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博 士 論 文

Alternative Comics as Contemporary Art :
A Viewpoint on Artists and Works

現代芸術としてのオルタナティヴ・コミックス
—作家と作品を巡って

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Introduction

This thesis is written from the perspective of an artist. I'm going to use my creative activities, experiences of studying abroad and my own works to explain the importance of discussing alternative comics as contemporary art, the connection between alternative comics and contemporary art, and in which sense they can become the same from the perspective of an artist.

As a student, from the bachelor to the doctoral levels, I tried different ways of narrating with images and conducted different experiments on the combination of image and word. I was trained as a cartoonist and illustrator at university and have worked in these two fields for about ten years. But I always find my works not fit the comics industry: the mainstream comics in the People's Republic of China, which are Japanese manga style, French *bande dessinées* (BD)¹ style and US comic strip style. What I am aiming at is not just telling a story, but also presenting my thinking through style and material.

In 2003, I found a magazine titled *Contemporary Art*², a monthly that introduces the newest information of the contemporary art scene around world. The issue I found ran a special theme about comics art, under the title "Enjoying life in a cartoon way, making Art in a cartoon way"³. There were some articles contributed by art critics and artists about underground comix, adult manga and art, which includes comics elements. The article "Evil Flowers Blossom in Dark Room"⁴ which introduced underground comix and alternative comics attracted my attention (I discovered later that this was a translation of one chapter of Roger Sabin's book *Comics, Comix & Graphic Novels: A History of Comics Art*⁵). As I was

¹ BD: Franco-Belgian comics are comics that are created for a Belgian and French audience. They are known as BDs, an abbreviation of bande dessinée (literally drawn strips) in French.

² *Contemporary art*, March 2003, Contemporary art press.

³ "卡通着生活, 卡通着艺术", *Contemporary Art*, March 2003, Contemporary art press, pp.8-47.

⁴ "暗地里盛开的恶之花", *Contemporary Art*, March 2003, Contemporary art press, pp.22-27.

⁵ Roger Sabin, 1996: 177-215, "Alternative Visions".

attracted by the style and expression, I researched alternative comics from the viewpoint of contemporary art and started to know underground comics artists and alternative comics artists from contemporary art magazines and art books. At the same time, I found some European comics, which were closer to my conception of telling a story with the combination of image and word. I was especially fascinated by German alternative comics artist Anke Feuchtenberger⁶ (fig.0-9, 10, 11, 12, 13) and French BD artist Nicolas de Crécy (fig.0-1). However, at that time I did not realize that artists like them were not typical even in their own comics culture, but rather advanced and avant-garde in the 1990s when their works were not yet acknowledged. For example, in 2003 I discovered de Crécy who was already famous for his artistic BD albums. I thought he was a mainstream BD artist who makes “typical” mainstream BD like *The Adventures of Tintin*⁷ and *Asterix*⁸. But after I had researched more about his work and French comics culture, I realized he was alternative, although not as aggressive as French underground comix works, which were published by independent publisher L’ Association. First of all, he usually does not work with script writers as distinct from other BD artists. When I had the chance to talk with him⁹, he said that his imagery was influenced more by fine artists like Hieronymus Bosch (fig.0-8), James Ensor (fig.0-4), Egon Schiele (fig.0-6), Otto Dix (fig.0-7), and George Grosz (fig.0-5), and he demonstrated these influences with examples from his work *FoliGatto* (script by Alexios Tjoyas, Les Humanoides Associes, 1991) (fig.0-1) and *Le Bibendum Céleste* (Les

⁶ Anke Feuchtenberger (born in 1963) she studied illustration at the Academy of Art Berlin from 1983 to 1988. Jochen Enterprises published her first comics, which were collaborative projects with the writer Katrin de Vries. Since 1997 she has been a professor at the HAW Hamburg, lives in Hamburg and Quilow. In 2008, she was awarded the Max and Moritz Prize as the Best German-Language Comics Artist. For more information, see her website:

<http://www.feuchtenbergerowa.de/>

⁷ *The Adventures of Tintin* (French: *Les Aventures de Tintin*) is a series of comic albums created by Belgian cartoonist Georges Remi (1907–1983), who wrote under the pen name of Hergé. As of 2007, Tintin had been published in more than 70 languages with sales of more than 200 million copies

⁸ *Asterix* or *The Adventures of Asterix* is a series of French comics written by René Goscinny and illustrated by Albert Uderzo (Uderzo took over the writing after the death of Goscinny in 1977). The series first appeared in the Franco-Belgian comics magazine *Pilote* on 29 October 1959. As of 2013, 35 volumes have been released.

⁹ He gave a presentation at Kyoto Seika University in November, 2013.

Humanoïdes Associés, 1999) (fig.0-2). Especially in *Le Bibendum Céleste*, he used different techniques and materials including watercolor, acrylic, color ink, gouache, oil pastel, collage. De Crécy himself also thinks of this work as an experiment, with regards to the changings of touch in one and the same page which couldn't be found in BD when this book was published. In the 1990s, his approach of importing art history in BD was unique. But when asked if he locates himself as a BD artist or artist who does BD, he clearly said he is a BD artist because he is more interested in telling a story; and he gave the example of the wordless book *Prosopopus* (Dupuis, 2003) (fig.0-3), which used less artistic techniques than *FoliGatto*. When asked about where his narrative skill is from, he said that he was not influenced so much by mainstream BD, but more by Lorenzo Mattotti (fig.0-14, 15, 16, 17, 18) (who also strongly influenced Feuchtenberger), David Lynch and Japanese animation film director Hayao Miyazaki, and he said for artists it's important to import elements and skills from the world outside of BD, or comics, to keep it innovative. He graduated from the BD course of the Ecole Européenne Supérieure de l'Image Angoulême, the most famous university which provides education of BD in France. But in his first year, this school had just been founded and there was almost no complete course, so he did not benefit much from the education but explored and experimented by himself.

Anke Feuchtenberger is different from Nicolas de Crécy, as she graduated from the art department of the Academy of Art Berlin and started as a print and graphic artist. It was later that she found her way of presenting her thinking in comics and published her own alternative comics work.

When I finished my bachelor course in China, and entered the master course of the cartoon department at Kyoto Seika University in 1998, I thought it was the same as in China – the cartoon and story comics courses are put in the same department under the name of “cartoon”, and students are expected to learn about alternative comics and critical art. But when I started my study at Seika, the first academic institution for the training of manga

artists, I was surprised to find the cartoon department clearly separated from the story manga department. Seika's manga department was divided into two sections, one for cartoons, and the other one for story manga (graphic narratives). The cartoon department emphasized the artistic importance and the kind of humor and satire which is reminiscent of *Punch*, and it offered education in a narrow sense: one-panel cartoon, newspaper cartoon, political cartoon and picture book. In 2000, the department of manga came to consist of a cartoon course and a story-manga course; in 2006, it changed into the Faculty of Manga, consisting of three courses: cartoon/story-manga, animation, manga production/editing. Students who want to learn the skill of storytelling have to go to the story-manga department which focuses on the comics industry without considering the artistic, or critical possibilities in story-manga. These two departments were separated due to the increase in applicants for the story-manga department. Since then, the two have come to think that they are not connected. Even the students think this way: once a student told me that I shouldn't do graphic narratives/narrative comics because I'm in the cartoon department. For me, the advice of the student and the attitude of the two departments somehow reflect the development of Japanese comics and the problems which the people in the manga field are facing. Nowadays in Japan, manga is considered entertainment more than art, and the system, market and industry are so mature that they do not rely on the gallery or newspaper.

As concerns education, there are a lot of polytechnic colleges in Japan which focus on raising "craftsmen" for the industry and the entertainment world rather than artists. But university education of comics or manga should not just be about imparting techniques which have already been invented; it should also give students a chance to examine comics outside the manga industry or even the comics world itself, like from the perspectives of design, art and literature. University should provide approaches to think about comics,

encourage students to have a more experimental spirit and to explore the possibilities of comics with their own work.¹⁰

But nowadays in Japan, when we try to find a text book about “What is manga?”, we usually can find a lot of discussion about techniques, like page-layout, using of pen, or panel layout, the characteristics of manga industry, the differences between Japanese manga and western comics or the history and characteristic of Japanese manga. And when people discuss the definition of manga, usually they consider these elements, the history and industry¹¹. But one can hardly find a book which talks about the connection between manga and art, especially contemporary art from the perspective of manga studies¹². Indeed, all the existent approaches help us know more about the characteristics of manga, establishing a clearer image of the manga history, and understanding this culture better. But all these focus on the existent manga system and industry. As an artist, I think it’s necessary to talk about the connection between comics and art, and to explore how art pushed the development of manga. The manga artist has the same motivation and experimental spirit as the fine artist in their own area. Manga or comics is not just an industrial product but also an independent art, not the secondary or “lower” genre of fine arts. But if one only discusses the characteristics of manga and its commercial value without critical thinking, the discussion will miss its aesthetic value which is important for making it an independent art. The education of manga easily goes into the direction of how to adapt yourself to the manga industry and how to adjust your work to the “typical” industrial manga, typical according to the general audience’s opinion (and based on past work). The point is it’s necessary to realize that

¹⁰ Actually a teacher of Seika University also indicated that most students who go to Seika University to learn manga turned to be much closer to “art” and “design”, more than for commercial manga (Sagawa 2010: 18-21). But when I studied at this university, I found the students are lacking basic knowledge about art in general which is considered basic education at a Chinese art university, no matter whether it’s a design department or a cartoon department, and students also said they doesn’t care about art in general because they thought manga they like has no connection with art, especial contemporary art.

¹¹ See for example Isao Shimizu (2007) or Kentaro Takekuma (1995).

¹² There is a special issue “Manga, Comics and Art” in *Bijutsu Froum 21*, vol. 24 (2011, Jaqueline Berndt ed.) but this is still not enough if compared with the books which discuss the history and industry.

manga comes from a developing process. When discussing the industry, system and style in an isolated way, people can only see “what manga is, or comics looks like in that period”, but the focus is not on what manga or comics can be and in which exchanges with other genres (art forms) it has been engaged.

That’s why I think it important to engage in critical thinking of what “manga” is in different contexts, to pursue what pushed and is going to push the development of manga in different periods, what the important elements for development are in different periods, and how those elements have affected manga. I believe that no matter when and where, when one genre tries to establish its authority through excluding other genres, it will deprive itself of future possibilities.

When scholars and even artists try to give a clear definition of comics, or any other term, there is always a challenge they have to face: due to the development of comics and art, the situation is always changing. And also, giving a definition of comics may be different from giving a definition of manga, because of the different comics history and the differences between the two visual cultures. The best way to discuss the boundary of comics and manga is not to claim that “Comics (as distinct from manga) is Art”, but reveal the differences and connections between those two in a contemporary sense, and discuss in which way manga or comics can be defined as “art”, and in which sense alternative comics should be considered as one genre of contemporary art. Without setting a clear line to separate comics and manga from other genres, this discussion will allow more elements to be involved.

1. Alternative Comics as Contemporary Art

Director Ralph Rugoff and curator Roger Malbert held a Hayward Gallery touring exhibition in 2007 called CULT FICTION: ART AND COMICS¹³, and they regarded the relationship between comics and fine art as follows:

“It is 20 years since the exhibition COMIC ICONOCLASM at London’s Institute for Contemporary Art featured the work of fine artists inspired by comics. Since then much has changed. Firstly, the old hierarchical distinction between ‘High and Low’ [the title and subject of an exhibition at New York’s museum of Modern Art in 1990] has largely dissolved. Secondly, the hegemony of American comics is no longer absolute; Japan, France and Belgium are all at the forefront of the international comics culture. Thirdly, the medium of the comic strip has been transformed and its creative potential revealed by increasingly subtle and sophisticated treatments in ambitious and beautifully produced graphic novels.”¹⁴

But maybe they were too optimistic about the situation at that time because in the same year as this exhibition, comics artist Mark Brandl indicates that the gap between the comics camp and the fine art camp was still existing:

“The relationship between the comic art world and that of the “fine” arts has been a strained one. Yet both represent worthy forms of creativity and many people, including some fine artists, judge them as of equal merit. Nevertheless, “high” artists have traditionally looked condescendingly at comic art, seeing it at best as a kind of accidental success, and at worst, as corporate hack-work. Even the adjectives used to name the fields reflect this—high/low; fine/applied, etc. Comic fans similarly often view fine art as too elitist, assuming that the often difficult works of experimental artists are public ploys. Impartially

¹³ (4 May-1 July, 2007), New Art Gallery, Walsall,(14 July - 16 September, 2007), Nottingham Castle, (21 September- 11 November, 2007), Leeds City Art Gallery, (17 November – 13 January, 2008) , Aberystwyth Art Gallery, (19 January- 16 March, 2008), Tullie House, Carlisle

¹⁴ Ralph Rugoff and Roger Malbert, 2007:9.

judged, both camps are wrong – and yet, unfortunately, sometimes right. Accept my terminology here as simply indicative, not judgmental. *Fine* artists consist mostly of artists who create art intended for galleries and museums, or for sale to collectors. Comic artists consist of artists who create sequential art intended for publication, and generally for sale to mass audiences.”¹⁵

Which I think matches precisely the relationship of comics and fine art nowadays.

1-1. Definitions of Cartoon and Comics, and Connection with Picturebooks

When defining cartoon and comics, it is necessary to consider the different definitions of each term in different contexts and periods. And nowadays, there are more and more crossovers, which render the borderline of the genres vague. It is also necessary to consider the definition and characteristics of specific works.

1-1-1. Definition of Cartoon and Discussions

There are a lot of discussions about what “Cartoon” is. In different periods the definition of Cartoon is also different.

“In Renaissance art, the term cartoon refers to a full-size preparatory design for an artwork in another medium. They were used in the creation of frescoes, other large scale wall paintings and tapestries.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Mark Staff Brandl, 2007:43.

¹⁶ “The Raphael Cartoon: What is a cartoon?”,
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/raphael-cartoons-what-is-a-cartoon/>

But nowadays, “the word cartoon seems awfully broad stretching from animated shenanigans to concept-driven sketch with caption to certain stylistic conventions and modes of drawing”¹⁷, and caricature is considered as one branch of “cartoon”.

In the *Oxford Dictionary*, we can find the following definition of “Cartoon”.

1. A drawing on stout paper, made as a design for a painting of the same size to be executed in fresco or oil, or for a work in tapestry, mosaic, stained glass, or the like.

2. A full-page illustration in a paper or periodical; esp. applied to those in the comics paper relating to current events. Now, a humorous or topical drawing (of any size) in a newspaper.

b. Cinematography. An animated cartoon.¹⁸

In *The American Heritage Dictionary* (2006), the term “Cartoon” includes more aspects than in the *Oxford Dictionary*.

“Car·toon:

. A drawing depicting a humorous situation, often accompanied by a caption.

. A drawing representing current public figures or issues symbolically and often satirically: a political cartoon.

. A preliminary sketch similar in size to the work, such as a fresco, that is to be copied from it.

. An animated cartoon.

. A comic strip.

¹⁷ “The Raphael Cartoon: What is a cartoon?”,
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/raphael-cartoons-what-is-a-cartoon/>

¹⁸ J.A.Simpson and E.S.C.Weiner, 1989:927

. A ridiculously oversimplified or stereotypical representation”¹⁹

But the definition of the term “Caricature” in the *Oxford Dictionary* is similar to the definition of “Cartoon” in *The American Heritage Dictionary*:

“Caricature:

1. in Art, grotesque or ludicrous representation of persons or things by exaggeration of their most characteristic and striking features.
2. A portrait or other artistic representation, in which the characteristic features of the original are exaggerated with ludicrous affect.
3. An exaggerated or debased likeness, imitation, or copy, naturally or unintentionally ludicrous.”²⁰

Thomas Wright talks about the history and the roots of the term “Caricature”, which is related to “exaggerated picture”:

“Caricature is, of course, an Italian word, derived from the verb *caricare*, to charge or load; and therefore, it means a picture which is charged, or exaggerated (the old French dictionaries say, “*C’est la même chose que charge en peinture*”). The word appears not to have come into use in Italy until the latter half of the seventeenth century, and the earliest instance I know of its employment by an English writer is that quoted by Johnson from the “Christian Morals” of Sir Thomas Brown, who died in 1682. [...] The word was not fully established in our language in its English form of Caricature until late in the last century.”²¹

¹⁹ <http://ulcercity.blogspot.jp/2007/09/what-is-cartoon.html>

²⁰ J.A.Simpson and E.S.C.Weiner, 1989:899.

²¹ Thomas Wright, 1865:415

Thomas Wright thinks that the engraving *Political games of cards* (France 1499) is the oldest Caricature.²² But he also talks about one important reason that separated *Caricature* in the modern sense from the old art work which carried the same satirical meaning, that is, medium:

“It has been already remarked that political caricature, in the modern sense of the word, or even personal caricature, was inconsistent with the state of things in the middle ages, until the arts of engraving and printing became sufficiently developed, because it requires the facility of quick and extensive circulation. The political or satirical song was carried everywhere by the minstrel, but the satirical picture, represented only in some solitary sculpture or illumination, could hardly be finished before it had become useless even in the small sphere of its influence, and then remained for ages a strange figure, with no meaning that could be understood.”²³

So, the term “Caricature” in the modern sense took shape after the invention of the industrial printing technology in the 18th century. However, with the using of the new technology, the boundary and the definition also changed. French scholar Judith Wechsler talks about what “Caricature” meant from 1830 to 1870 in French and the connection with society as follows:

“Our cross-section through these cultural shifts is approached primarily by way of caricature in the daily press. When caricature is discussed in the history of art, although its political and social context is acknowledged, formally it is analyzed in relationship to prints

²² Thomas Wright, 1865:348

²³ Thomas Wright, 1865:347

and drawing. But caricature can also be looked at in relation to the tradition of classification and codification of human types.²⁴”

And she summarizes three strands of caricature of that time in France:

“Three main strands can be distinguished in caricature, and each has its own relation to our theme. One is the portrait charge, which depicts an individual, usually a political figure. [...] The second strand is the allegorical interpretation of public events. [...] The third strand, which is explored more fully than the others in this study, is social caricature – the satirical presentation of typical characters in everyday situation.”²⁵

The last two points of Judith Wechsler’s definition of caricature did not appear in the explanation of “caricature” in the *Oxford Dictionary* but they are close to the definition of the term “cartoon” in the same dictionary. In terms of function, *Caricature* is not just a branch of “Cartoon” in the modern sense²⁶, but it is a non-animated cartoon before the new technology (the film) had been invented. And also in Judith Wechsler’s definition, the domain of *Caricature* includes early comics which started from Hogarth’s series of moral works. So in this sense, Caricature from 1830 to 1870 can also be considered as early comics.

In McCloud’s book *Understanding Comics*, the importance of the revolution of printing for comics is emphasized. But when he talks about the roots of comics he gives us some examples of using not printed, that is, hand-made pictures to tell a story, like ancient Egyptian fresco, and when he talks about the beginning of contemporary comics, the examples he gives are William Hogarth and Rodolphe Töpffer, which is reasonable because

²⁴ Judith Wechsler, 1982:14

²⁵ Judith Wechsler, 1982:14

²⁶ See page 7, also see the definition of cartoon in the *American Heritage Dictionary*, 2006.

their works include prints. But there is a slight difference between the Egyptian fresco group and the William Hogarth group, which is tied to critical contents.

When McCloud talks about the works which can be related to comics before the invention of printing, all the examples he gives represent daily life, or religious issues, but when he talks about the works after the invention of print, the examples he gives are more focused on critical contents.²⁷ However, he himself discusses the new technology of printmaking only with respect to changes of the form and circulation of comics, not with respect to what kind of difference the printmaking brought about between these two periods and how it induced the developing of modern comics.

Against this backdrop, the following question arises: Could it be that the origin of modern comics and its core elements are to be found not just in form, but also in function: social critique or presenting thoughts in an ironic way, with both style and contents, which couldn't be shared widely because of the previous limits of technology? With print, circulation is not a problem anymore, ordinary people gain the right of criticizing society, and it's this right which was incited, among other things, by the new technology that also pushed the appearing of comics and cartoon.

Töpffer, who is acknowledged as one of the forerunners of comics, called the new media *printed literature*, and he emphasized the importance of printmaking when he gave the following definition of this new media:

“Sequential sketch will be ruined if over-drawn, but if drawn with a simple curved line then the thinking will be presented clearly, in other words, if you think about printed literature, the first thing we know is that there is nothing quicker, more convenient and more economic than transcript lithograph. With this technique, we don't need the help from print workers, we don't need to make reversal print for making the finished work like the original

²⁷ Scott McCloud, 1998:17-27.

drawing, and it doesn't take more than one hour to make a print. And you can also make one thousand or two thousand copies.”²⁸

The characteristics of the lithograph which are important for Töpffer's definition differ completely from the characteristics of ancient Egyptian fresco or any other work before printmaking: pre-modern forms required a lot of people, budget and time. Töpffer also talks about the importance of the number of copies which can be made with this new technique. This connects to his conception about which function the new art form can accomplish and which position it should occupy: a media which relates the message of the story (in Töpffer's and Hogarth's case, moral education) clearly to the general audience. This is another characteristic which the works before printmaking did not have: they couldn't reach a wider audience due to quantity, they couldn't be reproduced many times.

1-1-2 Definition of Comics and Discussions

Scholar John Holbo pointed out the variation of the definitions of comics in different periods:

“To a first approximation, comics are footnotes to *Punch*; yet more visual and much literary art is just footnotes to comics — in McCloud's sense... . That goes too far: a

²⁸ 「描き足らしをすると台無しになり、逆に単純な曲線で描かれることで思考を明瞭に示すような連続したクロッキー、すなわち版画文学を問題にするときにまずわかるのは、すばやさ、便利さ、経済性において、転写石版ほどすぐれたものはないということだ。この技法を使えば、版画工の協力なしで、できあがり原画と同じなように左右逆の版を作る必要もなく、製版するのに一時間以上待つ必要もなく、千部も二千部も刷ることができる。」, Naoko Morita, 2013:81.

definition makes a circle, in/out, center/perimeter. Our responses to works are informed by knowing where this circle-comics-is.”²⁹

As Holbo indicated, the definition of comics is very different according to scholar, period and situation, but these differences and changes – “the circle of comics” — need to be determined.

There are many other different definitions of comics from the perspective of form, like Robert C. Harvey’s:

“Comics are understood as narratives told by a sequence of pictures, with the dialogue of the characters incorporated into the pictures in the form of speech balloons. Comics are a hybrid form: words and pictures.”³⁰

But nowadays there are comics without words which do not fit his definition. He also discussed the general tendency, the term “comics” is usually mixed with other terms:

“In general, we treat the term “Comics” quite broadly, and understand this term to cover graphic novels, newspaper strips, single-panel gag cartoons, superhero comics, romance comics, western comics, underground comics, web-comics, manga, alternative comics and a wealth of related phenomenon.”³¹

McCloud defined comics from the perspective of both form and function in an aesthetic sense: “Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer.”³² But what about the old

²⁹ John Holbo, 2012:5.

³⁰ Robert C. Harvey, 1996:3.

³¹ Aaron Meskin and Roy T.Cook, 2012, pp. xxi.

³² Scott McCloud, 1994:9

Egyptian fresco which appears in his book; can it be equals to comics books such as Superman?

Groensteen points out why it's impossible to give a clear definition of comics:

“The comics system will be a conceptual frame in which all of the actualizations of the “ninth art” can find their place and be thought of in relation to each other, taking into account their differences and their commonalities within the same medium.”³³

In his paper, Groensteen gives us some definitions by other researchers which are apparently out of date. He does not give his own definition, and points out that it's impossible to find a solid definition in terms of form. He states: “What distinguishes a comic from a cycle of frescoes is the fact that the written words are essential to the understanding of the story.”³⁴ Among the not proper definitions which he discusses, only David Kunzle's touches on contents:

“I would propose a definition in which a “comics strip” of any period, in any country, fulfills the following conditions: 1) There must be a sequence of separate images; 2) there must be a preponderance of image over text; 3) the medium in which the strip appears and for which it was originally intended must be reproductive, that is, in printed form, a mass medium; 4) the sequence must tell a story which is both moral and topical.”³⁵

But what about comics without a topic which serve just expression and experiment for artistic purpose, like abstract comics?³⁶ Robert Crumb made the comix *Abstract Expression*

³³ Thierry Groensteen, 2009a:130

³⁴ David Carrier, 1997:317

³⁵ David Kunzle, 1978:2

³⁶ *Abstract comics* is a conception of comics that combine concepts of visual abstraction with the traditional continuity of the comic strip. They can also be called abstract sequential art. This conception first appeared in Molotiu (2009). Creators of abstract comics include Robert Crumb,

Ultra Super Modernistic Comics in 1967 (fig.4-254), which is the first piece to bring together the words “abstract” and “Comics”, at the beginning and the end of its title³⁷ And Russian suprematist El Lissitzky can also be considered in this regard. He made the book *About Two Squares* (fig.4-250) in 1920 (published in 1922), which featured the brief tale of a black and a red square that arrive in a chaotic world and restructure it into a new order. Even if the captions are placed underneath each picture (which is not comics-like), this book nevertheless presented in the six pages of its story a graphic drama whose narrative relied on primarily formal transformations, from disorder to clarity and harmony.³⁸

Bill Blackbeard, a researcher from the US, holds the opposite view. To him, a comics is:

“a serially published, episodic, open-end dramatic narrative or series of linked anecdotes about recurrent identified characters, told in successive drawings regularly enclosing ballooned dialogue or its equivalent and generally minimal narrative text.”³⁹

This does not apply to the situation of nowadays, because there are graphic novels which are not “serially” published.

Pierre Couperie also defined comics with respect to form:

“Comics would be a story (but it is not necessarily a story...) constituted by handmade images from one or several artists (it must eliminate cinema and the photo-novel), fixed images (in different from animation, multiple (contrary to the cartoon), and juxtaposed (in difference from illustration and engraved novels...) But this definition applies equally well to Trajan’s Column and the Bayeux Tapestry)”⁴⁰

Andrei Molotiu, Patrick McDonnell, Mark Badger, Henrik Rehr, Benoit Joly and Gary Panter.

³⁷ Andrei Molotiu, 2009:1

³⁸ Andrei Molotiu, 2009:1-9

³⁹ Bill Blackbeard, 1974:41

⁴⁰ Casterman, “E3” Tournai, 1983:36

This definition also does not fit the situation nowadays because there are comics made by computer.

The definitions above apply to the situation of comic in the time, but because of the development of the technology innovation and other reasons. Those definition are all out of dated. Like Groensteen points out, it is impossible to he give a solid definition, even just or a short time. Because nowadays, comics had imported many elements and other genres also borrow elements from comics, so it is hard to draw a clear borderline. But it is possible to discuss about the characteristic of the new works which borrow elements form comics, and discuss about if it can be categorized to the genre comics.

1-1-3. The Formal Connection between Picturebooks and Comics

Since later 1960s comics have impacted the picturebook significantly. Nowadays more and more artists integrate comics elements, such as panels, speech balloons, sound words, speed lines, and character design, into picturebooks. Scholar Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer points how artists import elements from comics:

“The adaption of these elements, in particular the division of the page in multiple panels, the placement of text within the pictures, and the use of lines and symbols to indicate motion or emotional impact, demonstrated that picturebook artists experiment with different pictorial and textual strategies in order to extend the artistic potential of the picturebooks medium.”⁴¹

⁴¹ Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2013: 100

Kümmerling-Meibauer points out what caused this tendency:

“[...] on closer consideration, these aspects do not really contribute to an exact demarcation between these genres. This is mainly due to the convergence of picturebooks, comics and manga, and strengthened by the globalization of the book market and the tendency to create artworks that are characterized by trans-cultural and inter-medial features.”⁴²

In my own research and creative activities, I do not borrow elements only from comics, but also from so-called “picturebooks”, and I found several formal similarities between these two genres. Even before the “crossover picturebook” appeared, there were several similarities. Due to the characteristic which both genres shared, it was possible to import elements from each other. Kümmerling-Meibauer made an excellent summary of the similarities between comics and picturebooks:

“Picturebooks, comics, and manga have much in common: they are rich and complex media, combining images and texts in different formats and playing on the interdependence of these signifying systems. They are strongly determined by a narrative form relying on a sequence of pictures, thus belonging to an art form coined as sequential art by American comics/graphic novel artist Will Eisner. Hence, picturebooks, comics and manga are distinguished by their multimodal character; they have verbal and visual elements seamlessly combined in multifaceted ways. Another commonality is that they are highly inter-textual with their artists drawing on diverse sources from the arts and popular media.”⁴³

⁴² Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2013: 101

⁴³ Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2013: 100

Because of this tendency, there are more works which cannot be unequivocally categorized as comics or picturebooks in the traditional sense, in which the borderline between comics and picturebooks is being blurred.

“While most people have an idea, albeit intuitive of what a typical picturebook, comics, or manga is, it is not easy to draw a strict dividing line between these genres.”⁴⁴

Crossover works bring new possibilities to pictorial narrative. Kümmerling-Meibauer gives several characteristics of such picturebooks and indicates how they bring new possibilities to both genres, concerning reading process and reading direction, the number of pages, the visual style and the page layout.

1) Crossover picturebooks change the reading process and the reception:

“Attentive looking at picturebooks by children of preschool age is guided in a joint interaction between child and adult mediator who usually reads the text aloud, promoting the child to listen to the text and to scrutinize the illustrations for additional information. [...] By contrast, comics and manga do not cater to reading aloud, they demand a skilled reader who is able to decipher the text in the speech balloons and text blocks and decode the visual symbols and signs in the pictures. Closing this gap somewhat, crossover picturebooks and picturebooks for adult elicit a change in reading process, relying on the viewer’s capacity to read the book silently.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2013: 100-101

⁴⁵ Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2013: 101

But silent reading is not a unique way of reading manga and comics, it also applies to recent picturebooks, which changes the traditional way of reading picturebooks:

“In addition, the incorporation of text into the images, a typical feature of comics and manga, also increasingly occurs in picturebooks. For this reason, the claim that the simultaneousness of seeing and reading is a unique feature of comics tends to lose validity.”⁴⁶

2) Crossover picturebooks have more pages than traditional picturebooks:

“A picturebook usually consists of four octavo sheets (twenty-two pages), while comics and manga are generally not created as a single book, but as a series that comprises up to ten and even more volumes. Although the rise and success of the graphic novel has resulted in comics and manga that are printed in single volume(s), their length is definitely not restricted to thirty-two pages.”⁴⁷

3) Cartooning appears in crossover picturebooks as well:

“Picturebooks usually have full-color drawings or photographs, while manga and to a certain extent also western comics tend to be monochrome. Yet, even picturebooks once in a while have black-and-white drawings so that this aspect is not adequate either to emphasize the difference between picturebooks, comics, and manga. All three appear in a vast range of visual styles, but what they nearly all have in common is that they reduce the detail of the visible world in terms of color, shape, and texture, and they typically employ outlines to

⁴⁶ Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2013: 101

⁴⁷ Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2013: 101

depict objects. Thus, cartooning is not restricted to comics and manga but also appears in picturebooks.”⁴⁸

4) About paneling, she points out:

“The doubles spreads in picturebooks generally show a single image or two images with a text printed beneath, besides, or above the illustration, whereas the images in comics and manga consist of a panel sequence, most commonly between six and twelve in number per page.”⁴⁹

But in some recent crossover picturebooks, there are more images per page than previously.

