RUNNING HEAD: REFLEXIVE COMICS

Reflexivity in Comic Art

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Explorations of reflexivity have been undertaken across a wide variety of disciplines. Film (see Ames, 1997; Burch, 1973, Recchia, 1991), literature (see Alter, 1975; McCaffery, 1982; Waugh, 1984), theater (see Schlueter, 1979), photography (see Burgin, 1982), painting (see Stoichita, 1997) and new media (see Szczepanik, 2002) have all been explored with regard to reflexive elements within their respective texts. Robert Stam (1985), in a widely influential book on the subject, writes that “Reflexive works break with art as enchantment and call attention to their own factitiousness as textual constructs” (1).

Most conceptualizations of reflexivity refer to it as a process in which the text calls attention to its own status as a fabrication (see Ames, 1997; Beggan, 2003; Pearson & Simpson, 2001). Some literary scholars apply a nearly identical definition to the terms “self-conscious fiction” (Alter, 1975) or “metafiction” (see McCaffery, 1982; Waugh, 1984). For the purposes of this theoretical exploration, reflexivity will be conceptualized as a process by which the author of the text and/or the audience of the text functions to call attention to the text as an artificial construct. The key distinction here is that this definition places agency in the hands of individuals (author and audience) rather than in the hands of a neutral artifact (the text). Reflexivity is not something that is located in the text itself, rather it is something that the author engages in while creating and the audience engages in while consuming. An individual audience member can experience reflexivity regardless of whether the author had any intention of that effect.
As a technique and a strategy of both creation and consumption, reflexivity closes the distance between the author and the audience. By laying bare the mechanisms of the production process, the author provides an avenue for the audience to make sense of what they are consuming within the context of authorship. By reading into the mechanisms of the production process, the audience creates their own avenue.

In an examination of the role of reflexivity in the pornographic films of Candida Royalle, James Beggan (2003) found that “reflexivity provides a perspective on the creation of pornography that reduces the psychological distance between women in the audience and on screen” (318). This reduction of “psychological distance” that results from reflexivity promotes intimacy between the creator and the consumer. Perhaps because of this, many of the examples used to illustrate reflexivity in comic art are taken from erotic comics – a genre in which intimacy would seem to be of paramount concern.

**Forms of Reflexivity in Comic Art**

Awareness of reflexivity in comic art is not new. Matthew J. Pustz, in his book *Comic Book Culture: Fanboys and True Believers* (1999), discusses the series titles *Sensational She-Hulk* and *Animal Man* which make prolific use of reflexive strategies. In what follows, five forms of reflexivity will be explored with respect to how they manifest themselves within the comic text. Among these are *authorial awareness, demystification, reader awareness, intertextuality, and intermedia reflexivity*. While each of these categories is discussed separately, it should be pointed out that the boundaries between them are porous and it is frequently the case that a single text includes a variety of forms of reflexivity which intermingle and give way to one another.
The form of reflexivity termed authorial awareness has as its key characteristic the insertion of the author into the text. Stam (1985) writes that “Reflexive artists often foreground the narrating instance, and in so doing call attention to the reader or spectator” (149). Already, with this statement, the overlap between forms of reflexivity is evident. By calling attention to him/herself as the teller of the tale, the author also calls attention to the individual to whom the tale is being told. Nevertheless, with regard to this form of reflexivity, it is the author who instigates self-awareness by calling attention to his/her own existence in the text.

