate's edges, a burst of simultaneous acts of cruelty, or, as the eye is directed around the house by the use of light and shadows, we are to read the

events as slightly staggered, giving visual expression to the inescapability of the repeated traumas to which the victims are subjected. Such a paradoxical effect of rendering space and time is unique to visual narratives. Here the spatial and temporal plasticity creates a scene of indeterminacy and confusion, which ultimately underscores the horrors of the scene and the disorienting effects of violence.

Plates 6-8 continue to depict the soldiers' ever more ambitious cruelty, as they move away from commercial and domestic spaces to sack and burn a church, dominate a whole village, and move out toward the countryside to prey on any who cross their path. These three plates follow the narrative pattern of compounding violence while returning to a more single-event-based episodic style. This sequence informs the viewer that no place is safe, especially when the brigands embody the worst aspects of battle and have no respect for the sanctity of a place of worship. Plate 6 visually emphasizes the destruction of the church and the looting of its valuables, as the center of the image depicts the burning building, a cart full of altarpieces, and chests and a crucifix thrown to the ground in front of the soldiers. Clusters of soldiers, again committing murder and rape, populate the rest of the grounds around the church. These clusters extend all the way back to the arched gateway of the town, again providing an atmosphere of inescapability enclosed by the soldiers and the physical borders of the illustration. Plate 7 has a tripartite structure that recalls the layout of the image for Psalm 37 in the Harley Psalter.⁴⁰ Instead of God watching over the suffering Psalmist and his arms-bearing neighbors on another small hill, the sky is full of smoke from burning thatched roofs. This is not to say Callot was directly influenced by the Harley Psalter nor its model, the

⁴⁰ See image appendix, figure 16.

Utrecht Psalter, which he certainly never saw; however, the elements in the picture are highly typical in pictorial narrative. The foliage and architectural elements encase the composition, and there is a balance of elements in the left, center, and right sections of the image combined with a sense of height as a house on a small hill burns in the center background. Plate 7 expresses simultaneity because of this compositional balance—we see one event visually unified by the smoke that joins the three houses and the sky as well as the mass of soldiers, livestock, and dead bodies on the ground. The densely grouped soldiers and their victims populate the foreground and a line of soldiers directs the eye to the center house, unifying the three sections of the image. Plate 8 depicts the soldiers in the forest, performing bloody deeds of outlawry as they apprehend a traveling carriage and murder the inhabitants. The juxtaposition of the natural elements, the trees and birds flying through the sky, provides a jarring sense of dissonance as human violence perverts the otherwise neutral, natural scene. A soldier uses a tree for cover in the bottom right foreground while two others assault a man atop a boulder. Like plates 6 and 7, plate 8 shows a corpse in the foreground against the white ground, repeating and emphasizing pointless death.

The remaining plates depict a turn of fortune in the arrest and public torture and execution of the soldiers and the battered impoverished human leftovers of war. Here the shift in narrative trajectory recalls the morality tale. The narrative culminates in a final image not of violence, as one might suspect, but rather of a restoration of visual and legal order through a royal court scene. The sequence from the soldiers' arrest to the civilians' revenge lack none of the violence or despair of the previous plates. Arguably, they are

even more gruesome, as plates 10-14⁴¹ add public spectacle and five different types of torture and execution into the narrative. Plates 15 and 16⁴² examine the lingering effects of war on the soldiers, doomed to die or live out in trauma and bodily infirmity. Plate 17⁴³ renders one last chaotic event, as the peasants take their vengeance on those who terrorized them. Plate 18⁴⁴ returns to a geometrically harmonious order, as courtiers organize themselves in lines directing the viewer's eye to the monarch. In plates 10-14, visual evidence corroborates Hornstein's assertions that particular kinds of violence were understood to be just by the contemporary culture. The verse captions change tone at this point in the narrative; they describe the tortures as deserved ends for the damned and disloyal. The "strappado, the hanging, the firing squad, burning alive, and the wheel,"⁴⁵ each comprise the central visual focus of these plates. The violence remains, but the visual chaos has abated because the acts of execution and torture form the central point of each of these images. There are crowds of spectators, but each image directs the viewer to focus and linger on the corporal punishment.

Plates 15 and 16 illustrate a qualitatively different kind of violence, one that may strike observers as modern, though as Wolfthal and Hornstein indicate, seventeenth-century thinkers spent a great deal of intellectual energy on the problem of violence and war. Rather than an agent enacting assault or murder on another person, here we see those who cannot reintegrate into society. They are, in some ways, the walking dead, and the bulk of the detail in these scenes renders men on crutches, begging, missing limbs,

⁴¹ See image appendix, figures 38 and 39.

⁴² See image appendix, figure 40.

⁴³ See image appendix, figure 41.

⁴⁴ See image appendix, figure 41.

⁴⁵ Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 87-8.

and generally being left for dead, if not actually dead. The town has been restored to order and the outside of its gates show no signs of the earlier devastation. The fully intact, carefully rendered buildings in plate 15 dwarf the soldiers, creating an optical relationship that makes them seem smaller than in previous illustrations. The soldiers, now veterans, have been reduced to homelessness, dependency, and death. In these two plates, the buildings and the natural elements dwarf the veterans. They no longer wield power, and visual details in their ragged clothing and stooped postures emphasize this. In plate 16, the begging veterans are objects of the peasants' scorn; the civilians look past the beggars—their eyelines extend over or away from the beggars. The change in spatial relationship physically reverses the pattern of domination found in plates 4-8, as it is now quite literally the soldiers who crawl toward the peasants. The repetition of this visual pattern depicting a crawling or dying figure before a standing or otherwise empowered figure highlights the reversal of fortune, and the cruel fate (whether the audience found it justified or not) that awaits those who have no place in the current order.

Plate 17 creates a jarring contrast in relationship to both the previous two plates, 15 and 16, and the immediately following and final plate, 18. Plates 15 and 16, though a sad commentary on the now suffering soldiers—or a just punishment depending on one's point of view—exude greater visual balance. Plate 17, “the peasants' revenge”⁴⁶ shows a mass of bodies attacking one another in the twisted, thick forest. Read syntagmatically, the relationship of plate 17 to the relative calm of the remnants of war, both as walking casualties in plate 16 and rewarded members of court in plate 18, reinforces to the reader that it remains a scene of total hostility, whether justified or not. The bodies enacting

⁴⁶ Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 89.

violence upon other bodies comprise elements of distant arthrology, visually linking the earlier deeds of the soldiers with current deeds of the peasants. With the exception of a small patch of sky and a far-off building in the center background, every bit of plate 17 exudes aggression. Even the trees, very much matching the levels of light and shadow on the bodies of the men, become sites from which to shoot or hang people; the tree branches and trunks press in from the outside edges of the image toward the center, encasing the struggle. In the very foreground, at the right of the plate, it appears that a group of peasants attack a soldier with pitchforks and a club, though as Kunzle notes, it is very difficult if not impossible to tell who is who in this composition: “The suffering peasant is now become murderous and brutalized by his own revenge, and will soon become glad to fill the ranks of the mercenary army depleted by death. Peasants and soldiers have become indistinguishable, not unlike the pigs and humans at the end of *Animal Farm*, to the point that it seems idle to ask whether the figure hanging starkly against the sky is a soldier or a peasant. The cycle can begin over again.”⁴⁷ Kunzle’s literary analogy is apt and telling, as he uses a popular allegorical political novel to draw out the problems of cyclical violence explored herein. I am less interested in his perfectly appropriate comparison to a novel, as this is the era of visual narratives that scholars often conflate with all kinds of novels, than I am in the appearance of allegory and a sense of cyclical narrative time. Allegory and cyclical narrative are older but persistent forms, and in a piece counted as strikingly modern in its approach and content, narrative patterns from the Middle Ages and Antiquity appear to great visual and topical effect. The secular historical content of *Les Misères* may obscure a cyclical reading, as the final

⁴⁷ Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 90.

plate appears to establish a clear endpoint on a linear trajectory; however, as Kunzle states, there is a cycle at work.

Both Kunzle's assertion and a brief reading of the final plate in relationship to plate 2 and plate 17 will shed light on the cyclical component of the narrative, which coexists with the episodic and linear elements in the sequence of plates. Plate 18 provides a clear symmetrical composition, in which King Louis XIII sits enthroned, dead center. Unlike all of the previous plates, this image is almost perfectly balanced. To Louis' left and right, open rounded arches provide a window to the outside while groups of virtuous soldiers and courtiers stand ostensibly awaiting reward. The groups of men are approximately equal in size, and the formation in which they stand directs the viewer's eye to the king, as does his elevated position on the throne and the canopy that surrounds him. In relation to Plate 17, this image visually opposes the chaos and violence to such a high degree that the reader must understand plate 18's narrative importance; the effect of plate 17's juxtaposition with plate 18 highlights the visual harmony at work in plate 18, and its image of the monarch as the restorer of order and dispenser of justice.⁴⁸ Simply put, the image itself creates its own meaning, and the meaning is enriched and strengthened in relation to the immediately preceding image and the whole sequence, recalling Groensteen's three planes of meaning. Regarding the cyclical element, this plate merits a comparison to plate 2, as it is the other plate in which war is depicted as a just act and a vocation of the virtuous. The orderly groups of rewarded men in plate 18

⁴⁸ Kunzle credits this to Callot's need to "clarify his official purpose and to declare himself, as a member of a defeated nation, unequivocally on the side of the victor," noting that "Callot closes with a scene of Justice personified by King Louis XIII exhorting his soldiers to virtue. The King, as Judge, appears rather late, for it is not a higher justice which had condemned the soldier to his brutal death but his crime alone; it is not the law which exacts due revenge, but the victim himself," *The Early Comics Strip*, 90.

visually echo the still battalions of plate 2, not necessarily in shape, but in their large number and stillness, and their awaiting official approval for the deeds of their vocation. Plate 2 gives no indication, visual or verbal, that the soldiers will abandon virtue and destroy everything and everyone in their path. Plate 18 similarly excludes this possibility, as retribution has already occurred at the hands of those performing public executions and tortures, the avenging peasants, and finally, by passive exclusion rather than explicit activity. In these two plates, the depicted soldiers are assumed to be virtuous, as the vice-filled ones have already been destroyed. Both images show sanctioned behaviors such as enlistment and awaiting reward from the conquering ruler, acknowledging and validating not only his authority, but painting him as a legitimate and just figure. They visually connect the conditions at both the beginning and end of war. As Kunzle shrewdly observes, the emphasis on the restoration of order at the hands of an invading monarch, and perhaps the nature of violence and militarism itself, set the stage for the cycle to begin again.

Les Misères was very popular in its own time and continued to be long after Callot's death. Copies were made across Europe, and prints from the original plates into the nineteenth century.⁴⁹ Though some claim that his subject matter was entirely new, it took up a highly typical subject, violence and warfare, that writers and peer engravers were already reporting, if not examining. Callot happened to be one of the most prolific of these artists, but he was not the first graphic artist to use this subject matter, even during the period of the Thirty Years' War. While Callot's invention or adaptation of the *échoppe* tool, his obsessive attention to detail, and the distinctiveness of his line cannot

⁴⁹ Griffiths, "Callot: Miseries of War," 18.

be ignored, he also still worked very much within ongoing, persistent semiotic, spatiotemporal, and aesthetic strategies used by earlier (and later) visual narratives. *Les Misères* comprises an example of generally-episodically-based sequential visual narrative. Though the sequentiality largely springs from multiple numbered plates, the plasticity of visual narrative creates an account that functions at an overtly linear and subtly cyclical level. Callot's partnership with Israel Henriet and the captions added by the abbé de Marolles make *Les Misères* a collective product; the less expensive editions could be pasted into albums, too, allowing the individual buyer to collect a print as an aesthetic object or arrange the narrative.⁵⁰ *Les Misères* holds an important position on the continuum of visual narrative as it employs typical devices of visual narrative while ostensibly helping to plant the seeds of a popular twentieth- and twenty-first-century genre in the form of comics journalism.

Hogarth: Capitalist, Satirist

William Hogarth began his career in the 1720s, almost a century after Callot's death,⁵¹ and their art differs significantly.⁵² Hogarth's printed work, in contrast to Callot's and the other engravers and etchers who preceded him, typically gets tied to verbal literature, though much of it is visual narrative. Scholarly consensus on Hogarth as literary, verbally "discursive,"⁵³ and evolving beyond the primitive (read

⁵⁰ Griffiths, "Callot: Miseries of War," 13.

⁵¹ Frédéric Ogée, "From Text to Image: William Hogarth and the Emergence of a Visual Culture in Eighteenth-Century England," in *Hogarth: Representing Nature's Machines*, ed. David Bindman, Frédéric Ogée, and Peter Wagner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 1.

⁵² Hogarth may have learned some of his craft by copying Callot's *Les Misères*. See Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 299.

⁵³ Ogée, "From Text to Image," 1. James Grantham Turner criticizes the verbal approach to Hogarth: "The problem with this contextualizing approach is that it threatens to reduce the visual specificity of these prints. Much of the work on Hogarth has been done by literary experts, amateur and professional, while even art historians (with a few exceptions) have tended to analyze the content rather than the facture, the

medieval/religious) techniques of pictorial narrative, correctly identifies his relatively new approach of the “novel in prints,” but fails to see continuity of older forms and devices such as speech scrolls, serializing, and sequentiality that depends as much on the viewer/reader as it does the visual narrative at hand. There are many reasons for this, and the influence of the Franco-Belgian school of criticism forms one. Smolderen writes:

Since the end of the twentieth century, French comics artists have exhibited a growing interest in literature and enjoy speaking about drawing as if it were a form of writing, an *écriture*. Without realizing it, they have reactivated a very old tradition that can be definitively located in the work of the eighteenth-century English painter and engraver William Hogarth. This conception of drawing dates to a time when the image, and in particular the engraved image, lent itself to forms of reading and writing whose richness and sophistication we no longer recognize. In reality, each time a contemporary illustrator relies upon solutions transmitted from this distant past (the clear line, the modeled line, the combination of heterogeneous graphic styles, the schematic representation of instantaneous movement, the use of postures or physiognomic expressions, caricature, speech balloons, etc.) he or she is connected to Hogarth’s lineage, and through this lineage, to the deep history of the culture of the printed image. By combining, in an ironic way, an older tradition of edifying picture narratives with

marks on paper and canvas.” See “‘A Wanton Kind of Chace’: Display as Procurement in *A Harlot’s Progress* and Its Reception,” *The Other Hogarth: Aesthetics of Difference*, ed. Bernadette Fort and Angela Rosenthal (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 39.

the humorous literature that emerged in England during this time, Hogarth is the artist who brought the art of the print into modernity.⁵⁴

Smolderen's summation of the Francophone approach is telling in its biases toward the verbal and the concept of modernity, though it does open up to a larger history of print, and set up a recursive relationship amongst all pictorial narratives after Hogarth. The Francophone influence of viewing drawing as a way of writing does not comprise the only sphere of theoretical or historical influence on this same reading of the works of Hogarth, one so widely accepted it is almost axiomatic. Much work on Hogarth stems, wittingly or not, from the perspective of "Sister Arts" criticism, a methodology that has been around since the institutionalization of art history in universities, if not earlier.⁵⁵ The problems of this method arise from its strictly comparative iterations and, often, a lack of medium specificity. Suffice it to say that the "Sister Arts" approach stalks the works of Hogarth. The attachment of this methodology to Hogarth is, on the one hand, understandable because critical opinion in his own time seems to fall along those lines. The "Sister Arts" approach represents a centuries-old institutionalized understanding of Hogarth, thus it is hard to shake. Hogarth's graphic narratives are frequently coupled with a verbal literary context even if they have very little verbal content, which is perhaps the

⁵⁴ Smolderen, *The Origins of Comics*, 3.

⁵⁵ W. J. T. Mitchell explains the method: "One traditional answer to this problem [of how to examine visual narratives or other forms in which images and text interact meaningfully] in the (American) academic study of the representational arts has been the comparative method. The tradition of 'Sister Arts' criticism, and the pedagogy of 'literature and the visual arts,' has been the dominant model for the interdisciplinary study of verbal and visual representation. In its ambitious forms 'interartistic comparison' has argued for the existence of extended formal analogies across the arts, revealing structural homologies between texts and images united by dominant historical styles such as the baroque, the classical, or the modern. In its more cautious versions it has been content with tracing the role of specific comparisons between visual and verbal art in poetics and rhetoric and examining the consequences of these comparisons in literary and artistic practice," 84. "Beyond Comparison: Picture, Text, and Method," *Picture Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 83-107.

most problematic point. The “Sister Arts” reading skews critical discussions of his work towards the novel, the contemporary emergent literary form. By nature, this interpretive lens frames the discussion in terms of institutionally established verbal *or* visual tropes and their position within existing styles. This approach excludes the possibility of an analysis of functionality not hemmed in by time period or aesthetic category, so it obscures the recurrent methods of visual narrative at play in some of his most famous pictorial sequences.

In addition to these critical sticking points, Hogarth’s work exemplifies products of the Habermasian public sphere,⁵⁶ so any intellectual appraisal of his works gets filtered through this literary bourgeois stance. Hogarth was the first influential graphic narrative artist to be a member of the secular public sphere that Habermas characterizes as a new social class of the eighteenth century. Though he began his career as a metal engraver, Hogarth quickly became recognized for his style, and went to work illustrating literary texts, which perhaps provides another reason why any discussion of Hogarth’s work must deal with the novel and its influence on works produced both before and after he gained artistic autonomy.⁵⁷ What is aberrant about Hogarth’s works is not their progresses, moral sequences of the follies and failures, or alternately good works and successes, of everyman-type London citizens—these same themes and plot trajectories can be found in

⁵⁶ John Bender claims that Hogarth’s *A Harlot’s Progress* and *A Rake’s Progress* “may have consolidated a ‘public’ [in the Habermasian sense] in England in the 1730s.” See “Matters of Fact: Virtual Witnessing and the Public of Hogarth’s Narratives,” in *Hogarth* ed. Bindman, Ogée, and Wagner, *Hogarth*, 50.

⁵⁷ Much is written on Hogarth’s class-climbing from metal engraver, to engraver, to commissioned portrait painter, to independent artist, but very little information exists about those who printed his various works. He may have done the bulk of it himself, until his death. The British Museum’s prints of *A Harlot’s Progress* were printed by Hogarth. See Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 4, 20, 23.

Dutch, German, and Italian broadsheets.⁵⁸ Rather, two standout qualities of the work are aberrant: First, the works combine highly refined graphic art (often based on initial paintings rather than drawings) and thoroughly quotidian themes that crossed class boundaries, presenting a hitherto unusually wide portrait of society. Second, before the completion and publication of his graphic series, Hogarth advertised them to potential subscribers, bringing market forces and commodity culture even more directly into the equation.⁵⁹ Beyond these qualities, the majority of Hogarth's narrative works evince ubiquitous methods of rendering progress through narrative time and space. I will focus on the most famous sequence, *The Harlot's Progress*, as it is usually held up as a virtuosic watershed moment in graphic narrative.

Slow Dive: *The Harlot's Progress*

Hogarth's most popular, continuously famous narrative series *The Harlot's Progress* appears in six discrete episodic plates in which one plate depicts one scene on one page. Yet, for the piece's brevity, it manages to narrate a very long passage of time in which a young woman feels the excitement of new opportunity, only to be brought down by seduction, vice, crime, and eventually sickness and death. *The Harlot's Progress* is a moral cautionary tale, moral and topical in Kunzle's sense, and it is also an example of refined caricature that pillories society without abandoning sympathy for the protagonist. The sequence is not *sui generis*, as Kunzle notes, because it borrows its plot from a Venetian broadsheet of "The Mirror of the Harlot's Fate."⁶⁰ Smolderen corroborates this

⁵⁸ For these engravings, see Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 248-95.

⁵⁹ Christine Riding, "The Harlot and The Rake," in *Hogarth*, ed. Mark Hallett and Christine Riding, *Hogarth* (London: Tate Britain, 2006), 73.

⁶⁰ Kunzle, *The History of the Comic Strip Volume One: The Early Comic Strip, Narrative Strips and Picture Stories in the European Broadsheet from c.1450 to 1825*, 278.

point, writing that the narrative “scrupulously followed the framework of a Venetian picture story dating from the preceding century. For a virtuoso painter like Hogarth, the adaptation of a popular subject that had circulated as prints in the Catholic world was already an incongruity,” which results in “ironic elevation of a popular picture story.”⁶¹ Hogarth does embellish the older sequence in lavish detail and changes it significantly, adding specific details to indicate Moll Hackabout’s fall from innocence that coincides with her southward journey from pastoral York to metropolitan London. Each plate contains a vignette portraying the stages of Moll’s life in London, and the rendering of time follows a regular left-to-right reading direction, indicating the passage of time sequentially through both the separative and linked elements of each section.

The Arrival and the Fall

Plate 1⁶² wastes no time in setting up Moll’s precarious situation and forecasting her impending ruin. Kunzle describes the picture’s temporal scheme as symbolizing Moll’s present, indicated by “her moment of indecision, expressed in an uncertain stance and bland expression,” her immediate future expressed by the prostitute who greets her, and her distant future in the two men behind the prostitute, the falsely titled “Colonel Charteris and his pimp.”⁶³ Notably, Charteris was a real person and a “sexual predator known to newspaper readers of the period.”⁶⁴ The possibility of Moll’s salvation, rendered in the pamphlet-distributing religious man, does not register her presence; instead, he turns his attention to the women in the coach Moll has just disembarked from.

⁶¹ Smolderen, *The Origins of Comics*, 10-11.

⁶² See image appendix, figure 42.

⁶³ Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 304.

⁶⁴ Smolderen, *The Origins of Comics*, 12.

The plate reads easily from left to right, and indicates a moment in time; however, the multiple temporalities that the image alludes to direct the reader to linger on the image. Smolderen describes, after Robert Paulson, these relationships as diagrammatic. That is, in all of the plates, there are diadic and triadic structures that deepen and expand the meanings of the narrative and the allusions to literary and popular new material, such as *The Choice of Hercules*, images of the Annunciation, and news stories.⁶⁵ Visually, the narrative also highlights the interaction between Moll and the prostitute, as they occupy the center foreground and contrast starkly in dress and expression. The bawd's face is marked by the pox and she reaches out, touching Moll's unmarked face. Every element in the image appears to be diegetic, not only in terms of "the fictive space in which the characters live and act,"⁶⁶ but also in terms of being inextricably linked to the plot.⁶⁷ The density of the images and their story-space encourages the viewer to dwell upon the image, spending a longer time picking out small details and references alluded to and overtly rendered by Hogarth. Even though each plate captures one moment in time, the level of detail works to control, and ostensibly slow, the narrative pacing. This visually and spatially rendered passage of time is extended and multiplied by the sequential

⁶⁵ Smolderen, *The Origins of Comics*, 11-12. Smolderen recalls Paulson's work to bolster the triadic reading of plate 1: the religious man, Moll and the bawd, and Charteris and the pimp form a triangulated relationship in which Moll has only the choice in front of her because the religious man has ignored her. Smolderen calls this an "inversion" of the famous fifteenth-century painting in which Hercules stands between a woman personifying Virtue and a woman personifying Vice because "Virtue, embodied as a religious man, turns his back on her and is completely disinterested in her fate. This modification of the conventional diagram of *The Choice of Hercules* leaves the field open to Vice (appearing as a celebrated London madam), who lures her prey with promises under the bawdy gaze of Colonel Charteris [...]," 12.

⁶⁶ Pascal Lefèvre, "The Construction of Space in Comics," *A Comics Studies Reader*, ed. Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 157.

⁶⁷ For example, the York Wagon is diegetic; it appears visually as Moll's conveyance, and makes a site for the religious man to hand out pamphlets, while simultaneously ignoring her.

arrangement of and the juxtaposition with the following plates, despite their organization around a single major plot point conveyed in one large frame.

Plate 2⁶⁸ depicts Moll's rise in wealth, her status as "a real courtesan maintained by a rich Jewish merchant,"⁶⁹ and, especially in light of details contrasting with the previous plate, her fall. This scene of intimate subterfuge relies on the coextensively isolative and progressive methods of rendering time germane to graphic narratives as well as the popular contemporary modes of caricature and domestic satire.⁷⁰ Within the interior of the plate, Moll has overturned a table and broken dishware in order to distract her merchant from her young lover's escape. The two domestic servants—a young woman by the door where the lover sneaks away and a boy carrying a tea kettle to Moll's right—the merchant/lover, and the pet monkey all wear a similar expression of shock at the upturned table and flying crockery shards. The female servant stares, mouth agape, at the young soldier, who gestures to quiet her. Their eyes form a direct visual line to Moll, who flippantly gazes in a direction that is hard to determine; she appears to be looking neither at her fleeing lover nor her seated lover. The moment is effectively frozen in time, underscoring the upheaval, but it also carries a dynamic sense of movement through time and space. The monkey runs away from the falling table and dishes; the lover tiptoes toward the door, and both the merchant and the young servant express kinetic energy in their faces and postures. Additional change in plot and time appears in Moll's now pockmarked face, her much fancier albeit rumpled dress, and her right breast about to

⁶⁸ See image appendix, figure 43.

⁶⁹ Smolderen, *The Origins of Comics from William Hogarth to Winsor McCay*, 11, note to figure 1.10.

⁷⁰ Riding notes the scene's biblical dimensions in the two pictures hanging on the wall. One depicts Jonah and the other depicts Uzzah "being stabbed in the back as he steadies the Ark of the Covenant." See "The Harlot and the Rake," 81.

spring forth from her corset. These elements, of course, exemplify elements of caricature and bawdy humor, but more importantly, they echo the physical appearance of the prostitute in plate 1. This visual repetition braids⁷¹ Moll's falling into vice in with her prior state of innocence and initial meeting with the prostitute, as well as the future that awaits her in the remaining four vignettes.

Vice Squad

Plate 3⁷² shows Moll immediately before her arrest for prostitution and indicates her worsening condition. She sits on a bed in a shabby apartment holding what is probably a stolen watch,⁷³ again disheveled and about to pop out of her dress. More black marks appear on her face, and her servant is an older, noseless syphilitic woman,⁷⁴ as opposed to the young woman and the boy in the previous scene. This plate continues the narrative relationship with the previous two plates and forecasts the next one. There are two primary temporal schemes at work here: The single scene, in isolation, narrates Moll's impending arrest and directs the viewer to her present degrading physical and moral state. In relationship to the immediately preceding and following plates (Groensteen's plane of the syntagm), the spatial composition shows significant elements that come in and out of the doors in plates 2 and 3, and the result, in plate 4, of what comes in the door during plate 3. In plate 2, the lover, a symbol of infidelity⁷⁵ but one

⁷¹ In the sense of Groensteen's "tressage" or braiding elements of the narrative into coherence. These details cross plates, and connect the narrative in both meaning and movement through space and time.

⁷² See image appendix, figure 44.

⁷³ See Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 306, and Riding, "The Harlot and the Rake," 82.

⁷⁴ Riding points out that this woman would have been referred to as a "bunter," a common servant, as opposed to the "maidservant and pageboy" of the previous scene, "The Harlot and the Rake," 82.

⁷⁵ Kunzle describes the soldier as "poor but decent" as opposed to Moll's company in plate 3, implied by portraits of highwaymen on the wall and "the wig-box of a noted highwayman" on her canopy bedframe. See *The Early Comic Strip*, 306.

over whom Moll has control, exits through the door at left; in plate 3, the arresting officers enter at right to take Moll and her syphilitic servant to prison, as illustrated in plate 4. Smolderen characterizes the relationship between plates 2 and 3 as a “diptych” that depends upon a comparison between the two scenes: “In the interval, one can see that the rich bourgeois décor of the courtesan is transformed (almost item for item) into a sordid apartment pitifully attempting to maintain the illusion of a certain stature (a stool being used as a table, a chair as a dressing table). [...] In comparing the two images, the attentive reader will have noted that this change in status (and comportment) is reflected in the choice of pets: we shift from a little monkey adorned with ribbons to a kitten who is only interested in what is happening underneath Molly’s skirt.”⁷⁶ Essentially, the scene relies upon iconic solidarity, the combination of coextensive separation and joining that combines to create a narrative. The changes in the scene direct the viewer not only to understand that time has passed, but also that Moll has fallen further and will be removed even from this relatively lower station.

Moll’s extraction from her dingy apartment results in an arrest and a scene of incarcerated hard labor in plate 4.⁷⁷ This image marks the first time when Moll does not wear an oblivious or bland countenance, understandably, since she now beats hemp with the other arrested prostitutes, gamblers, and petty thieves held in Bridewell Prison.⁷⁸ In comparison to the other plates, this one slows time, conveying the monotony and suspension in time for those imprisoned. The composition shows the slowed pace through

⁷⁶ Smolderen, *The Origins of Comics from William Hogarth to Winsor McCay*, 12.

⁷⁷ See image appendix, figure 45.

⁷⁸ See Riding, “The Harlot and The Rake,” 82-3; Kunzle, *The History of the Comic Strip Volume One: The Early Comic Strip, Narrative Strips and Picture Stories in the European Broadsheet from c.1450 to 1825*, 306; Smolderen, *The Origins of Comics from William Hogarth to Winsor McCay*, 15 note to fig. 1.13.

the addition of a group of grey, relatively indistinguishable figures, repetitive gestures of labor, and an overall lack of the more kinetic details found in plates 2 and 3. The scene provides elements of physiognomic caricature; the woman behind Moll winks and leers directly at the viewer while the noseless servant adjusts her stockings and grins unpleasantly at Moll. In contrast to the other prisoners, and perhaps suggestive of her naiveté, Moll wears a lavishly detailed dress complete with a hoop. The dress, as in earlier plates, reflects her relative position and its overall incongruity with the rest of the scene. This visual device occurs in every picture: In the first plate, she wears a simple, modest dress among the predatory dregs; in the second, her disheveled look, the result of an affair with the soldier fleeing the room, shows that she bites the proverbial hand that feeds her; in the third, her slightly more mussed dress creates harmony with her surroundings but counterpoint to her pretensions. The dress builds narrative continuity and represents just how out of touch Moll is with the reality that surrounds her. The detailed pattern on Moll's dress prompts the viewer to examine her more carefully, creating the overall effect of slowing the pacing while emphasizing how completely out of place it is. Both the noseless "bunter" and the woman behind Moll share the same lighting and unshadowed covering on their heads, emphasizing their places in the foreground and drawing even more attention to the two women's mockery of Moll and her inappropriately fancy clothing. There is no way out of this image, as no door, carriage, or other exit appears,⁷⁹ which also slows the narrative pacing.

Sickness and Death

⁷⁹ Kunzle identifies a small rectangle at the back of the room as shutters on which a hanged man is drawn. The drawing is "a graffito effigy of Sir John Gonson ('Sr J G') who was recognized by contemporaries as the Justice of the previous scene," *The Early Comic Strip*, 306.

Plate 5⁸⁰ returns to a domestic scene and a more dynamic pace, which is depicted through household chaos as Moll languishes, dying from syphilis. The image neatly divides itself into halves: On one side there are those concerned for Moll or at least attached to her, the servant and Moll's small son. On the other are those unmoved by her plight and probably interested in profiting by her sickness, the two doctors and the old woman rifling through Moll's trunk. Scholarly opinion conflicts on whether the woman is getting ready to take Moll's clothes or select appropriate burial garb, which seems very much down to the conscience of the critic.⁸¹ Riding identifies the two doctors: "The corpulent figure on the left is Dr. Richard Rock, whose name appears on a piece of paper on the cylindrical coal container (far right). The teeth placed on this paper are Moll's, which have fallen out as a result of syphilis. Rock was well-known for inventing and peddling medicines such as 'The famous, Anti-Venereal, Grand, Specifick Pill,' and, ironically, cure for toothache. The other doctor is not identified by Hogarth but is probably Dr. Jean Misaubin, an émigré French doctor."⁸² These details most likely would have mattered to the contemporary audience, and connect the series to popular culture beyond its own existence as a well-liked and highly consumed story. The return to Moll's apartment visually links the narrative to her life before and after the arrest and her time in Bridewell. The visual chaos recalls plate 2,⁸³ especially the upturned table in the center foreground and the arguing doctors. This time, though, instead of breaking expensive plates to distract her rich lover, Moll is swaddled in blankets while two quacks fight in

⁸⁰ See image appendix, figure 46.

⁸¹ Neither Kunzle nor Grantham Turner comment on the old woman; Riding suggests she is picking a burial outfit; Smolderen calls her "a shrew" picking through Moll's things.

⁸² Riding, "The Harlot and the Rake," 83.

⁸³ Riding corroborates this and suggests that this scene, rather than Moll's arrival in London, "initiated the spectacular decline in Moll's fortunes." See "The Harlot and the Rake," 84.

her home and her small child puts his hand in a fire. We know from her condition that she will die, so the final plate appears as a logical conclusion to the sequence.

Plate 6⁸⁴ comprises the most visually static scene, though it would be a mistake to read it as a non-narrative tableau punctuating the ending of a story. Kunzle reads this scene as an important part of the story and nod to “the pictorial tradition,” in which ceremonial or “mock-ceremonial” scenes provides a comment upon the larger society rather than just an indictment of its less desirable elements.⁸⁵ Indeed, this image seems to encompass the range of human behaviors from genuine empathy to casual indifference and intentional disdain. Through the figures attending the viewing, the narrative subtly comments and extends previous events to the current moment in which the mourners (many of whom do not appear to mourn) fill the room to have a look at Moll in her coffin. In a sexually suggestive pairing at left, a woman holding an erect “angled sprig of rosemary”⁸⁶ looks out at the viewer, her arm linked to a blank-faced parson who spills his wine in his lap. Another woman, perhaps Moll’s servant, uses her coffin-lid as a table, while a younger prostitute peers into the coffin. At right, an amorous-looking undertaker tugs at another prostitute’s glove⁸⁷ as she pulls a handkerchief out of his pocket. Behind these two, another prostitute stares at herself in the mirror. Moll’s young son sits in the center in front of the coffin, playing on the floor in his mourning garb, seemingly indifferent to everything happening around him. This scene encompasses all of the sequence’s elements: humor, lust, vice, manipulation, the failure of institutions such as

⁸⁴ See image appendix, figure 47.

⁸⁵ Kunzle, *The History of the Comic Strip Volume One: The Early Comic Strip, Narrative Strips and Picture Stories in the European Broadsheet from c.1450 to 1825*, 307.

⁸⁶ Riding, “The Harlot and the Rake,” 84.

⁸⁷ Riding suggests that these two figures are sexually suggestive, and that the glove suggests a condom, “The Harlot and The Rake,” 84.

the Church, and Moll's initial innocence in the first plate that led her to an unfortunate fate, now personified in her little son whom everyone ignores.