Kümmerling-Meibauer also points out the motivation of artists to challenge the borderline between picturebooks, comics and manga, and for which purpose the elements from those genres are combined:

“On closer consideration, a lot of pleasure in reading comics, manga, and picturebooks is filing in all the blank space beyond each panel and each illustration. [...] One gauge of the challenge of picturebooks, comics and manga is how much they excite the imagination – what the reader perceives beyond and between the borders of their single pictures and panels.”⁵⁰

1-2. Alternative Comics as Contemporary Art

⁴⁸ Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2013: 101-102

⁴⁹ Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2013: 102

⁵⁰ Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2013: 102

Generally, commercial comics are not seen as contemporary art, even if they share similarities, like being reproductive and team work. French BD are called “the ninth art”, but there are still discussions about manga and comics in other cultures. Because commercial comics are connected to the mass market, it is complicate to give a clear conclusion about whether it is contemporary art. But it is possible to discuss alternative comics, that is, one branch of comics, as art because of the independency of both creating process and circulation.

1-2-1 Ambiguous Borderline between Art and Alternative Comics

It is not just comics that is influenced by art, art also is influenced by comics, “In fact, quite a lot of art directly or more obliquely inspired by comics, was getting some recognition at the time [1973].”⁵¹ But the fine art world keeps silence about it; consequently, this relationship does not get the broader cultural awareness it deserves. Comics critic Paul Gravett indicates that “it can still come as a surprise to some that comics are not always divorced from the other arts of their times and can equally respond to and impact on those arts’ changing practices.”⁵² And he gives a few examples of the connection which has been missed in art history:

“Ignorance, if not prejudice, may explain why major surveys, such as those on Art Nouveau, Art Déco or Modernism at the Victoria and Albert Museum, can embrace everything from advertisements to kitchenware, but rarely refer to how these movements were visibly reflected in comics. The exquisitely colored elegance of Winsor McCay’s

⁵¹ Paul Gravett, 2007:15

⁵² Paul Gravett, 2007:16

LITTLE NEMO IN SLUMBERLAND [New York Herald, New York American, October 15, 1905 - December 26, 1926] pages epitomizes Art Nouveau for the masses, read by millions free with their Sunday paper. George McManus's BRINGING UP FATHER, another American classic, would have demonstrated the public's appreciation of Art Déco, while George Herriman's KRAZY KAT [October 28, 1913 - June 25, 1944] has been appraised by Adam Gopnik as a crucial intermediary' figure or 'missing link' in art history."⁵³

Gravett also indicates a reason of why comics has been excluded from thinking about art:

"Comics more broadly have been the "missing link" in most twentieth-century art history primers. It is as if their role in providing easily accessible stories to a broad public means that they were out of synch with numerous changes in thinking about art."⁵⁴

He also points out the connection between Pablo Picasso's Cubism and the Sunday funnies. Art critic Jonathan Jones suggests in 2002 that "... it was the distorted, vibrant, violent, grotesque, fantastically modern graphic world of the American newspaper comics that helped Picasso break out of every convention of continuity in art, that helped him paint a portrait that is a cartoon, but with gravitas."⁵⁵ In 1937, the same year Pablo Picasso created *Guernica*, he also produced *The Dream and Lie of Franco*, two sheets of prints, comprising 18 panels which satirize the Spanish general Francisco Franco in an exaggerated way inspired by newspaper cartoons of that time.

If comics can be seen as the combination of words and pictures (or only pictures), then we can say that the contemporary art scene, from René Magritte and Kurt Schwitters onwards,

⁵³ Paul Gravett, 2007:16

⁵⁴ Paul Gravett, 2007:16

⁵⁵ Paul Gravett, 2007:16

has employed this crucial element of comics in paintings. In 1960s America, elements from comics were used in another sense. Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol produced works which employed comics characters, or made silk screens from one panel of a comics book, like Dick Tracy, Superman, Popeye the Sailor Man and Mickey Mouse. They were picked up as the visualization of American mass consumption culture since the 1930s, and functioned as nostalgic mythologized archetypes in their work.⁵⁶ Gravett comments on Lichtenstein's case:

“Comics therefore became a refuge, or ghetto, for representational artists who wanted to draw more or less realistically tales of fantasy, superheroes, romance, crime, war or other genres. In his [Lichtenstein's] search for ‘...a painting that was despicable enough so that nobody would hang it’⁵⁷ it was precisely their pariah status in art circles that made such comics so alluring as ‘found objects’ for Lichtenstein in the early 1960s.”⁵⁸

Artists who created fine art in the 20th century also borrowed or found their inspirations in comics like Keith Haring's pop art works in the New York subway which were inspired by graffiti art. His works do not quote from comics or refer to comics, but they are comics in essence.⁵⁹

1-2-2. Artists Who Work in the Comics World

Generally, comics is considered as the combination of picture and word, and at the same time, comics has been related to literature more than visual art. There are artists, who

⁵⁶ Inuhiko Yomota, 1999: 218.

⁵⁷ Paul Gravett, 2007:16

⁵⁸ Paul Gravett, 2007:16

⁵⁹ Inuhiko Yomota, 1999: 220

published their “comics”, but their requirements about the quality of paper, size and quality of the book bring their works closer to the visual art tradition if compared with the mainstream comics which are closer to the tradition of literature, emphasizing story and contents more than drawing technique and the quality of paper.

Scholar Emma Mabony indicates what elements of comics attract fine artists’ attention:

“The comics medium offers a unique form of communication where word and image combine to follow the exploits of characters through space and time and often across the pages of multiple issues. Its ostensibly ‘innocent’ form allows for the dissemination and articulation of difficult ideas in an accessible manner, providing a platform for political and social commentary as well as a vehicle for escapism, introspection and deviance. The comics book’s appeal to contemporary artists is rooted in this visual language and its potential for pictorial storytelling.”⁶⁰

As Mabony says, comics is a new way to communicate and a new form, with its special combination of image and text, through which artists can express their thinking in a unique way.

And reaching a wider audience easily is another reason of why comics attract artists to represent their ideas:

“Many of the comics artists began by self-publishing their work, an approach also embraced by the fine artists who are attracted to the format for its ability to reach and influence a wider audience than a gallery context would permit, but also lack the publishing infrastructure.”⁶¹

⁶⁰ Emma Mabony 2007:11

⁶¹ Emma Mabony, 2007:12

So for artists like them, the book is one form to present their ideas and reach the audience without going through the gallery or other limited sites of circulation. Their intention is not just to present their art work or idea in a comics book, but to present the (comics) book as their art work. In many cases, the quality of paper and the particular form (big size like with *Raw*, and small size and horizontal format like with *Jimmy Corrigan: the smartest boy on earth*) is very important for these artists compared with commercial comics which has a fixed form and size. Because the quality of paper, the size and design are all important for presenting the artists' ideas and paintings/drawings, the artists bring their requirements into the book making process, just like choosing materials for painting (sometime the bad paper has also a message), even if they do not have many choices because of the limits of print technology. While commercial comics do not care too much about the material quality of their products (although there are some different cases like in BD), these books should be considered as art, on the same level of art as the work they put in the gallery (even if the works they represent in the book have been presented in gallery already), and at the same time, these books can still be categorized as comics – “artistic” comics. Bart Beaty points out the characteristics of these “artist” comics books through the example of Anke Feuchtenberger who explores mythological, bodily, and feminist themes and who has been publishing her books in high quality with small press houses states:

“The comics book artist’s demand for a format that best fits her work is necessarily akin to the desire of a painter for a canvas sized appropriately for the scale of the painting, because in essence, the cartoonist has conceptualized the work as art, not as a book or a product of the mass market. Different sizes and different formats convey competing values and represent different ideologies in the comics form, as they do in other fields of culture. From

the intimate to the epic, the format of comics book is bound to its position within the field and its interpretation by audience.”⁶²

Feuchtenberger takes elements from comics if she thinks it suits what she wants to express, without considering the value, original meaning and differences between art and comics. Her work has certain narrative elements, and she says of herself that she is a “drawing artist” or “draughtswoman” (in German, Zeichnerin). But Feuchtenberger also uses comics elements without considering their historical value. This usage can be found in her book *Super Lacrimella* (2012). In one picture, she refers to superman with a woman’s flying gesture and her dialogue line “I wish I’d known” (fig.0-9). Apparently, she did not aim for the “art” value when she chose these comics elements.⁶³

Some later stories closer to comics than this book, but importing comics elements for expression actually makes her an artist who uses comics as a medium for her personal thoughts and feelings, as distinct from commercial comics artists who make comics for industry and audience.

In October 2013, when Feuchtenberger held an exhibition at the Art Museum of Nan Jing University of the Arts, she insisted that all the works — copies, prints and original works — should be put in a narrow space to create a comics-like atmosphere. Her intention was to suggest the difference from fine art, but the curator rejected this idea because he thought it too artistic and lacking the necessary consideration of the audience. So, Feuchtenberger’s attitude may reveal that she is an artist who focuses not only on graphic narrative but also on the “gesture” and “conception” of comics rather than on comics as straight and entertaining storytelling.

⁶² Bart Beaty, 2007:54

⁶³ Feuchtenberger talked about this in her artist talk during her exhibition in Nan Jing, on October 19, 2013.

2. Japanese Alternative Comics as Contemporary Art

Critic Junzo Ishiko⁶⁴ thought that manga's value is not in art, but in social function and reflecting social life:

“All arguments about whether manga is art are in general unproductive. The definition of art depends on the individual, and nobody is particularly concerned with that. Also, there are quite a lot manga works perceived as art. But it is also true that it is in the nature of manga to sever all the connections with “art” and vividly embody the concrete and solid actuality of our everyday lives. It is quite possibly this sense of life, decidedly separated from any evaluations of the work as “art” that gives actuality to manga as a medium.”⁶⁵

In this quote, Ishiko understands manga in a general sense. Indeed, manga has a strong connections with society, but the content is presented with both text and picture, and thus it has strong connections with visual culture as well. Manga has its special way to present a story, just like film and painting. If one only thinks about the function and context, then the particular aesthetic value cannot be realized. And also, not all manga is made from life or for life; there are also manga works which are made for artistic experiment.

Berndt points out the characteristics of manga and the aesthetic value, which is a good reason of why we should discuss manga as contemporary art:

⁶⁴ Junzo Ishiko (石子順造, born (木村泰典), 2 October, 1928 – 21 July, 1977), art critic, manga critic. He wrote a series of critical article about contemporary art, underground art, design and manga. He is considered as forerunner of manga criticism.

⁶⁵ 「マンガが芸術であるかないかなどという論争は、およそ不毛だの一言につきる。「芸術」という語の解釈も人さまざまろうしそうであって困ることもあまりない。そして、芸術とみなされていたマンガも、間違いなくあるし、多くあって結構だ。しかし、芸術などという言葉には一切とらわれず、よりいきいきと生活の地平のアクチュアリティを体現するのが本来マンガのあり方でもあろう。マンガを表現としてアクチュアルに成立せしめてよるのは、あくまで価値的な芸術としての評価などとは無縁な、生活実感そのものであるだろう。」 Junzo Ishiko, 1975:160

“Compared to academic painting which conceals its internal contradictions and discontinuities, as well as its purposes as a medium, under the disguise of autonomous art, (story-) manga functions above all as a medium for daily communication, and appears as an impure, hybrid form of expression. Aesthetically, it intertwines the verbal and the pictorial, the sequential and the simultaneous, the temporal and the spatial; culturally, it is shaped by Japanese and East Asian traditions as well as by modern European and American influences. Precisely because of these characteristics, story-manga presents a challenge not only to the existing discipline of art history, literature and film studies, but to manga studies itself.”⁶⁶

Apparently, there is still a need to discuss the connection of manga and contemporary art. And because the situation of Japanese manga is different from comics and cartoon in the west, it deserves to be discussed separately.

2-1. Definitions of Manga and Discussions

In western languages, “Caricature”, “Cartoon” and “Comics” are not separated clearly. This applies to “manga” as well, although internationally “manga” is automatically identified as story-manga. But in Japan, the term also designates the short form of the one-panel caricature and the four-panel comic strip. For example, in a Japanese dictionary, one can find the below definition of manga (漫画):

“Manga: 2. Translation of the English term “Caricature”, especially the simple and smart drawing which focuses on social critique and satire. *Punch* drawing. One panel and four

⁶⁶ Jaqueline Berndt, 2001:352

panels (drawing) with speech balloons. Originally, the focus is on humor, but it includes also gekiga and story manga. Essayistic drawing (*manpitsuga*).”⁶⁷

This definition puts the emphasis on the satirical cartoon and caricature.

More modern definitions of the term privilege story manga:

“Nowadays the word “manga” mostly refers to a work in which narration results from the sequential reading of numerous pictures, and which employs pictures as its main force and also dialogue lines, sound effects, and pictograms. With respect to the format, manga is divided into one-panel manga, four-panel manga (*yonkoma*), and longer narratives. These latter are divided into short stories, 20-30 page stories such as the episodes in *Black Jack*⁶⁸, and long narratives in which the story unfolds throughout hundreds of pages.”⁶⁹

Here we see story manga (マンガ) included in the definition of “manga” (漫画).

But although story manga and cartoon have been named by the same term “manga”, actually in Japan, they are separated clearly as “cartoon”(漫画) and “story manga”(マンガ). Until the 1970s, manga as cartoon mainly addressed an adult audience. It was published in newspapers and credited with a higher cultural status for its political and social messages.

⁶⁷「漫画: 2. (英の *caricature* 訳語)、特に社会批評、風刺などを主眼として単純軽妙な絵。ポンチ絵。一コマ、四コマなどで、ふきだしに書き込んだ会話でつづるもの。本来、滑稽さを主眼としたものだが、劇画、ストーリー漫画の類も含んでいう。漫筆画。」Shogakukan Japanese dictionary editorial department, 2001:565

⁶⁸ *Black Jack* (ブラック・ジャック) is a Japanese manga written and illustrated by Osamu Tezuka in the 1970s, dealing with the medical adventures of the title character, doctor Black Jack. *Black Jack* consists of hundreds of short, self-contained stories that are typically about 20 pages long.

⁶⁹「現在の漫画は絵を主体として台詞や擬音・効果符を付けた複数の絵を連続的に読むことで物語性を持たせた物を大部分に指す...形式としては1コマ漫画、4コマ漫画とそれ以外の物語が主体のもので分けられることが多い。物語を主体としたものでも、「ブラック・ジャック」のように20~30ページの(雑誌ではちょうど1話分となる)短編を基本とするものと、数百ページに渡り物語を展開する長編ものに分けられる。」

Nico Nico Pedia: <http://dic.nicovideo.jp/a/%E6%BC%AB%E7%94%BB>

“The story-manga, or graphic narrative, on the other hand, has been typically seen as a type of entertaining fiction for young readers which has come to dominate the realm of manga gradually since the late 1950s with the birth of the manga magazine format.”⁷⁰

Ippei Okamoto⁷¹, one forerunner of Japanese contemporary manga, gave his definition from the perspective of an artist, in the sense of function, but not in the sense of form: “Manga is a work which penetrates the secrets of society and human beings.”⁷² And he characterizes manga further as something which “skillfully touches the truth which hides in the thing and heart.”⁷³ He also gave his definition of manga in general:

“Manga connects with everything in the universe, it is the name of the painting that dissects and picks out the realities of negotiating situations, and expresses beauty in its result.”⁷⁴

Okamoto also realized the difficulty of giving a clearly definition of manga, because of its characteristic: “Manga, as a branch of painting, is independent and being accepted; there are no limits to its thought or expression.”⁷⁵ The manga he refers to is one-panel cartoon, but the problem of giving a clear definition has not changed much since Okamoto’s days, not even in regard to story manga.

⁷⁰ Jaqueline Berndt, 2001:350

⁷¹ Ippei Okamoto (岡本 一平, June 11, 1886 – October 11, 1948) was a Japanese cartoonist and writer.

⁷² op.cit. 「漫画とは世態人情を穿つ絵をいう。」 Ryotaro Mizuno, 1991: 27.

⁷³ op.cit. 「物事や人情の隠れた真の姿に、たくみに触れる。」 Mizuno Ryotaro, 1991:27

⁷⁴ 「漫画とは宇宙間の万物に就きて、その現状並みに相互間の交渉する実相を解剖抉剔し、その結果の美を表現する絵画を謂ふ。」 Junzo Ishiko, 1975:14

⁷⁵ 「漫画というものが絵画の一派として、独立して認められてきたものであり、漫画とは思想上、表現上に何の拘束も持っていない。」 Ryotaro Mizuno, 1991:27

There are opinions that the origin of Manga is in one panel manga and four panels manga. But Ryotaro Mizuno⁷⁶ thinks that we should not try to find manga's origin in the form (like panel layouts); instead, we should try to find it in contents and sense.⁷⁷

Kazuyoshi Shigematsu also thinks that the essence of manga is in the contents and function:

“It is said that the origin and characteristics of manga are in humor, wit and sense. The elegance and essence which are considered as our country's tradition fermenting in the form of giga (caricature), ezoshi (illustrated books), sharebon (share book), kokkeibon (kokkei book), ukiyo-e (woodblock print), nishiki-e (brocade picture), fushiga (satirical drawing), haiga (haikai drawing), senryuga (senryu drawing) attest to this genealogy and historical body.”⁷⁸

Critic Fusanosuke Natsume gives his definition from the perspective of semiotics:

“Manga is more or less a reservoir of such conventional signs. But readers usually do not notice that, as these conventions lean on a tacit and unconscious agreement.”⁷⁹

Tomofusa Kure gives his definition from two perspectives, one is from media studies:

⁷⁶ Ryotaro Mizuno (水野良太郎, born 1937) is a Japanese manga artist and illustrator. For more information, see his website: <http://ryot-mizuno-web-magazine.webnode.jp>

⁷⁷ 「日本では「ひとゴマ漫画」や「四ゴマ漫画」が漫画の原点だと言う人がいるが、一般論としては、こうした表現の形式が原点にならないのは漫画の歴史が示す通りである。漫画の原点を論じるなら、コマ数の多い・少ないといった表現形式にあるのではなく、内容やセンスに問われるべきではないか。そうした論議を曖昧にして北結果、日本では「漫画」と「マンガ」「コミック」「劇画」はそれぞれ別物だと言うような独善までが一人歩きを始めてしまった。加えて「MANGA」「GEKIGA」という名詞がそのまま欧米のマスコミに登場する例も増えてきた。これは彼等のイメージする漫画とはニュアンスが多少違ってものとして使われている。」 Ryotaro Mizuno, 1991:28

⁷⁸ 「漫画の原点と特色は、ユーモアとウィットとセンスにあると言われており、わが国なりの風流や粋・通といわれる伝統は、劇画・絵草紙・洒落本・滑稽本・浮世絵・錦絵・風刺画・俳画・川柳画といった形で発酵し、それなりの系譜と蓄積された歴史的母胎のあることも知るところである。」 Kazuyoshi Shigematsu, 1996:1

⁷⁹ 「そしてマンガは、多かれ少なかれ、こうした約束記号の集合なのだ。ただ読者は普通、そんなことを意識しない。それらは暗黙かつ無意識の了解事項である。」 Kentaro Takekuma & Fusanosuke Natsume, 1995:3

“By the way, about the definition of comics, I want to briefly define it while referring to Ishiko’s thoughts: Pictures, mainly in the form of panels, which put forward a narrative.”⁸⁰ And he indicates in which sense this definition can be made:

“This is not a definition; the more important characteristic usually recognized is “reproduction art” as discussed by Tada Michitaro: mass production as premise, only copies without original (of course, there is the script), drawings which are deformed (with a difference in degree), infants and youth as main audience, mostly entertaining purpose — these are points which I can make out.”⁸¹

But Kure approaches manga also from the perspective of semiotics:

“Manga, in the same way as language, music and movie, is a sign systems which records and transmits human thought. In the case of a language, a rule of a certain order is called the grammar of the sign system. In manga, too, there should be a thing similar to the grammar in the language. [...] Let’s think about the definition of manga which I gave in the previous paragraph—Pictures mainly in the form of panels, which put forward a narrative— from the viewpoint of the grammar of manga. In semiotic terms, this means sequential pictures which combine presence (現示性) with linearity (線条性).”⁸²

⁸⁰ 「さて、マンガの定義だが、故石子順造が考えていたものを参考にしつつ、簡潔に次のように定義したい:コマを構成単位とする物語進行のある絵。」Tomofusa Kure, 2007:101

⁸¹ 「定義ではないが、ほとんど常に見られる重要な特徴ということでは、大量生産を前提にしコピーだけがあってオリジナルがない（むろん原稿はある）多田道太郎などの言う「複製芸術」であること、絵は程度の差こそあってもデフォルメされていること、幼児から青年層にかけてを主たる読者としていること、娯楽を目的とするものが大半であること、これらの点を指摘することができる。」Tomofusa Kure, 2007:101

⁸² 「マンガは、言語、音楽、映画などと同じように、人間の思考を記録し伝達する記号体系である。言語の場合、その記号体系の中にある秩序の規則が文法と呼ばれるものだ

Scholar Yoshitake Oshiro points out three elements which are important when defining manga from the perspective of semiotics:

1) linguistic signs like in narration or dialogue, 2) images represented as signs, such as humans, items and background, 3) complex signs like sound effects, shape metaphors or other visualized words, such as the combination of text and drawing (drawn text) which is unique to manga⁸³

This definition refers mainly to the mature Japanese story manga.

In his book, Mizuno points out that in Japan, story manga is separated from one panel cartoon, although both had been categorized as manga. Critic Tomofusa Kure made a mistake when he wrote about comics in the US, “In America, manga (マンガ) which focus on humor are called Cartoons, and manga which focus on story (manga which look like a long string of images) are called Comic strip”⁸⁴ —which is not exactly true.

2-2. Discussion about Manga as Contemporary Art

が、マンガにも、言語における文法と同じようなものがあるはずだ。[...] 前項で述べたマンガの定義について、マンガの文法の視点から、もう一度考えてみよう。マンガの定義は、コマを構成単位とする物語進行のある絵というものであった。これを、記号論の用語を使って言い換えてみると、現示性と線条性が複合した一連の絵とすることができる。」Tomofusa Kure, 2007:105-106

⁸³ Yoshitake Oshiro, 1987:24

⁸⁴ 「ちなみに言うと、アメリカでは、笑中心のマンガを「カーズーン」、物語中心のマンガを「コミック・ストリップス(細長いひものようなマンガ)」と称している。」Tomofusa Kure, 2001:104

In regards to whether manga, especially alternative manga, is contemporary art, I want shall begin my discussion from the meaning of style and the historical connection between avant-garde and comics.

2-2-1 Social Critique as Style: Line

When McCloud discusses the different expressivity of the line, he only considers the different effects of it. For example, he puts Carl Barks's *Uncle \$Crooge* next to Robert Crumb's drawing to illuminate the difference. But he does not touch upon the different background of the artists, although they are from completely different comics scenes.⁸⁵ It's easily to accept his theory because of the obviously different style of the two works and their common comics book form as well as categorization as comics.

But Carl Barks was born in 1901 and started to work for Disney in 1935, while Robert Crumb was born in 1943 and worked in the American underground comix scene of the 60s, who took an approach to comics opposite Disney, not just in the sense of style, but also in the way of creation, distribution and readership etc. Compared to the world of mass-produced comics, Crumb has a stronger connection with the art world which affects the meanings of his line work.

The difference in line work could be related also to the different materials used in different periods. Such is the opinion of Kentaro Takekuma.⁸⁶ The line can be employed to serve the story, but it also can be a reflection of the artist's personality, a representation of the artist's thinking, or a response to social discourses.

Junzo Ishiko related the different line work of *gekiga* and Tezuka manga to different kinds of thinking and everyday life in the post-war era. This could be another way to understand

⁸⁵ Scott McCloud, 1998:134

⁸⁶ Kentaro Takekuma & Fusanosuke Natsume, 1995:12

the differences in style. But regardless of the approach, when we talk about the comics as an “art” work, the style cannot be separated from the contents of the work and the artist’s background. These elements shouldn’t be ignored even when simply discussing the effects of style. That’s why contemplation of both contents and style, and of the connection between them is necessary when one pursues the artistic and social meaning and the potential function of a comics work.

2-2-2. The Historical Connection between Manga and Avant-garde in Japan

It is also necessary to take a look at the connection between manga, art and avant-garde in history. In retrospect, it is easy to see that manga, especially alternative manga, cannot develop without the communication with the art scene. Even Osamu Tezuka made realistic sketches, which have generally been attached few importance in the manga scene, but this does not mean that the manga scene had no connection with fine art after Tezuka. From Tezuka to *Garo*, Japanese manga artists have been deeply and widely influenced by fine art. And the art world also often intersected with the avant-garde scene of its time.

Before the early 60s, manga was considered something for children or the product of a low culture. In other words, putting efforts in it was assumed to be ridiculous. At the same time painting was regarded as something for adult appreciation, and people who put efforts in painting were considered more praiseworthy. Thus Japanese manga artists tended to entwine an inferiority complex with a certain pride in opposing standardized art, an attitude which can be found in Shinji Nagashima’s manga *Mangaka zankoku monogatari* (『漫画家残酷物語』, 1961~1964). In the late 60s, the newly emerging genre of *seinen manga* frequently borrowed expressive means from painting. And the artists created some experimental works.

In the 1970s, the world of manga became wider and the boundaries of manga expanded.

“The borderline between manga and the other genres like fine art, avant-garde art, commercial design, illustration, photography, etc. was obscure, and works could be placed on that very borderline.”⁸⁷

The work by graphic designer Tadanori Yokoo and other artists like Toshio Saeki⁸⁸ appeared in the Avant-garde manga collection *Zen'ei manga kessakushu* (『第2期現代漫画—前衛漫画傑作集』, Chikuma shobo, 1971), along with those of manga artists such as Hayashi Seiichi and Tadao Tsuge. And works of contemporary artists such as Hideo Takeda⁸⁹ and Shigeo Fukuda⁹⁰, as well as manga artists Osamu Tezuka⁹¹ and Machiko Hasegawa⁹² won The Bungei shunju Manga Award.⁹³ Some manga artists like Kazuichi Hanawa (fig.3-1, 2, 3) and Seiichi Hayashi⁹⁴, with graphic designers and artists like Uno Aquirax and Tadanori Yokoo⁹⁵ designed posters for Shuji Terayama's avant-garde films and his avant-garde theater group *Tenjo Sajiki*.

While alternative manga magazines like *Com* and *Garō* published manga works by fine artists and illustrators, the art magazines and general magazines also published manga-like

⁸⁷ 「それだけ漫画の世界が広くなり、漫画とほかの分野、つまり、純粹絵画、前衛美術、商業デザイン、イラストレーション、写真、などその境界がアイマイになってきて、それらの境界線上で重要な仕事をする人がふえてきたということである。」 Sato Tadao, 1971:317

⁸⁸ Toshio Saeki (佐伯俊男, b.1945) is a Japanese artist and manga artist, famous for his paintings and drawing focusing on erotica, violence, and perversion.

⁸⁹ *Mon mon* (もんもん, 1977), for more information see his website: <http://takeda.cooh3.com/>

⁹⁰ *International humor from toy to house* (住宅から玩具にいたる国際的ユーモア, 1976).

⁹¹ *Buddha: animal companion grass* (動物つれづれ草 (ブッダ), 1975)

⁹² *Sazae-san* (サザエさん, 1962).

⁹³ The Bungeishunju Manga Award (文藝春秋漫画賞, 1955 - 2001) was an annual award given out for gag, four panels, one-panel, satirical manga, and the works which are considered the master piece of manga creators by Bungeishunju in Japan.

⁹⁴ For more information see his website: <http://www.hayashi-seiichi.jp/>

⁹⁵ “Hanawa was drawing for manga monthly *Garō*, right? I'm not sure if the right word is deep or broad, but Terada certainly found a variety of talents.” Kyoko Kujo, 2004:11

works by illustrators and fine art artists like Yosuke Inoue,⁹⁶ Hidetoshi Umeda,⁹⁷ Cho Shinta,⁹⁸ Yoji Kuri,⁹⁹ Tadanori Yokoo, Toshio Saeki, Tiger Tateishi¹⁰⁰ and Genpei Akasegawa.¹⁰¹

“Before the 80s, artists only borrowed the means of expression of painting without much self-consciousness. Then, the new generation of manga artists in the 80s fully realized this obscure borderline and imported the means of expression of not just traditional art forms, but also contemporary art and avant-garde into their work with conscious. Manga artists Maruo Suehiro¹⁰² and Suzy Amakane¹⁰³ can serve as examples.”¹⁰⁴

In the contemporary art world, there is also a tendency to import manga elements, but related to social function, artistic value:

“Artist Murakami Takashi for example questions the difference between comics and academic painting by showing their basic similarities as two flat media. [...] However, Murakami does not treat this kind of painting as eternal art, but rather as an ephemeral and cute toy signifying “super-flat Japan”, or a culture flat in its social structure, its pictorial

⁹⁶ Yosuke Inoue (井上 洋介, born on March 7, 1931) is a Japanese illustrator and picture books artist.

⁹⁷ For more information, see his website: <http://www4.point.ne.jp/~umeda/>

⁹⁸ Shinta Cho (長新太, born as Suzuki Shuji (鈴木しゅう治), September 24, 1927 – June 25, 2005, Japanese manga and picture books artist. He is also known as the “God of Non-sense”(ナンセンスの神様).

⁹⁹ For more information, see his website: <http://www.yojikuri.jp/>

¹⁰⁰ Tiger Tateishi (タイガー立石, born as Koichi Tateishi (立石紘一) December 12, 1941 – April 17, 1998), Japanese fine artist, manga artist, picture book artist, pottery artist.

¹⁰¹ Tomofusa Kure, 2007:176

¹⁰² For more information, see his website: <http://www.maruojigoku.com/>

¹⁰³ For more information, see his website : <http://www.coganet.co.jp/>

¹⁰⁴ 「八十年代に登場した新しい世代の漫画家のなかには、こうした現代美術の趨勢を充分に自覚したうえで、その認識のもとにはや漫画でも絵画でもない一連の作品を発表シテいこうという傾向が見受けられる。われわれはそのもっとも興味深い例を丸尾末広とスージー甘金に見ることができる。」 Inuhiko Yomota, 1994:220

spaces, and its imitative thinking.”¹⁰⁵

And Berndt points out that Yoshitomo Nara’s art is closer to manga:

“It affirms visible surfaces instead of spiritual depth; conjoins the visual, the verbal, and the narrative instead of separating them neatly; prefers a dialogue with the viewer to a hermetic self-referentiality by treating “painting” as a mere medium; and does not claim a unique identity. Which is just like the medium of manga, which is determined by commodification, reproduction technologies, genre specifics and teamwork.”¹⁰⁶

Berndt also points out the differences between this tendency in fine art world and the tendency of avant-garde of 60s in Japan:

“It strives neither for “anti-art” — like the Japanese avant-garde of the 1960s — nor for an alleged pre-modern authenticity. Rather critically aware of Japan’s modernity, it actualizes a traditional mutuality of aesthetic concerns and quotidian culture.”¹⁰⁷

But no matter how these manga artists approach art and comics and how many elements they use in their own works, the close connection between these two genres cannot be ignored and they cannot be discussed separately.

3. Method and Contents of Each Chapter

¹⁰⁵ Jaqueline Berndt, 2001:369-370 & Murakami et al. 1998:20

¹⁰⁶ Jaqueline Berndt, 2001: 370

¹⁰⁷ Jaqueline Berndt, 2001: 370

3-1 Method

I clearly know that no matter how hard I try, any clear definition will be broken later, because some works can be hardly categorized, but if we do not examine the borderline of comics again and again with new eyes, then we won't know how far the possibilities could reach. In this thesis, instead of giving a solid definition of "comics", I want to pursue contemporary definitions and meanings by analyzing and comparing the works of those specific artists who have influenced my own creating activity.

