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Redefining the Graphic Novel

by

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3 INTRODUCTION

In this thesis it is my intention to redefine the graphic novel. The problem with the current definition of a graphic novel is that there is no definition, so the term graphic novel is constantly mis-applied, arising from a general vagueness of what a graphic novel is, where did it come from, what does it to.

The term graphic novel is often applied to a hardbound comic book collection, an album if you will. This leads to confusion, and a worthwhile medium finds itself getting lost and misrepresented.

Roger Sabin gives this definition of a graphic novel that they are "lengthy comics in book form with a thematic unity." [1]

I would have to say that I disagree with this statement. It is this blurring of comics with graphic novels that causes the confusion. A graphic novel is not a comic book. A comic book presents a story that is serialised over the course of months or years, each episode being able to stand on its own to some extent, but being part of a greater whole. Each episode ends with a cliff hanger, something to bring the reader back, and it must contain enough information to retain the readers interest were there is a gap of a month or more before the next episode. Also, there are few comics in the mainstream were the authors or artist will have sole rights to the character they are writing about. If a writer gets to do "Batman", he will be only one writer in a long line to do so and he must follow on from what all the previous writers have done. Freedom is sacrificed for continuity. A comic is written and illustrated one episode at a time. The writer may have it all mapped out, but the comic must be able to stand alone, to be accessible to a first time reader. Certain worthy comics, when collected, do not make good reading. Writer, Grant Morrison's comic *"The Invisibles"* is extremely good issue by issue, but, when it was recently collected (and labelled a graphic novel) it made heavy reading, very heavy reading. It simply didn't work. It worked well as a comic. You had a month to think about things, mull them over until the next episode, but it didn't work collected. Why? Because a comic book is written with that month long gap in mind. It becomes part of

[1] Roger Sabin, Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels, London, Phaidon, 1997, P. 112

the story, it allows for cliff-hangers, changes of scene, or, indeed, changes of artist or writer. This gap between issues affects the pacing of the story. The story evolves within set and rigid confines.

This need for a cliff-hanger, the need for a certain amount of accessibility in every episode, the rigid confines of the format, all affect the story telling process. Combine this with the fact that there can also be the problems of continuity, building on other writers work, as well as any commercial pressures there might be, (Grant Morrison once had to change a storyline midway because of falling sales) and comic book writing can become a little difficult to day the least.

Now compare this with the writing process involved in a graphic novel were the confines are no greater or smaller than those of an ordinary novel. This is an important difference. Both the comic and the graphic novel seek to tell a story, but the way in which a story can be told are different. The confines of the comic affect the story. Now bearing in mind these differences in story writing alone, if you take four comics telling one story and put them in a hard cover, take the same story and render it in a purely graphic novel style, then the differences will be noticeable. The comic collection (which are always labelled graphic novels) will have a jerky style, a stop start feel to it. At times it will be repetitive, the cliffhangers, the portions that are recapped, a lot of the accessibility all become redundant compared to the fluid linear narrative of the graphic novel.

In our culture, film and comics are the major conveyors of story through imagery. Each employ arranged graphics and text or dialogue. While film and theatre have long ago established their credentials, comics still struggle for acceptance, and the art form, after more than ninety years of popular use, is still regarded as a problematic literary vehicle.

In the 1980's the major comic giants of DC and Marvel saw the graphic novel as a means of gaining credibility for comics, and to expand comics into the mainstream book market. In 1986 after releasing a small amount of graphic novels, DC comics collected Frank Millers *"The Dark Knight Returns"* labelled it a graphic novel, it achieved a great deal of critical acclaim as did its release of Alan Moore's *"The Watchmen"*. DC felt justified in its "little white lie". Both were comic book collections not graphic novels, but by eliminating the word comic they felt they could get past any prejudices, and, to an extent, this worked.

However, it was only a short-term fix with long term problems. Initially, there did seem to be some progress and book stores began to stock graphic novels, but as Dave McKean stated in an interview, "graphic novels is a difficult idea to sell, trying to convince book sellers that they know what they're talking about is bad enough, but for them to convince the book buying public to take a chance on these often expensive things.... It's tricky. And where do you put them? There was a brief attempt to get a graphic novel section in book stores, which is pretty silly if you think about it, like just putting all the records in a record store together and saying "well, it's all music." Stacking *Maus* next to *Judge Dredd* next to *Viz*.... It's crazy. But you've got to have somewhere for them." [2]

The problems were worsened when DC and others spurred on by the success of *"Dark Knight Returns"* and *"The Watchmen"* stopped making graphic novels and merely put out collections labelled as graphic novels. A lot of them were very poor, (*"Dark Knight"* and "The *Watchmen"* were extremely good comics who could survive being collected, and a lot of subsequent collections were just shown up as being poor by being collected), and did nothing to further the cause. In short, things were a mess, and, to some extent still are. The error of a graphic novel section in bookstores quickly showed up the confusion of what they were. Graphic novels were all stuck upon one shelf regardless of genre, and, all too often, there were more comic collections than graphic novels. This is why it needs to be clarified as to what a graphic novel is.

To clarify what a Graphic Novel is, I feel that it is essential that we know where it came from, what is its history. There is to the best of my knowledge, no written history of the medium, which I feel makes it even more important that I outline one within this thesis. With a clear picture of where the medium came from and how it came about, I feel we will have a clear picture of what it is now. The first thing to do is to outline the history of the comic-book, (section 2) as I've already stated one of the mediums primary problems is its confusion with comic-books. By outlining the history of the comic-book, I hope to set in the mind where they came from and also we will have a clear picture of the differences not just in technique and approach but also in histories. With this knowledge of the history of the comic-book firmly under our belt, I intend to move on and look at the history

[2] Dave McKean, Comics World, APL, Essex, October, 1994, P. 34 – 36.

of book illustration (section 3). I intend to illustrate the point within this section that the mediums history lies within book illustration, that alone would render the medium a separate entity to that of comic-books. The Graphic Novel would for me seem logically to have it's roots within book illustration, book illustration is the illumination of a text, the Graphic Novel is the same thing but with a greater emphasis on the graphic element. Following that I intend to examine the history of the mainstream Graphic Novel, (section 4). This is very much a look at the recent state of the medium and within this section I'll be focusing on the interest taken by the mainstream comic companies, this I feel will give us a picture of the Graphic Novels general state at the moment. In the following four sections I'll be looking at four different illustrators, two book illustrators and two comic-book illustrators. The first Frans Masareel (section 5) essentially founded the medium, the second Lynd Ward (section 6) enhanced it and brought it to America, (where it could be discovered by American comics creators, the importance of which I'll be coming back to later) then Will Eisner (section 7) who added comic-book techniques, and finally Art Spiegelman who evolved it beyond being a comics hybrid medium. I intend to tie up all the loose ends of this seemingly complex picture and come out with a clear vision of what a Graphic Novel is where it came from and what is its potential.

4 THE HISTORY OF THE COMIC BOOK (AMERICA)

There is, I would say, no one person individually responsible for the existence of the comic book. Ever since man could make marks, he has held a desire to tell a story with them, from cave paintings to Trojan Column in Rome (dedicated AD 113) and the Bayeaux Tapestry in Normandy (c. 1100). However, to see these people had to travel, as they were in a fixed position, or they were unique.

The creation of the printing press changed things all over Europe radically. Images could now travel to people and multiple copies could be produced of them, providing greater accessibility and the birth really of mass media.

In the middle ages with high degrees of illiteracy, woodcuts were combined with text to convey whatever message the author wished, be it religious or political, or, as I have found, as a souvenir of an execution (public). These were sold to the public at large gatherings or in towns. The religious prints were sometimes combined in book form

known as devotional books, and, indeed, these early religious sheets were sometimes subdivided like altar pieces and like comic layouts. These early sheets show evidence of word-balloons and speedlines, and panel borders.

Gradually publishers saw a broader market for their sheets involving humour. Thus they began to appear involving caricatures of famous people and funny illustrations, and these became known as "comicals" or "comics".

In the Victorian era (1800's), new discoveries in technology enabled publishers to print things cheaper, and bind them in the form of magazines. This resulted in hundreds of different magazine titles published. Magazines like the *"illustrated London News"* and the *"illustrated Police News"* (1824 and 1864) were of a more serious news genre. The other genre was the serialised fictional story prose accompanied with illustration. These were known as the "penny dreadfuls". The third kind was concerned with political satire, the likes of *"Punch"* (1841) and they had American counterparts in *"Judge"* (1881), *"Life"* (1883) and *"Puck"* (1876).

"Penny dreadfuls" really are comic books. *"Ally Soper"*(1884) (see figure 1) who was a successful serialised weekly character paved the way for today's equivalents, and for a glut of imitators.

In the States there was a strong following of book illustration, and people like Mark Twain were ardent supporters of it. Twain was a believer in the power of pictures, and selected various artists to illustrate his novels, which, in turn, became popular. If pictures pushed up book sales then they could boost newspapers. Single image cartoons became a feature first of all, followed by proper strips, then full page supplements. Examples are Lyonel Feininger, Windsor M^{c}Kay and George Herriman. All were widely syndicated. From here it was only a matter of time before comics went it alone.

But these early purely comic books were made up of newspaper reprints, were hardbound and often were put out by the newspapers themselves. It would not be until 1933 before the comic book as we know it was created.

Ally Soper's Half Holiday

FOUNDED AND CONDUCTED BY GILBERT DALZIEL.

Vol. IX.—No. 416.] SATURDAY, APRIL 30, 1892. [ONE PENNY.

THE MAY QUEEN.

"The idea of holding a May Day gathering in our back yard can certainly lay claim to originality, and Poor Pa deserves commendation on this account. May Day falling upon a Sunday made things a bit awkward; but Papa cleverly overcame this difficulty by ordaining that the celebration should take place last Tuesday. Out of compliment to Alexandra, Xantippe was elected May Queen, and would doubtless have filled that position with becoming dignity but for the unseemly conduct of our neighbours. As it was, the whole affair ended miserably, and a general feeling of dampness prevailed."—Tupper.

FAITH, HOPE, BUT NOT CHARITY.

THE PHAETON AND PAIR.

Ally Soper, one of the victorian 'penny dreadfuls'.

1 Number

With the arrival of the newspaper, so arrived the comic strip, a strip of three panels or less, the subject matters usually being political satire or social comment. These early forms still run today in the same manner. Then gradually started to be told these were gradually serialised. The first actual comic books were to appear as supplements in these newspapers, and eventually went it alone, circa 1934. Slowly comics gained a foothold and a place in the publishing world. The real giants of comic book publishing lay in America.

The earliest appearance of the comic strip as we know it, was in the pages of the big U.S. newspapers at the turn of the century. Gag panels (as they used to call one picture cartoons), and political cartoons had been around for some time so the idea of communicating ideas in two dimensional picture form was not a new one, but, in 1894, when the continuity strips first appeared, a whole new dimension was added to cartooning time. By presenting a sequence of pictures, an artist could put across the illusion of a series of events in chronological order. This naturally led to the addition of an important ingredient, previously possible only in the live performance of an actor or a comedian timing.

This advance was so influential that the creators spent the first 30 years of comic strips exploring only their possibilities for comedy, without giving a thought to the potential of comics for telling dramatic tales. It is for this reason that the term "comic strips" came to be applied to all continuity art, whether the strip in question was comic or dramatic.

Unlike the cinema, to which comics are closely related, the comic strip matured slowly. Although the earliest films were made and screened for their novelty value, within a few years sophisticated creative talents such as D.W. Griffith were pushing at the frontiers of their art forms, peaking with such films as *"The Birth of a Nation"* (1915) and *"Intolerance"* (1916).

Over in the comics camp, however, the levels of artistry would not catch up with those of cinema until the advent of Hal Fosters's *"Tarzan"* (1929) and Alex Raymond's *"Flash Gordon"* (1934) newspaper strips. In 1934, King Features Syndicate, which had seemed uninterested in the new concept of adventure comics, introduced three new series all by Alex Raymond. The first of these was *"Flash Gordon"*. This science fiction strip was a

masterpiece of comic art. Also in 1934 came Milton Caniffs *"Terry and the Pirates"*, a story of a young boy, his guardian in a world of intrigue and drug smuggling. Caniffs drawing style was deceptively simple, but produced a sophisticated result, and the material holds up well today.

In 1937, a new comic was created by small time publishers, Harry Donenfeld, entitled *"Detective Comics"*. A comic which would later lend its initials to the whole company D.C. Comics.

In essence "Detective" simply transferred the themes of the "Black" detective pulp magazines (which featured the work of Dashiel Hammett and Raymond Chandler) to the comic book page. The formula was a huge success, and in 1938 Donenfeld released a new comic, *"Action Comics"* featuring a new character "Superman". The comic was a sell out success. Donenfeld was to follow this success with another in the shape of "Batman", and the "superhero" had arrived (see figure 2).

In 1941 back in the newspapers Will Eisner's *"The Spirit"* made his first appearance. *"The Spirit"* was the star of a 16 page comic book given away with the Sunday edition of many U.S. newspapers. Eisner was to turn the medium on its end, and *"The Spirit"* became a showcase of what could be done with comics as an art form.

In 1961, a company called Marvel Comics, which had enjoyed a big success during the 1940's with the adventures of such characters as "The Human Torch", "Sub Mariner" and "Captain America", decided to re-enter the costumed hero field. The Company had scratched out a living doing pale imitations of other peoples work. Then, seeing their wartime rivals, DC Comics, scoring a moderate success with revivals of their 1940's superhero characters, Marvel decided to give it a go. Marvel editor, Stan Lee, did not want to just copy DC, but to create a more realistic superhero, someone people could identify with.

