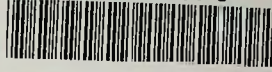


Henry Walker  
James Brown

T727

NC 0019941 9



MO056348NC

National College of Art and Design

**Underground Comix  
( Sex in Comix by Robert Crumb )**

A Thesis  
submitted to the faculty of  
History of Art and Design and Complimentary Studies  
in candidacy for  
Bachelor of Design in Visual Communications

Submitted by  
**James Barry**  
March 1991

# Contents

List of illustrations	4 , 5	
Acknowledgements	6	
Introduction	7	
Introduction to Underground Comics.	17	
Chapter One	Sex in comics and Robert Crumb.	26
Chapter Two	Censorship and the reflections and effects of comics on society	58
Chapter Three	Underground comics update - The success of Viz and other alternative comics today	96
Conclusion		96
Bibliography.		107



## List of Illustrations

<u>FIG</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
1 <b>Happy Days and Merry and Bright</b> , Victoria and Albert Museum, 1983 (Pg. 3,9)	8
2 <b>Funny Wonder</b> , Victoria and Albert Museum, 1983, (Pg. 10)	9
3 <b>Dick Tracy</b> , Marschall, 1989, (Pg. 224)	10
4 <b>Vault of Horror and Crime Stories</b> , Estren, 1974, (Pg. 35)	13
5    Comics Code Authority by Spain Rodriguez, Davidson, 1982, (Pg. 82)	14
6 <b>Wonder Wart Hog</b> by Gilbert Shelton, Knockabout Comics, 1990,(Cover)	18
7 <b>Wonder Wart Hog</b> by Gilbert Shelton, Knockabout Comics, 1990, (Pg. 7)	19
8 <b>The Fabolous Furry Brothers</b> by Gilbert Shelton, Knockabout Comics, 1990, (Cover)	20
9 <b>Zap Comix</b> No. 4, Estren, 1974, (Pg. 237)	21
10 <b>Tarzan</b> , Horn, 1976, (Pg. 409)	28
11 <b>Sheena, Queen of the Jungle</b> , Horn, 1976 (Pg. 403)	28
12 <b>Batman and Robin</b> , Gifford, 1987, (Pg. 19)	29
13 <b>Adventures of Robert Crumb</b> , Crumb, 1976, (Pg. 37)	33
14   Crumb during his school days, <b>Wierdo</b> No. 20, 1987	34
15   Crumb at work, Estren, 1974, (Pg. 115)	34
16 <b>The Great Inter-Continental Fuck in and Orgy Riot</b> , Estren, 1974, (Pg. 117)	36
17 <b>The Family That Lays Together Stays Together</b> , Estren, 1974, (Pg. 169)	36
18 <b>Wierdo</b> comic No. 20, 1987, (Front Cover)	37
19-22 <b>Footsy - the True Story of How I Became A Teenage Sex Pervert</b> , <b>Wierdo</b> , 1987	39-41
23 <b>Honeybunch Kaminski</b> , Crumb, 1976, (Pg. 96 & 106)	42
24 <b>Lenore Goldberg</b> , Donahue & Goodrick, 1974, (Pg. 52)	44
25 <b>R. Crumb versus The Sisterhood</b> , Crumb, 1976, (Pg. 88 & 95)	45
26 <b>Splder Joy</b> by S. Clay Wilson, Estren, 1974, (Pg. 45)	49
27   S. Clay Wilson, <b>Zap Comix</b> No. 5, Estren, 1974, (Pg. 67)	50
28 <b>S. Clay Wilson, Yellow Dog Comix</b> No. 13 & 14, Estren, 1974, (Pg. 67)	50



<u>FIG</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
29 <b>Mr. Natural &amp; Flakey Foont</b> , Crumb, 1976, (Pg. 12)	52
30 <b>Bo Bo Bolinski</b> , Crumb - <b>Uneeda Comix</b> , Estren, 1974, (Pg. 62)	53
31 <b>Fritz the Cat</b> ,Estren, 1974, (Pg. 259)	53
32 <b>The Bleeding Heart Syndrome</b> , Crumb, 1976, (Pg. 73)	62
33 <b>The Adventures of Robert Crumb Himself</b> , Crumb, 1976, (Pg. 36 & 40)	63
34-37 I.D No. 2., Robert Crumb, 1990	69-72
38 Advertisement in <b>Viz</b> comic for <b>2000AD</b> , <b>Viz</b> , NO. 44, 1990	74
39 <b>2000AD</b> , <b>Good Housekeeping</b> , Sept. 1990	75
40 I.D NO. 2, Crumb, (cover)	78
41 <b>XYZ Comix</b> by Robert Crumb, Horn, 1976, (Pg. 365)	79
42 <b>Viz</b> No. 46, 1991, (cover)	80
43 <b>Postman Plod</b> , <b>Viz</b> No. 44, 1990	80
44 <b>Sid the Sexist</b> , <b>Viz</b> No. 42, 1990	80
45 <b>Roger Mellie - the man on the telly</b> , <b>Viz</b> No. 46, 1991	80
46 <b>The Fat Slags</b> , <b>Viz</b> No. 46, 1991	81
47 <b>Viz</b> tabloid - style article, <b>Viz</b> No. 46, 1991	81
48 <b>Zit</b> cover, <b>Zit</b> , issue No. 1, 1991	84
49 <b>Gas</b> cover, <b>Gas</b> Vol. 2, No. 8,1990	85
50 <b>Mary Lamb and her Acts of Wanton Cruelty</b> , <b>Zit</b> , issue 1,1991	86
51 <b>Antiques Rogues Show</b> , <b>Zit</b> , issue 1, 1991	87
52 <b>Brain Damage</b> cover, <b>Brain Damage</b> , Vol. 2, No. 8, 1990	88
53 <b>Judgement</b> , <b>Brain Damage</b> , Vol. 2, No. 8, 1990	89
54 <b>My Wife the Vicar</b> , <b>Brain Damage</b> , Vol. 2, No. 8, 1990	90
55 <b>Cameraman</b> , <b>Brain Damage</b> , Vol. 2, No. 8, 1990	91
56 <b>Bljou Funnies</b> , Lynch, 1975, (Pg. 2)	111

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my tutor, Gerry Walker, the librarians of N.C.A.D library, and in particular, Colette Traynor for typing this Thesis.

## **Introduction**





Fig. 1

Fig. 1 & 2; Early English comics from the 1930's.



THE FUNNY WONDER 1<sup>st</sup>  
EVERY FRIDAY

# "THE VENGEANCE TRAIL!"

A Thrilling Story of the Wild West, featuring Popular Cowboy Charlie. On page 2.



No. 1,050.

PITCH AND TOSS SOW SEEDS OF TROUBLE FOR CAPTAIN CODSEY.

MAY 12, 1934.



1. The saucy Sal had been laid up for repairs and grown a few whiskers, so the skipper got out his lawn mower. "Come and give the deck a haircut!" he looked at Pitch and Tom. "Jump in it!" Drop that and grab hold of the mower!"



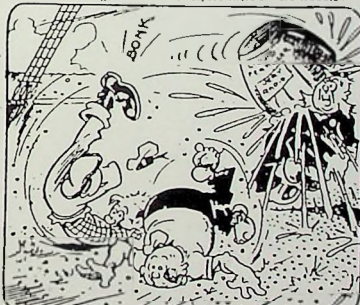
2. Our masiners obeyed orders and dropped what they were doing. "He brought it on his own head!" piped Pitch, as the boy of seeds waved Codsey's bald dome. "Come on! We had better mow along with the mower, ere there's more trouble!"



3. The seeds showered all over the deck, and the wrathful howls of the skipper echoed round the bay. "You know, knave, pigeon-loaf, bottle-necked lumps of nothing!" he bawled, as he grabbed a cask of rapid fertilizer. "Get it! Hold that!"



4. "Bubbling shrimps!" said Tom, as that cask whirled towards them. "We do as we're told and get told off for doing it!" "You're taking me!" gasped Pitch. "Gallop, mate!"



5. Our saucy sails put on a spurt, but slipped up on the seeds, and catching that cask a fourpennyone with his off-side hoof, Pitch sent it whizzing back on to the poor old skipper's head!



6. The cask split open, the skipper lapped the mast, and coming all over soft-hearted, our lads yanked their bows into his cabin to patch him up and make his face look a bit tidier.



7. "There, there! Cap'n mustn't worry his little self and our stout sail. You sit here and take things quietly, while we take things in hand. Don't worry, sir! We'll forgive you for all we're done. Come on, Pitchy-boy! Let's clear the deck!"



8. But when Pitch and Tom ambled out and found the rapid fertilizer had got busy on the seeds, you could have knocked them down with a hammer! "Look at the blooming flowers!" gasped Pitch. "Can you beat it!" "We'd better!" and Tom.



9. And here we see our masiners playing hide and seek in the deck flower garden, tip toeing through the tulips, and dawdling through the daisies, with the skipper getting a spot of trackery. He didn't catch them, so everything on the garden was lovely!

Fig. 2





Fig. 3

Fig. 3; Dick Tracy - Detective character created by Chester Gould.



It's generally agreed that the person who started all this comic relief was a Swiss educator Rodolphe Topfler (1799 - 1846) who invented the strip cartoon. Modern comics as we know them today began around the 1880's. It was a natural development from the newspaper strips that brought cartoons into the comic book format. From the very beginning, comics were intended as light entertainment non-serious literature for children. It was viewed as a somewhat lowbrow literary form by the upperclasses and even today comics still fail to achieve the respectability as regular books, although the opposite is true on the continent; countries like France, Italy, Spain and Belgium sell comics alongside respectable literary works and the European artists as a result enjoy the same respect as say, a film Director. In America though it was always a different story. In England, the title Comic Cuts was an adequate term to describe the "funny papers" that existed for up to half a Century, Comics like Funny Wonder, Happy Days and Merry and Bright survived without serious challenge until the 1950's. (Figs. 1 & 2)

When Chester Gould (1901 -1985) created "Dick Tracy" (Fig. 3) he broke two self-imposed taboo's of the strip world - guns were always used and so blood flowed. In the 1950's the spotlight fell on the whole comic business and the kids favourite

literature was exposed. It was the time when horror books and crime stories were the mainstay of comic art. The themes explored were of livid crime, violence and ghastly blood-drenched horror. Comic book titles like Teen-age Dope Slaves, Tales from the Crypt and from the crime books; Murder Incorporated and Gangsters typified the general themes now been explored (Fig. 4). The congressional investigations followed the many public outcries and doctors and professors, like Dr. Wertham began intense analytical studies of these so called children's comics. In this McCarthyite atmosphere of the early 1950's comic books were treated like semi-pornographic and excessively violent books which could be held responsible for a generation of juvenile delinquents. The Comics Code Authority (Fig. 5) came down heavily on the accused and it led to much upheaval in the comics business. It affected all of Europe too, countries including Germany, Holland, Italy and Ireland all had their own versions of anti-crime and horror comics campaigns. The net effect was a somewhat stabilising effect on the business - it was even beneficial in the way that it halted the work of the cheaper and less talented cartoonists whose work was pure trash and it had existed up to now feeding off the public's desire for blood and gore.

But through all this of course, comics have survived.



Fig. 4

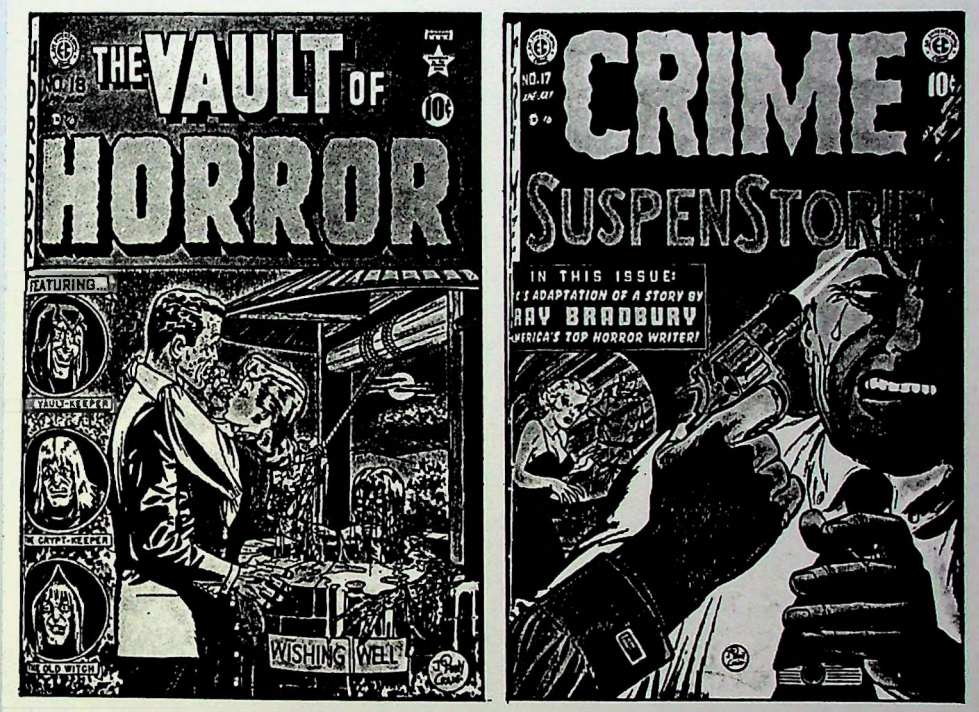


Fig. 4; Typical American comic titles from the 1950's.



Fig. 5

# "THAT IS NOT DEATH WHICH CAN ETERNAL LIE; AND WITH STRANGE BEINGS EVEN DEATH MAY DIE"

FROM THE NECRONOMICON  
BY THE MAD ARAB ABDUL ALHAZRAD

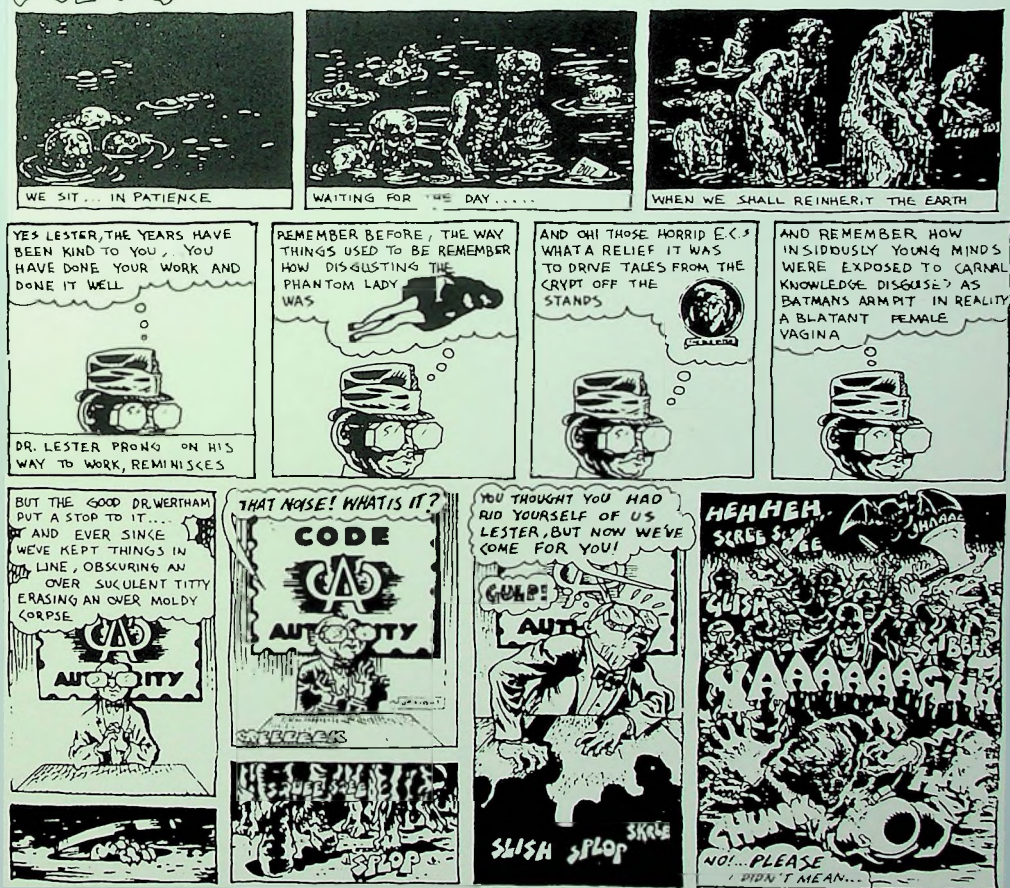


Fig. 5; The Comics Code as seen by underground artist Spain Rodriguez, USA, 1968.