I will focus on alternative comics and the works which have not been considered "comics" yet. I will discuss in what sense they are "comics" and "art", and try to discern the borderline between the two areas, and the ways they can be united. I would like to think about how "art" can be redefined in this context. Instead of simply asking in what sense these works are "art", I shall inquire into what kind of art these works are and what their social function and position is. By this, I want to show the ambiguity and interconnections between "comics" and "art", and examine how this ambiguity makes limitless and exciting potential for all the genres.

In particular, I'm going to look into four aspects of the given works:

1. Form and Style (meaning brought into play by style)
2. Story and Contents (the meaning and function in society): Contents is not treated as an important element in the development of comics, or in comics criticism, but I shall consider it as I am especially interested in the critical potential of comics.
3. Publication and Distribution
4. Art as an Institution (legitimacy of contemporary art)

3-2. Contents of Each Chapter

In Chapter 1, I will introduce the works of U.S. artist Joe Coleman and British artist Sue Coe and discuss their paintings as examples of critical contemporary art, and the similarities and differences between their books. I will then explain how their printed paintings work as comics. Finally, I will try to indicate the position of the comics art books made by non-comics artists.

In Chapter 2, I will introduce Czech-born American artist Peter Sis and Australian artist Shaun Tan, and analyze their works-paying special attention to the connection of these works with the artists' lives and environment. I will try to discern the artists' way to perceive the world, and their personal approach to the genres. With their works as an example, I will contemplate similarities and differences between picturebooks and alternative comics. I will look at comics and picturebooks as contemporary art which provides opportunities for expression and critical takes on reality.

In Chapter 3, I will discuss the works of Japanese alternative comics artist Kazuichi Hanawa, and Hong Kong alternative comics artist Li Chi-Tak. Then I will indicate the characteristics, the differences and similarities in their works and their connections with contemporary art. I will proceed to think about the different meanings of "alternative" and different ways of being "alternative" and being "contemporary art" in different cultures by analyzing the connections between their works and their respective environments.

In Chapter 4, I will introduce the alternative comics scene in the People's Republic of China. I will start with the history of cartoon and story comics in China, and then I will move on to development of alternative comics in China and their typical features. I will then try to deduce their social function and-their connections with contemporary art by analyzing the first anthology of Chinese alternative comics, *Special Comix*. Finally, I will introduce my own works and use them to show how all the artists appearing in the first three chapters influenced my creative process. Through this I shall demonstrate what my attitude towards comics and contemporary art is

In this thesis, I will focus on the critical meaning of form and style, of story and contents, and examine whether the chosen works can be related to critical contemporary art. I will also include the aspects of publication and distribution to further specify the function of these works. In addition I will discuss how to locate such works and artists and pursue new possibilities by analyzing the legitimacy of contemporary art.

At first glance, we may only see formal similarities between different genres, as a result of mixing elements from those genres. Also, the form of the discussed works is not fixed, because for these artists each type of contents has its own way of presentation requiring a change of form. This can probably explain why the same artist may create completely different works – they always need to find a balance between the contents and the form. In the cases discussed below, some artists may stay committed to one form for a long time, but in the end, they change unlike those artists who work for a particular taste or market, because artists who work for the latter don't have the same freedom (some artists who make works for market also change their style and form, but there is a less logical and strong personal development than in the cases discussed below), or the artists may limit themselves to one genre. This is why I consider their motivations and life experiences in my discussion of their works.

Chapter 1 Joe Coleman and Sue Coe: Comics Book Artists in the Art World

In the America of the 1960s, *underground comix*¹ appeared along with the hippie subculture and anti-Vietnam war movement. This new genre, which focused on social problems and political issues, gained wide support during that period. It also contributed to the art of comics, expanded its styles and contents.

But in the 1970s, the function of social critique faded out. Due to organizational and economic problems, underground comix started to disappear and leave its place to what we call “alternative comics” today, which focuses on a more personal, but not necessarily socio-critical narrative. It seems that, during this transformation, comics lost the social critique function that related it to art previously. However, the question is, did the critical function of comics completely vanish with the disappearance of the underground comix movement? If not, where can we spot it now?

In this chapter, I’m going to examine the works of Joe Coleman and Sue Coe who are considered to be “artists” rather than “comic book writers” or “illustrators.” I intend to examine the characteristics of their art works, find out their connection with both art and comics scenes, look at how the elements of graphic narratives in their art work widen the horizon of comics and art, what kind of functions their works have in society, and how important these functions are in finding the artists’ positions and defining their works. Neither Joe Coleman’s, nor Sue Coe’s works have been analyzed in comics studies yet. Yet, I believe, it is necessary to bring to attention their works’ importance both as comics and for the legitimization of alternative comics as art.

1. The similarity of Joe Coleman and Sue Coe’s Works

¹ Underground comix are small press or self-published comic books, which were most popular in the United States between 1968 and 1975. Underground comix depict content like drug using, violence and sexuality, which were tabooed for mainstream publications by the Comics Code Authority.

There are several similarities between the two artists. They are both born in the 1960s. They create not just paintings but publish books. They present their works in museum and gallery. They go beyond the realm of visual art, Sue Coe as an activist and Coleman as a performance artist. There is one most important connection between them: both of them were active in the alternative comics scene of the 1990s.

Coe published her anti-apartheid protest books *How to commit suicide in South Africa* (Radom House, 1983) (fig.1-66), and *X-Pictures: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* (New Press Publishing, 1986) (fig.1-54) in the first alternative comics magazine *Raw* and *Raw one-shot*.²

Raw is an anthology, which was started, by Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly in the 1980s. The purpose of launching this anthology was to provide a platform for avant-garde comics that would not be published anywhere else.³ Spiegelman himself published his *Maus* in *Raw*, which is considered the most important alternative comics. Both *Maus* and *Raw* made a huge impact on the independent comics world. *Raw* had a small print run 5000, and in order to present the artwork better, an unusual format – 28cm x 36cm – was adopted.⁴ Each page of *Raw*, featured design ideas such “overprints” and “drop outs” that were associated with the punk aesthetics.⁵ *Raw one-shot* is another magazine published by Raw Books which was developed as a separate line of titles by individual contributors. They were intended as a means to showcase a whole body of work or tell longer stories than in *Raw* itself.⁶

Meanwhile, Coleman got himself the title as “S. Clay Wilson⁷ for the 1990s”⁸ with his *Cosmic Retribution* (Fantagraphics Books, 1992), in which “intense, obsessive drawing

² Roger Sabin, 1996:189

³ Roger Sabin, 1996:178

⁴ Roger Sabin, 1996:178

⁵ Roger Sabin, 1996:188

⁶ Roger Sabin, 1996:181-182

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S._Clay_Wilson

complemented biblical quotations and densely-wrought prose yarns about murder, torture and horrendous retribution, with every wound, every degradation, lovingly depicted.”⁹

Cosmic Retribution draws on works first published in *Taboo* magazine¹⁰, a magazine announced to return “horror comics to the ‘forbidden’ status they enjoyed in the 1950s”; it was the most outstanding title of alternative horror comics¹¹ which “were produced partly in the belief that being as extreme as possible had an aesthetic and creative value”.¹² Its contents were much closer to underground frontrunners like *Skull*.¹³ The contributors included important alternative comics artist like Charles Burns, Clive Barker¹⁴, Alan Moore and Neil Gaiman¹⁵.

As mentioned above, both Sue Coe’s and Joe Coleman’s works were published in various artistic alternative magazines. In line with this, both were obviously involved in the circles related to Raw Books and Fantagraphics Books, another important publisher of alternative comics, founded in 1976. Many notable cartoonists published their work there.

2. Who is Joe Coleman?

Joe Coleman (b. 1955, in Norwalk, Connecticut) is an American painter, illustrator and performance artist. Before becoming a full-time artist, Coleman worked as a taxi driver and briefly attended the School of Visual Arts, New York.

Coleman attracted attention first in the mid 1970s with his drawings which had reached a wide underground audience by then. He joined the underground comix scene, contributing to *Blab!*¹⁶, *Bizarre Sex*¹⁷ and Fantagraphics Books’ *Snake Eyes*¹⁸ and *Big Mouth*¹⁹ (No.3). He

⁸ Roger Sabin, 1996:208

⁹ Roger Sabin, 1996:208

¹⁰ #7, 1992, Spiderbaby Graphics,

¹¹ Roger Sabin, 1996:204

¹² Roger Sabin, 1996:208

¹³ Roger Sabin, 1996:204-208

¹⁴ For more information, see his website: <http://www.clivebarker.info/>

¹⁵ For more information, see his website: <http://www.neilgaiman.com/>

¹⁶ *Blab!* No.3, 4, 5, 6, 7

self-published his comics *The Mystery of Woolverine Woo-Bait*²⁰ in 1982 (fig.1-1). He also had *Muzzlers, Guzzlers and Good Yeggs* (fig.1-2) – a pocket-sized hardcover book, consisting of works originally appeared in *Blab!* – published by Fantagraphics in 2005. Between the mid '70s and mid '80s, he moved slowly from drawing to painting, almost at the same time when underground comix disappeared.

Today, Coleman is acknowledged as a visionary painter and an outsider artist, having his works introduced for example in the outsider art magazine *Raw Vision*²¹. His paintings were exhibited around the world in museums and galleries. In 2006, he had a retrospective exhibition at New York's Jack Tilton Gallery, entitled "Joe Coleman: 30 Paintings and a Selection from the Odditorium." The following year he had one-man shows at two major European museums, the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, and KW Institute, Berlin.

Despite the fact that the data given above could be considered a sufficient summary of the artist's professional background, the way Coleman defines himself is probably more revealing:

"Abstraction is not important to me. The need for me to create comes from a more personal source. I'm not sophisticated. [...] I'm pre-industrial. One of the only modern inventions that have value to me is dynamite. Before that, all the tools that I needed were there. I have more in common with the religious painters, people like [Adolf] Wölfli, too. Who was a big influence on me, and he was a big storyteller. The sophisticates have a word for the kind of work I do: "self-indulgent". I'm stuck with myself for eternity. I'm the only one I gotta figure out, and I'm the only one I can figure out. I can't figure out you or anybody else. Self-indulgent is the only thing I can be."²²

¹⁷ *Bizarre Sex*, No.5, 6. *Bizarre Sex* is an underground anthology

¹⁸ *Snake Eyes*, No.2

¹⁹ *Big Mouth*, No.3

²⁰ Fantagraphics issued a reprint in 2004.

²¹ *Raw Vision* No.11

²² Adam Parfrey, 1992:9

These words from an interview with the artist reveal three essential aspects of himself and his work: He likens himself to “religious” and “medieval” artists, he acknowledges Adolf Wölfli’s influence on himself as a “story-teller”, and he emphasizes the function of his art in discovering and expressing himself. In the following pages, these three points will be discussed in detail.

2-1. The Critical Function of Coleman’s Style and Contents

2-1-1. Coleman’s Roots in the Traditions of Cartoonesque Art: Carnival and the Grotesque

Coleman’s comix-like painting can be related to cartoonesque art: carnival and the grotesque. In his essay, Timothy Hyman maintains that artists such as Bruegel, Callot, Tiepolo, Goya, Ensor and Beckmann were nourished by carnival.²³ Carnival is “a supremely visual phenomenon.”²⁴ Carnival was recorded as “a pre-Lenten feast only in the later Middle Ages,” but “most anthropologists locate its origin much earlier, in pre-Christian ritual and especially in the Saturnalia – the period of license and excess, when inversion of rank was a central theme.”²⁵ It is “inseparably linked in European mind with Christianity, and discourse on the subject tends to be governed by the conventional dualisms of ‘high’ and ‘low’, order and disorder, government and the people, God and the devil.” The term *carnavalesque* signifies not the actual festival, but an idea. Mikhail Bakhtin defined it as “that peculiar folk humour that has always existed and has never merged with the official

²³ Timothy Hyman, 2000:9

²⁴ Roger Malbert, 2000:76

²⁵ Timothy Hyman, 2000:9

culture of the ruling classes”.²⁶ It “invokes a laughter linked to the overturning of authority.”²⁷ Hyman regards caricature as one branch of carnivalesque, and accordingly, he categorizes James Gillray, a British caricaturist, as carnivalesque; to Malbert, George Grosz is carnivalesque because of his preference of “comic-grotesque possibilities of exposing the body’s intimate parts in public”²⁸. The grotesque canon encompasses four themes: the tumultuous crowd, the world turned upside-down, and the comic mask.²⁹

Most of Coleman’s paintings are intricately detailed portraits of famous and infamous people: artists, outlaws, serial killers, movies stars, friends, and family. For the most part, his subjects are at the center of the canvas, confronting the audience with their stares, surrounded by biographical scenes and details, which ring the central image. US avant-garde film director Jim Jarmusch (who is an admirer of Coleman’s work)³⁰ reads Coleman’s paintings from the perspective of an artist:

“[I]n some way these paintings are like books and movies, in some ways like cartoons, or like nightmares, but they are not like images and words. They are the associations and obsessions that come from some deep place inside Joe Coleman’s psyche and soul, and are then meticulously transformed into his amazing paintings.”³¹

Obviously, although Coleman’s works bring to mind other works, media or concepts, they always have a personal, self-expressive quality.

When we examine his paintings within the context of art history, we notice that they have been often connected to pre-modern artists, in terms of style and content. His paintings are most often compared with those of Hieronymus Bosch, and the Dutch master has exhibited

²⁶ Timothy Hyman, 2000:14

²⁷ Timothy Hyman, 2000:14

²⁸ Roger Malbert, 2000:79

²⁹ Timothy Hyman, 2000:15

³⁰ For more information, see his website: <http://www.jimjarmusch.com/>

³¹ Jim Jarmusch, 1997:11

his work alongside works. In 2008, New York's Dickinson Gallery exhibited Coleman's work together with paintings by Hans Memling and other early 15th century Netherlandish painters, under the title "Devotio Moderna: Joe Coleman/Northern Primitives".

One thing noteworthy is the fact that Coleman left the School of Visual Arts where he studied, apparently because he felt stifled by the limitations of classroom: The university wanted him to paint what was fashionable at the time, that is, abstract painting, but he wanted to learn the techniques of medieval and Renaissance painting, like a craftsman rather than an "artist" in the modern sense. Indeed, this inclination has defined not only the contents and the style of Coleman's works, but also the way he works with particular tools. He often paints with magnifying lenses and a single-hair paintbrush.

Similarly, the influence of old masters and religious painting is also reflected in the format of Coleman's works. Like his work *Altar to Sex, Violence and Death* (2001) (fig.1-23) and *Pandora's Box* (2010) (fig.1-24). All works have the structure of an altarpiece: one main painting in the center, and two smaller paintings which half the size of the main painting used as doors. But this format is not used for its original religious purpose. Coleman has a different approach, creating his own shrine to sanctify the violence and negative side of human society. (Also there is no real heaven part in these altarpieces).

In one of his essays, art critic John Yau divides Western art history into two categories, and he positions Coleman as a successor of the Northern tradition (as opposed to the Southern):

"On the macrocosmic level, the history of western art can be divided into two distinct traditions which separate themselves along an axis that runs from the chilly north to the bright south. Thus, the apotheosis of the Northern tradition is embodied in the horrific, boil-covered demon in the lower left-head corner of the Temptation of Saint Anthony panel of the *Isenheim Altarpiece* (fig.1-22) by Matthias Grunewald [...] In the Northern tradition

one detects a recurring interest in the inevitability of disintegration and decay [...] Joe Coleman belongs squarely in the Northern tradition, which extends from Grunewald and Bosch to modern artists such as Francis Bacon, Otto Dix, and Ivan Albright.”³²

It's obvious that there are a lot of connections and similarities between Coleman and the old masters. But instead of legitimating Coleman's works by connecting them with older and established examples, I want to use these connections and similarities to ask if it's possible that the Netherlandish masters like Bosch had the same intentions like Coleman, and if their “art” works can be considered “comics” of the past.

In addition to colors, Coleman uses some other materials to present his ideas. In *And a Child Shall Lead Them [Mary Bell]*, he uses a schoolgirl's dress to indicate the subject's identity. And in *As You Look into the Eye of the Cyclops, So the Eye of the Cyclops Looks into You* (fig.1-39), Coleman also used soundtrack and television.

2-2-2. Critique in Contents: Apocalypse, Autobiography and Self-portrait, and the Subjects in Coleman's Paintings

Just by going through the interviews Coleman has given so far, it can be easily understood that he has a radical opinion on modern technology and values:

“[T]his is what people don't want to look at, that life exists only through the suffering and death of other life. That's the only thing that keeps the world going. Science comes up with the incredible ways to keep thing alive, and moralists are begging for ways to keep people from being cruel to other people, but that's what nature is. [...] There are children that are

³² John Yau, 1997:13-14

being born that nature would not allow to be born, but modern science is keeping them alive.”³³

His also dislikes the modern city and sees it as the illness of earth: “The planet is the host. [...] The tumors are cities, so now the host is covered with tumors.”³⁴ This can be considered his personal religious statement, but also an anti-humanism statement, Coleman’s personal rebellion to modern values, which manifest themselves in modern science and technology. These two quotes are sufficient to give us a general impression of the “religious” and anti-humanistic approach of Coleman’s, which affects his art and creative activities to a great extent.

Coleman’s doubts or his rebellion against the morals of “normal” contemporary society can be observed clearly both in his style and the subjects he picks. He challenges conservative morality constantly with his passion, admiration, and compassion about the abnormal historical figures he paints: serial killers, outlaws and outsider artists. A good example of this would be his *American Venus [Jayne Mansfield]* (fig.1-35). The character of this painting is Jayne Mansfield (1933-1967) who was a Hollywood sex symbol of the 1950s and early 1960s. Mansfield’s body is portrayed in the center of the painting in the state in which she was found after the accident.

“Unabashedly hungry for fame (and willing to exploit her considerable physical asserts to get it), she revealed the sordid impulses underlying our sex-and-scandal obsessed culture. Unfortunately, she did so at a time when America was still ruled by a punishingly hypocritical morality. Her willingness to expose herself in public (at a time when such

³³ Joe Coleman, 1992:24

³⁴ Joe Coleman, 1992:25

display were strictly a taboo) got her the headlines she so desperately craved but destroyed her career in the process. Her death by decapitation in a car wreck made her immortal.”³⁵

As can be inferred from this example (along with many others), Coleman is highly critical of the “American dream.” Suffice to mention his depictions of decay, and disintegrated flesh. His style, in this sense, brings to mind the style of Otto Dix, whose attention was gripped by the horrors of the trenches of World War I.³⁶ Otto Dix was profoundly affected by the sights of war and published *Der Krieg* (1924), a portfolio of fifty etchings that represent his traumatic experiences, which is an important work both in the art and cartoon world. Similarly, Coleman’s works *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* (fig.1-37) and *Vietnamese Prostitutes* (fig.1-38) satire the humanism and “American dream” in an ironic and horrible way.

The apocalyptic contents in Coleman’s paintings can also be traced back to his own traumatic experiences. Coleman was raised in an Irish Catholic family. He began drawing at the age of eight, producing a series of sketches of burning, stabbing, and crucifixion. Later, unpredictable danger and the need to survive became constant themes in his youth, and they still are present today, as expressions of what he calls “the holiness of violence and suffering.”³⁷ In this way religion, or more precisely Catholicism, fuses with violence for Coleman and enters into his art. About the influence on his paintings, he says:

“Catholicism had an immense impact on me. It’s destroyed people around me and done terrible things to them – like my mother, for instance. But also, at the same time, it’s given me incredible tools of expression. The Catholic church has an incredible vocabulary of symbols that I incorporate into my work because for me there’s none that work as well.”³⁸

³⁵ Katharine Gates, 1997: xxvi

³⁶ John Yau, 1997:35

³⁷ Roger Manley 1998:41

³⁸ Joe Coleman, 1992:8

But most of the time, Coleman uses the “vocabulary of symbols” to present his anti-humanistic thinking and human violence, not the original religious meaning and contents in Catholic art; he even goes for the opposite of its original purpose: using the Catholic aesthetic to present the paradox of Catholicism satirically.

2-2-3. Pre-modern Modernism: The Craftsmanship and the Authorship

When asked about how he thinks about his connection with different art genres, especially painting, Coleman says:

“Probably just a feeling of being more comfortable with it. Even what would be considered commercial art, like sideshow banners and stuff like that - somehow I can identify with it in a visceral way. More so than I can with what would be considered High Art. I get more of a reaction looking at naïve Art or a sideshow painting. It’s dirtier. There is something about it that is onto yourself. It’s not like you have to go by someone else’s rules.”³⁹

Although it may sound like Coleman prefers simplicity over high art, he doesn’t consider his art as simple illustration either:

“That’s why I have to keep on digging to find out what it’s telling me. If I were doing a simple illustration, I would create an idea and figure out a way to present the idea in an

³⁹ Joe Coleman, 1992: 5-6

illustrative form when I'm painting, I don't know what the idea is. It's going to tell me as I'm doing it.”⁴⁰

Coleman locates his personal motivation for drawing in his childhood, and in the interest of conveying certain feelings realistically:

“That way I know that what I'm getting out of it is real, that it's not what I'm told to see but what I feel. When I was a child I wanted to be able to portray that way it feels to be stabbed or to be set on fire. I didn't have the tools at that time, but that's what I wanted to be able to do.”⁴¹

Moreover, despite the fact that Coleman seems to stand closer to contemporary “commercial art”, he seems to have an almost nostalgic fondness for the craftsmanship of the past:

“You're being fooled when you're told to take value out of craftsmanship. You're being told that less is more, but less is always less and more is always more. [...] But when things are done right, like in the Renaissance, certain smaller painting could take years to complete. It's just a trick of the art game. If there was true value placed on craftsmanship, 90% of what's considered great art right now would have no value.”⁴²

This particular liking becomes a source of frustration for Coleman at the School of Visual Arts:

⁴⁰ Joe Coleman, 1992: 5

⁴¹ Joe Coleman, 1992: 6

⁴² Joe Coleman, 1992: 6

“I wanted to paint figuratively, but they wouldn’t let me paint what I wanted to paint. [...] I loved Medieval and Renaissance painting. I thought I could learn about those things in art school. I was certainly misinformed about that. They didn’t want you to learn technique, they wanted you to paint what was fashionable at the time.”⁴³

The art education, which Coleman expected to have, is similar to some kind of apprenticeship. Coleman values craftsmanship on the technique and skill level, but the authorship in his paintings is the product of values of the post-medieval period. In medieval and early Renaissance, artists were not considered originations; God was. Artists were considered act “craftsman”. One characteristic is that there was no signature of the artist on the work.⁴⁴ It was from Renaissance onwards, that artists started to sign their works to claim authorship and make sure people knew they were their original works.

Strong personal insistence can also be seen in Coleman’s thinking about his position in the art scene. When Coleman was asked if he felt like he came to his own as an artist when he was disappointed about the art fashion at that time, he replies: “[T]here’s something that gives you strength when your heroes are shot down, that makes you take their place.”⁴⁵ This may reveal that establishing his own authority was important in his career as an artist, and this is different from “craftsmanship” in its original sense. In this sense, the “craftsmanship” Coleman insists on is more like a weapon to fight against the modern art system and to distinguish himself from the modern art fashion, which is abstract, but it does refer to the original meaning in art history.

2-2-4. The Meanings of Different Colors and Materials

⁴³ Joe Coleman, 1992: 6

⁴⁴ Some medieval artists did sign their works, like Paolo Veneziano.

⁴⁵ Joe Coleman, 1992:7

As mentioned above, between the mid '70s and the mid '80s, Coleman moved from drawing to painting, from the world of comics to his portraits. He explains this in a way, which can be related to his need for self-expression:

“I started with black and white, strictly from line. For a long time that’s all that I did. I don’t think I could do a serious color work until the late ’70s. [...] At first you try to do things in removed a manner as you can, because the first things are pretty frightening, and that’s why you can come to terms with these things in black and white, in Film Noir. It sorts of protects you from looking at yourself. As you gain courage in tackling those subjects you have to push it farther each time; you’re not satisfied any longer to go in a certain territory because you know that territory already.”⁴⁶

However, this change in style and the tools used by the artist point at deeper meanings, further connections:

“The major difference is that most of the work done with pen and ink is scratched; it’s like you’re cutting into the surface, which is what I like about it. Whereas with painting, there’s a whole set of tools which have to do with the spectrum of color. You can reveal more intimate scratches. You can have a really soft, tonal scratch of a particular color. Say you’re revealing the veins beneath the surface of a body; you would not have the same effect in a line drawing. It would be too harsh. The pen and ink vein wouldn’t really have the feeling of blood rushing under the skin.”⁴⁷

Besides, even when he works in black and white, through the surface on which he draws—that is, through a special kind of paper—he aims for creating the same effect:

⁴⁶ Joe Coleman, 1992:21

⁴⁷ Ibid.

“Yeah, that’s probably one of the reasons I started using paper; it does have a quality similar to painting. You have a depth that you don’t have with plain black and white, but what you’re missing is the color spectrum, which is important to me, because the human body is capable of producing incredible colors, especially when it starts to decay and putrefy. You can give a sculptural sense of it in black and white, but not what it truly looks like.”⁴⁸

So, for Coleman, drawing/painting with different materials is not just for the effect, but in itself an action, or a performance. Different materials enable different forms of expressions. In this sense, materials and his creativity as action should be considered particular ways of presenting his ideas, independent from the final paintings and drawings, having meanings in themselves. Upon being asked if “different media contain a different moral intent,” Coleman replies: “At least on the level of color work being more personal than black and white, the black and white being more reactionary to my environment.”⁴⁹ But he doesn’t make self-portraits in black and white because the body is “real” and personal to him, rather than a symbol: “Film Noir makes art of life, views things in symbolic terms.[...] These things (the interviewer, my own face in the mirror and my face) present themselves as color to me, as a reality distinct from art.”⁵⁰

The technique and style he employs can be considered, in a sense, is a rebellion against or a reflection of modern society. This approach is closer to contemporary art. And his combining classic techniques, traditional art forms and comics elements to express his thinking without considering the original meaning and value, brings his works close to post-modern. In this sense, his painting can be considered contemporary art.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

2-2. Coleman's Painting as Comics

In order to discuss the possibility of regarding Coleman's paintings/prints as comics, it's necessary to trace the formal similarities between them. Panel layout and narrative are crucial elements of comics. And in Coleman's work, one can see the strong influence of such comics-specific elements. Yau indicates the connection and similarities between Coleman's paintings and his comix works he made of the 1970s, and points out that Coleman's painting is a "logical development" of his comix:

"Given Coleman's use of a highly decorative border, text (often taken from the bible), as well as both real and imagined frontally posed figures, it is not farfetched to suggest that his paintings of the past decade are a logical development of his earlier engagement with graphite drawing and the highly detailed comics strips and illustrated books he did in the 1970s, most notably his illustrated versions of the autobiography of two infamous figures in the annals of crime, *Cal Panzram, #31614* and *You can't win: The Autobiography of Jack Black*." ⁵¹

But Yau also thinks that Coleman's painting is not a simple change from comix, he points out the connection between Coleman's painting and illuminated manuscripts and suggests appreciating Coleman's painting in this way:

"Coleman isn't simply an artist who moved from low art means to high art means. His deft use of bright colors, minute details, and the strongest precedent for his art is the illuminated manuscript. It is with this in mind that the viewer should look at his modestly scaled acrylic

⁵¹ John Yau, 1997:37

painting on Masonite. The difference is that the illuminated manuscripts were based on sacred texts, while Coleman collapses together both the sacred and the profane.”⁵²

Below, I shall to discuss how these and other comics elements are connected to Coleman’s paintings, how those elements are presented and what kind of functions those elements have in Coleman’s painting. I also shall examine to discuss about in which sense Coleman’s paintings can be considered comics.

2-2-1. Storytelling: Illogical Narratives

Coleman points out that the process of drawing is important for him and describes his working process as exploration:

“The process of work is like digging. I’ll start anywhere on the picture and not know what is going to be. The painting becomes a dig, a dig inside my head. It may appear in the conventional sense of digging.”⁵³

And because of the way he works, the final painting cannot be predicted. He goes on with another metaphor in order to explain the process better:

“The objects are not placed. But there is a process of sketching when it’s specific to the area I’m working in. It’s like a jigsaw puzzle; I paint a particular square inch until it is totally complete, then I add another piece onto it.”⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Joe Coleman, 1992:5

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Coleman doesn't make a storyboard or a sketch before painting. This way of working isn't like the "typical" way of making comics, which involves creating a storyboard and following a logical order. Japanese critic Fusanosuke Natsume defines "comics (manga)" as "the gathering of tacit and unconscious conventional signs"⁵⁵ which audience reads with "tacit agreement". This applies especially to commercial comics. The purpose of making such comics is to convince the audience of the story by means of "tacit and unconscious conventional signs", including a logical time order or a certain narrative way, which both artist and audience "agree with" and understand.⁵⁶ Even the experimental and underground comix of Art Spiegelman and Robert Crumb have clear story lines which the audience can follow easily, that is the narrative style is not so much different from that of mainstream comics. But Coleman does not order the biographical scenes in his works according to chronology or some kind of obvious logic. Instead, he puts them together around the character, graphically like the first page in *Jack Black*. This form and expression constantly appear in Coleman's paintings, and it can be connected to his motivations and the personal way he expresses his thinking. Which means there is a narrative, but this narrative is not in agreement with the audience, but only the artist's own logic. When an interviewer asked him about the storyline of his paintings, Coleman pointed out his way of narrating is catching "the moment" in action and put such moment together without the suggestion of the moment.⁵⁷ He relates this kind of narrative to medieval painters, outsider artists and schizophrenic artists:

⁵⁵ 「そしてマンガは、多かれ少なかれ、こうした約束記号の集合なのだ。ただ読者は普通、そんなことを意識しない。それらは暗黙かつ無意識の了解事項である。」 Kentaro Takekuma and Fusanosuke Natsume, 1995:3

⁵⁶ Kentaro Takekuma & Fusanosuke Natsume, 1995:1

⁵⁷ Joe Coleman, 1992: 10 -11

“There is a narrative without saying: “This happened, and then this happened”. Medieval painters would do narrative painting without ... [interviewer: *A linear time frame?*] I guess that would be a way to put it. A lot of the so-called outsider and schizophrenic art would do that too.”⁵⁸

And he relates this characteristic to his own needs of expressing: “There’s so much I want to tell. There’s so much I want to communicate, that I have to get out. There’s not even enough room, there’s so much I got to tell.”⁵⁹

And when asked about the personal symbols, talismans, voodoo, little phrases that recur in schizophrenic art, Coleman says:

“That’s why I feel a kinship with Dwyer, and that’s why I picture him in the self-portrait. There’s a couple reasons why I identify with schizophrenics; the first is in the need to express some of my psychic torment to define my own reality, my own existence in the world. That’s a reason why I work, and obviously it’s a reason why schizophrenics work, so I feel close to them in that way. Also I share the idea that there are forces outside of what is commonly perceived as reality that influence existence, the spirit world and energies and things existing outside of us.”⁶⁰

In the light of these statements, it is apparent that even though Coleman’s paintings are meticulously composed, they’re not planned beforehand. Coleman’s works are randomly presenting the elements they bring together, providing no order in this sense, and this “chaos” also influences the reading/appreciating process of the audience, because there is no clear storyline, which can be followed as in normal comics. As Jim Jarmusch puts and

⁵⁸ Joe Coleman, 1992: 10-11

⁵⁹ Joe Coleman, 1992: 11

⁶⁰ Joe Coleman, 1992:11-12

exemplifies it, “The stories these details tell are not arranged for us in any linear, logical, “adult” pattern. Pieces of text snake their way around the nearly microscopic imagery.”⁶¹ Nevertheless, this doesn’t mean Coleman’s works have no order or story to follow. Jarmusch goes on to suggest such a way of reading them:

“Our own interests and obsessions are our only guides, and we are free to follow our eyes in and out of these words in our own unrestricted time-frame. Joe Coleman’s paintings tell many stories, and their link to our culture and iconographic history is not tenuous—even if the seemingly random arrangement of imagery might suggest us.”⁶²

In sum, it seems that upon encountering Coleman’s works, the audience have to rearrange the whole set by themselves. Coleman’s painting may resemble his drawings in comix form, but they’re not typical comics in terms of the way they’re made, if compared with traditional comics or cartoons whose ideas usually come before the making process. Compared with such comics and even Coleman’s own comix, there are random elements in Coleman’s painting, which make these works “artistic” and “subjective” in the sense of self-expression, whereas comics focus more on an “objective” and “rational” way of telling a story.