Perhaps the most obvious examples of authorial presence in comics come from artists who have created autobiographical accounts using the medium of comic art. Frank Thorne’s Drawing Sexy Women (2000) and The Crystal Ballroom (2003) is an example of a two-volume text which takes on as its central focus the existence of the author. Thorne (2000, 2003) renders images and descriptions of himself (and the people he has known) throughout the text while offering his own congenial first-person account of the stories he has lived. Presented with such candor, the reader is provided with a context for interpreting the events of Thorne’s life through the attention that is called to the author’s agency within the stories. Descriptions and images do not purport to be reality; rather they are openly presented as the author’s memories as they have been reproduced by the author. In this sense, the experience of reading Thorne’s books is much like reading the diary of a personal friend. Similar to this, although smaller in scope, is Peter Kuper’s Comicstrips (1992) which offers a personal account (in comic form) of his own travels throughout Africa and Southeast Asia. Of particular interest in Kuper’s work is the fact that his presence as an author is doubly underscored. First, he depicts himself in
caricature form within the pages of the book, and second, he calls attention to the fact that the comics in the book were created at the time of his trip.

Art Spiegelman’s *Maus I* (1986) and *Maus II* (1991) employ an especially potent use of authorial reflexivity in that each work confronts the author’s personal struggle in putting together the narrative. In this sense, each of his graphic novels is an autobiographical account of his experience as an author.

Beyond autobiographical accounts, Scott McCloud, in his influential works *Understanding Comics* (1993) and *Reinventing Comics* (2000), has brought the reflexivity of comic art to a new level of awareness. Beginning from the first panel of each book, the reader is greeted in the first person by a caricature that the author has drawn of himself. Both books begin with the words “Hi, I’m Scott McCloud” written in a bubble over the caricature’s head. In choosing to present himself in this way to the reader, McCloud paves the way for the highly reflexive investigation of comic art that follows in both of his books. The reader is constantly made aware of the fact that they are a reader engaged in the act of absorbing the author’s lecture.

In addition to these unambiguous examples of the author’s presence in the text, there are a number of other, more subtle, varieties. Stoichita (1997) offers four categories of “contextual self-projection” (200) of the author into the text. These include the *textualized author*, the *masked author*, the *visitor author* and the *self-portrait*. The previous examples which include Thorne (2000, 2003), McCloud (1993, 2000), and Kuper (1992) all exemplify what could be termed a self-portrait in comic art form since they depict the author as the central figure in the text. Beyond self-portrait, however, McCloud (at one point in *Understanding Comics*) can also be seen as a textualized author.
because he depicts himself in the act of drawing the text within the text (see Figure 1). Still more exemplary of this concept is Spiegelman’s *Maus*, which provides an abundance of details about methods of production within its own pages. Thus a textualized author is one who depicts him/herself in the act of creating the text. This, of course, draws maximum attention not only to the author, but to the author in the act of authoring.

The presence of the masked author (an author who “leaves the crowd to become the protagonist” [Stoichita, 1997: 203]) is evident in Milo Manara’s *Giuseppe Bergman* series of graphic novels. Here, Manara draws the character of Giuseppe Bergman in his own image, but gives him a unique identity that is separate from his own. In this sense Bergman becomes Manara’s alter ego, permitting Manara a high degree of self-reflection in crafting Bergman’s character. An example similar to this one can be found in Frank Thorne’s creation of the character “Thenef” (in his series *Ghita of Alizarr*): a wizard who looks exactly like Thorne himself. In a statement which demonstrates the potency of the reflexive act in the comic text, Thorne explains: “I have crafted Thenef the wizard in my own image. I have allowed my hair and beard to grow to flowing lengths as a device to make it easier to imagine myself as Ghita’s comrade-in-arms…” (Harvey, 1996: 234). In this drastic example, the author has clearly placed great importance on his conception of himself within the text.

Stoichita’s final category of contextual self-projection is the visitor author. The concept of the visitor author is virtually indistinguishable from what is known in the world of cinema as the *cameo* appearance. An excellent example of this form of authorial presence within the comic text occurs in Paolo Eleuteri Serpieri’s *Creatura*
Serpieri manifests himself in the character named “Doc” who plays a peripheral role in the story. Examples of visitor authorship serve as subtle reminders of the author’s role in the creation of the text.