Best-Seller

At least part of the wild popularity of *A Harlot's Progress* was the licentious and scandalous content coupled with the manner in which Hogarth moralized without being stodgily puritanical. The judges, arresting officers, and doctors are no more paragons of virtue than the Jewish merchant, Moll, or her servants. The only figures who receive an unequivocal and not too gentle criticism are "Colonel" Charteris, the quack doctors, and the "harlot-hunting London magistrate Sir John Gonson," whom the audience purportedly enjoyed seeing in such a salacious narrative.⁸⁸ For all its allusive and literary complexity, the narrative exhibits typical methods of pictorial narrative and self-conscious expressions of the traditions from which it came. These qualities may explain why Hogarth is so often identified as the one of the progenitors of comics; though arguments for that status tend to exhibit the former part of that equation. The audience would have been familiar with this sort of material, as it was already popular, but *A Harlot's Progress* enjoyed 1200 subscribers on its release, not including all of those who snapped up pirated editions, imageless verse explanations and editions, theatrical versions, merchandise objects such as cups and fans, and, finally, cheaper small copies authorized by Hogarth in an unsuccessful attempt to stop the piracy.⁸⁹ The early consumer capitalist aspects of Hogarth's work and associated merchandise not only corroborate the Habermasian popularity of the series, but also introduces a nascent form of the economic element that

⁸⁸ Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 307.

⁸⁹ Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 307.

later becomes a large part in the production and distribution of later visual narratives. The complete success of *A Harlot's Progress* integrated a very wide, receptive audience in and after its own time, and the sequence can undoubtedly be counted on the continuum of visual narrative explored thus far. Despite near unanimous scholarly consensus that Hogarth was a visionary genius and representative of industrial modernity, the sequence repeats and builds upon earlier patterns of visual narrative established in medieval and early modern times. Rather than rendering strictly novel phenomena, the series relies upon allegory and an array of subtle metaphors and allusions, both to its contemporary milieu and Biblical and classical culture. The topical yet generally accessible fall story places the once solely religious morality tale into the realm of the secular. These qualities in combination with the clear sequential narrative function as recursive elements, which add contemporary concerns and mores to older methods of pictorial storytelling, expanding upon established patterns.

Part Three: Works of the Nineteenth Century

Goya: Visionary, Radical

Cultural conditions in late eighteenth-century Spain did not form as fertile grounds for the emergence of the commodity market and the new class of consumer bourgeois public as conditions in England and the majority of western Europe. Thus, there was no satirical broadsheet tradition to draw from besides the few British imports circulating in Spain.⁹⁰ During this time, Francisco de Goya y Lucientes established

⁹⁰ See José Manuel Matilla, "Estampas Españolas de la Guerra de la Independencia: Propaganda, Commemoración y Testimonio/Spanish Prints from the Spanish War of Independence: Propaganda, Commemoration and Evidence," *Goya, Cronista de todas las Guerras: Los Desastres y Fotografía de Guerra* (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, 2009), 41-2. Goya had two associates who would have shared these prints with him. Matilla also points out that there was a well-

himself as an acclaimed artist and became painter to King Carlos III in 1780 and court painter to King Carlos IV in 1789.⁹¹ Not long after the accession of Carlos IV, Spain was plunged into a long period of political and social instability, and ongoing warfare from without and within. Goya created his famous series, *Los Desastres de Guerra*, between 1810 and 1820.⁹² He graphically interpreted and illustrated the widespread famine and devastation that resulted from the Napoleonic Wars, especially the Peninsular War (1808-14) between the French, and Spanish sympathizers to the French, and the Spanish.⁹³ The reinstatement of the Inquisition in 1814 meant that Goya risked legal and canonical prosecution or worse in publishing *Los Desastres*; because of this, it was not printed from the original plates and published until 1863, 35 years after Goya's death, by the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando.⁹⁴ Since the series was not printed until many years after Goya's death, the two sets of numbering and a sense of thematic unity were all the printers had to go on. Though Goya comprises the most auteur of the narrative artists in this chapter, this historical necessity ended up forcing *Los Desastres* to be a collective production both materially and narratively. The sense of narrative engendered by the printers' sequencing and the imposition of a narrative structure by the viewer participate

established propaganda machine that included broadsheets, and saw a brisk trade in propaganda pieces as collectible items, 37-40. The selections of primary texts in Chapters One and Two are English, with the possible exception of the *Bibliae Pauperum*. This decision is in large part due to the time and space limitations of the dissertation project; however, it is significant that the English satirical broadsheet tradition influenced the making of the Spanish broadsheet. Despite the strong insularity of Spanish culture at the time, Goya's work evinces patterns established by earlier forms of visual narrative as well as aesthetic and social elements from the contemporary English broadsheet tradition.

⁹¹ See Tala Orngard, "Goya: *Disasters* in Context," *I Saw It: The Invented Reality of Goya's Disasters of War*, comp. Annaliese Beaman and Roxane Young (Grinnell, IA: Grinnell College Faulconer Gallery, 2004), 1; Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 419.

⁹² Tulliola Sparagni, "Imagination and Reality, Dream and History in the Prints and Drawings of Francisco Goya: *Los Caprichos*, *Los Desastres de la Guerra*, *Los Disparates*," in *Francisco Goya: Los Caprichos, Los Desastres de Guerra, Los Disparates*, ed. Tulliola Sparagni (Montreal: Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal, 2001), 20.

⁹³ See Orngard, "Goya's Disasters of War," 1-2; Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 422.

⁹⁴ Orngard, "Goya's Disasters of War," 2; Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 423.

in the making of *Los Desastres*. This process occurs much in the same way that a reader participates in the construction of a text, according to Barthes,⁹⁵ and a spectator can find narrative sequence and narrative intelligibility through combinations of visual harmony and dissonance in a participatory “varied mode of looking,” according to Joselit.⁹⁶ Even if we deem the narrative structure as generally atemporal and anti-narrative to account for the loss of time and sanity in war, a discernable narrative structure remains present in *Los Desastres*.

Political upheaval, violence, and widespread, unrelenting poverty form the background for *Los Desastres*, which has been hailed as much for being a fantastic approach to political art with a hitherto unseen aesthetic as a work of documentary realism with artistic embellishment. Whether one places the series in the category of nonfiction documentary, protest art, or a hybrid of realism and allegory, *Los Desastres* has few peers. Callot’s pervasive influence on the thematic content and design is palpable, though, and Sparagni reads Goya’s work as participating in an already established tradition of war-prints, including art of the Thirty Years War by Callot, Hans Ulrich Franck, and Rudolph Meyer.⁹⁷ The nearly textless series belongs on the continuum of typical forms of pictorial narrative even though it evinces aberrant aesthetic qualities and a seemingly intentional disregard for some time-device and emplotment markers germane to comics and graphic narratives. Yet, *Los Desastres* is a series, and Kunzle points out, “*Fatal Consequences of the Bloody War against Bonaparte in Spain, and*

⁹⁵ Barthes, “Death of the Author,” 142-48.

⁹⁶ Joselit, *After Art*, 39.

⁹⁷ Sparagni acknowledges the aesthetic and political differences in Goya’s work, but nevertheless sees the war-themed art as related, noting that “Goya was undoubtedly familiar with these earlier works; in fact, the final image of the Franck cycle, ‘The horseman’s end,’ is reprised in plate 69 of *Los Desastres*, ‘Nothing. The Event will tell,’” 20.

other emphatic *Caprices*, in *85 Plates (Fatales Consecuencias de la sangrienta Guerra en España con Bonaparte y otros Caprichos enfáticos en 85 estampas)* [...] contains a hint of a narrative structure missing from the phrase *Disasters of War*, which was invented when the set was published in 1863 and possibly meant to evoke Callot's *Misères de la Guerre*.⁹⁸ The series focuses itself on war in a variety of contexts and combines a sense of witnessing and imaginative response, probably as influential on horror comics as works of war-focused comics journalism. Hillary Chute explains that the variety of registers at work in *Los Desastres* “work to produce an account of the present, while others function to produce the recent past and perform the work of counter-memory. [...] the images, many of which are of actual historical record, flag themselves as doing the work of reporting. The captions appearing below the images are not simply descriptive; some are sarcastic, and some work against the fact of presentation of the image itself, such as in plate 26, whose caption simply states, ‘One cannot look at this.’”⁹⁹ Of course, the spectator must look at the image and confront its violence, just as the figures, eyes closed, will be met with the bayonet tips intruding from the right side of the frame. The plasticity of the drawn images assists in building productive tension among the events of the story-space, its real historical context, and the viewer taking in each image while building compounding meaning in relationship to the preceding and following images.

The approximately 80 images¹⁰⁰ that make up *Los Desastres* all evince a more expressive, less tightly controlled, and therefore more stylized and less regimented

⁹⁸ Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 422.

⁹⁹ Chute, *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form*, 8.

¹⁰⁰ Juliet Wilson-Bareau counts 82; see “Goya: The Disasters of War,” 33. Sparagni counts 80, “Imagination and Reality,” 93-132.

aesthetic. *Los Desastres* does not share the painstakingly small, tightly etched lines of *Les Grandes Misères* or the almost obsessive level of detail within *A Harlot's Progress*.

Goya's use of aquatint, a technological innovation of the very late eighteenth century,¹⁰¹ made a greater variety of tone and shade and produced a fuller range of light and darkness in the illustrations. This technique produced the washy, clouded backgrounds in the images, which often read as smoke, clouds, night skies, and darkness in the metaphorical and literal senses. There is a figural looseness in the lines and shading of the human figures in *Los Desastres*, which underscores the disturbing nightmarish imagery in which a traumatized, disassociative aesthetic coexists with the visceral realities of war. Because the images generally do not communicate a neatly sequential organization, a variety of templates have been suggested to make a coherent narrative structure.¹⁰² For example, Kunzle builds a trajectory "from conduct of the war to its consequences" followed by a moment when "bitter realism turns to bitter satire," and a set of "anguished allegories" to finish the series.¹⁰³ Juan Bordes provides a more exact, but similar framework: "*The Disasters* can be divided into three distinct parts. In the first, Goya illustrated stories of real-life events of proven authenticity, yet in all these prints he transcended the specific facts, generalising them in a consciously critical manner. In the second part, he reinterpreted his experiences of war on the streets of Madrid, with the horrors of the 'Year of Hunger,' describing the presence of war through its effects on everyday life. Lastly, he devoted some prints to subjects treated in a symbolic vein, which he called *caprichos enfáticos* ('emphatic caprices'). In these images Goya

¹⁰¹ Annaliese Beaman and Roxane Young, "The Medium for the Message: Printmaking and the *Disasters of War*," in Beaman and Young, *I Saw It*, 3-4. See also Wilson-Bareau, "Goya: The Disasters of War," 37.

¹⁰² See comments on Joselit in Chapter One, note 64.

¹⁰³ Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 423.

presented the political consequences of the postwar period [...].”¹⁰⁴ The generally tripartite framework offered by Kunzle and Bordes provides a foundation from which to interpret the narrative. In addition to their template, there is a consistent use of allegory and metaphorization across the three sections, even in the more realistic pictures.

The First Arc of *Los Desastres*

The first plate, “Sad presentiments of what must come to pass,”¹⁰⁵ is one of the physically darkest in the whole series. A man in torn clothing kneels in the center with his hands extended out and his eyes raised up in a manner that suggests something between total desperation and knowledge of the futility of the gestures. The figure is martyr-like, and Sedlmayr interprets it as a “secularisation of the religious subject of ‘Christ Praying in the Garden’.”¹⁰⁶ The etched lines are hatched frenetically and close together, combining with the wash effect of the aquatint to create a gradient from dark grey at left to thick blackness at right. A careful look reveals monstrous figures hidden within or perhaps emanating from the dark hatching, which Mérida describes as “an avalanche of monsters and chimeras, which represents the French invasion,” essentially biding its time to prey on the citizens of Spain, represented here in the tormented kneeling man.¹⁰⁷ The image by itself is disturbingly timeless, yet when read in relation to the second plate, “With reason or without her,”¹⁰⁸ and, truly, the rest of *Los Desastres*,

¹⁰⁴ Juan Bordes, “Los Desastres de la Guerra: Interpretaciones Históricas/The Disasters of War: Historical Interpretations,” in *Goya, Cronista de todas Las Guerras*, 78.

¹⁰⁵ See image appendix, figure 48.

¹⁰⁶ Hans Sedlmayr, *Verlust der Mitte: Die Bildende Kunst des 19. Und. 20. Jahrhundert als Symptom und Symbole der Zeit* (Salzburg: O. Müller, 1948) cited in Bordes et al., *Goya, Cronista de todas Las Guerras: Los Desastres y Fotografía de Guerra* (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, 2009), 82-3.

¹⁰⁷ E. Mérida, “Los Desastres de la Guerra,” cited in Bordes et al, *Goya, Cronista de todas Las Guerras*, 82-3.

¹⁰⁸ See image appendix, figure 49. Translation mine.

the crisis of the man in the first plate and similarity to Christ in Gethsemane makes more sense, much in the way that Groensteen expresses levels of meaning at the plane of the syntagm and the sequence. In plate 2, two Spaniards fight with French soldiers and are hopelessly outgunned. The soldiers carry bayonets, pointed directly at the men who carry a small knife and a sharpened stick, perhaps the handle of a farm implement. The soldiers stand with their backs to the spectator, in a faceless immovable-looking mass; the man with the small knife bleeds from the mouth and his comrade holds a futile fighting stance. On the ground behind them are more soldiers and civilians, and a civilian corpse off to the left. The relatively spare aesthetic quality of the scene makes it more violent; there are no aesthetic flourishes to glorify or distract from anything occurring in this image. Reading plates 1 and 2 together makes the desperate condition all the more apparent. The figure in crisis in plate 1 forecasts the coming events, analogizing Spanish suffering and lack of allies to Christ's suffering in the Garden before the Crucifixion. The figures in plate 2 manifest the events caused by the undifferentiated monsters bearing down in plate 1, but they do so without glory.¹⁰⁹ There is a relationship of cause and effect at work in these two images, but, as plate 3 demonstrates, the cause is the war and the effect appears to be more violence.

Plate 3, "The same,"¹¹⁰ depicts the same level of violence, only this time it is perpetrated by a member of the guerrilla resistance instead of the French soldiers. The caption in and of itself indicates that nothing is truly changing. A pile of bodies lies dead

¹⁰⁹ Goya was no sympathizer of the French military, but he purportedly had reservations about the populist rebellion, "which served as a cover for the most reactionary sectors of Spanish society." See C. Dérozier, *La Guerre d'Independence Espagnole á Travers L'Estampe: 1808-1814* (Lille: 1976), cited in Bordes et al, *Goya, Cronista de todas Las Guerras: Los Desastres y Fotografía de Guerra* (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, 2009), 84.

¹¹⁰ See image appendix, figure 50.

center in the composition; on top of the heap at left, a Spanish fighter raises a knife, preparing to stab the soldier he has fought to the ground. At right, another Spaniard raises an axe high above his head, ready to bring it down on a still living French soldier, fighting back from the ground with a sword in his hand. Besides the difference in clothing and weaponry, the men look the same. They wear crazed, anguished expressions on their faces and their bodies contort horribly. Like plate 2, this image contains no embellishments or details to cue the spectator to approve of the violence or relish in the spectacle. It is a harried and ugly scene; the switch in fighting roles from plate 2 to plate 3 is not so much a switch but an equation, echoing the image's caption. Neither of these pictures provide any kind of geographic or temporal specificity—the viewer knows that they are Spanish and French men fighting each other because these are images from *Los Desastres* and the soldiers carry nation- and period-appropriate weaponry, but little else indicates where the events are taking place, and nothing indicates how much time is passing. The paradoxical generality/specificity factor stems from the artistic rendering of real events that Bordes interprets as the inclusion of factual events and the critical generalization of those facts.¹¹¹ Narrative intelligibility emerges at the tripartite level of the syntagm and the longer link manifested in relationships of the sequence; however, the images themselves augment the disturbing absurdity of war because of their lack of temporal, and to some degree geographic, specificity in the narrative.

In and out of the story space

¹¹¹ Bordes, "Los Desastres," 78. See the previous section, "Goya: Visionary, Radical," paragraph 3.

Plates 1 through 3 illustrate the madness of war at its beginning, setting the stage for a narrative that continues to descend into cruelty and despair, as each image compounds the desperation and amoral greyness of the first triad of plates. Critical treatments of *Los Desastres* often focus on the symbolic or allegorical content of the scenes, or perform investigative work into the particular historical events to which the images belong. These treatments are very important to understanding the series, but the pictorial narrative devices must be taken into account as well. *Los Desastres* contains images that make overt reference to the nondiegetic space, that is the space outside of the narrative or space that does not expressly contribute to the narrative, turning the nondiegetic space into an important part of the composition, as rendered visual narratives are able to do. Plates 15, “And it can’t be helped,” and 26, “One cannot look,”¹¹² depict rifles and bayonets coming into the panel from outside of the frame, indicating to the audience that the soldiers are beyond the physical limits of the picture. The extension into nondiegetic space through cut-off weapons may be a matter of plate-size limitation, an example of the spandrel at work; just as importantly, however, it creates the effect of the violence being always already present in the space of the beholder, in the physical reality of the maker and the viewer rather than confined by the constraints of the page. This is, of course, not to say that gunmen literally confront each viewer of the series, but rather that the placement of the rifles and the bayonets transgress typical composition to great effect. Rather than alluding to imaginary violence, the image renders an imaginative account of real violence, and breaks the orderly boundaries of the page for emphasis. Plate 15, one of the most recognizable images from *Los Desastres*, illustrates a firing

¹¹² See image appendix, figures 51 and 52.

squad readied to execute men bound to posts. In the foreground, a corpse lays in front of a bound, blindfolded man, who is about to be executed. Behind him, another man is similarly bound to a post, and the firing squad appears as a slightly amorphous mass of uniformed bodies and rifles pointed at those doomed to die. The illustration directs the viewer to focus on the bound, blindfolded man in the foreground and his inability to see the rifle muzzles even though he and the viewer both know that they are there. The bound men are thrown into relief by the small bit of light on the left side of the picture, which contrasts with the dark sky and ground that pervades most of the composition. Plate 26 depicts a similar scene, only one that is more chaotic. Instead of a line of men waiting to be executed, plate 26 shows a pile of people crying, begging, holding each other, and praying in the face of their impending executions. At right, bayonet tips extend into the scene, forcing their way in toward increasing darkness and human misery. The light darkens as it goes left, in the same direction as the bayonets pointed at the civilians. In both plates 15 and 26, the weapons are self-consciously obtrusive; that is, even though they fit the events of each image, their placement and extension into the nondiegetic space makes their visual appearance even more notable. The placement also emphasizes the suffering of the victims, especially in plate 26 in which we see only the victims. The choice to render the rifles and bayonets entering from beyond the frame effectively collapses the boundaries of the visual series, the historical events, and the narrative created each time an observer reads the series.

Allegory, Satire, Cycle

The section of *Los Desastres* including plates 71-82¹¹³ contains the overtly allegorical images, and satirical fantastic compositions depicting monsters and monstrous people and animals. The preceding plates, depicting acts of war, the filling of mass graves, and the ravages of famine develop a detectable narrative structure through thematic and visual continuity. The allegorical section abandons this pattern of spatiotemporal and relatively sequential development, taking the narrative into the realm of satire and political critique through coded allegorical images of animals and monstrous figures. Narrative does not disappear here, but it takes on a level of variety and layered meanings that recall both medieval pictorial narratives in their dense multiplicity and contemporary nineteenth-century political prints in their unabashed caricature and satire. Goya, of course, had the Inquisition to fear, so allegory was a necessary tool rather than a Hogarthian exercise in cleverness. Alfredo Rivera characterizes this shift in narrative technique as analogous to the abandonment of reason that war requires, and as a strategy “to make his prints transcend specific political references in order to question whether humans have the capacity for reason.”¹¹⁴ This question pervades the entire series, and connects the allegorical “*caprichos enfáticos/emphatic caprices*” with the reportage of the earlier narrative. This allegorical final section also creates a clear ending in the relationship among plates 79-82,¹¹⁵ which entails the absurdity of violence and its cyclical nature and the possibility of hope.

¹¹³ Here I am using the numbering given in Bordes et al, *Goya, Cronista de todas Las Guerras*, 82-245 because it follows prints from the first edition of the series and includes two previously “lost” plates, one that was either confiscated or hidden from the Inquisition (plate 82) and one that was given by Goya to a friend (plate 81). These two plates were not included in the 1863 Academia edition, and this accounts for the different estimation of the number of plates in this part of the series, 242-45.

¹¹⁴ Alfredo Rivera, “*Qué Locura! The Fantastical and the Absurd in the Caprichos Enfáticos,*” in Beaman and Young, *I Saw It*, 23.

¹¹⁵ See image appendix, figures 53-56.

To illustrate the continuity of emplotment outside of an historical events-based context, it is useful to examine plates 79-82. These plates illustrate continuity of narrative through connected images and the monstrous allegorical content used to comment on the postwar condition. Plates 79 and 80 render the death of truth and subsequent attacks on the truth, depicted as a young woman. In plate 79, she lies dead in the foreground, emanating rays of light in every direction. The figures observing her are a mixture of mourners and murderous conspirators. For example, justice appears toward the right side of the mass of spectators, on the ground hiding her face and holding her scales loosely. A bishop gestures over the body of the truth; Rivera connects the bishop's gesture to the fox-like creature in plate 74,¹¹⁶ but his left hand makes exactly the same gesture as the batwing-headed personification of hypocrisy in plate 71, cuing the reader to associate the clergyman with hypocrisy.¹¹⁷ To left of the bishop, two distorted hooded figures carrying a shovel and a hoe leer down at Truth, appearing to delight in her death. They may be her gravediggers, but it is unclear. Close to the hooded figures, a monk stands, probably representing the Inquisition,¹¹⁸ a force that contributes to the death of the truth. Plate 80 illustrates the possibility of her resurrection; the central visual focus appears in the bright light and rays emanating from the truth's head and torso. This composition is much darker and sketchier overall, as the details of the crowd are partially obscured by the rays. The lack of detail in the crowd makes it seem more monstrous and shapeless; the only outstanding figures or faces are that of a grotesque human-like creature holding a book and a man wielding a bludgeon at Truth. The effect of the paired sequence of plates 79

¹¹⁶ See Rivera, "Qué Locura!," 26.

¹¹⁷ Ch. Yriarte, *Goya: Sa Biographie, les Fresques, les Toiles, les Tapisseries, les Eaux-Fortes et le Catalogue de l'Oeuvre* (Paris, 1867) cited in Bordes et al, *Goya, Cronista de todas Las Guerras*, 222.

¹¹⁸ Yriarte, *Goya*, cited in Bordes et al, *Goya, Cronista de todas Las Guerras*, 222.

and 80 does not end with resounding hope so much as a doubled emphasis on the death of the truth and the uncertain question of her return, as expressed by the repeated images of her prone body and the juxtaposition of the darkening crowd with the light emanating from her.

Plate 81 makes an abrupt visual turn from the previous two plates, and functions on a variety of levels. The image visually connects with the previous images of monsters and allegorical animal figures while continuing the examination of the absurdity of war and delaying the triumphant resurrection of the truth in plate 82. Plate 81 renders a gorged, four-legged monster lying unconscious, perhaps sleeping, after devouring many people. The corpses spill out of its mouth and onto the ground, denoting total excess and waste. With its indeterminate canine body, the monster recalls earlier allegorical images of the dogs attacking the lone, noble horse in plate 78, the fox documenting humanity's fault in its own destruction in plate 74, and the much earlier image of the canine monster in plate 40, which most likely represented British opportunism and sacking of "towns that had been previously liberated from the French."¹¹⁹ These distant relationships among the canine-monster images comprise examples of distant arthrology and create meaning synthesized across the narrative; thus, plate 81 appears not as an aside, but rather as a building block in the series' summation of war. Plate 81 also creates a temporal delay by its place between the images centered on the truth. The overall effect heightens the drama and the cautious optimism of plate 82, in which Truth returns and comforts a bedraggled man. This plate does not represent a clichéd happy ending, but rather the hope that there

¹¹⁹ J. Vega, "Desastres de la Guerra. Goya ante las Fatales Consecuencias de la Guerra," in *Goya y el Espíritu de la Ilustración* (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 1998), cited in Bordes et al, *Goya, Cronista de todas Las Guerras*, 160.

may be better possible worlds. The man, stooped and suffering, looks into the eyes of Truth, her arms outstretched and bright light emanating from her again. Symbols of peace and plenty surround her; a sheep, a basket full of food, and a tree with leaves on it starkly contrast with the previous images of animals, monsters, corpses, executions, rape, and devastation. Truth points with the index finger of her left hand, but this gesture does not mean the same thing as the pointing of the left hand of hypocrisy or the bishop who loomed over her dead body. These repeated gestures recall the emphasis on hands in religious art and pictorial narratives of the Middle Ages, and, as an example of restricted arthrology, the pointing left hands remind the viewer that not all ideals stem from corrupt institutions.¹²⁰ The young woman as truth seems to direct the man toward the light.¹²¹ The three appearances of truth are miraculous—they suggest death, the possibility of resurrection, and actual resurrection, much like Christ—yet the narrative places them in the secularized realm of warfare and the idealistic possibility of reasoning and living beyond warfare.

Despite Goya's perceived status as an auteur, *Los Desastres* relies upon a variety of semiotic and temporal markers typical to visual narrative that persist in the chaotic vision of war that it expresses. The series' paradoxical combination of the highly specific and the intentionally general, the secularization of religious imagery, and the use of allegorical visual and temporal techniques finds a natural expression through the medium and form-specific qualities inherent in comics and graphic narratives. As Callot's use of

¹²⁰ To remind the reader, restricted arthrology consists of sequential links, "relations of the linear type," that express smaller links among intelligible "linear semantic relations" throughout a narrative. See Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 22 and 103.

¹²¹ According to Yriarte, plate 82 represents Goya's "tribute to all the creators of social utopias," *Goya*, cited in Bordes et al, *Goya, Cronista de todas Las Guerras*, 244.

the technological development of the *échope* allowed him to produce his signature line quality and work at a faster rate, Goya's use of aquatint allowed him to produce a greater range of light and shadow than earlier techniques in etching and combine washes with frenetic line work. The style of *Los Desastres* feels otherworldly, and in some ways, novel. A close examination of the series demonstrates that the typical qualities of coextensive separation and joining, meaning at the level of the syntagm and sequence, manipulation of repeated elements to control narrative pacing, and the use of diegetic and nondiegetic space were as vital to the achievement of the narrative vision as the new aesthetic and the approach to making a narrative of war and dark satire. Kunzle writes of Goya's narrative style in the series of etchings, "It is also in a curious way nearer to Rodolphe Töpffer than to the English caricaturists, although one can hardly imagine two artists more different in temperament than the Spaniard and the Swiss."¹²² Kunzle bases this comparison on the emotive, dreamlike quality that pervades both *Los Caprichos* and *Los Desastres*, seeing the two series as much more similar to Töpffer's highly personal pictorial reveries than Hogarth's adaptation of specific social problems into morality tales or Callot's *Les Misères* and its carefully constructed narrative of chaos and order in warfare.

Töpffer: The Swiss Romantic

Kunzle is correct in estimating the difficulty of imagining Goya and Töpffer in the same sphere. After all, Töpffer's works represent a continuity of the bourgeois satirical-literary picture story. He was not a court painter hiding from a corrupt monarchy

¹²² Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 424.

or the death-dealing Inquisition, but a pedagogue who produced numerous essays, “farces,” small novels, and “eight longish (serio-) comic strips [...] Made originally for an educated elite, his picture stories were copied, popularized, and plagiarized in various languages,” reaching great popularity in their own time across audiences of all ages and social classes.¹²³ Töpffer’s tie to the literary,¹²⁴ like Hogarth’s, is in part a result of coextensive bourgeois cultural practices; the German Romantic novelist, scientist, and politician Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was a popular patron, and Goethe’s friends and colleagues Johann Peter Eckermann and Frédéric Soret brought Töpffer’s early works to Goethe’s attention.¹²⁵ Goethe enjoyed the story-albums of *Cryptogame*, *The Adventures of Dr. Festus*, *Jabot*, and the *Voyages*. Goethe died after Töpffer began to gain local fame in Geneva, but Goethe’s patronage and his publication of an article praising Töpffer’s caricatures certainly bolstered Töpffer’s popularity and already-growing cultural capital.¹²⁶ His career as a pedagogue and a writer, along with his movement in important cultural circles, established his stories as culturally approved, though they were not completely accepted, as Töpffer’s initial reticence to claim his own authorship demonstrates. Töpffer’s works do not overtly reveal the seriousness found in the series of both Callot and Goya or the broadly morally motivated satire in the works of Hogarth; however, they do treat the subjects of war and other social issues more delicately through an approach relying on farce, caricature, and satire. As Kunzle explains, “He cuts a wide

¹²³ David Kunzle, *Father of the Comic Strip: Rodolphe Töpffer* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 15.

¹²⁴ Smolderen writes that “Töpffer was penetrated by the literary values of the first German romantic period, and he knew the modern tendencies of English caricature [then expressed in the works of George Cruikshank and his peers after Hogarth] immediately,” *The Origins of Comics*, 25.

¹²⁵ David Kunzle, *The History of the Comic Strip*, Vol. 2: *The Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 29-30.

¹²⁶ Kunzle, *The Nineteenth Century*, 29-30, 33.

swath of sociopolitical issues that he largely avoids in his prose works and that crop up in his picture stories alone: war and militarism, absolutism, bureaucracy, law, cholera, frontiers, religion, the peasantry, and science. [...] That Töpffer's critique takes place in a world of dream and farce should not delude us into thinking that he was not sublimating serious concerns such as exercised his liberal-minded and critical contemporaries."¹²⁷ This assertion accounts for the similarity Kunzle finds between Töpffer and Goya, and reminds the reader that aesthetic lightness does not negate the possibility of thematic gravity.

The most important distinguishing features in Töpffer's picture stories lie in their more expressive, figural line quality, the consistent arrangement of captions at the bottom of the panels, and the expression of time. Töpffer's narratives tend to convey time in a linear, progressive manner that depicts series of moments or gestures; typically, one very small event occurs per panel or significant space. The narrative pacing in the majority of Töpffer's works moves away from the long and sometimes indeterminate spans of time depicted in *Les Miséres*, *A Harlot's Progress*, and *Los Desastres*. The relatively quicker narrative pacing found within Töpffer's comics, which often uses multiple panels to convey one event, also appears in parts of the Egerton Genesis and the Holkham Bible Picture Book, along with newspaper cartoons and, later, contemporary comic books and graphic novels. Smolderen understands Töpffer's rapid, flighty narrative pacing as an intentional, ironic counter to the increasingly formalized treatises on acceptable

¹²⁷ Kunzle, *Father of the Comic Strip: Rodolphe Töpffer*, 9.

techniques in poetry and art, especially Gotthold Lessing's *Laocoon* and its espousal of the superiority of progressive action over description in poetry and visual art:

In his texts on art, he [Töpffer] contested the legitimacy of any work that pretended to be the result of a mechanical application of a process or a system, whatever it may be, and virulently denounced the impoverishment of the expressive language, which never fails to follow. [...] Through the language of progressive action, Töpffer's picture stories really explored the idioms of progress. To do so, they fell back upon the cartoonist's favorite weapons: the sketchiness of character, the mixing of genres, and the collision of tones and styles.¹²⁸

The resistance to systematized progress appears ironically in Töpffer's gentle farces through the invocation of progressive action and visual humor. All of Töpffer's graphic narratives employ rapid narrative pacing not to glorify action, but to comment upon the silliness and even danger of materialism and unchecked "progress."

The material context of Töpffer's productions are tied to technological innovations in the invention of transfer lithography. The method necessitated collective production, as lithographers and printers were still needed once the initial marking on the paper was done. Töpffer wrote about his own process in his *Essai d'Autographie*: "The lithographer gives you a stick of ink and a piece of paper spread with a layer of glue starch. You dilute the ink, dip your pen in it, you scribble on the paper ... (and) send the

¹²⁸ Smolderen, *The Origins of Comics*, 40-1. Smolderen also quotes Töpffer's treatises on the value of art and language unfrozen from academic regularity, and his writings against the mechanization of manufacturing and art. Töpffer's words look forward to Walter Benjamin's concerns about the loss of "aura" through industrial proliferation, mechanical and technological reproduction, and the continuous increase in commodities.

page to the lithographer. He wets it on the reverse side, lays it on the stone, and subjects it to pressure, and here is your design transferred from paper to stone. It has then only to be fixed by means of the usual preparation, inked and printed it in as many copies as you want.”¹²⁹ When Töpffer’s eyesight faded later in his life, he employed the younger French caricaturist Cham and an anonymous engraver to help him produce *Cryptogame*, a satire much-focused on lampooning romantic love, often against the background of Algeria during the French conquest.¹³⁰

Cholera, Telegraph Poles, and Mischievous Winds: *Monsieur Pencil*

Töpffer’s earlier series *Monsieur Pencil* treats the topics of warfare, the cholera epidemic, and more generally, the theme of progress. *Monsieur Pencil* often mocks the regular military and the national guardsmen who became a de facto police force during periods of civil unrest, but maintains the light, energetic aesthetic through Töpffer’s unique line and frequent use of slapstick.¹³¹ Kunzle finds *Monsieur Pencil* to be the work that “bears the strongest imprint of the July 1830 revolution [in which Charles X, the French Bourbon King was removed from his throne and subsequent battles and demonstrations occurred]. The most polarized of his works, playing an extreme absurdism off against emphatic injections of political actuality, it is at the same time balanced, having been tempered and refined by the experience of the decade prior to its publication in 1840.”¹³² *Monsieur Pencil* appeared in two versions, the 1831 version, which contained moments of overt, direct critique of named persons, such as the war-

¹²⁹ Kunzle, *Father of the Comic Strip: Rodolphe Töpffer*, 78.

¹³⁰ Kunzle, *The Nineteenth Century*, 64-6; Kunzle, *Father of the Comic Strip: Rodolphe Töpffer*, 95-100.

¹³¹ Kunzle, *Father of the Comic Strip: Rodolphe Töpffer*, 9.

¹³² Kunzle, *The Nineteenth Century*, 52.

profiteering Rothschilds, and the 1840 version, which self-censored some of that content. Most of the changes between the two versions were in adjustments to the layout and elimination of a text-heavy section satirizing French parliamentary politics.¹³³ The 1840 version, which will be examined here, extended sympathies to both the urban working class and the rural peasantry, and continued the earlier version's critique of the "volunteer militia" amassed for seemingly no reason, and the professional military who terrorized the countryside and its inhabitants.¹³⁴ *Monsieur Pencil* displays a combination of highly kinetic images and very short intervals of time expressed in each panel. The linear, progressive feeling of the narrative makes the elements of slapstick humor even more salient, and results in a cartoon that makes intelligent social satire and neat absurdity.

Vignettes from *Monsieur Pencil*

A series of accidents and coincidences pervade *Monsieur Pencil*, one of which is the arrival of a man from the sky, via an ill wind of progress represented as "a malicious zephyr."¹³⁵ The man, M. Jolibois, is of course not from the sky or a distant astral body; however, the self-important Professor who finds him has decided that he must be from another planet, the planet "Psyche." Subsequently, the professor cages him to perform research and writing on his captive "psychiot." During Jolibois's entrapment, he mistakes the Professor's maid for Mme. Jolibois and the Professor for her lover and flies into a jealous rage. The zephyr, distracted, stops blowing Mme. Jolibois along in the air as he had been earlier in the story, and leaves her to float down towards M. Jolibois, now free

¹³³ Kunzle, *The Nineteenth Century*, 55.