Today, comics enjoy a new respectability, especially those newly termed "Graphic Novels" and in a way the variety of styles and themes now freely explored by cartoonists, owes a lot to those artists in the 1960's who were forced underground to produce mainly for themselves, comics, that refused to be restricted by the authorities codes of standards, and instead created a wealth of new themes with all sorts of taboos to be exposed and many more avenues to be explored.

This thesis then, looks at these comics that emerged in the 1960's termed underground comics. Although the subject matter of the comics can be quite varied I have decided to concentrate my study mainly on SEX. This is the one subject which was used at least once by all the underground artists, and it was the favourite theme for many. The sex content of the comics was the main ingredient, along with violence, that brought such controversy to the comics. Its a perfect theme, therefore, through which we can study the whole underground movement.

It's a fact that the great majority of the underground cartoonists are men and this has meant that there is a great deal of sexism, in the comics, and especially of course in the sex comics. This is another issue I will discuss in the Thesis.



The question of pornography inevitably comes up when looking at explicit sex comics and its connected to the whole issue of sexism, since pornography mainly involves the degradation of women and this as we shall see is very often present in the comics.

Most of the controversy about sex and sexism in the underground comics centres around Robert Crumb who is regarded by many as one of the best draughtsmen in the business. It is through his work mainly that I will discuss the aforementioned issues.

Throughout the thesis, I will address the issue of how these comics effect the reader and the morals and values which they offer us generally, and since this thesis deals with sex in the comics, I will be concentrating mainly on the values and morals concerning women and their treatment by men.

Finally, in the last chapter I will bring the underground comics story up to date by looking at the new style of alternative comics coming from England. Comics such as Viz, Zit, Gas etc. are very popular and they enjoy the benefits of been sold in major newsagents and book stores despite their similar content to the underground's of sex, sexism and bad language.



## **Introduction to underground comix**

Fig. 6

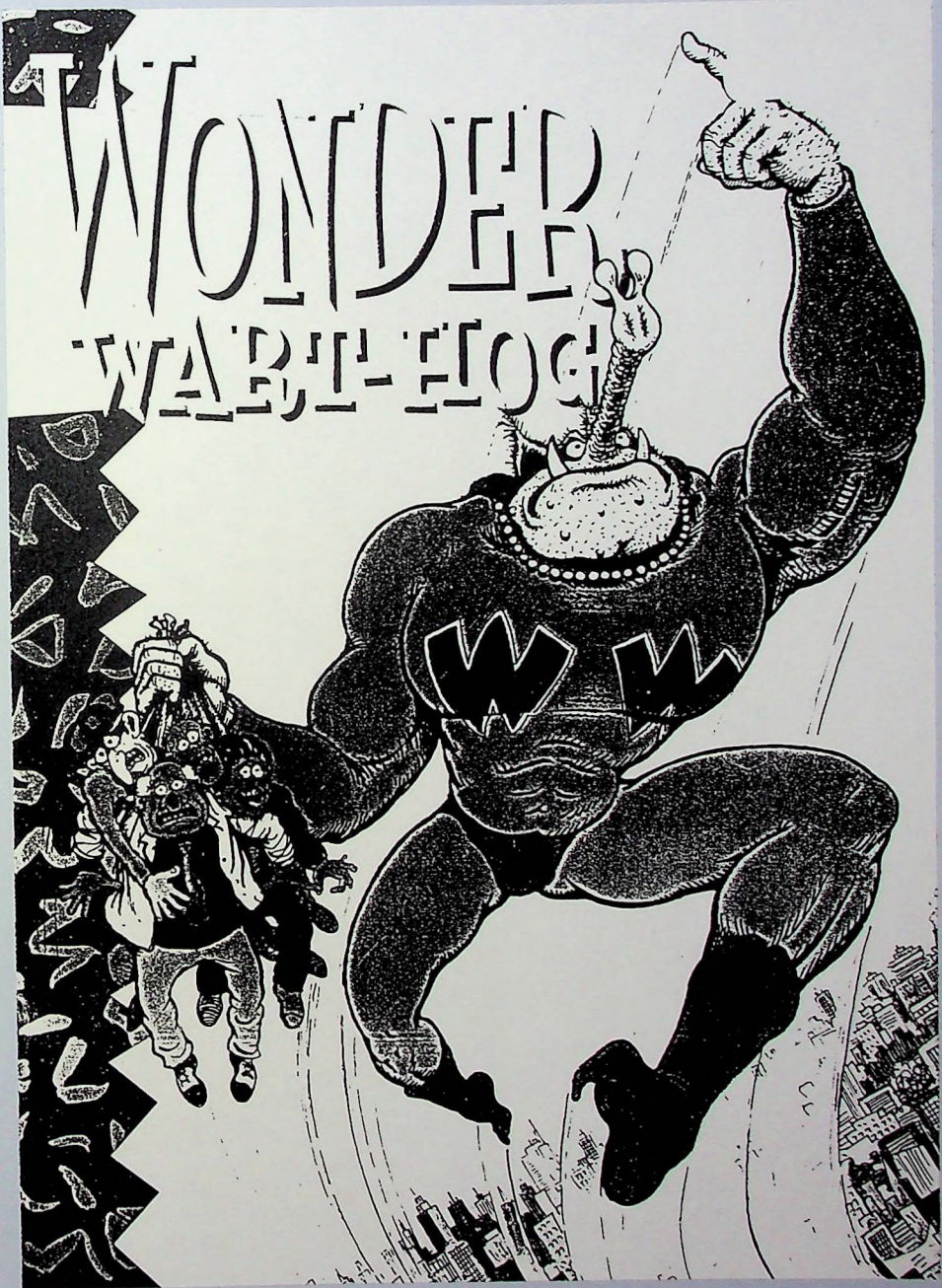


Fig. 6; Gilbert Shelton's superhero of the underground comics.



Fig. 7



Fig. 7; Wonder Wart Hog - Escape from the planet Squootpeep satirizes the beginnings of the classic Superman story.



RIP  
OFF  
PRESS  
INC.

THE FABULOUS FURRY

£1.95

# FREAK

## BROTHERS

by GILBERT SHELTON, PAUL MAVRIDES  
DAVE & SHERIDAN



Fig. 8

Fig. 8; Three crazy dope headed hippies, perhaps the most famous and most successful of all the underground characters.



Fig. 9

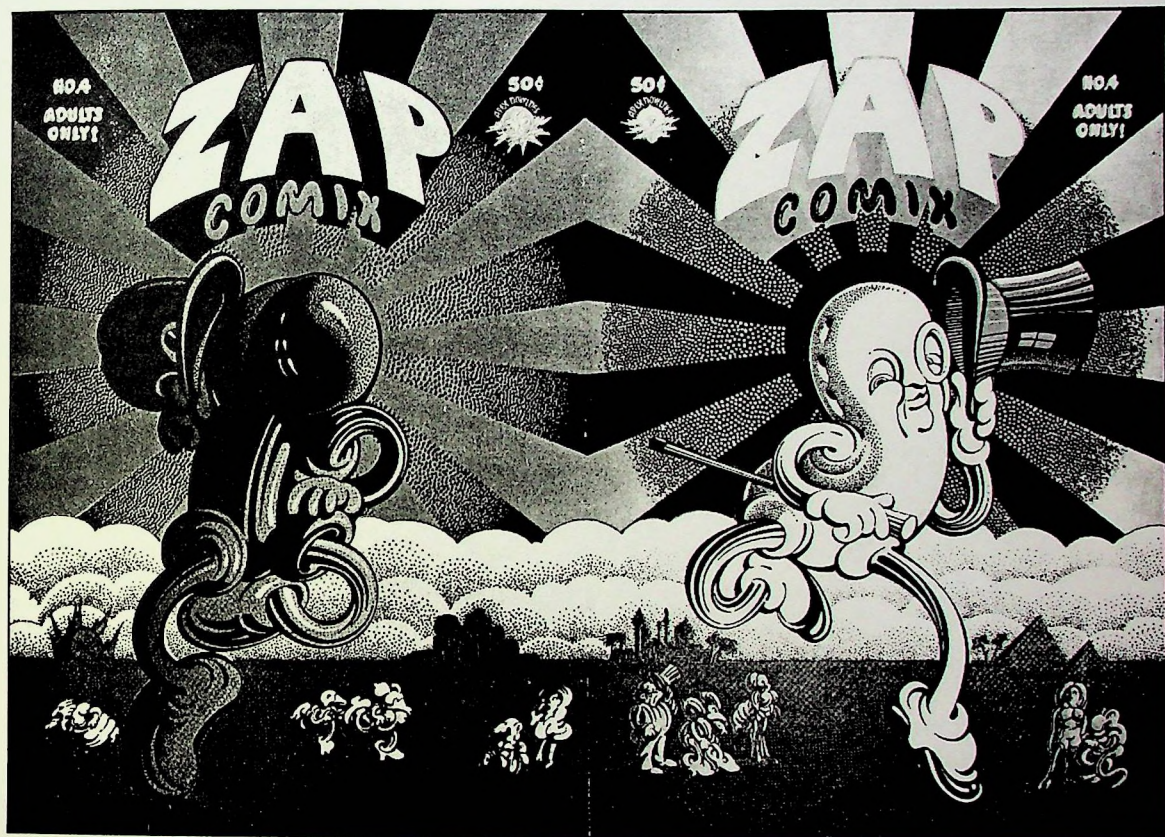


Fig. 9; Officially the first underground comic started by Crumb and included the work of S. Clay Wilson.

In the Reitberger and Fuchs Anatomy of a Mass Medium, the roots of the underground comics are traced back to the universities in the late 1950's, where the students produced many "underground" mags. This is true of course and indeed these mags are where some of the undergrounds finest cartoonists made their first mark. Wonder Wart Hog (Figs. 6 & 7) is a famous superhero of the underground and it was first introduced by its creator Gilbert Shelton (also creator of the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers) in the University of Texas magazine Texas Ranger, it then wen on to be published in Harvey Kurtzmann's Help magazine.

Similarly, whereas Robert Crumb's first works are usually pointed out to be sex comics Snatch and Zap (Fig. 9) he had already, previous to this, created the mischievous Fritz the Cat for Cavalier magazine.

The underground scene though would soon have its heyday. This happened around 1968 and most of it was concentrated in San Francisco, although any major city would have its own bunch of underground publications. Chicago for example produced Bijou Funnies. The artists involved here were Jay Lynch, Skip



Williamson, Robert Crumb and Jay Kinney. In the Apex treasury of Underground comics, Lynch explains though that Bijou was not the first : 'That was Crumb's Zap No. 1, it came out in San Francisco six months before Bijou', and as Marty Palls points out in his introduction to the Bijou collection :

Bijou's acceptance proved that the new undergrounds were more than just a one-man, one-book, one-town phenomenon. "Comix" soon became standard items of Flower Power's paraphernalia - and they stayed when the flowers hit the ash can ! (Lynch 1975 Pg. 6)

Underground comix appeared and blossomed in the late 1960's when there was already a ready audience who had been conditioned by the ever present underground press. It was the perfect time to launch an alternative comic since it was a time when there was cultural revolt generally. It was like comics getting on the band wagon, in my own opinion and the cartoonists along with the musicians, poets and writers all wanted to express their own views and get involved in various movements.

When the underground scene really happened, it was like an explosion of sex, violence and blood thirstiness. They were aimed at that particular audience who for example could respond

better to the likes of Crumb's Mr. Natural than to the classic superhero's of the day, ie. Superman, Captain America etc. The reason, for example, the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers by Shelton was so successful was, like Shelton says, there was a lot of actual "Freak Brothers" out there buying the stuff - ie. the dope headed-sex mad hippies of the 1960's and 1970's. !!

The majority of these "comix" were very much comments by cartoonists on the society of the time; they discussed the taboo subjects of sex, rape, murder, religion and spiritualism. Basically, they were polemics in comics format, emotioned arguments expressing resentment of the establishment.

There were artists like Robert Crumb who's very personal, disturbing and perverse comics were very much the artist working out his hang-ups on paper. Then there was S. Clay Wilson (born 1941) who put his basest Sado-masochistic dreams on paper in a bizarre, overcrowded style. Roy Hayes (1950 - 1984) perhaps the most disturbing of all; his drug induced vision produced comics that broke all preconceptions as to how comics should look.

Gilbert Shelton, overall one of the most commercially successful, became his own publisher by helping to start Rip-off Press in 1968 and by 1970 all the cartoonists had banded together



in the United Cartoon Workers of America. There was great loyalty among the artists and this made the business strong. The industry of "comix" flourished, with up to six publishing houses selling over 100,000 books per month. The survival of these peculiar brand of comics then was to depend on those individual artists involved and how they kept to their unique style of cartooning. Jay Lynch says :

underground comix must keep evolving faster than the mass media can assimilate then, the danger is to fall into a formula. We don't want to get like the straight magazines always printing the same stuff. Comix should stimulate, not make people feel secure. (Donahue & Goodrick 1974 Pg. 10)

Today, the same artists continue to work in this field, however, in the vast variety of comics now available and with a general relaxing of censorship, its difficult to find any real underground comix.

## Chapter One

### Sex in comics and Robert Crumb



Perhaps the earliest examples of sex in comics were to be found in the comic books of the 1930's. The Tarzan (Fig. 10) theme was big at the time, and the female version of Tarzan, characters like Sheena Queen of the Jungle by W. Morgan Thomas and Nyoka (the explorer) would provide young boys with a feast of delightful buxom beauties reclining in erotic poses, clad in very skimpy Tarzan-like loin cloths. Whether the shapely girls accompanied Tarzan himself, or went out on their own expeditions, they could always turn their own physical attributes to their best advantage - striking fear into native black "wild men" who feared their dominance or they would use their goddess like white beauty to win over any fearsome encounter.

These jungle comics were in fact very daring for their time, especially when compared to the films of that same period, but the comics then were never taken seriously by the critics, and also therefore by the censors. That is until they all went too far. When the cartoonists saw that sex and violence sold comics, they got braver and more daring as they competed for sales. Eventually it all had to go, and it did when the Comics Code Authority stepped in.

Fig. 10



The only bit of sex available in comics during the 1930's.