There are several striking examples within the genre of erotic comic art which serve not only to foreground the author, but to use the author in such a way as to heighten the intimacy of the experience. For example, in Giovanna Casotto’s *Bitch in Heat* series of comic books, she not only draws herself as a character, but repeatedly calls attention to her role as artist. An advertisement for *Bitch in Heat* features Casotto bound and gagged, dressed only in bra and panties with a caption beneath that reads: “Would you buy a comic this woman drew?” (see Figure 2). Additionally, each issue of *Bitch in Heat* features a semi-nude photograph of Casotto on the inside front cover. By drawing attention to herself as a physical object of desire, as an artist, and as a character in the story which she herself has drawn, Casotto creates a great deal of context in her work that permits the reader to connect the text to the flesh and blood person who has created it.

A slightly different strategy is employed by Parris Quinn in *Shadow and Light Volume Four* (2002). In the preface to this graphic novel, Quinn notes the following:

After the publication of the first three volumes of SHADOW AND LIGHT and seeing the excited response I was getting from women friends, an idea began to form when Charlotte, a friend of mine, offered me her story to use in a book. I began asking other women I know if they’d be willing to share a particularly outrageous sexual event in their lives for me to illustrate. I didn’t want fantasies. I wanted the real thing and I wanted an event in which they had been the catalyst.
Here are four of those stories, created visually, exactly as they were told to me (Quinn, 2002: preface).

In this example, Quinn calls attention to himself as author only to highlight his role as a vessel in bringing these real-life stories to the reader. By being reflexive in his role as author and explaining what steps he took, Quinn creates an entry point to the events of the stories through his own agency. A similar strategy is used by Luca Tarlazzi in *Vixxxen: The Adventures of Selen Volume Two* (1998) when he depicts himself at his drafting table engaging in a sexual encounter with Selen, the star of the series (see Figure 3). The connection that the reader has formed with the author allows for a vicarious experience through a reflexive awareness of the author as a real person engaging in a real act.

Additional examples of erotic comics which call attention to themselves as narrative depictions of events that have actually happened include the anthology titled *True Porn* (n/d) and the biographical comic stories produced by *Carnal Comics*. The editors of *True Porn*, Kelli Nelson and Robyn Chapman, advertise the fact that they “were enticed by the idea of cartoonists coming together to share their real life sex stories” (4). Similarly, Jay Allen Sanford of *Carnal Comics* emphasizes the fact that “[t]he stars of erotica worked directly with us, to turn their life experiences into comics” (2004: 10). In *Triple – X – Cinema: A Cartoon History Told By Those Who Lived It* (n/d), Sanford further boasts that “[a]s often as possible, events and likenesses depicted actually happened much as drawn and written” (2). By presenting the text as a conduit of the author’s experience, it becomes authenticated and is brought one step closer to reality.
The *Housewives at Play* series of erotic comic books authored by the comic artist “Rebecca” not only calls attention to her status as an author, but provides the reader with several avenues of interaction with her. For example, it is advertised at the end of the graphic album *Housewives: Mothers and Daughters* (2003), that “Rebecca now accepts commissions.” In addition, reading the *Housewives at Play* series (volumes 1-10) and viewing the graphic albums (see appendix), the audience is informed of the website (www.Rebeccahap.com) where it is possible to send email correspondence to Rebecca. Moving beyond the act of foregrounding her status as an author by providing potential individual interaction, Rebecca generates an extremely high level of authorial reflexivity. A reader can scarcely ignore the author’s presence in the face of an open invitation to communicate.

Beyond foregrounding themselves as creators, another effective strategy that reflexive authors frequently employ is demystification. As the name implies, demystification is the act of revealing the mechanisms of production responsible for creating the particular text. In this way the audience is “demystified” as to how the text was constructed.