To this end Marvel published the *"Fantastic Four"* in 1961. The stars were a group who undertook a privately financed space mission which went wrong and left them with super powers. At first the group didn't even have costumes, preferring to operate in street clothes, but corporate pressure became too much, and soon they all sported skin-tight blue pyjama suits. Yet, unlike all their predecessors, the *"Fantastic Four"* spent much of

their time arguing amongst themselves, and deserting one another in times of crisis, and displaying other typically human traits. The series was a huge hit and soon Lee added other misfit heroes to his line-up of comics, *"Spiderman"*, *"The Hulk"* and *"Thor"*. The success of all of these turned Marvel from a small company into a Giant.

The hippy era and drug culture of the late 1960's gave birth to the "underground" comic books. These weren't really underground comics. They were given the name because they were distributed through the head shops and record stores rather than via the news distribution system. One of the first of these was Robert Crumbs *"Zap Comic"*. Crumb went on to create *"Fritz the Cat"* and *"Mr. Natural"*. In his footsteps came Gilbert Shelton's *"Wonder Warthog"* and *"The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers"*.

Comics continued pretty much the same, give or take the odd title, for the next 10 years, with steadily declining sales. Critics and fans alike were predicting its demise until something happened that nobody anticipated, the specialist comic shop. The specialist comic shop had been springing up around the U.S. and Europe since the mid 1970's. These were bookshops which specialised in comics of all types. Some got involved in distribution and began distributing to outlets in other countries. By the end of the 1970's, every major city in the U.S., Canada and Europe had at least one "comic shop". A huge amount of comics sold were being sold to older readers, particularly those who had grown up with the Marvel comics of the 60's.

Comic Conventions, in existence since the 60's, became huge affairs. Comic "fandom" was a growing force. This, the comic shops and the distribution network were what revitalised the industry, encouraging a renaissance of comics. It is interesting to note that the first graphic novels in the modern sense, appear as this renaissance began to gather momentum, and must owe their continued existence to the support of the comic shops who stock them in such large numbers. So now we have a rough out line of the history of the comic book, and nowhere in that history did the Graphic Novel get a mention, that's because the Graphic Novel has only appeared relatively recently on the comic-book scene (it would be 1978 before a comic creator got involved in the medium and 1983 before a major comics publisher got involved, but I'll be coming back to this in more detail later) and now I intend to look at the very different history of book illustration.

A mixture of superhero charachters from Marvel and D.C. Comics.

Number 2

5 A BRIEF HISTORY OF BOOK ILLUSTRATION

The graphic novel is I've said earlier a form of book illustration, so at this point I feel it would be valuable to take a briefly at the history of book illustration. The word illustration implies a picture tied to text, and this relates as much to the graphic novel as it does to conventional book illustration.

Book illustration is something we think of as signifying pictures which decorate a page of printed text. Illustration is much older than printing, which for us dates back a mere five centuries. Illustration has a continuous history, which dates back over 2,000 years.

Ancient Egyptian papyrus rolls are probably the first examples of book illustration. One of the finest was made about 1370 BC for Hunefer, a scribe and high official. Sections of the roll contain what we today call "strip illustration"(figure 3) along both top and bottom margins with text in between (this obviously is valuable as a source for the origins of the comic strip as well as the graphic novel), but the history of illustrated literary texts effectively begins only with the arrival of the codex (multi-leaved waxed writing tablets used throughout the Greek and Roman world, the text was written on separate sheets of vellum or parchment which were then gathered together, secured between two boards and bound at the spine to form the book as we know it today) in the first to fifth centuries AD.

Adoption of the codex form affected book production as profoundly and permanently as did the invention of printing in the mid-fifteenth century. In the codex, the space available for writing and pictures was greatly increased and at the same time concentrated.

Book illumination survived the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West, but the period between the 6th and 8th centuries is extremely confused. Scribes and illuminators in the Eastern Empire (especially in the imperial scriptoria in Constantinople) preserved many features of late antique illustration while, at the same time, adopting them to Christian texts. From early days the codex was associated with Christianity and recognised as the appropriate form in which the revealed truth of the scriptures could be broadcast. In missionary and evangelistic work, Gospel books in codex form were essential.

Egyptian Book of the Dead, hunefer papyrus 1370.

Meanwhile in the West, book illumination reflected the styles of the barbarian invaders of the Western Provinces of the Empire. Celtic metal work, interlacing beast ribbon designs and spiral patterns all made their appearance in the earliest Christian manuscripts of the north, the Book of Kells being one of the finest examples of these manuscripts.

5.1 CAROLINGIAN ILLUSTRATION

It was not until the Carolingian Renaisance in the late 8th and 9th centuries that Western Europe enjoyed a period of relative stability after the break up of the Roman Empire with the revival of the Empire in the form of the Holy Roman Empire under Charlemagne. This renaissance was brief but was to have a profound effect on Europe. The revival of learning which Charlemagne sponsored, the reform of the liturgy and of writing, the establishment of monastic schools and the concentration of scholars about his court, transformed the book arts in the space of two or three generations. From Charlemagne's time, a continuous evolution in manuscript illustration can be traced. Illumination was confined to monastic scriptoria supported and patronised by royalty, and nearly all the texts thought worthy of illumination and illustration were religious.

The religious books comprised several categories. These were Biblical texts, books on the Old Testament, Psalters and Gospels and there were liturgical texts necessary for the celebration of Mass. It would be after the death of Charlemagne before complete bibles appeared.

The Psalter, the second most important text necessary for celebrating the liturgy, was also the principal devotional book of the laity (though only the greatest and richest in the land could afford to own one) until superseded by the Book of Hours in the late Middle ages.

The famous *Utrecht Psalter* written and illustrated in 830 in an Abbey near Rheim is the finest example of the highly individual style of pen drawing found in Carolingian manuscripts. In the *Utrecht Psalter* the emphasis is placed on illustration, not on decoration. Each Psalm is illustrated with expressive pen drawings extending across the top, middle and bottom of the page. In the 11th and 12th centuries, the manuscript was in England where three copies were made. They had an important influence on the development of a linear style of illustration in England.

5.2 THE EARLY GOTHIC

Until the 12th century, illustrated books were the prerogative of the clergy and the ruling classes. Books were needed in monastic libraries for teaching and meditation, as well as for the celebration of the Mass. For laymen of sufficient rank and wealth, an illustrated book, such as a Psalter, was primarily a devotional and status symbol object.

From the 13th century onwards, the situation was to change radically. The rise of the universities and spread of education increased the demand for books of all kinds, including illustrated books. Paris was the largest and richest city in Europe, with its Court, Church and University as the chief patrons of the arts and learning. But it is known that wealthy burghers bought books, and that there were even some students from wealthy families who could afford to buy books instead of renting them from the stationers. Book collecting and, with it an aesthetic appreciation of books in their own right, had arrived.

The manuscripts of the early gothic period leave no doubt that book illuminators took their forms directly from the architecture of the time, the sculpture and the stained glass windows. Jean Pucelles' *"Book of Hours"*, made around 1325, is a good example of this. The miniatures are set in frames surrounded by gothic cresting or, as in one miniature, inside a complete gothic church.

The early gothic period of book illustration lasted from around 1250 to 1380. In this span of a century and more, France began to ascend both culturally and politically which, despite the disasters of the Hundred Years War with England, spread the Gothic style throughout Europe. By the late fourteenth century, script, illustration, initial and border had come together in book illumination of unparalleled splendour. It was an age of aristocratic patronage, exemplified the most by the Duc de Berry of France.

The *"Tres Riches Heures"*, (see figures 4 & 5) made for the Duc de Berry by the three Limbourg brothers is regarded by many as the finest fifteenth century illuminated manuscript, and the supreme example of painting in the international Gothic style. The book is what is known as a Book of Hours, a devotional book.

Number 4

Limborg Brothers, , the “Tres Riches Heures”.

The Limbourg Brothers,the month of February, The Tres Riches Heures,

5

Number

The paintings within by the Limbourg brothers show two worlds, the aristocratic and the religious, sometimes merging with apparent ease in a manner that set these illustrations apart from those in other Books of Hours from that period. Depictions of Properties owned by the Duc de Berry appear naturally in the religious scenes.

The illustrations are beautiful to behold. They are exceptionally detailed while not being so detailed that the pictures become heavy. They are simply wonderfully executed works. The book has a calendar section, where each month is depicted with a full-page landscape. The second section deals with specific religious texts. The book contains exquisite pages such as the Visitation, a beautiful example of Gothic mannerism in which the figures Mary and Elizabeth are surrounded by playful groups.

The illustrated books of the early middle ages were primarily religious, but the pattern of patronage and, with it, the range of books produced was changing. Histories, chronicles, epic poems, chivalrous romances, stories of the Trojan War, of Alexander the Great, King Arthur, all became popular. Astronomical, Medical and Travel books were in demand. After the long monopoly of religious subjects, illustration was at last becoming popular, instructional and recreational in a manner we can recognise as anticipating modern attitudes.

5.3 THE ADVENT OF PRINT

Although luxury manuscripts and book painting continued to flourish up to and beyond the 15th century, the greatest development was that of printing. In the mid 15th century, the invention of printing from movable type letters cast in lead became a revolution thanks partly to two important technical developments which had their origins two or three centuries earlier: the rise of the European paper making industry, which ensured a supply of papers of the requisite quality, and the production of new inks of appropriate consistency for use with type, and with the wood blocks (see figure 6) which were the chief method of reproducing illustrations.

Gunter Zainer, Jesus Christ, Ausburg, 1473.

Number 6

From about 1450 onwards, the block books began to appear. Pictures and text were cut in relief on a single block that was then inked and an impression taken by hammering or rubbing a sheet of paper placed over the inked block. One side only of the paper was used, the other being spoilt. The sheets thus produced were collected together and mounted or bound in volumes.

The block books co-existed with letterpress at least until 1480. They seem to have been especially popular in Germany and the Netherlands where they were sold at fairs.

Printing from movable type was first practised in Europe at Mainz in the 1450's. Its invention is attributed to Johan Gutenberg, whose 42 Line Latin *Bible*, published around 1455, is one of the most famous books in the world.

The Renaissance, Humanism, Reformation and Counter Reformation were huge concepts that permanently affected the lives and beliefs of Europeans. Their influence on books and book illustration was profound, but, whereas the Reformation revolt (which Italy largely escaped) hopelessly divided Northern Europe, the Renaissance produced a flourishing of the book arts in Italy, which was then transplanted to France in the second quarter of the 16th century, raising France to the position of pre-eminence in the book arts, a position maintained for most of the century.

It was not only the appearance of books which changed in the two decades after 1520. There were new types of books to be illustrated such as architecture, the military arts, festival books, collections of portraits, emblem books and horticulture. In printing, illustration and binding alike we find a refinement and sure sense of style that set a standard in book design. This was partly a reflection of the big changes taking place in all the arts, as the gothic ideals of France changed over to the late Renaissance art called Mannerism. Characteristics of the Mannerist style are elongated figures and filling all the space with ornament of some kind and a high level of technical accomplishment.

5.4 THE BAROQUE

The 17th century, during which the Baroque style matured, has been called the "age of grandeur", a period with extrovert and exuberant aspects, although it was also a period of exploration, emergent capitalism and scientific discovery. It was an age of patronage,

when book illustration reflected the tastes and interests of royalty and the upper classes, things like fencing, horsemanship, the military arts and architecture (see figures 7 & 8).

The second great artistic patron was the reformed Church, which had managed to re-establish the Catholic faith in the Netherlands and Southern Germany. There followed a period of renewed assurance in the missionary activities of the Church and an enormous number of books on religious and other subjects were produced by the Jesuit Order.