¹³⁴ Kunzle, *The Nineteenth Century*, 55. Kunzle reads the critique of the military as an important similarity to the works of Callot.

¹³⁵ Smolderen, *The Origins of Comics*, 44.

of the cage, who attacks her.¹³⁶ This sequence from *Monsieur Pencil* concerns itself more with aesthetics and humor than politics, as it gently lampoons academics and their institutions. Still, the narrative devices are highly functional; they employ repeated visual elements, montage-like scenes, and rapid linear emplotment that Smolderen likens to “chain-reaction phenomena (also assimilated to contagious diseases and rumors) that constitute, to [Töpffer’s] eyes, the true syntax of progress (and of progressive action).”¹³⁷ Page 15 displays the chaotic circumstances of Jolibois’s arrival and attendant events in four panels. The first shows the Professor and his maid sticking Jolibois in the cage, as the zephyr blows Mme. Jolibois, a tiny blob, through the sky off in the distance. The zephyr continues to blow the woman through the sky for the next two panels, building continuity as the two panels depict the Burgher, legs up, in a haystack and his dog landing on a telegraph pole, respectively. They too appear to have been victims of the zephyr. In the fourth much thinner panel, the Professor sits stooped over his writing desk, and “hastily finishes his great article on a brand new subterranean wind [probably the zephyr] and addresses it to the Royal Academy, so as to be able to dedicate himself undisturbed to his creature from outer space.”¹³⁸ The four panels shrink in thickness and reinforce the effect of the Professor, albeit erroneously, documenting all of the important information. Ironically, from what the viewer sees prior to this display of scholarly labor, the previous events are absurd and accidental, and not the result of some fortunate communication from the stars.

¹³⁶ See image appendix, figure 57. Kunzle, *Father of the Comic Strip: Rodolphe Töpffer*, 47, 85. Kunzle, *The Nineteenth Century*, 53-5.

¹³⁷ Smolderen, *The Origins of Comics*, 44.

¹³⁸ Kunzle’s translation of the caption in panel four on page 15 of *Monsieur Pencil*, *The Nineteenth Century*, 53.

Page 16 contains a tripartite page layout, showing a thin panel at the end almost identical to the one on page 15, in which the Professor again writes down his findings. In the first panel, the Professor enters Jolibois's cage, and tries to begin to dissect him. Jolibois kicks the Professor, who falls unconscious into his maid's arms as she closes the cage door. The slapstick scene is ridiculous, and made even more so by the visual repetition of the Professor's return to his desk—the learned man still does not understand what he is looking at. Page 17¹³⁹ provides a montage-like layout in which the 8 panels alternate between Jolibois struggling in his cage, and the Professor sitting in the same position at his desk to document his findings. The four repeated pairings of Jolibois and the Professor compound the absurdity, and the rapid back-and-forth viewpoint of the panels suggest a double absurdity: The Professor's description, expressed in the captions below panels 2-8, is correct in the sense that he is recording Jolibois's gestures accurately, and the viewer verifies that by reading the page. Yet, the reader also knows that Jolibois's behavior is the result of his wrongful imprisonment and excessive jealousy, so he behaves absurdly as well. The hyper-compressed sequence of recurring panels, shrinking in size, and the internal synthesis between the montage-like scene extends the humorous mistake. Mme. Jolibois floats down from the sky, no longer held aloft by the zephyr, and her slow descent stretches across three panels on page 18,¹⁴⁰ recalling the three earlier panels in which the zephyr blew her along in the sky. The multiple subtle visual repetitions combine with the reemergence of elements that have only briefly left the page and create a clear temporal scheme alongside obvious

¹³⁹ See image appendix, figure 58.

¹⁴⁰ See image appendix, figure 59.

movement in space. The vignette as a whole also forecasts another case of mistaken identity when Jolibois, in a box, will be mistaken for the embodiment of cholera.

On page 64,¹⁴¹ a clever narrative digression in the first panel, a “meanwhile,” sets up the comedic elements of the second and third, and the third panel builds meaning across a great distance in the narrative. Pencil and Mme. Jolibois have reached what is most likely the French border, as they have been partially directed there by the zephyr that has manipulated them from the beginning with its theft of items and people and rumors of ensuing chaos caused by the poorly functioning telegraphs. They are subject to a disinfecting to prevent the spread of cholera. They arrive coincidentally at the same time as the Professor’s box, containing M. Jolibois, which must be fumigated for sanitary purposes. The disinfectant smoke, and his jealousy at seeing Pencil with Mme. Jolibois, suffocate Jolibois, and send him bursting out of the box in the third panel. Again, Jolibois’s jealousy causes problems, and the line “(for passion blinds, alas),” formulaically repeated in the captions, cues the reader to the earlier scenes of Jolibois’s ridiculous behavior.¹⁴² The verbal cue, along with another disproportionate reaction on the part of Jolibois, are elements of general arthrology, as they link distant sections of the narrative together cohesively. The health officers, frightened, run away from Jolibois and the broken box, screaming, “The Cholera! The Cholera!” which causes a hyperbolic reaction in the health workers. On page 65, each panel depicts an increasingly large group of fleeing health workers, starting with three in the first panel, then nine in the second, twelve or thirteen in the third, and, finally a mass of indeterminate number in the fourth

¹⁴¹ See image appendix, figure 60.

¹⁴² Kunzle’s translation of the phrase “car hélas, la passion aveugle!” in the second panel of pages 16, 18, and 64. See *The Nineteenth Century*, 52-3, 55.

panel. Only the Professor's maid seems to realize that there is no risk of cholera, and this man is the same one who kicked her employer into unconsciousness and then bolted. Underneath this pratfalling, comedic scene, there is a serious concern about contagion and the dangers of ignorance whether from the religious or the medical professionals. Kunzle explains: "While Töpffer spoofs the (reasonable) sanitary precautions of quarantine, fumigation, and purging which added to the usual hassle of frontier checks, he also seems to ridicule a superstitious fear of the disease, as if he, as many, could not bring himself to share the belief that the cholera would really strike as close as France, not to speak of Switzerland."¹⁴³ These scenes visually recall the chaos that ensues when an ill wind blows and telegraph poles, the instruments of the progress Töpffer found so disturbing, provide false or excessive information, causing that chaos.

The majority of *Monsieur Pencil* follows the above patterns of rapid timing and absurd comedy, along with the establishment and repetition of visual and semiotic links across great physical and temporal distances in the narrative. One notable exception to the dominant comedic approach is the narrative's depiction of the "20th Light" regiment of professional soldiers, which exemplifies *Monsieur Pencil*'s critique of the auxiliary police forces and the military. On pages 36 and 37,¹⁴⁴ they slash crops with their swords, destroy dams, burn the beautiful forests, and then sit around drinking wine and celebrating their terrible achievement. A larger panel, taking up much of page 36, illustrates the destruction of the crops, visually emphasizing the importance of the scene. Each act of destruction is rendered separately in its own panel rather than the story's

¹⁴³ Kunzle, *Father of the Comic Strip: Rodolphe Töpffer*, 23.

¹⁴⁴ See image appendix, figure 61.

usual progressive narrative style, which creates a different temporal and spatial effect. The allocation of one panel per act slows time, and suggests that the soldiers have traveled a greater distance. Töpffer's loose, caricatural aesthetic does not fit the gravity of the subject comfortably, unlike the hyperdetailed plates of *Les Misères* and the frenetic shadow-world of *Los Desastres*, but the dissonance between both the topic and the line quality, and the more amusing scenes and depictions of actual destruction, works to throw the seriousness of the depicted events into sharp relief. Perhaps in light of the absurd, incidental catalyzing events at the beginning of the narrative,¹⁴⁵ the incongruous aesthetic/topic pairing makes sense.

Conclusions

Upon examination, Töpffer's picture stories have significant qualities in common with *Les Misères*, *A Harlot's Progress*, and *Los Desastres*. Though wildly different in its aesthetic and more linear and progressive in its narrative approach, *Monsieur Pencil* relies similarly upon social critique and the spatiotemporal plasticity of pictorial narrative to produce its myriad effects. This chapter has established that neither Hogarth nor Töpffer are the progenitors of the modern comic book or graphic novel, but that their works play a substantial role in popularizing, in the Habermasian sense, visual narrative amongst a wide variety of the populace in those who produced and consumed products of the Habermasian secular public. The etchings of Callot, often overlooked, and the series of Goya, often relegated to strictly art historical discussions, also play just as important of

¹⁴⁵ Kunzle seems to corroborate this idea: "*Pencil* gives us a wider, indeed European text for the perils of militarism, for the political crux of the story is the manner in which accidents of telegraphic transmission, caused by a little dog making the arm of a telegraph waggle at random, are capable of bringing the nations of Europe to the brink of war," *Father of the Comic Strip: Rodolphe Töpffer*, 19.

a role. Each artist had a particular style and narrative vision, but none of them created or published without the assistance of either other artistic laborers or publishers and financiers. The investment in secular realism, evinced in the works of Callot, Hogarth, Goya, and Töpffer, does not constitute a total break from earlier, religious visual narratives. Rather, the graphic narratives of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries examined here employ consistently similar strategies of making meaning and rendering time and space; the tools and lines change, but the temporalizing of space and spatializing of time changes little. While their topicality broadens greatly, they all seem simultaneously occupied with similar questions of morality and the place of violence in the world. The oblique violence of the medieval and early modern depictions of Cain slaying Abel, for example, resonate subtly in the images of war depicted in this period. The focus on human folly and vice in the Bible picture books, especially in their more burlesque images, recurs in the works of Hogarth and Töpffer. The important differences between the visual narratives of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries and those of the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period arise in changing technological means of production and reproduction along with a widening base of consumption of these works, not limited to originals, but also including less expensive editions as well as pirated editions. The serial, sequential narratives of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries represent a great opening in the possibilities for graphic narrative, and their influence is palpable in the contemporary comic book and graphic novel.

Chapter Four

Superheroes and Horror Shows: Comic Books in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

Part One: Historical and Institutional Background

Comics in the Periodicals

To link the works of Callot, Hogarth, Goya, and Töpffer to the genre comics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it is necessary to take a slight detour through the continuity and growth of visual narratives in newspapers and periodical magazines. During the time Rodolphe Töpffer's popular picture stories were being disseminated, magazines containing humorous comics, satirical and serious political cartoons, and comics reportage began to grow in popularity in western Europe, England, and the United States. The arrival of the newspaper in the eighteenth century, and its rapid expansion in the nineteenth century,¹ provided another wide-reaching platform for comic strips and series. These formats further popularized the genres and iterations of pictorial narratives that exploded in popularity throughout the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as they were inexpensive to consume and widely available. Often identified as another origin point for the comic book as we now know it, serial newspaper comics employed and experimented with the aesthetics and semiotics of visual narrative, sometimes performing with remarkable stylistic consistency, and at other times, self-consciously playing with the form to develop new layouts. American newspaper comics such as

¹ Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, 121-5.

Richard Felton Outcault's *Hogan's Alley*, Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, and George Herriman's *Krazy Kat* displayed visual novelty even as they worked within well-established techniques of visual narrative,² initiating an even wider audience into reading dense monoscenic narration, numbered panels, and arrangements on the page that deliberately subverted left-to-right reading order.³ Though these cartoonists expanded the possibilities of the form, they belong to the larger tradition of pictorial narrative that begins with the illustrated manuscript rather than on an island of perceived modernity. In addition to the newspapers, graphic news supplements and comedic magazines continued to disseminate pictorial narrative to wide audiences as well. Graphic journals and supplements such as *The Illustrated London News*, pictorial sections of *Harper's News Monthly*, *L'Illustration*, and *The Graphic* enjoyed wide circulation and did as much to popularize graphic narrative as the comics sections in the *Chicago Tribune*, *The New York World*, *The New York Journal*, and *The Boston Sunday Post*. Periodicals such as *Judy*, *Fun*, *Punch*, and *Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday* also brought graphic narrative to large audiences.⁴

The continuous proliferation of graphic narrative in periodicals indicates that comic books were not arriving as a totally novel form on a visually or verbally illiterate

² In a recovery project, Dan Nadel provides evidence that a host of other comic artists were stretching the form in ways often attributed to only a few artists, such as Outcault, McCay, and Herriman, compiling a newspaper-centered account of typical methods persistent among more than just a few famous artists. See *Art Out of Time: Unknown Comics Visionaries, 1900-1969* (New York: Abrams, 2006).

³ See Smolderen, *The Origins of Comics*, 7, 51, 56, 80, 106-7, 141-2, 148-50, 154-60. See also R.C. Harvey, *The Art of the Funnies: An Aesthetic History* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994).

⁴ See Santiago García, *On the Graphic Novel*, trans. Bruce Campbell (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), Smolderen, *The Origins of Comics*, 76-9, 81-6, 92, 94, 99-104, 105 107, 131, 137, 141, 150-152, 157, and Kunzle, *The Nineteenth Century*, on comics periodicals of the nineteenth century. During the twentieth century, silent (wordless) visual narratives also flourished. Lynd Ward, for example, created silent graphic novels in woodcuts. See *Lynd Ward: Six Novels in Woodcuts* (New York: Library of America, 2010), which collects Ward's novels printed from 1929-37, *God's Man*, *Madman's Drum*, *Wild Pilgrimage*, *Prelude to a Million Years*, *Song Without Words*, and *Vertigo*.

public. Rather, they should be understood as another manifestation of a long-standing pattern of making and disseminating visual narratives. Comic books' material specificity has to do with the successful template of periodicals as well as the conditions and speed of production changed by technological innovations and demanded by widening consumerism. The appearance of the serial comic book is not uniquely American; however, a persistent strain of criticism identifies the comic book as an American invention.⁵ Some histories of the comics form and medium link the development of single-issue serial comic books with a kind of class-consciousness; they claim that newspaper comics and early comic books were for the uneducated masses, a rebellious, American lower-class expression that polite society reacted to with shock.⁶ This origin story is only partially true, as American newspaper comics are but one example of graphic narrative that profoundly influenced practitioners of the comics medium in its current forms.⁷ Some scholars of the medium hold to a definition of comics as an

⁵ M. Thomas Inge pinpoints 1933 as the year comic books came into existence, "at the end of the era of industrialization in America," and asserts that "the comic book was an original and powerfully attractive culmination of several mainstreams of national culture and technology," *Comics as Culture* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990), 131. The various designations of 1929, 1933, 1934 or 1935 as the birthyear of the comic, at least the American comic, occur because those years saw the publication of magazine-format comic books full of leftover, unprinted comic strips, first by Dell in 1929, and then later by Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson under the title *New Fun*. See Rocco Versaci, *This Book Contains Graphic Language: Comics as Literature* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 7; David Hajdu, *The Ten-Cent Plague: The Great Comic Book Scare and How It Changed America* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, & Giroux, 2008), 19-21.

⁶ Hajdu, for example, writes, "Created by outsiders of various sorts, comics gave voice to their makers' fantasies and discontent in the brash vernacular of cartoon drawings and word balloons, and they spoke with special cogency to young people who felt like outsiders in a world geared for and run by adults," *The Ten-Cent Plague*, 5. Hajdu conflates the comic book with American youth culture and children in general, though he does admit that working-class and immigrant adults probably read the newspaper strips that influence the comic books he characterizes as completely ignored by adults until they were deemed destructive to children and adolescents.

⁷ Thierry Groensteen demonstrates that comics have had changing readerships and distribution formats from the nineteenth century on, countering the idea that comics were always directed at a juvenile audience. He maintains that, in France, nineteenth-century readership was largely composed of adults reading comics in album (book or book-like format), whereas early twentieth-century readership was dominated by children reading, mostly American, comics in "illustrated youth magazines," until the regaining of an adult audience through comic books and magazines in the 1960s and '70s. See "Why Are

American invention coextensive with the beginnings of film, and later, American popular youth culture.⁸ These attitudes unwittingly enforce the institutional tendency in literary studies to focus on auteur comics, especially autobiographical and nonfiction comics, by adhering to the model of a high-low culture binary. Unexamined, these assumptions present an obstacle to a wide study of the preponderance of collectively-produced visual narratives, to which comic books belong, regardless of their cultural capital. Just as Kunzle's blind spots in his assessment of the history of comics are the arbitrary tie to print and his exclusion of religious materials, the idea that comics emerge solely from an American newspaper environment limits their connection to persistent, ubiquitous qualities of visual narrative embodied in graphic narrative across time, nations, and technologies. Without the long and essentially nonlinear and nonhierarchical matrix of relationships made apparent in studies of comics before the advent of American newspaper strips or comic books, we would arrive at the conclusion that comics and graphic narratives in their contemporary forms are either a completely novel, niche form or merely another set of ephemeral consumer products.

Innovations and Continuity in the Medium: Formal Vocabulary

Because critics usually frame the comics medium in terms of its novelty, it is important to sort out which narrative and aesthetic devices are new. Some devices in the

Comics Still in Search of Cultural Legitimization?" *A Comics Studies Reader*, ed. Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi), 4. A similar pattern occurs in the U.S.: The audience for newspaper comics may have been of mixed ages, but the majority of readers would have been adults, as children were not yet a significant marketing category. With the rise of the comic book, marketing is directed at children and adolescents, though aspirant adults also read comics. As the original audiences of American comics age, adult comics (in both the counterculture underground comix of the 1960s and 70s and the more mature, often darkly-themed mainstream comics of the 1980s) recapture mature audiences.
⁸ Jared Gardner does not claim an American origin unequivocally, but he does conflate the emergence of the modern comic with the emergence of the motion picture. See *Projections: Comics and the History of Twenty-First Century Storytelling* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 13-22, 35.

medium appear to be novel, such as the framed caption and the speech bubble, but they are not. The framed caption as an original inclusion appears in the works of Töpffer, the *Bibliae Pauperum*, and the Egerton Genesis, in which the text provides a mixture of explanatory caption and narrative content. Arguably, one could count the words at the bottom of Goya's *Los Desastres* prints as captions; they have been taken to be titles, but they can be read as highly compressed, complex glosses of the images as well. Speech bubbles or balloons are frequently identified as a novelty in newspaper comics and early comic books, but they are much older. Groensteen corroborates the idea that critical amnesia pervades the matter of speech bubbles, especially in the twentieth-century arguments about comics promoting illiteracy:

From the thirties on, the speech balloon, which gradually replaced text located under the image, was a central target for educators and for those taking sides with the written word. The procedure was thought to be of American origin, which would have sufficed [in France at that time], if not to disqualify it, at least to make it an object of suspicion. [Critiques of speech balloons as causing illiteracy were levelled in the United States as well.] Apparently, no one remembered that the balloon had been used in medieval times, and, more recently, in eighteenth-century European caricatures. It is true that, at that time, balloons were particularly popular in England, and already held in low esteem by the French.⁹

⁹ Groensteen, "Why Are Comics still in Search of Cultural Legitimization?" 6.

Speech scrolls, functionally the same as balloons, appear throughout the Holkham Bible Picture Book, for example. Suspicion of new aesthetic and narrative devices is especially unfounded when they are neither harmful nor new.

The use of and play with the frame as a boundary of enclosure and the panel as a pliable space stems from a very old pictorial tradition. Comics' use of the panel and frame as paradoxically joining and separative units of meaning is not necessarily new, but the medium allows the panel and frame to be used to more complex narrative effect than seen in protocomics and early forms of pictorial narrative. Contemporary use of the panel and frame is much like the spandrel, a necessary evolutionary adaptation responding to the exigencies of the medium; the rectangular frame and panel a by-product of the overall structure of a codex. Increased attention to the graphic character of written language and experimentation with letterforms occurs consistently in genre comics, first on comics' covers and title pages, and then throughout the entire comic, especially in genre comics made during and after the 1980s. Arguably, experimentation in letterforms is not a novelty, as Old English and Latin were typically copied in different scripts in the Middle Ages, and special letterforms were cast to print Old English in the Early Modern period. The use of different letterforms to indicate different languages, speech tones, affectations, and moods in dialogue probably begins with comics. The expression of sound and verbal sound signifiers (such as the bolder or ornamented rendering of onomatopoeic words like boom, pow, zap, and "snikt")¹⁰ as visually dynamic words and symbols comprises a new element, but it may be an outgrowth of the medieval practice of rubricating or

¹⁰ "Snikt" is a familiar sound signifier to most readers of superhero comics—it is the sound of the X-Men character Wolverine extending his claws.

ornamenting important words or names. Here, creating sound in a silent medium is key. As Catherine Khordoc observes, “The ability to create the illusion of sound through visual devices is unique to comics.”¹¹ The medium necessitates the creation of a full sensory dimension that must be simultaneously read and seen, encoded and decoded, which Groensteen characterizes as “effects of networks.”¹² Such a narrative environment builds on earlier expressions, expanding the dimensions of envisioned sound; before newspaper comics and comic books, the reader had to imagine the sound entirely or experience its absence. Multiple increasing close-ups and pans out to wide landscapes or overhead views comprise features of the medium that differ from their ancestors, something that most likely stems from the influence of film.¹³

As a self-consciously rendered medium, comics also cultivate a heightened sense of co-conspiracy¹⁴ through the necessity of high levels of audience participation. The use of splash pages, full pages or two-page spreads that emphasize an important scene or moment, has some degree of precedent in the earliest forms of codex-bound pictorial narrative such as the full-page scenes dedicated to the fall of the rebel host in the Junius

¹¹ Catherine Khordoc, “The Comic Book’s Soundtrack: Visual Sound Effects in *Asterix*,” in *The Language of Comics: Word and Image*, ed. Robin Varnum and Christina T. Gibbons (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 173. See also Robert S. Peterson, “The Acoustics of Manga: Narrative Erotics and the Visual Presence of Sound,” *International Journal of Comic Art*, 9.1 (2007): 578-90. Peterson focuses on manga, extremely popular Japanese comics, but many of his observations count for comics that use the Roman alphabet, and more generally, comics that use sound. For example, Peterson elucidates the place of sound in all comics: “Being able to read is a prerequisite to both comics and books, but there is an important shift in the nature of the medium of comics that draw the reader into the sound of the action. Comics utilize word/pictures and pictured/words, where the way something is written visually informs sound quality in narrative action. Such exaggerated onomatopoeic words commonly appear in comics as hybrid word/pictures, which convey the essence of lived sensations by using the sound-like experience to fuse the sign/icon into a single sensation,” 578.

¹² Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 160.

¹³ Gardner, *Projections*, 9, 11, 186, 189.

¹⁴ McCloud explains this by depicting a murder, and explaining how the reader is “an accomplice,” *Understanding Comics*, 68. He also characterizes the participation as “intimacy,” 69. Hillary Chute remarks on McCloud’s use of the term as a fitting one in “Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative,” *PMLA* 123.2 (2008): 460.

11 manuscript and the Illustrated Old English Hexateuch. The inset panel, a smaller panel placed inside of a larger one, is a new device and a refinement of the way earlier visual narratives use space and time. Groensteen characterizes the inset as “evidence of the extreme suppleness that characterizes the management of space within comics. It opens up a large range of procedures in which the repartition of frames, escaping from the relative automation of tabular compartmentalization (or, [...] the logic of *gridding*), is more directly dictated by the semantic articulations of the story and fully participates in the *mise en scène*.”¹⁵ The inset panel exponentially increases the possibilities of expressing narrative time. The multiple verbal narrative registers, a voiceover or explanatory caption/track versus dialogue, emerge with comics before the advent of sound film. This combination allows depictions of reflection and memory, which can take the form of an inner ongoing monologue, an omniscient narrative voice, or an imagined dialogue with the reader, in addition to other possibilities. The caption content exists alongside immediate or past dialogue, creating narrative digression, tension, and elaboration in relationship to the spoken or heard dialogue. Explanatory captions were extant long before the comics medium, but the medium’s combination of dialogue and captions appears to be new.

Comics in Academic Literary Studies

Comics and graphic novels entered academic study first as a paraliterature or subliterature, much in the same way dime novels and other more popular media forms have done. Marianne Hirsch’s 2004 editor’s column in the *Publications of the Modern*

¹⁵ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 86. Groensteen defines gridding as “dividing the available space into a number of units or compartments,” *The System of Comics*, 144.

Language Association of America (PMLA), “Collateral Damage,” discusses Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* and *In the Shadow of No Towers*, comics about the Holocaust and the 9/11 attacks, respectively.¹⁶ The article encourages a particular kind of visual narrative into the academic fold because such narratives are determined to be effective vehicles for expressing trauma; Hirsch reads them in a larger discussion of the highly disturbing images that emerged from the Abu Ghraib scandal, war photography and philosophical treatises on suffering. Unfortunately, this high-profile article, which marks one of the first major forays of literary studies into comics, demonstrates little regard for or understanding of the comics medium’s specificities. Hillary Chute’s article “Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative” published in the 2008 *PMLA* is one of the earlier articles to present comics as a serious object of literary study with a clear understanding of comics as a medium. At that time, Comics Studies had been an academic undertaking of its own in France and Belgium for decades, and in the rest of Europe and the United Kingdom for nearly as long. The majority of American universities still largely ignored comics then, though some rare scholarly practitioners such as David Kunzle and M. Thomas Inge had been writing seriously on the medium itself for many years. Chute’s article represents a move toward academic acceptance of comics as a medium worthy of study, but with some serious caveats. Chute correctly narrates the resistance to and indeed the difficulties of academic research on comics, but ultimately settles *de facto* on a canon-establishing gesture that excludes the most typical manifestations of the form:

Comics—a form once considered pure junk—is sparking interest in literary studies. I’m as amazed as anyone else by the comics boom—despite the fact that I

¹⁶ Marianne Hirsch, “Collateral Damage,” *PMLA*, 119.4 (2005): 1209-15.

wrote an English department dissertation that makes the passionate case that we should not ignore this innovative narrative form. [...] But comics presents problems we're still figuring out (the term doesn't settle comfortably into our grammar; nomenclature remains tricky and open to debate). The field hasn't yet grasped its object or properly proposed its project. To explore today's comics we need to go beyond preestablished rubrics: we have to reexamine the categories of fiction, narrative, and historicity. [...] Highly textured in its narrative scaffolding, comics doesn't blend the visual and the verbal—or use one simply to illustrate the other—but is rather prone to present the two nonsynchronously; a reader of comics not only fills in the gaps between panels but also works with the often disjunctive back-and-forth of *reading* and *looking* for meaning. Throughout this essay, I treat comics as a medium—not as a lowbrow genre, which is how it is usually understood. However, I will end by focusing attention on the strongest genre in the field: nonfiction comics.¹⁷

The field is more settled now than when Chute wrote this article; a canon has been established, which largely resembles a microcosm of the western literary canon, but with the “junk” of many fiction comics excluded. This “junk” status, as critics Jared Gardner and Bradford Wright claim, may actually be the lifeblood of the medium that allows for continuing creativity and multiplicity even within genre comics,¹⁸ but it may also continue to prevent serious appreciation of the medium beyond its canon. The debates on status and terminology that Chute outlines continue, with slightly more agreement on a

¹⁷ Chute, “Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative,” 452.

¹⁸ Gardner, *Projections*, 7-8. See also Bradford Wright, *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), xiv.

basic framework from which to begin. The article raises points that still occupy Comics Studies, but more importantly, it reflects an ongoing bias in literary studies against typical genre comics. I am not blaming Chute for this, as her work primarily centers on nonfiction and documentary forms of narrative, and she is an astute reader of these forms. The diction of the article, however, reveals a larger problematic trend in literary studies and its disciplinary treatment of comics. Nonfiction comics, such as autobiography/memoir, if one typifies them as a genre, are a rare, if not the rarest, manifestation of the medium.¹⁹ That is not to say that nonfiction comics are not comics or that they are not worthy of study. They rely upon essentially the same semiotic, aesthetic, and material conditions that fictional genre comics do; they are visual narratives, and thus engage in the same processes of the most typical iterations of visual narratives. The issue here is that canonical nonfiction comics manifest an atypical, and at times illusory, process of being made by a single person, and thus are easily folded into an academic discipline that still very much organizes itself around single authors and values rarity over ubiquity. In characterizing nonfiction comics as “the strongest genre,” Chute’s pronouncement, perhaps unwittingly, restages the questions of cultural legitimacy that until very recently have kept the majority of comics outside of serious study. Incidentally, the approach valorizes the New Critical stance on real art as the products of an individual genius, only with nonfiction graphic narratives in place of poetry. Furthermore, in naming nonfiction comics as the most viable manifestation of the form, the article excludes comics traditionally understood as genre comics, that is, crime, horror,

¹⁹ Nonfiction comics, especially in the form of comics journalism, have been produced with increasing frequency in the last fifteen years, but not enough to be considered typical in the way that genre comics are typical.

superhero, fantasy/science fiction, romance, and war comics. Genre comics, regardless of one's assessment of their relative quality or canonicity, are examined here on the basis that they continue the pictorial narrative strategies and the collective production made manifest in earlier media forms. Furthermore, because all comics require a dialogic and dialectical reading process that reference their own structural parts, they are recursive in nature. Genre comics also constitute examples of texts that can be understood through spandrel-logic, as some of their primary signifying units are adaptations to the physical constraints of the medium.

Part Two: Definitions and Terminology

What Constitutes a Genre Comic?

Genre comics are the most common iteration of the comics medium, and owe their title to taxonomical need as much as thematic and marketing categories. The term has recently been used to differentiate large-press popular comics from “alternative” or “indie comics,” which originally referred to underground comix produced outside of mainstream publishing in the late 1960s and 1970s, and grew to include comics that were not mainstream superhero comics—especially not those produced by the “Big Two” companies, DC and Marvel Comics—and hence “alternative.”²⁰ Now “indie comics” typically refers comics made by smaller publishing companies, such as Drawn and Quarterly or Fantagraphics Books, or published by independent creators. Some of this distinction is arbitrary both within and outside of the academy, as “indie comics” often overlap with genre comics in form and content. Many are also now produced regularly by

²⁰ See Charles Hatfield, *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature* (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2005), 3-31.

established companies. One of the largest and most financially successful comics companies, Image Comics, produces creator-owned comic books, most of which fall into the category of genre comics due to their content, though they are not the intellectual property of the Image Comics company. Within Comics Studies and academic contexts, genre comics is usually shorthand for popular comics that correspond to particular categories of fiction, and much later, nonfiction. The waters are muddy, but for my purposes, a brief foray into the history of genre comics will clarify the importance of the term.

With the publication of single-issue serial comics beginning in the 1930s, the form moved away from merely reproducing unsold, unpublished comic strips and into serial stories based around a character or group of characters, or vignettes based on a common theme. The superhero comic emerged in 1938 with the publication of *Action Comics* No. 1, the first appearance of Superman,²¹ followed by the 1939 arrivals of Batman in *Detective Comics* No. 27, and the Human Torch and the Sub-Mariner in Timely Comics titles, Captain America in the eponymous series in 1941, and Wonder Woman in *All-Star Comics* No. 8 in 1942.²² The first crime comic book, *Crime Does Not Pay*, appeared in 1942, and the first horror comic book, *Adventures into the Unknown*, was published in 1948. The EC Comics horror and crime titles, such as *Crime SuspenStories*, *The Vault of Horror*, *The Haunt of Fear*, and *The Crypt of Terror* were published in 1950.²³ The superhero genre expanded rapidly until companies began to cut

²¹ See John A. Lent, "The Comics Debates Internationally," in Heer and Worcester, *A Comics Studies Reader*, 69; Versaci, *This Book Contains Graphic Language: Comics as Literature*, 7.

²² Gardner, *Projections*, 118; Daniel Clark and Krystal Howard, "The American Comic Book: A Brief History," *Critical Insights: The American Comic Book*, ed. Joseph Michael Sommers (Ipswich, MA: Grey House Publishing, 2014), 8.

²³ Lent, "The Comics Debates Internationally," 69-70.

failing titles in the 1970s. “Funny animal” comics and war comics emerged in the 1940s as well, though these genres did not persist as successfully. Romance comics emerged in the post-World War II period, but their traditional iterations largely disappeared by the 1970s with few exceptions.²⁴ Science Fiction/Fantasy comics appeared in the early 1950s with EC Comics’ *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy* and Atlas Comics’ (later Marvel Comics) *Strange Tales*.²⁵ Science Fiction/Fantasy, horror, and superhero²⁶ comics have been the longest lasting and most commercially successful of the genres, though crime comics have experienced a resurgence since the 1980s because of a rise in interest in neonoir-style narratives. These genres frequently blend in the most successful comics of the last 35 years, so they should not be taken as dogmatic categories, but rather as a useful vocabulary to differentiate the different topics and thematic concerns of popular comic books. In short, the arrival of the single-issue serial comic is simultaneously that of the genre comic. Genre comics still command a large readership²⁷ even though the

²⁴ Joseph Michael Sommers, “Negotiating Popular Genres in Comic Books: An Impossible Mission. Against all odds. Yet, somehow the Chapter is Saved!” in Sommers, *Critical Insights*, 84-5.

²⁵ Sommers, “Negotiating Popular Genres in Comic Books,” 82-3.

²⁶ The comics industry has experienced major rises and falls, often coextensive with market conditions, but the superhero genre bears the mark of this the most overtly. That may be due to its rapid periods of proliferation, glut, loss, and resurgence, or because the genre has changed enough with its demographics to survive, but at times not rapidly enough to hold waning interest. There are four major periods of comics, usually invoked in discussions of superhero comics, which oddly leave out anything made after the mid-1980s: the Golden Age (1930s-50s), the Silver Age (late 1950s-1960s), the Bronze Age (1970 up to mid-1980s), and the Modern Age (mid-1980s-present). The dates are approximate, as they represent an average range determined from multiple sources. These are marketing terms as much as enthusiasts’ vocabulary, but have been incorporated into academic examinations with enough regularity that they warrant definition here. The vague term for post-mid-1980s comics presents a problem. Like any other sets of periodization, though, there is much debate surrounding what begins and ends when and why. A general working idea of the significance of these terms will suffice for this project and this particular chapter’s examination of superhero comics. See Charles Hatfield, *Hand of Fire: The Comics Art of Jack Kirby* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 8-9; Kyle Eveleth, “Rust and Revitalization: The So-Called Bronze and Modern Ages of Comics,” in Sommers, *Critical Insights*, 121-24.