Fig. 11



Calm came over the comics in the period that followed. The 1950's were taken over then by some great crime stories and as we have seen the crime books and horror stories had their fair share of violence. Sex came only in the shape of "dames" and "broad" who were bossed around by the mainly male, villains and crime busters. However, as we shall see in a later chapter, the 1950's also saw a massive crackdown on comics by the authorities and critics in their depiction of sex and violence. Dr. Fredrick Wertham for example had a lot to say about sex in comics and he published his accusations in his book Seduction of the Innocent, which he revised later in Sign of Lain (1964). Dr. Wertham believed that not only did comics seduce the reader into crime but also into sexual perversions.

"I WANT TO BE A SEX MANIAC" screamed the title of one chapter which was one answer a little boy gave to the Doctors questions. Wertham attacked the comics of his day but also any comics already in existence for years before ; the 1940's, as we know from films etc. of the time, saw bosoms coming into fashion and this was amply reflected too in the comics - Phantom Lady and the aforementioned "jungle" heroines went about their adventures and supporters then began to see sex everywhere.

Fig. 12



Fig. 12; Batman and Robin by Bob Kane.  
Two homosexuals according to Dr. Wertham !



Calm came over the comics in the period that followed. The 1950's were taken over then by some great crime stories and as we have seen the crime books and horror stories had their fair share of violence. Sex came only in the shape of "dames" and "broad" who were bossed around by the mainly male, villains and crime busters. However, as we shall see in a later chapter, the 1950's also saw a massive crackdown on comics by the authorities and critics in their depiction of sex and violence. Dr. Fredrick Wertham for example had a lot to say about sex in comics and he published his accusations in his book Seduction of the Innocent, which he revised later in Sign of Lain (1964). Dr. Wertham believed that not only did comics seduce the reader into crime but also into sexual perversions.

"I WANT TO BE A SEX MANIAC" screamed the title of one chapter which was one answer a little boy gave to the Doctors questions. Wertham attacked the comics of his day but also any comics already in existence for years before ; the 1940's, as we know from films etc. of the time, saw bosoms coming into fashion and this was amply reflected too in the comics - Phantom Lady and the aforementioned "jungle" heroines went about their adventures and supporters then began to see sex everywhere.

Apart from the obvious flaunting of the female form, the critics imagined phallic emblems and other sex symbols to lurk everywhere. All comics were attacked at this level - even the superhero's. To Wertham, Batman and Robin were clearly homosexual, (Fig. 12), Wonderwoman then being the lesbian counterpart to the dynamic duo, even poor old Porky Pig was seen by Wertham as an invitation to buggery !! Superhero's like Batman and Robin, and Superman were always understood to be completely sexless heroes but it takes perhaps a sicker personality like Wertham's to point to the Robin character and say : 'He often stands with his legs spread, the genital region discreetly evident'. (Fuchs & Reitherger 1972 Pg. 113)

These were some of the more ludicrous accusations made by Wertham on comics, his arguments here on sexual matters are definitely a bit stretched, but his attacks on violence and horror in comics were possibly a little more understandable and he cited good examples of some quite disgusting horror scenes in the comics directed at young people.

The Americans puritanical view of sex made it quite a taboo subject of discussion, and to the underground artists that emerged in the 1960's, taboo's were there to be broken.



Previously the more controversial artists of the straight comics, and writers in general would proceed to get material printed by evading the censor to see what could be sneaked through, what could be gotten away with, and what could be disguised enough to pass the censor, but not so much as to escape the audience. The underground artists, however, simply ignored the censor altogether. The new comics, or "comix" as they were better known, enjoyed complete freedom of censorship, and the artists were free to experiment with form and style.

Robert Crumb is regarded by many as one of the best draughtsmen, and definitely the most controversial of these underground cartoonists. Crumb is the type who never stops drawing cartoons, he is still working today, and from his work so far it is clearly obvious that his main preoccupation was with sex. A person like Crumb then couldn't have been in a better place than San Francisco in 1968!

So who IS Robert Crumb? 'My first memory of Crumb was of a long, skinny, gawk, bent over a sketchbook ..... I've never met anyone with such a cartooning compulsion (Crumb 1976 Pg. iv) that's how Harvey Kurtzman knows him but a perfect picture of Crumb is drawn by himself - (Figs. 13, 14, 15) it is though, a vicious satire of himself which he draws very often in his comics.

Fig. 13

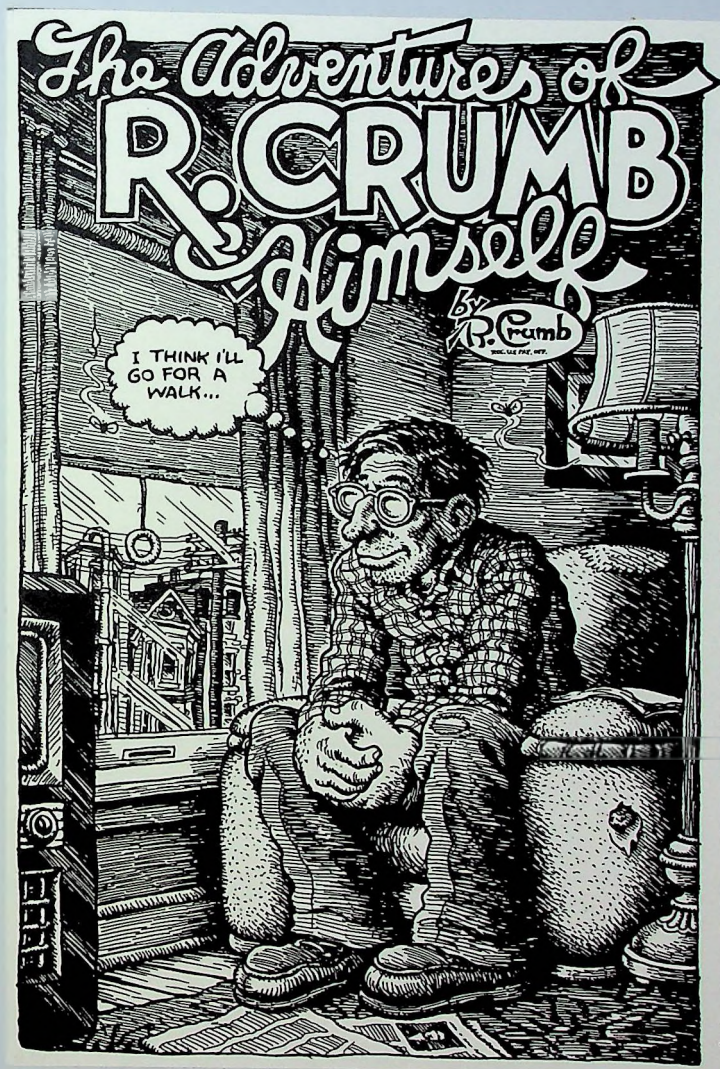


Fig. 13; Robert Crumb caricature by Crumb himself.





Fig. 14

Fig. 14; Crumb during his school days.



Fig. 15

Fig. 15; Crumb at work

He depicts himself as a sex-crazed sadist, sentimental slob and naive hayseed. Crumb says : 'I have to keep poking fun at myself and anything else I might be tempted to take too seriously'. (Donahue & Goodrick 1974 Pg. 12)

The Great Inter-continental Fuck-in and Orgy-Riot (Fig. 16) was the centre page spread in Crumb's first issue of SNATCH, it was replaced in the second issue with The Family that Lays Together Stays Together (Fig. 17), such were the scenes created by Crumb from the beginning of his career. The initial 800 copies of Snatch No.1 sold very quickly on the streets of San Francisco, and that must have encouraged him, it was only the beginning.

In Werido comic No. 20 (Fig. 18) which is a collaboration of a varied bunch of alternative cartoonists, Crumb tells us the story where his perverse personality began :

When I was thirteen I was in lust with certain girls ..... I wanted to do things to 'em ... I don't know exactly what...I didn't know how to talk to 'em or ask them out on dates or anything like that...but there was ONE thing I could do...one form of contact I could make with them ; A gentle little game called ..FOOTSY - (the true story of how I became a teenage SEX PERVERT !!!).

The story sets the scene of his classroom in 1956-57, 'the air of the classroom thick with the seething bodies of Blossoming



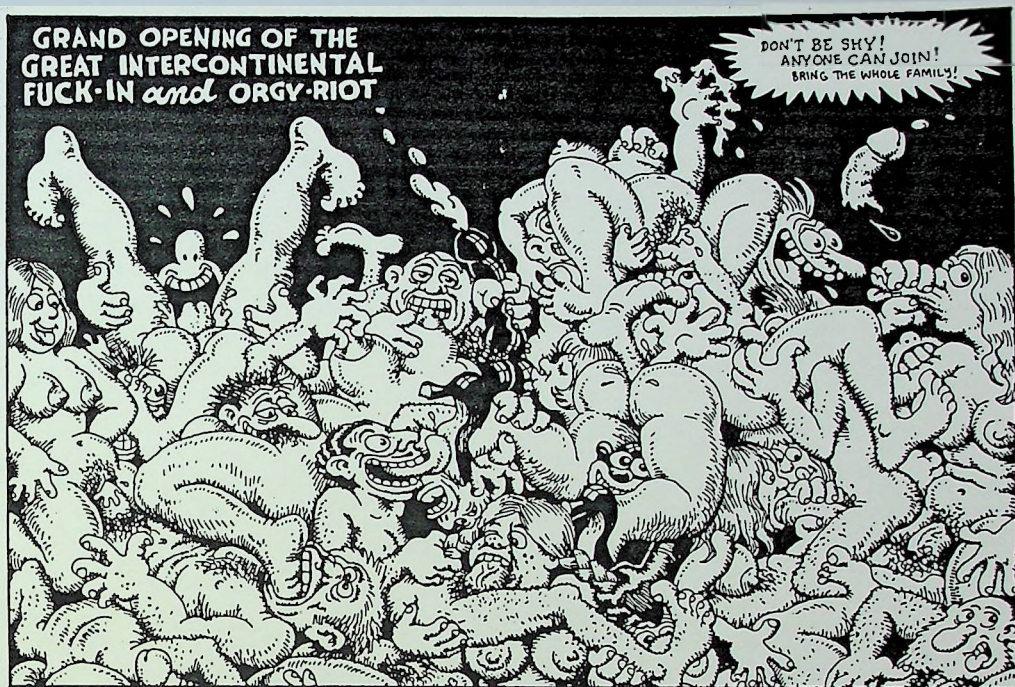


Fig. 16

Fig. 16, above and 17 below, Crumb's early work for Zap Comix.

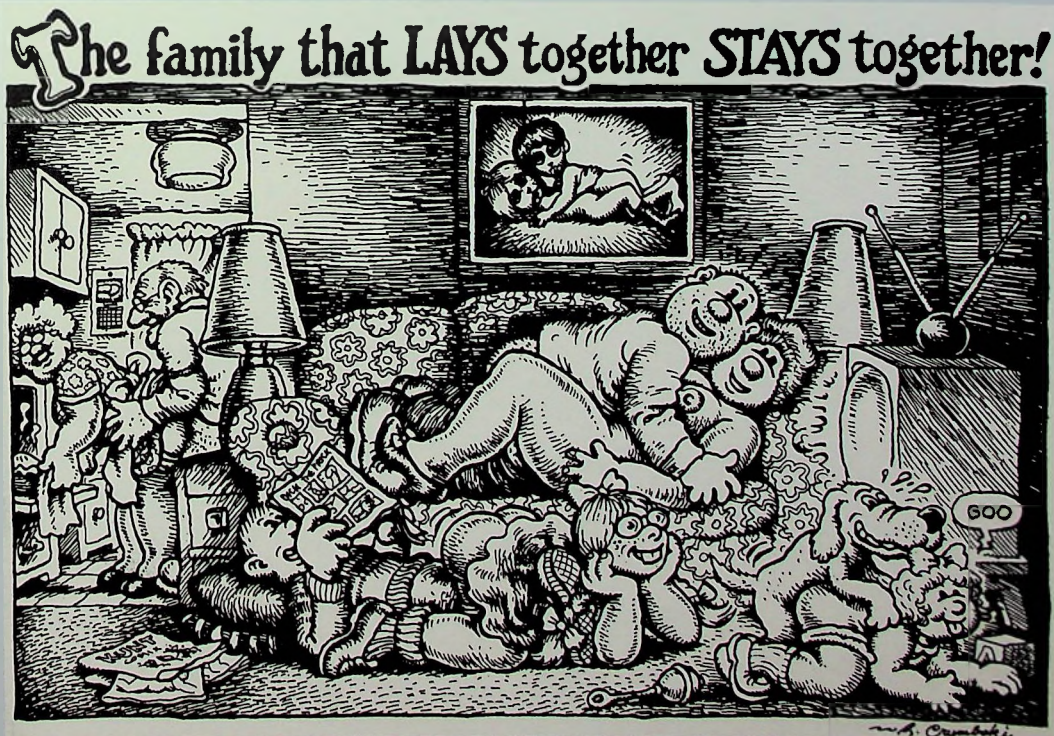


Fig. 17



ACT GASP  
CO. FUNNIES

NO  
FILM  
CRITICS

NO  
ROCK  
STAR  
INTER-  
VIEWS

NO  
SUPER  
HEROES

NO  
LIFE-  
STYLE  
ARTICLES

\$2

NO  
STEREOTYPICAL  
CHARACTERS

NO  
FASHION  
TRENDS

NO  
SITTING  
POSITIONS

NO  
MOVIE  
STARS

NO  
BULLDOGS  
OFFERS

NO  
AMOUR  
GIRLS

NO  
INVEST-  
MENT  
TIPS

NOTHING  
ABOUT THE  
WAY AND  
FASHION

Fig. 18

NO 20

I WONDER IF THIS  
IS THE NAME OF THE  
FUTURE OR JUST ANOTHER  
EXAGGERATION WHICH  
OUR DECADENCY WILL  
END UP WITH WORLD  
CURIOSITY AND HORROR.  
WELL, WHO CARES? IT'S A  
GREAT WAY TO CONTRI-  
BUTE INFINITY TO THE  
UNIVERSE. IN THE  
MEAN TIME, I'M  
HAPPY.

OH HE'S  
SO WEIRD!

IN THIS ISSUE:  
**RELIGION**  
**CRIME**  
**FOOD**  
**SEX**

R. CRUMB

'87

NO  
SPACE  
EPICS

NO  
LOVE  
STORIES

NO  
COPS &  
ROBBERIES

NO  
CUTE  
THINGS

Fig. 18; Cover of Wierdo comic ( compilation of artist's work).



13 and 14 year olds' and it continues with Crumb as a student and his lustful yearnings to touch the 'throbbing squirming extremities of the luscious "Ginny"' this meaning her legs. Ever since his youth it seems, Crumb had a fixation for girls with thick long legs, he rarely draws girls ("gurls") any other way. This particular story shows Crumb at his best. The drawing is excellent - his depiction of himself as the bespectacled - gurl obsessed 14 year old is perfect and hilarious to follow as the poor student is tormented and teased on by not just one but yet another 'Sultry Steaming, (Dolly Hensley)'. The characterisation in fact is very similar to the way Woody Allen depicts himself in films :the slovenly appearance, the crazy glasses that emphasises the leering eyes and he's the guy with the greatest hang-ups about girls. (Figs. 19 - 22)

In an interview with Susan Goodrick, Crumb goes some way to explain himself :

When I was younger I had problems because I was attracted to strong women. In high school you were supposed to like weak, frail women. I never did and I always felt kind of queer or something 'cause I liked women who were physically strong or independent, what would be considered masculine by traditional standards. I guess I turned out kind of eccentric because I failed at being socially correct as early as high school. The failure was so traumatic that I got completely outside of convention and developed my own tastes. I don't think anyone, including women's liberation should decide who you should be attracted to.