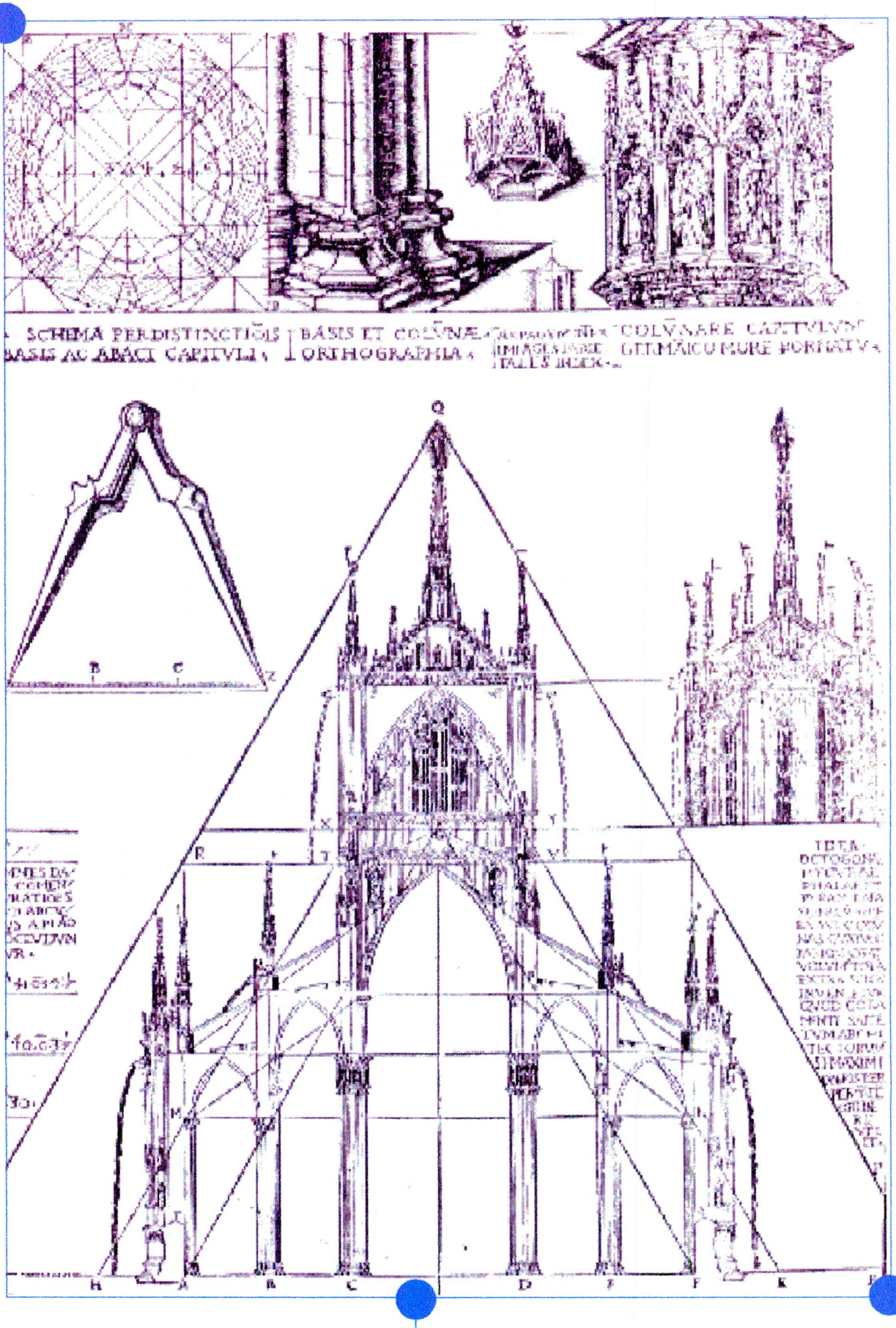
The decline in quality of French printing in the late 16th century, when many Protestant printers fled to Geneva to escape from the wars of religion, coincided with the period when engraving on copper replaced woodcuts as the primary technique for illustration. At the same time the centre of printing moved to the Netherlands, and the best engravers were to be found there, - Hendrik Goltz in Haarlem, the large de Passe family in Utrecht and the brothers Wierix, Theodore and Cornelis Galle (see figure 7) in Antwerp.

It is convenient in this simplified history of Book Illustration to call the 17th century as the age of Baroque, and to describe the 18th century as the age of Rococo.

Rococo developed the Baroque's displays of wealth into intricate patterns with the emphasis on grace rather than on energy. The Rococo century was a golden age for illustration, above all in France. Grandeur gave way to lightness, the rich families and upper classes developed a taste for elegant books. The main object of the Rococo illustrated book was to give pleasure. Lightness of touch, harmony of decorative elements, playfulness, full-page plates are all elements of Rococo illustration. Rococo illustration is primarily in line, the technique used the most during the century was a combination of etching with engraving on copper plates. There were many great illustrators of the time, Gravelot (1699 – 1773) lived from 1732 until 1745 in London where he introduced the Rococo style. His style remained consistently elegant, the low-life characters are depicted with the same refinement as the upper classes. Charles Cochin (1715 – 90) illustrated many of the fetes of the French Court and lastly Jean-Michel Moreau (1741 – 1814) who dominated illustration in the last quarter of the century and lived on into the new one.

Cornelis Galle, cavalry tactics, Antwerp, 1630.

Number 7



Cesare Cesarino, proporitions of a gothic church, 1521

Number 8

The 18th century and the Rococo was the last of the universal styles, the 19th century displays none of the same consistencies of pattern or in development. Traditions had collapsed in the French Revolution of 1789 and its aftermath. The new century was to be one of ceaseless change and experiment in the arts. Never was there a greater interest in illustration of every kind. Diversity of techniques, the vagaries of literary and popular taste, and an insatiable demand for books, make the 19th century the richest period in the history of illustration.

In England, Thomas Berwick pioneered at the end of the 19th century a new process of wood engraving characterised by a white line tonal effect. *"The Aesop Fables"*, published in Newcastle in 1818, was to inspire a new generation of wood engravers many of whom migrated to London.

The second new technique came from Germany. Alois Senefelder's discovery of lithography, a method of surface printing from stone, in the year 1798, came at the right moment in history. Senefelder (1771 – 1834) had been interested in printing for several years. He stopped trying to adapt copperplate engraving to stone and found a way to print from a flat surface (planography). Johann Mannlich (1741 – 1823) made it popular by using it to reproduce Old Masters paintings in a series of portfolios issued between 1811 and 1816.

At first lithography was used for commercial purposes, publication of musical scores and the reproduction of paintings. It was in France that the new medium's possibilities were fully realised by Gericault, Ingres, Delacroix and Daumier, the latter two applying it with great flair to book illustration. The technique rapidly became popular, it needed no middleman as did copperplate. Gottfried Engelmann, a German who obtained a patent in 1837 for chromolithography, pioneered the ultimate development of Senefelder's discovery. The process required up to 20 stones, one for each colour, and they were over printed one after another. Almost at the same time in England, James Hullmandel (1789 – 1850) produced one of the finest lithographed books, Thomas Shotter Boys *"Picturesque Architecture in Paris"* 1839.

Edward Burne Jones, the Cantebury Tales, London, Kelmscott press, 1896.

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6 NINETEENTH CENTURY

19th century book illustration had altered course radically by the 1880's, as a result of technical as well as social and aesthetic changes (photographic or mechanical processes of reproduction were developed from 1850 onwards, and by 1880 had revolutionised book illustration). Ordinary book buyers as well as the minority of connoisseurs began to treat illustrated books rather more as precious objects and less as objects of use. In the commercial market, with the rise of photographic reproduction, there was a revival of interest in hand craftsmanship that brought with it the Aesthetic Movement and the cult of what the English artist, William Morris, called the "Book of Beautiful"(figure 9).

The rise of Aesthetic illustration can be traced to a technical development, the revival of etching in mid century after a period of eclipse. Etching has always been the collectors favourite process, and for the artists it held a great deal of sensitivity. Professional etchers were much in demand for the reproduction of drawings and many also turned to book illustration.

The Book of Beautiful was a product of the Arts and Crafts movement, which was a reaction to the industrial revolution. The books were examples of thoughtful design and a conscious appeal to medieval traditions of craftsmanship. William Morris founded the Kelmscott Press in 1891 and applied these principles to book production in his primary aim of improving commercial printing. It closed in 1898 after publishing 50 influential books under Morris, which inspired similar private press endeavours throughout England.

6.1 EXPRESSIONIST BOOK ILLUSTRATION

The revival of interest in book production in the 1890's produced a wealth of fine illustration in Germany as well as in England and France during the early years of the 20th century. Although the new century began in a political sense only after World War 1 of 1914 – 1918, several of the art movements which were to dominate the future were already emerging before the outbreak of war. Cubism and Expressionism would be the leading movements for the first two decades.

Expressionist illustration makes a powerful visual impact with it deliberately uncouth forms, aggressive density of tone in the woodcuts and above all by the suggestion of spiritual torment. It is also a very egocentric style (figure 10).

Ernst Barlach, Mephistophles dances with a witch, an example of expressionist book illustration, 1923 Barlach.

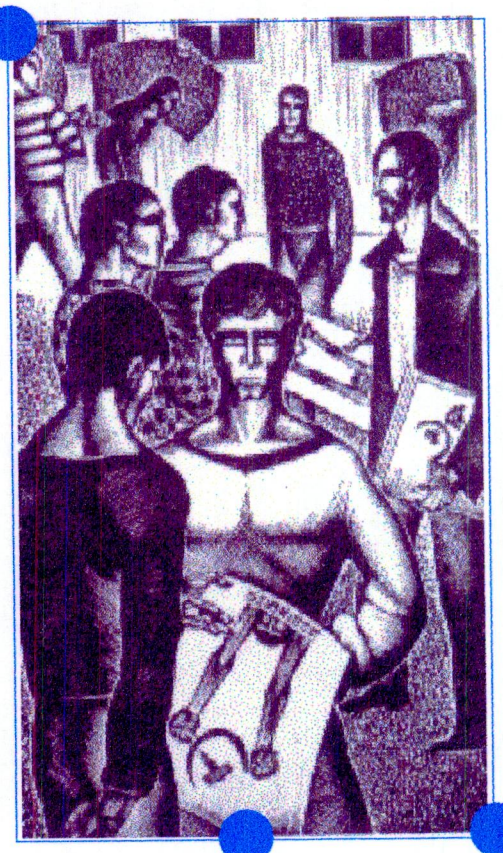
10

The artist's interest in his text is often subordinated to the projection of an intensely personal and emotional state of mind. Illustration is seldom literal or anecdotal, still less considered as the embellishment of a text. In contrast with Symbolism, where art was allied with beauty, in Expressionism it becomes a form of protest, ugly if this were thought necessary to drive home a point.

The movement originated in reaction to impressionism and the philistine values of the Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm II. The period during which the Expressionist illustration dominated the fine book was quite brief, from about 1907 to 1927. In its later manifestations it was to sum up the bleak mood after the defeat of Germany in 1918. Expressionism was the main target of the Nazi attack on all forms of progressive art. Many paintings and sculptures were confiscated from museums and destroyed, others reserved for an exhibition in Munich in 1937 where they were skilfully displayed to look their worst.

The mature Expressionist book illustration style can be seen in Oskar Koloschka's *"Tubitsch"* (1911), a collection of poems by Albert Ehrenstein illustrated with twelve line-etchings. In more violent mood are Max Beckmann's (1884 – 1950) wood engravings to Kasimir Edshmid's short novel *"Die Furstin"* (1918). The text is a sequence of loosely connected episodes centred on a princess in which dreams and sensitive travel descriptions with Symbolist nuances appear frequently. It is characteristic of Expressionist illustration that Beckmann makes no concession either to the romantic story or the beautifully printed text. His six full-page illustrations are all stark, angular close ups. Finally of note, here is the work of Belgian Frans Masareel who pioneered using his woodcuts to tell stories, usually anti-war protests, without using any text. I'll be returning to Masareel later because it is here that the seeds of graphic novel are planted.

In 1930, Lynd Ward, an American who had studied in Leipzig, introduced the "novel in pictures" pioneered by Frans Masareel. Cape published his *"God's Man"* and *"A Madman's Drum"*(figure 11) in the same year (1930). The powerful woodcuts tell their own story of an artist's gradual disillusionment with life in a world increasingly dominated by facism. As with Masareel, I shall be returning to Ward later on.



Lynd Ward, Madmans Drum,Vertigo Books,1930.

7 AMERICAN ILLUSTRATION FROM 1920

With the ending of the First World War, a new period opened in American illustration. The famous Armory Show, a vast international exhibition held in New York in 1913, had displayed avant-garde artistic movements of Europe on a comprehensive scale for the first time in the United States. It marked the beginning of the modern movement in American art, in which illustration had a place from the 1920's onwards.

A wealth of new opportunities for artist/illustrators became available in the rapidly developing advertising industry, in posters, comics and other forms of graphic art. Magazine illustration continued to be popular, though photography was beginning to take over the place of original work. But magazine covers continued to be artist designed and some publications, such as *"Colliers"* and *"The New Yorker"*, never changed over completely to photographic illustration.

The 1920's were the Jazz age, an emancipated frivolous decade whose spirit is evoked in the work of John Held, Jnr. (1889 – 1958). He was the ideal interpreter of Emily Post's *"How to Behave – Though a Debutante"* (New York, Doubleday, 1928), a send up of fashionable society. Held's girls in short skirts and moon-faced men in baggy trousers, which he exaggerated into always perfectly creased cubes, created an image of the flapper generation.

Another caricaturist who came to the fore in the 1920's was Miguel Covarrubias (1904 – 1957). Born in Mexico City he moved to New York at the age of eighteen. He worked for a time in the theatre, designing sets and costumes for ballet and plays. His studies of black people made his name. A number of them were assembled together in *"Negro Drawings"* (1927), an anthology of New York Negroes. The drawings are sharp and reminiscent of cubism. A great deal of American illustration was carried out in the American Art Deco style, which prevailed at the time.

8 ILLUSTRATION SINCE MID-CENTURY

In reaction to the drabness of the contemporary scene, there occurred a brief but vigorous renewal of book illustration in English general publishing between 1943 and1955, which developed into a minor neo/romantic revival. The texts chosen were those with literary appeal, and the illustrators were themselves primarily painters whose style tended towards the literary and anecdotal. The series began in 1943 with the *"Rime of the Ancient Mariner"* illustrated with nightmarish pictures by Mervyn Peake(1911 – 1968), and John Galsworthy's famous trilogy *"The Forsyte Saga"* appeared with line illustrations by Anthony Gross.