²⁷ The ongoing popularity of genre comics can be attributed to their generic mutability and the growth of creator-owned titles. Pragmatically the market has also played a significant part in this, as the major two publishers of genre comics, Marvel and DC, have gained a great deal of revenue through major Hollywood films. The trade paperback format, a collection of serial comics into a larger bound volume, allowed comics entry into bookshops under the auspices of “the graphic novel.” Graphic novels, truly, follow the form of

market for comics in general has receded. It is true that all comics use a similar set of signifying practices, self-consciously draw attention to their rendered nature, and possess a level of plasticity that other media do not, but many genre comics express these functions in their fullest range. The genre comic, as a manifestation of visual narrative, requires reader participation in relationship to ocular inducement and verbal and visual cuing. In this way, the genre comic behaves recursively by referencing itself as well as the myriad forms of visual narrative that precede it. Visual narratives more temporally remote from our contemporary milieu, such as the illustrated psalter, the *Biblia Pauperum*, and *A Harlot's Progress*, for example, can evince a balance of clarity and opacity because the reader or viewer may have needed, or may need, to be an initiate in the practice of reading the pictorial narrative of that time. It may seem easier or more natural to apprehend genre comics because they are a contemporary expression of pictorial narrative often labelled as simple or “junk,” and some examples in the medium do much to guide the reader. Still, genre comics require a process of reading functionally related to their pictorial ancestors regardless of their cultural capital.

Part Three: Reading Genre Comics by Issue or Episode

Time and Crime: “Murder May Boomerang”

Crime Suspense Stories was one of EC Comics' bestselling titles,²⁸ and a truly collective production. The series showcased the writing of Al Feldstein, the coloring of

the novel in that they are not collections of serial issues; they are one continuous story published originally as one continuous story. Will Eisner's *A Contract with God* and Gilbert Hernandez's *Bumperhead* are graphic novels because they were conceived of, made, and published in single volumes. The term graphic novel has fallen into usage interchangeably with the term trade paperback.

²⁸ The series was unfortunately short-lived because of the Kefauver Senate Subcommittee hearings on juvenile delinquency. EC owner William Gaines testified before the committee, as he was concerned with the dominant viewpoint that crime and horror comics somehow contributed to juvenile delinquency. Gaines

Marie Severin, and the drawings of popular artists such as Wally Wood, Jack Kamen, Joe Orlando, John Severin, Joe Kubert, Graham Ingels, and Johnny Craig and Harvey Kurtzman, who were both editors at EC as well. In “Murder May Boomerang,”²⁹ Feldstein, Marie Severin, and Craig collaborated to produce a chilling and relatively sophisticated tale of murder. The narrative makes use of a highly regularized gridded structure, recalling the primacy of the multi-paneled page layout seen in earlier texts such as the Harley Psalter, the Egerton Genesis, the printed *Biblia Pauperum* (British Library Blockbook C.9 d.2), and *Monsieur Pencil*. The comic employs both monoscenic narration and progressive narration, using graphic cues such as panel design and background color to build and vary the depiction of space and time. Key images are repeated and manipulated, building relationships of distant and restricted artology, and the strange title only becomes clear when the first and final panel are shown to be intentionally identical to one another. As murder may boomerang, so does the narrative, which begins and ends in the present, but moves through the past events leading up to that point quite deftly.

The second panel on the first page³⁰ depicts a younger man driving through the rain with his elderly father, and provides a beginning that is both *in medias res* and strangely frozen, much like the situation of the two men. The motion lines around the

did not fare well, and he may not have taken the hearing seriously. The EC crime and horror titles were banned and never recovered under the censorship of the newly formed Comics Code Authority; however, their aesthetic and narrative influence still appears in comics today. See Amy Kiste Nyberg, “William Gaines and the Battle over EC Comics,” in Heer and Worcester, *A Comics Studies Reader*, 58-68; Amy Kiste Nyberg, *Seal of Approval: The History of the Comics Code* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998); Bart Beaty, *Frederic Wertham and the Critique of Mass Culture* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005).

²⁹ Al Feldstein et al., “Murder May Boomerang,” *Crime SuspenseStories* No. 1, collected in *Crime SuspenseStories* Vol. 1, Publ. Russ Cochran (Timonium, MD: Gemstone Publishing, 2007), 11-18.

³⁰ See image appendix, figure 62.

windshield wipers and the direction of the falling rain indicate work in concert with the caption at the top of the frame to indicate that they are driving, and have been for a long time. A metal bar separates the split windshield and the two men so that the reader sees them encased together, yet separated by the physical line and the tragic events of which the reader quickly learns. The following two pages provide background leading up to the conflict of the tale, but they are not mere progressively narrated digressions. The captions at the top cue the reader to understand the following narrative as a trip through man's memories; the captions, as narration of events and the man's memories, effectively guide the reader through the images of unfolding events until we return to the tale's present day. Three panels on the second page and one panel on the third page³¹ characterize the warmth and appropriate mutual dependence of the father and son upon each other after the woman of the house dies, and subtle changes in the panel arrangement indicate their changing roles and responsibilities to one another. The upper-right panel on page 2 is spare; against a plain red background, the boy, at left, looks up at his father to tell him he has made dinner, and his father praises him accordingly. There is a tone of class aspiration at work here—the woman of the house has died, the father works a low-paying job, and the child takes on the duty of a parent and a functioning member of the household. The panel at right in the middle of the page continues both the class-climbing aspirations and the emphasis on the father-son relationship. The father embraces the son, now a young man, looking up at him and encouraging him to go to college. Here, they have changed positions from the panel immediately above; the father stands at left. Though there are two intervening panels, the page layout still works to cue the reader to

³¹ See image appendix, figure 63.

stack these images of the father-son bond. The panel immediately below, at the bottom right of the page, does the same thing, only now the son has returned home from college with a chemical engineering degree. They embrace as two grown men, now the son stands at left, and the tricolonnar stacking of the development of their relationship amplifies their closeness. This function does not limit itself to one page, but provides a similar scene on the next page one more time before the elements of conflict begin to play out. At the upper right on page 3, the two men embrace again, against a plain background. Now the son has the means to care for the aged, hardworking father, and his position in the panel recalls his father's position in the upper right panel of the previous page, the panel in which he was still a young boy depending upon his father. They wear the same hats as grown men, and the repetition at work here builds a relationship to the upper right panel on page 2 and the two other panels that emphasize this relationship.

The visual repetition of the father-son bond is clever and cruel considering how the remainder of the story plays out. The two men take a vacation and enjoy outdoor leisure pursuits, as depicted in the upper left monoscenic panel of page 4.³² In what follows, the reader learns that an escaped convict is on the loose, and the man races back to the lodge, panicked that something awful has happened to his father. On page 5,³³ the page layout reflects the man's panic and disorientation along with the sense of time distortion that often accompanies moments of crisis. The top row of panels contains narrative captions, and depicts the man's drive back to the lodge, cutting from a view outside of his car, to his face worried with sweat, to his screeching halt and a possible

³² See image appendix, figure 64.

³³ See image appendix, figure 65.

moment of relief, indicated by a thought bubble. The abrupt disappearance of the captions in the quadrant below on page 5 forces the reader into the moment of crisis, as the governing narrative voice has disappeared. The square symmetry of the individual panels and as a block of four groups them thematically while driving a sense of circular movement as the man calls out to his father. He looks in different directions, finding the prisoner's uniform, and panicking even further in the last panel on the page. The visual cues suggest that he is turning around in circles, and the stark backgrounds in the upper and lower right panels of the quadrant amplify the panicked, circular feeling.

What follows is a cautionary tale against vigilantism and vengeance, remarkable since EC Comics was so criticized for its depictions of violence, and a return in time to the beginning of the story. The man swears to avenge his father, and they go out looking for the assailant, but his father incorrectly identifies the assailant, and the young man murders an innocent person walking through the woods. The narrative repeats the elderly father's dazed face a total of four times, once on page 6, once on page 7, and twice on page 8.³⁴ The recurring face recalls the initial scene of him staring out of the windshield as he and his son are on the lam, until in the fourth and final repetition, the reader is delivered back to the original scene. This repetition not only cues the reader to make meaning across the narrative and set up the end-return, but also serves to outwardly indicate the father's seemingly deteriorating internal mental state, perhaps because of the attack. This outward visual manifestation of an internal state links the audience to the shift in the father's state of mind, and comprises a typical strategy of identification

³⁴ See image appendix, figures 66 and 67.

inherent to visual narrative.³⁵ In the initial dazed-faced scene, the father stares out into space, or straight at the reader, and reacts indifferently to his son's claims of vengeance. On page 7, the father's face appears in the upper left panel, surrounded by swirling black and orange marks, a riff on a common visual trope in comics and some films that indicates either a break with reality, fading out of consciousness, or the onset of psychosis. Only on page 8 does the young man realize—and with him the reader if he or she had not already suspected—that the father has no idea who his attacker was, nor does he know who his son's victim was, and he may not even be grounded in reality at all, as the visual and verbal narration indicate. The upper right panel on page 8 depicts the old man pointing out of the window at another man, an off-duty deputy, identifying him as the attacker, and the following panel at middle left repeats the dazed, pupil-contracted, gape-mouthed expression of the father. Realizing that he has committed murder rather than an act of vengeance he deemed justifiable, the man flees with his father, and the bottom panel, significantly the largest on the page, returns to the exact same scene in the beginning. This final touch neatly closes a narrative that moves through multiple temporalities, commenting upon the problem of cyclical violence, and certainly accomplishing the “boomerang” of the title.³⁶

³⁵ See Chapter One, pages 89 and 90 on the identification and visual marking of inward states in the Harley Psalter. The drawings cue the reader to conflate the psalmist's skin, afflicted with sores, to the demon's skin, implying a relationship between inner states and outward appearances; the images also cue the reader to link the arrows in the psalmist's body with the arrows that Christ holds. Similarly, the illustration and repetition of the father's dazed face in “Murder May Boomerang” serves to reflect both his worsening mental state and to cue the reader to connect his break with reality to related plot events: the initial attack at the hands of the escaped prisoner, the son's murder of an innocent man, the father's continuous misidentifications, and the duo's flight that visually links the end with the beginning. This method of making visual identifications is a cornerstone of visual narrative, and both the medieval and contemporary examples here depend upon this technique.

³⁶ Jared Gardner calls the typical EC Comics surprise endings “the O. Henry finish,” after the American short fiction writer who relied upon such devices, *Projections*, 113.

Nightmares and Metanarrative: “Midnight Snack”

EC Comics’ great success came from its crime and horror titles, and *Tales from the Crypt* depicted gruesome stories that had a lasting influence on the genre. “Midnight Snack,”³⁷ created by the same team as “Murder May Boomerang,” presents the narrative cliché of “it was only a dream,” but provides a horrific twist that complicates the hackneyed premise and the fairly simplistic plot, and creates a running metanarrative that lampoons the perceived dangers of reading horror stories. The first page opens with a large panel at left in which a sweating man appears to be hiding from an angry, torch-carrying mob in a graveyard.³⁸ The following two panels, a stock appearance by the “vault-keeper,” the commentator on the stories, and an introduction to the protagonist, Duncan Reynolds, make it seem as if the graveyard scene is an imaginative product of Duncan’s reading of a book simply labelled *Horror Tales*. The top left panel on page 2³⁹ gives a visual sound signifier, a series of 12 “bong” noises, to show the reader that it is midnight, as Duncan remarks in the next panel. The third panel depicts a series of circular lines around Duncan’s head, which seem to indicate exhaustion or dizziness. Taken in relationship to the preceding panels, the third panel visually disrupts the domestic scene. Read at the level of the syntagm, in relationship to the immediately preceding panel and the immediately following panel, the reader understands that Duncan experiences some kind of attack or transformation. Duncan appears outside, in an undisclosed location, by a fire hydrant in the fourth panel. The composition of this panel stands out visually, as it

³⁷ Al Feldstein et al., “A Midnight Snack,” *Tales from the Crypt* No. 24, collected in *Tales from the Crypt* Vol. 2, Publ. Russ Cochran (Timonium, MD: Gemstone Publishing, 2007), 63-8.

³⁸ See image appendix, 68.

³⁹ See image appendix, 69.

abruptly shifts the viewer's perspective from the previous six panels; here, Duncan is drawn so that the reader views him from below. Neither the reader nor Duncan understand how he has suddenly arrived outside. The following panels depict a straightforward story of our protagonist attempting to eat in a restaurant, only to become sickened by the cooking odors. When read at the level of the sequence, it becomes clear that something is very wrong with the protagonist. At the bottom right of page 3, the circular lines repeat around Duncan's head, and he becomes very dizzy. At this point, because of meaning produced at the level of the sequence, the reader knows that Duncan will most likely end up in another place.

Duncan awakens in a graveyard only to frenetically, excitedly dig up a grave. The running captions redouble Duncan's crazed monologue, both informing the reader that Duncan has lost his mind and is driven by a hunger that he cannot understand and may be starting to enjoy. The panels here straightforwardly depict the actions, moving in and out of close range to emphasize the actual digging up of the grave and the explanation of his hunger and sickness. He has a pang of conscience before passing out again and waking up in the grave itself, hovering over a corpse that he has apparently been munching on.⁴⁰ The corpse, in the upper left panel on page 5, is mostly outside of the panel. Because of the tasteful placement of the corpse, the caption in the next panel does the heavy lifting, feeding the reader a "mutilated, partially devoured body"⁴¹ that he or she must imagine, and thus participate in Duncan's grisly crime. Immediately after this, the third panel shows the same angry mob from the beginning of the story, heading toward Duncan. The

⁴⁰ See image appendix, 70.

⁴¹ Feldstein et al., "A Midnight Snack," *Tales from the Crypt* No. 24, 67.

placement of the mob at this point in the story complicates reader expectations—if the mob is here and Duncan escapes, which he does, it leaves one unsure of what to anticipate, even if one is an initiate in the typical EC narrative patterns. Duncan flees, passes out again, and wakes up at home, introducing the tired cliché of “it was all a dream.” This pattern does not build the circular narrative in “Murder May Boomerang,” but something else must be occurring because there is still a page left, and the cue of the repeated image indicates that there is more to the story.

Page 6⁴² introduces the self-awareness of the story and the metanarrative parody of more conservative opinions of consuming horror comics, the opinions of those who thought that consuming certain types of media led to violent behavior or other imitations of the media’s content. The top left panel shows Duncan back at home with the *Horror Tales* volume in hand, relieved that he had been having a nightmare. This visual cue recalls the beginning of the narrative, in which Duncan appears in two visually incongruous panels, at home reading the book and in the graveyard scene. In the top right panel, he says, “Now that I think about that dream I have to laugh! Never thought horror tales would affect....”⁴³ The reader can momentarily laugh with him, as reading horror tales does not turn one into a cannibal. He interrupts himself, noticing that everything that belongs inside of his refrigerator, including the shelves, is sitting on his kitchen table. In the fifth panel, Duncan opens the refrigerator door, and a body falls out. Again, the verbal caption provides description that the picture obscures: “And out tumbles a *partially eaten corpse!*”⁴⁴ Though the reader may not be as surprised as Duncan, if he or she is, the

⁴² See image appendix, figure 71.

⁴³ Feldstein et al., “A Midnight Snack,” *Tales from the Crypt* No. 24, 68.

⁴⁴ Feldstein et al., “A Midnight Snack,” *Tales from the Crypt* No. 24, 68.

delayed revelation bursts the dream-resolution cliché, and makes the extreme close-up of his upset face more disturbing. There is no reproducing of the circular-lined episodes of dizziness, as the audience experiences the revelation that Duncan is indeed a flesh-eating monster. Since the audience was made up of readers of horror tales, the amusing false parallel of the consumption of horror stories and the consumption of flesh (that turns out to be true in the story-space) appeals to a shared sense of reader expectation around the horror genre, and the ghoulish vault-keeper ends the story by punning on Duncan's terrible fate.

It's Complicated: *Love and Rockets*, Romance, and Time

Love and Rockets is a comics series that began in 1981, and continues to be written and printed today. The series was created by the Hernandez brothers, Jaime, Gilbert, and Mario, and began as a collection of independently published short comics by the three brothers. Jaime and Gilbert introduced characters into their respective story worlds of East Los Angeles-based fictive Barrio Huerta, or Hoppers, and the imagined border town of Palomar. All three brothers initially worked together on these stories, but by 1983, Jaime was responsible for the Huerta stories that narrated the lives of a group of women while Gilbert expanded the world of Palomar and its inhabitants. The earliest stories blend genres: superheroes, robots, and other sci-fi creatures populate the world alongside regular people and a pervasive sense of fantasy, sometimes mocked, permeates the stories.⁴⁵ As the series progressed, Jaime Hernandez's stories became increasingly

⁴⁵ Santiago Garcia sums up the brothers' influences: "Of equal importance for Gilbert and Jaime were influences that ranged from Steve Ditko and Jack Kirby, the architects of Marvel, Hank Ketcham, cartoonist of *Dennis the Menace*, and Dan DeCarlo, one of the main artists responsible for developing *Archie*, to Robert Crumb and Spain Rodriguez [seminal figures in underground comix]," *On the Graphic*

realistic, though not without the occasional appearance of superheroes, a horned billionaire, and ghosts. His work on *Love and Rockets* began to exclusively narrate, and still does, the lives of two women, best friends and sometimes lovers, Margarita “Maggie” Chascarillo and Esperanza “Hokey” Glass, and their friends, “Las Locas,” and family. Unlike many long-running serial comics, *Love and Rockets* depicts its characters aging and dying. *Love and Rockets* qualifies as an “indie” or alternative comic because of its ties to the punk subculture and its independent publishing history, yet the Maggie and Hokey stories are heavily influenced by conventions of the romance genres, while also incorporating elements of humor comics and the realistic “life writing” forms of alternative and nonfiction comics. The stories depict love, relationships, and sex, but entirely avoid the heteronormative marriage plots of mid-century romance comics. Maggie and Hokey’s relationship forms one of the central points of nearly all of Jaime Hernandez’s *Love and Rockets* stories, and their stories employ some generic conventions of the romance while eschewing others.

As a long-running serial comprised of many small narrative arcs, it is difficult to discuss parts of *Love and Rockets* in isolation. The smaller narrative arcs, like episodes in any series, do have coherence, however, and “The Secrets of Life and Death: Vol. 5”⁴⁶ provides a strong example of the way the narrative conveys shifts in time, using conventions of visual narrative and comics semiotics to shape emplotment and provide a flashback story framed by scenes from the current time. The episode opens on Hokey and her current partner Terry, as Hokey reads her friend Izzy’s diary in the first panel, the title

Novel, 128. Charles Hatfield tracks the development of Gilbert Hernandez’s stories and changing styles in *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature*, 28.

⁴⁶ Jaime Hernandez, “The Secrets of Life and Death: vol. 5,” *The Girl from H.O.P.P.E.R.S.: A Love and Rockets Book* (Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2007), 1.

of which, “The Secrets of Life and Death: Vol. 5,” doubles as the episode’s title.⁴⁷ The two women chat, and Hopey’s explanation of the book’s content sends one or both of the women, and the reader, into a flashback sequence, signaled by a thought-cloud border that intrudes on the space of the bottom left panel; the subject of memories also intrudes into Hopey and Terry’s conversation, as the flashback sequence depicts when Hope and Terry were first together and Maggie had just moved to town, unwittingly creating a love triangle. In the cloud, a younger Hopey chucks a shoe at their nemesis Julie Wree, whom Terry has just attacked. In a nod to newspaper comics and cartoons, stars float around Julie’s head, indicating pain. The following pages of the narrative, contained within the flashback, appear in regular rectangular panels, as the time shift has already been indicated by the cloud-edged border of the first page.

The second page sets up the conflict between Terry and Hopey over Maggie, and Hopey’s manipulative behavior. Maggie is an innocent bystander at this point, and the art depicts her as such clearly, as she walks up and down the sidewalk minding her own business. This section uses the sidewalk in conjunction with the reader’s progression through the panels to spatialize and mark the passage of time. In the left middle panel, Hopey and Terry gossip about Maggie as she walks down the street with her cousin Licha. Hopey winds Terry up, but does not finish the threat of what she would do to Maggie if her bigger cousin was not around. Maggie and her cousin hear nothing and continue to progress down the street while, in the next panel, we see a close-up of Licha’s face with Hopey’s speech bubble extended over it, warning Terry of Licha’s reputation: “No way, Terry! You wanna die or what? Remember that’s the chuca who kicked Del’s

⁴⁷ See image appendix, figure 72.

ass up and down the street with a chicken wire fence.”⁴⁸ The reader already immersed in the series, the initiate, so to speak, will recognize Del Chimney as the trashy drug dealer who tries to sleep with everyone and is the butt of many of the character’s jokes; however, even if the reader does not arrive at the comic with that knowledge, the mention of Del accounts for what triggers the flashback in the first place. The focus returns to Terry disparaging Maggie, and then Maggie returns, coming down the sidewalk alone. The passage of time in this section largely follows Terry and Hopey’s conversational rhythm, but the details of the scene assist to indicate visual shifts in time.

The following page is laid out into eight panels, the top six of which concern Hopey and Terry, with Maggie functioning as a visual interruption in the middle column.⁴⁹ The layout directly corresponds to plot conflict, and creates meaning among the panels and contextually within the space of the episode, and the much longer sequence of the entire comic thus far. At top left, Terry goads Hopey to beat up Maggie, but Hopey responds in the second panel by saying hello to a very surprised Maggie. At top right, Hope smiles and waves while Terry fumes. Not to be reductive, but the top row visually registers the conflict, essentially depicting the couple sans conflict, the perceived source of conflict, and the couple post-conflict. The middle row extends the conflict, but places Maggie in the middle again, as Hopey walks after her and away from Terry. Terry, left alone, sputters with rage, as her face turns to a cartoonish monster mask and a thought bubble containing a tank appears over her head. At least a few hours, if not days, pass between this scene and the bottom two panels, as day has become night. These two

⁴⁸ Hernandez, “The Secrets of Life and Death: vol. 5,” 2.

⁴⁹ See image appendix, figure 73.

panels focus on Maggie, as she has a phone conversation with her friend Izzy (the future writer of “The Secrets of Life and Death: Vol.5”), split into two smaller panels to denote the connection via telephone. In the bottom right panel, Maggie hears someone throwing rocks at her window, indicated by her thought bubble and the visual sound signifiers at the window. The whole page visually concentrates the threads of conflict apparent in the plot, and though there are no overt references to the time or its passage, the reader knows that time has passed.

Visual narratives, especially in the medium of comics, require a back-and-forth suturing together of closely and distantly related details to build upon the knowledge the reader gains from the narrative as it is read in order. This operation is what Groensteen calls braiding, or *tressage*,⁵⁰ meaning the constant linking together of elements, whether their linkages are overt or not. This episode of *Love and Rockets* provides multiple examples of the suturing or braiding process. For example, the first panel on page 4 provides an instance of this suturing process. As Hopey stands outside of Maggie’s window inviting her to sneak out to a party, the reader knows that more than a day has passed because of Hopey’s dialogue with Maggie. At the level of the syntagm and sequence, the passage of time has been indicated, restructuring the temporally vague movement of the preceding panels into a clearer time duration, and indicating to the reader that it is not only nighttime, but at least one day after Maggie interacted with

⁵⁰ Groensteen defines braiding: “Jan Baetens and Pascal Lefèvre have justly noted that ‘far from presenting itself as a chain of panels, the comic demands a reading capable of searching, beyond linear relations, to the aspects or fragments of panels susceptible to being networked with certain aspects or fragments of other panels.’ Braiding is precisely the operation that, from the point of creation, programs and carries out this sort of bridging. It consists of an additional and remarkable structuration that, taking account of the breakdown and the page layout, defines a *series* within a sequential framework,” *The System of Comics*, 146, citing Baetens and Lefèvre, *Pour une Lecture Moderne de la bande dessinée* (Brussels: CBBB, 1993), 59.

Hopey. The reader can adjust her knowledge accordingly and proceed with the story. Another instance of suturing and returning to earlier information occurs when the two women are walking to the party in the third panel. Maggie corroborates earlier information about her cousin Licha and Del, which cues the reader back to Terry and Hopey's previous conversations, both within the flashback sequence and at the beginning of the narrative. In the fourth panel, sound becomes visualized in the form of song lyrics floating through the air, "Growing tired of this useless situation,"⁵¹ indicating both that the song is playing and perhaps subtly reflecting Hopey's boredom with Terry and interest in Maggie. This interpretation of the song lyrics may seem like a stretch, but the bottom right panel, immediately vertically below the panel containing the lyrics, conveys otherwise. The panels' close proximal visual relationship functions as one of many indicators of the troubled relationship. In the bottom right panel, the last one on the page, Terry is visibly distressed as she and Hopey argue about Maggie being at the party.

Page 5 contains the only panel with an explanatory caption,⁵² as there is no concrete pictorial information to convey the passage of time or the duration between the first and second panels. This contrasts with earlier examples that depict a clearer passage of time, such as the recurring but slightly different images of Noah's ark in the Hexateuch and the Holkham Bible Picture Book, the overt sequential progression of the destruction of Sodom in the Egerton Genesis, the changing of Moll's physical appearance throughout *The Harlot's Progress*, and changes of scene that also spatially mark passing time in *Monsieur Pencil*. Because of the lack of clear visual temporal markers, the reader could

⁵¹ Hernandez, "The Secrets of Life and Death: vol. 5," 4. See image appendix, figure 74.

⁵² See image appendix, figure 75.

easily assume that the second through fourth panels occupy the same night as the party scene. The first panel on the page belongs to the night of the party, but the second, as demonstrated in the caption, which is a vital aspect of the pacing, occurs the next night. The three women sit in a closet, where Hopey and Terry live, and discuss their living situations. These panels convey a lot of information through dialogue, but their visual arrangement keeps all three women in the panel with equal visual weight, illustrating relative harmony and tying into plotlines of the larger series built around the triangulated relationship of Maggie, Hopey, and Terry. In the fourth panel, Maggie references her *tia* (aunt), and in the fifth and sixth panels, the reader sees why Maggie feels the need to move out of her domineering aunt's house. A knock at the door disrupts *Tia Vicki's* tirade at Maggie, and at the top left of the next page, Vicki opens the door to Hopey. In this panel, Vicki's stereotypically feminine silhouette (wavy hair and curves) clashes with Hopey's androgynous punk look. The second panel extends the conflict between who Maggie comes from, embodied in her aunt, and who Maggie is becoming, embodied in Hopey. The design of the panel places Maggie in between the two women, worried, as they exchange verbal barbs. In the third panel, Maggie attempts to pull Hopey away from the door as she continues to insult Vicki. Maggie goes cross-eyed with worry, and the art again uses symbols from older newspaper cartoons and comics in the form of a large sweat bead running down her face and a speech balloon with a symbol that indicates an unsuccessful attempt at sound. The lower right frame of this panel appears edged in the thought bubble, signaling the reader that the flashback sequence ends here. The next panel returns to Hopey and Terry in the present time, as Hopey finishes the story. Terry comments ironically, "And now she's back living with that woman. Fate sure has a weird

sense of humor,”⁵³ which applies to her own situation as much as it provides a bridge in space to the next panel, in which Maggie is back at Vicki’s house.

Ever the self-aware series, the episode has a small bonus comic strip, “Flashback Mania,” at the bottom of the page where “The Secrets of Life and Death: Vol. 5” ends. The appearance of this small strip immediately follows the longer flashback-based vignette, jokingly demonstrating meta-awareness of the fictive space of the comic while relying upon the visual and verbal markers that demonstrate the manipulation of time and memory in both the longer and shorter stories. The four-panel strip illustrates Hopey and Maggie in bed together. Hopey wakes Maggie up in the middle of the night to ask her a silly question and get attention. The very brief vignette is easily tossed aside as a short comedic bit, but it also punctuates the previous longer story with a scene of domestic intimacy between Maggie and Hopey, reminding the reader that though the two may be separate at the end of “The Secrets of Life and Death: Vol. 5,” they consistently end up together. This short strip induces another act of braiding, reinforcing the significance of the Maggie-Hopey dyad to the previous episode and what comes before and after in the ongoing narrative. Its placement on the page immediately below two panels, which enclose and split Hopey and Maggie visually as much as conceptually, takes on further significance. At the end of the previous episode, they are living in different places, and not speaking to one another. Immediately underneath that narrative surface, in the short strip, they are almost as physically close as two people can be. “Flashback Mania” functions as a coda and a link, which seems like a paradox; however, it precisely

⁵³ Hernandez, “The Secrets of Life and Death: vol. 5,” 6.

instantiates the spatial and temporal plasticity of the comics medium, in which joinings and ruptures always end up woven into a larger picture of meaning and aesthetic experience.

Superheroes: *The Uncanny X-Men: The Dark Phoenix Saga*

The superhero genre has consistently reinvented itself since its inception in the 1930s, and has pulled itself back into popularity through periods of audience loss, gluts of financially unsuccessful comics, shifting audience demographics, and other obstacles. Myriad examples can be drawn from the genre to illustrate both rigid adherence to and deviation from typical semiotic and aesthetic qualities of the genre itself and patterns found in visual narrative as a whole. *The Uncanny X-Men* issues 129-137 chronicle the 1980 story arc entitled *The Dark Phoenix Saga*, which has been evaluated by some as the first major superhero story to attempt to recapture an adult audience that tired of themes and plotlines that had been recycled for decades, purportedly creating a serious rupture in content while continuing to convey that rupture through typical narrative means. Writing on Bronze Age comics, Kyle Eveleth notes that “it was the first comic to break the unwritten rule of killing a primary protagonist in Jean Grey, and by suicide no less. Rather than destroying the series, the gambit [according to then Marvel editor Jim Shooter] ‘propelled the X-Men to the top for, what, two decades?’”⁵⁴ A cynical reading might suggest that Shooter, an editor with a reputation for being controlling of the Marvel creative staff, took a chance on a potential profit increase.⁵⁵ Regardless of motive or

⁵⁴ Eveleth, “Rust and Revitalization: So-Called Bronze and Modern Ages of Comics,” 130.

⁵⁵ Evidence abounds, some undoubtedly apocryphal and some probably true, that the death was writer Chris Claremont’s and penciller/cowriter John Byrne’s idea, while other accounts credit it to Jim Shooter. There are no academic sources on this that I am aware of, but a blog post entitled “The Origin of the Phoenix

situation, the creative group created a storyline that ended in the suicide of a major character and nudged the genre toward more thematically adult content, constituting a significant growth in the genre. I have introduced the topic of Jean Grey/Phoenix's death into the dissertation both because it comprises a significant break from thematic and plot rules and because it throws the graphic continuity of typical genre comics elements into high relief. Despite breaking the unwritten rule, nothing changes formally. The ability to render a radical thematic departure in the same forms as the more "regular" content exemplifies the malleability of comics, and underscores the wide expressive range available within typical modes of storytelling. *The Dark Phoenix Saga* does experiment, but it remains within the ubiquitous realm of visual narrative rather than the aberrant. The story arc relies entirely on signifying practices conventional to both genre comics and visual narratives more broadly, and what follows analyzes these typical elements in one of the issues leading up to the infamous death.

The Uncanny X-Men: Dark Phoenix, issue 137, narrates the exploits of the Dark Phoenix, a character transformed from the heroine Jean Grey/Phoenix into a cosmic force of destruction. The story arc encompassing this issue is a production of seven people: writer Chris Claremont, penciller and cowriter John Byrne, inker Terry Austin, letterer Tom Orzechowski, colorist Bob Sharen, editor Jim Salicrup, and editor-in-chief Jim Shooter.⁵⁶ The first section of *Dark Phoenix* illustrates two parallel stories. The primary plot narrates Jean Grey's disappearance into the violent deity-like form of the Dark Phoenix and the X-Men's attempts to subdue her. The secondary plot narrates political

Saga," on Jim Shooter's personal website, jimshooter.com, discusses the matter, and Claremont and Byrne have been discussing the matter periodically in interviews since the comics came out.

⁵⁶ Chris Claremont and John Byrne et al., *The Uncanny X-Men: The Dark Phoenix*, issue no. 137, *The Uncanny X-Men: The Dark Phoenix Saga* (New York: Marvel Entertainment, 2014), 112-29.

corruption and a typical evil domination plot perpetrated by villain Sebastian Shaw's attempt to use the ensuing chaos to persecute and defeat the X-Men. The issue opens on the scene of an explosion in the sky that doubles as visually embellished letterforms reading "DARK PHOENIX."⁵⁷ More than an attention-grabbing lead device, the image visually conflates the main villain's name with the first major act of destruction, one directed at the colleagues and friends who just attempted to rescue her. The scene also contains three captions; one in jagged outline functions as a subtitle and a sort of come-on to the reader: "Witness the birth of a god!" The two lower captions contain explanatory narration, functioning as an omniscient voice to provide background and dramatically link the current issue with the previous issue. The explanatory captions behave diegetically and non-diegetically; they establish and advance the plot while simultaneously reaching out to the reader, who participates in the story-space from the outside.

The layout of the second page consists of regular, rectangular panels, but their varying size and arrangement cue the reader to different pacing in the narrative.⁵⁸ The outermost left panel is the largest, and notable because it takes up the whole vertical length of the page, whereas the other panels are significantly smaller. At the top, Dark Phoenix floats in the air, and motion lines indicate her sweeping forcing away her former colleagues. Blast lines radiate outward from her, repeating the visual motif of the letters/aircraft explosion of the first page, and informing the reader that the explosion on the previous page resulted from Dark Phoenix's actions. The composition directs the eye

⁵⁷ See image appendix, figure 76.

⁵⁸ See image appendix, figure 77.

downward in concert with the heroes' fall from the sky. Strong visual inducement via directional cues can be seen in the majority of pictorial narratives from their early instantiations, such as the rebel angel's fall and depictions of the sacrifice of Isaac in Anglo-Saxon visual narratives, and the strong linear cuing in much of *Monsieur Pencil*. In isolation, the panel serves as an establishing moment, centering the Dark Phoenix and showcasing her five former teammates physically jettisoned away as they plummet toward the ground. The remaining smaller panels are dynamic, focusing on the various heroes as they try to break their respective falls. The close proximity of the smaller panels indicates rapid movement through time and space, and their reliance on motion lines and visual sound signifiers creates a unifying kinetic feel.

The sense of rapid movement in time and space continues on page 3 as the top triad of panels shift perspective in rapid succession. The first panel illustrates Storm looking down from the sky, catching teammate Wolverine in her hand, while they look on to see Dark Phoenix pursuing Cyclops, another teammate, downward. The frame cuts off part of Storm's and Wolverine's bodies and provides a decentered quality. The second panel shows gravity-defying forces as Storm swoops down to catch Cyclops and attempts to fly away with her teammates. The arcing motion lines illustrate Storm and her colleague's movement upwards, while Dark Phoenix pursues in a complementary arc of flame. The third panel focuses on Dark Phoenix, and depicts winds surrounding her in the form of heavy swirling blue and black lines. Storm attempts to hold her at bay by manipulating the weather, as the caption informs the reader. These three panels render typical superhero genre fare, and in doing so, they show multiple views and movement through the same space while simultaneously showing hardly any passage of time. The

fourth panel, a thinner horizontal panel in the middle of the page, slows time as it shifts perspective. All of the heroes are in the boundaries of the frame, and they have dialogue that follows left-to-right reading order and moves from distant background to foreground, which creates perspective and dimensionality on the flat surface of the page. Their respite is brief. Dark Phoenix returns in another fiery blast in the fifth and final panel of the page, recalling the first large panel on the previous page both in visual composition and in its set-up of the conflict. Pages 2 and 3, read together as a whole gridded layout, evince remarkable visual consistency, not only in the depiction of the characters, but also in the use of strong directional lines to indicate explosions, weather, flying, and falling.