(Donahue & Goodrick 1974 Pg. 14)



Fig. 19



IN AMERICAN HISTORY, WITH THOSE BIG FINELY MUSCLED LEGS SO CARELESSLY THROWN OUT THERE, RIGHT IN MY WAY, I COULDN'T STOP MYSELF, WAYNE OR NO WAYNE.



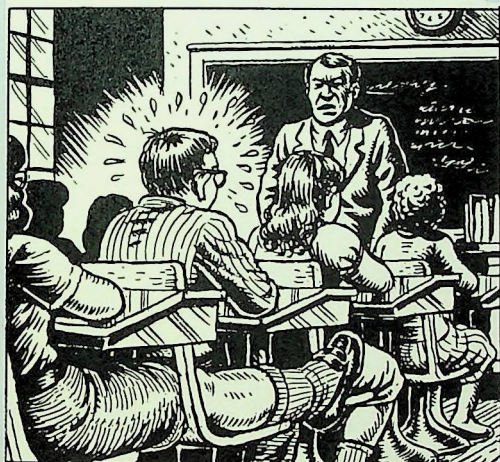
AND SHE LET ME! THIS WAS REALLY A THRILL! ME, A LITTLE NOBODY, PLAYING FOOTSY WITH THE VOLUPTUOUS SEX-ROT DOLLY! THE PRIZE, THE OBJECT OF ALL THEIR DESIRES, WAS LETTING ME PUT MY FOOT ON TOP OF HERS! I GLANCED AT HER...THE PALE BLUE EYES GAZED BLANKLY AT NOTHING IN PARTICULAR...



Fig. 20



NOT ONLY THAT, BUT IT SEEMED TO ME THE 'TEACH' WAS GIVING US DIRTY LOOKS. FIE NEVER LIKED ME MUCH TO BEGIN WITH.



WHEN THERE WAS THE SULTRY, STEAMING DOLLY HENSLEY, WHO SAT TO THE RIGHT OF ME IN THAT SAME CLASS, AND WHO ALSO OFTEN POSITIONED HERSELF IN VARIOUS LASCIVIOUS SPRAWLING SLOUCHES AT HER DESK.



Fig. 21



Fig. 22



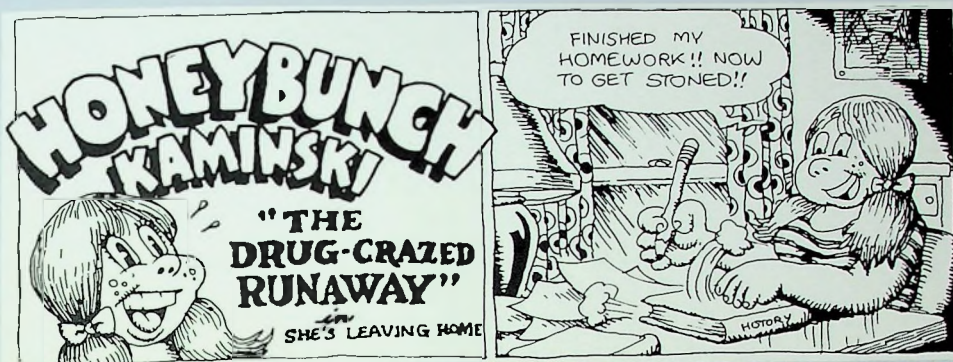


Fig. 23; Above, one of Crumb's more endearing characters and below with "Projunior", (originally Pro - Junior created by Don Dohler).

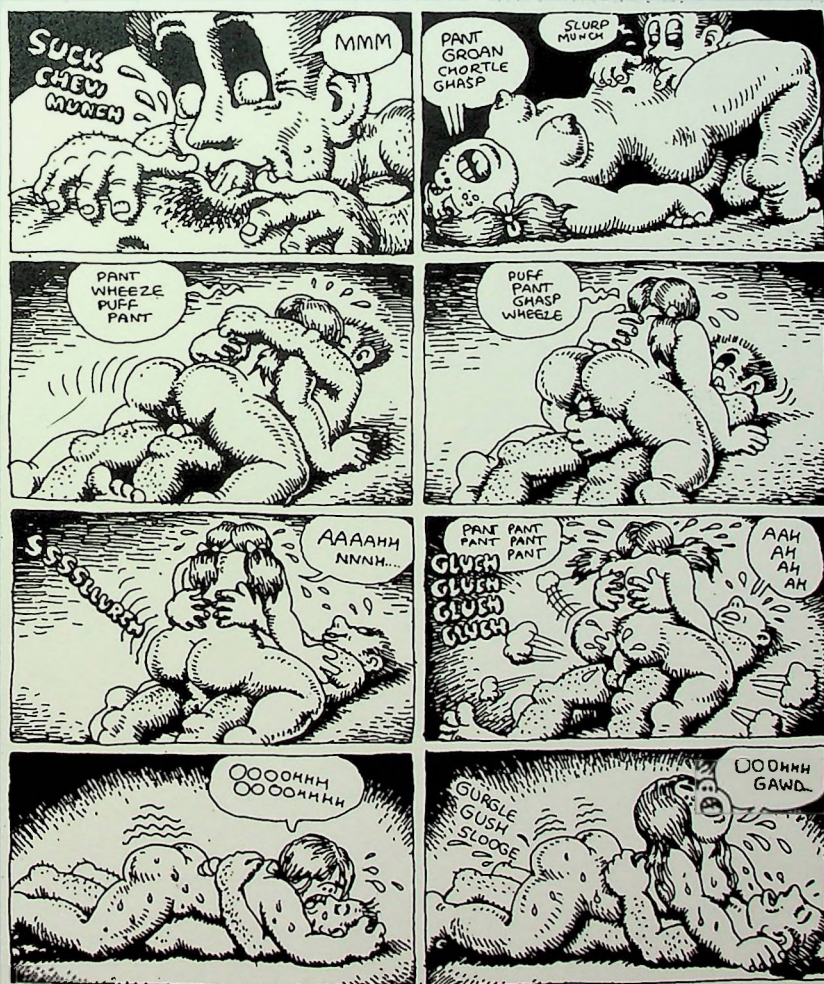


Fig. 23

Crumb is often criticised for his depiction of women as sex objects who exist solely for abusing by men. The fact is though, Crumb often gives a balanced view. He has created some very endearing characters like Honeybunch Kaminski, a cute little run-away character (at least she involved herself in "straight" sex and the out of "real" love) (Fig. 23). He also created the female protagonist and portrayed her at some length. This was Lenone Goldberg, (Fig. 24) the admirably defiant supporter of Women's Liberation. But perhaps these, with a few more examples are a weak argument to support Crumb's depiction of women in the comics because at the end of the day the simple fact is, Crumb doesn't know himself how he really feels about women. Take for example, what he says in an interview in the underground newspaper, the East Village Other : he was answering to criticism expressed by women on his Big Ass Comics No. 1 where he was supposed to have been very hostile towards women :

Dean Latimer (Interviewer) : "Yeah? I mean, what seven year old boy is not hostile towards women?"

Crumb : Yeah, but when you're twenty five you should know better.

Latimer : Yeah, but when you're twenty five and you can recreate the sensibilities of a seven year old, that's really something. Art ...

Crumb : Who's recreating?

Latimer : You mean that's the way you feel towards women?

Crumb : Well, sometimes" (Estren 1974 Pg. 130)



Fig. 24



Fig. 24; One of the few Crumb characters which present a strong image of women.



Fig. 25



Fig. 25; Above, Crumb get's a well deserved good thrashing from "The Sisterhood", but in the end the male chauvinist dominates again, (below).





Scandalous remarks indeed. Enough there to make any woman scream "Male chauvinist sexist pig". Needless to say Crumb was continuously attacked by women's lib on this issue and he faces the issue head on in his comics. One great story is R. Crumb verses THE SISTERHOOD" (Fig. 25). It again shows the Crumb character who plays a prank on a girl but the wimpish Crumb gets his cumuppence when the girl runs to the "Sisterhood" for help. One of the gang of girls is a "Big Piperoo" who towers over the now cowering Crumb. A massive physical fight ensues and Crumb, who stands as a symbol of his type of chauvinist men, gets a good thrashing, and the other girls (women's lib) look on laughing. But there is a hilarious twist to the story and the big woman succumbs to her femininity when she becomes aroused by all the fighting : "Fighting makes me horny .. Besides I think you're cute, even if you are a dirty rotten chauvinist asshole motherfucker". What follows is a hilarious display of foreplay and Crumb's sexual (male) victory. "So much for women's liberation" he says walking off satisfied and the burly gurl is left panned out muttering "ooh that felt good" and she lays on a pile of rubble and on the other girls that was once the "Sisterhood". But the artist has to add at the very end : "Just kidding girls !!. Actually I'm on your side!!! This was just another infantile fantasy from a sick, immature mind ... but remember, its only a comic book!!! Love & Kisses, R. Crumb" (Crumb 1976, Pg. 86)

In his Big Ass Comic No. 2 Crumb has an even more direct approach to women. He addresses all women in 'A word to you feminist women - from that ol' male chauvinist pig, R. Crumb himself!!!!' In this one page strip Crumb genuinely tries to explain himself and his treatment of women in his comics :

Call me a sexual criminal if you like, a "pimp", a "sexist pervert" if it please you ..call me anything you want!! You're probably right". The strip goes on frame by frame, the Crumb character getting quite worked up on the issue until he finally explodes at the end : "WELL listen you dumb assed broads, I'm gonna draw what I fuckin' well please to draw, and if you don't like it FUCK YOU!!!

(Estren 1974, Pg. 128)

If we try to make less of Crumb's "crimes" against women we could compare his work to some other underground artists who, like S. Clay Wilson depicts some of the most vicious sex and violence in comics. (Fig. 26). Wilson shows us a world of complete decay. Every imaginable sexual practice takes place in his comics and he presents the sex as the dirty and disgusting practice of similarly vile and extremely ugly characters. Wilson focuses our attention on the warts and all features of decadent society and when we compare this to Crumb's work, at least we can say Crumb sees sex as an object for enjoyment and satire and it is much further removed from pornography than is Wilson's work. Wilson preoccupies himself with the inter-relationship between sex and violence, a very one-sided view point which he chose to explore from the beginning of his career and never stopped!



Wilson's work also show up the fact that there's often a very thin line between sex and violence and very often in the underground comics we are given a combination of both (Fig. 27). In Wilson's work especially, sex IS violence. Wilson's preoccupations are with pirates, lesbians, motor-cycle freaks and demons and often all in the same story (Fig. 28). This work has very little to say, every story is just a constant flow of wanton decay. The characters beat kill and eat! each other. Mike Barrier writes in Funnvworld No. 10 : 'Wilson's is a world seen after too many days of too little sleep and too much coffee when every persons physical imperfections loom so large that they're disgusting'. (Estren 1974, Pg. 129))

His work is generally very hard to read, Wilson tends to throw everything in and each frame is full to capacity making the whole page at a glance look like a black scribbling mess. Very often its difficult to make out the individual frames. Wilson doesn't have any regular characters either - the stories are loosely based around a given title and characters appear everywhere. One character that might at first appear to be the main figure of the story could get his head blown off before the story ends and it goes on and on, in almost constant blood, sex and violence. Its difficult to imaging Wilson as a person to be like anything other than the characters he draws. Harvey





Figs. 26 - 28; Vile and disgusting characters in crazy stories of sex and violence courtesy of S. Clay Wilson.



Fig. 27



Fig. 28



Kurtzman says of Wilson : ' .. in his imagination sure, he's very much like his cartoons - he drinks a lot of beer and swears a lot. He can affect you so you think maybe he's a pussycat when he gets drunk, but I would say he's a violent man'. (Estren, 1974, Pg. 64) Kurtzman was introduced to Wilson's work by Crumb, and at first he was quite offended by the material, and found it was moving into pornography even, but now in support of Wilson he says : "he's got a good writing mind, a literate quality that I think is better than any other underground cartoonists. His choice of words is very fine". (Estren, 1974, Pg. 64)

Crumb worked with Wilson in the early sex comics and he admits that Wilson was a major influence on him, showing him that he didn't have to hold himself in while drawing cartoons. Whereas Wilson continued to draw more or less the same stuff he did in the sex comics, Crumb at least went on to create new characters, not all hung up on sex. Some of these include Fritz the Cat, a hip street-wise cat who occasionally, though, indulges in a few orgies ...Mr. Natural a capitalist Guru who is seen by Flakey Foont as he who has all the answers but Mr. Natural would only answer "Fuck Off" to Flakey's questions on the meaning of life. (Fig. 29) Then there's Bo Bo Bolinski, (the Barroom Bum - he's such an obnoxious character!!) and there's many more characters. The aforementioned Fritz the Cat character is





Fig. 29



53  
Fig. 30

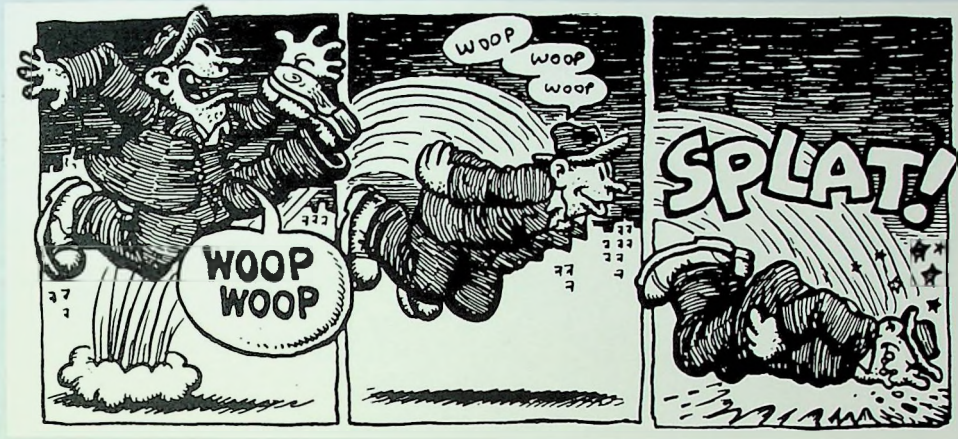


Fig. 31; Below, an advertisement for the Ralph Bakshi / Steve Krantz production of Fritz the Cat from the Washington Post April 11, 1972.



Fig. 31



perhaps one of the most famous of all the undergrounds creations. So much so even that an animated film has been made of the character (Fig. 31). Crumb was approached by Ralph Bakshi and Steve Krantz in 1970 to film Fritz the Cat and it was released in 1972. It caused quite a sensation on its release and it was the first animated cartoon to receive an "X" rating. The animators had kept very close to the original Crumb ideas, drawings and compositions in Fritz the Cat, and this character could be quite scandalous. The film included scenes of barroom brawls, all night bull sessions in tacky New York flats and confrontations between the cat and the cops, who were drawn as pigs. The film ended with the scene where Fritz was in Hospital dying from his wounds, but he's revived by his many weeping girl friends and they all engage in a massive sex orgy on the Hospital bed.

Crumb was working on this character ever since Crumb Brother Almanac, the once off comics he produced with his brother Charles at the very beginning of his career. He finished Fritz in 1965 only to return to the character once more in 1972 for the simple purpose of officially killing off the character. The phoney, con-artist sex-mad cat was eventually killed off by a rejected female ostrich who split his skull with an ice pick.