The French "livre d'artiste" had continued to flourish in unexpected ways. Henri Mattisse's *Jazz* is a completely integrated work of art, combining the artist's own text with images produced by a complex "pochoir" process. It is so precious an object that, like many livres d'artiste, it comes unbound, in a box. A later English example closer to illustration in a traditional sense, but still essentially artistic in its reference is David Hockney's series of images to accompany Wallace Steven's *"The Blue Guitar"*.

It is sometimes claimed that post war illustration has flourished only in the field of children's books. There is no question of the vitality and imagination found in children's books, but new techniques and experimental approaches to expression have greatly stimulated visual communication in all branches of the graphic arts during the second half of the twentieth century. Posters, advertisements, magazines, television graphics, film animation, stamps and record sleeves are all illustrations in the broad sense. Artist/designers have often to work in several of these media to maintain their position in a competitive environment. Few can afford to specialise in, or concentrate on, the illustrated book alone.

In the 20th century, the range of books being produced has narrowed, modern novels and poetry are rarely illustrated. The market for adult books is largely supplied by the publications of the book clubs and private presses, those books whose primary purpose is to impart information and by the graphic novel. Book illustration has always been concerned with communication, it has to interpret or to amplify a text, a function which distinguishes it from painting and sculpture. In scientific and technical works, as in book

dealing with archaeology and pre-history, illustration plays a vital part because it can select features in order to emphasise a point in a manner impossible in photography.

So now we have an outline of the history of comics, the medium most readily associated with graphic novels, an outline of the history of book illustration, a medium, which by its very nature of image tied to text, must possess the seeds of the graphic novel. We have an outline of the graphic novels more recent history, but the graphic novel did not conjure itself up out of thin air. At the risk of repeating myself, I felt that the antecedents of the graphic novel lay in book illustration and it only owed its existence partly to comics. In the next two chapters I intend to illustrate this theory.

9 THE ORIGINS OF THE MAINSTREAM GRAPHIC NOVEL

In this chapter it is my intention to talk about the origins of the mainstream graphic novel. By the term mainstream graphic novel I am referring to those books published by the major comic book companies of American, D.C. and Marvel, and of the mainstream book publishers by no means are these the first examples of the graphic novel. I have already hinted earlier that the origins of the graphic novel lie with Expressionist book illustrator Frans Masareel and his "stories without words", the first was published in France in 1917, and with Lynd Ward, also mentioned briefly in the History of Book Illustration, who brought Masareel's ideas with him to America where he refined them and released his own "novels without text", first published in America in the 1930's. In America Ward's work would be discovered by influential comic artist Will Eisner, who, in the 1970's, combined Ward and Masareel's storytelling techniques with comic storytelling techniques to produce in 1978 what we know today as the "graphic novel". Eisner's first graphic novel was published in a short run by underground comic book publisher Kitchen Sink Press, and did not reach a large audience until the mediums name had been established by other artists. It was important to state all of that briefly even if it may seem a little repetitive, as I'll be coming back to all three in more detail later on. It is important to make clear that what I'm talking about here is primarily the mainstream graphic novel.

America's largest comic book publisher "DC Comics" published its first graphic novel in 1983 entitled *"Star Raiders"*. *"Star Raiders"* seems to have come about mainly by accident than invention. It was originally intended to run as a four part mini series. The project was meant to run in conjunction with an Atari video game, but in the words of Projects Editor, Andy Helfer, "Sales fell through the floor on Atari. We were halfway into the second part when they canned the project. We had 45 pages of beautiful artwork, and Paul Levitz said "Can you turn it into a 64 page graphic novel?" [3] Well, when you had intended to have 75 more pages of story and you get 19 instead, you compress. We pulled scenes out of the beginning and made them part of the climatic battle, and it was all designed to showcase the wonderful artwork that Jose Garcia-Lopez had laboured on for so long". *"Star Raiders"* was written by Elliot Maggin and had painted panels by Garica-Lopez. It was printed larger than normal American comics (normally A4) on slick quality paper and had the label "Graphic Novel No.1" on the cover. It sold for $5.95.

"Star Raiders" was a somewhat haphazard and accidental affair, and though it was not originally meant to be a Graphic Novel, it did set DC thinking about the format and they decided to continue with it. To get the ball rolling, and also to justify the higher price and higher printing standard, DC turned to science fiction expert Julius Schwartz, who edited a group of graphic novels based on works by top authors in the field. The series included Ray Bradbury's *"Frost and Fire"* illustrated by Klaus Janson, and Harlan Ellison's *"Demon with a Glass Hand"* illustrated by Marshall Rogers.

Although, in my own opinion, these early offerings are not strictly speaking "Graphic Novels", they were novels first and were merely adapted, just as some worthy novels have failed to be realised to any degree of success in film, because of the different storytelling mechanisms of the novel and of cinema which sometimes leave an unbridgeable gap between the two, so the same can be said of Graphic Novels.

Despite the modern novel and the graphic novel having similar story telling mechanisms, they also possess mechanisms unique to themselves, mechanisms which cannot be employed if the writer does not know about them because he is not writing for that given

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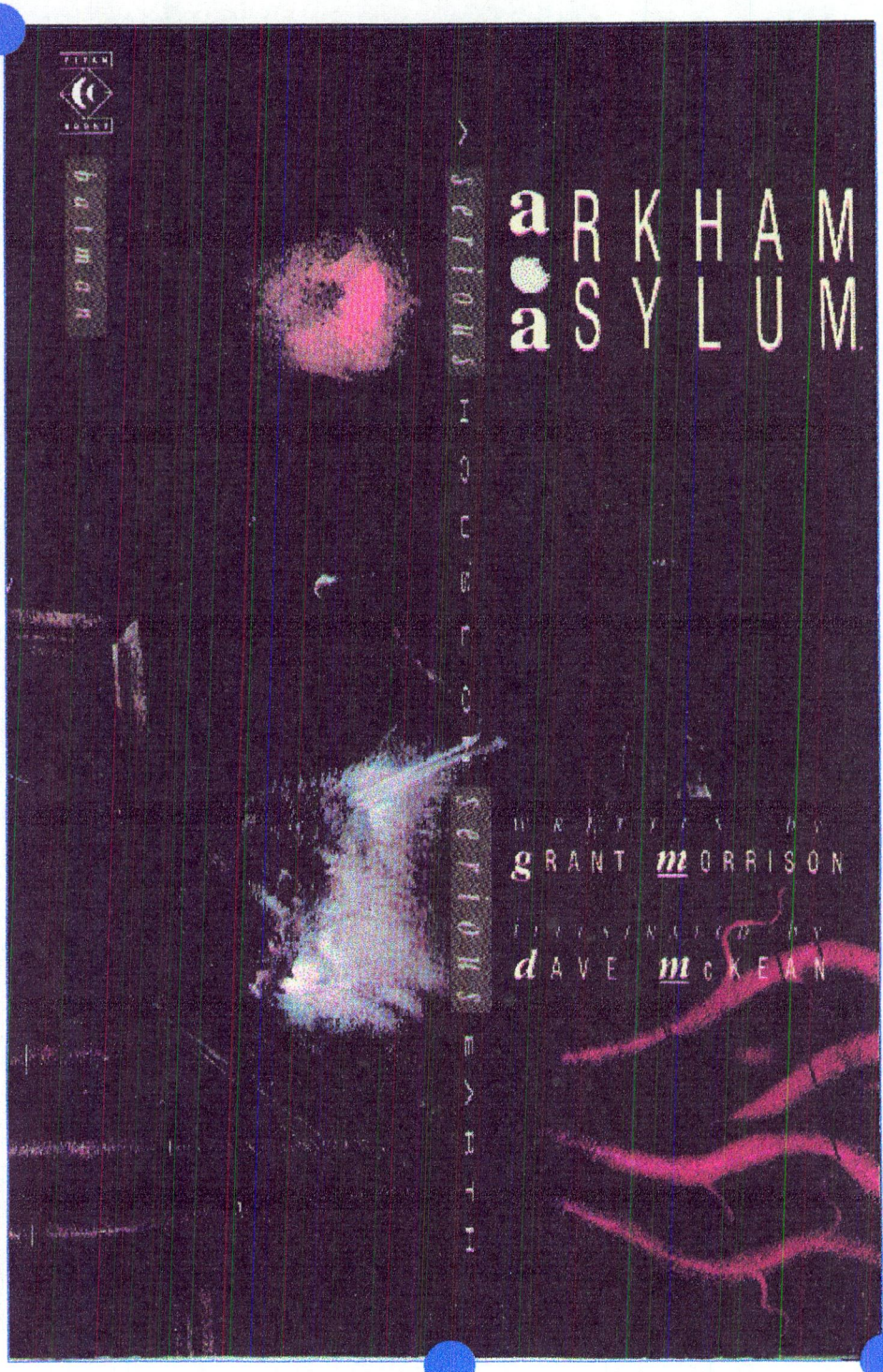
[3] Les Daniels, D.C. Comics a Histoty, D.C. Books, 1996, P91-92

medium. In the same way, hardbound collections of comic books cannot be called "Graphic Novels" because the writer of a comic book is not using the mechanisms unique to a graphic novel, such as allowing a story to evolve naturally through the length of the novel, he is evolving it within the serialised smaller confines of the comic book. These books were worthy first attempts and did help keep the idea alive, they were also to publish more original offerings by comic book creators like Jack Kirby *"Hunger Dogs"* and Ernie Colon *"Medusa Chain"*.

DC's loyalty to the medium was to be rewarded when their graphic novels went through the roof in 1989, with the publication of *Arkham Asylum* (fig 12). *Arkham Asylum* was everything a graphic novel should be, it wasn't published in any other format before (i.e. it wasn't a serialised comic and it wasn't a novel) it used the story telling techniques of the graphic novel to the full, it was printed on beautiful paper, was beautifully designed, it was a best seller in hardcover in hardcover at the somewhat expensive price of $24.95. It followed in the wake of the successful Batman film, and featured darkly innovative illustration by British artist Dave M^{c}Kean, writer Grant Morrison trapped Batman in a madhouse with his worst enemies and provided a disturbing experience for the fans of the gothic hero. DC continues to explore the graphic novel, for more in depth stories of its superheroes, and as a forum for more difficult adult narratives. Writer Grant Morrison and painter Jon J. Muth explored murder and metaphysics in *'The Mystery Play'* 1994, while Dean Motter collaborated with art curator Judith Dupre on the script for the *'Heart of the Beast'* 1994 with Sean Philips providing the visuals for a tale of romance and decadence among Manhattan artists. DC remains loyal to the medium to this day upping the ante in terms of quality and innovation, providing new and challenging works that the somewhat lacklustre comics side of things can take inspiration from.

Americas other larger half of the comics big two, Marvel, were not slow in following DC into doing a Graphic Novel. Their first effort was an original story based on one of its superheroes "Daredevil", entitled simply *"Daredevil"* written by, later to be famous, Frank Miller, and illustrated by Mazzachelli. It was a cautious first attempt despite the talents of those on board, but Marvel persevered. They brought Miller back, but teamed him up with one of the most stunning comic artists to date, Bill Sienkiewicz, a painter and designer. The project was *"Elektra Assassin"* and was an acclaimed success. This was followed by *"Wolverine"* by Chris Claremont and illustrated this time by Frank Miller.



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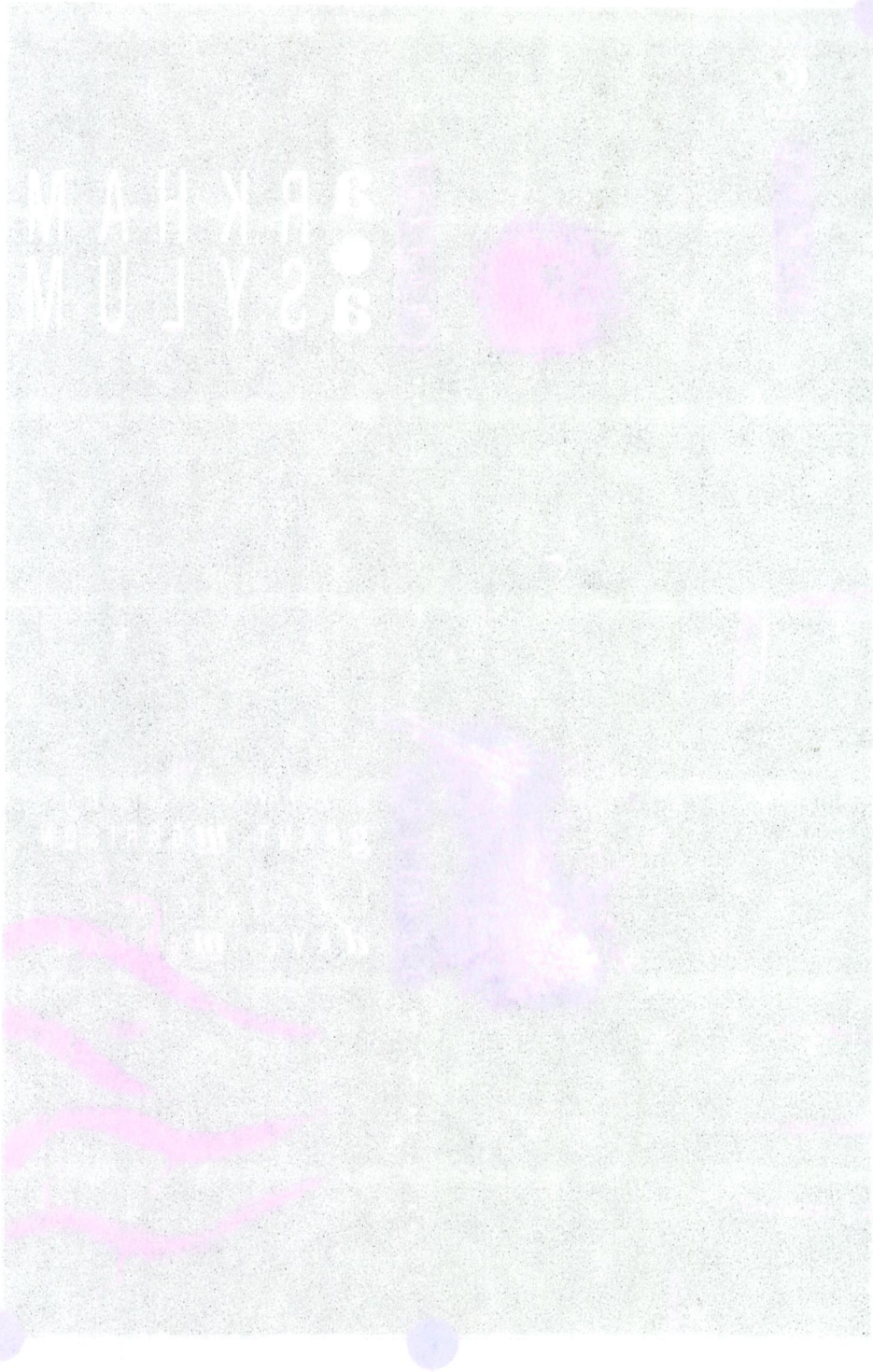
Grant Morrison and Dave McKeans, enormously successful Graphic Novel Arkham Asylum, Titan Books,1989.