The depiction of space and the reliance on directional and motion lines on pages 4 and 5⁵⁹ operates similarly to pages 2 and 3, but clear patterns in color scheme alert the reader to the growing ferocity of Dark Phoenix. On page 4, the second, fourth, and sixth panels, in which the X-Men attempt to fight back or help one another, have a blue background. Yellow dominates the first, third, and fifth panels in which the Dark Phoenix attempts to destroy her former friends. The seventh panel contains both colors, but yellow dominates as Dark Phoenix attacks Storm. On page 5, yellow becomes the main color as the attacks increase in intensity and success, dispatching the X-Men one by one. Here, the narrative pacing appears to speed up. While the images on the previous page devoted more than one panel to each dispatched X-man and followed a linear progressive pattern, the top three panels on page 5 seem to speed through the attacks. This change may be an effect of the color scheme visually marking the narrative pacing, or of the compounded, recurring action scenes of the previous pages. The bottom left panel depicts Dark Phoenix

⁵⁹ See image appendix, figure 78.

victorious over the heroes. She floats down toward the ground in a fiery yellow triangle while the heroes all lie defeated, inked in a pale greyish blue and robbed of the distinctive colors of their costumes. Though the reader does not see a visual change, the narration caption in this panel indicates that Jean, still somewhere inside the consciousness of the monster-goddess, experiences grief for her friends. The caption atop the following panel, Dark Phoenix's speech, and her posture illustrate that Jean Grey is no more.

The narrative transports the reader five minutes back in time and to a different location from the previous installment of the story, the Hellfire Club on Fifth Avenue. The X-Men have fled the area after rescuing Jean Grey, as the caption indicates at the top of page 6.⁶⁰ The information gained here causes the same process of reevaluation and suturing to the revelation that at least a day has passed between panels in *Love and Rockets* "The Secrets of Live and Death: Vol. 5." Essentially, even if a reader has familiarity with the contents of the previous issue, the movement back in time and its clear demarcation is necessary to introduce the ongoing parallel plot. The audience must progress through the comic and mentally double back to gather and reintegrate the information; the multiple temporalities at work are then woven into the larger narrative. The shift in time and space delivers the reader to a scene of emergency services attending to the collateral damage of the X-Men's rescue operation. The narrative captions explain that the people being removed are, in fact, the same villains who had earlier captured Jean Grey before her transformation. This seeming digression plants the seed of a plot

⁶⁰ See image appendix, figure 79.

that will be realized after the *Dark Phoenix Saga* ends, providing the audience with more information to keep in mind for future reading.

The third panel on page 6 introduces Senator Robert Kelly in conversation with the villain Sebastian Shaw. Here, the narrative follows a linear progression as the two men converse, and Kelly attempts to send the police after the X-Men. The first panel on page 7 is read over easily enough, but it introduces a thematically ongoing conflict in the series: the inability for regular police forces to handle the mutant contingent, and the separation between those superheroes who work for the state, and those outside of it. All of this information is hyper-compressed, but implied in the police officer's statement: "With all due respect, Senator, we're out of our league here. My officers aren't equipped to fight super-powered mutants. Tackling the X-Men would be suicide. You want results—call the Avengers, or the Fantastic Four, or Shield [mutants who work for the state]."⁶¹ This conflict provides Shaw an opportunity to scheme against the heroes under the guise of being a concerned citizen. In the second panel, he suggests to the Senator that an expedient solution to the mutant problem could be reached in the form of Sentinels, mutant-hunting robots. The Sentinels become the main antagonists immediately following *The Dark Phoenix Saga*, and this conversation looks forward to the *Days of Future Past* storyline by folding the Sentinels into the series' continuity. The two men are interrupted by a police officer pointing off into the distance, and the telltale yellow color appears again in the fourth panel at bottom left, creating visual unity with the previous panels and starting to link the events. Shaw and Kelly look out toward Central Park to see a bright light in the sky. The yellow of the sky visually begins to close the distance

⁶¹ Claremont and Byrne, et al., *The Uncanny X-Men: The Dark Phoenix*, issue no. 13.7

between the scene at the Hellfire Club and the battle raging, unbeknownst to Kelly and Shaw, in Central Park. The final panel, the largest on the page, illustrates the full manifestation of Dark Phoenix, not as a humanoid woman, but as a gigantic fiery phoenix poised to destroy the world. The aesthetic and semiotic devices used in this narrative, which generally follow genre comic conventions outside of the radical plot choice, create narrative coherence and plot density through the mechanics of the page layout, panel size, and inducement in conjunction with the readerly actions of braiding and participatory reading.⁶²

New Horror and the Haunted West: *Pretty Deadly*

Pretty Deadly, a contemporary Horror-Western comic, blends elements of the horror genre with aesthetic and narrative influence from fictional Westerns in novel, comics, and film forms.⁶³ The comic first appeared in October 2013, published by Image Comics, and has been in syndication since then. *Pretty Deadly* is the product of a writer, Kelly Sue DeConnick, an artist, Emma Ríos, a colorist, Jordie Bellaire, a letterer, Clayton Cowles, and an editor, Sigrid Ellis. The narrative initially centers around Sissy, a little girl with heterochromia dressed in a vulture cloak, who travels with a blind man named Fox telling the story of the legendary Deathface Ginny. The major players in the story, with a few mortal exceptions, turn out to be gods, grim reapers, and their offspring. The series matches frontier violence with an occult narrative, and a frame story in the form of a dialogue between a butterfly and a skeletal rabbit that provides the introduction and overarching narration in each issue. The frame story hearkens back to older genre comics,

⁶² I use the term participatory reading to contrast with passive reading, and to highlight the particularities of reading visual narrative, especially in the medium of comics.

⁶³ Kelley Sue DeConnick and Emma Ríos, et al., *Pretty Deadly* No. 1 (Berkeley: Image Comics), 1-28.

such as *Tales from the Crypt*, in which a governing host/narrator provided explication alongside the story and an introduction and conclusion. Bunny and Butterfly are different in aesthetic and character, but they essentially perform a similar third-person omniscient narrator function as they explain and comment upon the story. The comic is notable for its highly complex formal structure. It relies heavily on layered panels of varying sizes, and often the backgrounds bleed into one another and figures overlap panels and implied scenic space. *Pretty Deadly* contains very little nondiegetic space, so the processes of determining relationship and meaning between and among panels is almost always influenced by the background or landscape of another scene, making it a highly immersive comic.

The first page of *Pretty Deadly* opens on Bunny and Butterfly,⁶⁴ the narrators, having a dialogue about when they met. The scene combines delicacy with a sense of urgency and violence, and lays a set of quick panels over more slowly developing action. Butterfly floats at the top above waving blades of grass that blend into a lightening gradient of color. A horizontally-oriented panel encases a blur of white feet running through the same grass. Immediately below that, three panels appear in a row. The first panel contains a wide yellow eye with a dilated pupil and a small caption of Bunny's reply. The caption's placement within the panel signals that the reader is looking at an extreme close-up of Bunny's frightened eye. The second panel illustrates more of the same grass and the ruffles on the dress of a little girl who runs through it, and the third panel focuses in on her twisting ankle. The rapid pace implied and uncomfortable closeness conveyed by the panels contrast strongly with the still butterfly floating above

⁶⁴ See image appendix, figure 80.

them. Underneath the three panels, in the unframed background, the sky and grass are rendered again, but the illustration on the bottom half shows a little girl falling and Bunny watching her. The middle and left panels inform us that the falling girl belongs to the dress and the shoe above, and that she was probably chasing Bunny. The very bottom panel zooms in on wide-eyed Bunny, as Butterfly's caption asks "On that day, were you afraid, Bunny?"⁶⁵ The reader has just seen the little girl give chase and fall, so the question seems innocuous and reasonable. Upon turning the page,⁶⁶ we see Bunny with part of its face shot off, laying in the waving grass. There are no cues for the reader to understand if the little girl is out hunting rabbits, or if she is angry about falling in front of the object of her chase. In this way, the violence is senseless. There is no frame, but the ends of the grass make one and separate the page into two distinct parts in a grisly version of the flora used as a frame substitute. Below the gruesome scene, the little girl with blood on her face and dress stands holding a smoking gun. Butterfly has alighted on a blade of grass. The identity of the little girl is unclear at this point, but the reader is made to understand that she is somehow part of the ensuing narrative.

Bunny's narration introduces Sissy and Fox, who perform the origin story of Deathface Ginny for a crowd of townspeople.⁶⁷ The page layout is crowded and asymmetrical, switching viewpoints from the gathering crowd in the top panel to a panned-out scene in which Fox and Sissy use the gallows as a makeshift stage. The townsfolk are a grisly unremarkable lot, and the uppermost part of the panel goes off the page, cutting off spectators' heads and bodies. To the upper left of the stage, two small

⁶⁵ DeConnick and Ríos, et al., *Pretty Deadly* No. 1, 1.

⁶⁶ See image appendix, figure 81.

⁶⁷ See image appendix, figure 82.

panels depicting Sissy's and Fox's faces as they ready themselves lie over the sky of the staged scene. A panel focused on a redheaded man, who watches with interest but does not join the crowd, lie over the right of the staged scene. Below the staged scene, to the left, a panel zooms in on Fox and the large bundle he holds in the above staged scene. Behind this panel, the reader sees Fox quickly unfurl a cloth full of panels with a grid of icons on it. In front of this scene, a small child gasps in amazement in another smaller panel that lies over the background. The overall effect of the small panels builds emphasis on each of the people contained therein, and shifts points of view from the players to the crowd. Each smaller panel is encased in a thick black frame, which calls attention to their separateness from each other and the staging scenes, making them disruptive. Each black-framed panel is also vital in pointing out and visually linking the people who are most important to, or the most affected by, the performance. The larger scenes in the top and bottom behind the small panels provide the scene's primary source of movement through time, as Sissy and Fox move from calling the crowd to revealing the primary prop.

The two performers begin their tale, and the three pages⁶⁸ that depict it contain qualities of monoscenic narrative as they are so densely packed and repeat figures to indicate movement in time and space. The images in this section exist in the present time of the performance, both in the drawings of the performers and in the icons from the textile to guide Sissy and Fox's audience through. There is another temporality at work, that of the past and a fleeting story within the story, in the pale sepia- and ochre-toned images that visually render the content of the story that Sissy performs. The upper left-

⁶⁸ See image appendix, figures 83, 84, and 85.

most corner of page 6 shows Fox raising a stick in the air, ready to point to the images as Sissy tells the tale. Fox's stick cuts across his body to point at the first two pictures of the Beauty and the Mason, indicating two shifts in time and two distinct physical acts. To the right, Sissy recites the story and appears twice, changing her face to reflect Beauty (she caresses her face) and the hateful Mason (she imitates a monster). Here time moves vertically, marked by the two movements of Fox's stick and the two Sissies. To the right, the Mason appears in ghostly ochre tones with flames on his back. Beauty is off in the distance behind him. There are two temporal schemes at work here, and a lot of movement through them. Fox points toward the covetous men who desired Beauty, and the space between his stick pointing at the Mason and his stick pointed at the covetous men becomes a panel boundary. Within that boundary, demons torment the Mason in the same ochre and sepia tones as the upper right image. Between Fox's stick pointed at the covetous men and his stick pointed at the tower, another of the icons, the audience of the performance appears. In the lower left corner, the Mason drags Beauty off toward the tower to imprison her. The page contains almost no gridding, instead relying on borders created by Fox's stick, Sissy's body, and the icons. The combination of these images and Sissy's speech guides the reader's eye down the page and through the two temporal schemes of the content of Sissy and Fox's performance and the actual performance itself as it unfolds in the comic.

The next page visually emphasizes the importance of Death and the reapers to the story as a whole because more space on the page is given to the union of Death and Beauty and the ochre-sepia embodiment of Sissy's story. Sissy appears only once on this page, in the upper left corner close to the interior margin of the page. Fox's stick again

cuts across the page to point out the icons of the summoning and the blood, the ways that Beauty attempts to die. To the left the icon of Death appears, and behind it in Sissy's story space, a hand reaches out to staunch the blood coming from Beauty's wrist. It is Death, as the reader sees from their union below. Behind the Death-Beauty love scene and below their hands, small snippets of the crowd appear, but they are much more enrapt than they were on the previous page. Fox's stick extends behind Death and Beauty, pointing to the icon of Death Fell in Love. Fox stands turned away from the image of their union, to the left of the ill-fated lovers, and the redheaded man, marked out for significance in previous panels, stands to the right. These details visually imply that they are somehow involved with the story beyond simple performance and spectating, as no one besides Sissy, the teller, is marked out from the crowd individually on the page. Fox's stick again reaches from the left to point at the icon of the Babe, the child Beauty left Death to raise on his own. This page continues the temporal scheme begun on the previous page, but the boundaries start to thin out as the teller recedes from view and the characters take up more physical space on the page.

In the final installment of Sissy's performance, the art directs the eye in a downward curve, ultimately arriving back to the real time and space of the now larger crowd gathered around the make-shift gallows stage. This section re-centers Sissy, and relies on Fox's sticks solely as pointers and not as boundary markers. At the upper left of the page, a small child begins to cry at the story. This is the same small child who was depicted in the black-framed panel at the bottom left on page 5, and the same small child who has been watching the performance unfold from the audience. Next to the child, Fox's stick reaches from the top of the page, pointing to the icon of At Rest, which

depicts a hand closing the eyes of Beauty's corpse. Fox's stick then points to the image of a Vulture. The vulture, in the ochre-sepia section embodying Sissy's tale, flies towards Death and obscures the title on the image of the vulture. Death, holding his baby, extends the child towards the vulture. The vulture seems significant, as Sissy wears a vulture-head cloak. It may be a representation of the Reaper, but the reader cannot tell at this stage. Fox's stick points from the margins at one last icon, the image of Deathface Ginny, the daughter of Death and Beauty. Below her image, she rides a horse off into the distance. To the left of Ginny, in the lower center of the page, Sissy sings the song of Deathface Ginny and reaches for the crying child, who stares blankly out. She jumps off the gallows toward the child, exclaiming "Death rides on the wind!" and delighting the crowd. One member of the crowd, the mysterious redheaded man, watches from the back of the crowd (the foreground of the bottom scene) with growing interest, cuing the reader to remember that the narrative visually marks him out twice before. Taken by itself, the performance scenes comprise strong examples of building narratives within narratives, handling compressed depictions and multiple strands of time, and using devices other than rectangular frames to enclose diegetic elements. Read in concert with knowledge gained in the rest of the story, particularly in subsequent installments, the performance represents the basis of the conflict that occupies the series' first major narrative arc.

Conclusions

The genre comic comprises the most typical manifestation of the comics medium. Whether one finds much or little cultural cachet in genre comics, they engage in the same signifying practices as more storied comics and indeed more storied media forms. I selected the primary examples in this chapter because they cover a broad span of time

and they are all extremely popular, both in the time they were published and now. Like their predecessors in visual narrative, these graphic narratives participate in a social and cultural economy whose audience, intended or real, lies beyond the narrow confines of coterie culture. Often, as is the case with *Love and Rockets*, “alternative” comics participate freely within the generic conventions of more popular comics, or adapt formal, semiotic, or aesthetic aspects of genre comics for their own ends. In this way, the basic nature of visual narrative in codex form manifests in genre comics, and genre comics’ influence on “alternative” or purportedly more literary comics is quite far-reaching, even if it provides a template to alter or work against. The denial of cultural capital to genre comics has been a fickle enterprise, much like the economic booms and busts that the industry has undergone since its inception in the 1930s. EC Comics such as the ones examined in this chapter, excerpted from *Crime Suspense Stories* and *Tales from the Crypt*, were once thought to be the cause of juvenile delinquency, or at least stupidity, among children and adolescents. Now they are hailed as classics of the medium. Regardless of one’s position on the matter, they constitute foundational examples of the medium’s ability to reach a wide audience and manipulate time and space. Superhero comics, long derided by even comics readers themselves, and understandably so, cannot be dismissed out of hand because they comprise the longest consistently produced genre of any comics. Any mass of narrative that large is bound to contain strong examples of the possibility of the medium and more limited examples. *The Dark Phoenix Saga* provides all the usual trappings of superhero comics, and exploits them to control multiple narrative strands and introduce a thematic rupture that had not been previously explored. The episode from *Love and Rockets* comprises a strong example of a romance

comic and clear yet complex use of spatialized time and braiding. The episode also represents a negotiation of categories, as most of Jaime Hernandez's influences are genre comics, and uses typical modes to express its narrative. *Pretty Deadly* belongs to a newer set of genre comics, which experiment with the aesthetic and semiotic possibilities of graphic narrative to create popular, imaginative worlds. Often these comics look quite different than older genre comics and newspaper comics, but their mechanisms of signification are largely the same. Comics carry a unique plasticity as a medium, as they are always self-consciously rendered acts of what Thierry Groensteen calls "narrative drawing."⁶⁹ Some of this plasticity stems from their particular instantiations as rendered narratives in a codex-based format. Their malleability also grows out of reliance upon images, including graphicized words, to create all the sensory details, and from the constant necessity of negotiation and awareness while reading. Genre comics have material and demographic specificities, many of which are newer conditions related to economics, audience demographics, and conditions of production. At the same time, they undoubtedly display persistent patterns first visualized by the pictorial narratives that came before, building another link on the long continuum of popular visual narrative.

⁶⁹ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 146.

Coda: Conclusions

This project was conceived as a way to find, examine, and elucidate the value of typical modes of collectively-produced visual narrative made with the intention, effect, or recorded result of reaching wide groups of people. In creating a historically long and nonhierarchical view of the persistent, and at times not unique, qualities of pictorial narratives across time, I have endeavored to build an archaeology that scaffolds the development of the contemporary comic book out of earlier forms of print and manuscript culture. The first three chapters approach the task by finding examples of visual narratives that are perceived to be rarities, whereas the final chapter presents visual narratives that are popular and common, but still continue to function like their ancestors in noteworthy ways. Some of the primary texts, of course, are rare insofar as they are very old, exist in one extant copy, or receive little attention. Working from a stance that can only see and value rarity, however, obscures the use value and far-reaching effect that many of these texts have had and continue to have. Often institutional views of the supposed divide between high and low culture or popular and refined culture reify exceptional cultural products, never bothering to ask if they existed in a wider context of material making, or if a contemporary viewpoint may commit anachronism while examining them. To this end, it was important to establish a strong historical and theoretical grounding as I approached each era and each set of texts.

The project intentionally does not ask what the origin of comics is because an origin point only remains so until someone with an earlier point and a better argument comes along to displace the previously held origin point. In short, origins are unstable things. What drives my research here is the question of what is typical. That mode of

inquiry is difficult because one must avoid ahistorical and anachronistic flattening while being attuned to larger patterns of continuity. I found that there are high levels of functional continuity in the way visual narratives spatialize time and temporalize space; however, there are significant moments of rupture due to changes in societal structure and technological means of production and reproduction. For example, monoscenic (many scenes within a frame) and episodic narration can be found throughout the long history of visual narrative outlined here. Yet, monoscenic narration occurs more frequently in the Middle Ages and the contemporary comics than in etchings and engravings, including Töpffer's comics. As plates were used in etchings, the size of the plate became the *de facto* panel size, and its borders the *de facto* frame, so overtly sequential and serial visual narratives grew. Creating a series of plates generally eliminated the needs for the monoscenic technique, but it reemerges with drawn graphic narratives. The comic book as we know it was almost an accidental invention—unsold comic strips were compiled into tabloid size magazines and sold well enough that magazine format serial comics emerged. That of course stems from a variegated history, but the point remains that ruptures and random occurrences can powerfully drive media even in forms that seem generally continuous.

One of the issues resounding through this project is what we mean when we talk about popular culture. There is an almost automatic reaction that dictates that popular culture or artifacts containing a popular impulse must also be products of a mass post-industrial Habermasian, secular, and often areligious public. This viewpoint falls apart under scrutiny, especially when dealing with the cultures of the Middle Ages in which religion featured in all aspects of life. I have attempted here to tease out a more careful

and subtle distinction among the terms popular, public, and mass. As Raymond Williams has noted, “There are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses.”¹ The influence of the mass culture idea, or the conception of popular culture solely as culture belonging to the so-called masses, stems more from our current moment in consumer capitalism than it is an accurate window into the past. That being said, capitalism and expanding trade alongside the mechanisms of the bureaucratic state, displace the church and the monarchist state as mechanisms of cultural control, which impacts the development and trade in popular graphic narratives enormously. I hope that my tracing of the long history of visual narratives helps to bring genre comics into more interdisciplinary scholarly discussion that avoids the defensive posture that plagued comics in literary studies and Comics Studies generally for so long. The medium has its own specificities, but in conversation with graphic narrative across media and time, a more subtle history emerges. This history can acknowledge the contributions of collectives and laborers and reach out to a variety of disciplines to deepen our understanding of a wide range of human enterprises in narrative art.

¹ Williams, *Culture and Society*, 300.

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IMAGE APPENDIX

Figure 1: Plates 7 and 8, Joe Sacco, *The Great War*. Howitzer fire in the Somme.

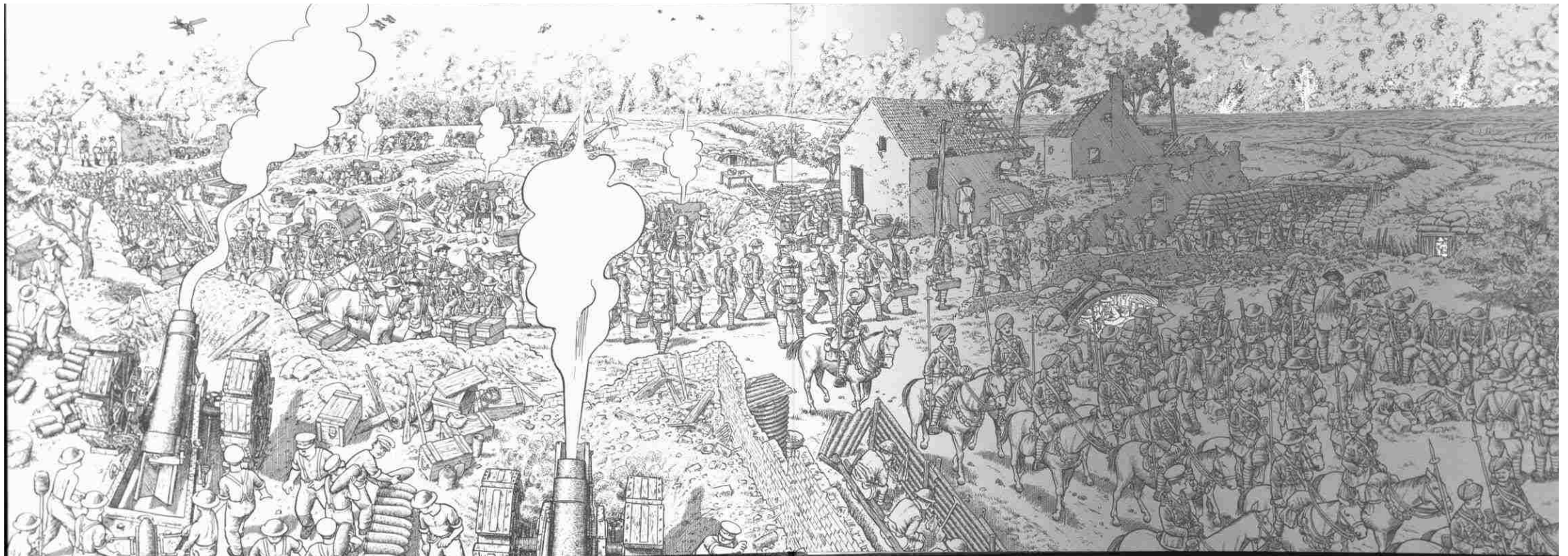


Figure 2: R. Crumb, *The Illustrated Book of Genesis*, Chapter Four. Cain slays Abel and is cursed by God.

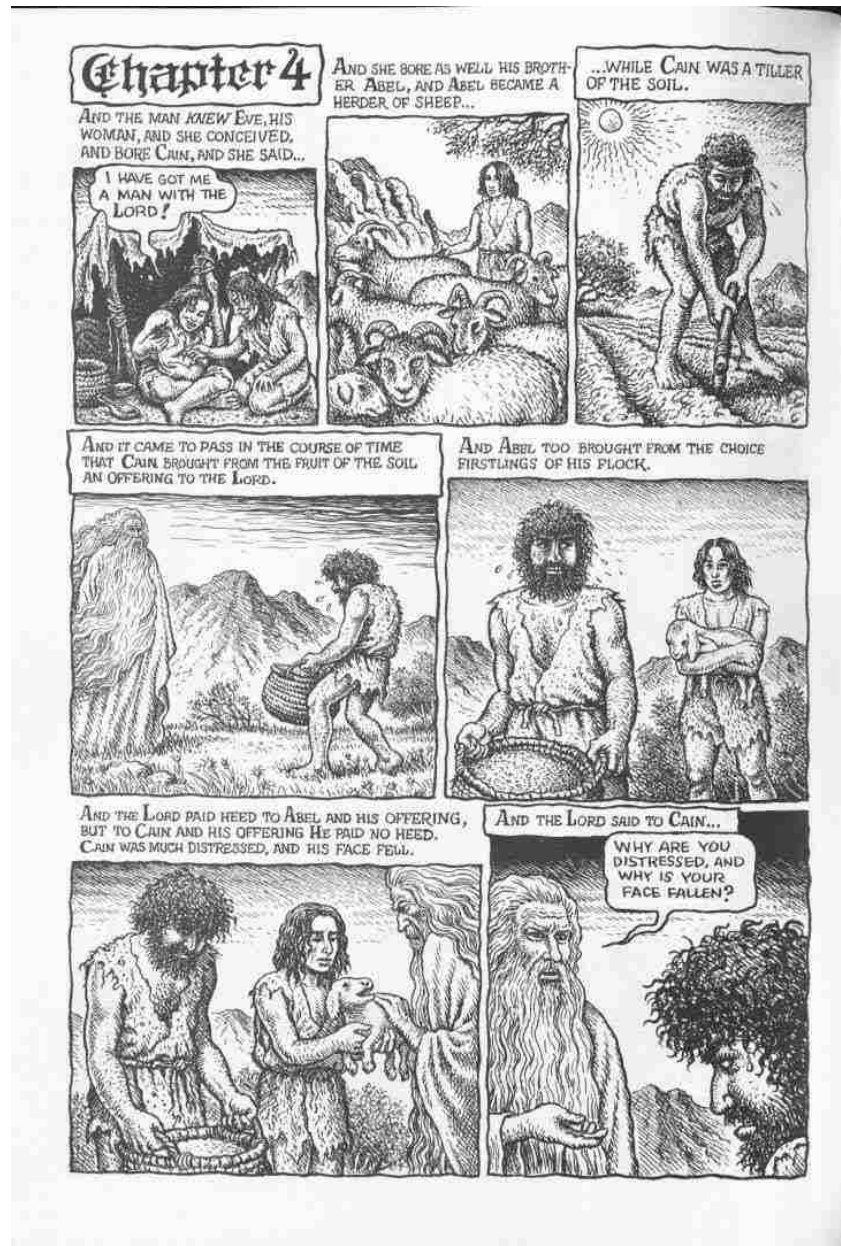


Figure 3: Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 10-13. McCloud's account of early visual storytelling and comics.

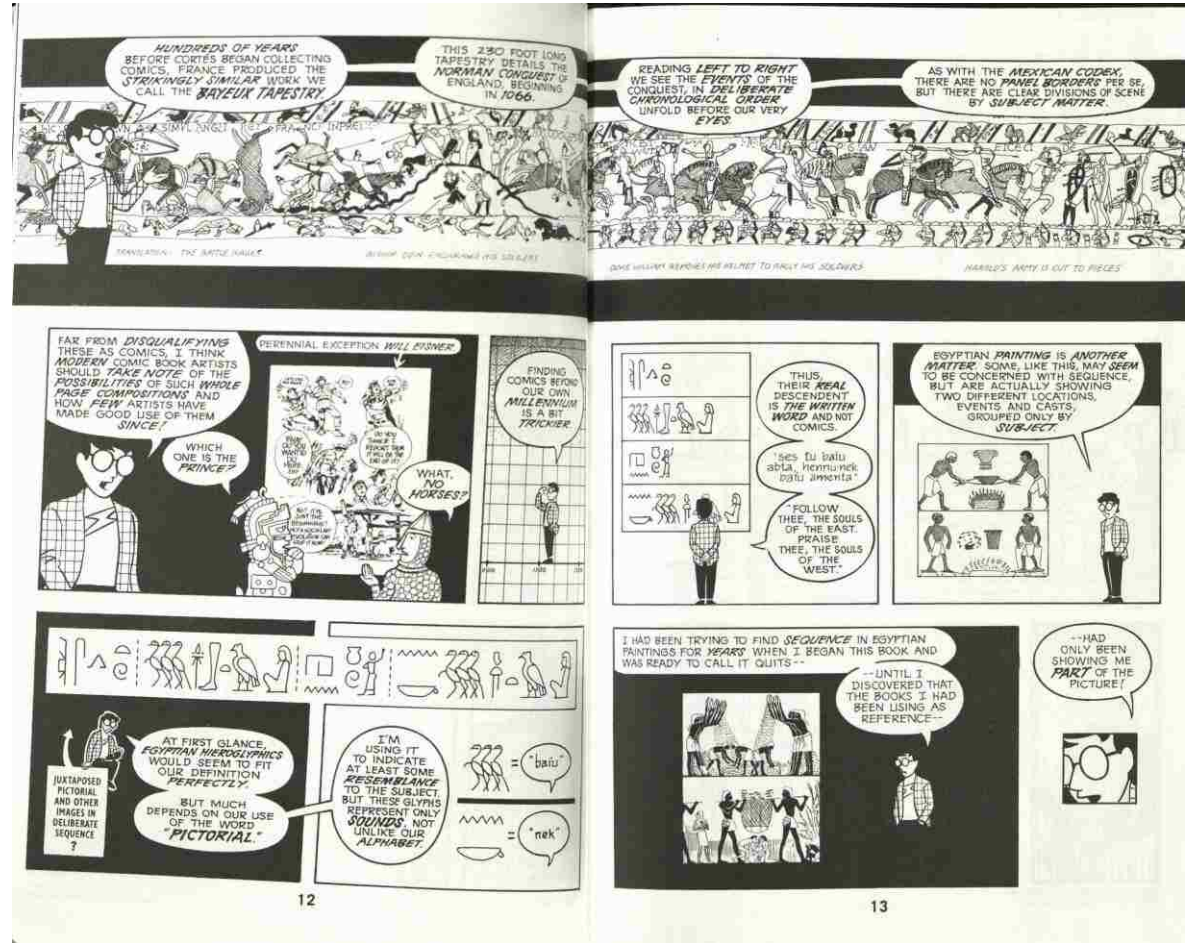
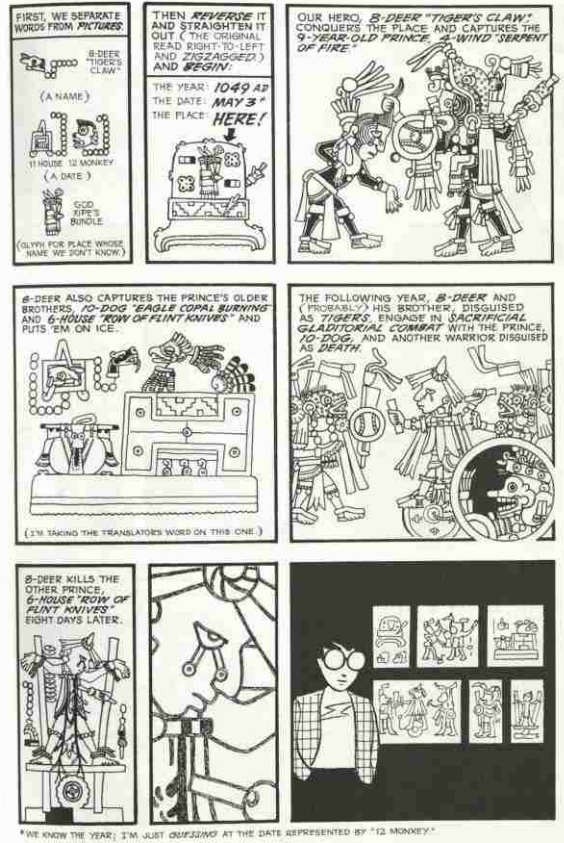
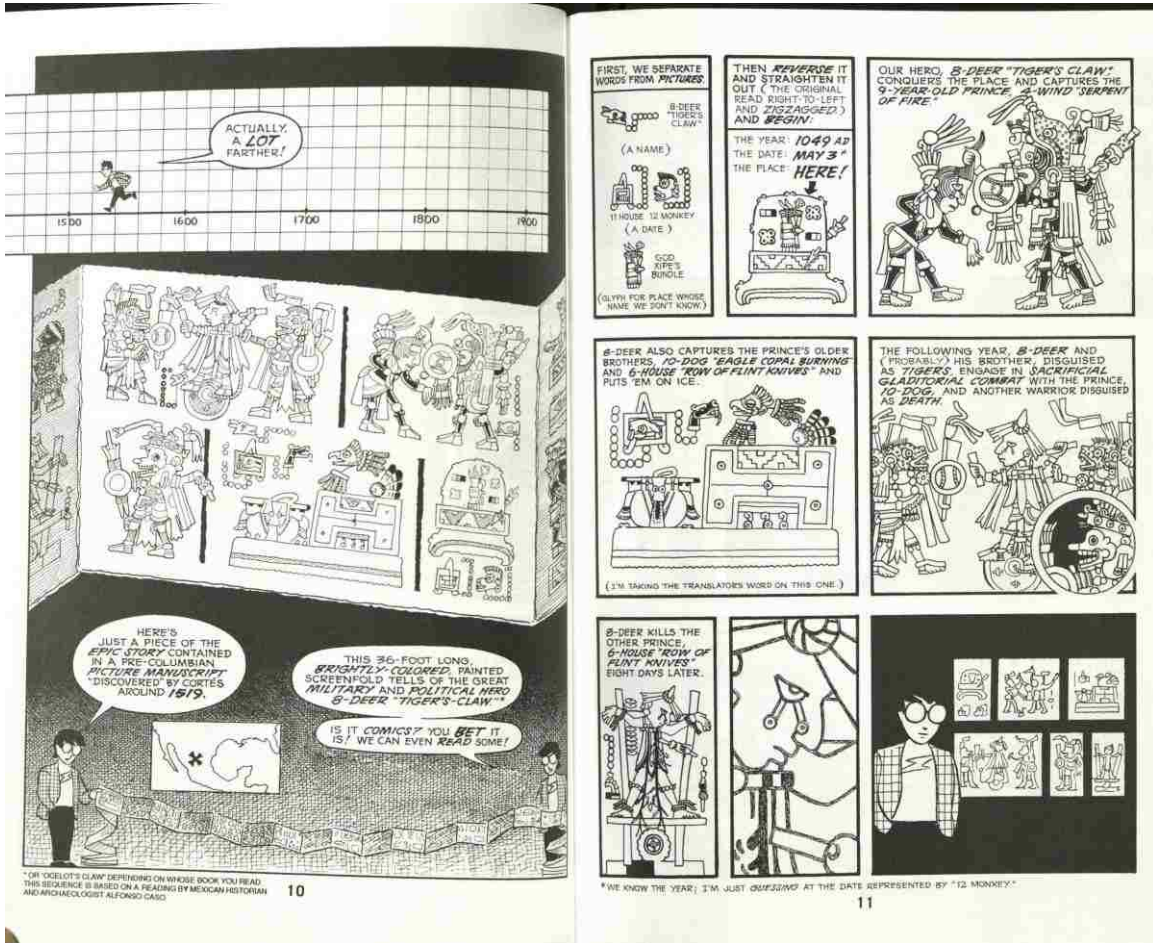


Figure 4: The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, Cotton
Claudius B. iv, Fol. 2r.
The fall of the rebel host.