2-2-2. Fragments Laid Out as Panels

When Roger Sabin talks about the horror comics scene in the 1990s, he raises one page of Coleman’s *The Final Days Of Paul John Knowles*⁶³ as a typical example. However,

⁶¹ Jim Jarmusch, 1997:11

⁶² Jim Jarmusch, 1997:11

⁶³ Joe Coleman, 1992:88

unfortunately, Sabin touches only the radical contents of Coleman's work and locates him in the horror comics scene, but leaves out in what sense Coleman's one panel work is comics.⁶⁴

Here, I want to analyze *You Can't Win: The Autobiography of Jack Black*⁶⁵ in order to show its connection with comics.

The reason I've chosen this work as example is, first of all, because it has a clear story line. Secondly, it includes all the visual elements, which constantly appear in Coleman's later fine art work, his way of combining art and comics elements, which makes his works different from comics, although they still can be categorized in the same group. Thirdly, this work, along with three other works, was presented along with his paintings in the same book, for which American underground artist Robert Crumb⁶⁶ wrote a foreword. In the foreword, Crumb relates Coleman's works to S. Clay Wilson and Robert Williams⁶⁷, highlighting Coleman's connection with the American underground comix scene.⁶⁸

You Can't Win: The Autobiography of Jack Black consists of nine pages. As the title makes clear, the story is about Jack Black, a famous outlaw in American history. The first page is a full-page portrait of the protagonist (fig.1-4). In this picture, Black looks directly at the audience from the center, surrounded by a couple of scenes depicting fragments from his life, such as when he is taking opium, exploding a safe, robbing a train, breaking and entering, etc. Some words which label his identity are written on both sides of the central figure: "thief, burglar, stick up man, safe cracker" to the right and "hobo, convict, opium addict, author" to the left. Jack Black's portrait, small biographical scenes and the words form the main picture are surrounded by symbols like roses, skulls, dragon, mermaid, snake on knife, and so on.

⁶⁴ Roger Sabin, 1996:207-208

⁶⁵ *You Can't Win: The Autobiography of Jack Black* was first published in the book *Cosmic Retribution* (Fantagraphics, 1992, p.39-47).

⁶⁶ For more information, see his website: <http://www.crumbproducts.com/>

⁶⁷ For more information, see his website: <http://robtwilliamsstudio.com/>

⁶⁸ "He's somewhere between a true American primitive and a social realist, if you have to classify him somewhere. There are similarities in attitude to the work of S. Clay Wilson and Robert Williams, but their three visual styles are radically different from each other." (Robert Crumb, 1992:1) In this context, "primitive" refers to folk culture.

Three pages follow the first page, each page containing two one-panel works that depict Black's life from his childhood to his youth, with captions beneath each panel (fig.1-5, 6, 7). Page five consists of a full-page crime scene, which depicts Black's rough life as a burglar (fig.1-8). Finally, the last four pages (pp. 44-47) return to the previous format, which are two panels on one page (fig.1-9, 10, 11, 12). These panels relate later parts of the protagonist's life, ending up with a close-up portrait. The fourth panel (pp. 45), which shows a scene of Jack Black taking opium, recalls one of the small fragments from his life on the first page (fig. 1-10).

There are three other stories in *Cosmic Retribution*, the same book. All of these stories are presented in the same way, except the first pages, which carry not the fictional character's portraits, but violent scenes.

By taking a closer look at *You Can't Win*, we can see how Coleman could be considered a storyteller, or "a biographer whose primary medium is paint."⁶⁹ In the works constituting *You Can't Win*, it is possible to find similarities with comics in terms of page layout: each biographical scene around the central subject is very similar to the panels in a comics story. And in this sense, it is possible to think that this particular "set of drawings" forms a comics story, but organized on one picture plane. The first page with the portrait of *You can't win* can even be seen as a biography by itself.

John Holbo defines the comics panel through its function: "A panel is a work of narrative art if its function is to tell/imply a story (represent an event, or events)"⁷⁰, which directly applies to Coleman's case.

If we consider the life of the subject in Coleman's work as a story, then the fragments, or life events, which surround the subject, are different parts of this story, and the space one fragment takes can be considered as one panel. In this sense Coleman's work can be taken as an example of comics in which the events are not shown page by page, but on the same page.

⁶⁹ John Yau, 1997:15

⁷⁰ John Holbo, 2012:8

When McCloud talks about the origin of comics, he uses the ancient Egyptian tomb of Menna and the Bayeux Tapestry as examples. Indeed, in such ancient works, every scene is ordered in a linear fashion and they can be considered “sequential” images following one another, but they appear also on the same plane, which makes it possible to see them altogether and at once. It’s the audience who decide if they want to “read” the story scene by scene, or jump from one to another, or look at it as a whole. While building up his theory, McCloud leaves out children’s picture books and illustrated books in that they’re not called “comics;” however, he discusses the possibility of taking the Bayeux Tapestry as one. Leaning on McCloud’s idea, John Holbo further claims that the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel (which has no text on it) can enter the same category if it is okay to consider even the Bayeux Tapestry as an example of comics:

“Let me illustrate further. McCloud wants to keep out the bulk of children’s picture books and illustrated books, nominally on the ground that we don’t call that sort of thing “comics.” But we don’t call the Bayeux Tapestry “comics” either. But McCloud does. So into the McCloudian comics long box—with the Bayeux Tapestry and Codex Nuttall—go children’s books, illustrated books, and (why not?) the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.”⁷¹

According to Holbo, the Sistine Chapel is similar to superhero comics, in the sense of form and contents:

“I’m looking at panels, Separated by gutters, populated by active, attractive, albeit implausibly well-muscled, precariously clad persons of human and superhuman nature. The eye is invited to take in the whole page while the panels, in sequence, are read as narrating an origin story. I’m gazing at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.”⁷²

⁷¹ John Holbo, 2012:6

⁷² John Holbo, 2012:5

The described effect is actually very similar to the effect created by Coleman's works.

If the Egyptian tomb of Menna and the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, which have no accompanying texts, can be considered to be comics in this sense, then Coleman's paintings and other works, which tell us stories through both images and texts, have the necessary elements to be comics in the way Holbo defines.

2-2-3. Interconnection of "Reading the Story" and "Watching the Story"

When we are "reading" Coleman's stories, we're also "looking at" it, because, although there is a narrative, it is presented through a painting which can be watched and appreciated in a traditional way. Instead of presenting the story in a chronological order and page by page, it's done in normal comics, Coleman mixes all the events happening in different periods of the character's life and presents them in one painting, as if they're taking place simultaneously. He treats all these scenes equally; none of them is emphasized or can be considered as the climax. There are also objects and symbols in the painting (rose, devil, skull...), which have a certain meaning and help to create the atmosphere, although they have no direct connection with the story. So when the audience looks at the story, they can see all the events in the same frame, and it becomes impossible to look at any scene without being affected by the others, no matter which one the audience decides to focus on. This is something, which doesn't happen, in normal comics reading. In a normal comics reading in order to know what's going to happen next, the audience has to turn to the next page, because events unfold on separate planes, even if some comics deviate from the grid in favor of collage-like composition

The interesting thing about Coleman's work is that because every moment of the story has already been presented in the same plane, the moment the audience sets their eyes on the painting, they already see the whole story. The reading process for finding an ending is already complete; the whole work is the ending, or vice versa, the way is the goal. This can also be related to Coleman's working process. He himself doesn't know how his painting will look like until he finishes. So, when the audience start to read or look at the work closer, it's like looking back to check every event that happened in the past, to see how they affected each other, how these isolated events make up one whole story, and how they connect to the ending in the sense of reading order.

In this way, compared with other comics in book form, Coleman's narrative brings about a different reading experience, and this is an interesting point, which separates his works from ordinary comics. When presented in the form of books, works should be considered "artistic comics," or comics closer to visual arts than literature.

2-2-4. The Comics Element: Using Text as Effect

Scholar Keegan Lannon indicates different functions of text in comics:

"1. Neurolinguistic Text: Verbal representations of mental processes.

- a. speech balloons: when words are spoken
- b. Thought balloons: when words are thought

2. Sound Effects: Verbal representations of non-verbal sounds.

- a. Motivated: onomatopoeic sound effects, e.g. BOOM!
- b. Unmotivated: words that do not sound like the noise they represent, e.g. knock-knock

3. Narrative Text: A “voice” which crosses diegetic boundaries to directly address a reader, real or imagined.

- a. Intradiegetic: narrated by something within the story
- b. Extradiegetic: narrated by something outside the story

4. Printed Text: Legible textual data that are part of the setting of the scene depicted in a frame.

- a. Consequential: text important to the story, e.g. a letter (legible to the reader) a character is reading.
- b. Incidental: text that is a minor part of the scenery, e.g. the signs on building in the backgrounds of scenes.”⁷³

In Coleman’s paintings and drawings, we can see the use of text in almost all the functions above. For example, in *A Picture From Life’s Other Side [Hank Williams]* (fig.1-36) and *Tenebrae for Carlo Gesualdo*, around the subjects there are music notations composed by Hank Williams and Gesualdo, both of whom were musicians. This kind of composition also appears in Coleman’s *Public Enemy No. 1 [John Dillinger]* (fig.1-33).

Further, in every painting, the text, which is related to the main character’s life and fills the gaps between biographical fragments, is written/drawn in different ways and sizes, in a shaky or twisted way, and in different colors. These texts do not just provide information about the character, but they also help creating an and unsteady atmosphere, bringing to mind the characters’ unsteady mental condition, life style, and the chaotic environments they used to live in. This way of using text for creating a particular effect also can be found in comics, where it is called Sound Effects.

Coleman himself talks about the influence of comics and the importance of text in his artwork in this way:

⁷³ Keegan Lannon, 2013:287-305

“There was the influence of comic books. Especially the 50s comic books, the old EC comics [...] Text is so important for me in painting. It’s such an unusual thing for a painter but it’s something important to me because they are all a narrative and the text to me is just as important as the images. The words influence the image in the way they are created, it’s the text and the way that the text looks it can change the effect of the image. All these things contribute to a story. There has been times where not only do I use the text and the image but I use musical notation in the paintings as well.”⁷⁴

Here, another point that is worthy of attention comes to the fore: Coleman’s use of text not only as message but also as effect is quite similar to the use of text in Japanese manga. In the Western comics world, it is generally considered that comics are combinations of words and images⁷⁵, and that word and image have equal importance; texts are less often used as visual effects, or like pictures, but more for the message. At the same time, in Japanese manga, communicating with audience depends more on images than verbal text, which is different from Western comics, especially American comics.⁷⁶ Meanwhile, text in Japanese manga is not just used for narrating, but also to express the atmosphere and feel or psychology, like onomatopoeia (sound effects or shape metaphors). When Japanese critic Fusanosuke Natsume talks about the use of onomatopoeia, he claims that using text, as effect is a characteristic of Japanese manga⁷⁷. In this sense, the usage of text in Coleman’s painting can be related to Japanese manga.

2-3-5. Biography and Autobiography: the big “I”

⁷⁴ “Exclusive Interview: Myth and Reality – The Art of Dying with Joe Coleman,” <http://www.fangoria.com/new/exclusive-interview-myth-and-reality-the-art-of-dying-with-joe-coleman/>

⁷⁵ Harvey C. Robert, 1996:3

⁷⁶ Jaqueline Berndt, 2007:121

⁷⁷ Kentaro Takekuma & Fusanosuke Natsume, 1995:126

1) Biography

The images and texts surrounding the central figures in Coleman's painting are not chosen at random. Coleman picks the objects which can be related to the main subjects, or somehow show their characteristics:

"I would choose objects for painting that were real, but would choose them in such a way that they would have some kind of significance, would say something about the subjects."⁷⁸

Yau summarizes the characteristic of Coleman's attention to those objects as follows:

"The painting is done close-up; Coleman uses acrylic [paint] and an assortment of incredible tiny brushes to render the variegated surface of the pockmarked, tattooed, wrinkled skin of his subjects. It's as if he were examining each subject with a microscope."⁷⁹

And Yau explains why he thinks Coleman is a biographer whose medium is painting:

"At the same time, in order to support his findings, he surrounds each portrait with dozens of vignettes comprised of various images and texts, as well as small portraits of important figures in the subject's life. Thus, it is not so much the sitter's countenance that matters to Coleman, but his biography. He doesn't choose his subjects because they look good, but because he finds in their life something that holds his attention. He is a biographer whose primary medium is paint."⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Joe Coleman, 1992:23

⁷⁹ John Yau, 1997:15

⁸⁰ John Yau, 1997:15

Almost all the portraits of the killers Coleman has painted are presented in the same composition as the first page of *You Can't Win*: The main figure stands at the center, confronting the audience. Yau also highlights another defining characteristic of Coleman's portraits: all of them are actually representations of Coleman himself, and, in a sense, all are biographical. Yau interprets this particularity as follows:

“For the most part (his portrait of Céline is a notable exception), Coleman's subjects are posed frontally, which reminds us of the distinction Meyer Shapiro made between the frontally viewed sitter and the sitter posed in profile. For Shapiro, the frontal figure is evidence of the first person singular ‘I,’ while the sitter seen in profile evokes the third person singular, ‘he’ or ‘she’. Within the context provided by Shapiro's understanding of portraiture, one could say that Coleman's figures embody a dissonant, lyric ‘I’.”⁸¹

2) From biography to autobiography

Coleman made several self-portraits, in which he used exactly the same posture and composition, which he adapted in other portraits:

“[I]n each case, Coleman has painted a decorative border made up of either pattering, images and signs, or some combination of all three, which underscores as well as affirms central aspects of his subject's character, his inner life.”⁸²

⁸¹ John Yau, 1997:14-15

⁸² John Yau, 1997:15

And even if he portrays other people, he chooses his subjects through a very personal/private approach. To begin with, he is interested in depicting speculative portraits of historical figures. In addition to that, he states that he feels an inner connection with all the characters in his works, especially with serial killers:

“Freaks have always represented the torment and rage I would feel emotionally, except they would put it on a direct physical level that I could identify. I see an incredible beauty in the physical manifestation of rage.”⁸³

Which reveals that Coleman feels a connection with the subjects he chooses. And one reason why he constantly draws them is partly because he is using this as a form of therapy to release his own rage. He indicates that the motivation of painting stems from oppression:

“I felt alienated and alone and gradually my fear turned to hatred. At home I couldn’t express my anger – my father was the only one allowed to do so. But my rage found an outlet in drawing.”⁸⁴ In a similar way, he describes another one of his works, *Hunting Humans*⁸⁵ as his “self-portrait” and a substitute for actual physical violence: “It was helpful for me to get it out in a painting rather than walk down the street and actually do it. Sometimes killing feels like the only way to communicate.”⁸⁶

In relation to motivation and personal interpretation, not actual contents, the portrait which can be seen as biography and also as a kind of autobiography. From his early painting *Portrait of Charles Manson*⁸⁷ to his recent painting *And a Child Shall Lead Them* (fig.1-34),

⁸³ Joe Coleman, 1992:13

⁸⁴ “Later I discovered a new way to express self-hatred and rage at others in the act of exploding myself [his performing art]” Joe Coleman, 1992:13

⁸⁵ Acrylic on panel, 28 x 36 cm, 1986

⁸⁶ Joe Coleman, 1992:15

⁸⁷ Acrylic on Masonite, 1988; this work is included the book *Cosmic Retribution*.

all the subjects Coleman has drawn are posed the same way (only the latter work has more text and more details about the character's life). Coleman explains that when he draws the characters, he chooses and presents the elements which he felt personal connections with, not for the audience, but for himself. The way he is studying those characters is not just for understanding them, but also for understanding himself. His approach to those characters is extremely personal. As a result, the character's life is actually a reflection of himself. So although Coleman makes portraits of different characters, in fact, all the characters are he.

In the light of this, it becomes clear that Coleman's motivation for making art is similar to art therapy, an unconscious process of self-discovery, the results of which can't be predicted before drawing.

2-3-6. Media: From Painting to Print

Now that we've taken a sufficient look at Coleman's "comics" such as *You Can't Win* (or the other stories which have been published in both comix magazines and his own books), we can now turn to his fine art paintings, which have been printed also in book format.

The medium of painting cannot reach as wide an audience as printed material. Coleman's paintings too are only accessible to collectors and those who have the opportunity to visit galleries. So the questions arise: When his paintings are presented and published in a book form, can we categorize them as comics? Obviously, when we have the book form, the problem of limited audience disappears—in printed form the paintings can spread easily. Then, can his books be considered the same as ordinary comic books? If not, how should we define them?

Even though these books are published as art books, due to the similarities with Coleman's comics, for example in format, the resulting material can be considered as a special kind of comics when these comic-like paintings are presented in print.

Besides, Coleman doesn't just reprint his paintings; he makes also illustrated storybooks. For example, he has made *Muzzlers, Guzzlers And Good Yeggs*⁸⁸ which is a collection of works taken from *Cosmic Retribution*, including *You Can't Win*. One-page works appearing in *Cosmic Retribution* are changed to two-page in *Muzzlers, Guzzlers and Good Yeggs* (fig.1-4). Moreover, Coleman also publishes books based on his paintings. For example, he has turned *The Man of Sorrows* (fig.1-17), which depicts the crucifixion from his own perspective, into the book *The Man of Sorrow* (Gates of Heck, 1993) (fig.1-18, 19, 20, 21). In the book, the components making up the painting are presented separately and Coleman tells each picture's individual story in his own handwriting. As a result, the audience is provided with two ways of appreciating the book, through the pictures and through the story.

3. Who is Sue Coe?

Sue Coe⁸⁹ (born in 1951, Tamworth, Staffordshire) is a British artist and illustrator. She mostly does charcoal drawings and prints and has established her reputation as a socio-political artist. In the 1980s, Coe was featured on the cover of *Art News*. She frequently contributed to alternative comics magazines and periodicals, like *World War 3 Illustrated*, *The Progressive*, *Mother Jones*, *Blab!*, *Raw*, *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *Time Magazine*, *Newsweek*, *The Nation* and so on.

⁸⁸ 13 x 10 x 1.7cm

⁸⁹ Sue Coe studied at the Chelsea School of Art, London (1968–1971) and at the Royal College of Art (1970–1973) and lived in New York City from 1972 to 2001. She taught courses at Parsons School of Design about social awareness in art.

Her artwork has appeared in numerous museum collections and exhibitions, including New York's Museum of Modern Art and Galerie St. Etienne in New York City. Her artwork is featured in the animal rights movie, *Earthlings*, and on the cover of *Animals, Property, and the Law* (Gary L. Francione, Temple University Press, 1995). Since 1998, Coe has sold prints to benefit animal rights organizations; her paintings and prints are auctioned as fundraisers for a variety of progressive causes. In 2002, Brown University staged an exhibition of her work titled *Commitment to the Struggle: The Art of Sue Coe*.

3-1 Coe's Work as Critical Art: Contents and Motivation

Her works are presented on the website Graphic Witness as “visual arts and social commentary”. Her major influences include the works of Chaim Soutine and José Guadalupe Posada, Francisco Goya and Rembrandt, also female artists like, Käthe Kollwitz, Rachel Rosenthal, Rosa Bonheur, Elizabeth Catlett, Frida Kahlo, Jaune Quick-To-See Smith.⁹⁰

3-1-1 The Critical Topics and Contents

Here I want to use the book *Pit's Letter* (Four Walls Eight Windows, 2000) (fig.1-42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48) as an example to examine what kind of stories Sue Coe tells. The reason why I've chosen this work as my example is that it's an independent work in which both story and images (mainly drawings) are created by Coe.

Imagine one day you find a book in a bookstore, not so big, about the size of children's picture books. In this book, there are one or two drawings on each page. Sometimes there is

⁹⁰ ICON: Sue Coe Interview, http://www.3x3mag.com/sue_coe.html

a full-page picture of a scene of human violence. They depict various forms of human violence, for example, a father abusing his daughter (fig.1-42), a couple of men raping a woman, animals being crucified (fig.1-44), scientists and big companies abusing animals and people alike (fig.1-47). In contrast to these black and white sketch-like drawings, there are also a few colored paintings in detail. These drawings and paintings depict animals in horrible, somehow biblical, apocalypse-like situations, with a lot of symbols here and there.

The story is given in the form of a letter from a dead dog. In this letter, she describes her miserable life to her only surviving sister. She recounts her life in human family, the violence and the miserable situation of animals she witted. She finally dead because of the scientific experiments on her at Eden Biotechnology, where her former master ends up in the same situation.

The socio-critical content in *Pit's Letter* is the main subject of Coe's work. For a quarter of a century Coe has explored factory farming, meatpacking, apartheid, sweat shops, prisons, AIDS, and war. Her works are often directed against capitalism and cruelty towards animals. Her commentaries on political events and social injustice have been published in newspapers, magazines and books. For example, her painting *Woman Walks into Bar-Is Raped by Four Men on the Pool Table-While 20 Watch* (fig.1-40) is based on the real-life gang rape of Cheryl Araujo that occurred at Big Dan's Bar in New Bedford, Massachusetts, on March 6, 1983.⁹¹

In this work, Coe captures the moment when the victim is being raped on the pool table, and gives great detail as to what is happening: The woman is being victimized by not only the four men who rape her, but also by the others in the bar who watch all the process. Actually, every book Coe has published focuses on a social problem. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa* (Radom House, 1984) is a careful treatment of black education, labor, juvenile delinquency, apartheid, detention, and torture in South Africa, with historical facts

⁹¹ *The Accused* (1988) is one of the first Hollywood films to deal with rape in a direct manner; it is also based on the same crime.

(fig.1-66). *Meat: Animals and Industry* is a collective project on the subject of slaughterhouse. In *X-Pictures: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* (New Press Publishing, 1986) the artist presents the life of Malcolm X, an African-American political leader, Muslim minister and human rights activist (fig.1-54). *Dead Meat* is a visual record of Coe's visits to 40 slaughterhouses, cattle ranches, and hatcheries in the United States, Canada and England. *Bully: Master of the Global Merry-Go-Round* is a critique of the Bush administration (fig.1-60). In *Sheep of Fools: A Song Cycle for 5 Voices*, Coe depicts in detail the horrific conditions of the sheep industry. *Cruel: Bearing Witness to Animal Exploitation* is another work on the exploitation of animals raised and slaughtered for human consumption (fig.1-50).

3-1-2. The Motivation: Sue Coe's Identity as an Independent Artist /Craftswoman

As mentioned above, every work of Coe's is about social problems. But of course it does not indicate that she picks her subjects randomly; indeed all of them have a connection with her own life and experience. Coe grew up close to a slaughterhouse and developed a passion to stop cruelty towards animals. She was a worker in a factory but left it because she wasn't satisfied with the simple assembly work, which was considered women's job. In one interview, Coe says that there was a political tendency already in her early work, because from her childhood on, "the sense of justice" has fueled her creativity, and the idea that art can be used to speak for those that cannot.⁹²

⁹² "I did both, but my 'political' art at that time, consisted of posters stating where to meet etc; very crude. I was aged 17 and had very few art skills. If you go up against the system, you see the true nature of reality. My father threw food over the police barricade. Very few teachers backed up the strike, but the ones that did, were the best-they were fired of course. Just before this event, Yoko Ono came as a visiting artist. This was the first female artist I had seen, who was not a student, and I was impressed at her creativity and wit, and her power-the male teachers were outraged-they were all male teachers, and this was another part of my education. During the takeover, marxist activists came to speak, and John Lennon donated money to the students for food, as he lived in the area-this was before he met Yoko Ono. Some of the visitors to our strike were artists who had political content in their work, they made posters and agit prop work, and I saw that it was possible to integrate art and content, this was a revelation."

It can be argued that today, a lot of artists work on political and social topics for the sake of marketing, but not so much for self-expression. However, in Coe's case, her political tendencies do not seem to originate from a "fake" passion, and her works are not targeting the mainstream market (although some of them are for newspapers or magazines). Coe's passion about art is in craft and this influence comes from her family:

"My mother was taken out of art school, to do 'war work' which was to work for the telephone exchange. My father worked for an engineering company, in sales, and he would carve wooden boxes in his spare time. From my parents, I learned to appreciate craft."⁹³

As to how Coe defines herself, there seems to be not one but multiple keywords, for no single label describes her. Coe thinks that the categories and their values (including art) are not important for her and she does not try to fit herself into any of them:

"Very few creative people fit into a comfortable category. Sometimes I work for the printed page, make reportage art, do books, other times have shows in galleries and museums, sometimes do political propaganda, other times am an activist artist, and have done many hundreds of illustrations some good, some bad. I enjoy calling myself an illustrator in the gallery context, because there is nothing more despised in an art critics mind, than an 'illustrator'—maybe 'cartoonist' is even lower on the what-is-hi[gh]-art scale."⁹⁴

For Coe, then, publishing books is just one of the many ways to present her ideas, like painting and exhibiting her works in museums, regardless of their "artistic" importance. And this is exactly why she has optimistic expectations for artists:

ICON: Sue Coe Interview, http://www.3x3mag.com/sue_coe.html

⁹³ ICON: Sue Coe Interview, http://www.3x3mag.com/sue_coe.html

⁹⁴ Ibid.

“The future of images, and those that create images, has never looked more interesting. There is a gigantic maw out there, starving for pictures, an opportunity for artist who can create their own worlds and share them without waiting for permission from the mainstream publications. As the market for journalism in America shrinks, images illustrating or illuminating the literal text will not be necessary, there are only so many ways to depict the joys of corpocracy, and the 'war on terror'. As a reaction to that, artists will find other means to report the truth, self-publishing, doing their own investigative journalism, and this too will enter the mainstream. As artists generally do not work for money, they cannot be controlled by money.”⁹⁵

Coe is exactly the type of artist she talks about: She uses various ways to present her work and communicate with the audience without support from mainstream publications, sustaining her creative activities with her artist life

3-2. Form: The Connection between Coe’s Books with Comics

Coe’s books don’t look like the comics or graphic novels of today in the sense of format. However, in the sense of function and form, they do, by the way Coe presents her commentaries sequentially in *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, *X-Pictures* and *Bully!* bring to mind *Los Desastres de la Guerra* (The Disasters Of War), which is a series of 82 prints created between 1810 and 1820 by the Spanish painter and printmaker Francisco Goya. This work expresses the violence of the 1808 Dos de Mayo Uprising and the later Peninsular War of 1808-14. Through this work Goya makes both a commentary and a chronicle of his

⁹⁵ Ibid.

era. Other similar works are William Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress* (six prints, published in 1732) and *A Rake's Progress* (eight prints, published in 1735), which are series of paintings and engravings present commentaries on moral topics.

The expressive style and the contents which criticize the violence of humans in Coe's works can be related to Otto Dix's book of etchings *Der Krieg* (1924) and George Grosz's satires on German society *Gott mit uns* (God with us) and *Jedermann sein eigener Fussball* (Everyman His Own Football)⁹⁶. These artists' works have strong cartoon elements and they influenced both the worlds of fine arts and cartoons with their ironic/critical styles. Nicolas de Crécy and Joe Coleman admit that Otto Dix's and George Grosz's paintings had a huge impact on them.⁹⁷ Coe's works can be considered as comics in the sense of form and contents, and she also should be considered as an artist whose works reflected the darkness of human society and war based on the artist's own experience, like Goya and Käthe Kollwitz.

Coe's work can also be connected to the alternative comics culture of the 1980s, through the structure and composition of each page. When we compare Coe's *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, and *X-Pictures* with Japanese alternative comics artist Kazuichi Hanawa and avant-garde artist Genpei Akasegawa's work "Hanasaka jiji"⁹⁸ (「ハナサカヂヂイ」) (fig.1-87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93), it's easy to see the formal similarities. The stories consist of one-page drawings/paintings and the composition of each page is a mix of words and images. Moreover, "Hanasaka jiji" is also a critical work about war and capitalism.

In this sense, Coe can be considered as an artist whose works have strong cartoon elements, and her printed works, especially the books like *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, *X-Pictures* and *Bully!* can be categorized as alternative comics.

⁹⁶ February 15, 1919, Wieland Herzfelde's Publishing House. Includes two photomontages by John Heartfield on the front cover and six line drawings by George Grosz.

⁹⁷ Joe Coleman, 1992:13

⁹⁸ Sato Tadao, 1971:47-58

3-3. Coe's Books as One Way for Expressing and Presenting

3-3-1 Visual Critique in Coe's Books: Visual Critique in Pictures/Paintings

One distinguishing characteristic of Coe's books is that the critical meaning is not just in the story, but also in pictures. The meaning of the story and the opinion of the artist are placed in these pictures. They appear as caricatures, symbols and other visual items, and the audience can't have access to the opinion of the artist without finding out the meaning of these visual elements, or by only reading the text. Actually, the texts in these books are not as important as the pictures, because the artist's thoughts are fully presented in the latter. This characteristic brings Sue Coe closer to visual arts, than literature.

3-3-2 Making Books for Paintings or Making Paintings for Books

Coe's books look like comics at first sight, but upon taking a closer look, it is possible to notice structural differences. And there are also structural differences between her books.

In Coe's books, some pictures have no logical connection with the story, and the development of the story would not be affected by a lack of those scenes. For example, in *Pit's Letter*, the crucifixion of animals (fig.1-44), the horrible views of the world (fig.1-45) and the scene in which animals are put into the meat mixer (fig.1-46) have no connection with the main story, which is told by the dog. What they do is to present the misery of animals in human's world. Likewise, the topic and composition of one page in *Sheep of Fools: a song cycle for 5 voices* resembles one page in *Pit's letter* (fig.1-45), which also shows the horrible situation animals have to face, and it has no direct connection with the

story either. In another book *Bully!*, the pages 31-32 (fig.1-61) are much more colorful than with other pages in the same book (fig. 1-62, 63, 64, 65).

As mentioned before, every book by Coe takes a social problem as its theme and usually presents it as a story. But the pictures, which are included and presented in the story, have no direct connection with the story itself, at the same time there are a lot of information and symbols in these pictures, which can be related to the subject of the story. The images convey the motivation of why the artist made the story, or the commentary on the subject by artist. When compared with Coe's other works, it becomes obvious that these pictures (with indirect relations to stories) are close to her independent paintings, easier to be seen as independent works rather than parts of a book. They're connected to the main stories thematically, but they are not structurally necessary. And there is one picture in *Pit's letter* (fig.1- 46), which is actually an independent oil painting, titled "Second Millennium" (fig.1-49).

