Like other popular cultural forms before them, comic books and graphic novels have moved up Stuart Hall's 'cultural escalator' and as a consequence have had their cultural value enhanced in the eyes of cultural and aesthetic institutions (1981, 234). The academy has helped propel this rise of comics and graphic novels; there are an increasing number of conferences, journals and journal editions dedicated to comics. Published works, such as Hunting the Dark Knight: Twenty-First Century Batman (Brooker 2012), Critical Approaches to Comics: Theories and Methods (Smith & Duncan 2012) and Comics and Culture: Analytical and Theoretical Approaches to Comics (Magnussen 2000), have all extended the range of scholarly understanding of the comic book phenomenon. Works by artists, writers and scholars including Neil Gaiman, Alan Moore, Art Spiegelman, Frank Miller, Scott McCloud, Will Brooker and Danny Fingeroth have forced a reappraisal of the space occupied by comic books: "A form that was once solely the province of children's entertainment now fills bookshelves with mature, brilliant works . . . Cartoonists' work is hung on the walls of galleries and museums" (Wolk 2007, 3).

This special issue of Scan: Journal of Media Arts Culture contributes to this burgeoning field with the third instalment of 'Reading Between the Panels'. This issue focuses on the theme of adaptation amongst comics and graphic novels. In recent years mainstream media entertainment has seen comic leviathans Marvel and D.C. leverage considerable reserves of intellectual property bringing the heroes of paperback comics to the big screen and other avenues of exploitation such as videogames. Such a landmark of commercial convergence is however, as this collection of articles demonstrates, only a single manifestation of comics and graphic novel's relationships with other cultural and media forms.

In Beginning Again: The Reboot Phenomenon in Comic Books and Film, William Proctor examines the phenomenon of the reboot in superhero narratives through the prism of adaptation studies. Tapping into recent reboots, Proctor argues that adaptation is a complex matrix of interaction and interrelation between multiplicities of texts where ideals of "beginning" and "end" have no place; as he posits, "A reboot is a brand-new product; yet it is already old".

In Special Effect: Have film adaptations changed mainstream comics? Liam Burke explores the relationships between American comics and their cinematic progeny. Burke considers the concessions and compromises made by comic publishers to render their products more amenable to film adaptation questioning who is colonising whom in this relationship.


Lynn Gelfand's Moon Prism Power, Make-Up!: Sailor Moon and the Transformation of the Multiform Story in Modern Media examines the titular manga series as a multiform tale due to its extension into multiple media arenas such as anime, live action television, and fan fiction. Gelfand positions the Sailor Moon series as a new manifestation of older oral multiform narratives.

Charlotte Plylyser's Rogue Paratexts: Epo's Graphic Classic Adaptations and the Jupien Effect uses the theories of Gerard Genette to examine a double adaptation: Flemish adaptations of Japanese Manga appropriations of canonical western literary texts. In particular, Plylyser looks at such adaptations in terms of their impact on the Graphic Classic series' paratextual dynamics.

'Apocalypse Why? The Neutralisation of the Antichrist Motif in Three Comics Adaptations' by Maaheen Ahmed and Martin Lund analyses the notion of the "antichrist" outside of religious paradigms and in three selected comic series. Ahmed and Lund contend that placing the "antichrist" - iconic of an impulse away from Christ, or as a personification of evil - into the medium of comics neutralises its traditional characteristics.

Josep Catala draws out (no pun intended) the capability for comic books to express complexity through an examination of the relatively new genre of the comic book documentary. 'A Drawing of the World: Documentary and Comic Book' addresses and diffuses a seemingly apparent paradox between two traditionally distinct media forms.

References


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