To sum up on Crumb and his work, he definitely is one weird

guy but he's a genius. Its a fact that he had no formal art training yet he quickly became expert at character creation and he shows great awareness of the society he grew up in. He pools all his ideas and vision and creates a bunch of characters who each have their own message. He has drawn them then in a style absolutely unique, a style which embodies all what the underground stands for. Its easy for the reader to take his work for granted as he presents his work to us with a deceptive simplicity. He communicates on a street level yet his work is poetic, there's deep thought and solidity to all his characters. What also comes across in his work is that he loves what he's doing.

The problem though, with Crumb's work, is his overt sexism. Its a problem which as Estren points out in the "History of Underground Comics", is rife in the whole underground comics business: "The comics remain, by and large, bastions of male chauvinism..... their common portrayal of women either as total sexual objects or as quintessential castrating bitches leaves much to be desired". Most of this controversy about sexism centres around Crumb. Early in his career Crumb did a lot of work for porn books and he said later that he hoped those books had broken some taboos and that the cartoonists now could move into other things. But obviously Crumb's work varied only a



little from the sex themes and we know how porn most often perpetrate the degradation of women. The only consolation I think, offered to women viewers, is the way Crumb depicts himself in his stories. Any sensitive reader, not just women, will look in disgust at some of the more disgusting sex and violence scenes in these comics, but we could overlook the cartoonists attitudes which are chauvinist since they are, as Crumb would claim, merely reflecting the values of society as a whole. We can all laugh or scorn at the pathetic, sick, perverted character as Crumb so often depicts himself and laugh at the poor wimp with all his hang ups. Finally, the male viewer might learn something about how women are treated in society and then set about changing their sexist attitudes.

## **Chapter Two**

**Censorship and the effects and reflections of comics on society**



The effects on the public from exposure to the sex comics is debatable. Most people will view the comics as just hilarious comedy rather than obscene or dirty. People see their own hang ups made fun of in comics and it helps them to cope with those hang-ups.

The main concern for the authorities of course is children and their exposure to any violence or explicit sex in comics. This was the fear during the crusades of the 1950's - that children were obviously reading comics a lot and very often the material in these comics could be harmful to their mental state. If comics reflect society, which many cartoonist insist they do, then surely its reasonable to presume that children could form a very twisted view of society from reading some of the more violent comics such that existed during the 1950's. With the underground comics of course we are to presume that the "Adults only" label is actually enforced and then they're not available to children. This label is often seen by some critics as a gimmick to sell comics, it certainly seems more attractive when the material is "for your eyes only", so it puts the onus on the retailer or whoever sells the comics directly to the public to sell it to adults only. Hence, the children are protected at least and it follows along Eysenck & Nias advice in Sex,

Violence and the Media when they suggest that any material deemed pornographic, or violent should be removed from public view but 'accessible to those really intent on securing them' and this is a good compromise because its 'halfway between censorship and complete permissiveness'. What they're suggesting in other words is that certain delicate material could be available to the public, as they have a right to read whatever they like, but to, say, in the case of books, place them out of view, so at least the temptation isn't there and children are protected to some extent.

The question then arises of whether, Crumb's work, for example, is pornographic. If the question is put to the man himself, the answer is a definite NO. When interviewed in Rolling Stone, Crumb said the even Snatch, one of his earlier and most sex orientated comics, "isn't regular pornography. It comes at it from another angle. It's satire on itself; it makes fun of pornography" (Estren, 1974 Pg. 124): Susan Goodrick explains it further in her discussion in the Apex Treasury; 'The Violence and Sexual fantasies in his work are not pornography they are an attack on the "straight" cultures dictum that sex and anger are to be kept in tight reign at all costs'.

However, as we have already seen, Crumb's work is definitely explicit, but where I feel Crumb's work survives all this



pornographic fuss and its possible effect on kids, is in the very fact that its cartoons ! not "real" people in these pictures. IF Pornography does effect people, and its very debatable too, then I think it can only be in minor degree and then if the source was a comic book I would say its even less. If kids see rape, illicit sex and violence on TV or in pictures it is much easier for them to see themselves doing it than it would be if they've seen it in comics - the bridge between fiction and reality is that much greater.

TV definitely has altered ways of life and political opinion much more radically than comics and as a result it came in for a lot more abuse by the mass medial crusaders. Obviously, comics are not seen as a major threat to the youth, its still a relatively new medium and not everybody reads comics, but nearly everybody owns a TV Set. However, back in the 1950's comics were more widely read, as were books in general as TV was only just beginning to take off. The effects of comics on children would have been most notable then and although Dr. Wertham exadurated much of his findings one has to admit to understanding some many other examples he presented as dangers to the youth. There's one particular scene in an E.C. Comic story by Jack Davis which was brought up again and again in support of censorship. The story called Foul Play shows a game of baseball in which the ball is

actually a human head, the torso is used a defence guard and the intestines are laid out as markings on a field. Another picture in the booklet has been criticised for its text ; the scene shows two corpses being dragged along the road by a car and the captions read : These \*\*\*\*\* !! gravel roads are tough on tyres !! But y'a gotta admit there's nothing like them for ERASING FACES".  
(Fuchs & Reitberger, 1972, Pg 115)

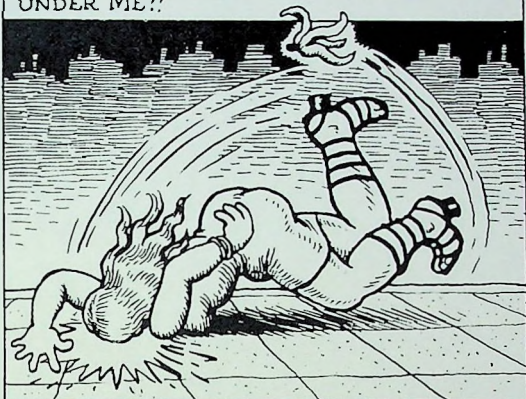
No child could remain untouched by such horrors and books with these horror stories and similar were always readily available to the children, it doesn't come as a surprise then that the Comics Code Authority, Dr. Wertham and his friends got all the support they needed to clamp down on the freedom of comics.

Today, it would be more relevant for us to look at the moral and social values and standards that comics offer to young people rather than question whether they may be harmful or not. One of the most important issues that must be looked at is the portrayal of women, since as we often see, in this male dominated society, there is often a lot of sexism and sometimes outright violence shown against women. Indeed, the underground comics scene has been dominated by male cartoonists and this is bound to produce an unbalanced view. Crumb agrees - "I really am against sexism, I mean against discrimination based on sex. I think women do it as much as men do. But since we live in a male dominated



Fig. 32

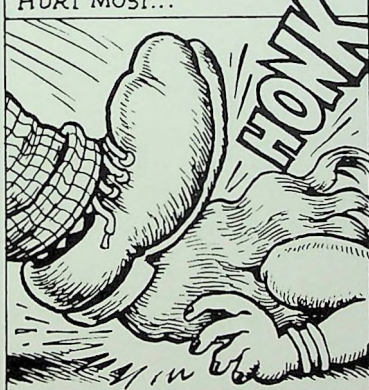
**S**UDDENLY IT SEEMED AS IF SOMEONE HAD PULLED THE WHOLE WORLD OUT FROM UNDER ME!!



**I** FELT LOST...CONFUSED...AIMLESS....AND I WAS IN PAIN...



**I**T WAS THE DEGRADATION, THE HUMILIATION, THAT HURT MOST...



...BEING STEPPED ON...LETTING PEOPLE WALK ALL OVER ME...



**I** LET THEM USE ME FOR A DOOR-MAT...BUT I DIDN'T CARE...I'D LOST ALL PRIDE...



**I** ALLOWED MYSELF TO BE DRAGGED THROUGH THE MUD...IT DIDN'T MATTER...



Fig.32; The Bleeding Heart Syndrome by Crumb.





Fig. 33





society, women suffer more from it". (Donahue & Goodrick, 1974, Pg. 14). But Crumb will go on depicting women as he does, perhaps he doesn't feel comfortable enough with women to treat them better than sex objects. Crumb adds 'I've been attacked by womens liberation. They say I'm a "chauvinist pig" getting rich be degrading women. But I think its healthy to get that stuff out in the open where you can laugh at it and understand it rather than keep it hidden and festering'. That's easy for him to say, but it might at least go some say to quieten the angry shouts from the feminists. However, as soon as he has said all this one can just hear the tail end of a snigger, so typical of Crumb. That's the real Robert Crumb and this attitude is what prevails in his work - one minute he's deeply concerned and even apologetic for his work, then at the end he just says to hell with it. The Adventures of Robert Crumb Himself shows us exactly his trying, but changeable personality. The story shows Crumb going in search of "professional training" at the National School of Hard Knocks". The story continues to show representations of Law, Education and Religion in society as they beat and kick into him the "virtues of honesty, humility, obedience, self control..." (Fig. 33) The final act of the ritual involves a nun who raises an axe about to chop off Crumb's penis - now that's going too far, Crumb grabs the axe and decapitates the good sister and runs for it. The laugh then comes in the last two frames, again in typical Crumb

style, he joins the "School of Hard Knockers"!!! where he then gets the "gurls". To sum up he adds "So, I'm a male chauvinist pig .... nobody's perfect (Crumb, 1976, Pg. 40)

And Crumb's final word to us is this :

There's only one country in the world where a person could get away with expressin' theirselves as freely as I do ! .. an' that's right here in the good ol' U.S.A. and don't choo forget it!. So when I tear down this country an' criticize our society, remember I do it with love.

(Crumb, 1976, Pg. 8)

Crumb is quite entitled of course to criticize society through his art and it may be welcomed if his work highlights the injustices and maladies of society today. However, from reading his comics he does more harm than good. For example, he tends to glorify rather than "criticize" the abuse of women. As we have already seen, he often depicts himself in the comics as a perverted sex maniac, and as his comics are overtly sexual he seems to wallow in sexual fantasy himself, personally. Who are we to judge the man? But we can criticize Crumb on the grounds that his work can be a danger to society (however small) and very much like a social disease which he is supposed to be exposing himself. It's typical too of people like Crumb to remind us of individual liberty and freedom of speech ("in good ol' USA") when faced with censorship. But as is highlighted by Eysenck & Nias



(Sex violence and the media) this freedom of speech is too often used by people who can incite racial hatred and violence. Crumb at the very least, could be found guilty of incitement to violence against women. Eysenck and Nias, in their book have outlined proposals for censorship in the media (in particular TV and film) and they are fair in their criticisms of pornography admitting that :

the portrayal of sex and violence in the media does not affect the attitudes and behaviour of viewers : that these effects are variable, depending on the details of presentation and the personality of the viewers .... our recommendations suggest a closer watch on the portrayal of violence in the media and also certain restrictions on the portrayal of pornography, though not of erotica.

They agree that pornography should be judged in terms of the context (ie. in the context of straight unperverted sex, pornography is acceptable) but they stress that 'where the context is hostile to women, as most pornographic films are, we feel that such films should fall under the category of incitement to violence towards minority groups - even though women are not a minority group'. Even though here, they are discussing pornographic films, it could just as easily apply to the work of Crumb and some of his contemporaries. In the following quotation simply replace the word "films" with "comix". Eysenck and Nias continue

that such films do constitute a clear sense of incitement to maltreat women, downgrade them to

a lower status, regard them as mere sex objects, and elevate male "machismo" to a superior position in the scale of values. Evaluative conditioning, modelling, and desensitization all point to the same conclusion, namely that such presentations have effects on men's attitudes which are detrimental to women; in fairness to more than one half of the population, such incitements should be proscribed".

This may be coming down too hard on comics than necessary, however if we agree that pornography can be damaging to society then censorship of it should effect all the media, and to include comics, and if Crumb claims his comics are not pornography, he can't, however convince us that they're not degrading to women. (Figs. 34 - 37)

The debate on the influence of comics is an on going one. Comics have their supporters who fail to see any harm in them at all and such supporters included our psychologists too - Dr. Jenny Cozens, an English psychologist, recently wrote in Good Housekeeping Magazine (Issue Feb. 1990) the 'horror has been a part of children's literature since Grimm's Fairy Tales'. It helps children feel safe because they can project their more frightening feelings onto a fantasy. In the same article which considers 2000 AD comic (Figs 38 & 39) (directed at children) increasingly violent, Dr. Cozens is supported by Martin Barker (author of Ideology, Power and the Critics. Barker says here that



# THE DEVIL MADE ME DRAW IT

Intellectual but  
Pleasure Loving  
Jewish American  
Princess →

Well Fed →

Big Strong Legs  
from Dancing Classes  
& Athletic Games →

Expensive  
Custom-Made  
Boots →

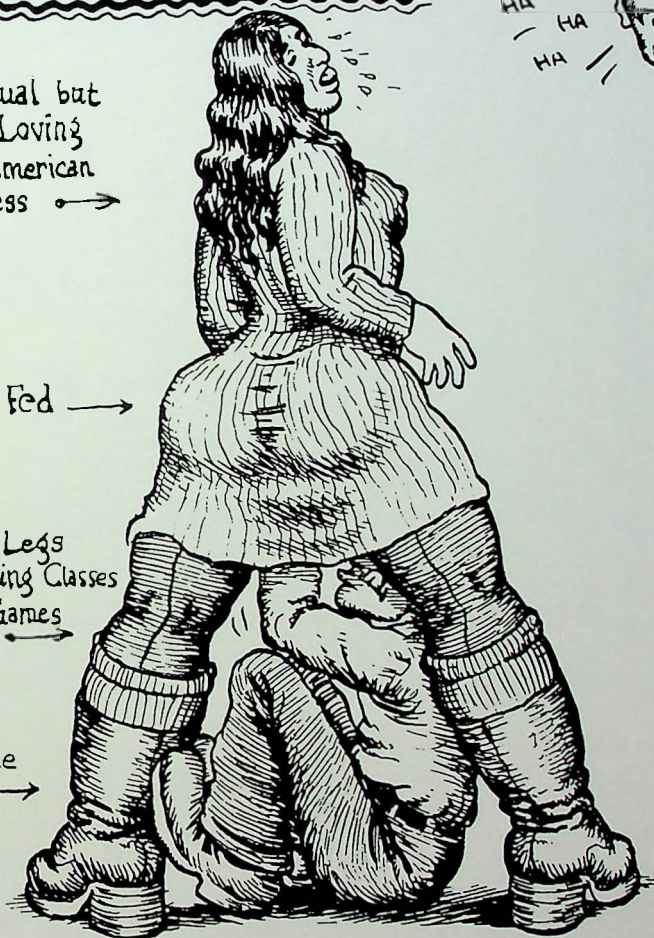


Fig. 34



A NEW MAGAZINE JUST FOR:  
WOMEN WITH RADICAL FORWARD PELVIC TILT...

# SHELF

JAN. '89  
\$2.95

## REAR-END ROMPS:

EXCITING FUN  
IDEAS FOR YOU  
& YOUR MATE  
TO UTILIZE  
YOUR  
BOUNTIOUS  
BOTTOM!

NEW  
EXERCISES  
TO KEEP IT  
HIGH, ROUND  
& HARD!

## SHELF-POSSESSED!



A HUSBAND  
WHO LOVED  
THE SHELF  
TOO MUCH!

THE MOVING DRAMA OF A  
CONFIRMED STEATOPYGIC

DAZZLING  
FOTOS OF 5  
NEW SHELF  
DISCOVERIES!