These pictures, which have strong critical meanings, can be found in every book by Sue Coe, but their proportion varies in each book. For example, in *X-Pictures*, almost every picture is a commentary on the social situation, displaying the artist's opinion or attitude. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa* is also more or less the same. But in *Pit's Letter*, there're some pictures, which are realistic sketches of the dog or the boy, and there is no symbol to show the artist's opinion or attitude in these sketches. It looks like these pictures are inserted rather for joining the main critical pictures to each other as a story, and make the work less radical compared to a book full of critically loaded pictures. This can be also found in *Sheep of Fools*, which is closer to a picturebook regarding its form, because it has fewer pages and a shape, which is similar with traditional picturebooks.

3-4. Gallery Works and Publications

Another thing we need to pay attention to is publication, because this differs from gallery work and the contemporary art scene, which are based on the gallery or such institution. Coe doesn't only exhibit her works in galleries, or gets them published in newspapers and magazines, but also publishes her own books at small presses like Fantagraphics. All such books by Coe are high quality, mostly hardcover and in full-color, but in different sizes. For example: *X-Pictures: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* is a 16 x 23 cm hardcover, full-color book that reproduces a number of illustration projects. *Dead Meat* is a collection of works presented in a 20 x 25 cm softcover, full-color book. *Pit's Letter* is a 18 x 18 cm hardcover in full-color. *Sheep of Fools: A Song Cycle for 5 Voices* is also a square hardcover book but of bigger size: 26 x 26 cm. And also printed in full color, *Bully!: Master of the Global Merry-Go-Round* is a 14.5 x 19.5 cm softcover book. One exception is *Cruel: Bearing Witness to Animal Exploitation*, because it's published only in Kindle version, but still full-colored.

The characteristics of Coe's books, like the un-usual size and the color are close to artist Anke Feuchtenberger, who is considered "comic book artist" by scholar Bart Beaty:

"The comics book artist's demand for a format that best fits her work is necessarily akin to the desire of a painter for a canvas sized appropriately for the scale of the painting, because, in essence, the cartoonist has conceptualized the work as art, not as a book or a product of the mass market."⁹⁹

This characterization of the artist and her work is related to the artistic comic book. Beaty points out that this tendency of the artistic comic book which can be found in European

⁹⁹ Bart Beaty, 2007:54

small press comics publishing, initiated by L'Association, is closer to visual art than literature:

“L'Association, on the other hand, broke with both the corporate and generic model of comics production in the 1990s, repositioning the serious (or ‘high’) comics model as a function of visual rather than literary predispositions.”¹⁰⁰

As mentioned, this tendency has more relation with the artist book tradition than literature. And it is because of this tendency that cartoonists can be considered artists:

“The status of the cartoonist as an artist has been central to the small press comics revolution of the 1990s in much the same way that the idea of the cartoonist as writer informed so much experimentation and change in 1970s. Many contemporary European small-press comics artists have explicitly sought to redefine their cultural practice through reference to the book as a form of material culture that is constructed as an art object.”¹⁰¹

And this kind of artistic comics or artist books can be seen as art because the artists use comics as a medium to present their own thinking, not a service for the traditional comics audience or market: “Different sizes and different formats convey competing values and represent different ideologies in the comics form, as they do in other fields of culture”¹⁰²

No matter which form they use, the personal goal or motivation of people like Coe is not criticizing society as a tool to gain success in the contemporary art market, or fitting themselves into the genre of comics, cartoon, or art. They strive for self-expression, and this makes them both comics artists and artists in a general sense. Sue Coe and Joe Coleman’s

¹⁰⁰ Bart Beaty, 2007:10

¹⁰¹ Bart Beaty, 2007:48

¹⁰² Bart Beaty, 2007:54

mutual intention is not finding a place in the mass market of comics, but expressing themselves, their opinions and feelings freely. Therefore, they should be considered as independent artists, standing somewhere between art and comics.

Chapter 2 Shaun Tan and Peter Sís: “Crossover” Picturebooks and Picturebooks for Adults as Alternative Comics

“In general, picturebooks are considered as children’s literature, targeted at children of preschool and primary school age, while comics and manga address divergent age groups, ranging from children and adolescents up to adults. However, the increasing sophistication of modern picturebooks and a growing shift toward addressing both children and adults on different levels have led to the creation of picturebooks that transgress the borders of children’s literature. As a result, these crossover picturebooks have been responsible for the recent introduction of picturebooks for adults [...]”¹

As Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer observes, recently there is a tendency to exceed the limitations of picturebooks and blur the boundaries between this medium and certain others, which results in the appearance of “crossover” picturebooks. In this chapter, I want to use Shaun Tan and Peter Sís’s picturebooks as my examples and examine them as graphic novels/comics, indicate how they are composed and how they function, through mainly comparing them to the latter genre. I focus on these two artists, not only because their works display such a tendency as explained by Kümmerling-Meibauer, but also because they interestingly introduce their own personal experiences into this newly formed genre as well. Therefore, by analyzing the connections between the artists’ lives and the contents of their work, I will also draw the attention to how they relate autobiography and artistic ways of self-expression.

1. Similarities between Shaun Tan and Peter Sís

¹ Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2013: 101

Shaun Tan and Peter Sís are artists from different cultural backgrounds. However, there are many similarities between them. To begin with, Peter Sís is an immigrant and Shaun Tan comes from an immigrant family. This common point has provided them different experiences, perspectives and motivations, making them more sensitive to cultural differences, political problems and social issues. They've introduced their experiences into the picturebooks they make, expanded the contents of picturebooks, and in a sense, they've brought this genre closer to contemporary art by enrichening it with critical thinking.

Both of them had experience with making films or animated films. In terms of format as well, Tan and Sís share an important point. They've imported various formal elements from other genres like comics and graphic novels, which are generally uncommon for picturebooks. Especially their making use of frames and the ways they do that, which will be discussed in detail below, has become a trademark of their style. It is with this and other additional characteristics that their works transgress the so-called border between picturebooks and comics/graphic novels.

Taken separately, neither voicing social or political concerns, nor utilizing unconventional formal elements makes Shaun Tan and Peter Sís's works unique though. In other artists' books as well, sociopolitical issues or elements of comics frequently appear. However, giving place to these two not necessarily related innovative aspects in one body, at the same time, sets Tan and Sís apart from the rest. For example, David Wiesner's² *Tuesday* (Clarion Books, 1992), *Sector 7* (Clarion Books, 1997) and *Flotsam* (Clarion/Houghton Mifflin, 2006) are all picturebooks with frames but without words in frames, and therefore hybrids with regard to form, yet not with regard to content. Roberto Innocenti's *Rose Blanche* (Creative Editions, 1985) and *La Storia di Erika* (with Ruth Vander Zee, La Margherita, 2003), on the contrary, are picturebooks about politics and war –following, however, the traditional picturebook format. There are also graphic novels like Art Spiegelman's highly

² For more information, see the artist's website: <http://www.hmhbooks.com/wiesner/>

acclaimed *Maus* (Raw Vol. 1 No. 2 – Vol. 2 No. 3, Penguin Books 1980–1991) that talk address war and racism. Different from all these examples, a parallel relationship between form and content becomes an outstanding characteristic of Shaun Tan and Peter Sis's works, occurring in multiple books by both artists.

2. Who is Shaun Tan?

Shaun Tan (born in 1974, Fremantle, Western Australia) is an Australian self-taught illustrator and author of picturebooks.³

As a teenager, Tan created images for science fiction and horror stories in small-press magazines. When Tan was 16, his SF illustrations first appeared in the Australian magazine *Aurealis*. During that time, the imagery he created for illustrated books that deal with social, political and historical subjects became famous.⁴ Later he studied Fine Arts, English Literature and History at the University of Western Australia.

His collaborated with authors like Gary Crew and John Marsden, published picturebooks like *The Viewer* (written by Gary Crew, Simply Read Books, 1997) and *Memorial* (written by Gary Crew, Simply Read Books, 1999) and *The Rabbits* (written by John Marsden, Lothian Children's Books, 1998). *The Lost Thing* (Lothian Children's Books, 1999) was the first picturebook he wrote and illustrated tcompletely by himself. His picturebooks have been widely translated all over the world.

Tan collaborates on animated film, musical and theatrical works which are adapted from his work. He also works as a theatre designer and a concept artist⁵, and directed the Academy Award winning short film *The Lost Thing* (Passion Pictures Australia, 2010). He produces fine art and murals, and he is a fiction cover artist.

³ Now he works as a full time freelance artist and author in Melbourne.

⁴ He won the L. Ron Hubbard Illustrators of the Future Contest as the first Australian in 1992.

⁵ In the films *Horton Hears a Who!* (20th Century Fox Animation, 2008) and *WALL-E* (Pixar, 2008)

2-1. Social Critique in Contents

The diverse images of Shaun Tan's creations show many different views of the world, seen from historical, cultural, social and personal perspectives.

2-1-1. *The Arrival*: Issue of Immigration and Cultural Difference

In his book *The Arrival*, Shaun Tan tells the story of an immigrant: A man leaves his family and hometown to escape from a “big threat” (which takes the shape of a huge human being only partially seen) to seek his future on another continent where he faces a lot of problems like unemployment, culture shock and various misunderstandings. But he also meets people with similar experiences (an old man, an Asian girl and a Russian family who have escaped from their own countries) and makes new friends. After finally settling down and earning some money, he manages to bring his family to the same country. The story ends with his daughter, as a resident, showing the direction to apparently a newcomer, just like the people who did the same for her father when he just arrived.

The Arrival is an immigrant story, both on a general and a personal level. Tan himself is the son of an immigrant: His father is a Malaysian Chinese who immigrated to Australia in the 1960s and married an Australian. Actually, in one of his interviews, Tan reveals that the inspiration for making *The Arrival* initially comes from the past of his father:

“Although being very fantastical on the surface, the book is actually based on the research of various migrant stories, told by migrants themselves as oral histories, interviews or written anecdotes. My idea was to try to distill all of these different journeys into a single universal story, that could somehow transcend any specificity of language, culture, time or place.

Originally that interest began with my father's stories of coming to Australia from Malaysia, and broadened out from there. I became particularly interested in the stories of people travelling to New York in the early 20th century, escaping war, oppression and poverty in Europe.”⁶

It can also be argued that *The Arrival* is connected directly to Shaun Tan himself. One detail that provokes such a reading is that the main character and his wife are drawn very similar in looks to the artist and his wife, a Finnish lady. Moreover, at the end of the second chapter, on the page where the man finally settles down in his apartment (there is no pagination in this book), among all the meaningless words, there pops up Tan's own Chinese name – Chen Zhiyong (陈志勇) – the only words with reference to the real world, pointing somehow to his personal place in this story. Considering Tan's relationship with language and cultural differences, the possibility of finding such a connection gets even more plausible:

“For a start, just the fact that you're in a mixed race household and that's normal, means that it never occurs to you that cultural difference is a problem. You grow up with it. Even when talking to my Dad I'm quite accustomed to the fact he might not know every word that I know, and I have to make allowances for that, but also that he speaks another language that I don't speak. I learned a little bit of Chinese but not much.”⁷

In the light of this statement made by the artist, firstly, an analogy can be made between his lack of proper knowledge of Chinese and the words that appear in his book without making any sense, and secondly, it can be explained how naturally cultural differences

⁶ “Interview de Shaun Tan (VO),” <http://www.bdtheque.com/interview-shaun-tan-vo-200.html>

⁷ “Shaun Tan - Work is a Bit Like Brussels Sprouts,” <http://bookwitch.wordpress.com/interviews/shaun-tan-work-is-a-bit-like-brussels-sprouts/>

become a theme in his work, not only through his father's, but also through his own personal experiences.

2-1-2. *The Rabbits*: Issues of Colonization and Problems of “Civilization”

The Rabbits is an allegorical picturebook about colonialism and the problems that have actually occurred in history in the process of “bringing civilization” from some parts of the world to others. It is a story, told from a first person perspective, of how “rabbits” destroy both the culture and environment of an island in the name of civilization, and the war that ensues between the rabbits and the local animals. On the last page of the book, rabbits and local animals are seen sitting together in the wreckage of pollution and war, confused about how exactly they've ended up in such a situation, revealing that this outcome is a disaster also for the intruders.

In this book, rabbits are used as a symbol of colonizers, or self-appointed providers of civilization and technology, while the other animals are used as symbols of local residents. Using animals and their (natural or generally accepted) characteristics in such a way, that is, as symbols to present fresh outlooks on human society is a widely adopted technique in literature, especially for dealing with political issues. Some of the most famous examples are George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago*, and also Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, which has been acknowledged as literature, becoming the first graphic novel to win a Pulitzer Prize.

In Tan's book, there is one other point regarding allegorical style that is worth mentioning. The particular selection of animals to refer to actual events is fitting not only because of the animals' characteristics but also because they are directly related to a real ecological disaster that took place in Australia: In 1859, twenty four rabbits were released and caused nationwide damage later. Moreover, just like the sheep brought by the rabbits eat all the

grass on the fictional island and cause a famine, in real life too, alien species like pigs, cows, dogs, horses and mules which were brought by colonists and immigrants to the continent decimated certain species and destroyed the biological balance of the local environment.

2-1-3. *The Lost Thing*: The Value of “Compassion”

The Lost Thing is a 32-page picturebook which tells the story of a young boy who comes a giant red “thing” one day. It seems that no one except for the boy notices the existence of the “thing”, because they are too busy with other stuff. The boy spends the afternoon with the “thing”, but nobody comes to pick it up, and it turns out that no one knows whom it belongs to. So the boy decides to take this mysterious, lost being back home. To his surprise, his parents do not notice the guest until he points it out to them, and when they notice it, afraid of diseases and troubles, they demand the boy to take it back to where it was. The boy, in turn, hides the “thing” in the shed in their backyard and starts looking for its owner. After a while, he finds an advertisement of a governmental repository, collecting “unclaimed property” which cause the daily life of whoever finds them to get “unexpectedly disrupted”. Thinking this is the only option, the boy takes the “thing” to the unpleasant grey building at the given address. However, while trying to do the necessary paperwork, he mysteriously receives a business card from a cleaner in the building, with the advice that he should take the “thing” elsewhere. Following the instruction on the card, eventually the boy and the “thing” find a better place for the latter, a place where lots of different “things” reside. Towards the end of his story, as he takes a bus and disappears in the midst of many other identical buses, the boy says, “I see that sort of thing less and less these days though, maybe there aren’t many lost things around anymore. Or maybe I’ve just stopped noticing them. Too busy doing other stuff, I guess.”

Tan points out that *The Lost Thing* was born out of his personal memories and concerns about modern life:

“For me it has something to do with a kind of forgetfulness that comes with education and adult wisdom. That is, our study of some ideas or theories about the world can have the unfortunate side-effect of precluding alternative points of view; we fail to see the “lost thing” that is sitting in front of us. When writing the story initially, I wasn’t thinking about any of this very intelligently, of course. I was just interested in the idea of a creature or person that had no conceivable place or function, and what I would personally do if I came upon such an inconvenient thing, how it might test my compassion. It’s also based partly on memories of a stray cat that my brother and I rescued from our school when we were children (our school principal had openly threatened to kill and bury it!); it lived happily as our family pet for the next ten years or so.”⁸

The attitude of the parents, or the gray building that accepts “things” only to make them disappear, show how indifferent and intolerant today’s society is, that is, towards everything that does not *belong*. In this sense, *The Lost Thing* is a fable about the value of uselessness, ambiguity, and compassion, endangered by modern society’s pragmatism.⁹

2-1-4. *The Viewer*: Gazing at the Apocalypse

In contrast to *The Arrival* and *The Lost Thing*, which bear many elements related with—both in terms of storylines and drawings—Shaun Tan’s identity as the son of an immigrant, *The Viewer* presents a more general idea, and mainly through images, although

⁸ “Interview de Shaun Tan (VO)”, <http://www.bdtheque.com/interview-shaun-tan-vo-200.html>

⁹ Based on this point, it is possible to compare *The Lost Thing* with Franz Kafka’s works (like *Die Verwandlung* – *The Metamorphosis*) and the works of Kazuichi Hanawa’s. For further discussion and comments related to the latter, see Chapter 3.)

there are verbal descriptions as well. This difference can be accounted for by the fact that this book is a collaborative work, created by Tan and Gary Crew, a horror writer.

The Viewer is a 32-page picturebook which tells the story of a boy, Tristan, who finds a box looking like a normal View-Master¹⁰ one day. The box shows him the whole development of human beings from the beginning of the world, just to focus on the modern industrial age, which is presented as the end of the world. In this book, the scenes that are shown to Tristan, and also to the reader, are selected from the darkest moments in history, such as the plague of locusts in Egypt, the Crusades, witch-hunts, slave trade, and a fictional nuclear war followed by nuclear pollution. The story ends in a dark tone as well, with Tristan disappearing mysteriously forever. It is the destruction brought upon earth by human beings, however, rather than the strange and ill fate of the protagonist, that is the focus.¹¹ To conclude, it can be said that once again a critical meaning finds its way into Shaun Tan's work, although it is a collaboration.

2-2. Format as Comics: Page Layout in *The Arrival*

Compared to *The Arrival*, Tan's other works like *The Lost Thing*, which have text along with pictures, are closer to traditional picturebooks. In traditional picturebooks, the double page layout consists of one big drawing or two page-size drawings, usually with a text that parents can read to their children. However, in *The Arrival* there is no text, and there are more frames than in traditional picturebooks. Therefore, to reveal more about Shaun Tan's style, I'd like to attempt a formal analysis of this exceptional book here.

Apparent from one of his own statements, Tan did not know much about the comics/graphic novel medium when he started working on *The Arrival*. It was only after

¹⁰ A stereoscopic device that creates the illusion of three dimensions with a set of small color photographs on film.

¹¹ This idea can be compared to Joe Coleman's announcement of the victory of violence and evil against good. For further discussion and comments related to Coleman, see Chapter 1.

discovering a tendency in his style that he seems to have made research to present what he had in mind:

“I started sketching some layouts which looked incredibly clunky and repetitive, at which point I realised I was creating a comic rather than a picture book, and needed to brush up. I read Scott McCloud’s book for a start, and also looked closely at the work of Chris Ware, Daniel Clowes and other contemporaries, examining their panel compositions and sequencing. I also looked at books like *Maus*, which deal with real-life issues in an abstracted form, exactly what I was trying to do with *The Arrival*. I also studied the work of Raymond Briggs, who also straddles the fence between comic books and picturebooks, fiction and non-fiction: *The Arrival* drew some compositional inspiration from his wordless picture book/comic *The Snowman*.”¹²

As Tan indicates, at that point in his career he drew influence from various comics artists. Because he happens to be a role model for Tan, and because his book is one of the works most frequently mentioned by scholars in discussions of forms and genres, in this part I’ll also briefly compare *The Arrival* with Chris Ware’s *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth* (Pantheon Books, 2000).

In *The Arrival*, page layouts can be divided into seven kinds:

- 1) Double pages consisting of several frames of the same smallest size (fig.2-17)
- 2) Double pages consisting of two page-size frames (fig. 2-22)
- 3) Double pages consisting of several medium-size frames (fig.2-19, 20)
- 4) Double pages consisting of only one double-page size frame (fig.2-23)
- 5) Double pages consisting of several frames of the same medium size (fig. 2-24)

¹² “Interview de Shaun Tan (VO)”, <http://www.bdtheque.com/interview-shaun-tan-vo-200.html>

6) Double pages consisting of several frames of the same medium size and one page-size frame (fig.2-18)

7) Double pages consisting of several medium size frames and one one-page size frame (fig. 2-21)

As the list above indicates, in *The Arrival*, frames of different sizes are combined in various ways. These frames are not always chronologically arranged, but rather graphically composed. This kind of structuralization of page layout is very similar to the one Chris Ware employs in his graphic novel/picturebook *The Adventures of Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*. For example, five of the categories listed above can also be found in Ware's book, with slight variations, but following to the same logic of distribution:

1) Double pages consisting of two page-size frames (fig. 2-77)

2) Double pages consisting of several medium-size frames (fig.2-80, 81, 82, 83)¹³

3) Double pages consisting of several frames of smallest size and medium size (fig.2-84, 85)

4) Double pages consisting of several frames of the same medium size (fig. 2-80)

5) Double pages consisting of several frames of smallest size and one page-size frame (fig.2-86, 87)

6) Double pages consisting of several medium size frames and one page-size frame (fig.2-78, 79, 86)

Apart from such similarities in page layout, another similarity between *The Arrival* and *The Adventures of Jimmy Corrigan* is the way of keeping the reader observe the main character's life from a certain distance. More precisely, for example, compared to other comics, there aren't many close-ups of the main characters' faces. (fig. 2-83).

¹³ On the pages shown in the indicated figures, half-page frames can also be thought of as a separate category. However, for the sake of comparison, I will be loosely categorizing them in the style above.

In Tan's work too, there is no real close-up of the main character – only the size of frames and the proportion between frames and the character's face change, but until the end the main character's face remains the same size as the faces shown on the flyleaf (fig. 2-19,20). This creates a sort of distance between the character's life and the reader; the reader can only observe the character's life objectively, without feeling or seeing it from his perspective. The resulting effect somehow goes hand in hand with the isolation of the character in a new country as an immigrant.¹⁴

In *The Arrival*, Tan uses sequential wordless images to tell a story about a social problem. And this can be traced back to Lynd Ward's woodcut novels and Frans Masereel's "novels without words" from the early 20th century. At that time, this form was especially used for presenting social issues. Today, it is still employed by artists like Raymond Briggs (fig.2-29), Peter Kuper¹⁵ (fig.2-30), Thomas Ott¹⁶ (fig.2-31) and Neil Bousfield¹⁷ (fig. 2-32). Considering the influence from artists like Raymond Briggs during the creating process of *The Arrival*, it can be linked to this tradition of wordless graphic novel.

2-3. Shaun Tan's Books as Crossover Picturebooks and Picturebooks for Adults

In one of his interviews, Tan defines his own work this way:

"I guess I'd divide it into two strands. One has more to do with sketching and painting from life, trying to represent things that I see around me. The other is a kind of playful exploration of imaginary worlds – places I don't see in front of me, but which have strong

¹⁴ But the changes of the main character's situation in *The Arrival* are shown with a difference degree of tone and colors, with different pencil and charcoal drawings. In the beginning of the story, when the protagonist is leaving his country, the drawings are darker and more monochromatic, but at the end of the story, golden-brown colors are introduced and the tones get brighter, which creates a warmer atmosphere.

¹⁵ For more information see the artist's website: <http://www.peterkuper.com/>

¹⁶ For more information see the artist's website: <http://www.tott.ch/>

¹⁷ For more information see the artist's website: <http://www.inkyfingerspress.com/>

emotional or conceptual parallels to lived experience, much like dreams. The latter forms the basis of my illustrated books, which are probably best described as speculative fiction. I am a little wary of labels, because they don't adequately explain what I do, or my motivation (true for most artists I think)."¹⁸

Defining Tan's works with just one label seems impossible indeed, considering his interest in various different genres, which forms his aspirations to an extent. During the same interview, he indicates that he has been heavily influenced by literature, especially by books without illustrations. Instead of the visual charm of illustrations, his pointing at a critical medium—which is generally considered one of the high arts—as a source of inspiration is definitely worth noticing:

"I was actually more affected by books without illustrations, and sometimes found illustration an unwelcome distraction, as in *The Hobbit* and *Narnia* books, I just disagreed with the representation! My brother and I had *Animal Farm* read to use [*sic*] when we were quite young, my mum unaware that it was a dark political satire, though we all enjoyed it, and it might have lodged something in my brain because I still often think of it as a benchmark "good story". Later I came across the short stories of Ray Bradbury, which really got me interested in writing 'seriously' at about the age of 11 or 12."¹⁹

However, this aspect of Tan's creative background is not acknowledged by the industry in general. In France, Gallimard is selling *The Red Tree* in "junior" collection, and similarly in Japan, *The Arrival* has been given a place in children's books section. The artist puts the problem of being labeled in this way briefly and practically with these words:

¹⁸ "Interview with Illustrator Shaun Tan"

<http://www.australianedge.net/none/interview-with-illustrator-shaun-tan/>

¹⁹ Ibid.

“It seemed that no matter what I did, regardless of conceptual sophistication, it would be shelved as a children’s book simply because of the physical format. And then I would have to deal with all these questions about ‘dark’ stories and intended age-range!”²⁰

The atmosphere which Tan often creates, laden with the feeling of uselessness in *The Lost Thing*, loneliness in *The Red Tree*, and doom in *The Viewer*, is not common in picturebooks for children. Yet, actually, these stories are not created for such a target group to begin with. Indeed, they are not intended for any particular readership:

“Over the years I’ve realised that the problem of compartmentalisation has to do more with critics, booksellers, publishers and so on—it’s a problem of exclusion rather than misdirection. All readers will find the books eventually, and the artificial boundaries between children’s and adult literature might dissolve. In the meantime, it’s a shame if certain books are only marketed to children, in the same way that it would be a shame if they are only marketed to adults or readers of comics.”²¹

Tan does not think much about target readers; what he presents in his picturebooks are his personal feelings and thoughts as an adult. Then he chooses the form which he thinks is best for presenting the particular contents of his selection, without considering the form’s original value, meanings or conventional use. He expresses his own ideas about social and political issues, through experimenting with the forms of picturebooks/graphic novels/comics. This is how he differs from the typical picturebooks/graphic novels/comics creators who work for certain publishers and audience groups. In this sense, it is easier to consider Tan a contemporary artist who works with more mainstream, therefore unusual media.

²⁰ “Interview de Shaun Tan (VO)” <http://www.bdtheque.com/interview-shaun-tan-vo-200.html>

²¹ “Interview de Shaun Tan (VO)” <http://www.bdtheque.com/interview-shaun-tan-vo-200.html>

3. Who is Peter Sís?

Peter Sís (born in 1949, Brno, Czechoslovakia) is a Czech-born American illustrator, author, and filmmaker.

Sís's father was a filmmaker and his mother was an artist. When he graduated from university²², he began a career as a filmmaker.²³ In 1982 he was sent by the Czech government to Los Angeles to produce a film for the 1984 Winter Olympics. But the project was canceled later because of political reasons. Ignoring the governmental order of returning to his country, Sís decided to stay in the United States and has worked there as a picturebooks artist since.

Sís moved to New York City and illustrated his first book in 1984: George Shannon's *Stories to Solve: folktales from around the world* (Greenwillow, 1985). Sís quickly became one of the leading picturebooks artists with *The Whipping Boy* (with Sid Fleishman, Greenwillow Books, 1986), which won a Newbery Medal in 1986.

As a cartoonist, Sís has contributed to *The New York Times Book Review*, *Time Magazine*, *Newsweek*, *Esquire*, *The Atlantic Monthly* and many other magazines. As an artist who makes art through many different mediums, he has created a mural for New York City's 86th Street Lexington Avenue subway station and a mural for the Washington/Baltimore Airport, as well as stage set for the Joffrey Ballet. He also has designed many books and posters, including the poster for Miloš Forman's Academy Award-winning motion picture *Amadeus* in 1984 and a poster for the New York City subway system.

He collaborated with Bob Dylan on *You Got to Serve Somebody* in 1983. He also has produced commercials for Nickelodeon & PBS Kids. His film is in the permanent collection

²² Sís was educated at The High School of Applied Arts, the Academy of Applied Arts in Prague and the Royal College of Art in London.

²³ He won a Golden Bear Award for an animated short at the 1980 West Berlin Film Festival.

of the Museum of Modern Art in New York²⁴, and his works have been exhibited all over the world.

3-1. Sís's Approach to Picturebooks as Autobiography and Social Critique

Peter Sís has created many picturebooks based on or related to his personal life and experiences. Critical meaning in Sís's works is not as obvious as in Shaun Tan's, but it has been presented in a more complicated way through both content and style. I'd like to focus especially on three books by Sís, *The Wall: Growing Up behind the Iron Curtain* (Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2007), *Tibet: Through the Red Box* (Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1998) and *The Three Golden Keys* (Doubleday, 1994), firstly because the artist appears as himself in all of them, and secondly because each book has its own form and characteristics.

3-1-1 *The Wall: Growing up Behind the Iron Curtain: Political Critique and Autobiography*

The Wall is a 22-page book, consisting of two parts. The first part is a sequence of playful but intense pen line drawings which depict a boy's growing up story. The young boy feels a passion for art, music and drawing, so he suffers during a period when his country prohibits people from expressing their own thoughts freely, and at the end of the story, by using his drawings as wings he escapes to eventually find his freedom. This part of the story is told from a third person point of view and the images are arrayed in storyboard panels.

The second part is a sequence of three "From My Journals" pages which are word-and-picture collages consisting of diary excerpts, timelines, the boy's drawings and family photos. The contents of the diary excerpts from 1954 to 1977 matches with real-life

²⁴ He has also won the Grand Prix Toronto and the Cine Golden Eagle Award.

events, as in this case: “1976, The Plastic People of the Universe rock band are in prison. I used to argue with them, and do not care for their music-but prison?” The three page spread in the first part serves the function of filling the gaps in the first story’s timeline.

These two parts constitute the whole story from the year of the young boy’s birth (1949) to his escape, mixed with factual information and material from Sís’s past. *The Wall* can be seen as a fictional autobiography, in parts fable-like (officers, soldiers and the police are presented as pigs in pen line drawings and in parts documentary leaning on (diary excerpts, photos and drawings). The book is based on Sís’s own experiences during the period of the iron curtain and the Prague Spring in 1968, when he was still living in Prague. For instance, the double-page drawing of the scene with words such as “The Beatles”, “theater” and “Allen Ginsberg”—along with symbols standing for them—(fig.2-43) can be related to Sís’s life as a teenager. By then, the artist had developed an interest in Western culture, Allen Ginsberg’s beat poetry, long hair for men, blue jeans and rock’ n’ roll, particularly the music of The Beatles, The Beach Boys and The Rolling Stones. And also the page of the boy flying away with the wings consisting of his drawings (fig.2-46) can be taken as a symbol of his artistic skills—as a filmmaker then— that provided him the opportunity to go to the United States in 1982.

3-1-2. *Tibet through the Red Box*: A Dialogue between Father and Son

*Tibet Through the Red Box*²⁵ is a non-fiction picturebook and is very much like *Maus*: a survivor’s tale told by his son in words and pictures. Yet, different from *Maus*, the tone of Sís’s book is not so obvious explicit and political, but more mysterious and even spiritual, because the political issues are not the most important thing in this book, but the adventures and mysterious experiences of Sís’s father. The story begins in 1994, with a brief note

²⁵ This book was also adapted to theatre by playwright David Henry Hwang in 2004.

calling adult Sís back to Prague, saying, “The Red Box is now yours.” What the book presents is the translation of adult Sís reading his father's diary of Tibet which was locked in the red box, with his drawings.

This story is based on real life. In the ‘50s, Sís’s father was sent to China by the government for teaching documentary filmmaking. But he actually recorded the construction of a highway from China into Tibet. It supposed to be a short trip, but then he and his fellows were separated from the hosts because of an accident. Unable to communicate with his family, Sís’s father disappeared for more than two years. In these two years, he witnessed China invading Tibet and he saws many mysterious events. He could not say what he saw because of the situation, but in secret, he kept a diary in which he wrote down what he had experienced, and he put it in a red box. Sís did not know about it until he received the note in 1994, which is the beginning of this story.

Sís presents the diary and events with sketches and handwritten excerpts on parchment-like backgrounds. The way Sís presents his father’s story puts the audience in the same situation as his father. Also, Sís arranged the mysterious stories which his father told him when he was a child with the excerpts from his father’s dairy, recreating the Tibet of young Sís’s imagination. Sís does not say whether he believed his father’s stories or nor. But there is a quote of Marco Polo’s refuse on his deathbed to retract his own accounts of supernatural experiences. (from Vladimir Nabokov's *The Gift*).