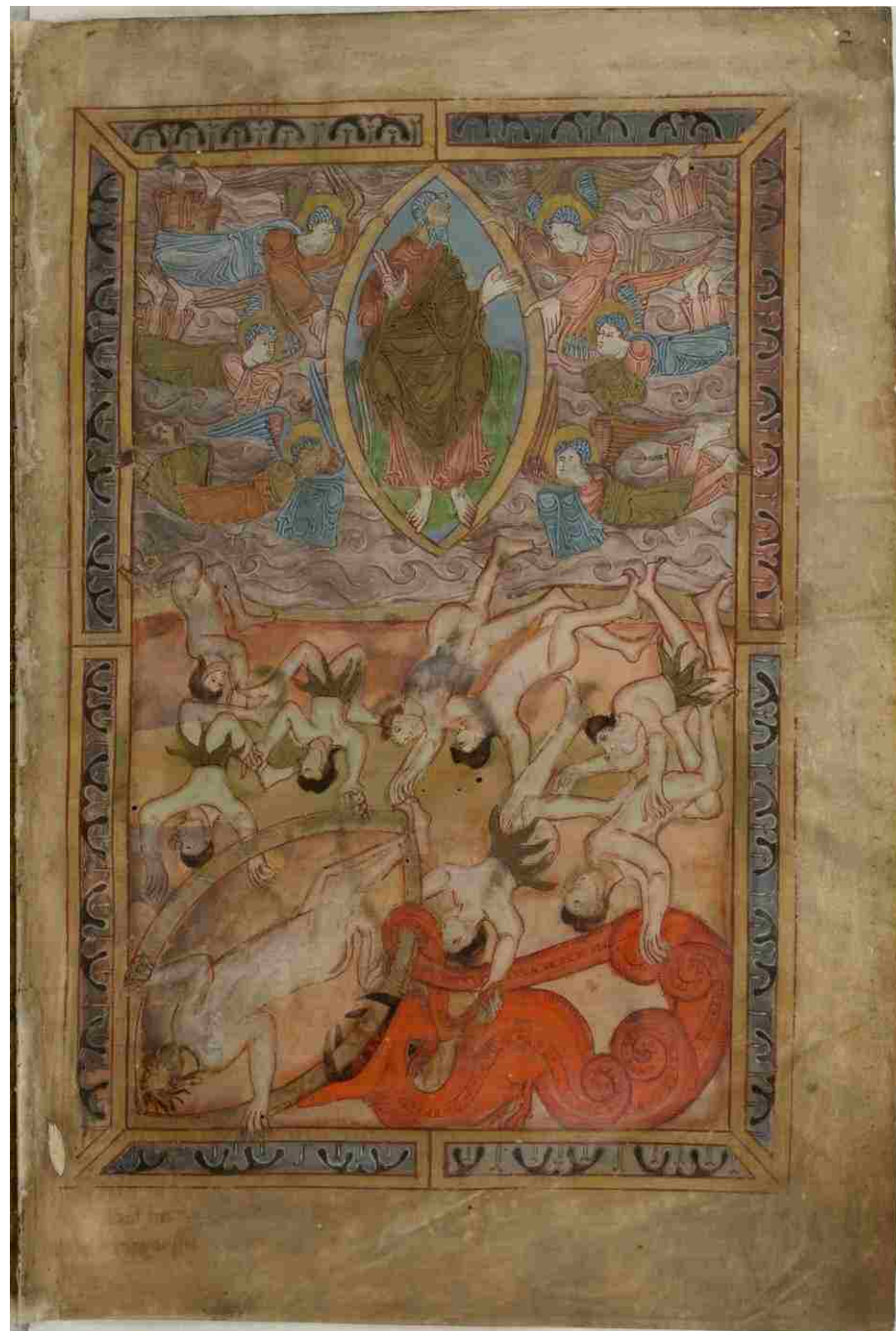
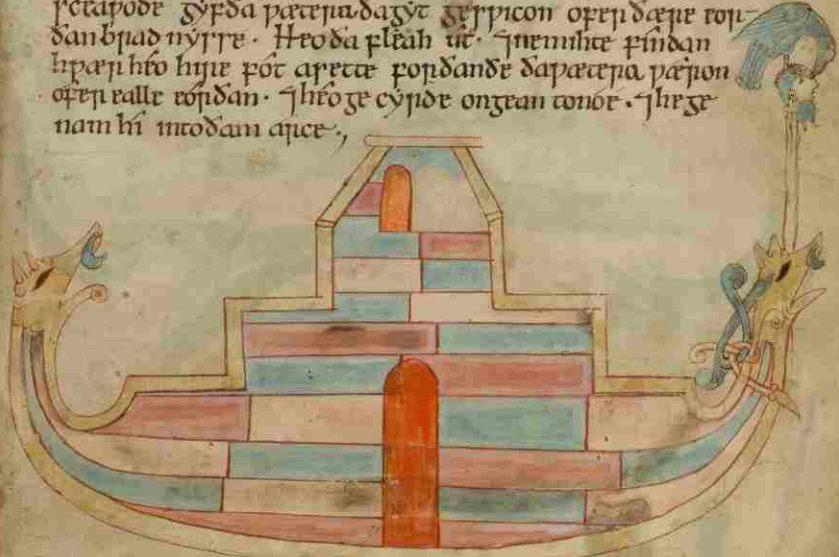


Figure 5: The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, Cotton Claudius
 B. iv, Fol. 15r
 The corpse-eating raven.

15

Dæt flod fæd dæ ssa an hund daga. 7 fæst daga. 7 godda
 gemande noes fære. 7 dæra nyrena de linn mid pæron.
 7 ærende pind ofer woldan. 7 dæ pæteru pindon ge pa
 node. 7 dæ pylppunga dære melan nypel nyre. pindon
 for dære. 7 dære hroponan pæter deotan. 7 færen pæp
 for boden. dæ pæteru dæ gecydon of dære woldan on gean
 færende. 7 betanmon to pangenne æfter odin healt
 hund daga. Dæ æt fæd fære ond am fæp dæ munde.
 ofer dæ muntar apmenteser lander. 7 dæ pæteru to woldan.
 7 pæwodon. of dæne teodan mond. 7 ond am to dan monde.
 æt wædon dæra munta cuollas. dæ æfter fæp dæ agam
 dægum. und yde noe his rāhdyl de he ond am afece zema
 code. 7 ærende ut ænne hærin. de hærin pleah dæ ut
 7 nolde eft on gean cyrian. ændandæ dæ pæteru ad pæp dæ.
 ofer woldan. Hæ ærende dæ eft ut æne culpan dæ hro
 7 æt pæde dæ dæ pæteru dæ ge 7 pæcon ofer dære to
 dan bpad nyre. Hæ dæ pleah ut. 7 nemlice pindan
 hærin hro hær fæt æfter for dænde dæ pæteru pæron
 æfter ealle woldan. 7 hro ge cynde on gean to noe. 7 he ge
 nam hi into dæm afece.



*Ergo sabbato primo anno. primo mensis. prima die mensis. apert noe cecidit archa. 7 undie. ad
 exspectata eet suplicat fress egrediendi expectabat dæmni preceptum. pma et die hie. unce
 simul septam mensis sedi id e. omni. subter. un. Al. Junij ferra pma egressi hie de archa.*

Figure 8: The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, Cotton Claudius B. iv, Fol. 15v.
Success and disembarking.



Figure 9: The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, Cotton Claudius B. iv, Fol. 8v
 Cain slays Abel, note bloody headwound.



Figure 10: The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, Cotton
Claudius B. iv, Fol. 38r
Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac.



Figure 11: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, Page 3
The fall of the rebel host.

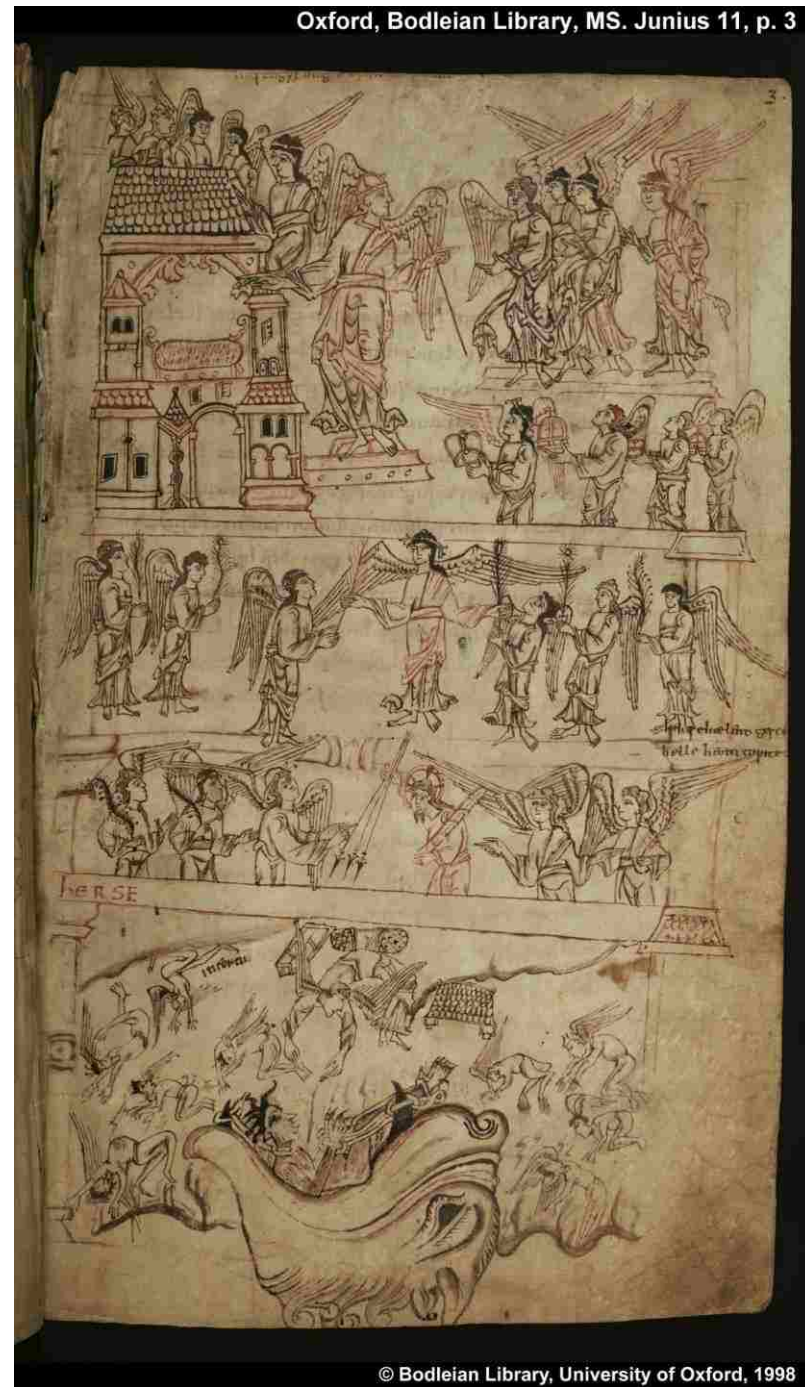
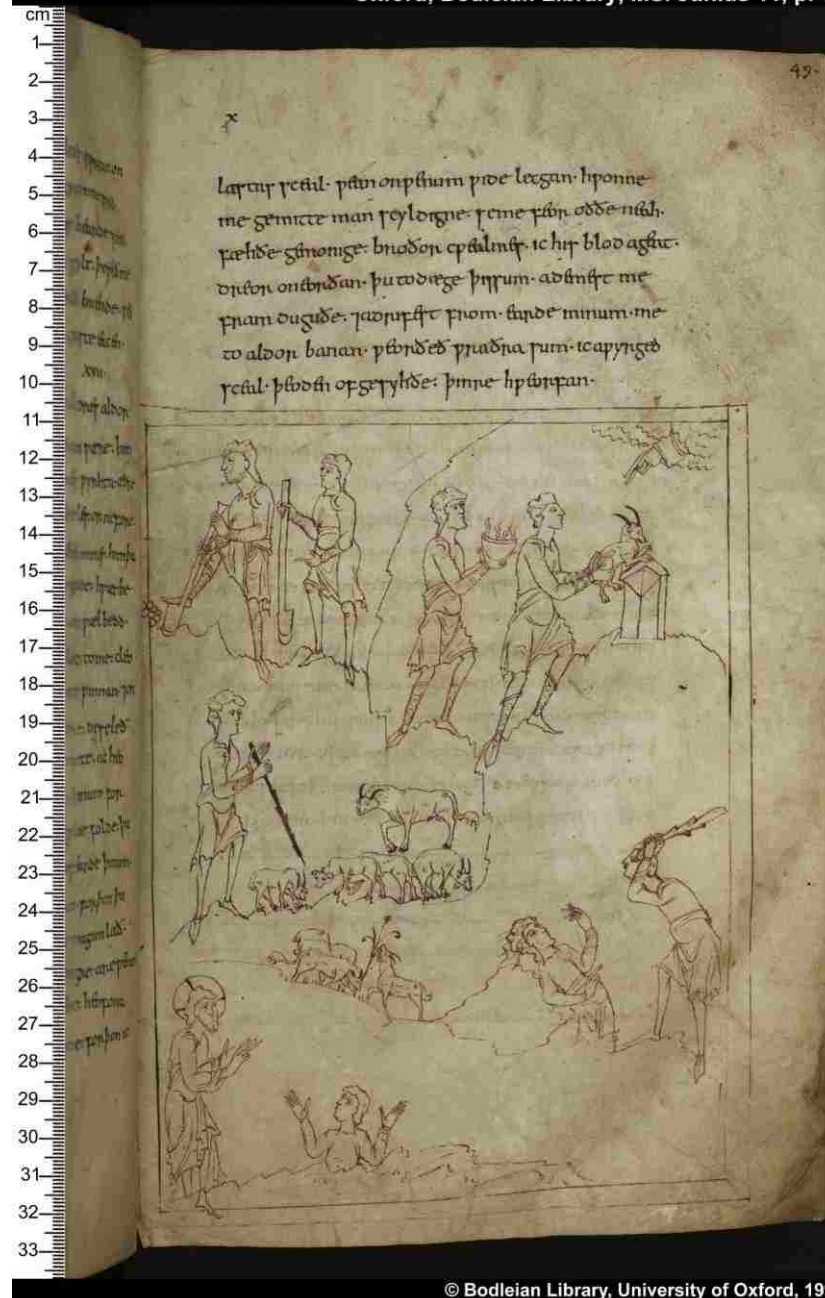


Figure 12: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Junius 11,
Page 20.
Satan's herald, the serpent talks to Eve.



Figure 13: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, Page 49
Cain slays Abel.



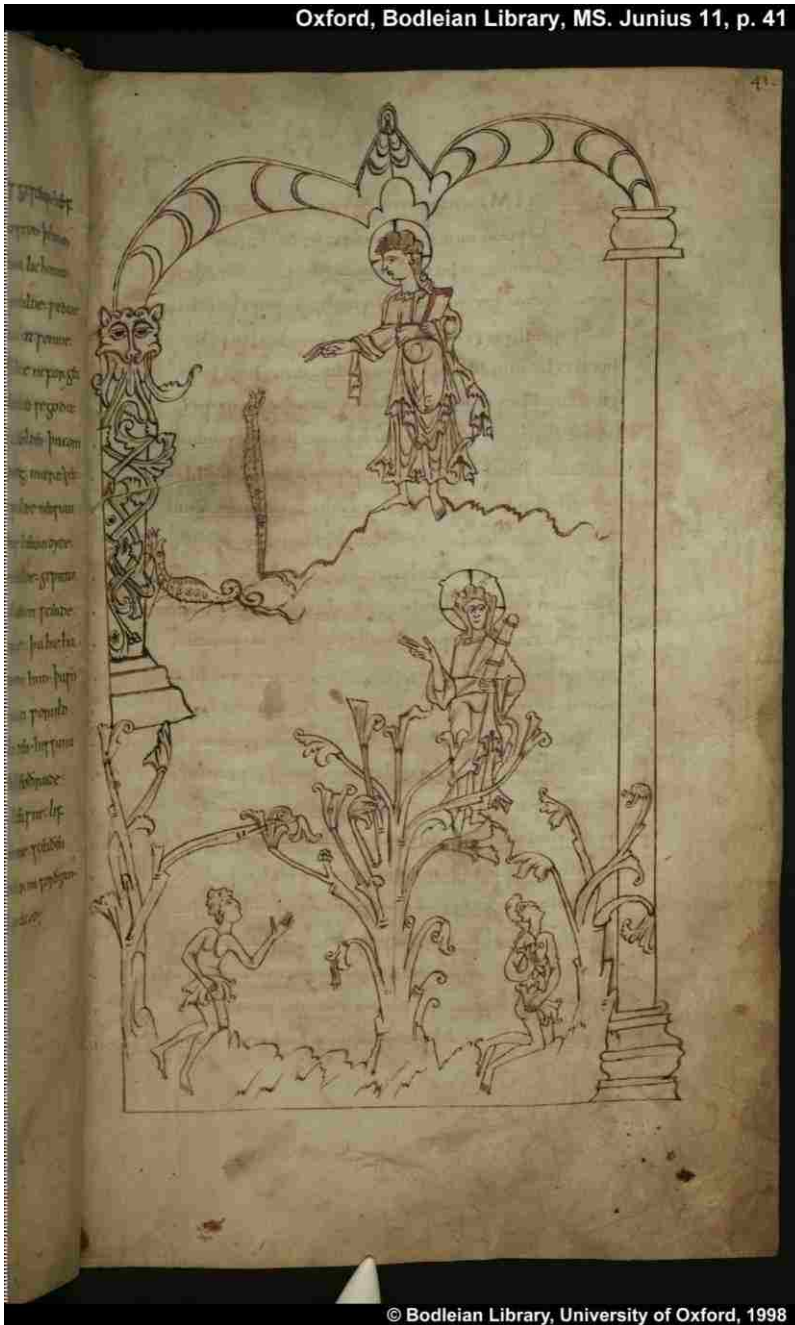
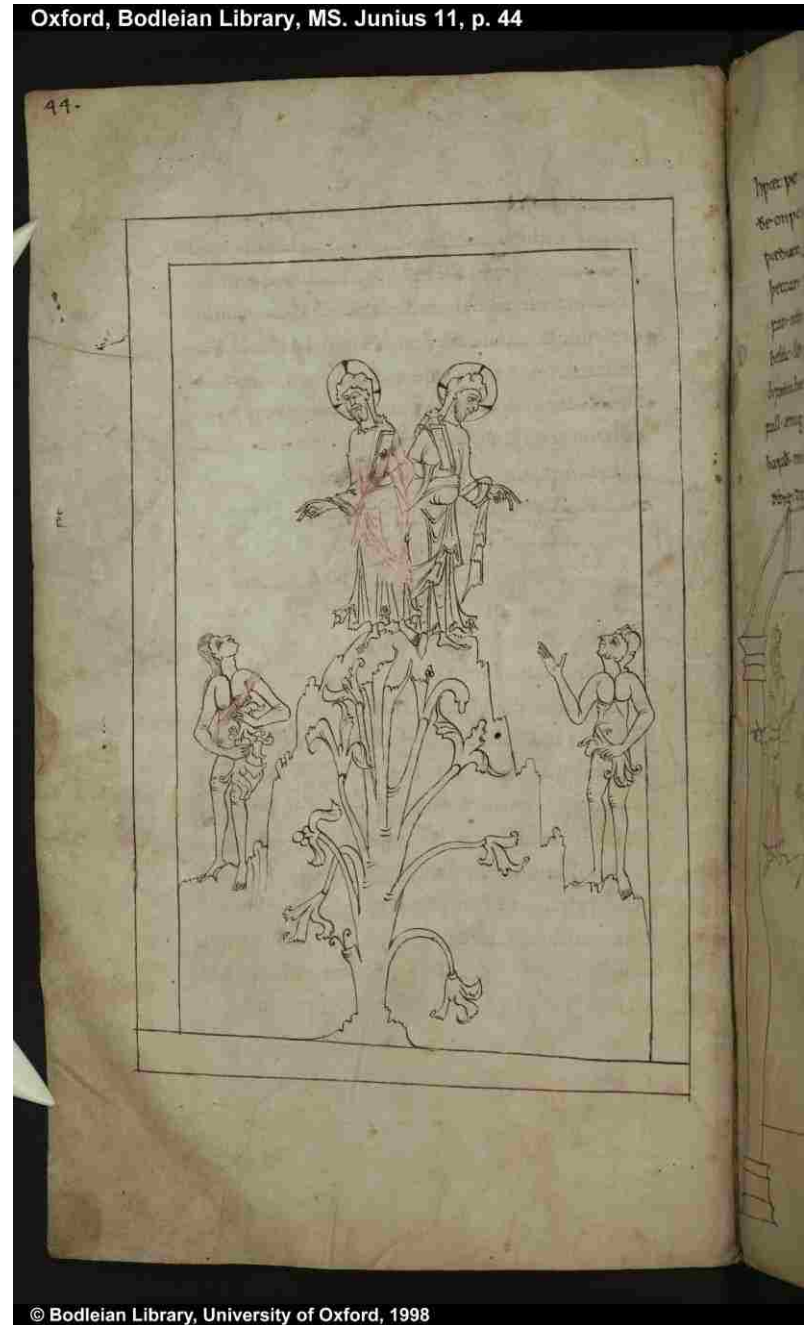


Figure 14: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, Pages 41 and 44
God punishes the snake.
God punishes Adam and Eve.



7lædd þáris læpam rance:



Enoch þóðan áldor dom aþor: þáðð þpæð foleq
 þpæ: nallq þállan læ-dom: þpæþe þeþe: þáðð he
 hynðe þeþ: hælod magi: bñac blæd dagu: bæmna
 þeþynde: þnæ: hund þurqæ: hnn þeþ þáðð heð
 þoðqæ þaldend: þeþe hænnon: onlic homan: lþpe
 þoþe: dñltenq: dugude: nallf: dñde þpæle: middan
 gñnd q: þpæ hñ: mñ doþ: gñnge: 7ælde: þonne hnn
 god hñþæ: ætca: 7æc þpæ: ándan: gæþnænna: on gñn
 með: 7hænna: alþor þomed: æc he: eþe: gæþat: mid
 cýnnig: ætla: of þpæþun: lænan: lþe: þñþor: on þam
 gñþpam: þeþ: gñst: on þñg: æc hne: comonnum
 modor: bñoþe: he þam: yloþ: æn: áþonnan: læpde:

Figure 15: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, Pages 60 and 61
 Enoch and Enoch's ascension



þpæ þeþ
 þpæ þeþ
 dagu: bæmna
 þeþynde:
 hñþæ: lþe:
 æc hne:
 comonnum
 modor: bñoþe:

Figure 16: London, British Library, MS Harley 603
The Harley Psalter, fol. 1v
Beatus vir and the *impii*.



Figure 17: London, British Library, MS Harley 603
 The Harley Psalter, fol. 7v
Inspens the fool, the Psalmist looks to God.



DIN FINEM
 DIXIT INSIP-
 IENS in corde suo.
 non est deus corrupti sunt
 & habominabiles facti sunt
 in uoluntatibus suis
 Non est qui faciat bonum
 non est usque ad unum
 Dominus de celo prospexit super
 filios hominum: ut uide-
 at si est intellegens aut
 requirens dominum
 Omnes declinauerunt
 simul in uiales facti sunt.
 non est qui faciat bonum.
 non est usque ad unum
 Sepulchrum patens est

PSALMVS
 quatuor eorum. linguis suis
 dolose agebant. uenenu
 aspidum sublabiis eorum
 Quorum os maledictione
 & amaritudine plenum
 est. ueloces pedes eorum
 a deffidendum sanguine
 Conteritio & infelicitas in
 uis eorum. & uiam pacis
 non cognouerunt
 Non est timor dei ante oculos
 eorum. nonne cogno-
 scent omnes qui operantur
 iniquitatem.
 Quide uorant plebem meam
 sicut escam panis. dominum non

DAUID XIII.
 inuocauerunt. illic trepida-
 uerunt timore. ubi non
 erat timor
 Quo deus in generatione iusta
 est. consilium inopis con-
 fudisti. quia deus spes eius est.
 Quis dabit exsion salutare
 israel. dum auerterit dominus
 captiuitatem plebis sue
 Laetetur iacob & exultet
 israel

Figure 18: London, British Library, MS Harley 603
 The Harley Psalter, fol. 22r
 The Psalmist beset by slings and arrows, surrounded
 by friends and neighbors.



Figure 19: London, British Library MS
Egerton 1821, Psalter and Rosary of the
Virgin
Symbols of the Passion



Figure 20: London, British Library MS
Additional 47682
The Holkham Bible Picture Book fol. 5v
Cain slays Abel.

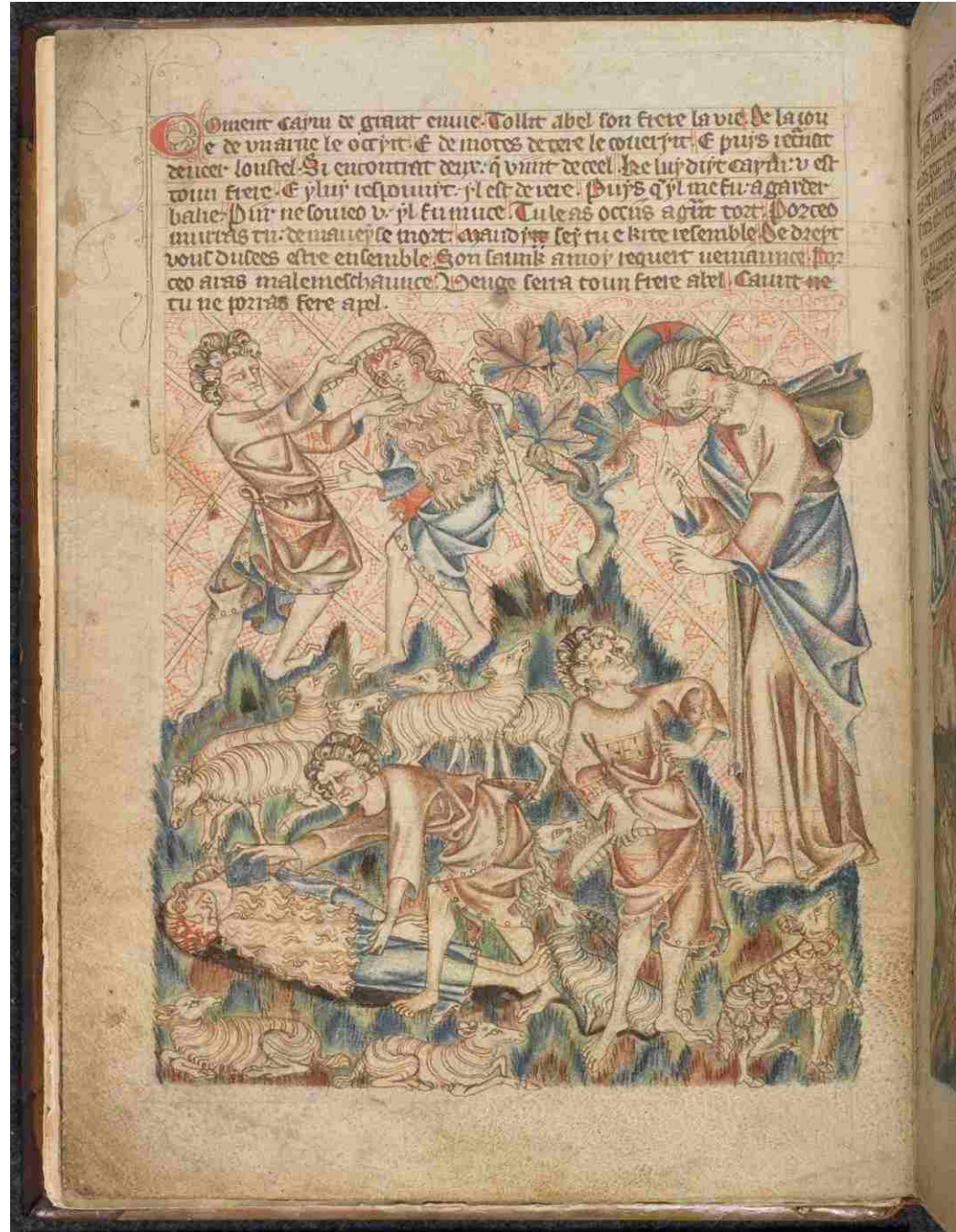
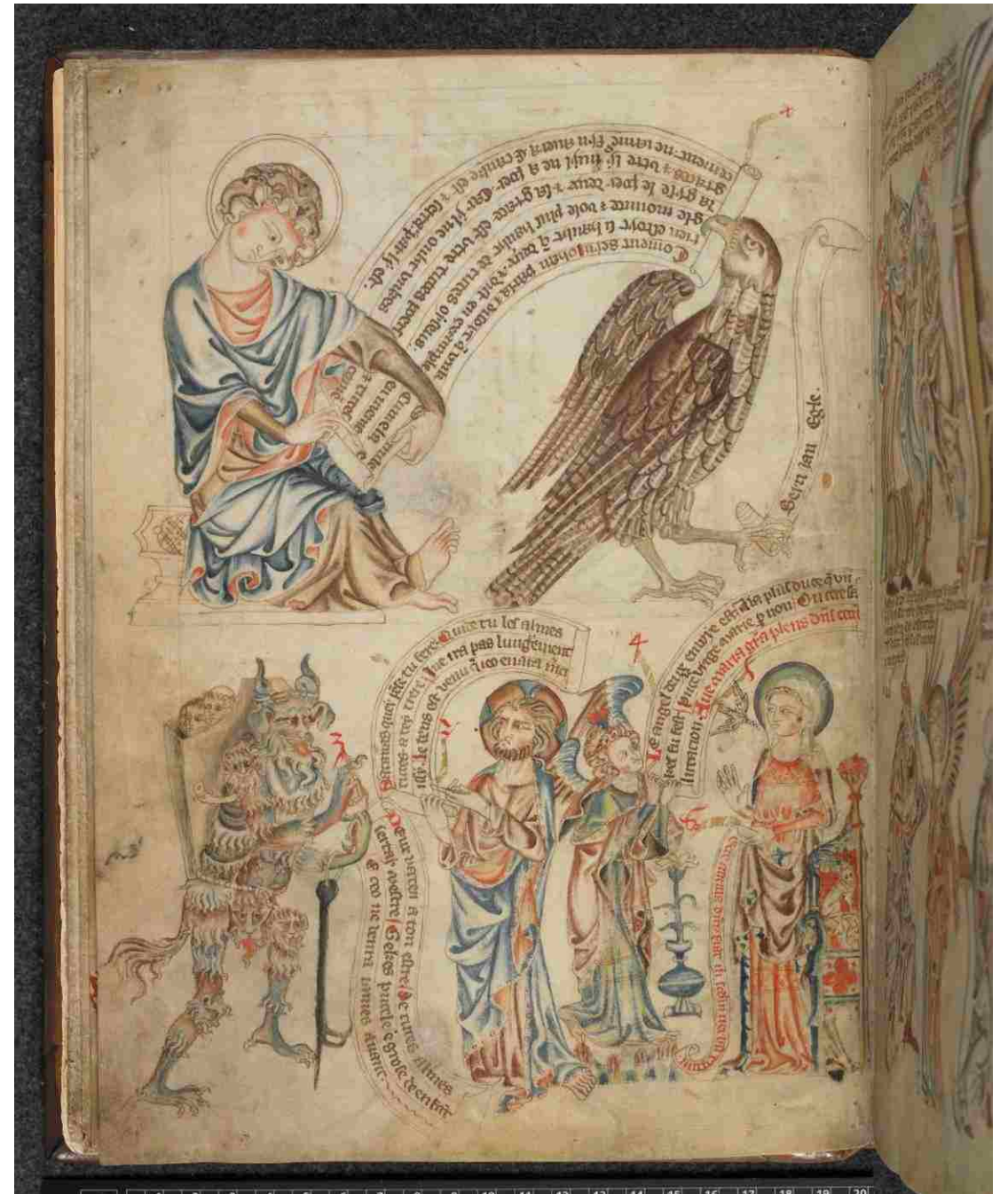


Figure 21: London, British Library MS
Additional 47682
The Holkham Bible Picture Book fol. 8v
Noah releases the raven and the dove.



Figure 22: London, British Library MS
Additional 47682
The Holkham Bible Picture Book fol. 11v
Satan talks to Christ, and an angel talks to
Mary.



En l'année de l'Incarnation de Nostre Seigneur
Jesus Christ mil six centz quatre vingtz
sept le jour de l'Ascension de Nostre Seigneur
Jesus Christ le Roy de France a fait un
ordonnement par lequel il a voulu que
les Rois de France soient couronnez a
Paris en la Cathedrale de Nostre Dame
le premier jour de May.



Le Roy de France a fait un
ordonnement par lequel il a voulu
que les Rois de France soient
couronnez a Paris en la
Cathedrale de Nostre Dame
le premier jour de May.





Figure 25: London, British Library, MS Egerton 1894, Fol. 4v
Noah's drunkenness.



... et de ...
... et de ...
... et de ...
... et de ...
... et de ...

... et de ...
... et de ...
... et de ...
... et de ...
... et de ...



Figure 27: London, British Library, MS Egerton 1894, Fol. 3r
The death of Cain.