## STEATOPYGIA:

A GENETIC  
BLESSING,  
BUT NOT IN  
DISGUISE!

by Anthropologist  
Dr. Cecilia Franchescini

STOP  
TRYING  
TO HIDE  
IT!!

LEARNING TO  
LIVE WITH  
YOUR SHELF

BY DR. STEVEANNE AUERBACH



Fig. 35



WHY IS ART A TEMPORARY DIVISION

R. CRUMB'S

# MOMENTS of GLORY

DETROIT, 1966:  
SHOWING OFF MY YOUNG WIFE'S  
SPECTACULAR LEG MUSCLES TO  
BOB RHODES, ANOTHER LOVER  
OF BIG WOMEN.

I DON'T ASK  
FOR MUCH...  
OR MAYBE I  
DO...



Fig. 36



Imaginary  
Girl  
(against the wall)



Fig. 37



'Violence has been around since the Bible and Shakespeare. 2000 AD is not a horror comic but an ironic political fantasy which uses the future as a springboard'.

Dr. Cozen's argument, especially, seems to support the theory of "Catharsis" which Eysenck & Nias describe as when "fantasies satisfy a need and are used when a delay in gratification is necessary. They also point out that 'Catharsis is derived from the Greek word for purgation meaning to dissipate or purge an emotion'. In the many investigations into sex and violence in the media there have been many claims made on this theory of Catharsis but unfortunately there is much more evidence to support the opposite view to Catharsis. Catharsis basically claims that the viewing of violence on TV, can have beneficial effects by allowing the viewer to purge himself of aggressive tendencies. Similarly, the theory is used to support pornography by claiming that by "substitution" a person can live out their sexual fantasies by reading or watching on TV pornographic material, thus satisfying their desires without actually acting it out themselves. However, Eysenck & Nias points out that: exposure to pornography may further increase the strength of the unacceptable urges, and there seems no reason why sooner or later the person will want to act out his fantasies. To suggest pornography might serve instead of the deviant act could possibly apply in the case of minor sexual variations, such as Voyeurism but hardly for the more "active" and involved sex crimes such as rape and sadism.

Fig. 38

**2000AD**  
FEATURING  
**JUDGE DREDD**

**THE BIG  
HARD  
ONE**

**BELIEVE  
IT!**

**ON SALE EVERY WEEK IN COLOUR**  
FROM NEWSAGENTS AND SPECIALIST OUTLETS, 40p

—CLIFF ROBINSON—

Fig.38; Advertisement for 2000AD as it appeared in Viz comic.



Fig. 39



Fig. 39; 2000AD - Judge Dredd.

Various experimental studies have been carried out to test the Catharsis theory, one of those most cited to support the theory was done by Feshbach & Singer (1971) - for six weeks boys were restricted to choosing from either 72 violent or 152 neutral programmes. The results that followed showed an increase in aggressive behaviour from the boys in the violent TV group than in the neutral group. (Eysenck & Nias, 1978, Pg. 131) But as Eysenck & Nias point out there is a simple explanation for these results :

The boys in the neutral TV group were not very keen on their programmes and often made protests about been so restricted in their choice. This resentment may have been expressed in the form of aggression, thus accounting for their scores relative to the violent group.

A further experiment then by Parke et al (1977) is just one of many that show a more adverse effect of violent TV viewing.

Delinquent boys aged 14 to 18 years tended to become more aggressive during the week in which they watched violent rather than neutral films. The study was repeated with more frequent assessments of aggression and with neutral films rated just as exciting as the violent ones; similar results were obtained.

(Eysenck & Nias, 1978, Pg. 131)

From the many experiments like this, it is obvious that sex and violence on TV can affect the viewer adversely. Obviously, some form of censorship is required, allowing for some degree of



violence and acceptable levels of pornography. Compromise is essential since we must allow for all tastes, even if sometimes they disagree with our own religious or general moral beliefs. The same must apply to comics. Children's comics should be monitored, as these will often offer children their first (and most impressionable) views of society. The Adult comics then should be treated with greater respect also, making sure that if the material could prove offensive or damaging in any way then at the very least its sale should be very restricted and prominent public display of the material should be prohibited. In addition the "Adults only" labels should be seen to work, and children will be unable to purchase the adult comics.



Fig. 40

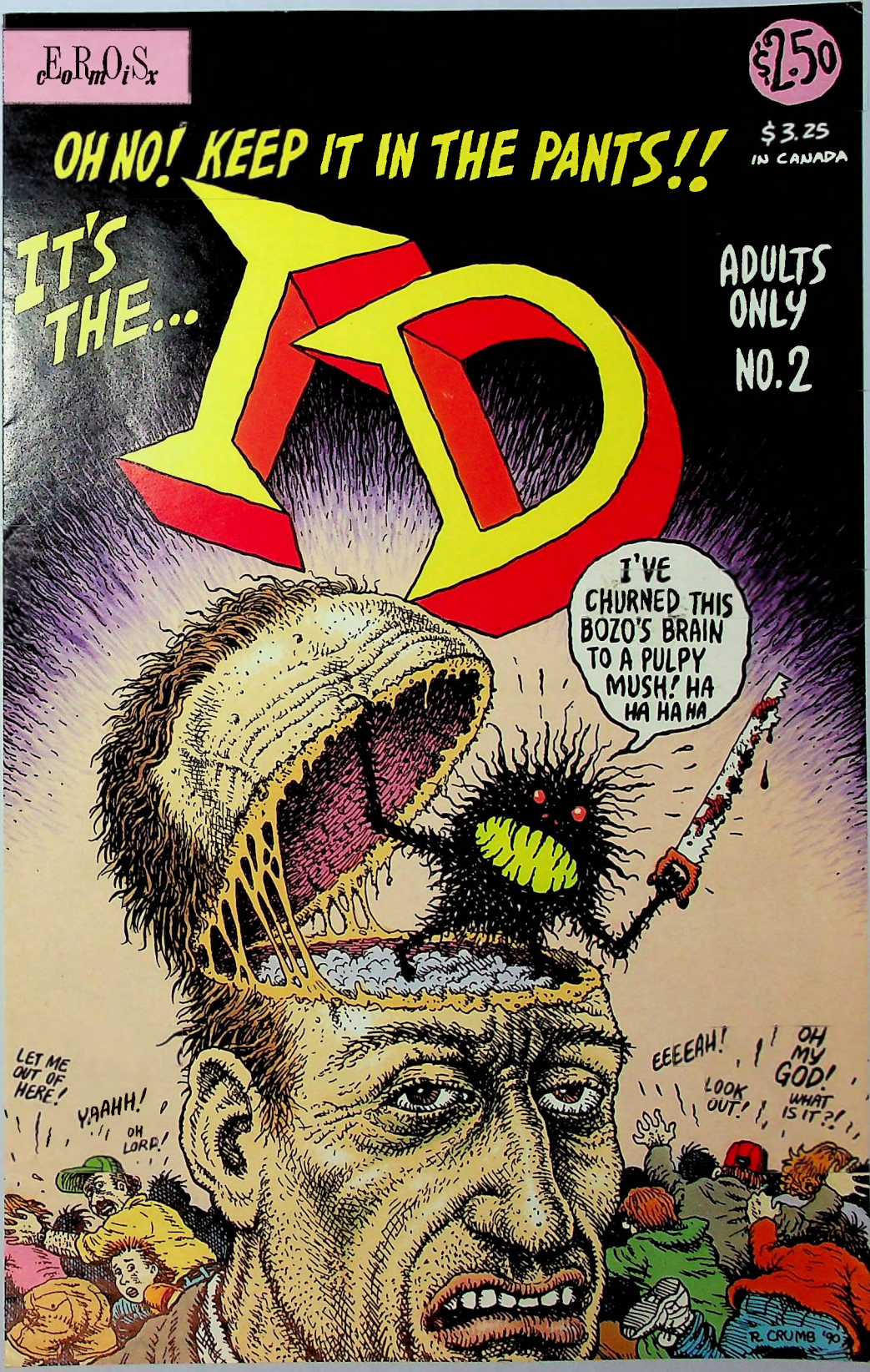


Fig. 40; The very latest work by Crumb.



Fig. 41

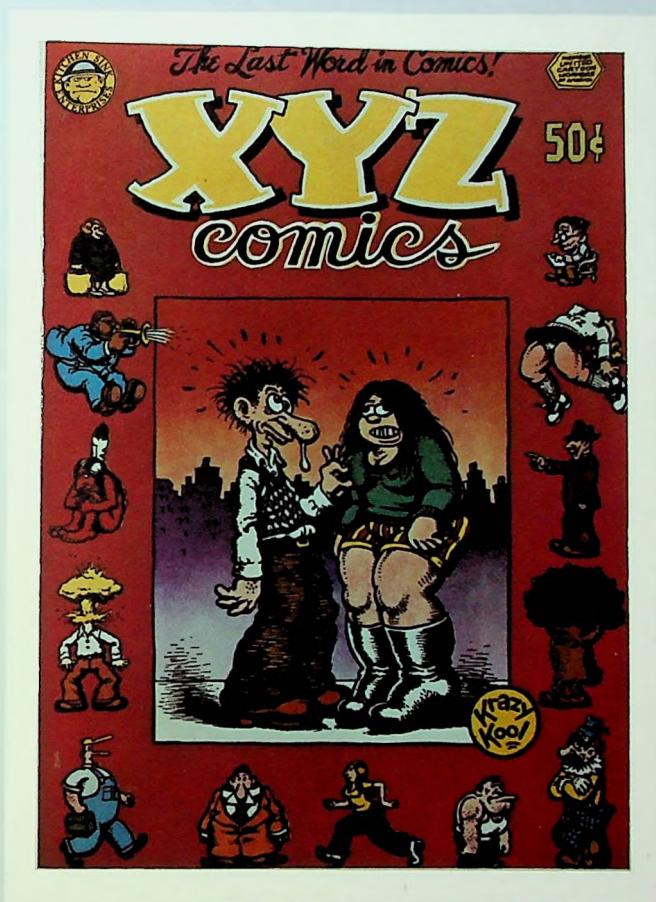


Fig. 41; All Crumb comic book from 1972.

## Chapter Three

Underground Comics Update -

the success of Viz and other alternative comics today



Crumb's cartoons are still available today. In their original forms, they are collectors items, they are very rare of course and therefore quite expensive. There are also reprints of his work and compilations of various strips available. In addition Crumb is still producing new material although not in any great quantity. There are plenty of other artists too who continue to exploit the sex themes in comics and these comics are found (usually displayed on the higher shelves) in most comic book speciality stores. But for the general public (ie. anybody, regardless of whether they have a special interest in comics or not) there has lately become available a new style of comic book which borrows much from the original underground comix.

The comics I speak of include one of the best selling magazines in Britain, Viz. (Fig. 41) This comic is familiar now to most people and it has a number of imitators including Zit, (Fig. 47), Gas (Fig. 48) and Brain Damage. (Fig. 51).

All of the above comics (except Brain Damage) are very similar in style. Viz started it off and the rest copied the exact same format. These relatively new style of comics combine traditional frame by frame cartoon strips with fake tabloid



15291  
VIRGIN

1. 1 25

**\$3.95**

No. 46

NOT FOR SALE TO CHILDREN

# SEX AND SEX AND ROCK AND ROLL

# Confessions of a pop groupy

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

# STARS BEHIND BARS

**Now in session  
~ Britain's first  
Celebrity Court!**

MR MELLIE - YOU HAVE BEEN FOUND GUILTY BY THIS COURT OF BEHAVING IN A PREDICTABLE MANNER ON THE COVER OF AN 'ADULT' COMIC. HAVE YOU ANYTHING TO SAY BEFORE SENTENCE IS PASSED?

BOLLOCKS

HMM.

**JUDGE DILES**

EEK EEK EEK!  
I'M SO TINY EVERYONE  
THINKS I'M A MOUSE!

# TRAITOR!

## We blow lid off Churchill's balloon Nazi surrender bid

ISSN 0952-7966



9 770952 796013



Fig. 43



Fig. 43; Nasty postman character from Viz comic.

Fig. 44



Fig. 44; Sid delicately chat's up another unsuspecting female in Viz comic.

Fig. 45

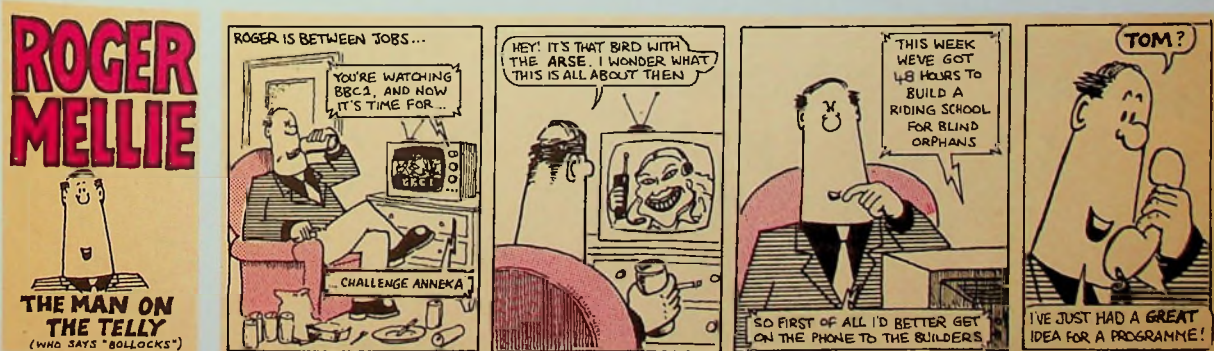


Fig. 45; Roger Mellie ( Viz ), often uses existing T.V programmes and makes up his own less desirable versions.



Fig. 46



Fig. 46; The most popular of all Viz characters.



# CLIFF MUST DIE!

Pop favourite Cliff Richards has been sentenced to death by members of a cult religious group who have branded the baby faced star an EVIL puppet of SATAN.

"Cliff Richards must die", says Blackburn based Derek Qualcast, self proclaimed High Priest at the Church of the Latter Day Scientific Christologists of the Seventh Holy Grail. And he accuses Richards of using his music to preach evil to unsuspecting record buyers and fans.

"Richards is the anti-christ", blasted Mr Qualcast, who is 57. "He is in league with the forces of darkness, and is sent by the Devil, to lure us from the path of righteousness. The words of his songs are thinly veiled catalogues of sexual corruption. He preaches fleshy pursuits and sinful activities, such as girl on girl, topless relief, oral and shaving pleasures".

## PORNOGRAPHIC

Mr Qualcast claims that Richards' hits contain Satanic messages. "Records

such as 'Devil Woman' speak for themselves, while 'Carrie' clearly takes its name from the devil worship pornographic film of the same name. And 'Goodbye Sam. Hello Samantha' is an open invitation to young people to indulge in acts of unfathomable evil, possibly involving farmyard animals".

## VIRGINS

Qualcast fears that Richards has already claimed the lives of thousands of young virgins, and goats. For he believes the secret of the baby faced star's boyish good looks is the blood of freshly killed victims, which he drinks every day. And worse still, he is convinced that 68 year old Richards practices voodoo, black magic and has the ability to turn himself into a bat.

## Muslim style 'Fatwa' on Peter Pan of Pop

In a 15 year campaign to silence the singer Qualcast has visited every record shop in Blackburn, and one in Rochdale, sprinkling holy water on their doorsteps. But despite his efforts the ageless star's string of chart hits has continued uninterrupted. However, Mr Qualcast vows to continue the fight.