For cinema, demystification is frequently achieved through revealing the hardware of film production including lights, cameras, grip equipment, microphones, studio boundaries, etc. (Stam, 1985; Ames, 1997). Alter (1975) makes note of a similar literary demystification in the case of Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*. When Don Quixote stumbles upon a printing facility where he observes activities such as type-setting and proof-drawing, the very techniques responsible for the text that the reader is holding are conjured to mind. A similar technique is employed for erotic effect by *Carnal Comics*
when Sanford (2004) describes the following aborted advertisement campaign: “‘Printed with Sarah-Jane’s actual orgasmic fluids mixed with the ink,’ we [would have] announced, planning on running photos of her masturbating over the ink vat” (10). The knowledge that the ink on the printed pages is mixed with Sarah-Jane’s “orgasmic fluids” calls reflexive attention to the comic book as a printed artifact, but simultaneously eroticizes that artifact through demystification.

In comic art, demystification must, at least on some level, apprehend the act of drawing and/or writing. At the conclusion of Thorne’s *Drawing Sexy Women* (2000), he includes a final chapter titled the “intimate section” (73) where he literally explores the techniques used to draw sexy women. The first page (74) references the tools of production by informing the student what supplies are necessary. By drawing a pencil, sharpener, eraser and sketch pad, Thorne uses the tools of drawing to reveal and demystify the tools of drawing (see **Figure 4**).

A much more thorough attempt to tutor the reader in the production of comic art is presented in Eisner’s *Comics & Sequential Art* (1985). Eisner demystifies the process of creating comic art by both explaining and illustrating various techniques. For example, in discussing “the language of the panel border” (44), Eisner presents four examples of panel outlines and describes the potential function of each within the comic story. Even more demystifying than this is Eisner’s flow chart of production (131) in which he illustrates several important stages in the production process. In these examples and throughout the rest of the book, Eisner brings the process of creating comic art to the central attention of the reader thus providing for a maximally demystifying experience.
McCloud, in *Understanding Comics* (1993), accomplishes a similar task by utilizing illustrations not only to present examples of points, but to actually make the points. Comic art historian and critic Stephen Weiner (2003) characterizes McCloud’s work in the following way: “while the character Scott McCloud lectures the reader on comics history, comics theory and comics technique, the pages of the book around him are filled with visually arresting ploys that demonstrate his points” (49).

One important example of how McCloud uses comic art to explain comic art comes in the form of the triangular continuum that he creates and continuously refers to throughout the book. In this triangular continuum McCloud shows how the medium of comics extends from realistic representation in the left corner to symbolic representation in the right corner and abstraction at the top corner. In a literal demonstration of how this works, McCloud draws over one hundred and sixteen faces within the space of a massive triangle, showing how varying levels of detail and abstraction can work toward achieving different effects (52-53). Thus not only does McCloud make the point about the diversity and range of comic art, but he demystifies comic art by using it to make that point.

Additional examples of the use of demystification in comic art are present in Milo Manara’s *Dies Irae* (1990) and Giovanna Casotto’s *Visions of Giovanna* (2003). In *Dies Irae*, Manara draws and redraws the character “Chloe” a number of times, demonstrating how subtle changes and differences in the rendering of a drawing lend themselves to completely different connotations (see Figure 5). In one particular example, Chloe is drawn as an innocent young girl gathering flowers before she is transformed into a sexy temptress in the next panel through some subtle alterations. Chloe herself even comments “Change a few lines and the whole picture’s different” (45). By drawing
attention to the fact that she is drawn is, to begin with, demystifying to the spectator. To juxtapose subtle changes in the same image for the purpose of showing how arbitrary relationships between lines on a page are is even more so.