Compared with traditional picturebooks which mostly don’t present artists’ own lives, *Tibet Through the Red Box* is a very personal work. Although Sís has created several picturebooks with connections to his own life, such direct approach and experience are unusual even for himself: “That's probably the toughest, hardest book I created just because, without thinking about it, I got very close, closest, to my personal life.”²⁶ The story of his father’s story develops in the same timeline as Sís’s growing up. Sís’s father's missing was a

²⁶ “Sís Stays in Touch With His Past”

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/sis-stays-in-touch-with-his-past/>

trauma for Sís. When his father finally came back home, young Peter was sick. Sís presents the trauma of his father's absence with a blank shape of his father's in every picture of family gathering, like picnics or Sís's birthday party (fig. 2-75, 76). Besides recollecting his childhood memories, Sís also presents his struggle with knowing both Tibet and his father through the Red Box as an adult in this book.

3-1-2. *The Three Golden Keys: Hometown and Nostalgia*

The Three Golden Keys is a 50-page book (longer than traditional picturebooks) that tells the story of a young man in a hot-air balloon, blown off his course in a violent storm. He lands in the city of his youth, where he finds his childhood home with three rusty padlocks on its door. Then a black cat with eyes of fire appears, and together they wander around in Prague to search for the three golden keys that will unlock the door to the young man's past. At each landmark that they visit, a different aspect of the city comes to life and presents a key along with a scroll of one classic Czechoslovakian fairy tale. After collecting the keys, the young man returns to his childhood home to unlock the door. Behind the door, stands his mother. She recognizes her son and comes to life, and so does the city. At the same time, the man hears his own voice calling his daughter.

In one sentence, *The Three Golden Keys* can be defined as an autobiography disguised as a fairy tale, which Sís wrote for his daughter to tell her about his own childhood in Prague.

3-1-4. Characterization in Sís's Other Books: People Living under the Shadow of Totalitarianism

Not in all of his books does Sís appear as himself.²⁷ Nevertheless, so far these unmentioned books too are connected to the artist's own experiences, though indirectly, through the characters and their stories.

The Tree of Life: Charles Darwin (Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2003) and *Starry Messenger: Galileo Galilei* (Square Fish, 1996), for example, revolve around two famous figures from the science world, respectively Charles Darwin and Galileo Galilei. These two characters lived in conservative environments which did not allow people to have unconventional thoughts, especially doubts about authority. Because of the discoveries they made, both of them were put under pressure and Galileo was even imprisoned. Sís himself clarifies the connection he makes between his political life and the famous astronomer's by saying, "[a] lot of Galileo is really to do with life in Prague in the late 60s and 70s."²⁸ Having grown-up under totalitarianism, where almost everyone was compromised and forced to keep silent and could not get much support, this is characteristic of the protagonists in Sís's books.

However, Sís doesn't put himself in an extremely political position either:

"I think I was conformist in many ways, I mean I was and I wasn't: I did play along, it was part of the system as a small child, completely brainwashed I guess. And then, we were sort of in the underground culture with rock, but we never went as far as someone like Vaclav Havel. I remember how we were looking at the group of dissidents around Havel, and we told ourselves that that was too much."²⁹

Such a statement may reflect that he is not a revolutionist who tries to change situations with radical political activity, but a man of ideas, or a dreamer, who expresses his opinions to

²⁷ *The Tree of Life: Charles Darwin, Starry Messenger: Galileo Galilei, Follow the Dream: The Story of Christopher Columbus*

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ "Peter Sís - Illustrator & Author of Magnificent Children's Books,"

<http://www.radio.cz/en/section/czechtoday/peter-sis-illustrator-author-of-magnificent-childrens-books>

reach the same goal in another way. As in the case of the main character in *Follow the Dream: The Story of Christopher Columbus* (Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2003), who changed the world by his personal adventure and discovery, the ability of dreaming proves as important as the ability of taking risks. Future and success lie beyond the borders of the homeland, both for Columbus and Sís.

Into his picturebooks, Sís directly or indirectly introduces his thoughts, his personal experiences and sometimes even himself as a character. Compared with the picturebook artists who work for a limited audience, mainly children, Sís is closer to a contemporary artist who uses picturebooks as a medium or a method to express himself. In this sense, his picturebooks can be considered as contemporary art. This kind of approach towards picturebooks, that is, using this medium for self-expression and molding it in an original manner – with a lot of details from one's own life – must be related also to the art education Sís received. After all, at an earlier stage of his career, he identified himself as an artist: “I first realized that I am an illustrator when I came to New York. Because until then I was an artist.”³⁰ In the end, however, regardless of where exactly such style comes from, Sís's works take a different shape from commercial picturebooks or picturebooks for children, with regard to all the connections with the artist's personal life.

3-1-2. Metaphor and Mixture: The Differences between Peter Sís and Shaun Tan (*The Arrival* and *The Wall*)

In this part, I will be looking at the characteristics of Peter Sís and Shaun Tan's works, in order to position them once again but with reference to literature. Focusing on *The Arrival* and *The Wall*, I will be discussing the differences in the two artists' ways of presenting social and political issues.

³⁰ Lida Sak and Michael Joseph, 1997:131-141

1) Differences (1): Direct and Indirect Narrative

If *The Arrival* is a story about how an immigrant adapts to a new life after escaping from his country, then *The Wall* is a work which describes the life before the escape. But both works address the reason why the characters feel the need to escape, by presenting the situations they face.

In *The Arrival*, the rationale is simple and clear: Weak people have to escape from the horrible situation they are put into. The story is told from the perspective of adults and everything takes place in an adults' world. The man who seeks his future in the foreign country and the people he meets have similar experiences; all of them are adults, and the way they describe the environment they live in is the same: through metaphors which are visualized for the reader. The husband describes the oppression they are subjected to as giant soldiers' using cleaners to clean people like garbage, and the woman likens the factory where she used to work to an endless fiery hell. These scenes are not realistically depicted—neither diegetically, nor extradiegetically—but can easily be related to actual historical events and to other works which present historical allegories. Moreover, even the stories are symbolic, and thus unrealistic; the way they are visually depicted convey the sensation of horror associated with mankind's actual wrongdoings in the past. It can be said that what is presented is real life, just with another background, in an alternative way.

In *The Wall*, however, there are almost no symbolic figures or metaphors—except for the Russians and the policemen. In contrast to this, there are many historical characters—like Joseph Stalin, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev—that resemble how they actually looked in real life, but are drawn more like children's sketches. There are also completely fantastical figures, like the creature with wing ears. Therefore, the overall impression of the book is like the work of a child—a child who tries to present an

actual situation with his limited knowledge and fills the gaps in the whole picture with his own imagination. Correspondingly, the story is told from a first person point of view, from the point of view of a young boy who likes art. When such a style of drawing and story-telling are combined, the audience cannot not feel the impact of the horrible situation as directly as in the case of *The Arrival*.

Aside from the narration of the boy, especially through page layout, a dark sort of humor finds its way into the story, creating a kind of bitterness without strict portrayals of actual tragedies. For example, on the pages which show the police chasing the boy (fig. 2-44), there are nine scenes displayed like posters hung on the wall forming the background. Each poster has a caption at the bottom. The ones on the biggest three read: “Everyone has to prove loyalty to the Soviet system”, “People are followed, monitored, harassed, imprisoned, deported, and tortured” and “Artists are brought to the National Theater under false pretenses”. The ones on the two smaller read: “Jan Palach protests the regime” and “Very few dare to stand up and criticize the government.” Finally, the ones on the smallest four read: “Dissident playwright Vaclav Havel is jailed”, “Dissidents are forced to do menial jobs”, “a doctor” [referring to the man on the poster, who is shown doing cleaning work] and “a professor” [who is shown digging a hole]. Also, spread on the double page, again at the bottom, we see another caption that reads: “Things got worse... and worse”. All of these scenes depict grave matters actually, although childishly drawn. The contents of the posters is even grimmer compared to the big chase scene, one of them being Jan Palach’s self-immolation. However, being *literally* as well as metaphorically left in the background, they make a softer impact than they could have made in other ways.

Similarly, on the next page (fig. 2-45), we see that the boy is still being chased, but interspersed in the big picture are eight scenes showing different ways of escaping from the Iron Curtain. Some of them are as follows: flying over it with a balloon, sneaking to the other side in a tree costume, swimming past it by hiding under a plastic duck, and high

jumping to the other side with a long stick. Some of these scenes, which are hidden between the curves of the winding path that the boy takes as he escapes from the police, are real cases happened in history. Nevertheless, the particular selection of scenes and the amusing composition prevent a direct connection to the horrors and misery of such times.

Interestingly, it is possible to find the source of inspiration for particularly this use of indirect narration in Sís's personal experience of growing up in Prague: "I grew up in society when lots of things were hidden, and they were not hidden just one way, but it was very complicated."³¹ As a person who experienced the whole process, Sís presents the "big" political changes in Czechoslovakia together with "small" details from life—like the hair styles changing in time. Told from a young boy's perspective and with an ironic tone, *The Wall* has a relatively light atmosphere, even though there are plenty of realistically depicted references to history.

This is the kind of atmosphere that cannot be found in Tan's epic-like *The Arrival*. In this work, even the warmest moment has certain heroic and educational meanings. But as a "half-outsider", this is the only approach Tan can adopt. Even though he has strong connections and emotional attachments with the history of immigrants, and although even the main character in *The Arrival* looks like himself, as a person who did not experience that period, Tan cannot present the story in a personal way, like Sís does in *The Wall* with all his first-hand materials and somehow subjective attitude.

2) Differences (2): History Mixed with Fantasy and History as Fable

Like Shaun Tan's, Peter Sís's picturebooks also bear political and critical meanings, and are also created for a general audience. However, the ways these two artists talk about similar issues—immigration, or totalitarianism for example—is quite different. Whereas Tan

³¹ "Sís Stays in Touch With His Past"
<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/sis-stays-in-touch-with-his-past/>

opts for a more direct social criticism presented from the perspective of adults with fable-like stories, in Sís's books, fantastic elements have been emphasized more; the political issues and conflicts are presented indirectly or as fantasies.

Tan introduces social problems and conflicts through metaphors and symbols, which is easily understood if the readers know what the symbols refer to in real life. But Sís brings a fantasy world into the real world, mixing fantasy and real history like in his *The Three Golden Keys*. History is always important in his works, but in the sense of culture and aesthetics, not in the sense of its political or social value. This can be seen in his *Tibet Through the Red Box*, where Tibetan culture, nature and fantasy are described over many pages, but not everyday life. Even when Sís describes what happened in the country and blames the invaders, it's because they destroyed the local culture and the fantasy, not because of the political impact and meaning, or their influence on normal people's life. No matter if this was his father's intention or not, the artist chose to present the case from this angle. Moreover, although there are social conflicts depicted in *The Wall*, they don't form the central subject like in Tan's *The Arrival*, but merge with the story of Sís's growing up in Prague which is of equal importance in this work.

This particular blend in narrative, along with some other defining characteristics of *The Wall*, might be related to the artist's hometown and Czechoslovakian culture before 1993. For example, Sís explains the reason why he is so drawn to the use of bright colors in much of his work in this way:

"I grew up on a block of grey houses, with sad people, all with ashen faces, and red flags supplying the only colour."³²

He further clarifies the connection between his works and the environment he was raised in, when explaining his use of bright colors in *Madlenka* (which is about the day his daughter

³² "Peter Sís: Biography"
http://www.parents-choice.org/article.cfm?art_id=33&the_page=reading_list

loses her first tooth and a fantastical journey around the world to Paris, India, and Italy): “I wanted to show how wonderful life is here, because I grew up in very, I would say, monotone and monolithic society.”³³

It is through his preference for mixing real life and fantasy, and also his preference for presenting political or social issues in an ironic or indirect way that Sis differs from Tan. In Tan’s work, there are not so many vague or grey parts, especially when he attends to political or social issues, and even there are fantastic elements, Tan always shows a clear stand point and strong connection with real life. In *The Arrival*, for example, he describes every reaction to the outside world and emotional changes through the main character’s face, which is logical in real life give the same situation.

3-3. The Structure and Form of Sis’s Books

3-3-1. Page Layout

If the shape of the frames in *The Tree of Life* is ignored, it’s easy to see the structural similarities with *The Arrival*. In the former as well, out of the seven kinds of page layout discussed earlier, six can be observed (fig. 49,50,51,52,53,54,55,56,57,58). The only exception is the 6th kind, that is, double pages consisting of several frames of smallest size and one page-size frame. However, this page layout can be found in Sis’s wordless book *An Ocean World* (fig.2-65,66,67,68), which also includes the 2nd kind—double pages consisting of two page-size frames—(fig.65, 66), and the 7th—double pages consisting of several medium size frames and one page-size frame (fig. 2- 67, 68).

³³ “Sis Stays in Touch With His Past”
<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/sis-stays-in-touch-with-his-past/>

The striking difference in *The Tree of Life* is that some frames have been inserted into bigger drawings serving as other frames. In other words, what we have here are not isolated frames appearing on blank backgrounds or divided by gaps, but pictures in pictures, or frames within frames. In this sense, the 4th kind—double pages consisting of only one double-page size frame—gets combined with the 5th to create double pages consisting of several frames of smallest size and medium size, *within* one double-page size frame work (fig. 2-51, 52, 53, 54). In the same line, the 2nd kind—double pages consisting of two page-size frames—can be considered as an 8th kind: double pages consisting of several (eight) frames of smallest size *inserted within* page-size frames (fig. 49,50).

In each book of Sís, the structure and function of frames are different. For instance, in *Follow the Dream* (fig.2-59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64) and *The Wall*, on some pages the frames are divided by gutters while on some others the frames are inserted into a bigger frame. In *Follow the Dream*, the kinds of double page layout that can be found are the 1st (fig.2-62), the 3rd (fig.2-63, 64), and three different types of the 2nd (fig. 2-59, 60, 61). However, the page layout of the first page (fig. 2-59), with small frames that have been put in a bigger frame which looks like an album, can be considered either of the 2nd kind or the 8th—just like the first page in *The Tree of Life* (fig. 2-49).

In *Follow the Dream* and *The Tree of Life*, it can be argued that this kind of page layout does not function as a part of the story but appears more for the sake of decoration and visual pleasure, because there are no direct narrative connections between the big frames and the small ones that are embedded inside the former. However, in *The Wall*, the narrative function of such page layout becomes more pronounced. For example, on the pages that depict the police raid on the rock music concert (fig. 2-41) and the boy's escape from policemen (fig. 2-44,45), the double-page size drawings and the small drawings which are inserted in them are more connected in terms of narrative. Especially in the escape scene, Sís aligns the four long frames on a bigger background frame depicting the path the protagonist takes, which

make the connection between the small scenes and the big mountain drawing more logical (fig. 2-45).

3-3-2. Graphical Frame for Decoration

In the works mentioned above, like in *The Wall* and *The Tree of Life*, the usage of the frames and the space between frames for purposes of both decoration and narration becomes one of the distinguishing characteristics.

A similar usage can be also found in Shaun Tan's *Rabbits* (fig. 2-3,4,5,6,7,8) and *The Lost Thing* (fig. 2-9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16). This feature separates their picturebooks from the traditional picturebooks that mostly have a double page layout consisting of one big drawing or two page-size drawings which do not have a close temporal connection with each other.

In Tan's *The Viewer* and Sís's *Tibet Through the Red Box*, there are pages which have the same composition. In *The Viewer*, the pages with the picture discs and the pages with the boy's eye looking at them compose double pages (fig. 2-1, 2). These double pages bring to mind those in *Tibet Through the Red Box*, consisting of mandalas on one page and Sís's family gatherings on the other (fig. 2-75, 76). In *The Viewer*, this composition is the main story itself, and in *Tibet Through the Red Box*, it works as the beginning of each new chapter and organizes the story.

Yet, this similar usage of frames as graphical decoration more than narrative can also be found in Sís's and Tan's older works. For example, in *Madlenka*, there is one interesting page on which the frames work both for separating the contents and as decoration (fig. 2-74). And in Shaun Tan's *Memorial* (fig.2-25, 26, 27, 28), the small frames work more for decoration than narration.

This kind of usage can also be found in the alternative graphic novel *Jimmy Corrigan: the smartest Kid on earth*; there are pages in which the frames are put in big frames (fig.2-82,

88). And if we consider the graphic drawing in the whole book, the frames here also work as part of the style and graphical decoration. But this kind of usage is unusual in mainstream comics. Because in such comics, most of the frames and the gutters between the frames are used as tools to compartmentalize the story in—generally identical—units of time and space, but not as parts of the drawings or stories. In his book *The System of Comics*, Thierry Groensteen indicates six functions of frame: closure, separative, rhythmic, structural, expressive, and readerly.³⁴ However, frames can be used also for visual pleasure—that is, in the works that between comics and picturebooks, although this may not be the usual case in comics. From my point of view, Groensteen’s summary is based on the functions which have been widely used. But because artists invent new ways of expression and new functions for old formal elements in order to present their thoughts and the contents of their choice, a new usage will appear. And with the appearance of new usages through individual experiments, minor functions can gain importance in the future.

3-3-3.Comparison with *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*

As they import various formal elements from each other, picturebooks and comics/graphic novels grow close to one another. Indeed, today’s alternative comics have a lot in common with picturebooks.

For example, Chris Ware’s *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth* is a work which is hard to categorize by form, due to its small size and use of multi-colors that make it similar to picturebooks. Yet, different from picturebooks, it has a bigger number of frames and pages. There are also pages with frames inserted in bigger frames (fig.2-82). Considering the visual arrangement of the whole book, here too the frames work as part of the style and graphical decoration.³⁵

³⁴ Cf. Thierry Groensteen, 2009b.

³⁵ Usamaru Furuya’s *Palepoli* (Ohta books, 2003) too, can be considered as an example of the

As to the use of frames in Sís's books, parallel to the interaction between picturebooks and comics/graphic novels, they also can be traced back to his experience and encounters with American graphic/poster design of '60s, which has close connection with underground comix movement at the same time. Sís points out the influence of two Czech artists, Jirí Trnka and Miroslav Jagr, who happened to be his instructors at college, and of American graphic design in the 1960s³⁶. Such stimuli, combined with the practices the artist got involved with at the earlier stages of his career (i.e. poster making, drawing comics for school magazines³⁷), certainly must have paved the way to, if not directly culminated in, the formation of his particular style.

It is also possible to compare Chris Ware's work at those of Sís in terms of contents as well. For instance, *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth* has certain autobiographical elements, especially the main character's relationship with his father. Autobiographical elements frequently find their way into alternative comics, like Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* (L'Association, 2000) which is based on her own experience, or David B.'s autobiographical graphic novel *Epileptic* (6 volumes, L'Association, 1996–2003), but they are not so usual in typical picturebooks. Together with the formal similarities, such elements let Sís's works, especially *The Wall*, appear as both alternative comics and picturebooks.

works in which the frames are used not just for separating the contents, but also for expressing ideas and for decoration (fig. 2-89, 90).

³⁶ "I was very lucky in college because I was selected by Jirí Trnka to be his student. However, he died a year after that, but I had a wonderful man, Miroslav Jagr, who was his assistant, and he lifted me up and encouraged me. I liked Mr. Jagr very much, but it's true that, when we ended college, all of us who graduated were drawing just like him: including the Vietnamese students. Then, in the 1960s, San Francisco poster art really interested me. Because we followed the magazines like *Graphis* and *Gebrauchsgraphik*" (Lida Sak and Michael Joseph, 1997:131-141).

³⁷ Ibid.

Chapter 3 Kazuichi Hanawa and Li Chi-Tak: Alternative comics as Avant-garde

In France and Belgium, by being connected and communicated with avant-garde film, BD have been acknowledged as the “9th art/neuvieme art” since the 60s. In American which has a long tradition of comics, comics has not been considered as art, and comics artists like Art Spiegelman, Will Eisner and Winsor McCay were not considered artists until the 80s.¹ In this regard, underground comix artist Robert Crumb highly contributed to the social acceptance of “artist comics”.² “[i]n Japan, manga have seen their legitimation rather in the name of “culture/bunka”, that is, something which can be shared on a national scale.”³

Nowadays it seems that there is not a problem anymore because manga has already become an independent system, and it doesn’t rely on any contemporary authority. Manga has been set as “media art” by the Agency for Cultural Affairs. But a cultural understanding of “media” seems to be more appropriate for manga – and this relates not to culture in the sense of “Japaneseness”, but how people make sense of their life and the world by means of changing kinds of pictorial narratives/sequential art.⁴ Also in the manga world, the term “geijutsu (art)” is being carefully avoided by almost everyone, including the manga artist Suehiro Maruo, who is considered an “artistic” manga artist but doesn’t want his manga being called “art”.⁵ Because of the mature manga market, the focus of contemporary critics is shifting from society to the reader’s community and fan culture. Against this boundary the communication between manga and contemporary art has been hidden.

In this chapter, I will analyze Japanese alternative comics artist Kazuichi Hanawa and Hong Kong independent comics artist Li Chi-Tak’s works, aiming to find the meaning in their contents, style, their positions and their work’s functions in society and culture.

¹ Hiroshi Odagari, 2013:109-110

² Jaqueline Berndt, 2014

³ Jaqueline Berndt, 2011:85

⁴ Jaqueline Berndt, 2011:83

⁵ Jaqueline Berndt, 2014

1. Similarities between Hanawa Kazuichi and Li Chi-Tak

The two artists are from different cultural backgrounds, but they work in the same area – alternative comics. They share the following points:

1) Both of them chose to do their work in a more personal way, not just because they wanted to fight with the mainstream comics industry, but also for the freedom of self-expression which they could not gain in the commercial comics world.

2) A critical function of their works is deducible from both style and contents.

3) They are closer to the avant-garde scene than the comics scene, but because of different background and environment this trait shows differently. That is to say, the meaning of being “independent” and critical varies depending on cultural background, the comics scene in the given period and region, and cross-cultural influences.

I will constantly refer to these factors throughout my analysis of the topics and visual characteristics of Hanawa and Li. Ultimately I aim to discern these artists’ creative stance, and the way their works function within their respective societies and culture.

2. Who is Kazuichi Hanawa ?

“[In Japan] Not all manga are at the mercy of high-speed, high-volume output, targeted audience, editor’s diktats and reader’s whims. In the most marginal sectors of comics publishing – in assorted specialist and adult magazines and books, and the proliferating *dojinshi* or fanzines - have sprung up all kinds of singular visionaries driven to create manga as only they can. Some of these manga artists might be given the Western label of

‘underground’ because of their position to, or lack of interest in mainstream acceptability [...].”⁶ This tendency started from 1960s, Yoshiharu Tuge and *Garō* magazine.

Kazuichi Hanawa belongs to the group of manga artists who Paul Gravett calls “singular visionaries”⁷. These artists, according to Gravett, stay detached from mainstream conventions and prefer “unapologetically personal approaches”⁸, which allows for comparisons with the “underground artists” in the West. In Japan, however, there is a chance even for a non-mainstream artist to enjoy commercial success, since the publishing system offers a variety of opportunities.

Kazuichi Hanawa (花輪和一, b. 17 April, 1942 or 1947 in Saitama, Japan) is a self-taught Japanese illustrator, manga artist and painter. Hanawa began his career as a manga artist in 1971 with “Kan no mushi”(「かんの虫」) in the manga magazine *Garō*, influenced by Tsuge Yoshiharu. This is a tale about a destructive boy who is taken to a sadistic acupuncturist for a “cure” by his mother, perhaps based on Hanawa’s own rural childhood.⁹

In 1972, also in *Garō*, he published erotic - grotesque works like “Kikan”(「帰還」), “Tatakau Onna”(「戦フ女」) and “Niku yashiki”(「肉屋敷」). From the 1980s, Hanawa’s style evolved, best described as “Japanese retro-kitsch horror”; perversion, aggression, and sadomasochism are recurring themes in Hanawa’s work.¹⁰ He became interested in Japanese medieval time and focused on macabre satires on Japanese medieval aristocracy,¹¹ created stories referring to Buddhism legends about imaginary creatures and fantastic tales.

Among Hanawa’s works in period style are *Nue: Shin Konjaku Monogatari* (『鵺 新今昔物語』, Futabasha, 1982) and *Ten Sui* (『天水』, Kodansha, 1994). Hanawa spent three years in jail (1994-1997) for possession of illegal firearms, and this experience became another source of inspiration for him. He transcribed every repetitive and demeaning ritual of his

⁶ Paul Gravett, 2004:132

⁷ Paul Gravett, 2004:132

⁸ Paul Gravett, 2004:132

⁹ http://www.lambiek.net/artists/h/hanawa_kazuichi.htm

¹⁰ http://www.lambiek.net/artists/h/hanawa_kazuichi.htm

¹¹ http://www.lambiek.net/artists/h/hanawa_kazuichi.htm

imprisonment into new and shocking material for the normal audience, in the manga *Doing Time* (『刑務所の中』, AX, Seirin Kogeisha, February 1998 – June, 2000).

This work was nominated for the ‘Best Comic Book’ award at the 34th Angoulême comics Festival in 2007. In 2002, Japanese director Yoichi Sai adapted *Doing Time* into the eponymous film¹². After this, Hanawa published the manga *Keimusho No Mae* (『刑務所の前』, 3 volumes, Shogakukan, 2003 - 2007), in which he interweaves the story of his ending up in prison with another plotline unfolding in mediaeval Japan.

In Japan, Hanawa is considered a “bizarre” manga artist, and his works are categorized as comics reminiscent of avant-garde or underground traditions, which often draw upon horror, pornography, and scatology for their shock value (other artists who work in this field are Suehiro Maruo and Hideshi Hino). Hanawa, together with the creators of so-called *Gekiga* manga of the 60s and early ‘70s, has been paid considerable attention, by alternative comics publishers as well as *The Comics Journal*.¹³

2-1. The Critical Function of Hanawa’s Works

2-1-1. Being Bizarre (1): Critique through Style and Fictional Characters

Hanawa’s style is different from that of typical modern Japanese manga. In his early period, Hanawa was already famous for his decadent, grotesque, sometimes nonsense drawing style. This has not changed throughout the range of his works, from the very first, *Kan no Mushi* to the latest one – the first volume of *Mizuho soshi* (『みずほ草紙』 vol.1,

¹² The film won five awards: Best director (Yoichi Sai) for the Blue Ribbon Award in 2003, Best Film for the Hochi Film Awards in 2003, Best Supporting Role Actor (Teruyuki Kagawa) for Kinema Junpo Awards in 2003, Best Art Direction (Toshihiro Isomi) and the Best Director (Yoichi Sai) for the Mainichi Film Award in 2004. The film has been presented in France in March 14, 2003 in the Asian Film Festival in Deauville and in May 13, 2004 in the Cannes Film Festival.

¹³ Jaqueline Berndt, 2006:107

Shogakukan, 2013). When *Doing Time* was nominated for the Osamu Tezuka Cultural Prize in 2001, Hanawa declined the nomination even though he had already got most votes in the first round of voting. He explained his decision as following: “I’m proud of myself as a minor manga artist, so I don’t think I’m qualified for any kind of prize [...] I’m not influenced by Osamu Tezuka.”¹⁴

Osamu Tezuka, who had never received any formal drawing training, but gained huge success and played the most important role in post-war Japanese manga, changed the whole manga culture with his theory of using images as signs and his using simple and smooth lines to draw characters, which are acknowledged as one distinguishing characteristic of Japanese manga nowadays (although he learned from Disney). In Tezuka’s opinion: “over-done” drawing¹⁵ is not proper for manga: “Manga artist should not be artist.”¹⁶ Since Tezuka, there has been no necessary connection between the dessin in fine art and the drawing in manga.¹⁷

But in the 60s, Japanese manga artists who did not want their trade to be known as manga or “irresponsible pictures”, like Yoshihiro Tatsumi and Yoshiharu Tsuge, started another tendency: adult manga. Japanese manga critic Junzo Ishiko discussed the difference between Gekiga and Tezuka manga. For Ishiko, the definitive feature of Gekiga was not just style, but the feeling of rejection towards the ideals of “peace and democracy” prevalent in post-war Japan. The roughness of lines, as contrary to Tezuka’s style, was combined with “not funny stories” and a realistic approach. These features, however, had been brought about as new means of expression, a new “culture”, shared by artists and readers in the 60s.¹⁸ Thus, the

¹⁴ 「マイナー漫画家を自負する自分としてはいかなる賞も貰う資格が無い[...]自分は手塚治虫から影響を受けていない。」

<http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E8%8A%B1%E8%BC%AA%E5%92%8C%E4%B8%80>

¹⁵ 描きすぎ

¹⁶ 「マンガ家はアーティストになるな。」 Toshihiko Sagawa, 2010:19

¹⁷ Kentaro Takekuma and Fusanosuke Natsume, 1995:64-67

¹⁸ 「手描きの痕跡を残した自然主義的な描法で、笑のない物語マンガとして貸本屋向けに描かれた劇画は、たんに様式的にだけ劇画であってではない。それは、一九六〇年を前後して、戦前日本の括弧づきの「平和と民主主義」からはみ出さざるをえなかったものたちの、いわば私的なメディアであり、私情のドラマとしての劇画であった [...] たし

new style can be considered the product of a different thinking.

Hanawa admitted that he followed not Osamu Tezuka, but Yoshiharu Tsuge and Japanese illustrators such as Kasho Takabatake or Hikoze Ito, who lived and worked in the later Taisho and early Showa eras. His style is completely different from Tezuka's tradition and closer to the realistic depiction in gekiga. In fact, Hanawa himself claims to have discovered his style after reading Tsuge's *Li Family* (「李さん一家」) in *Garô*.¹⁹

As an example of Hanawa's style, let us look at volume 3 of *Keimusho No Mae* (Shogakukan, 2007). Pages 3, 27, 47, 71, 95, 119, 143, 167, 191, 213, 237, and 263 (fig.3-19, 21, 23, 25, 26) constitute each a full page drawing by pen, detailed and grotesque, of an Asian deity appearing and disappearing. This series of drawings has no direct connection with the story, and there are no panels. The same applies to pages 5, 29, 71, 119, 143, 169, 191, 215, and 239 (fig.3-20, 22, 24), which are also each a full page pen work in a very detailed style. These pictures constitute another plotline, that can be connected to the story of how he has been put in prison. Many scenes in Hanawa's other works are depicted in this kind of detailed style.

In *Keimusho no mae*, this kind of "over-done" drawing appears just in one panel, but in *Tsuki no hikari* (Seirindo, 1980) (fig.3-11,12), *Suzakumon* (Seirin Kogeisha, 2005) (fig.3-13,14) and *Suisei* (Bunkasha, 2006), this kind of drawing appears as double spread,

かに劇画も、誕生日には、描線も中性的で、まるっこい図像、すなわち手塚マンガの亜流でしかなかった。しかし後でもふれるように、作者と読者とを共通して、生活行為がそれ自体表現＝文化でありうるようなカテゴリーで、やがて中性的な線による平和と正義のマンガからずれていく。他人を笑わずといった余裕は失われ、描写はリアリスティックに、描線は手描きの痕跡をあらあらしく残して具体感を深化する。」 Junzo Ishiko, 2011:197

¹⁹「当時池袋の印刷屋に勤めていてね、合間をみてはペン画のイラストを少年画報社なんかによく持ち込んでましたよ。でも「ダメ、ダメ」って言われて…。そんな時、たまたま近所の貸本屋でガロを立ち読みしていたら、そこにつげさんの「李さん一家」が載っていてね。あれはペン画みたいな漫画でしょ。漫画っていったら手塚治虫みたいな絵じゃないとダメだって、自分で思い込んでいたから。だからつげさんの漫画を見た時に、「あっ、こういう絵で描いてもいいんだ」って思ってたね。じゃあ、自分もガロに描いてみよう、と思ったんです。」 花輪和一の世界 1

<http://www.ggccaatt.net/2012/04/09/%E8%8A%B1%E8%BC%AA%E5%92%8C%E4%B8%80%E3%81%AE%E4%B8%96%E7%95%8C%EF%BC%91/>

and in some short stories, all the drawings are done in this style (fig.3-15,26) .