## SPUNK

"It is a clear cut case of Good against evil," he told us yesterday. "The Bible tells us that on the seventh day it was written that the heavens shall open and he will be



Richards - 'sent by Devil'

tempted three times for forty days and forty nights, and yea on the forth time the clouds shall part and down will rain the Devil's spunk and spawn and a multitude of frogs and boils, and so you shall know him by the name of Lucifer, and his name shall be Ahab, who begat Cain and Abel who begat George who begat Harry Webb who is called Cliff Richards. For so it is written, and so shall be". Mr Qualcast added.

# EATING SMARTIES MADE ME GROW WOMEN'S TITS

A Cleveland man yesterday claimed that Smarties made him grow women's tits.

Unemployed panel beater Bill Strimmer of Billingham claims that eating the candy coated chocolate sweets resulted in him developing a pair of 38 inch 'D' cup women's breasts.

"I was horrified, and embarrassed", Bill told us. "They were huge, with nipples and everything. I didn't know where to turn".

## WOMEN'S

Despite support from his wife, who lent him a bra, Bill faced ridicule from work-mates at the garage where he was employed, and eventually he was forced to quit his £10,000 a year job.

"I lost my job for having women's tits, and its all because of Smarties", says Bill, 42, who is claiming £2 million compensation from Smarties manufacturer Rowntrees for loss of earnings due to women's tits.

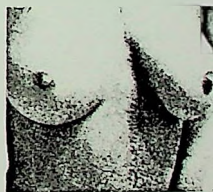
"I always ate Smarties, ever since I was a kid", he told us yesterday. "But the problems began when they introduced the blue ones." Within three days of eating the new blue coloured sweets, Bill noticed he was growing a pair of women's tits.

"I went to my doctor and he immediately asked if I'd been eating blue Smarties. He told me to stop, and sure enough the tits disappeared. But by then it was too late. I was already out of a job, and I was the laughing stock of the whole town".

## TITS

A spokesman for Rowntrees confirmed that blue Smarties had been introduced for a limited period, but was able to state categorically that they did not cause women's tits.

-claims man



A pair of tits similar to the ones claimed to have been grown by Mr Strimmer

Mr Strimmer refused to make any comment until he had spoken to his solicitor. "The blue ones definitely made me grow women's tits and I'll sue them for every penny they've got", he told us yesterday.

Mr Strimmer last hit the headlines in 1972 when he claimed that sucking Olde English flavour Spangles had caused him to grow women's tits.

# THE EYE AT NIGHT!

An Aberdeen woman may be forced to sell her house - because she claims TV astrologer Patrick Moore has been using his telescope to observe heavenly bodies - through her bedroom window!

## PEEPING

Glenda McBride, 58, says she has been forced to dress and undress with her curtains closed since peeping Patrick had a new extra powerful lens fitted to his telescope at his observatory in Selsey, Sussex.



Astrologer Moore yesterday

"He ought to keep his boggly eyes fixed firmly on the stars, and not on my tits", said Glenda yesterday.

newspaper editorials, (Fig. 46). At a glance the comics appear to be just regular Beano sale comics but it doesn't take long for the viewer to realise that there is quite a difference. In fact there's quite a few surprises here for the reader who has been conditioned through the years by reading The Beano, The Dandy, Whizzer and Chips etc. and here lies the success of these comics.

Basically all the themes and styles of regular comics have been turned on their head. The characters even look the same but now we see them using foul language, getting violent and even having sex with each other.

Viz comic, the original and still probably the best of this genre, is home to a host of crazy, sex-mad, abusive and some very stupid characters. The characters come and go, not always guaranteed to appear in the next issue. However, due to public demand some characters continue to appear each issue. It seems the most popular of all characters are Roger Mellie - the Man on the telly, (Fig. 44), The Fat Slags (Fig. 45) and Sid the Sexist, (Fig. 43) but there are many more. Roger Mellie is your regular TV personality but with a big difference. He enjoys drinking on the job (Ace Lager usually), he's a bit of a womaniser and he wouldn't think twice about uttering "Bollocks"



on live TV. Sid the Sexist is another "one of the lads" who as his grand title tells us, is an out and out male chauvinist sexist pig. Sid is usually found hanging around with his pals, getting drunk at discos, and always on the hunt for a "bird" with whom he can prove his manhood. However, with such blatantly disgusting chatup lines as 'Do ye like jewellery luv? ... suck my cock its a gem'!!, "our hero" is usually left in agonising pain from a kick to the nether regions by the horrified female.

By and large its the verbal content of these comics that are most offensive. The text is spiked with street slang and generally very bad language. No asterisks used, ever !! The cartoons are usually very simple and printed either in just black and white or one spot colour.

One of the most popular stories of all since Viz began is The Fat Slags. Again its very simply drawn and the story lines are based around the two fat girls "San" and "Tray" who enjoy nothing better than a lot of booze, plenty of "ciggies" and sex; anywhere they can get it and with anybody !! Because they're so fat and horrible they usually attract desperate have-a-go drunken men or indeed the fat slags will force themselves on some simple-minded drunken fool.



**EXCLUSIVE**

# ELVIS IS DEAD

## HIDE YOUR POSSESSIONS...



... ITS  
MADASS HUSSEIN

## ISSUE 1:

**MONTHLY**

## HORRORSCOPES: THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUR LIFE

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**JULIAN  
CLARY**

**STARS AS  
ALI IN NEW  
MOTION  
PICTURE**



**THIS MONTH'S  
HOTTEST REVIEW:  
"THE LAST  
SUPPER"**

# WINNIE CAN'T FIND NELSONS' COLUMN



ISSN 0961-3439



9 770961 343003

**MADASS HUSSEIN · SALMAN RUSHDIE**  
**JUDGE BRANSTON · GAVIN ST JAMES**

**ANGUS McBASTARD • TERRY THE TWAT • DOG  
BILLY BUNT • MARY LAMB • PLUS MANY MORE**

Fig. 48



Fig. 49



Fig. 49; Gas comic, similar in style and layout to Viz comic.



Fig. 50



Fig. 50; Nasty character from Zit comic.



Fig. 51



Fig. 51; More blood and discust from Zit.



Not For Sale To Children

88

# THE DAMAGE

Vol. 2 No. 8

only  
**95 P**



## GOD STRIKES BACK IN THE DAMAGE!

He's more  
**omnipotent**  
than ever!



770955 274016

Fig. 52

(Tin Tin's in a fix & pray for Starve Trek)



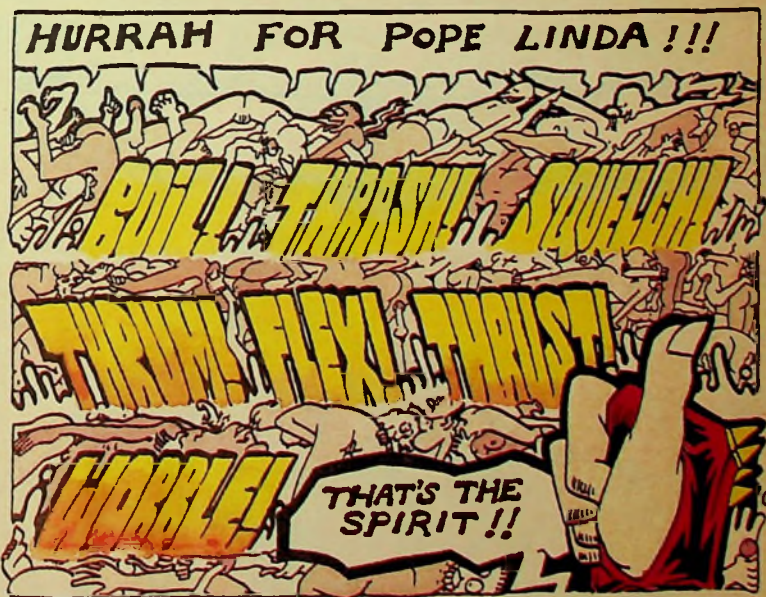




Fig. 53

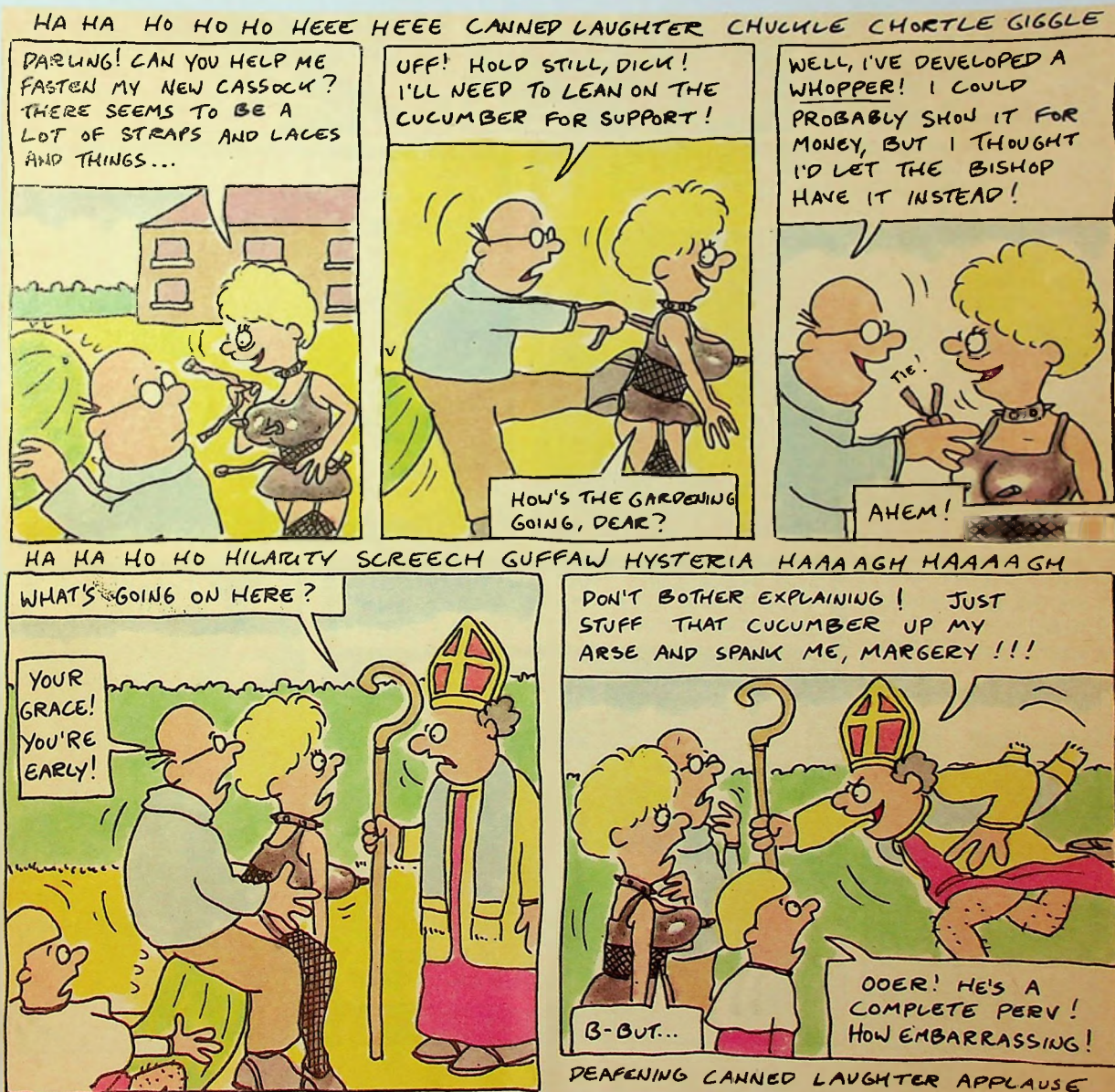


Fig. 53; More of the same from Brain Damage.



Fig. 54

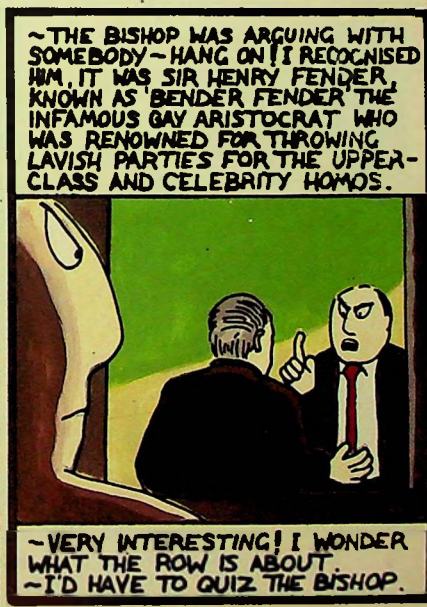


Fig.54; Cameraman from Brain Damage.

With these examples being very typical of these comics' content,, it comes at a surprise to see how easily available they are to the public. Viz comic really took off in 1985 when Virgin Books recognised its potential and promoted the magazine. Recently, then the comic became available in Easons as well as many other smaller newsagents and shops. All these comics carry the label "Not for Sale to Children" but whether this is actually enforced by the staff of these stores is uncertain. As I am a frequent visitor to Easons in O'Connell Street, Dublin, I recently noticed that Viz and Zit were removed from the music and comic book shelf where they always had been displayed, to a position on the highest shelf next to the special interest magazines (out of reach to children). When I questioned the Manager on their reasons for this, I was met with a puzzled look and after more probing questions on the content of these comics, thereby informing him for the first time of their explicit nature, the Manager had little to say other than they have never had any complaints for selling the comics and indeed anybody could buy them regardless of age. This simply highlighted a very relaxed censorship of books generally, even though in this case, the books which look just like regular comics, may be read by children.



I don't think Crumb could ever see his work available in these stores, but then, Viz comic and the others are big business for all concerned. Its remarkable that Viz is today the third best selling magazine in Britain, with on the TV Guides doing better. A recent article in the The Evening Herald reported that the Viz business is now worth £25 million. The article states that the comic sells a million copies per issue and Easons reported that Viz sales are 'absolutely brilliant, it flies off the shelves'. An Irish version of Viz also appeared, last year. The comic is called Crack and although it's again similar to Viz, there is a more Irish feel to its articles. This comic is the product of a group of Irish cartoonists coming together under the title of "The Irish Cartoon Co-op", and with some initial success with the first issue, they are hoping how to secure some financial backing from local publishers. The Evening Herald article of March 5th, 1991, though, reveals that this support is still not forthcoming and its eight months now since the release of the first issue of Crack. When asked then if the Irish magazine would be as outrageous as Viz, a Co-op member said 'Well they are absolutely filthy, I don't know if there is any point in trying to compete with them there'. But isn't this where the success of Viz lies?

Meanwhile, Viz continues to gain more readers and just like the undergrounds the more controversial the material, the better. As yet there hasn't been any criticism from the public of these comics and nobody seems to be offended by the material, or have there? There has recently been an example where a Viz character was used to advertise on TV, Tennents Lager. During 1988/89 Tennents ran an advertisement which used "Tracey" from The Fat Slags. The ASA (Advertising Standards Authority) in England, states that it received altogether 8,095 complaints from the public during the twelve months up to June 1989, many of which were directed at the Tennents ad. The complaint came mainly from women who felt that the ad. (and the Tracey character herself) was sexist, (Campaign July 1990). It goes to prove another point I made earlier about the more damaging possibilities TV has over, say comics. The material is there, in Easons if you want it, but don't force it on us via the television, the critics seem to say. The shouts of "sexist" show us too that cartoonists are still treating women badly in their comics and not much had changed since Crumb's explicit sexist comics. Nevertheless, there hasn't been any noticeable lobbying against sexism etc. in the comics today. I recently contacted the "Campaign Against Pornography and Censorship" organisation in Dublin to see if they had any special reservations on the sale of comics like Viz. I supplied a



representative with examples of Crumb's work and Viz to remind her of what's currently available in "adult" comics. Basically, the reaction was that Viz was not pornography (of course !) but that this comic and definitely Crumb's work displayed openly a degradation of women. However, this organisation at least will not be campaigning against the comics when they launch their campaign against pornography. They do mention in their Policy Statement, under the headline Pornography and Sexism that

images which represent women in sex stereotyped ways (such as "Janet and John" children books, soap powder "housewives", "Oxo mums", Mills and Boon and Jackie magazine heroines) are an essential part of creating and maintaining the system of sexism (and) that pornography is propaganda against women which perpetuates sexism, sex discrimination and sexual violence.