In 1991, Marvel garnered multiple industry awards for its graphic novel "*Wolverine, Inner Fury*" by Daniel Chichester and Bill Sienkiewicz. Marvel allows its Graphic Novel wing a great deal of independence and publishes them under the company name of "Epic" which also grants certain character ownership rights to its creators.

Leaving aside Kitchen Sink Press who published Eisners graphic novel in 1978, the smaller companies steered clear of the medium until they witnessed the success that D.C. and Marvel had begun to have, feeling assured that the medium was now commercially viable (Kitchen Sink achieved only moderate sales of Eisners book entitled '*A Contract with God*') they decided to hop on the bandwagon. Some extremely worthwhile titles of note are "*Lazarus's Churchyard*" and "*Skin*" from Tundra Publishing, "*Concrete*" from Dark Horse and finally "*Meet Studs Kirby*" from Fantagraphics. But what is probably of most interest is the way major mainstream book publishers, with no former experience or interest in comics, have released and commissioned Graphic Novels. Two companies in particular stand out, Penguin Books and Victor Golancz. Penguin saw what happened with "*Arkham Asylum*" and decided to try it out. They set about buying up popular comics from the underground, or with the independent comic firms, collecting them in album form and releasing them. They found they had a surprise hit on their hands in the form of Art Spiegelmans "*Maus*".,

"Maus", 1990, was not a collection like many of the others that Penguin released, but was an extremely powerful Graphic Novel. "*Maus*" is the biographical cat and mouse tale of Vladek Spiegelman's prisoner of war experience in Auschwitz. In order for Spiegelman to approach the task of committing this disturbing tale to paper in comic book form, he first had to find a suitably appropriate style with which to deliver the complex story and its large factual content and information without bogging the reader down with it.

Spiegelman states in an interview with Robin Cowings of *Comic Collector*, "for '*Maus*' I needed content that would focus me into the words, because it was a comic driven by its words, although, in order for it to exist as a comic, it wasn't a matter of finding functions through the comic that could visualise the words.

In "*Maus*", Spiegelman changed from the traditional mediums of comic illustration to primitive typing paper and fountain pens. "I worked with stationery supplies as a way of

feeling like I was writing I suppose. I tried to work in such a way that would be both polished into a sign system, and yet have enough immediacy to read like handwriting. That was a very laborious process, although it looks spontaneous" [4].

"Maus" was an enormous success for Spiegelman and Penguin. (c. June, 1992) It became an international best seller. Its success lies in the power and authenticity of the story, its unique presentation in Graphic Novel form and the clarity of Spiegelman's work which makes it accessible to a non-comic buying public. Penguin, spurred on by this success, unleashed many other Graphic Novels onto the book buying public. They often were of a poor standard, or too obtuse for a public not used to comics and their layouts and mechanisms, they failed. However, there were some notable exceptions, such as Italian Lorenzo Mattotti's *"Fires"* – an expressionistic, painterly Graphic Novel, which is too beautiful to be ignored. Penguin have not abandoned Graphic Novels, and recently released *"Maus II"*.

The other company that I mentioned is Victor Golancz. Victor Golancz approached things differently. In Graphic Novels they saw an area ripe for experimentation rather than exploitation. Golancz decided to commission work as opposed to scouting for existing work. They were often approached, and approached mainstream writers and illustrators not associated with comics. Gollancz did not see Graphic Novels as the exclusive domain of comic creators, rather seeing it as a separate, largely unexplored medium. This is where their thinking was more enlightened and exciting, opening doors rather than making Graphic Novels something for the elitists.

But as I've mentioned earlier the medium did not just arrive out of thin air, nor was, as I've also mentioned *"Star Raiders"* the first example of a Graphic Novel. It was as I've pointed out the first time that a mainstream publishing house got involved and brought attention to this little seen form of storytelling. The seeds for the medium were planted as far back as the First World War, by the Belgian illustrator, Frans Masareel, and that is exactly what I'm going to look at in the next chapter.

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[4] Of "Mice and Men", comic collector, Leeds, SOR, June 1992, p46–47.

10 FRANS MASEREEL

Frans Masereel was born on 30th July, 1889 at Blankenberge in Belgium. Masereel was a gifted artist who choose to render the majority of his work in woodcuts. His expressionistic drawings seem to have all the more power for being purely in stark black and white. Masereel, during the first war years, began to use his work to illustrate his pacifism and to illustrate the anti-war articles of others. In 1917, *Quinze Poemes* by Emile Verhaeren had appeared in Paris with 57 of Masereel's woodcuts – this was his first illustrative work. Two other albums that appeared in 1917 were a series of 10 woodcuts published in Geneva and *LES MORTS PARLENT* and 7 woodcuts printed in the magazine *LES TABLETTES*, these were really the forerunners of what Masereel himself called his "stories without words". Many artists throughout history have published sets of their woodcuts in an album but no one published them in the form of actual books, or in the form of a chronological story. Masereel did not use text, his illustrations already said what he wanted them to say quite clearly. Using text would have been merely saying it twice, so text was somewhat redundant, and, it is not that uncommon in modern comics to sometimes forego text, and there have been some notable successes, but there is no denying its difficulty.

Masereel's series of pictures revolve around one theme, and develop like a novel. These stories were to provide the wide scope his gifts of observation required, his imagination, his sense of satire and his sadness. They are full of his symbolic expressionism and his fantasy. The titles of his books produced in only a few years are *"25 images de la Passion d'un homme"* of 1918, which comprised of 25 woodcuts, *"Mon Livre D'Heures"*(fig 13) of 1919 which comprised of a staggering 167 woodcuts, truly novel length, *"Le Soleil"* with 63 woodcuts, *"Un Fait Divers"* of 1920 with 8 woodcuts, *"Visions"* of 1921 with 3 woodcuts, *"Souvenirs De Mon Pays"* of 1921 with 16 woodcuts. An impressive amount of work by anyone's standards. These works sometimes appear to be somewhat like haunting visions of the near future, or like expressionistic dreams. The book *"Le Soleil"* revolves entirely around the theme or idea of the sun. Masereel says of it "Man seems to me the only animal to look upwards to the sky, to the sun, if you will". He uses the sun

as a symbol of clarity and goodness, just as in "Idee" this is symbolised by a woman no hands can catch. [5]

Not all the stories have the same outcome. Masereel was heavily tainted by the war years and in his stories, more often than not, bitter reality triumphs as in *"Un Fait Divers"*, the rather dark take of a seduction, or as in *"Histoire sans Paroles"* (literally a story without words) the equally dark take of a couple.

Much of his works expresses his interest in the erotic aspects of life. His only reference to his homeland, Belgium, comes in *"Souvenirs de Mons Pays"* (Reminiscences of my Country.) Masereel had been forced to leave Belgium because of the war, and this work is reckoned to be a high point. Centred on a single character (an old fisherman, a poacher and a dairymaid) each illustration is packed with little scenes, which together form a complete narrative. Masereel uses the juxtapositioning of imagery to enormous effect. The images, which are dominated by human figures, use other visuals (such as the plain, the procession, the bells) to equally good effect(fig 14). This is especially true in the case of the bells where you can almost hear them ringing, and their depiction is particularly innovative.

There were woodcuts before Masereel, and there were woodcuts collected in album form before Masereel, and there were even woodcuts being used to convey a message (as seen in the medieval biblical books which were used to convey the Church's method to a largely illiterate Europe). What Masereel brought was a unique and new vision of how illustration could be used to tell a story. He used his woodcuts to tell a modern story, a story designed to be told purely through the medium he was using, as opposed to the other way around, which had been the case Masereel also published these stories in book form, which was very unusual. Prints were normally done quite large if they were to be published alone, purely as prints. Masereel was the first to publish his prints in book formats. His stories were linear and related to the times. His were novels without words, visual novels, graphic novels.

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[5] John Hartan, The Illustrated Book, Thames Hudson, 1981, P28-29

Frans Masareel,Early Graphic Narrative, "Mon Livres D'Heures",Paris.1919.

In 1920, Henry Van de Velde wrote to Masereel, his reply is as follows "You ask me to talk about myself. It embarrasses me, but I shall be brief. Before the war, I went in for a very solid (very Flemish) realism, *Quatorze Juillet, Bals Populaires Mendiants, Filles Matelots*, etc. All this work was violent, massive and sad. I have always been sad at heart, but I can also be very gay! I was looking for something else, but I wasn't quite sure what I would find. It was the spirit of all this that I needed. I think I have more or less found it, and I am certain that the war had something to do with it" [6]

Here with Frans Masereel in the 1920's we have a book illustrator, a man who worked almost exclusively in woodcuts, planting the seeds of the graphic novel. Masereel feels to have felt compelled to do more than illustrate other people's stories. He was an adamant pacifist, his anti war stance was to leave him exiled from his home country Belgium (1st. World War). Masareel had witnessed first hand the horrors of war and had been made a refuge and an exile, incidents which made an enormous impact on him. He lived in Switzerland illustrating the writings of prominent pacifists before he felt compelled to express his own voice through his woodcuts. The 1st World War, its horrors and his exile were the seeds of Masareel's "stories without words", the desire to say more than he could through conventional book illustration, not to illustrate other people's words but to illustrate his own feelings. Mentioned earlier was his book *"Mon livres D'heures"*, which bears a direct link to other books of hours a prominent theme throughout the history of book illustration, and was an evolution of those other books of hours, like the "Tres Riche Heures", modernised for the time and having text eliminated. The book in which Masareel really found his voice was with his *"Souvenirs de Mon Pays"*. A book which illustrates his own personal sadness of exile from his country, and his hatred of war. Masareel expanded on the idea of what book illustration was, he felt forced to, book illustration was were his talent lay and yet the medium did not allow him to express his anger and sadness of the war and of being a refugee, so he changed it and in doing so laid the seeds of the graphic novel.

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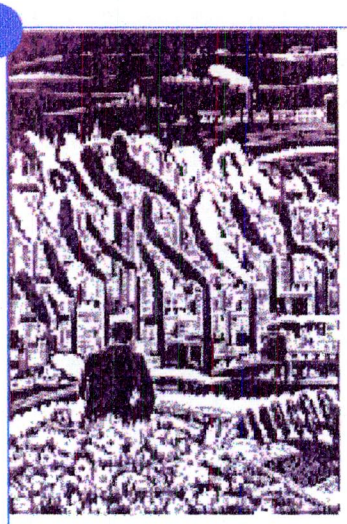
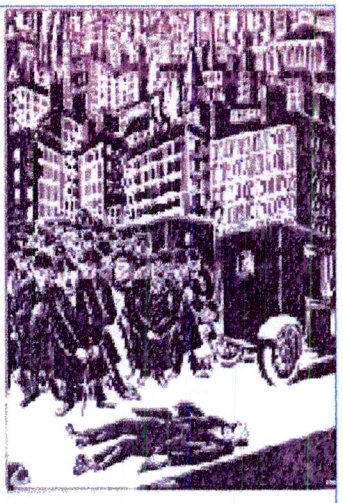
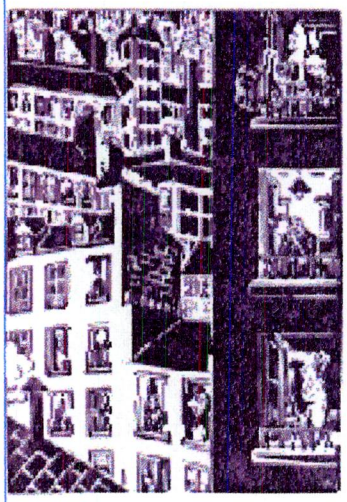
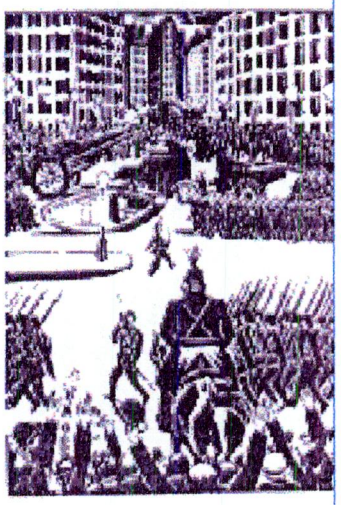
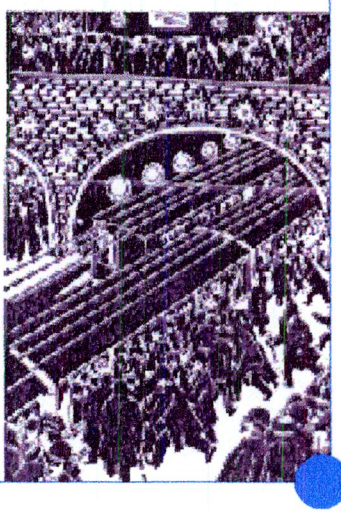
[6] John Harthan, The Illustrated Book, Thames Hudson,1981, P28-29



Frans Masareel, la ville, Paris, 1925.