If the drawing itself somehow shows the attitude, then the difference between Hanawa's grotesque, crowded lines and Tezuka's simple, smooth lines reveals a deep socio-psychological conflict. Modernization is presented as simple and smooth in heavily stylized line work, and the doubts about modernization are embodied in "realistic" and grotesque depiction.

Moreover, differences in the line work can be considered the representation of two different opinions on and approaches to comics. Consequently, we can regard McCloud's theory about the difference of Robert Crumb's line work and Disney's line work not just as stylistic effect, but also as symptoms of social conflict. The line work in Walt Disney's comics of the 1930s (from which Tezuka imported his line and iconicity) can be interpreted as a representation of the American mainstream life and values from the 1930s to 60s. Then Crumb's grotesque lines, also typical for other underground comix works, can be considered a representation, or visualization, of the doubts and rebellion against mainstream values and lifestyle, and of the new values which took charge of society between the 1960s and 70s. In the 60s, the anti-Vietnam war movement and Hippie movement denying not only social authority, but also old values, were at their peak, and the society structure started to change. Underground comix appeared during that period, and therefore it can be seen as closely related to these conflicts. However, the new values and the old ones existed simultaneously.

In this sense, Hanawa's grotesque line work can be considered as an opposition to the modern life style and values represented in Tezuka's simple lines iconic characters. In other words, different styles and line works can be understood as aesthetic reflections of social conflicts. Thus, Hanawa's style, together with the contents of his stories, and his self-consciousness as a manga artist, makes his work an opposite of mainstream manga and separates him from mainstream manga artists.

2-1-2. Being Bizarre (2): Anti-humanist/ Anti-utopian Contents

In Hanawa's work, there is a subject which constantly appears especially in the later works — anti-humanism and anti-utopia.

They are evident, for instance, in “The Turtle Man”(「亀男」), a story included in Hanawa's collected work *Nue: Shinkonjaku monogatari*. In this story, a young man born into a rich family transforms himself into a grotesque turtle and lives outside of the community. In order to defend his way of living as a human being, he has to choose total isolation. This story discusses the individual's value in a society which oppresses the alternative thinking. According to Japanese critic Kure, Hanawa's work indicates that the ultimate pacifism and nonviolence have to go beyond modern humanism.²⁰ This content can be related to Franz Kafka's short story *The Metamorphosis* (1915), in which a travelling salesman wakes up to find himself transformed into a bug. He is shunned by human society, including his family, because he does not have any value, and he dies in the end. Another parallel can be found in Italian novelist Italo Calvino's novel *The Baron in the Trees* (1957), in which a boy climbs up a tree in a rebellious fit after refusing to eat a dinner and decides to spend the rest of his life without coming down to the ground. This novel also addresses the changes of humanism values in modern times. In *Doing Time*, Hanawa seems to document his own imprisonment for illegal possession of firearms from 1995 to 1998. The sepia colors the manga is rendered in make it look as if the story happened in a far more distant past, and the pseudo-naïve tone it adopts points to how comfortable it feels to be in prison where you are finally free of any ‘adult’ responsibilities²¹ (fig.3-10). This attitude of absolutely rejecting the “good value” of human society and humanism gives Hanawa's work a deep meaning and critical function when put against in the background of modern society.

²⁰ 「徹底的な平和主義、非暴力主義が、最後には、楽天的な人間謳歌主義を突き抜けざるを得ないことを描き、これを通である近代的人間主義への反措定となっている。」
Tomofusa Kure, 1997:258

²¹ Jaqueline Berndt, 2006:119

Hanawa's preference of escaping from the adult and "normal" world and discussing society in a not realistic way is also reflected in the characters. In most cases, the characters are innocent-looking young girls who live in the country side; they are abused by adults or have to face hard situations or life conditions. Usually in the end they find happiness after dying, transforming into an animal or seeing the world they live in as an illusion. Another reoccurring character type in Hanawa's works is a half-god or a fairy who does not belong to human society is able to human behavior from an alternative point of view, like the kappa in *Heaven Water* (『天水』, Kodansha, 1994) or the girl and the boy in *Gohō Dōji* (『護法童子』, Futabasha, 1985). Hanawa points out that he uses children as a symbol of himself, to release the part which cannot grow up or be expressed in real life.²² If tension and conflicts between children and adults in all these stories can be perceived as a kind of the conflict between the world of innocent and pure and the world of evil and the wicked, then the endings of these stories (no one succeeds) somehow show Hanawa's opinion about the world: the only way to stop suffering from ordinary life is to escape, mentally or physically.

The story "Hesohikari" (「へそひかり」) in *Nekodani* (『猫谷』, Seirindo, 1989) can serve as an example. In this story, everyone in the village is branded by the village leader (and they receive brands only if they are considered qualified for it) without doubting this abnormal situation, except the main character – a little girl. But the reason she doubts is partly because she is not considered worthy of branding, and she wonders whether something is wrong with her. She also accidentally causes death of a young couple by mentioning their brands out loud, which is a taboo. The girl suffers from guilt, but in the end she becomes happy again

²² 「編集部:そんな世界になってきてから、よく子どもが描かれていますね。
花輪:自分の心の中にはすごく、ああいう子どもの部分ってあるんですよ。自分でも分かるのかね。そのたび「ああ大人になりたい」と思っているんだけど (笑)
編集部:花輪さん自信が投影されているんですね。花輪:うん、そうですね。だから描きやすいんじゃないのかな。自分の心の中に子どもの部分がいっぱいあってさ、大人になれない部分が。やっぱり徐々に階段を登るようにして大人になっていくでしょ。でも、そうじゃなかった。」

“The world of Kazuichi Hanawa 2” (「花輪和一の世界 2」)

<http://www.ggccaatt.net/2012/04/11/%E8%8A%B1%E8%BC%AA%E5%92%8C%E4%B8%80%E3%81%AE%E4%B8%96%E7%95%8C2/>

after realizing that: “This world is a lie, there is a better real world.” This epiphany is accompanied by the hand of god appearing in the cloud. As evident from “Hesohikari”, Hanawa not just points out the crimes and problems which happen every day but are accepted as a normal or “right” way of living, or as a social rule everyone has to obey, he also shows how the people who think they are innocent help to create this condition. And in the end, he points out that escaping to the “land of Happiness” is one solution usually people use instead of fighting the “rule”. In an interview, he points out that the “land of Happiness” is an illusion connected to a limited life condition.²³ By destroying the illusion of “happiness” without giving a solution or showing there is a possibility to change it in real life, he denies the “good” value and the “right” way of living, and leaves the audience with a desperate view of the future. In this sense, his work is anti-humanist.

Furthermore, in Hanawa’s manga, the relationships between people are usually cold and abnormal, even between family members. According to his interview, this thinking can be traced back to his own experience of being abused by his parent.²⁴ These kind of unhappy

²³ 「編集部:花輪さんの漫画にはよく“極楽”という言葉が出てきますよね。主人公が「しあわせになりたい、しあわせになりたい」っていうところがありましたでしょ。花輪:結局、しあわせってどういう事なのか分からないんですよ。あるがままに生きるのが幸せだ、平々凡々と質素に生きる、そういうふうになればね、性格的にね、山奥の辺鄙なところに嫁にいて、そこで小さな畑を一所懸命耕して、あまり外にも出ずにおばあさんになっちゃって、でも「ああいい人生だった」って死ぬ人いっぱいいるでしょ。そういう人って凄いなあ、と思うね。「私は幸せだった、本当に楽しかった」と思える。ああいう人になればいいなあ、と思いますよ。ずっと抑圧されて抑圧されて、それでオヤジの事が嫌い、で……。そんな現実から目を伏せていたんでしょね。だから眠ったままだった。そして、お袋が死んだとき、それがきっかけでね、「ああ、現実ってこんなに凄いな」って改めて思いましたよ。いかに自分が幼かったか。子どもだったてね。」 “The world of Kazuichi Hanawa 2” (「花輪和一の世界2」)

<http://www.ggccaatt.net/2012/04/11/%E8%8A%B1%E8%BC%AA%E5%92%8C%E4%B8%80%E3%81%AE%E4%B8%96%E7%95%8C2/>

²⁴ 「花輪：やっぱり母親の死だね、死んでからバーっと一気に出たわけ。あの時は本当に分からなくなっちゃったね。それまでは本当に夢うつつで生きてきたから、人生全部ドブに捨てた感じ。それをお袋の死で初めて気が付いてさ、自分は一体何だったてね。俺が3、4歳の頃、お袋が再婚したんですね。その義理の父が大嫌いだった。すごく嫌いだった。丸尾：夜中に茶碗は投げる、暴れては鍋は投げる、そういう人だったんでしょ。花輪：そう、もう地獄ね、アウシュビッツ収容所の記録フィルム見てさ「ああ、これって俺の家と同じじゃないか」って思ったもの（笑）。ものすごく恐かったし。丸尾：そりゃ怖いでしょ。暴力ふるうんだもの。花輪：いやそうじゃなくて、もっと何か違う恐

memories about family appear eventually in his works. In “Shigyo” (「市魚」), no one is concerned when in the course of the story a man takes a fish as his new wife, or when the fish gives birth to three half-human babies. When two of the babies die, no one takes notice including the parents: the mother-fish only feels strange about two spare sets of bowl and chop-sticks during dinner.

In Hanawa’s stories, all the abnormal situations appear as normal things in the characters’ life. The audience may relate them to their own life and experiences and think about the problems and crimes around them. They may think about how abnormal, strange and ridiculous the situation is and how desperate and hopeless they are as the one who is living in it. The bizarre description in Hanawa’s work is not just for the visual effect as shocking, also for evoking the desperate feeling in the audience.

Hanawa pays attention not only to medieval Japan. In 1988 Hanawa cooperated with Suehiro Maruo to publish *28 famous scenes of Murder and Verse* (『江戸昭和競作無惨絵英名二十八衆句』, Libroport), a book based on Tsukioka Yoshitoshi’s *muzan-e* collection *Eimei nijuhasshuku* (“Twenty-eight famous murders with verse”, 1867). The main theme of Hanawa and Maruo’s book is the brutality in modern society (fig. 3-5, 6, 7, 8).

According to Tomofusa Kure such doubts about modern values have started to spread in the 1970s, among liberal people who asked for change. During that “rebellious period”, the criticism about society did not just stay on the level of social and economic systems, but went deeper to the modern values which all these systems are based on. Kure indicates where the value and critical function of Hanawa’s works are in this sense:

さがあったの。丸尾：あっ、要するにヨソの人っていう感じがあったんじゃないの。花輪：そう、だからヨソの人だけどヨソの人ではない。丸尾：そういうヨソの人が家に入ってきているから違和感を感じたんでしょ。その人が隣りに住んでいけば全然恐くないけど、血の繋がりもないのに突然家の中に入ってきて、それを父親としてみなきやいけない。なんでこの人が父親なんだって思っちゃうよね。だから違和感から恐怖感が生まれて、話もしたくなくなる。」“The world of Kazuichi Hanawa 1” (「花輪和一の世界 1」) <http://www.ggccaatt.net/2012/04/09/%E8%8A%B1%E8%BC%AA%E5%92%8C%E4%B8%80%E3%81%AE%E4%B8%96%E7%95%8C%EF%BC%91/>

“And now there is a tendency which is reviewing the meaning of medieval period and religion in honest and intellectual scholars. This doubt about modern value is not just stay on the subjects such as pollution and nuclear weapon, but also unsurprising affects the world view and opinion about human being which are much wider. It’s important to think about the meaning of an unique artists like Hanawa who continues active creating activity in a scene where has no connection with their world, in this cultural situation.”²⁵

2-2. Medieval Japan as “Realistic” in Hanawa’s work

2-2-1. Hanawa’s Post-modern Approach to Picture Scrolls (emakimono)

It is important to note from the start, that when I discuss Hanawa’s approach to *emakimono* – Japanese traditional scroll – it is in the sense of it as a cultural product or point of reference rather than the origin of manga or an art form.

In comparison to tall and blond Caucasian-looking characters in Japanese mainstream manga, the characters in Hanawa’s works are “small” and “ugly”. Nor do these characters look like the Japanese in real life or Japanese characters from the “realistic” manga, like Katsuhiro Otomo’s *Akira* (*Weekly Young Magazine*, Kodansha, 1982-1990). If anything, they are much shorter than realistic depictions.

In most of Hanawa’s works, the background is medieval Japan, from Heian to Kamakura periods. It is easy to find that his characters are almost the same size as the characters on *emakimono* made in medieval Japan. For instance, all the characters in the collected book *Suzakumon* (『朱雀門』, Nihonbungeisha, 1988) (fig.3-27, 28) are short and small; like the

²⁵ 「現在、誠実で知的な学者たちの間で、中世や宗教の意味の見なおしが行われているが、それは、近代的な諸価値への疑いが、単に公害や核兵器への疑いにとどまらず、もっと広く世界観・人間観の再検討にまで波及せざるを得ないからである。こうした文化状況の中で、それらの学界の動向とは全く無縁の場所で、花輪和一という異色のマンガ家が意欲的な創作活動が続けている意味を考えてみることも重要である。」 Tomofusa Kure, 2007:258

drawings in “Sushinin nikki” (「崇親院日記」), they reinforce this reminiscence by evoking emakimono directly. Hanawa also imported other elements from scrolls, for example, the usage of a cloud to separate panels in the short story “Seireil” (「生霊」) in *Nekodani*.²⁶ (fig.3 - 30, 31)

In mainstream manga, when a story is set in pre-modern Japan, characters are usually shaped for the tastes of the contemporary audience, like Waki Yamato’s *Asakiyumemishi* (『あさきゆめみし』, *mimi/mimi Excellent*, Kodansha, 1979-1993) and Takehiko Inoue’s *Vagabond* (『バガボンド』, Morning, Kodansha, 1998-). Even though the background in those series is Heian period and early Edo period, respectively, the characters have more semblance to contemporary readers.

The authenticity of Hanawa’s characters aside, their design and depiction reveal the author’s inclination to combine the medieval period with modern techniques. Or, one can assume these stories might have been told by people from times past, and not from the contemporary industrial world, but in a modern way of story-telling.

A similar trend is found in the works by Hinako Sugiura, who was famous for her distinctive style which occasionally drew on ukiyo-e techniques. She produced manga which depicted Edo period life and customs with such style, like *Gasso* (『合葬』, Seirindo, 1983) and *Furyu Edo Suzume* (『風流江戸雀』, Ushio Publishing, 1987). But in Hanawa’s work, as indicated above, all the drawings are modern in terms of material (pen and standard paper) and technique (contemporary sketching), like pages 204-205 in *Suzakumon* (fig.3-13), or pages 26-27 in *Nekodani* (fig.3-29).

While Hanawa made a lot of works using medieval Japan as a background, his goal is expressing his opinion about contemporary society more than representing the life of that time (this is also different from what Hinako Sugiura tried to do: using the style of that time to introduce that time in a manga). In these medieval works, Hanawa doesn’t show his

²⁶ Yoko Yamamoto talks about different ways to utilize similar expression in emaki and manga in the same essay.

attention of the real life of that time, and he doesn't try to represent the custom or the value of that time like Hinako Sugiura did in her works. Instead, he puts all the abnormal and grotesque content and phenomenon which can be considered metaphors and symbols of modern values and the values which can replace those values, in a background which keeps certain distance with audience, and leaves audience to think about those values and their meanings. No matter how "realistic" his description of "medieval" Japan is, it can't be equaled to the real one. If one takes the ironic contents of Hanawa's works into account, the "medieval" Japan there can be interpreted as a fake world separated from the contemporary daily life.²⁷

Hanawa's approach to emakimono and to Japanese medieval culture is similar to German artist Anke Feuchtenberger's postmodern use of comic elements. The motivation for Hanawa to use elements from traditional art is to create a postmodern sense of play and fakeness and certain other effects; such playful borrowing of heterogeneous elements is more typical for an artist than a mainstream manga creator, and in this sense he is closer to contemporary art than comics.

2-2-2. Avant-garde Traits in Representation and Expression

One thing noteworthy is the combination of objective description and subjective viewpoint in Hanawa's work.

Hanawa puts all the scenes under an onlooker – an objective viewpoint. While the panels in Japanese manga nowadays are becoming bigger and bigger, Hanawa keeps the panels in a small size like in his works in 1960s, which have more panels on each page, and he does not emphasize the abnormal moment or subjects as something special by mean of extreme

²⁷ 「それは、全くの虚構であり創作である架空の“中世”である。架空の中世を設定することによって、花輪は、今度は単なる挑発ではない、近代的諸価値とは代替可能な諸価値を基礎に置く世界を描くことができたのだ。」 Tomofusa Kure, 2007: 256

close-ups or big panel. Of course there are changes of viewpoint between panels, but the objective viewpoint dominates the whole structure, and it actually rarely changes.

But at the same time, he also draws these scenes and subjects in an objective way with a lot of details which in real life may not be noticed from the distance which Hanawa keeps to the subjects (because it's human nature to focus on the things which provide useful information). Usually in manga, the objects and background appear as simple line drawing, but Hanawa draws them even more detailed than the characters no matter if it helps the audience understand the story better. This usage of style appears in almost every panel. So when the audience reads Hanawa's story, they will constantly be forced to look at all these details but still keep a certain distance to it.

On the one hand, he presents abnormal subjects and strange situations from a certain distance, but on the other hand, his detailed drawing style pushes the audience to the subjects and forces them to look closer. The combination of these two ways causes a nervous and uneasy tension, which makes his work more horrible.

Because of Hanawa's story, usage of picture scroll and his style, he can be considered an alternative comics artist and a representative of avant-garde/post-modern art.

3. Who is Li Chi-Tak?

Not just Japan manga has the problem of legitimization. Other comics in Asia also have the same problem. Hong Kong alternative comics artist Li Chi-Tak describes the situation of comics, especially alternative comics in Hong Kong, as follows:

"I still feel that comics is looked down upon all the time, normally people don't think this is a right job, unless you work for *Children Science* or something like this [...] there was a period when comics artist earned a lot of money, so people did not look down upon them, but

for now, it's hard to tell.”²⁸

Li Chi-Tak (利志達, b. 24 June, 1965, in Kowloon, Hong Kong) is a Hong Kong Comics artist. He started to work in the comics industry as an assistant for Hong Kong comics artist Yuk-long in 1982. From 1984 to 1986, he wrote and drew the series *Wei Si Li* for publisher Sichen, and designed CD covers for several music companies. From 1987, he was a regular contributor of short stories to several magazines. In 1987 he published *Tong Meng Shao Nian* (『同門少年』, self-published) that became a breakthrough hit and made him an icon. From 1989, he cooperated with publisher Subculture²⁹ to create works such as *Black Mask* (『黑俠: 壹個城市怪客的故事』, Script: Pang Chi-ming, 1991) and *Ci qin* (『刺秦』, 1993). In 1993, Li joined the group Comics World³⁰. At that point his works circulated in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan. In 1995 he left Comics World and mandated Seibunsha to deal with his publications in Japan. Li created series *Posh! Shounentai* (Jap. 『Posh! 少年隊』, Kodansha, 1995), aimed at Japanese market. Kodansha published the Japanese version first, and publisher COMICSWORLD published the Chinese version later. Li has actively cooperated with various Japanese publishers since then. In 1996 he published *Fly boy nine* (『飛人九』) and *30 min+* (1997) in Japanese *YOUNG MAGAZINE* (Kodansha). From 1998 to 2001, he published *The meaning of my world* (『我的世界意義』) in the computer monthly *ascii* (月刊アスキー, ASCII MEDIA WORKS). In 2001 and 2002 He published two works in the manga magazine *IKKI* (Shogakukan): “Otsukaresama deshita” (「お疲れさまでした」, November 2001, No. 6,) and “*Field of Dreams*” (「フィールド・オブ・ドリームス」, June

²⁸ “我由始至终觉得漫画是受到歧视的, 大众不觉得这是正常职业, 除非 你画《儿童的科学》那些就比较正常 [...] 有一段时间, 漫画家赚了不少钱, 社会地位好像提高了, 所以别人不会再歧视他们, 但是现在就很难说了。”Chihoi Lee and Craig Au Yeung, 2006: 92

²⁹ Subculture(次文化堂) is a Hong Kong publisher famous for publications on subculture, popular-culture, Guangdong language, and Cantonese researching. It has been the first publisher to publish political cartoons in Hong Kong.

³⁰ Comics World is a Hong Kong group founded by manhwa artist Ma Wing-Shing, he also founded Jonesky Limited (天下出版有限公司) in 1989, which a publisher of Hong Kong-produced manhwa and imported comics from Japan.

2002, No. 10). His work has been published in the magazines *Haowai* (號外) and *Young Sunday*. He also contributed to The Comics in Asia 2001 exhibition tour in Fukuoka Asian Art Museum. And his *Shi Shen* (『石神』, Jonesky Limited, 1993) was translated into French and published by French publisher Dargaud (1998). In other words, Li nowadays acts as an international figure while retaining his affiliation with the Hong Kong comics scene.

In the mid-90s, Li made another important contribution to the Hong Kong comics when he cofounded *Cockroach*, the comics quarterly which opened a new era for the independent scene in Hong Kong. He is best known for his realistic drawing style, influenced by Japanese manga artists such as Suehiro Maruo and Minetaro Mochizuki. And his style also resembles the work of the Japanese manga artist Otomo Katsuhiro. In Japan, Li is known as the “Emperor of Hong Kong Underground” and “Hong Kong’s Yoshiharu Tsuge”.

3-1. Li Chi Tak’s Work as Independent Comics

In 2011, Li produced two books: *Da hai dao tan* (『大海盜談』, Skywalker Press) which is a compilation of 130 comic strips from 2003, and *Da ai shen hua* (『大愛神話』, Skywalker Press). Both are hard-covered and are 20cm x 29cm in size, which is not a normal size of a comics book. These two books are compilations of short stories, most of them no longer than one page. The works in *Pirate Talk* are experimental, while in *Fairytales of Big Love* all the works are like essays on romantic topics.

Compared to most comics artists in Hong Kong, Li is more inclined to address social issues. As an example, I would like to use the seventh story in *Pirate Talk*, “A Star is Born” (no pagination, fig. 3-49). This is a one-page text-less comics that begins with some black-clad figures collecting small pieces of red paper from the people. When they knock on one person’s door, the person rushes to cut his finger and let the blood drop on the white paper, so the red color is actually the blood from every contributor. Then there is a panel in

which these papers are put on the ground to make a blood-stained road, and in the next panel, someone is walking this road while surrounding crowd takes photographs – thus the star is born.

In the first two panels of the adjacent, sixth story, there are no people, but a background and a speech balloon with “Ouch!”. Then a young man shows up. He sees some drops of blood on the ground, follows them and finds these are from the cut on his girlfriend’s finger. He wraps her finger with a red ribbon, and at the end of story, he takes his girlfriend to a Christmas tree decorated with numerous red ribbons just like the one on her finger (fig. 3-50). Both works are about blood, but have different endings and feeling. The first is cold and critical, but the second is warm and closer to normal life. While most of the works in this book are black and white, the pieces of paper, blood and ribbons in these two stories are printed in red color with special meaning, as a part of the book. This can be considered as Li’s experiment.

Some of Li’s works are experimental. In “Huge Office” in *Pirate Talk*, there is just one drawing of a world map with the following caption beneath:

“We have offices in Hong Kong. We also have offices in mainland. We learn Korean hardly. SARS is in Europe. Pig has virus. Cow could get mad, Mosquito flies everywhere. Mice are underground and human beings are on the ground. Hail science! On the moon we left our shoe signs – ‘MADE IN CHINA’.”³¹ (fig. 3-51)

Another work consists of two pages but contains only the drawing of sea waves. However, several of Li’s works focus on political issues, for instance, *Tian An Men Zhi Huo* (『天安門之火』, Subculture, 1989) made in the same year the Tian An Men accident happened. The

³¹ “我们的办公室在香港, 我们的办公室也在中国大陆, 我们努力学习韩语, 欧洲有禽流感, 猪有链球, 牛会发疯, 蚊到处飞, 鼠在地底人在地面, 科学万岁, 我们在月球留下清楚深刻的 MADE IN CHINA 鞋印。”

story recounts these events (fig.3-41).

In 2013, during the conference held by the International Manga Research Center in Indonesia³², I had the opportunity to ask him why he was attracted to such topics. I wanted to know whether he just saw political issues as interesting material, or tried to convey some message. I also wondered what kind of political stance he might have and whether that influenced his working process. He said there were political ideas in his works but he wanted the audience to discover those by themselves. He also noted that he had never had any problems (like censorship) with politically charged works. It is possible that the artist simply refrained from explaining too much of his work in order to avoid being labeled and keep a certain mystery about himself. As an artist, I understand that creative work involves countless conditions and elements, and, consequently, a politically colored work may be an accidental result just as likely as an intentional one. Furthermore, because it is mixed with other elements and presented in an artistic form, one cannot help including other elements and possibilities into the discussion of the politically charged contents. This is especially true for entertainment media like comics. But it is also because of this complexity that the political content presented with aesthetic considerations has more levels to consider and analyze, compared to normal, “purer” political or social commentary.

3-2. Being “Independent” and “Artistic”: from Mainstream to Experiment

To the question whether comics can be considered art, Li replied that in his opinion comics were “popular art”. When asked to comment on the problems of being “artistic” and representing Hong Kong “identity”, Li explained that Hong Kong audience was hard to approach, since readers both feared novelty and desired it, but were not particularly interested in creativity in comics:

³² 5th International Scholarly Conference, June 14-16, 2013. <http://www.5isc2013.org/>

“Personally, I prefer the idea of comics is art, but popular art. Hong Kong people want to be “artistic”, but at the same time they are afraid of being “artistic” because the fear being isolated. Hong Kong people are strange, they don’t easily accept the thing they are not familiar with, but they are also long for new things, Hong Kong people need to be hypnotized, and they don’t care about creativity; they think comics teaches bad things; [I think] it is a problem of conception.”³³

Li has developed his own opinion about comics, which is closer to art, but apparently, this opinion and the experiments he makes are different from the general idea Hong Kong audiences have about comics. And this conflict reflects in the development of his style. Li made different experiments with comics, from very commercial martial-art manhua style to experimental comics, his styles has changed a lot since his debut.

From my point of view, Li’s career can be divided into about three periods. At the beginning, his style was very close to the traditional Hong Kong mainstream manhua. Then his style changed; in particular, his page lay-outs and composition of panels became closer to the camerawork in film. *Shi Shen* (fig.3-38, 40) and *Hei Xia* are exemplary of that period. Page layout and experimentations (like the use of a movie - like camera and creating exactly same page layout on both sides of page but with different scenes) in these works were unique for Hong Kong at that time, but still the books he published then were of regular size.

Recently, however, Li has increased experimentation in his comics and started launching projects related to other media and creative activities, such as music or design. His *Finding MIE* [Ludwig Mies van der Rohe]³⁴ (2009) (fig.3-63, 63, 64) is a program related to

³³ “我個人偏向於認為漫畫是藝術，只不過是大眾藝術。香港人都怕自己好藝術，不入流，但是又好想自己很藝術，香港人很怪，對於陌生的事情不會很接受，但是又要新鮮，香港人需要催眠，香港不重視創意，甚至認為漫畫是一個教壞人的東西，這是個觀念的問題。”
<http://cartoon.southcn.com/mhpeople/mj/200309180365.htm>

³⁴ See website : <http://gbcode.rthk.org.hk/TuniS/rthk.hk/elearning/architecturetour/artist.htm>

architecture, and *Underground Music* series (self-published, 2002-2005) combines comics and music under the slogan “Listen to comics and watch music”. (fig. 3-44, 45, 46). His comics have also changed: both *Pirate Talk* and *Fairytales of Big Love* are bigger and more expensive than average comics, and for the book *ErKai* (『二開』, Hong Kong Economic Times, 2011), Li cooperated with writers to present the story through the combination of articles and one-page comics (fig. 3-57, 58, 59).

3-2-1. Li Chi-Tak’s Not So “Alternative” Alternative Comics: Contents, Form and Style

Significantly, Li Chi-Tak avoids labeling himself as, for instance, an “underground” or “independent” comics artist. He even blames people who try to identify him as such for alienating him from the audience:

“I clearly know that my comics is very different from mainstream comics, but I used to hate other people put labels like “underground”, “alternative” or “independent” on me, because these words make the audience feel a distance and turn their faces away from my works.”³⁵

Therefore Li keeps distance from both mainstream comics and so-called “underground”, “independent” or “alternative” comics. When asked about his views on the relationship between alternative comics and more mainstream comics, Li admitted that he had never seen a perfect match between the artistic and the commercial, though he did not feel much tension between the two trends either. He said:

³⁵ “我很清楚自己的漫画跟主流漫画很不同,但我曾经很抗拒别人用地下另类独立这些字眼形容我的漫画,因为这些字眼会直接令读者却步及后退。” Chihoi Lee and Craig Au Yeung, 2006:92

“I don’t think there’s conflict between the two, but you need to fulfill several criteria in order to make a commercial product that is still considered very artistic. So far I have not really seen any perfect match between the artistic and commercial.”³⁶

It’s not just the attitude. The comics *Hei Xia* is a work which “was an experimental combination of mainstream and innovative drawing styles, such as the use of movie camera-style points of view. The story itself follows a skilled martial arts man in a large city. During the day he is an ordinary person, but at night he applies a leather mask and goes out to help the city’s poor and helpless.”³⁷

When *Black Mask* is compared with the U.S. mainstream superhero comics, the similarities with Superman or Batman are obvious. In 1996, *Black Mask* was adapted into a movie starring Jet Li. Li points out that actually alternative artists benefit a lot from the development of mainstream comics: “In the 80s, there was more space for artists, because the mainstream comics developed well, and it gave people like us more opportunities, but when the mainstream comics went down, we also went down.”³⁸ In other words, the relationship between mainstream comics and alternative comics in Hong Kong is not in antagonism or isolated from each other, which is different from underground comics or alternative comics in Western countries, probably it is because of the characteristic of the Hong Kong audience, as Li points out above, who need “new” things but also “familiar ones”.

Thus the question arises, whether Li is really an underground comix artist? Is being “underground” important for him? In what sense can Li’s work be perceived as independent

³⁶ *Popcorn*, issue 10, pp.4

³⁷ Wendy Siuyi Wong, 2002:129,

³⁸ “八十年代，创作空间比较大，因为那时候主流漫画发展得好，所以就带起我们这些创作人也有发挥的机会，后来主流漫画开始式微，我们也同时滑落。” Chihoi Lee and Craig Au Yeung, 2006:94

comics?