In *Visions of Giovanna* (2003) Casotto and Grady include a section at the end of the graphic novel called “Preparing the Visions” that features photo-reference pictures of Giovanna and others engaging in sex as well as some rough pencil drawings of panels that were included in the story (see Figure 6). These items, which are normally omitted from a finished product, serve to demystify how the text came into being and what steps were followed to arrive at the completed project. Doing this gives the reader a set of reference points for interpreting and understanding the context of the work. Beggan (2003) takes note of a similar effect in pornographic film. He notes that “Filming filmmaking makes Candida Royalle’s films more accessible to women without experience with sexually explicit media. Through reflexivity, manufacturing pornography is normalized” (316). In this way the product, in each case, is transformed from a self-contained alien reality to an open presentation of a series of events that occurred to bring about the present text. Nothing is hidden or denied which could give way to suspicion or mistrust on the part of the reader.

A final note concerning demystification should acknowledge the undeniable truth that whenever a text seeks to demystify it will always offer another mystification in the place of the first. For example, a comic artist can draw him/herself drawing but cannot literally include his/her body in the text. The lines, no matter how reflexive they are, will always present an illusion. When in his sketch, titled *Drawing Hands*, Escher depicts two hands engaged in the act of drawing each other, he “attacks realism, using the forces
of realism” (Hughes & Brecht, 1975: The Visual Argument). To this point, Ames (1997) asserts that “the content demystifies while the style mystifies; the context at least purports to reveal what is ordinarily hidden while the style continues the convention of hiding the mechanics” (6). For this reason, demystification approached from the perspective of the audience becomes important. A text needs not lay bare the tools and methods of its production to be demystified. Insightful readers or spectators who observe carefully will always be able to spot the seams and gaps in the illusionist construct. This reader initiated demystification is of particular relevance to comic art as an increasingly diverse production process, that includes computer generated imagery and other photorealistic methods, calls subtle attention to the tools of construction.

Aside from the reflexivity that results from awareness of the author as the creator of the text and the reflexivity that results from the demystification of production processes, there are many ways that the spectator/reader can be made aware of his/her status as spectator/reader. The technique in film and television that is sometimes referred to as “breaking the fourth wall” – wherein a character breaks the flow of the diegesis to acknowledge the presence of the spectator – is a powerful tool for calling attention to the text as a construct. This technique is used throughout Manara’s *The Great Adventure* (1988) when Giuseppe Bergman disengages from the story to converse with the reader of the graphic novel (see Figure 7). Fashioning the story in this way permits Manara to call attention to the reader’s complicity in suspending disbelief for the sake of narrative coherence.

Another way that the reader of the comic text becomes conscious of him/herself is through an awareness of the gaze. With regard to film, Stam (1985) makes the
observation that “the look of the camera, the spectator’s recapitulation of that look, the looks between characters in the fiction, the looks which carry us from shot to shot” (59) all serve to highlight the truth that films are comprehended through the gaze. Beggan (2003), in his exploration of reflexivity in the films of Candida Royalle, notes that the spectator’s gaze is, in many cases, constituted through the gaze of onscreen characters.

In many ways the film spectator is actually dependent upon various characters as a means of motivating his/her own gaze. This idea is made evident in Recchia’s (1991) examination of Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960). Because the protagonist, whom spectators have been using as a conduit for their gaze, has abruptly been killed in the middle of the drama, Recchia notes that “we have been stripped of our conventional perceptual links to the story’s events” (263). Absent the onscreen intercessor, the spectator cannot help but become reflexive upon his/her own gaze and in the process gain sharp awareness of his/her active role in the film text.

Literature, unlike film, does not have the capacity to determine the sequence and duration of the reader’s attention. A reader of literature, as opposed to the film spectator, is able to skip, to reread slowly and to scrutinize the text (Alter, 1975; Stam, 1985). This tendency to seize control over one’s own agency within the text is particularly strong in the case of comic art where each iconic image, designed by the author to be read in a certain sequence, nevertheless vies equally for the reader’s attention with the turn of each page. With this, the concept of *automontage* is introduced.