11 LYND WARD

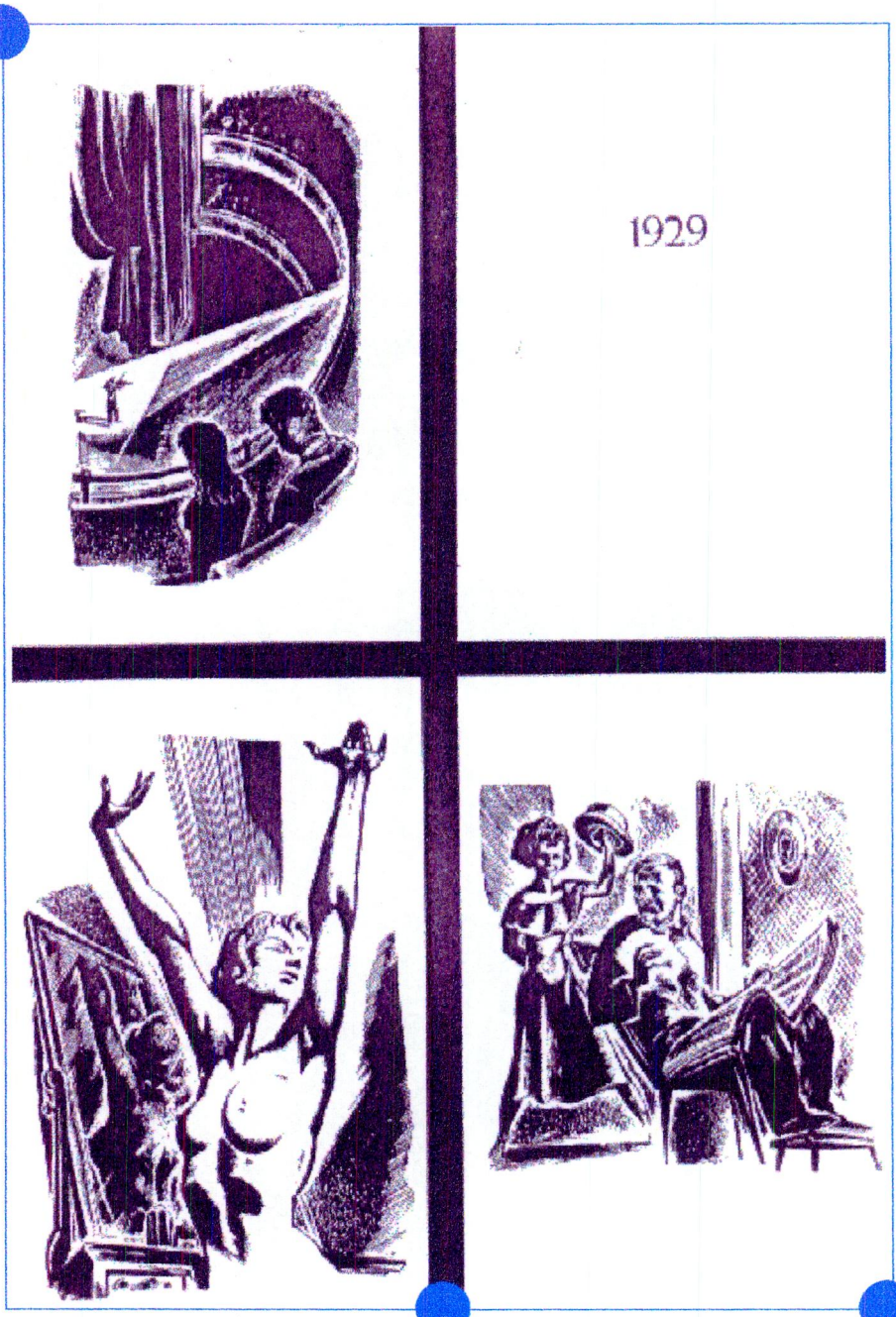
Masareel's work did not go unnoticed and Lynd Ward, an American, was to discover his "stories without words" while studying in Leipzig, and subsequently, in 1930 he introduced his "novel in pictures".

Ward's work is credited by many as being a forerunner of the graphic novel. Indeed, Will Eisner, one of today's most famous and accomplished graphic novelists accredits him as 'standing out as perhaps the most graphic story teller in this century."*

Ward was a successful book illustrator who was famous for his beautiful woodcuts. In 1930 his *"God's Man"*, and, in the same year *"A Madman's Drum"* were published by Cape. The powerful woodcuts tell their own story of an artist's gradual disillusionment with life in a world increasingly dominated by fascism. In 1937 he published *"Vertigo"*, a graphic novel narrated entirely with wood engraved images. Like Masareel, without a word of text he succeeds in telling a complete, compelling story thus proving the viability of the form. What is even more significant is that in over 300 pages, *"Vertigo's"* only concession to text is the occasional use of signs and posters. Ward kept the narrative focused by titling each chapter with a date (fig 15). He used the entire page as a panel. Printed on only one side of the page, with each image having no border, the reader had to turn the page to see the next panel.

With Ward, we see that Masareel was not alone in his desire to use this medium, also Ward provides us with a direct link with one of the creators of what we now call the graphic novel, Will Eisner, this is extremely important, it provides us with the final piece in the jigsaw of where the medium comes from. The work of Masareel and Ward is extremely important, both men came from a book illustration background, and so placed the entire story telling burden on the art work.

"Vertigo" was printed as a conventional book and sold in bookstores. It is interesting to note that this occurred about the time the first comic books appeared on news stands. *"Vertigo"* was published by a mainstream publisher.



Lynd Wards, Experimental Graphic Novel "The Girl", Johnathan Cape, 1932.

The story requires the reader to contribute dialogue and the intervening flow of action between pages. While this permutation succeeded in demonstrating the viability of graphic story telling, to an audience alien to comics it could not go very far beyond simply breaking new ground. Many readers found it difficult to read. Some enjoyed the wonderful effects of his woodcuts, but in the main, it required the mix of image and text to balance it. Ward, like Masareel, was obviously not interested in accommodating the great dependence graphic story telling has on a "prepared" reader already conditioned to participating in the narrating process. The amount of action that takes place between scenes takes considerable input from the reader to comprehend it.

Despite some of the reading problems, Ward's books have a greater legibility than Masareels because of the incorporation of text in the form of signs, etc., within his panels. Also Ward removed the then graphic novel from the realm of expressionism. Masareel was more of a fine artist than an illustrator, and although his woodcuts are extremely beautiful, Ward was primarily an illustrator and his imagery has greater realism and immediacy. Perhaps the most important thing Ward did was to bring Masareel's ideas to America.

It would be the interest taken by the American comic book creators which would prove to be the making of the medium. With the proliferation in the 1930's of the comic book and the newspaper supplements, that the burden formerly carried by the art work on its own would come to be shared by both image and text, the success of this mix would succeed the totally graphic technique. The success of the graphic novel as a powerful story telling tool depended on this meeting and mixing of book illustration and comic books. In the next chapter I am going to look at Will Eisner, the first comic artist to take an interest in the raw diamond that was the graphic novel.

12 WILL EISNER

American comic book artist, Will Eisner, is one of comics greatest creative forces. Eisner, born in New York of Jewish descent in 1917, is acknowledged by many as one of the great masters of comic book art. As a young man he studied art under the anatomist, George Brachman, before he found his true vocation in life as a cartoonist in the late 1930's.

After a fairly successful career as a packager of comic books for numerous publishers, he was to concentrate his efforts on a weekly newspaper comic supplement, which was entitled *"The Spirit"*. *"The Spirit"* was to turn out to be one of the most creative and influential comic books ever created. *"The Spirit"* which was syndicated world wide from 1946 onwards, became a showcase of just what could be done with comics as an art form, and he ran it until its conclusion in 1952, whereupon Eisner disappeared from the world of entertainment comics and devoted himself to the then unique field of educational comics that was successfully published by the United States Army for over two decades. During those years he also published teaching material in comic book form for schools.

In the mid 1970's, Eisner returned to his first love – sequential art as a story telling medium. In 1978 he wrote and illustrated the graphic novel entitled *"A Contract With God"*.

12.1 "A CONTRACT WITH GOD - BACKGROUND"

With *"The Spirit"*, Eisner was delivering a short story a week to an audience far more sophisticated and demanding than the news stand comic book reader. Eisner's comic was by reaching a more adult audience than news stand comics. Eisner was allowed to roam free into what was at the time, virgin territory, and he did so with all the vigour of youth. He was using *"The Spirit"* as the launching platform for all the ideas that swam in his head.

Later Eisner realised that he had only been working around one idea, that the comic medium, its arrangement of words and pictures in a sequence, was an art form in itself. Unique with structures and mechanisms, and a charm that was entirely its own, and that this medium could deal with meaningful themes. That there was more for the comic artist to work with than super heroes who were saving the earth.

In the preface to his graphic novel *"A Contract With God"*, Eisner states that he felt that he wasn't alone in this belief and that "In the middle 1930's, Lynd Ward explored this path in his remarkable attempts at graphic story telling. He produced several complete novels in woodcuts. One of these books, *"Frankenstein"* fell into my hands in 1938, and it had an

influence on my thinking thereafter. I consider my efforts in this area attempts at expansion or extension of Ward's original premise." [7]

12.2 A CONTRACT WITH GOD"

"A Contract With God" first appeared in 1978. The novel is actually made up of four short stories all set in the same tenement building in New York, and the stories interlock and come together in the end.

The story set in 55 Dropsie Avenue, the Bronx, recall tenement life in 1930's New York. The stories revolve around predominantly Jewish working class people, and Eisner readily admits that it is a largely autobiographical work (fig 16), and that all the events depicted did take place in one form or another. In the book, we are introduced to Frimme Hersh who has a contract with God, only God has violated the terms, Eddie the street singer who meets a failed opera soprano one drunken day, Scuggs the brutal superintendent who is seduced into a mortal struggle, Beautiful Goldie, who seeks riches in the country, and Willie, who learns a wide eyed lesson about sex and violence.

What Eisner has given us here are his memories as a story, and communicated in a fusion of image and copy. They are simple and they are harsh. They provide no easy morals to be gained from them, no throwaway slogans and no guide for life. The good guys don't win and the bad guys don't lose, because there is no real black and white here, no good guys, no bad guys, just people. Frightened, ambitious immigrants seeking relief from poverty, despair and the dread that, unhappy as the present maybe, things could always get worse.

Eisner, coming from this past, feels compassion for everyone, winner and loser alike, and this comes through making you think a little bit more on human nature. He possesses a great deal of empathy for all his characters, a sympathetic recognition of human frailties and follies most clearly demonstrated in his depiction of sex. He does not depict the average smutty puerile garbage that passes so often for the erotic in comics nowadays, but the pleasures of the body as a cause for misery or extreme happiness enjoyed by people who are not particularly beautiful or adept.

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[7] Will Eisner, "A Contract With God", Titan Books, London, 1989.

Will Eisner, the largely autobiographical Contract with God.

Number 16

Eisner's autobiographical reminiscence is not unique in modern writing, it is the source of material for the stories of other Jewish writers such as Isaac Singer and Philip Roth to name but two. But, what is unique, is Eisner's method of communication, with this fusion of image and text, and, in the process, Eisner does his utmost to mimic the operation of memory itself.

In the prologue to the tale Eisner gives you a brief background to the plight of Jews in Tsarist Russia. Memories gathered from his environment while growing up. Scenes he could not actually be remembering, as he was not present, and so their depictions are an adult's attempt to fill in childhood gaps. They are written in the past tense, a departure from normal comics technique. These are after all events in the past, yet his dialogue in the speech balloons is presented in the present tense. You remember words in the same tense as the one in which they were spoken. Eisner is using all the resources he has at hand, all the mechanisms the medium offers.