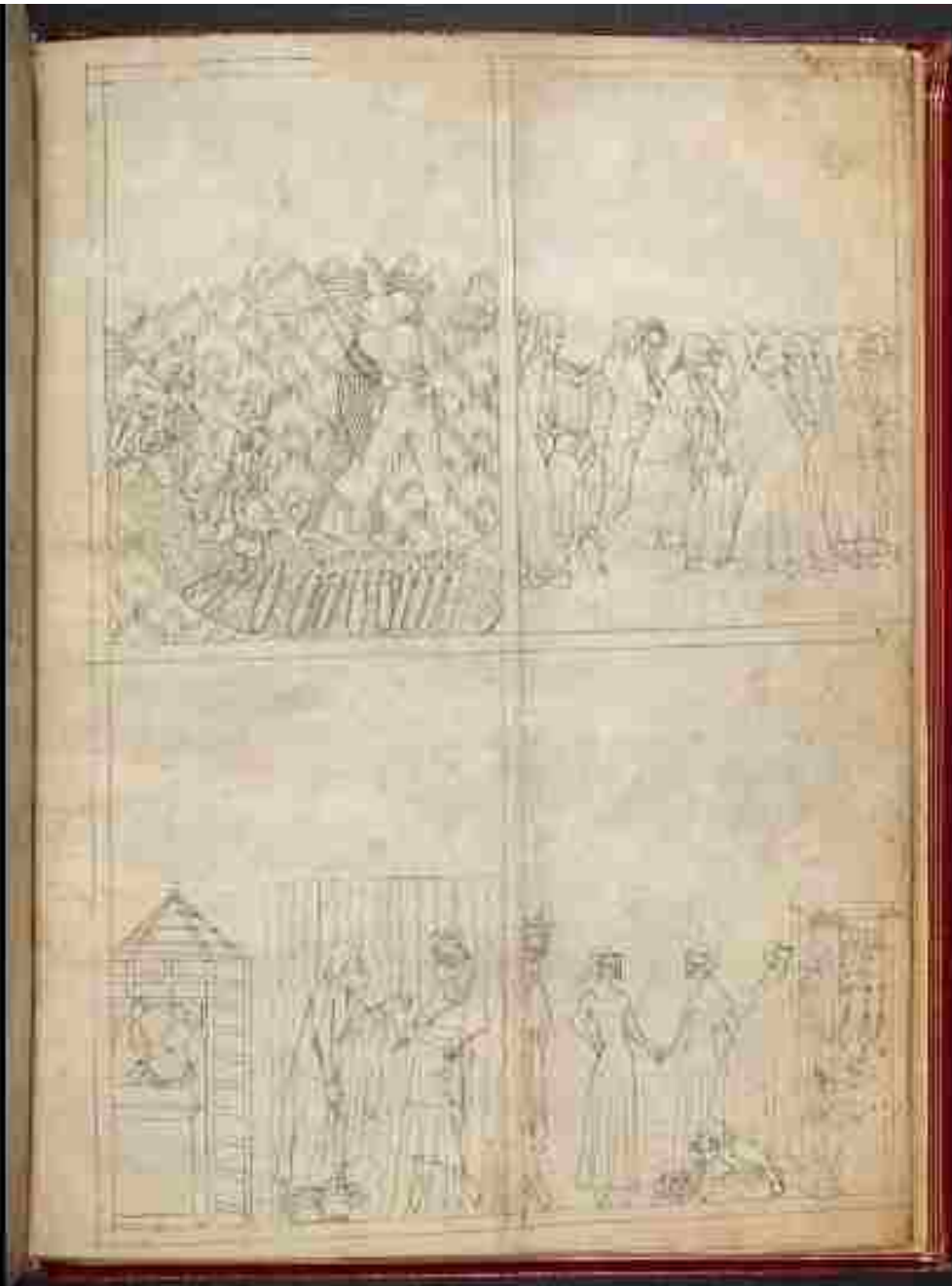




Figure 30: A Smaller Biblia Pauperum.

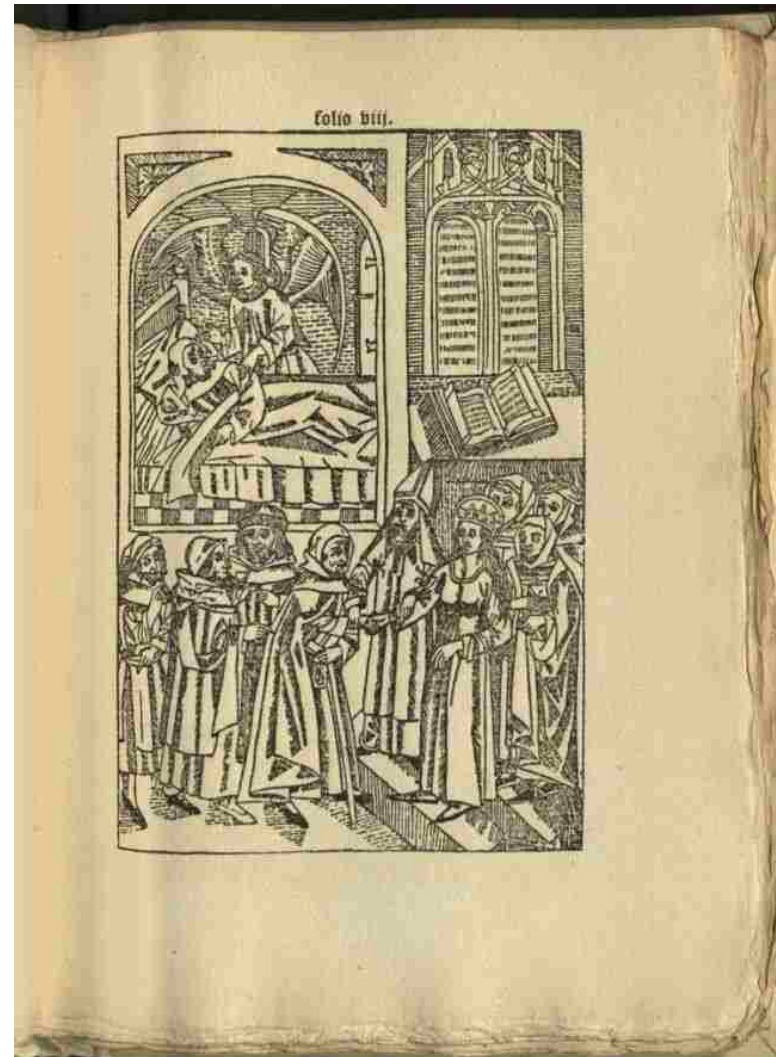
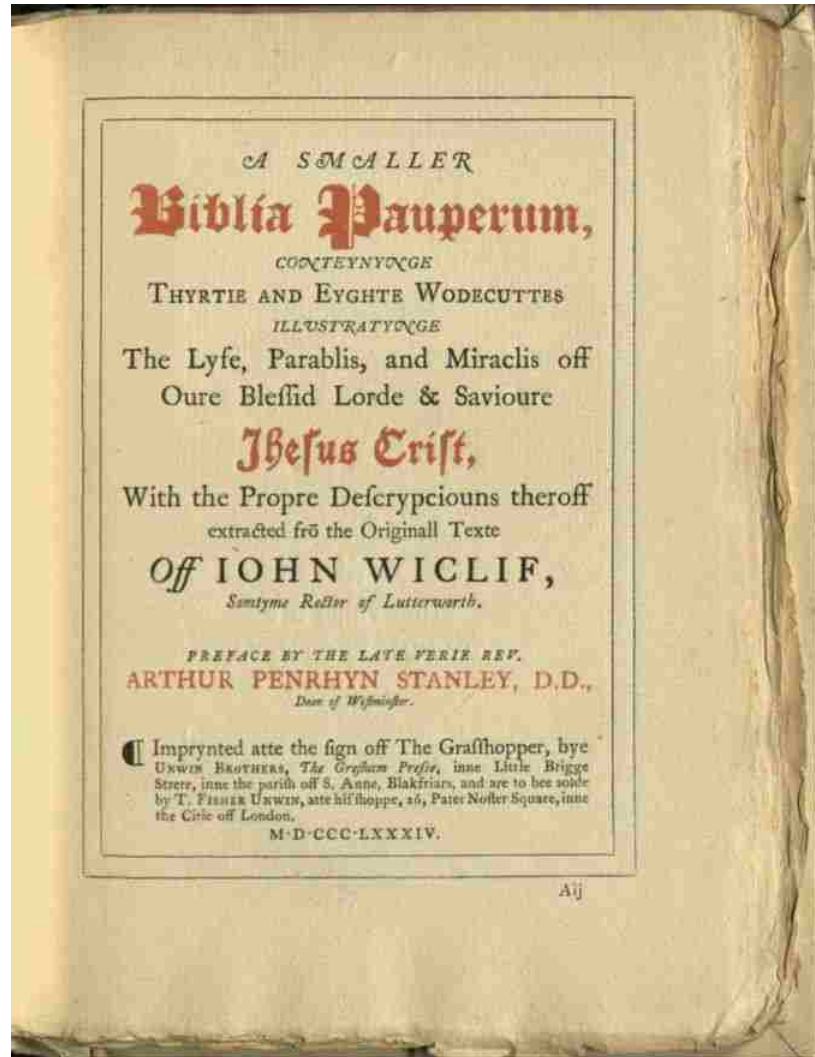


Figure 31: The twelve-part narrative scheme of the print *Biblia Pauperum*. See Avril Henry, *Biblia Pauperum: An Edition and Facsimile*, 8.

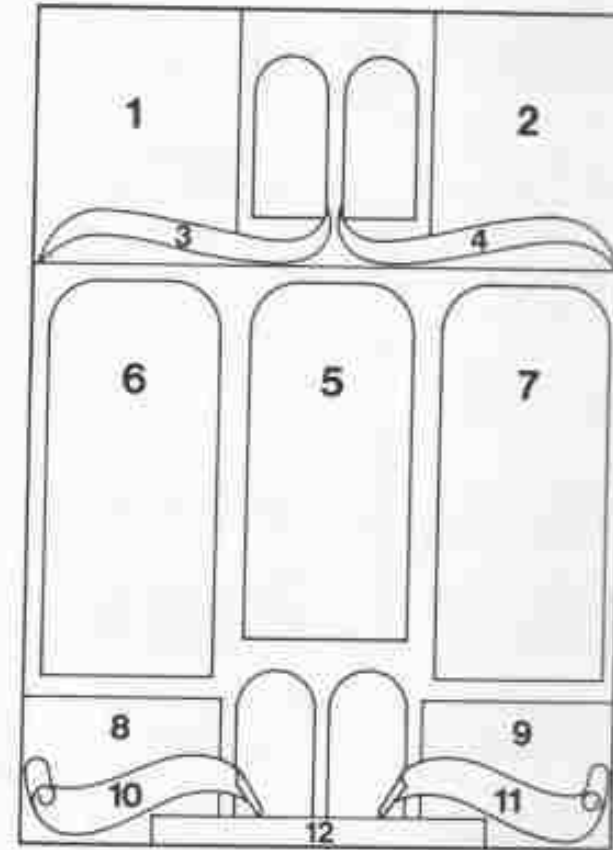


FIG. 6
Diagram of the twelve elements on a *Biblia Pauperum*
blockbook page.

Figure 34: Callot, *Les Grande Misères et Malheurs de la Guerre*, plates 2 and 3. Enlistment and war.

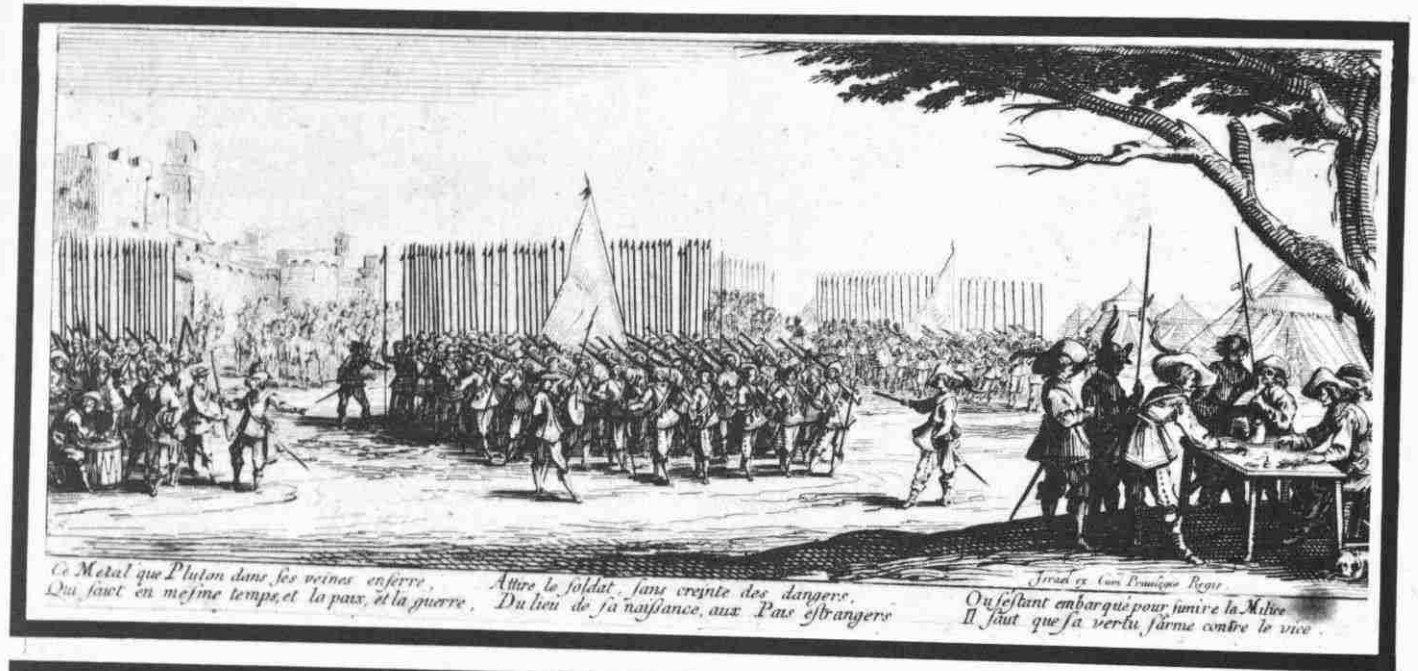


Figure 35: Callot, *Les Grande Misères et Malheurs de la Guerre*, plates 4-6.
 Soldiers ravage the countryside and sack the city.



4. (*Looting an inn*) "Their brutal spirit prompts them to thefts in the wayside inn, which they cover with the fine name of booty. These disturbers of the peace deliberately quarrel in order to avoid paying their host, and even steal his pots and pans. When they have been properly primed with food and drink, they become prone to help themselves to other people's property.
 5. (*Atrocities in a farmhouse*) There you have the brave exploits of these inhuman souls. Nothing escapes their hands

as they devastate everything. One invents tortures to extract gold, another spurs his accomplices to a thousand crimes, and of one accord they all wickedly commit theft, rape, murder and violation.
 6. (*Looting a city church*) This is the barbarous and sacrilegious behavior of those furious demons who greedily pilage, knock down altars, make a mockery of the respect due to the Immortals, and tear from the holy places the unhappy virgins whom they brazenly abduct and seduce."

Figure 36: Callot, *Les Grande Misères et Malheurs de la Guerre*, plates 7 and 8. Looting and attacking travelers in the forest.



Figure 37: Callot, *Les Grande Misères et Malheurs de la Guerre*, plates 10-12.

Punishment for the deserters: the strappado, the hanging tree, and the firing squad.



Figure 38: Callot, *Les Grande Misères et Malheurs de la Guerre*, plates 13 and 14.
Burning at the stake and the wheel.



Figure 39: Callot, *Les Grande Misères et Malheurs de la Guerre*, plates 15 and 16.
Homeless remnants of war.



13. (Burning alive) "These enemies of heaven who sin a
thousand times against the Lord"



Figure 40: Callot, *Les Grande Misères et Malheurs de la Guerre*, plates 17 and 18. The peasants' revenge and the restoration of order at court.



Figure 41: William Hogarth, *A Harlot's Progress*, Plate 1. Moll's arrival in London.



Figure 42: William Hogarth, *A Harlot's Progress*,
Plate 2.
Moll and her lovers.



Figure 43: William Hogarth, *A Harlot's Progress*,
Plate 3.
Moll's arrest.

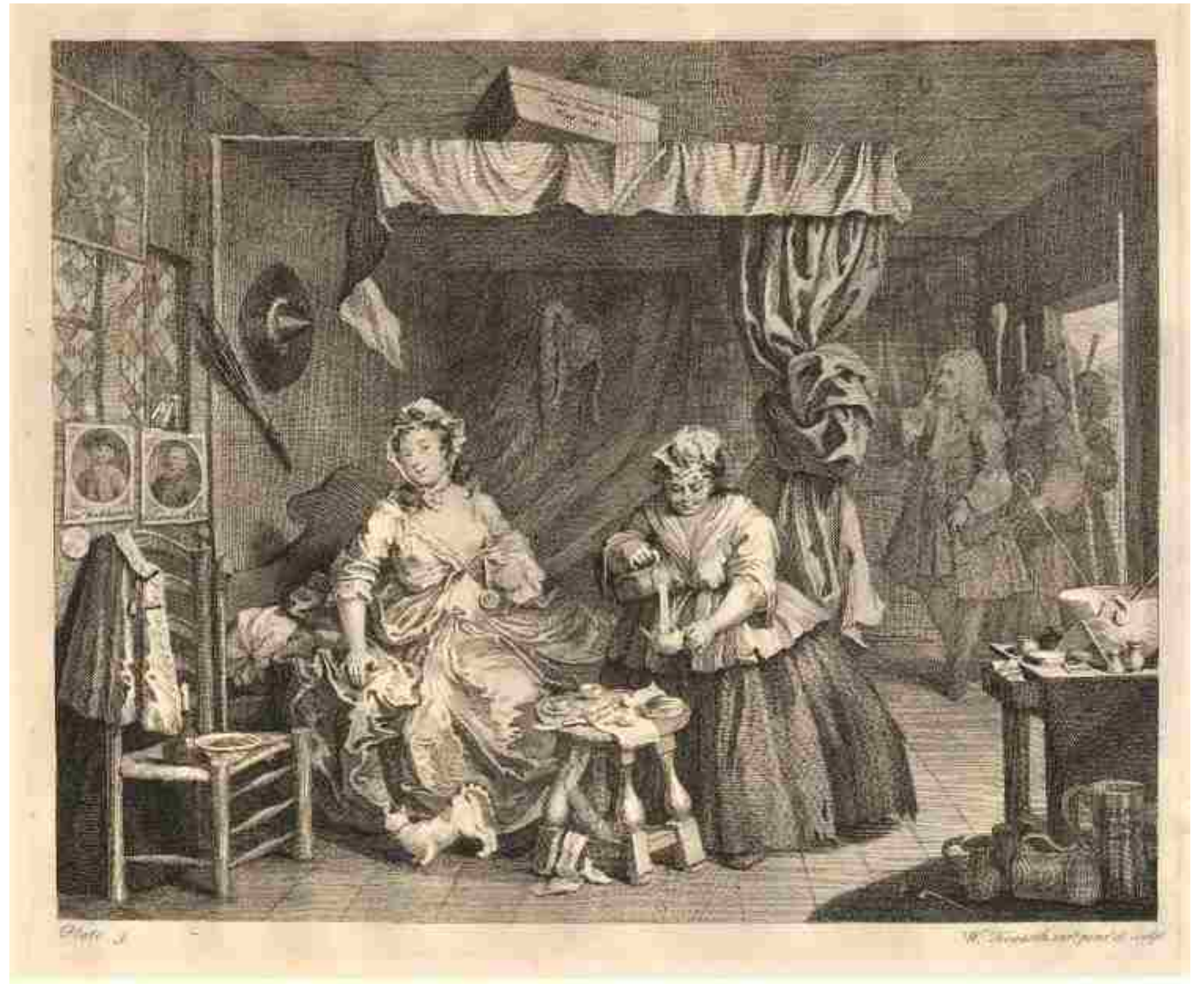


Figure 44: William Hogarth, *A Harlot's Progress*,
Plate 4.
Moll in prison.



Figure 45: William Hogarth, *A Harlot's Progress*,
Plate 5.
Moll dying, attended by quack doctors.



Figure 46: William Hogarth, *A Harlot's Progress*,
Plate 6.
Moll's funeral.



Figure 47: Goya, *Los Desastres*, Plate 1
“Tristes presentimientos de lo que ha de acontecer/
Sad presentiments of what must come to pass.”



Figure 48: Goya, *Los Desastres*, Plate 2
“Con razon ó sin ella/With reason or
without her.”



Figure 49: Goya, *Los Desastres*, Plate 3
“Lo mismo/The same.”



Figure 50: Goya, *Los Desastres*, Plate 15
“Y no hai remedio/And it can’t be helped.”

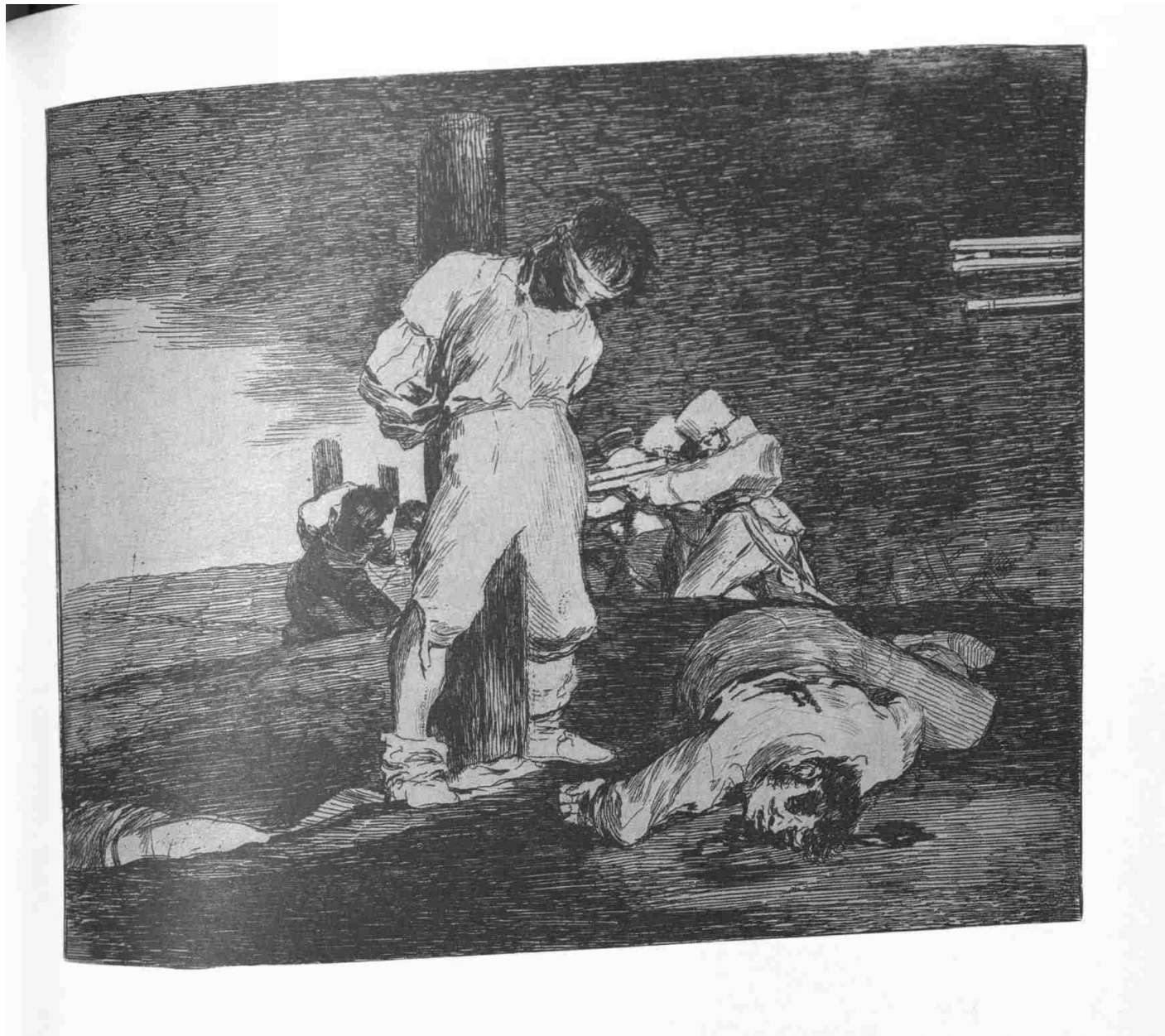


Figure 51: Goya, *Los Desastres*, Plate 26
“No se puede mirar/One cannot look.”



Figure 52: Goya, *Los Desastres*, Plate 79
“Murió la verdad/The Truth has died.”



Figure 53: Goya, *Los Desastres*, Plate 80
“Si resucitará?/Will she live again?”

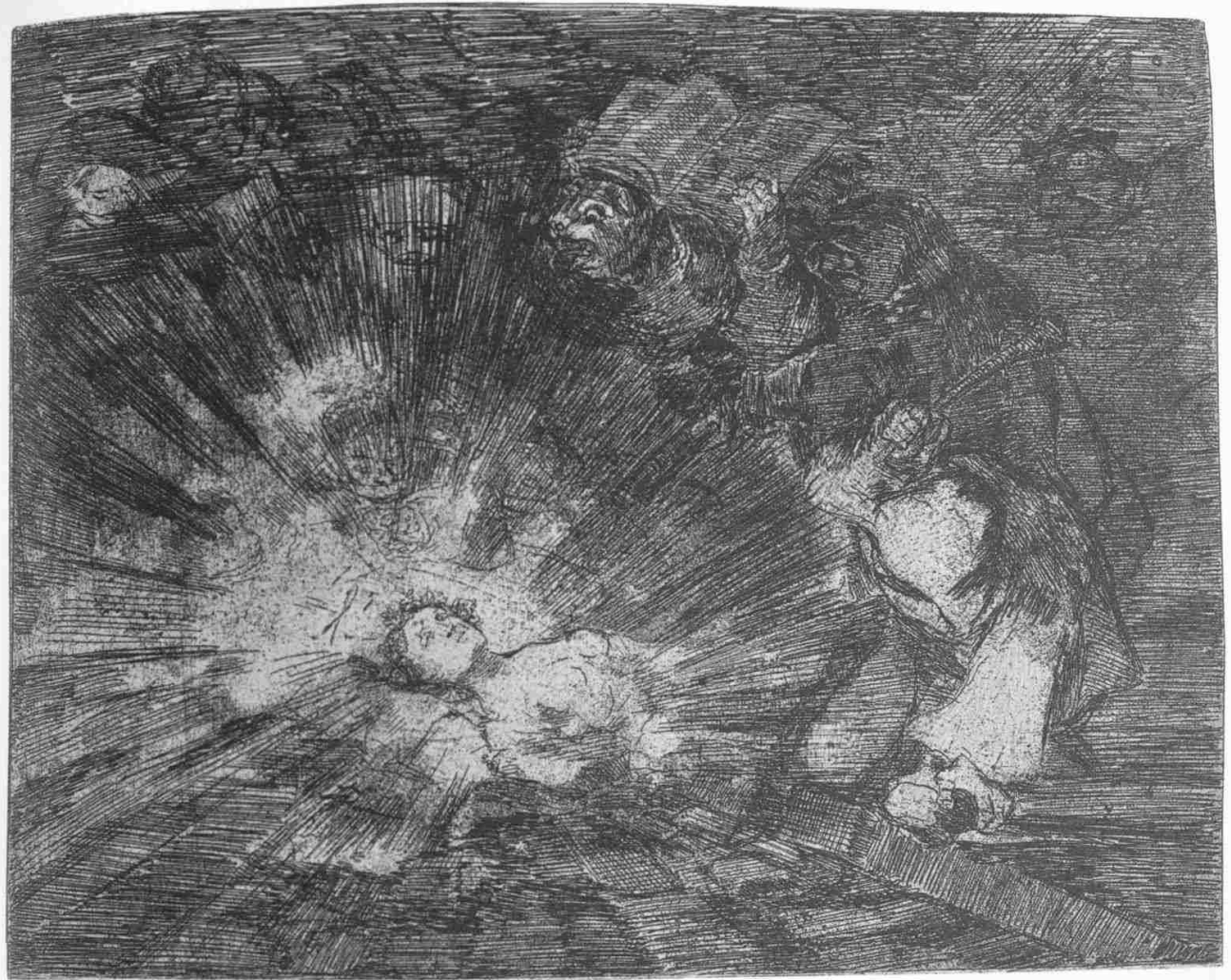


Figure 54: Goya, *Los Desastres*, Plate 81
“Fiero monstruo!/Fierce monster!”

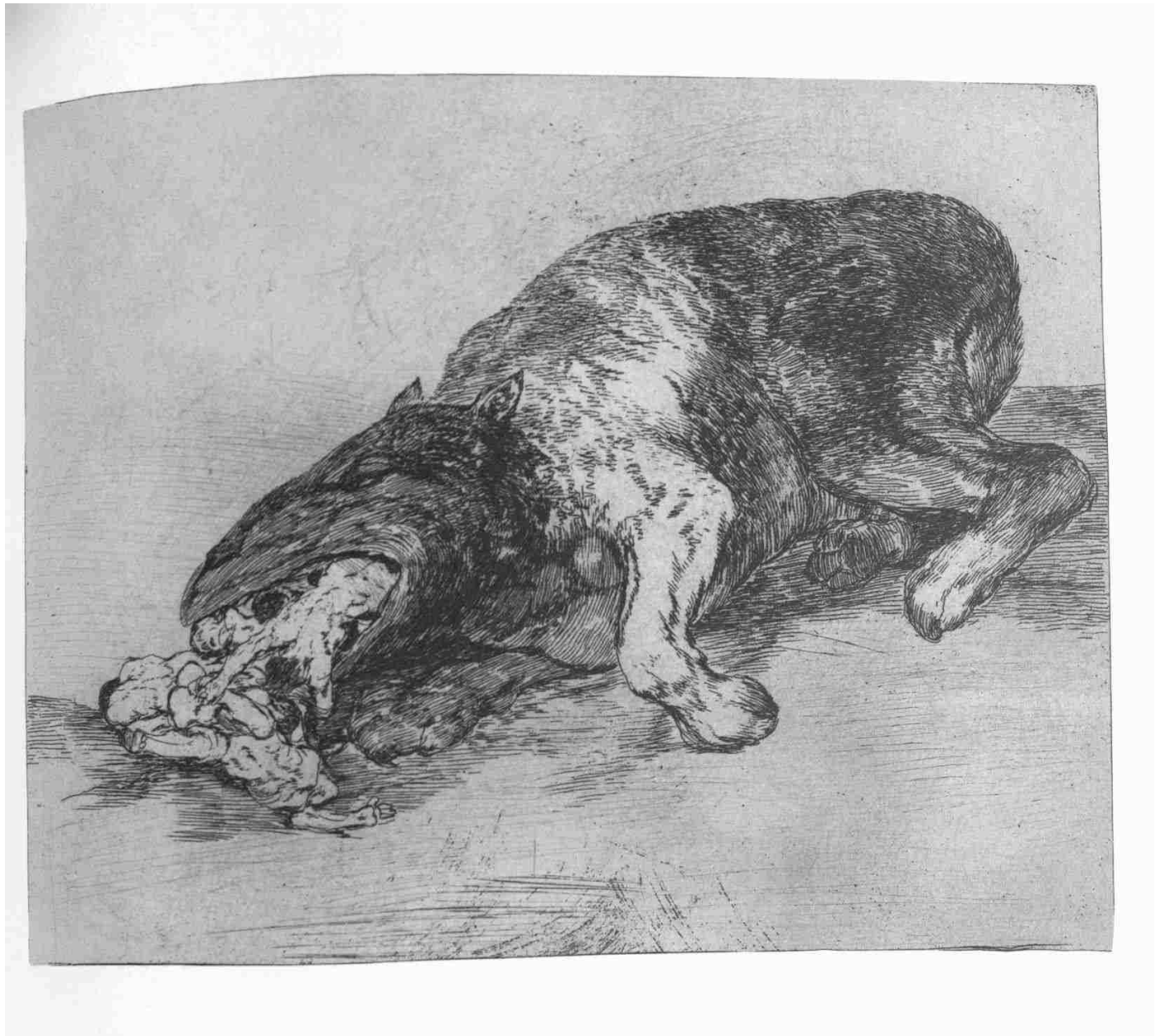


Figure 55: Goya, *Los Desastres*, Plate 82
“Esto es lo verdadero/This is the truth.”



Figure 57: Töpffer, *Monsieur Pencil*, Page 17. The professor writes about his exotic catch.