So the comics merely contribute in a small way to a great deal of sexism and women exploitations in the media. Besides, the comics I've just mentioned do not concern themselves with sex alone and a lot of characters are just the same as regular comic characters but with some very peculiar traits. They're intended as Adult comics and I think they can only be appreciated by adults because unlike the kids, they will associate with the somewhat perverse sense of humour.

## Conclusion



What I have discussed in this thesis, involves just one area of a relatively short but quite varied comic book history. Comics lost their innocence a long time ago. Ever since the 1950's, when there was a great interest in crime and horror comics, the authorities woke up and saw that comics were not just simple fun literature for kids. Heavy censorship resulted in a lot of publishers and cartoonists going out of business. Then, in the 1960's something new grew out of the censorship. The underground artists threw all the rules out the window and produced unadulterated scandalous comic strips. No taboo subject went unexplored in the comics. In particular the subject of sex was greatly explored and one of the best cartoonists, Robert Crumb, attracted the most controversy in comics especially with his sex comics. It provided me with material that exposed what the underground artists were all about generally; their desire to discuss any subject they wanted regardless of any taboos or laws of censorship, to highlight what was wrong with their society and to generally shock the reader with a devilish enthusiasm. But one of the main issues thrown up by Crumb's (and the others) sex comics is the amount of sexism in the comics. Crumb was definitely guilty of depicting women in a very unflattering and often degrading way. There were artists too like S. Clay Wilson

and Rory Hayes who were even worse than Crumb in their depiction of women. Crumb done his best to address the issue but in the end, he could never make up his mind about women himself and the two sides of his nature came out in his characters. The effects these comics have on people has been debated down the years. Comics generally were studied by Commissions in America during the 1950's and 1960's and it proved at least that there could be some adverse effects on children reading certain horror comics plus any comic depicting violence. Generally, comics which paint a distorted view of society will affect a child's view on that society and comics are where kids will learn their earliest moral lessons. Adults too can be affected if, for example, comics continue to add to the various media which depict women as sex objects or second class citizens and so adding to the general prevailing chauvinistic atmosphere.

The success of Viz just goes to show how much the comics business has changed in recent years. There is definitely an increase of interest in alternative comics now by practising cartoonists and the insatiable public. The cartoonists owe a lot to the growing number of comic book speciality shops and distributors who encourage the marketing of comics of all styles. The network has also nourished a growing number of adult buyers



and collectors (who's greater spending power will eventually help keep the speciality cartoonist happy, financially).

Younger people too today are much more visually aware and more intelligent in their reading habits and with comic book collecting now becoming very trendy (as a trip into "Forbidden Planet" - Dawson Street, Dublin will verify) the comics industry has never been healthier, at least, not since the 1950's anyway.

The very latest comics to appear are the "Graphic Novels", and perhaps under this title they will acquire a new respectability. A lot of these books are of a very high standard, artists combine some deeper story lines with excellent graphic, sometimes quite painterly, artwork.

The fact is, in my opinion, not enough attention is brought to the public about the quality and beauty of this artform. Too much money, reviews, general support is given to the so called higher arts, like painting and sculpture. More gallery space could also be given to the graphic arts and then to accommodate comics. It would after all open the museums and galleries to a whole new audience. At the moment, these institutions cater for an elite (very often upper-class) group and a very small group

when you compare the popularity of comics to fine art generally. It may surprise some people to hear that William Hogowth was better known for his cartoons and caricatures than his paintings during the 18th Century and along with artists like Thomas Rowlandson and James Gillray brought us some excellent examples of social satire, which is afterall what the undergrounds were all about. We can thank the likes of cartoonist Bill Blackbeard who founded The Academy of Comic Art in 1967 in San Francisco, for their efforts to raise the public standing of comic books but for now we, comic lovers, are best served by pop artists like Warhol, and in particular Roy Lichenstein who have used comics in a different way to make it their own "fine art".

In Comics, an Anatomy of a Mass Medium Reitberger and Fuchs remind us of the value of comics :

Comics are useful reference material for sociological, historical or semantic research into advertising and publicity, as well as being of interest to museums... of course a large number of comics, are of a very low standard but the "bad" comics are the most interesting from the sociological and psychological point of view. For in this mess of cheap entertainment unexpected pearls of beauty witherto undiscovered, suddenly appear. The same is true of Hollywood B movies.



And in the Handbook of American Popular Culture Thomas Inge points out that 'Comics serve as revealing reflectors of popular attitudes, tastes and mores and they speak directly to human desires, needs and emotions.'

Comics are really only a young medium and what we're witnessing today in the artistic skill and variety of titles of comics is only the beginning. In a world that is becoming increasingly visual, (Comics can rise above any language barrier), comics will soon have their day !!

The picture-story, which critics disregard and scholars scarcely notice, has great influence at all times perhaps even more than written literature. More people will look at pictures than read books". Rodolphe Topfler (1845)  
(Reitberger and Fuchs 1975 Pg. 100)

And what can be said for the underground movement in comics? Well today, there's very little we can call true underground comics. The term itself is perhaps outdated since there are no many avenues "overground" through which the alternative comics can now be sold. In fact the alternative comics are getting a lot more attention commercially today because they're "different". So the days are gone when Crumb and his contemporaries would print up their comics on an old printing press and sell the rough produce on the streets.

It's important though that the cartoonists don't sell-out their talents ie. that they would restrict themselves in style, quality or content purely for commercial reasons. What made the undergrounds special was their genuine non-capitalist attitudes. They were true artists who were producing work for themselves first, and then for anyone who would appreciate the unrestricted produce of their talents. In the Apex Treasury of Underground Comics (Pg. 10) Susan Goodrick quotes Jay Lynch (one of the prominent cartoonists during the 1960's, and co-founder of Bijou Funnies) on the subject of underground comix :

Underground comix must keep evolving faster than the mass media can assimilate them. The danger is to fall into a formula we don't want to get like the straight magazines always printing the same stuff. Comix should stimulate, not make people feel secure.

Another underground artist, Denis Kitchen, shows us that every working cartoonist will eventually come to a great fork in the road of his future :

Must succumb to the harsh demands of capitalist economics and are swallowed up by the giant maws of faceless industry or the mass media, where their talent is soon exploited and drained. The others, through superior genetic chains (or perhaps divine guidance) choose the smaller path and become Underground Cartoonists. The rewards are small and the glory is never what they deserve, but this bank of hardy libertarians assume their role with Spartan dignity. It falls primarily on their shoulders



to lead the masses against the corrupt  
bourgeois institutions that oppress all mankind.  
(Estren 1974 Pg. 22)

If we were to look for the underground artist today we must look, in their work, for at least some of the following qualities. First of all, within a comic book you can expect a great variety of styles. Then, just as startling is the difference in quality of draughtsmanship which can range from amateur to expert (and often in the same comic). The next common fact about the underground comic is it's restricted availability. If you look in underground newspapers you might find comics and this is where they originally took aboard the "underground" tag. But, usually to acquire the comic books and magazines, the only way usually is to send off to the publishers by mail, because these comics are usually not sold on the newstands or your regular comic book stores. The artists themselves are unique too. Usually, they are young and politically aware, and their subject matter is usually contemporary and satirical. The artist may have work printed in a number of different comics at any given time, they work to much more relaxed deadlines and under very little preconditions. Then there's the subject matter, and basically the underground comics deal with whatever subjects their artists wish, in uncompromising visual and verbal terms. Very often these subjects will be taboo

to their society, such as Sex, Religion, Violence etc. hence the labels "Adults only" or "Not for sale to Children" which most comics carry on their front covers.

The Cartoonists who founded the underground comics in the 1960's are still working today, in varying degrees and their work will introduce the newcomer to the great underground comics scene. These artists include Robert Crumb, Art Spiegelman, Gilbert Shelton, Skip Williamson, S. Clay Wilson, Jay Lynch, Jay Kinney, Harvey Kurtzman, Victor Moscoso and Denis Kitchen, and there's many more.

Most underground artists cite Harvey Kurtzman as the most important moulders of their own styles and attitudes. Kurtzman was one of the original artists working on Mad magazine, which is still going today. The early Mad was very similar to the undergrounds in its crazy drawing and crazy plots. According to Wendel Alan Pheg (Googiewaumer comics),: 'Harvey Kurtzmans effort with Help! and Mad and all those other is one of the keys to the whole revolution' (Estren 1974 Pg. 41).

Kurtzman himself on the other hand gives much praise to Robert Crumb in his introduction to Carload of Comics :



Before Robert C. cartoons were, by and large, fantasies. By and large I say. Some of us toyed with "Real" comics back then in the 1950's. But, most of all the cartooning was (and still is) fantasy. And much of it real dumb fantasy. Crumb, the pathfinder, leading point to his fellow undergrounders brought the gut reality to cartooning .... Crumb speaks reality and truth. If you're a discerning Crumb reader, if your interest goes beyond "the dirty parts", then you know him intimately. You know Crumb's life - his happiness, his disasters. You've gone deep inside his brain, into his sex, hate, love, dreams. He lays it all bare. He probes, he delves, he peels back the layers.

Mark J. Estren in his book The History of Underground Comics states that 'if the underground comics have produced a Mozart it is Robert Crumb'. In this book also Estren allows other underground artists to comment on Crumb ; George Metzger ; 'When Zap came out it blew my mind. Eventually I went to see Crumb. He's a weird guy, but a genius, I think. Very aware, he draws what he sees - a damn fine cartoonist'. Foolbert Sturgeon says : 'Crumb is important as an artist who makes current pressures and feelings expressible. The World'll never be the same'. One of the few women artists involved in the movement is Trina and she also voices her opinion via Estren's book. (Pg. 132) In particular she comments on the attitudes of the male cartoonists they're all hung up on something gross : shit, snot, cutting people's dicks off, rape, necro-

philia, always gross sex, always ugly sex. Women cartoonists that I know (and there are very few) aren't concerned with gross - rather, they're into decorative .... What does concern me is the hostility towards women I see in this work, especially by Crumb ... Crumb's porn upsets me, as does the work of a whole lot of other guys who think underground comix means porn. Rape is NOT FUNNY.

and as for that argument that the cartoonists are just reflecting society in their work Trina has this to say :

the cartoonists most guilty of sexism are politically obvious and have the social conscience of an oyster.... Spain (Spain Rodriguez) who really considered himself political until I recently corrected him, thought that sexism had something to do with fucking ..... they're (Cartoonists) are mostly all nice guys but they're political and social cretins.

On this strong feminist point, I finish my discussion on Underground Comics. The underground comics, in the end are just comics and probably should not be taken too seriously, however as we have seen, they can also be offensive, especially to women. Trina's point above should quite fairly represent the views of any offended female reader and I hope it adds balance to this discussion on the underground comics.



## **Bibliography**

1. **Baker, Martin** ; *Ideology, Power and the Critics*.  
Published by Manchester University Press, England, 1989.
2. **Crumb, Robert** ;  
(a) *Carload O' Comics - an anthology of choice strips and stories-1968 to 1987*  
Published by Belier Press , USA ,1976.  
(b) *Headcomix*  
Published by Simon and Schuster , USA, 1968.
3. **Davidson, Steef** ; *The Penguin Book of Political Comics*.  
Published by Penguin Books , England, 1982.
4. **Donahue, Don and Goodrick, Susan** ; *The Apex Treasury of Underground Comics*.  
Published by Apex Novelties, USA , 1974.
5. **Estren, Mark James** ; *A History of Underground Comics*.  
Published by Airlift Book Company , London, England, 1987.  
( First published by Straight Arrow Books, 1974 ).
6. **Eysenck, H.J. and Nias, D.K.** ; *Sex, Violence and the Media*.  
Published by Maurice Temple Smith Inc. , England, 1978.
7. **Fantagraphic Books** ; *The Best Comics of the Decade*.  
Published by Fantagraphic Books Inc., Washington, USA, 1990.
8. **Fuchs, Wolfgang and Reitberger, Reinhold** ; *Comics - An Anatomy of a Mass Medium*.  
Published by Studio Vista, London, England, 1972.
9. **Gifford, Dennis** ; *Encyclopedia of Comic Characters*.  
Published by Langman Group UK Limited, England, 1987.
10. **Horn, Maurice** ; *The World Encyclopedia of Comics*.  
Published by Chelsea House Publishers, London, England, 1976.
11. **Inge, Thomas** ; *Handbook of American Popular Culture*.  
Published by Greenwood Press, London, England, 1972.
12. **Lynch, Jay** ; *Best of Bijou Funnies*.  
Published by Bijou Publishing Empire, London, England, 1975.
13. **Marschall, Richard** ; *America's Great Comic - Strip Artists*.  
Published by Abbeville Press Inc., N.Y USA, 1989.
14. **South Bank Centre** ; *Folly and Vice - The Art of Satire and Social Criticism*.  
Published by The South Bank Centre , London, England, 1989.
15. **Victoria and Albert Museum**; *Penny Dreadfuls and Comics*.  
Published by the Victoria and Albert Museum, England, 1983.



## Comics

1. **Brain Damage** ; Vol. 8.  
Published by Tristar Publications Ltd, England, 1990.
2. **Dark Knight** ; Morrison, Grant and Janson, Claus.  
Published by D.C. Comics Inc., NY USA, 1990.
3. **Fabulous Freak Brothers** No.11; Shelton, Gilbert.  
Published by Knockabout Comics, London, England, 1990.
4. **I.D.** No. 2 ; Robert Crumb.  
Published by Fantagraphics Books, Washington, USA, 1990.
5. **Viz** No. 42, June/July 1990  
No. 44, Oct./Nov. 1990  
No. 46, Feb./Mar. 1991  
Published by House of Viz/John Brown Publishing Ltd., England.
6. **Wierdo** No. 20 .  
Published by Last Gasp Eco-Funnies, Cal., USA, 1987.
7. **Wonder Wart Hog -Escape from the Planet Sguootpeep** ; Shelton, Gilbert.  
Published by Knockabout Comics, London, England, 1990.
8. **Zit** ,issue 1  
Published by Humour Publications UK Ltd.,Sussex, England, 1991.

## Additional Sources

1. **Campaign** magazine issue 13 July 1990.  
Published by Haymarket, England.
2. **Comics Confidential** ; (video) ; a Ron Mann film.  
Produced by Don Haig, Martin Habury and Charles Lippincott.  
A Castle Communications Release, UK.
3. **Good Housekeeping** magazine, issue Sept. 1990.  
Published London, England.
4. **Print** magazine, issue Nov. - Dec. 1988.  
Published by R.C Publications Inc. NY, USA.

Fig. 55; Overleaf - last laugh from Bijou Funnies.





Fig. 55