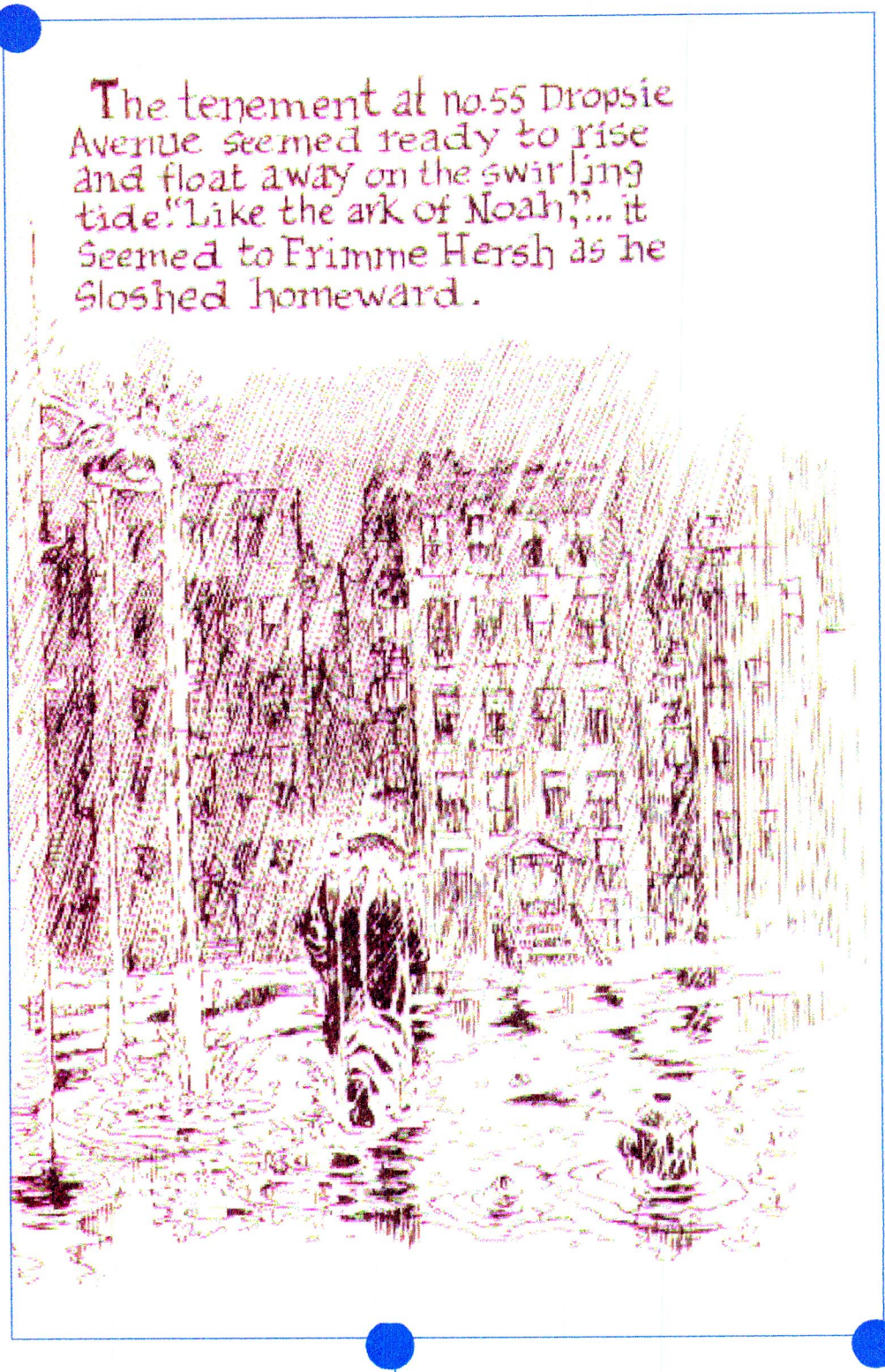
His artwork and text are a seamless whole. If in a scene it is raining, then it rains on the text as well as the characters, giving the whole thing an enormous sense of unity. Eisner treats text just as pictures, lending the words a greater impact. His characters are depicted as caricatures giving them enormous facial expression and depicting the characters actual character all in one go. There is great beauty to the fluidity and simplicity of his line. Backgrounds are often done sketchily, like a shorthand, when we remember things. Details like backgrounds are often hazy, and the sketchiness brings the main elements of the tale more into focus. Eisner set out to do the story as a novel right from the start, and so many frames are full page, or run into one another, and, noticeable by its absence, is the comic book frame. He lets the actual book frame the scene.

Eisner even puts the ink the book is printed in to his artistic uses. It is a sepia brown, a close approximation to the monochrome psychologists say is the colour of dreams and memories (fig 17).

With a *"Contract With God"* we see Eisner take those original ideas of Masareel and Ward, and combining and enhancing them using the techniques he had developed as a comic book artist, and coming out with a unique way of telling a story. Eisner had always

felt that he was capable of telling a powerful story using comic techniques. By modifying what had been the graphic novel, to suit his own talents and capabilities he proved that he could tell a story that was more than just a super hero tale. A *"Contract With God"* is still one of the finest graphic novels created, Eisner has been one of comics greatest innovators, using countless flashy graphic techniques, yet with this book Eisner uses a delicacy and restraint seldom seen in comics and it has a wonderful sincerity because of it. He had waited a long time before he got the chance to tell his own story, and before he got the chance to prove he could tell a powerful story. With this book he seized those chances, and the product is a beautiful founding work.

Eisner proved that you could tell a powerful tale in this new hybrid medium and eight years later a comic artist was to enter the field of graphic novels and create, in my opinion, one of the most powerful stories ever written *"Maus"* in any medium. Art Spiegelman was to take the Graphic Novel further away from the comic book not just technically but also, for the first time, since the crossbreeding of Graphic Novels with comics, visually. I intend to look at Spiegelman the latest artist to get involved with the medium and to examine his extraordinary creation *"Maus"* in the hope of demonstrating some of the medium's unique storytelling capabilities. I also want to look at Spiegelman and *"Maus"* so that we can see how far the medium has travelled and yet it still attracts artists to it for the same reason, its enormous power as a voice of protest.



Will Eisner, A Contract with God, 1978, note the use of sepia tone to reflect memories.

13 MAUS - BACKGROUND

Maus I and 2 (fig 18), the biographical tale of Vladek Spiegelman's experiences in the infamous German concentration camp, Auschwitz, first published in the USA in 1986, and became an international best seller, garnering press and media attention along with numerous persistent offers to commit the Maus story to celluloid.

The creator of *Maus* is Vladek's son, Art Spiegelman. Art Spiegelman had had an interest in comics since he was a child, and was publishing a fanzine while in high school that was his own amateur version of *Mad Magazine*. From there Spiegelman went on to a high school of art and design where he learned art as a trade. In 1965, he moved from New York to San Francisco and became involved in the underground newspaper and comic scene. Around that time he began a long term working relationship with an American bubble gum company called Topps, illustrating bubble gum cards such as the popular Garbage Pail Kids series – a kind of Cabbage Patch Kids for the deranged.

Over the years he worked as an illustrator, cartoonist and occasional writer for various general interest magazines such as *"Playboy", "The Village Voice"* and the *"New York Times"*. Spiegelman then met fellow underground comic artist Bill Griffiths, and they decided to produce a quarterly underground comic called *"Arcade"* which lasted a couple of years. This was the forerunner to *"Raw"*, Spiegelman's popular anthology title which started in 1980. It was in "Raw" that the embryos of Maus were born. Maus came from a short strip called *"Funny Animals"*. *"Funny Animals"* was printed as a small booklet in the centre pages of the tabloid sized *"Raw"*. Spiegelman states that "It had a lot of the same premises, a short story based on cats and mice representing what happened to my father in the camps." 8

To produce this strip, Spiegelman spent many weekends discussing with his father his experiences at the hands of the Nazis. This was the beginning of what was to finally amount to 30 to 40 hours of tape recordings and many notebooks recording his fact-finding conversations. Spiegelman says of these years of close discussion with his father that "basically it gave me a relationship with him. It was probably one of the motives for

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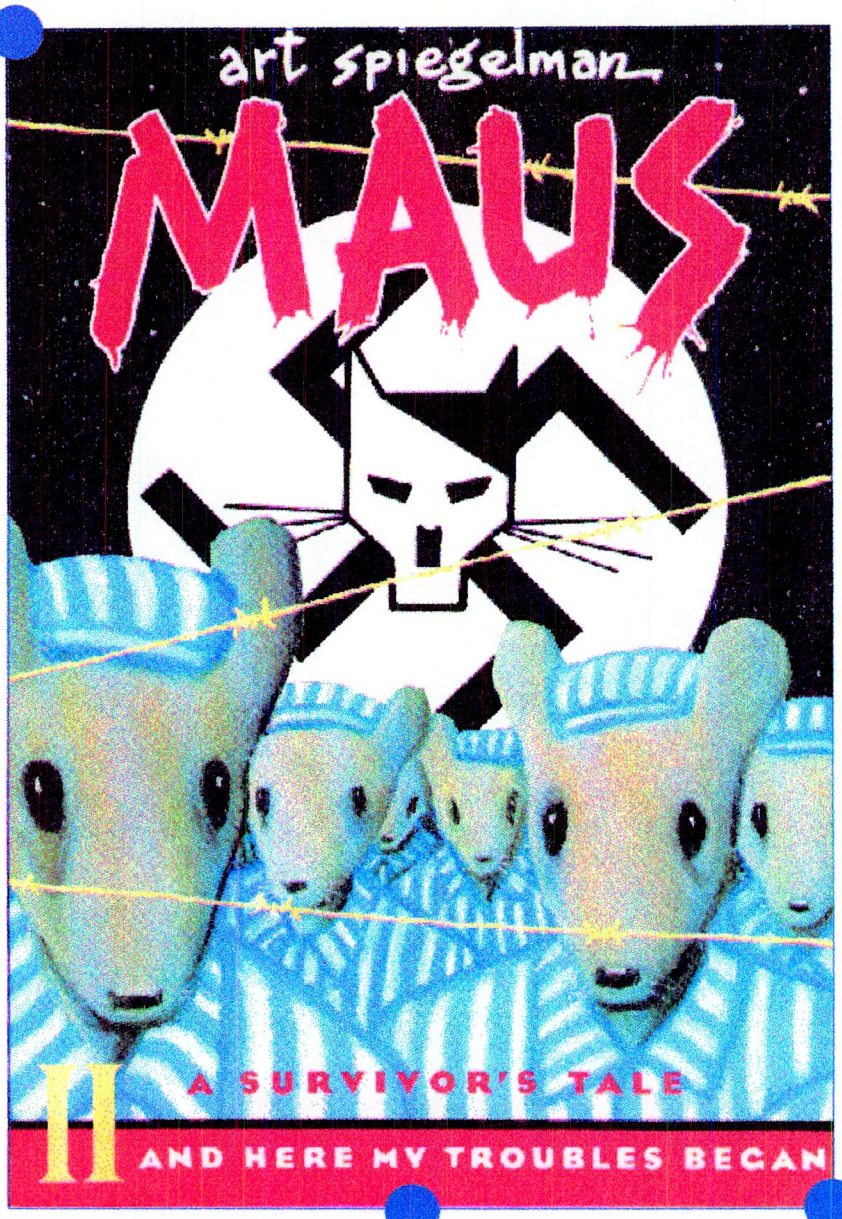
8 Of Mice and Men Comic Collector ,Leeds, SOR, June 1992, P. 46 – 47.

doing *Maus*. We figured out some way of sitting in the same room without clobbering each other. If it meant a tape recorder in the middle to mediate, okay so be it. By giving a place and an arena for me to listen to my father without yelling, without him coming at me, and for him being able to find a place where his son was actually interested in finding out about him without feeling threatened, was a way of finding a relationship with my father that was so difficult to find elsewhere."

In many ways it is the pursuit for the facts and the truth, this agonising over details, and his attempts at honesty by trying to understand and relate to his subject matter that has made both Spiegelman and his books such a success.



Art Spiegelmans, Graphic Novel, Maus, Penguin Books, 1986.

MAUS
A SURVIVOR'S TALE
AND HERE MY TROUBLES BEGAN

14 MAUS

Maus is the story of Vladek Spiegelman, a Jewish survivor of Hitler's Europe, and his son a cartoonist, who tries to come to terms with his father's terrifying story and, history itself.

Maus is a story with enormous power, and actually tells the story of the holocaust in a way that is somehow more real than other novels. It is a story told through the medium of the graphic novel and has more power than if it were simply written in pure text or novel form.

One of the most striking features of *Maus* is Spiegelman's use of animal caricatures. The Jewish people became mice, the Nazis cats, the Polish pigs (figures 19 & 20). This treatment conveys messages on many levels. One the one hand you have a cartoonist rendering a cat mouse story (i.e. Tom & Jerry), and on another level you have a Jewish author using classical Nazi metaphors to tell his father's holocaust memories.

Nazi literature is rife with comparison of the Jews as vermin, "The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human" quotes Adolph Hitler. He also stated that the Poles were nothing more than pigs or "schwein". A newspaper article from Pomerania, Germany, in the mid 1930's states "Mickey Mouse is the most miserable ideal ever revealed..... Healthy emotions tell every independent young man and every honourable youth that the dirty and filth-covered vermin, the greatest bacteria carrier in the animal kingdom cannot be the ideal type of animal..... Away with Jewish brutalisation of the people! Down with Mickey Mouse! Wear the Swastika Cross!"