Montage, a concept first developed by Soviet film theorists and practitioners of the 1920s, refers to the juxtaposition of discontinuous images that leads to the creation of a larger meaning through association. Automontage is a term designated to refer to a
similar concept that occurs outside of the film-viewing situation and through the reader’s own agency. When the reader of a comic text is faced with the array of icons laid out on the page, a visual shuffling of images takes place through the reader’s own erratic gaze. This visual shuffling begins because any one comic image holds the interest of the reader for only a brief instant. Victor Burgin (1982) makes careful note of this brevity of the gaze in an analysis of the act of looking at photographs. He writes that “To remain long with a single image is to risk the loss of our imaginary command of the look…” (152). Thus, on the comic page that is covered with panels to look at, it is highly unlikely that the reader will remain faithful to a single image for more than an instant.

To some extent, of course, the reader’s progression through the text will be guided by authorial devices such as narrative text, page composition, etc., but as artist and theorist of comics Will Eisner observes, “there is absolutely no way in which the artist can prevent the reading of the last panel before the first” (1985: 40). Speaking further to this point, Eisner explains that the entire page of comic text serves as a “meta panel” – that is, a panel which contains panels (63). Very similar to this is Stoichita’s (1997) notion of the “superframe,” a term he designates to refer to “the exhibition space of the collection” (104) in the art of painting. Stoichita writes that within the superframe, “The eyes are constantly ricocheting from one spot to another, unable to stop on any one thing. It is up to the spectator to construct, step by step, a combinatorial technique, to establish bridges and correlations” (114). An excellent example of this concept at work occurs in Art Spiegelman’s In the Shadow of No Towers (2004), where his massive 20” X 14.5” color plates offer a minimum of structure to interfere with the free roam of the reader’s gaze.
Through automontage, the reader uses the text to make sense of the text and derive pleasure and knowledge from it. This active use enables the reader to become reflexively aware of the nature of the reading experience and the context under which it takes place. Seeing the text as an artifact to be examined through one’s own agency diminishes the false pretense of reality that is espoused by illusionist readers and authors who are unconcerned with reflexivity. It is frequently the case within the self-motivated cross-cutting of automontage that several texts are brought together into the same synthetic experience. At this juncture, the role of intertextuality in establishing reflexivity becomes a critical concern.

Drawing from Kristeva, Stam (1985) defines intertextuality as “the simultaneous presence, within a literary work, of two or more intersecting texts which mutually relativize one another” (20). A work which is intertextual is thus, by its nature, reflexive as well because, as the multiple texts relativize one another, they must also call attention to one another as texts. It should also be pointed out that both author and reader are active in this process. The author must include multiple texts (or references to multiple texts) to create the effect of intertextuality, but the reader must also have an awareness of those texts in order to appreciate the dynamics of the work. Ames (1997) points out that as we consume texts they are added to the “repertoire of impressions” (p. 2) that we use to interpret future texts.

One clear example of intertextuality at work in comic art is present in Milo Manara’s graphic novel titled *To See the Stars*. In this text a young woman reenacts the events depicted within a collection of classical paintings. The woman and the paintings are used as a pure and innocent counterpoint to the jaded and treacherous urban world
that surrounds them. To appreciate this text in full, a reader must not only be able to understand what Manara has written and drawn, but the context of the multiple intertextual paintings.

In addition to the general notion of intertextuality, Stam makes use of Genette’s concept of transtextuality. Transtextuality describes a number of specific ways in which texts relate within a given work. The fifth division of transtextuality, referred to as hypertextuality, refers to the relationship between two texts (the hypertext and the hypotext) in which the hypertext “transforms, modifies, elaborates, or extends” (Stam, 1985: 25) the hypotext. There is an example of this in McCloud’s (1993) Understanding Comics where McCloud comments upon Magritte’s famous painting titled The Treachery of Images (see Figure 8). While Magritte’s painting points out that a painting of a pipe is not a pipe, McCloud expands upon this by pointing out that what the reader sees before him/her is not only not a pipe, but not a painting of a pipe: rather it is a printed copy of a drawing of a painting of a pipe. McCloud uses Magritte’s painting as a device to extend the point about the nature of the iconic sign to the medium of comics. To understand McCloud’s point, the reader must first understand Magritte’s point and in the process become aware of both texts as constructs capable of conveying the point.