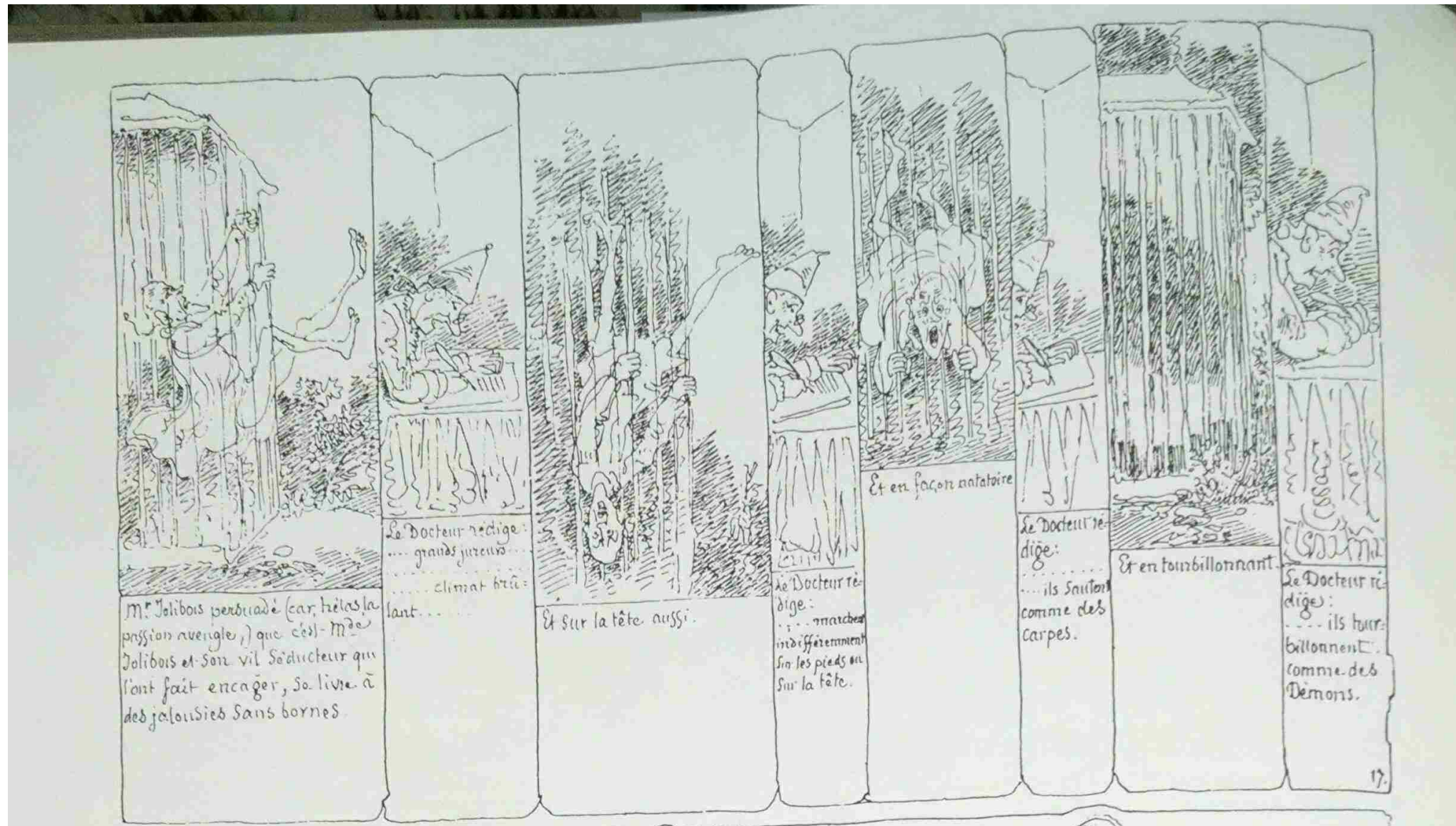


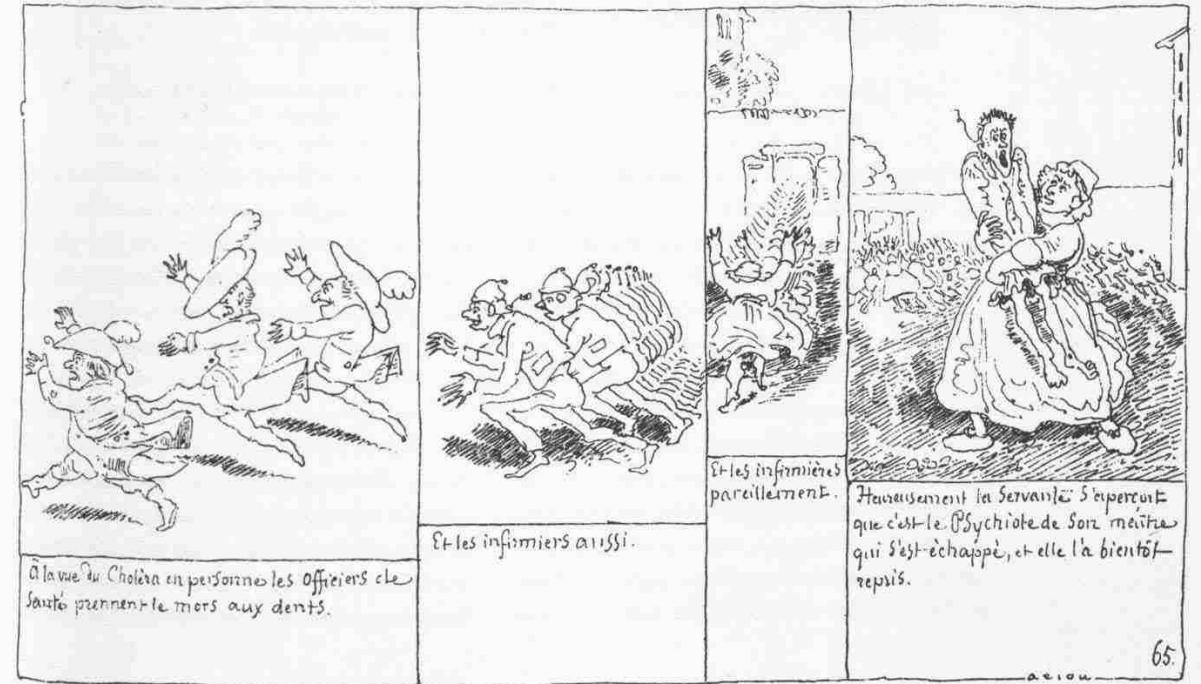
Figure 58: Töpffer, *Monsieur Pencil*, Page 18. Mme. Jolibois arrives from the sky.



Figure 59: Töpffer, *Monsieur Pencil*, Pages 64 and 65. Fumigating the professor's belongings and Jolisbois' attempt to escape.



1-10. invited to purge themselves, Mr. Pencil says he did so en route, Madame Jolisbois that she never purges herself. The Professor's effects are fumigated; Mr. Jolisbois suffocates with jealousy. The crate gives way, and the health officers cry . . . Cholera! (Pencil 64).



5-4. At the sight of the cholera in person, the health officers take the bit between the teeth. And the male nurses likewise. And the female nurses likewise. Fortunately the Maid realizes that it is her master's escaped Psychiot, and she soon recaptures him (Pencil 65).

Figure 60: Töpffer, *Monsieur Pencil*, Pages 36 and 37.
The 20th Light regiment destroys crops and the forest.

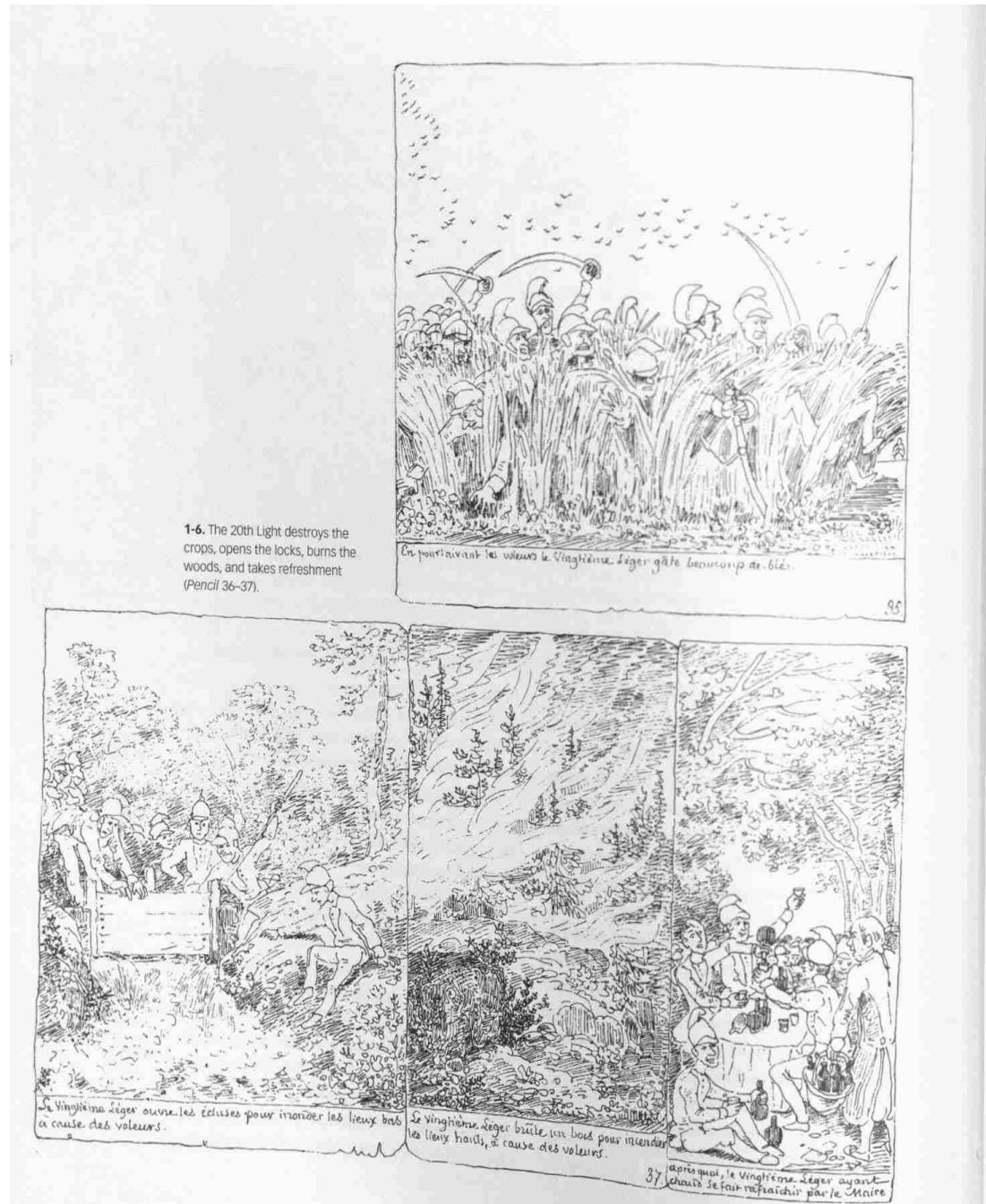
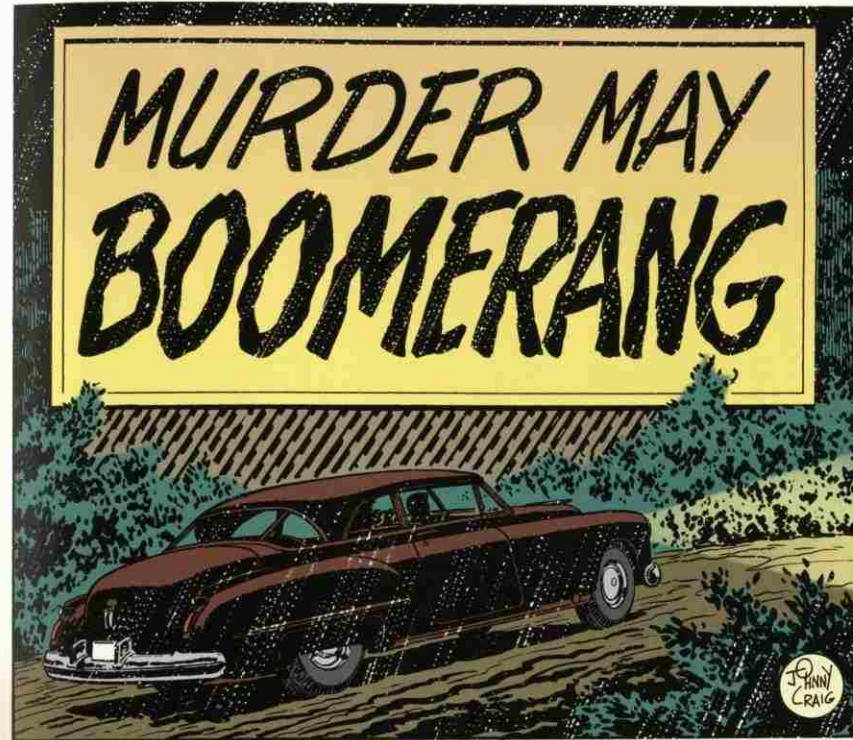


Figure 61: *Crime SuspenStories*,
"Murder May Boomerang," 1.



WE HAD BEEN DRIVING FOR HOURS. THE STEADY HUM OF THE MOTOR AND THE SWISH-SWISHING OF THE WINDSHIELD WIPERS HAD DEADENED MY BRAIN UNTIL I DROVE WITHOUT THINKING. ON AND ON... NEVER STOPPING, NEVER WANTING TO STOP, *AFRAID* TO STOP. AND AS OUR CAR TRAVELED THE ENDLESS MILES OF HIGHWAY, MY MIND DRIFTED BACK THROUGH TIME... THROUGH THE PAST WEEKS... MONTHS... YEARS... AND I WAS A YOUNG BOY AGAIN...



Figure 63: *Crime SuspenStories*, "Murder May Boomerang," 4.

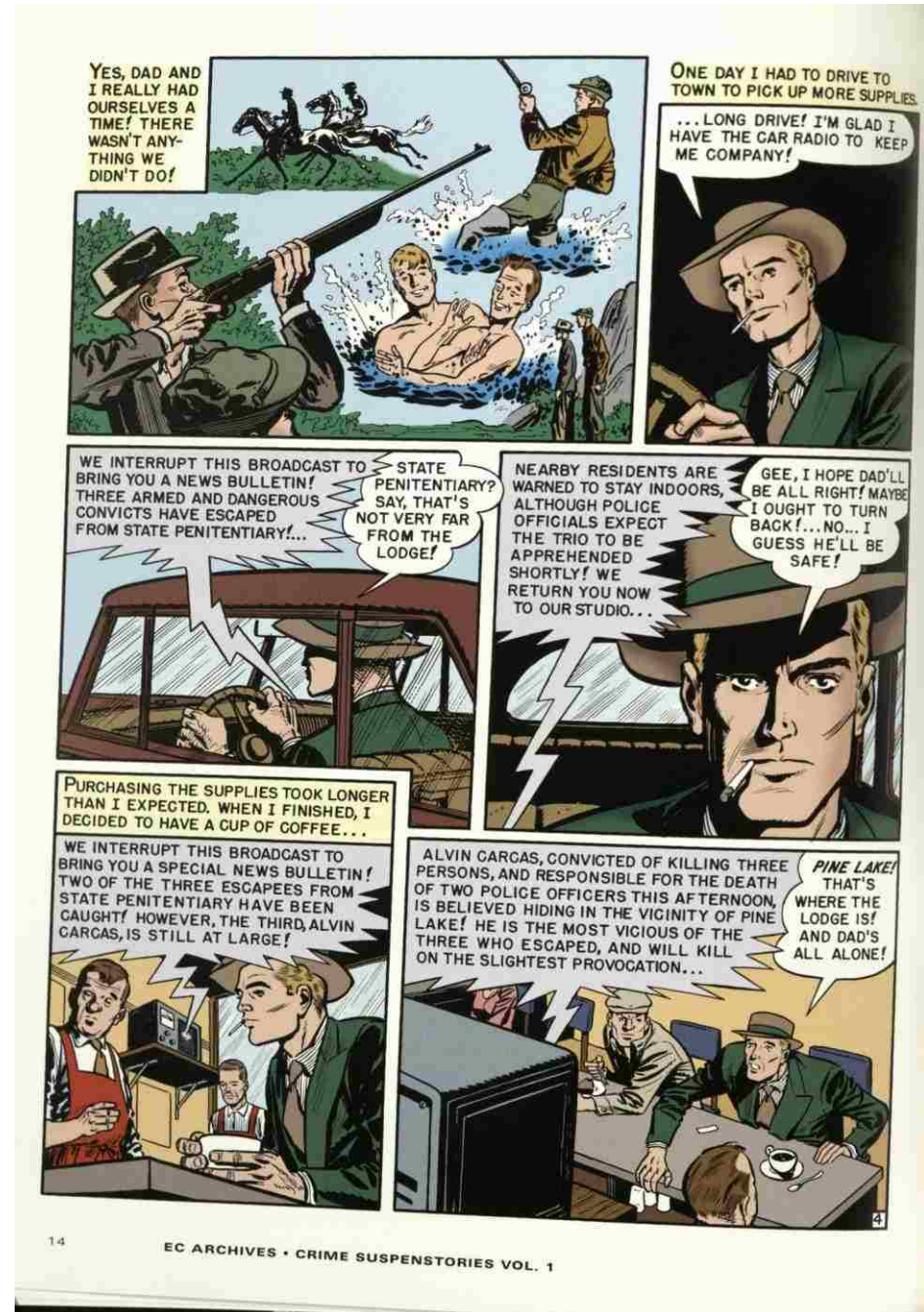


Figure 64: *Crime SuspensStories*, "Murder May Boomerang," 5.



Figure 65: *Crime SuspensStories*, "Murder May Boomerang," 6 and 7.

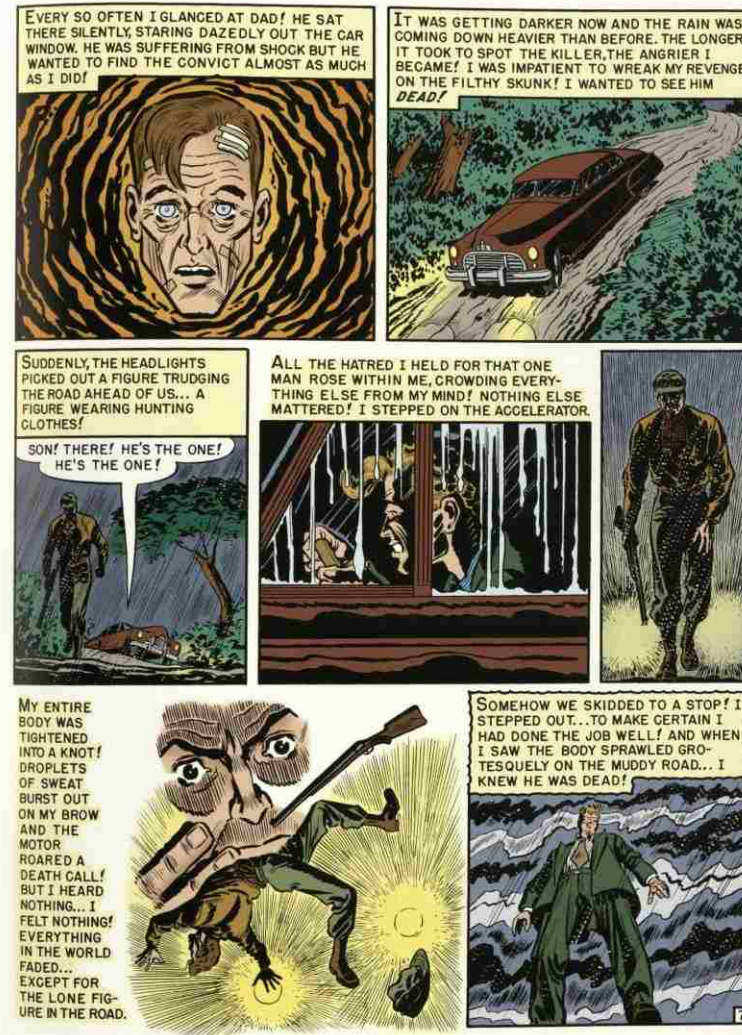


Figure 66: *Crime SuspenStories*, "Murder May Boomerang," 8.



Figure 67: *Tales from the Crypt*, "Midnight Snack," 1.

THE VAULT OF HORROR!



HELLO, AGAIN, YOU LITTLE MONSTERS!
I GUESS YOU'VE BEEN EXPECTANTLY
WAITING FOR THIS LATEST TALE FROM
MY PRIVATE COLLECTION OF HORROR
STORIES! WELL, HEH, HEH... I WON'T
DISAPPOINT YOU! THIS TIME I'LL
TELL YOU A TRULY *REVOLTING* YARN,
SO GET A STRONG HOLD ON YOUR
STOMACH! HEH! I CALL IT...
MIDNIGHT SNACK!



SCENE: THE HOME OF DUNCAN
REYNOLDS! TIME: MIDNIGHT!

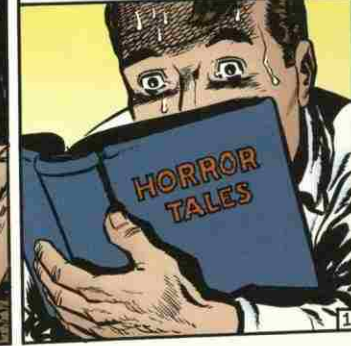


Figure 68: *Tales from the Crypt*, "Midnight Snack," 2 and 3.



Figure 69: *Tales from the Crypt*, "Midnight Snack," 4 and 5.



Figure 70: *Tales from the Crypt*, "Midnight Snack," 6.



Figure 71: *Love and Rockets*, "The Secrets of Life and Death: Vol. 5," 1.



Figure 72: *Love and Rockets*, "The Secrets of Life and Death: Vol. 5," 2.



Figure 73: *Love and Rockets*, “The Secrets of Life and Death: Vol. 5,” 4.

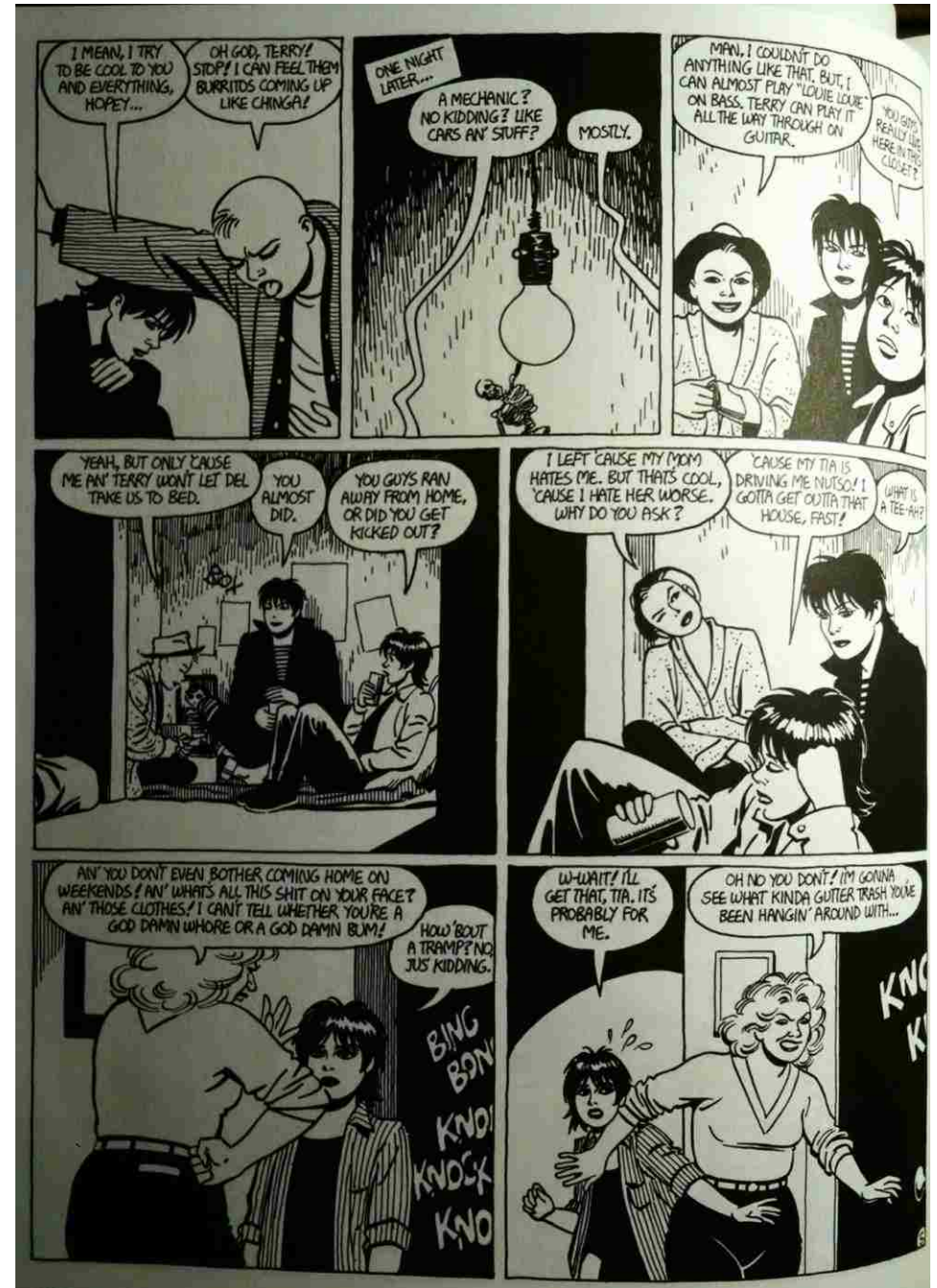


Figure 74: *Love and Rockets*, "The Secrets of Life and Death: Vol. 5," 5.



Figure 75: *The Uncanny X-Men: The Dark Phoenix Saga*, no. 135, 1.

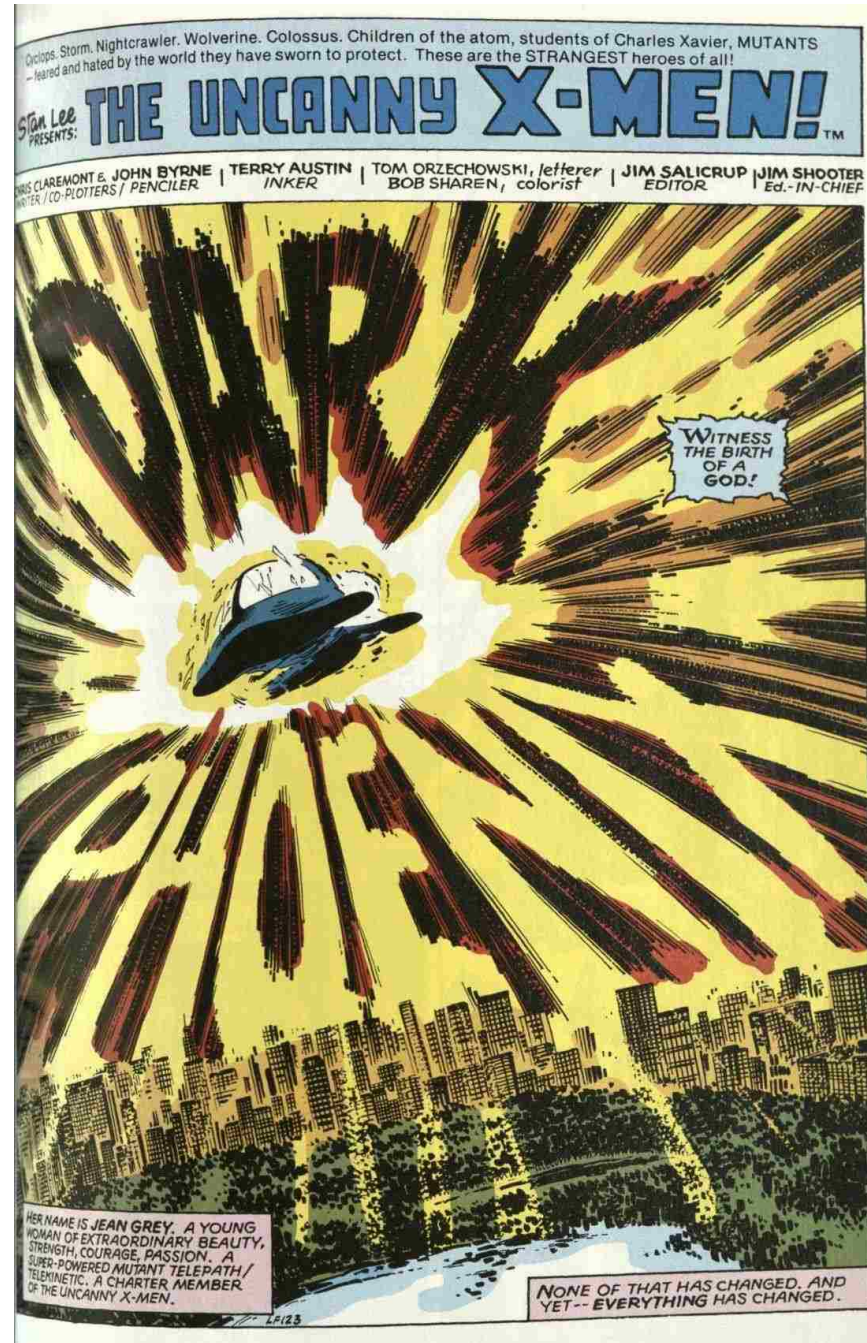


Figure 76: *The Uncanny X-Men: The Dark Phoenix Saga*, no. 135, 2 and 3.



Figure 77: *The Uncanny X-Men: The Dark Phoenix Saga*, no. 135, 4 and 5.



Figure 78: *The Uncanny X-Men: The Dark Phoenix Saga*, no. 135, 6 and 7.



Figure 79: *Pretty Deadly*, No. 1, 1.

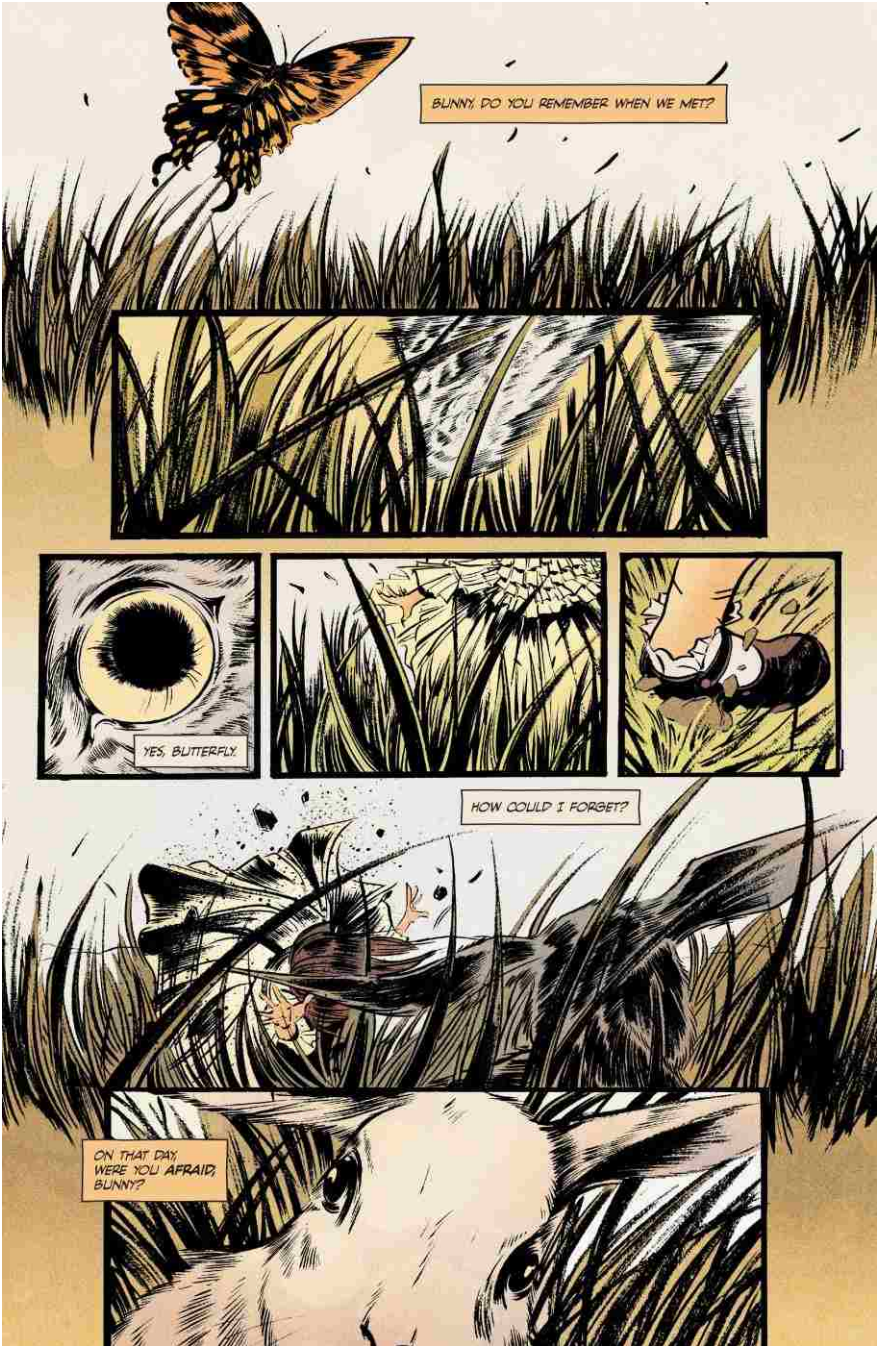


Figure 80: *Pretty Deadly*, No. 1, 2.



Figure 81: *Pretty Deadly*, No. 1, 5.



Figure 82: *Pretty Deadly*, No. 1, 6.



Figure 83: *Pretty Deadly*, No. 1, 7.

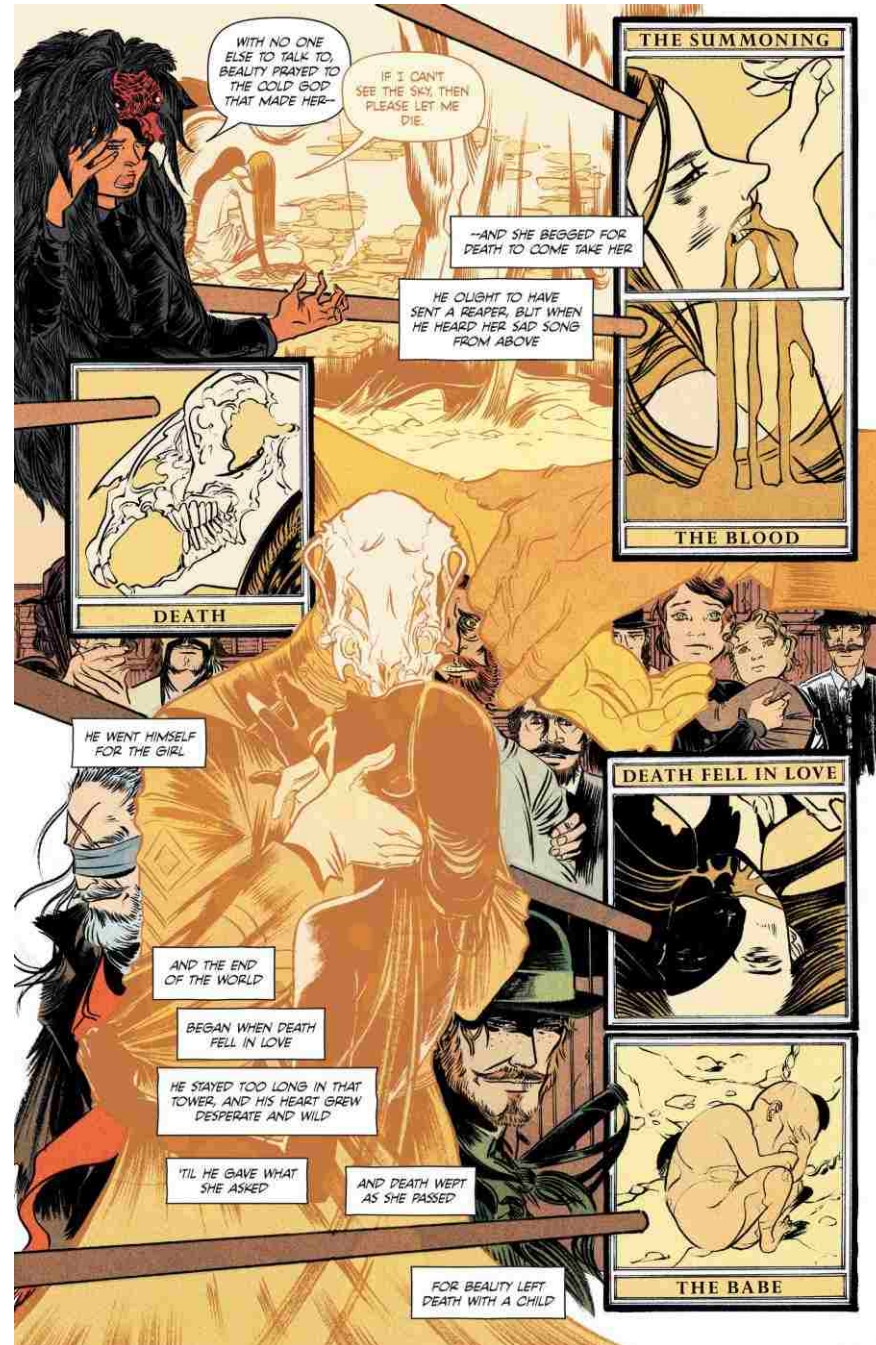


Figure 84: *Pretty Deadly*, No. 1, 7.