Spiegelman takes all of this Nazi propaganda and subverts its ideas, destroying it by revealing it is a device and nothing more. For example, Art Spiegelman's mother is frightened when a real rodent runs past her. It is paradoxically making these mice characters so human that the tale ultimately works. It is on top of this that the added dimension of Art Spiegelman himself narrating the tale, adding his own remarks and doubts about producing this book that helps enhance the story further, cementing in the reader's mind that this is a biography, a true tale. And, a final word on the mouse metaphor. Its persistent use has added poignancy with the chilling knowledge that the gas chambers of the concentration camps used a chemical called Zyklon B, a gas usually used to eradicate vermin.

note Spiegelman's use of animals to represent the Jews and Nazi's.

Art Spiegelman, a page from Maus, note the documentry interview style employed which gives the story greater authenticity, Penguin Books, 1986.

"For *Maus* I needed content that would focus me into the words, although in order for it to exist as a comic it wasn't a matter of finding functions through the comic that could visualise the words."

In *Maus,* Spiegelman drew the book the same size that it was printed in, which isn't normal practice. Normally cartoonists do things larger than the printed version to make it look more polished when shrunk down. Spiegelman wanted his to look less polished. Spiegelman not only drew to size, but he also changed from the traditional mediums of comic illustration to primitive typing paper and fountain pens. He said that he worked with stationary supplies as a way of feeling like he was writing. "I tried to work in such a way that would be both polished into a sign system, and yet have enough immediacy to read like handwriting. That was a very laborious process although it looks spontaneous."

Spiegelman's attempt at presenting the story clearly has paid off, and it is reflected in its sales figures and positive response from people outside the comic book genre. It seems that not only has the book helped many readers to comprehend the humanity of the horror that was Auschwitz; it has helped one man to understand his father.

Art Spiegelman, Maus, Penguin Books, 1980.

15 CONCLUSION

In the introduction to this thesis I outlined that the problem with the graphic novel was that there was no clear definition of what the graphic novel was, that the term was constantly mis-applied to books and comic books that were not graphic novels. There was no clear history of the graphic novel, no knowledge of where it came from, so here it is my intention to sum up the history of the graphic novel and lend it a clear identity of its own. To differentiate it as a separate medium not just a branch of comics.

In the second chapter I endeavoured to outline the history of comics. This was so we had a clear picture in the mind of where comics were coming from. The biggest problem with the graphic novel is the confusing of it with comic books. We found out that the modern comic basically evolved in America from newspaper supplements during the 1930's. Comics were originally confined to just a panel in newspapers, then they expanded into a three panel, sequential narrative strip, this became full page, then supplement and finally comics went alone.

In chapter three outlined the history of book illustration. The graphic novel is essentially an illustrated book, it therefore seemed logical that the origins lay not in comic books, but in book illustration. I traced the history from Egyptian papyrus rolls, to the medieval manuscripts, and the finely illustrated religious books of the gothic period, e.g. the "*Tres Riches Heures*" by the Limbourg brothers. From there I went to engraving and the pivotal invention in the mid 15th century of printing from movable type cast in lead. I looked at the explosion in the variety of books being produced after the Renaissance and the Reformation. Books were being produced on many subjects other than religious matter. There was the invention of photographic processes from the 1850's onwards. I looked at Expressionist book illustration, which provided the vital roots for the graphic novel in Frans Masareel. Expressionist illustration makes a dramatic visual impact with its aggressive use of woodcuts and one of the most important aspects of expressionist book illustration is that it was not considered to be used as an embellishment of text. It was this freeing from text, which allowed Masareel to produce his "stories without words" from 1917 onwards, and lastly, and just as important, is that expressionism was used as a form of protest. Outrage and horror at the First World War, and exile from his home country,

drove Masareel to make his "stories without words" and to use his novels and his art as a vehicle for his protests.

Later, approaching the 1930's, I found Lynd Ward who was inspired by Masareel, continued and furthered the work that Masareel had begun, and brought it to America. Ward also used the medium as a vehicle for his protests against the then growing facism.

I also looked briefly at illustration in America in the 1920's, were there was this great outlet in a variety of mediums for the illustrator, - books, posters and comics.

In chapter four, I sought to identify of the mainstream graphic novel. This is a relatively recent history of the medium and focused mainly on those books made by the major companies. Within this chapter we see large comic companies eventually achieving a great deal of success with the medium, success which encouraged them to continue investing and experimenting in the fledgling medium and establishing it as a viable commercial storytelling medium. The successes of the comic companies encouraged book companies to invest and experiment, thus bringing the medium back into the realm of book publishing and book illustration.

In chapter five, I considered Masareel and his work, focusing in on this pivotal character and his work. His work had its roots in expressionism and anti-war illustrations, which evolved into his purely graphic novels which were semi autobiographical protests.

In chapter six, I considered the work of Lynd Ward. Here we find a man inspired by Masareel, and a man in need of an artistic vehicle for his protests against facism. Ward refined Masareel's work and brought it to America where it could be discovered by the comic creators.

In chapter seven, I looked at comic creator Will Eisner and his graphic novel "*A Contract With God*". Eisner's book was a massive step, the previous books of Masareel and Ward lacked clarity of storytelling, visually powerful, they lacked at times clarity of message. Eisner changed that. He applied comic book techniques to the graphic novel with enormous success. He gave the medium the power to tell a complex story with subtlety and clarity. Eisner's work, like Masareel's, is semi autobiographical. Eisner was able to do with the graphic novel what he could not with comics, tell a story that addressed

difficult and personal themes with power. In the book, Eisner talks about being a Jewish immigrant in America. He also stresses at times his own protests against anti-Semitism.

Finally, in chapter eight, I examined the modern graphic novel, *"Maus"* published by a mainstream book publisher, and written by Art Spiegelman. In *"Maus"*, we see the graphic novel confirmed as a powerful storytelling medium. Its success in sales in bookshops validated its position as being worthy enough to stand with other novels, and its sales to non comic book, book readers stress its accessibility. An accessibility modern comics lack. Also within "Maus" we see an artist using the medium's unique device to the full. Using Nazi clichés of Jewish vermin visually and exposing them as devices of propaganda. Spiegelman also uses a rough almost expressionistic style. In *"Maus"*, Spiegelman talks of his own Jewishness and his father's exile and tortures, and the book is one of the most powerful protests against anti-semitism.

Is it coincidence that Masareel, Ward, Eisner and Spiegelman, used the medium of the graphic novel to express an intensely personal message, that they used the medium to tell autobiographical or semi autobiographical tales, that they used the medium as a vehicle of protest? Is it coincidence that Masareel was an exile and that Eisner and Spiegelman are descended from exiles? that both Eisner and Spiegelman are Jewish? I think not. It would seem that the graphic novel is especially suited as a method of conveying personal protest, a way of communicating outrage and horror to more people more effectively than just shouting alone. It is a method whereby an artist can communicate personally and with clarity the outrage he feels to more people than those that would attend an art gallery. These men seem driven by their own anger and a desire to communicate their hatred of the wrong they see. Masareel was driven by his pacifism and the First World War and his exile, Ward by his anger at the growth of facism. Eisner and Spiegelman are both Jewish and, in the modern era, it would be hard to find a people more sinned against than the Jews.

What we have here is a clear history of the modern graphic novel which stems from Will Eisner's incorporation of comic book techniques with a purely graphic novel which stems from Lynd Ward and Frans Masareel who was an expressionist, which was, in part, inspired by the revival of the woodcut by the Arts and Crafts movement who were inspired by medieval manuscripts.

We also have a clear identity of the graphic novel, formerly a branch of illustration, and then a hybrid medium with comics, before evolving into a separate powerful entity. It is a medium which displays a peculiar and seemingly unique ability as a vehicle for deeply personal protest.

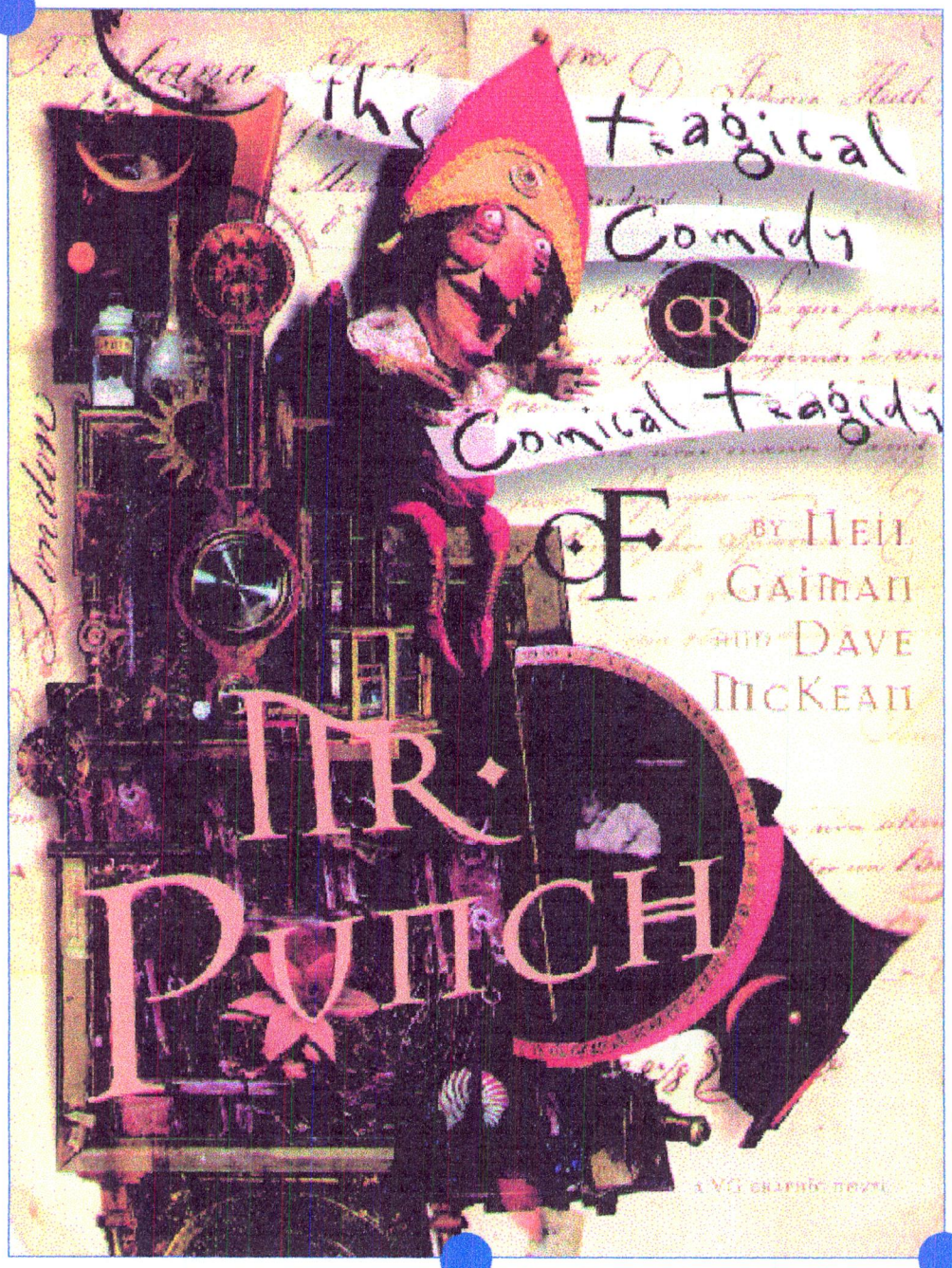
The problem of confusion with comic collections that I identified in the introduction, should not exist. Comics are an exceptionally worthwhile medium and should no longer seek respect from without. The quality of the work will stand out and will be seen by those broadminded enough to look, as already exists in France, Japan, Spain. There is also a place for comic collections. It is important that some of these ephemeral gems are not lost, but the label graphic novel should be reserved for the graphic novel.

Graphic novels are to comics what film is to television. Bigger budget, enormous freedom of visuals and story telling. They have vastly superior printing and paper, binding design, care, attention and more time. The stunning graphic novel, *"Kingdom Come"* by Mark Waid and Alex Ross took 3 years to make. No comic creators could have worked for 3 years and published nothing in that time. *"Mr Punch"* by Gaiman and McKean contains an enormous amount of mixed media double page spreads, photography and even puppets. No comic could do that for fear of that issue not selling. Nor is it a prerequisite to be a comic creator to do a graphic novel. Political cartoonist and former *"Punch"* illustrator David Lyttleton, together with novelist Ian McDonald, completed the graphic novel *"Kling Klang Klatch"* for Victor Gollancz and it is marvellous.

The latter half of the 20th century has experienced an alteration in the definition of literacy. The proliferation of the use of images as a communicant was propelled by the growth of a technology that required less in text reading skills. From road signs to mechanical use instructions, imagery aided words, and, at times, even supplanted them. Indeed, visual literacy has entered the range of skills required for communications in this century. The graphic novel lies at the centre of this phenomenon. It is a reflection of the trend towards greater visual literacy in the realm of the modern novel, were book illustration, formerly used to illuminate text, has supplanted it. The graphic novel is currently blazing the way in experimentation for its brother comic books and deserves to be placed on the same shelf as its other brother, the novel, not on a separate shelf.

It also should be classified in the same way, by genre and subject, i.e. fantasy, fiction, biography and so on. I don't see why they should be cobbled together on a graphic novel shelf. It makes more sense to integrate them and present bookshops with fewer problems.

Finally, I hope that I have helped to shine some light on this much mis-represented medium. I hope that I have also shone some light on its worth as a story telling medium with unique techniques, mechanisms, capabilities and a power that is its alone.



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