A further example of hypertextuality is present in Eisner’s works Comics & Sequential Art (1985) and Graphic Storytelling & Visual Narrative (1996). Within these texts, Eisner uses excerpts from his own work (the hypotext) as examples for his arguments about the construction of sequential art (the hypertext). What makes this example unique is that Eisner uses his own work as the hypotext, thus elevating the quotient of reflexivity by combining intertextuality and authorial presence. When the
reader explores these texts, he/she is exploring a conversation Eisner is having concerning principles about comic art that are used in his own work.

Parody is one genre of comic art that makes particularly strong use of intertextuality. Stam (1985) and Waugh (1984) each note the importance of parody in the study of reflexivity. In particular, Waugh observes that parody serves as a strategy to break the “frames” which are meant to set up the illusion of the narrative and organize the experience of the reader. Through frame-breaking, the illusionism of the narrative is undermined and the reader is made aware of the unmistakably constructed nature of the text. Further, parody reminds the reader that all texts are constructed based on other texts. The *Tijuana Bibles*, described by Spiegelman (1997) as “small booklets that chronicled the explicit sexual adventures of America’s beloved comic strip characters, celebrities, and folk heroes” (6), are an excellent example of parody as frame-break in comic art. When the reader encounters familiar characters within the *Tijuana Bibles*, he/she is compelled to recall previous texts featuring those characters. As this is done, the absurdity of the obscene situations calls notice to the nature of all texts as constructions that are at the mercy of their authors.

Beyond the reflexivity resulting from intertextuality is the reflexivity resulting from intermediality. In “intermedia reflexivity” (Szczepanik, 2002), the medium of representation is itself represented through another medium, thus calling attention to the particular features of each medium. In an article describing intermedia reflexivity, Szczepanik (2002) writes, “As one media form takes over and transforms the structural components of another, the hidden or automatised structural components of both media become defamiliarised. Thus, a new hybrid form emerges that reflects the structural
features of each colliding media” (29). To illustrate, when a comic text mixes drawings with photographs or computer generated imagery, intermedia reflexivity occurs because the structure of each medium is laid bare through its affiliation with the other medium. In *Reinventing Comics* (2000) McCloud includes a chapter that informs the reader of computer based approaches to comic art production. In demonstrating some of his points, McCloud includes computer graphics and digitally imported photographs alongside the drawings which the reader has been exposed to all along. By doing this, McCloud calls attention to each medium as a construct exposed through its intermingling with another medium that makes use of a different method of representation.

Some other examples of comic art which have made use of intermedia reflexivity include Cecil Fernando’s *The Man in the Pointed Hat* (1998) and Milo Manara’s *WWW.* (1999). In Fernando’s book, there is a photographic image of a television set among the drawings of the comic text (see Figure 9). In this particular case, three media are placed in relation to one another and mutually relativized. As a result, the peculiarities of the televised image are brought to the reader’s attention through photography which itself is scrutinized because of the hand-drawn context surrounding it. Conversely, the hand-drawn icons are also revealed as constructions when viewed in relation to the photograph.

**Conclusion**

Five forms of reflexivity have been investigated in terms of their impact on the authorship and readership of comic art. As previously noted, these forms are not strict categories with firm boundaries, rather they are an assortment of techniques that thwart the suspension of disbelief by calling attention to the illusion upheld by convention and narrative structure.
Through the use of reflexive strategies, authors and readers of comic art are able to contextualize the narrative act and experience an approximation of intimacy or closeness by making clear the link between the comic text and the outside world in which it was born, and of which it is a part.
References


Appendix

Additional Texts Used as Examples of Reflexivity in Comic Art


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