3-2-2. Li Chi-Tak's Motivation and Hong Kong's Comics Culture: Social Critique in A Commercial Way

“Don't laugh at me, I do comics because I want to start a revolution: I don't want mainstream comics to always stay mainstream. From the very beginning when I joined the comics scene, sometimes I have felt that I'm still in this revolution.”³⁹

Hong Kong mainstream comics, that is, martial arts manhua began to appear in 1968 under the influence of American superhero comics. By the end of 1970s, Wong Yuk-long and Seung-gun were the two main artists producing martial arts manhua. Their success helped to establish Hong Kong's comics business as a industry.⁴⁰ But there was a downside. As Kusaka Midori notes, Hong Kong martial arts manhua which now form the majority of mainstream works in Hong Kong are “too commercial” and clichéd. Their narrative patterns are very limited in scope and number and repeat those of American superhero comics; there is no stylistic variety on the level of drawings, and storylines amount to loosely connected fighting scenes.⁴¹ Commercial comics artists created comics in shared labor: “Because the paper is big, there are people who cut and separate every panel, and people who add background,-who draw buildings, or cars, etc. And since Hong Kong comics are full-colored, there are also specialists who do the coloring.”⁴² As a result, comics are created by a

³⁹ “不要笑我，我画漫画的动机其实是想搞革命 不想主流漫画永远都是主流。由入行到现在，有时候觉得自己仍然处于革命的状态。” Chihoi Lee and Craig Au Yeung, 2006:92

⁴⁰ Wendy Siuyi Wong, 2002:100-101

⁴¹ 「幾つかの代表的な作品を読んで感じた香港漫画の特徴は「アメリカ・コミック」の様式を用いて武侠小说を描いたもの、と言えるであろうか。特に黄玉郎グループの作家作品は大半が（描き手が次々と変るものの）絵がよく似ており、ストーリーらしいストーリーは無く、ほとんどが「打打殺殺（戦いにつぐ戦い）」の同工異曲。何冊か読むとうんざりしてしまったことを白状しておこう」 Kusaka Midori, 2000: 247-248

⁴² 「向こうは原稿がけっこう大きいので、ゴマごとばらばらに切って、それぞれ分けて、

“human assembly line”. “In the period when Wong Yuk-long controlled the market, everyone in the company had a copy of “Chinese hero” or something like this, [...] everyone copied it exactly like a bible. I found this weird. During one month work in the agency, I got nothing to do, so I decided to ignore them and do it myself, to see if I can make it without their support.”⁴³

Such was the company where Li Chi-Tak began his career. While he was to some extent influenced by Hong Kong mainstream manhua, he ultimately decided to leave and to create his works in a more personal, individualized way precisely because he “did not like the industrialized working system”.⁴⁴ And he points out that the mainstream was important for him at first. It was after working in such industry that he decided to explore his personal way of narration: “I had read Wong Yuk-Long’s manhua works since I was a child. I wouldn’t be who I am now without those works. It’s after I had joined the manhua scene that I decided not to follow that kind of style, abandoned some specific elements they used on purpose, and changed to works which not so many people do.”⁴⁵

Additionally, it is important to remember that, as distinct from Japan, Europe, or even the U.S, Hong Kong has limited opportunities for experimentation, due to particularities of the comics market which is heavy influenced by American commercial super hero comics. So,

背景を描く人、背景といっても、ビルを描く人か、自動車を描く人か、いろいろなタイプがいる。香港製のマンガはほとんどすべてカラーですから、カラーリングというんですが、彩色専門家もいるんです」 Midori Kusaka, 2000: 253

⁴³ “那时黄玉郎统一年代，公司里人人一本 “《中华英雄》图鉴”之类的影印本 [...] 作为圣经一样人人照着画。我就觉得这样很奇怪。入了玉郎机构做了一个月，无所事事，所以索性不理他们，试试自己做，看看没有们做后盾，自己能否做得到。” Chihoi Lee and Craig Au Yeung, 2006: 90

⁴⁴ “小的時候很喜歡看黃玉郎，緊張刺激，模倣和抄襲比較多；中期看馬榮成比較多，像《中華英雄》，一種完全不同傳統的畫風。高中兩年沒有看漫畫，中學畢業以後，學習不好，沒有上大學，工餘性質畫漫畫，開始將自己的作品寄給廣大出版社，曾經在黃玉郎機構做一個月的助理，逃出來了，我不喜歡那種工業化分工制度，一個人專門負責畫頭髮，另外一個人專門負責畫鼻子嘴巴什的。” <http://cartoon.southcn.com/mhpeople/mj/200309180365.htm>

⁴⁵ “我自小就看黃玉郎的漫画，有它们才有我。我是入了行之后，才决定不画那种风格的漫画，刻意弃用了他们一些特定元素，选择做一些少人做的创作。” Chihoi Lee and Craig Au Yeung, 2006:90

while Li's works are closer to mainstream comics than alternative productions in other countries, inside the Hong Kong comics culture he can be considered an independent comics artist. Further, for Li, expressing himself in comics is more important than working in the comics industry, as is evident from his decision to stay away from commercial production. Apparently, commercial success for him is less appealing than the opportunity to do create "non-boring" works.⁴⁶ This is one of the reasons he should be considered an alternative comics artist.

3-3 Still An Artist?: Li Chi-Tak's Alternative Comics as Seen from Outside of Hong Kong

All around the world, underground comix and alternative comics have similar characteristics, such as focus on social issues, personalized narrative and non-mainstream style, but this doesn't mean that works from another cultural background are easily accepted.

Li Chi-Tak has published works in foreign magazines or with foreign publishers, but found that it was just as difficult as finding alternative channels in Hong Kong.

In 2001, the Japanese publishing house Shogakukan invited Li to make two works⁴⁷: "Otsukare sama deshita" (「お疲れ様でした」/Thank You Very Much for Your Hard Work) and "Fuirudo obu dorimusu" (「フィールド・オブ・ドリームス」/Field of Dreams) which appeared in *IKKI* magazine, under the heading "The King of Hong Kong Underground Comix". The scripts were provided by Japanese script writer Yoshiaki Iwami, and adjusted to suit Li's style but Shogakukan asked Li to send story boards to Japan for pre-examining. In other words, in this project Li only did the art work, and, in effect, played the role of an

⁴⁶ “商業上沒法和他們比，我都想做成他們那樣，更加商業一點，更加開心一點，但是不行，回不了頭，還是不甘心，會繼續試下去。有人跟我說其實可以金庸化一點，好多人說過這樣更加有市場，但是我不願意做，其實可能會成功，但是我真的覺得金庸的東西很悶。”

<http://cartoon.southcn.com/mhpeople/mj/200309180365.htm>

⁴⁷ 香港アンダーグラウンド・コミックの帝王

industrial manga artist.

“Otsukare sama deshita” is set in a Japanese company; it opens with an image of people in a big juicer-mixer in a factory. When suddenly the juicer starts to work, the human beings in it are made to “juice”. A young man, the son of chairman, is shocked by what he see, but the chairman explains to him this is for making a sword, and one thousand human beings are necessary. When the sword has been made, the chairman asks all the workers to get together, and announces that due to the economy recession, he has to fire them, but because he does not want them to be seen as “losers” which is usually the destiny of those being fired, he wants them to die now. The workers accept his decision. So the director jumps into the crowd and starts to cut the employees’ heads, crying “Otsukare sama deshita!” (Thank you very much for your hard work!). The secretary explains to the young man that without the company, these workers are nothing, and nothing is going to change anyway in Japan. At the end of story, the director cuts his own head due to a request from his bank. And the new director is the young man, who accepts the reality, take over the sword and cuts the secretary’s head, crying “Otsukare sama deshita!”

Like many other of Li’s works, this one touches upon social issues, in this case satirizing Japanese company culture. All the characters in this story are Japanese. The sword – an important plot element – is a traditional Japanese sword. The scene on the sixth page with lots of people stuffed inside a big machine (fig.3-47) is reminiscent of Japanese contemporary artist Makoto Aida’s painting *Juicer-Mixer*⁴⁸ (290×210.5cm, acrylic paint, 2001) created the same year (fig.3-48). It has no connection with Hong Kong culture or any elements outside Japan. Since Li’s style is similar to that of some Japanese alternative manga, it might have been regarded as domestic by Japanese readers.

Not only the style and contents of this work lack elements generally associated with alternative comics, but the creative process itself is closer to the mainstream production.

⁴⁸ ジューサーミキサー

Alternative comics are usually created single-handedly, from script to storyboard and actual drawing. This is important when one attempts to define the value of a certain work as “art” and decide whether categorized as alternative comics altogether. When an alternative artist like Li works not as an artist but as a craftsman, there is no difference between the resulting work and mainstream comics. One might even say that in Li’s case, the work cannot be considered his personal creation. It may look like the other alternative comics Li produced, but the meaning and essence have totally changed.

Li never cooperated with Shogakukan again. He used to praise the freedom and personal touch in Japanese manga, so hard to find in Hong Kong comics, but apparently as a reader he did not have enough knowledge about the Japanese manga culture and industry.⁴⁹ In a later essay, Li points out that Japanese magazines actually do not give artists much freedom for experimentation, but privilege their market position; and Europe turned out to be the same.⁵⁰ In particular, Li describes how he proposed to a European publisher some shorter and more avant-garde projects which in his opinion did not fit the Hong Kong audience’s taste, but instead of considering his proposal, the publisher asked him to merely illustrate script provided by them. According to Li, the script was so detailed it even included a basic storyboard.⁵¹

It is possible to conclude from Li’s experience that the meaning and function of “alternative” or “underground” can only be achieved against the backdrop of the mainstream comics industry in the same culture. But the truth is, it is not always like this. For example, most works published in the alternative magazine *Raw* during its early phase, were from foreign artists outside the U.S., while its readership consisted mainly of Americans. It seems more reasonable to admit that intercultural cooperation cannot always proceed unconditionally, and alternative comics publishers have to take the local audience’s taste into

⁴⁹ “日本漫畫裏的那種自由自在，作品有活力和衝擊力並且追求個性，這是香港做不到的地方。” <http://cartoon.southcn.com/mhpeople/mj/200309180365.htm>

⁵⁰ Chihoi Lee and Craig Au Yeung, 2006: 96

⁵¹ Chihoi Lee and Craig Au Yeung, 2006: 96

account. Thus a “mainstream market” for alternative comics emerges; it is always important for a publisher to find the “right” audience and cater to their taste of “alternative”. In other words, publishers’ conservativeness and innovativeness may increase and vice versa depend on imported work. Publishers distinguish between different levels of being “alternative” and “artistic” in alternative comics, and assume that there are works less “artistic” than the others.

“Alternative” usually means that the whole creative process is done by one artist, from the script to storyboard and drawing. This is important when considering an alternative comics art value, even if it’s an alternative work. In Li’s case, the work which had been changed against his own will cannot be considered as his personal creation. But as the cases above suggest, there are different policies of comics publishing in foreign countries. For Shogakukan and other publishers, Li’s “alternative” was just a label. Eventually, they wanted his work function only as media of entertainment.

If one follows Junzo Ishiko’s theory that lifestyle defines forms of expression and, ultimately, culture, then the expression and contents of Li Chi-Tak’s works too must be related to Hong Kong’s local culture. At the same time, though Li’s works and creative process itself are not as “independent” as in other countries (e.g. in the U.S. or Japan), they still exhibit a certain degree of “independence” against the backdrop of Hong Kong culture as a whole, and mainstream martial arts manhua in particular. The question is why Li would not follow Hong Kong mainstream comics, despite its influence on him. The only explanation is that Li is driven by his own demands to them. For him comics are not limited to entertainment media produced with an eye to commercial success. Instead, Li strives to explore the expressive possibilities of comics and use new methods to relate his own thoughts. Reflected in his comics are not the dominant values of Hong Kong’s Society, but rather doubts about these values.

Ultimately I aim to discern the above authors' creative positions, and the way their works function within their respective societies. As countries in Asia, Japan and Hong Kong have different cultural backgrounds, and the comics situation in each country is different. In finding their audience and locating themselves, the alternative artists show different characteristics. But in essence they are doing the same thing, which is presenting their thinking through the medium of comics.

Hanawa's work has been categorized as "abnormal" or "bizarre" within the Japanese comic scene. But from my point of view, there are deep considerations and observations of Japanese society and its problems. The "bizarre" contents in Hanawa's work can be considered as his way of presenting and questioning "good" value and the "right" way of living by putting them in an environment (like medieval Japan) which the readers are not familiar with, provoking them to discover the "abnormality" by themselves. His expressive style and his postmodern approach to Japanese medieval history and scrolls make him an avant-garde artist.

As different from Hanawa, Li Chi-Tak's comics look more "commercial" at first glance, compared with commercial comics in other countries, like US superhero comics. But in Hong Kong, there is no developed alternative comics culture like in the US or Japan, so he has to find a balance between the commercial comics world and his own stance to comics as art.

Chapter 4 - Alternative Comics in a Country without a Mainstream: From Independent Comics to Art

In China today, that is, in the early 21st century, a threefold comics mainstream can be observed, consisting of comics in the style of Japanese manga (*xin manhua*), American comics, and French bande dessinée (BD). However, in addition to these, there is one more option: *duli manhua*. Making its first appearance in the age of globalization, this “independent manhua” bears some resemblance to alternative comics which have been attracting the attention of especially Western critics and researchers in recent years, with their autobiographical and experimental features. Yet, it can also be compared to American underground comix, in the way it deals with topics still considered “taboo” in China, although it lacks a clear target for resistance and independence efforts.

This chapter pursues how—in the absence of a comics mainstream “made in the People’s Republic of China”—independent manhua relates to alternative comics and underground comix as its precursor. Questions will be addressed such as: What are the characteristics and functions of this *duli manhua*, and in what sense is it “artistic”? Where could its critical function and social criticism reside? In the People’s Republic of China, where critical one-panel manhua doesn’t function anymore, how does the critical function of *duli manhua* work in society?

Relatedly, in the final part of this chapter, I will try to define and locate my own works in the context of the Chinese and world comics/arts scene.

1. What is *Special Comix* [SC] and Independent (Duli) Manhua?

1-1. Cartoons and Comics in the People’s Republic of China

In order to assert the position of duli manhua, first of all it seems necessary to survey the history of comics and cartoons in China, and to sketch the contemporary situation of comics culture there.

1-1-1. Graphic Narratives: Xin Manhua and Lianhuanhua

As mentioned above, there are three styles of mainstream comics in China, which are Japanese manga style, French BD style and American comics style. To give some examples, one of the representative artists employing Japanese manga style is Xia Da (b.1981). While keeping residence in China, she published the series *Daremoshiranai Zi Bu Yu*¹, (「誰も知らない～子不語～」) in the Japanese manga magazine *ULTRA JUMP* (Shueisha), between March 2009 and August 2010 (fig. 4-1, 2). This manga features the 9-year old girl Xiao Yu, who starts to experience strange things after her parents' move to a small town. Another Chinese artist working in shojo manga style is Ding Bing. Her “Gakuen GOD!” (『学園GOD!』, 2009-2010) became the first manga to be serialized simultaneously in the Japanese magazine *Monthly ASUKA* (Kadokawa) and the Chinese magazine *LOVELY*. Set in a school for aristocrats, this series depicts the pupils' romantic relationships (fig. 4-3, 4).

Recently there are also Chinese artists who work in the style of BD. Representatives of this trend are Jian Yi (b.1979) (fig. 4-5,6), Huang Jia Wei (b.1983) (fig. 4-7, 8) and Wang Peng (b.1980) (fig. 4-9, 10), whose works are published for the European market by French publishers such as Dargaud and Delcourt. As distinct from those artists who employ manga style, they usually do only the art work and coloring, while leaving the script to French writers. Jean David Morvan, for example, was involved in writing the scenarios for Jian Yi's *Le Dieu Singe* (3 volumes, Delcourt, since 2008) (fig. 4-5, 6), Wang Peng's *Au Bord de l'Eau*

¹ The subtitle refers to the collection of supernatural stories *Zi Bu Yu* (18th cent.) by Yuan Mei.

(2 volumes, Delcourt, 2008-2010) (fig.4-9, 10), and Huang Jia Wei's *Zaya* (3 volumes, Dargaud, 2012-2013) (fig.4-7, 8), which also received one of the International Manga Awards from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2009.

In addition to Japanese manga and BD, the American comics industry has come to appreciate Chinese artists as well. One of these artists is Guo Jingxiong (b.1975), better known under his pen name Da Xiong. Since 2009 a US resident, he started out in the People's Republic with comics adaptations of classic Chinese literature, such as *Xi Hua Liao Zhai* (Beifang Funü Ertong Press, 2000) and *Shui Hu* (Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 2002), but in recent years he got renown with artwork he did for DC: the short story "Superman and Doctor Light in Samurai"² (fig. 4-11), set in 16th century Japan, and two episodes for the *Star Wars* series (fig. 4-12).³ It is noteworthy that he creates different works for publication in French at the same time.⁴

In 1998, artist Liu Wei, who is affiliated with the major Chinese publisher Jin Hong Gong Si, noted the following about the role of foreign comics cultures for Chinese artists and readers:

"Chinese comics are not at all as developed and complete as those in Japan, America or Europe. And that's because they took their first step quite late. In the 1980s, Japanese manga finally came to China, and shortly after, American comics loomed in front of Chinese readers as well. Young people were absolutely fascinated by these novelties which were unlike anything else they had seen before. How manifold the turns, what unpredictable the suspense! And precisely because they were fascinated many people thought to give it a try by themselves. And it wasn't that bad, was it? Technically, Chinese people are second to none,

² DC's *Justice League of America 80-Page Giant*, vol.2, #1, 2009 (script: Amanda McMurray).

³ "Star Wars Adventures: Luke Skywalker and the Treasure of the Dragon Snakes" (2010), "Star Wars Adventures: Boba Fett and the Ship of Fear" (2011).

⁴ For further information see his website: <http://flagstudios.com>

after all. But actually, we haven't accumulated sufficient experience yet.”⁵

As evident from the above examples, for artists and readers in contemporary China, the comics mainstream is mainly imported from foreign cultures. But this does not mean that China lacks a local comics culture.

At the beginning of the 20th century, palm-size pictorial booklets called *lianhuanhua* flourished in China. Their narrative sequences were composed of one large image per page accompanied by captions. Before Japanese manga entered the country, *lianhuanhua* enjoyed a tremendous popularity as “comics” for children.⁶ But due to the Cultural Revolution which repudiated all pre-1966 values, the traditional *lianhuanhua* industry and artists almost completely vanished. In the 1980s, however, *lianhuanhua* not only revived but peaked. During this period, most of the stories were created for educational and propagandistic purposes. For example, *Di qiu de hong piao dai* (Red Ribbon of the Earth, China Lianhuanhua Publishing House, 1989) (fig.4-63, 64) is a typical educational *lianhuanhua* which tells a story about the Red Army from the time of the Second World War. Nevertheless, the reform and liberation policy leveraged the newly blossoming *lianhuanhua*, only to result in the final decline of its just recovered market. The decline was triggered also by the sudden influx of Japanese manga. Following this turn of events, artists who had familiarized themselves with the style of Japanese manga via pirated editions began to arrive on the

⁵ 「中国漫画は、決して日本、アメリカ、ヨーロッパのように発達した完全なものではない。なぜならその第一歩が、たいそう遅かったからである。八十年代になってようやく日本漫画が中国に伝わり、アメリカ式のカートゥーンもその後になってようやく中国読者の前に現れたのであった。これらの、いまだかつて見たことのない新奇なしろものに、中国の青少年たちはまるで魅入られたようになってしまった。まったく、これは何という、変化に富んだ、予想もつかぬ面白さであったことだろう！まさしく魅入られてしまったために、多くの人がこの方面で自分も腕を試してみたいと思ったのであった。そう、悪いことではないだろう。中国人は技術というこの分野では、けっして他人にひけはとらないのだから。ただ、実際のところ、われわれの経験の積み重ねは充分ではなかった。」 Wei Liu, op. cit. Midori Kusaka, 2002:43-44.

⁶ Midori Kusaka 2003b:12. As an example for the efforts to position *lianhuanhua* within comics discourse, see Seifert 2008.

scene.⁷ At first, these artists published their work in Chinese magazines such as *Comics King* or *Beijing Cartoon*, but lately they do not confine themselves to the domestic market anymore and work also abroad.

1-1-2. Manhua as Cartoon

In today's China, almost all cartoons are about foreign political problems; internal social problems can be addressed only to a certain extent. The most influential publication nowadays is *Cartoon Weekly*⁸, which focuses on one-panel humor and satire. Due to the strong influence of graphic narratives, especially Japanese style *xin manhua*, the one-panel cartoon is not as popular anymore as in the 1980s and 1990s. Even the monthly humor magazine *Wit & Humor*⁹ includes Japanese style gag manga.

Prior to the use of manhua as a popular term to cover the whole range of newspaper and magazine illustrations, caricatures and cartoons, Chinese artists employed a variety of other words to describe their works, like in the later Qing and early Republic period: *fengcihua* (satirical drawings), *yuyihua* (moral drawings), *fengyuhua* (allegorical drawings), *shihua* (drawings on current affairs), *xiehua* (humorous drawings), *xiaohua* (comical drawings) and *huajihua* (slapstick drawings). It was during this period that newspapers printed with lithography technology appeared, and newspaper companies started to produce *huabao*, one panel pictorial for entertainment. From 1877 to 1919 at least 118 kinds of pictorials were published, with *Dianshizhai huabao (1884-1898)*, a supplement of the newspaper *Shun Pao*, gaining immense popularity. The term “manhua” surfaced in the 1920s.

⁷ Matthew M. Chew and Lu Chen, 2010:172.

⁸ *Cartoon Weekly* (founded In January 20, 1979) is the only newspaper focusing on one panel cartoons in the People's Republic. Works of famous Chinese cartoonists such as Hua Junwu, Ding Cong, and Fang Cheng have been published in this newspaper.

⁹ *Wit & Humor* (founded in 1985) is a monthly which focuses on humor cartoon and comic stories.

“It is now generally recognized by Chinese writers that the term *manhua* in the meaning of “cartoon” or “impromptu sketch” was first adopted by Zheng Zheduo who, as editor of *Wenxue zhoubao* [The Literary Weekly], published Feng Zikai’s paintings under the title “Zikai manhua” starting in May 1925. Indeed, for some time after this Feng Zikai’s name was virtually synonymous with the word *manhua*. Feng himself attributes the introduction of the word to Zheng, although he claims that the originator of this style of contemporary casual painting (or what he calls *suiyihua*), although not of the name, was, in fact, the artist Chen Shizeng.”¹⁰

In 1934, Lu Shao Fei¹¹ published the magazine *Shidai manhua* in Shanghai, to which Japanese cartoonist Ippei Okamoto also contributed. In 1936, another magazine, *Shanghai manhua*, was launched. Artists Hua Jun Wu, Zhang Le Ping and Zhang Wen Yuan were active artists during this period.

There were two tendencies in the cartoon scene after the end of the Second World War and the founding of the People’s Republic of China: towards propaganda by the new government, and towards its critique. In this period, the Chinese Art Association published a magazine entitled *Manhua*. Later, because of the Cultural Revolution, the development of cartoons stopped until the 1980s. And since the turning point in the 1980s, pirated Japanese manga have affected the cartoon production to a great extent. Nowadays, there is no real critical political cartoon in the People’s Republic of China anymore.

1-1-3 The Relationship between Lianhuanhua, Xin Manhua and Art

¹⁰ Germie Barne, 1989: 17-18.

¹¹ Lu Shao Fei (Sept. 1903 - Feb. 1995) Chinese cartoonist. He was the editor of *Shidai manhua*, *Jiuwang manhua* and *Guo Jia Zong Dong Yuan Hua Bao*, and also helped to establish the Chinese Cartoonists Society.

One notable characteristic of *lianhuanhua* is its vicinity to fine arts, especially painting. Many artists who created *lianhuanhua* in the 1980s and 1990s work in the fine arts scene today. For example, He Duo Ling, who created the *lianhuanhua* *Xue Yan* (Snow Goose) in *Lian Huan Hua Bao* (*Picture Stories*, China Art Publishing Centre) (fig.4-65), now continues his career as a contemporary artist, also teaching art at university.¹² Another artist, Lu Yan Guang, who used to produce *lianhuanhua* with pen and ink (fig.4-66), now works in the style of traditional Chinese painting. Also, in many cases, *lianhuanhua* is considered as important as fine art. For instance, at China's 9th National Exhibition of Fine Art (1999), under the "picturebook" category, Ye Xiong's (b.1950) *Wei Ren De Xuan Ze* (*A Great Man's Choice*)¹³, and another *lianhuanhua* *San Guo Yan Yi Da Mi Gong* (*The Great Labyrinth of the Three Kingdoms*)¹⁴, by Guo Chuan (b.1972), Yin Meng (b.1973), Liu Xuelun (b.1954), and Liu Kui (b.1957) have been exhibited along with oil paintings, traditional Chinese paintings, lithographs, and woodcut prints. Most of these *lianhuanhua* are educational works or propaganda, appearing at exhibitions also as original paintings without text. To summarize, in China, *lianhuanhua* is acknowledged both as a form of entertainment and a national art connected to fine arts, especially in terms of style and contents.

Xin manhua (Japanese style commercial manga), on the other hand, is considered a "lower" genre than *lianhuanhua*, because it is an "imported" form of entertainment. This inferior position of *xin manhua* brings to mind the position of *lianhuanhua* before the foundation of the People's Republic. At that time, *lianhuanhua* was looked down upon by the fine art world as a lower genre for children or for poorly educated people.

However, in China, the concept of art didn't actually exist before the 20th century. The word for art—*meishu*¹⁵—was first introduced from Japan in the 1920s, and came to be used

¹² Two oil paintings by He Duo Ling appear in *Reckoning with the Past: Contemporary Chinese Painting* (The Fruitmarket Gallery/The Pale Green Press, 1996, pp.56-57). His *lianhuanhua*, *Xue yan*, is also made in the style of oil painting.

¹³ Toshiko Rawanchaikul, 2000:30-31

¹⁴ Toshiko Rawanchaikul, 2000:32-33

¹⁵ The term "meishu" (美術) was adopted from Japanese term "bijutsu" (美術).

widely later. This is similar with the development of the term “bijutsu” in Japan.¹⁶ The Chinese terms “manhua” and “meishu” were adopted directly from Japanese, using the characters for “bijutsu”. In addition, the long-lasting influence of Soviet Socialist Realism on the perception of art in China complicated the situation even further. Under such circumstances, it’s very hard to give a clear definition of the term “art”.

A similar kind of difficulty arises with the term “comics” in Chinese. When the term “manhua” was first imported, it referred to one-panel and four-panel cartoons only. Today, however, its scope is much wider, covering also graphic narratives created in the style of BD, Japanese manga, and American comics.

Although they are similar to each other to an extent, depending on the points introduced above, it can be argued that xin manhua should not be considered an offspring of lianhuanhua, even if both xin manhua and lianhuanhua are sequential narrative art and share formal similarities (like text balloons, and combination of image and text). Moreover, xin manhua should not be categorized as art (meishu) either. Instead, because of its particular system and the characteristics it gained in time, xin manhua should be taken as an independent genre of expression.

1-2 Duli Manhua in People’s Republic of China

If we add lianhuanhua as a fourth kind to the three kinds of mainstream comics mentioned repeatedly so far, independent (duli) manhua may count as the fifth kind of comics in the People’s Republic. It is a new breed that has emerged since the 1990s under the influence of Western alternative comics as well as the duli manhua of Hong Kong. Most of its readers and artists were born in the 1980s, as in the case of the other kinds of comics employing foreign

¹⁶ Jaqueline Berndt summarizes the development of the term “bijutsu” in Japan and the difference between “bijutsu” and “art” in its original meaning. Jaqueline Berndt, 2011b:21.

styles.

Placing short stories at its center, *duli manhua* resembles Western alternative comics also insofar as it signifies a kind of creation which relies on one and the same artist for both script and art work, and which stays by and large unrelated to the production system of editors and publishing houses (including deadlines and schedules) and the respective commercialism.¹⁷ Sale via art bookshops as well as the internet are the main channels of distribution. In this respect, the differences from foreign, especially Western alternative comics are minimal.

The publications most representative of *duli manhua* in the People's Republic are *Special Comix (SC)* and *The Choice of Cult Youth*. It is not exaggeration to say that both the term and the phenomenon of *duli manhua* have been shaped by *SC*, China's first independent anthology. At present, there are mainly three collectives active in metropolitan areas.

First, there is the probably earliest collective Green Bus, as they call themselves in English, although in Chinese they use the characters for "green school". Green Bus was established in 2002 by four young Chinese artists who were studying art at university or working for design companies. These young artists have been publishing their work on the Internet and holding exhibitions and other public events in Beijing, but so far they've refrained from printed editions.

By comparison, the second collective formed around *SC* is attracting much more attention. Three of the anthology's editors, namely Tang Yan (also known as DN), Hu Xiao Jiang (also known as Story Of) and Zhang Xun, are based in Nanjing, while their colleague Yan Cong runs the Beijing office. All are art-school graduates. Searching mostly online for works by Chinese artists who live both inland and abroad, they have published five printed anthologies so far. Released in March 2004, *SC1* introduced 15 short stories on 145 pages, including the works of artists who live abroad. *SC2* released in July 2007, featured 52 artists in a 366-page book. *SC3*, released in August 2009, featured 49 artists in a massive 635-page book. *SC4* was

¹⁷ Chihoi & Craig AuYeung, 2006:4.

released in 2010 and featured 42 artists on 421 pages. Finally, *SC5* was released in 2012 and featured 45 artists on 600 pages, including 6 artists from foreign countries. Most of the works touch upon contemporary social issues, such as the Sichuan earthquake (2008) or the impoverishment of former Olympic athletes.¹⁸ And whereas the first two volumes had a print-run of 500 each, *SC3* and *SC4* had a circulation of 1,500 copies.¹⁹

The third collective, publishing an anthology as well, is Cult Youth. However, it may also be regarded as a part of Green Bus, to which the two members who launched the anthology, Chairman Ca (Ca Zhu Xi) and Bini, belong. The word “cult” in the title points to the collective’s sources of inspiration, that is, “cult culture” as manifested in Suehiro Maruo’s comics and cult movies like *Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975). Volume 1 of *The Choice of Cult Youth* was published in 2007, featuring the works of 16 artists. Volume 2 (fig. 4-43) was published in 2008, featuring the works of 25 artists, and Volume 3 (fig. 4-44) was published in 2011, featuring the works of 13 artists.

In the People’s Republic, duli manhua has one characteristic in common with mainstream comics: All of them were originally imported. For this reason, they raise questions which would not apply to comics in America, Europe or Japan. We have to ask ourselves, for example, whether duli manhua should be solely discussed in the context of globalization, or whether in contemporary China this manhua is able to play a particular local role not available to American comics or Japanese manga. Further noteworthy is this manhua’s potential to raise critical awareness of social issues by stimulating communication within their own society. As a first step towards pursuing these questions, I shall discuss what independent manhua strives to gain “independence” from.

1-2-1. The Internationality of Duli Manhua

¹⁸ Matthew M. Chew and Lu Chen, 2010:187.

¹⁹ See the website: <http://www.specialcomix.com/specialcomix/>

In his introduction for *SC4*, Christian Gasser, co-editor of the Swiss magazine *Strapazin*, describes alternative comics in the era of globalization as follows:

“In the past 20 years, the world of independent or alternative comics has continuously expanded. Whereas before 1990 you had interesting and innovative comics scenes mainly in the USA, France and Japan, you can now find alternative comics in probably most countries in the world – all over Europe, but also in South Africa, Israel, South Korea, Argentina, Russia or China, these scenes are rather small, but thanks to a tight network, they grew together into an international community, and thanks to the quality and relevance of their work and the boom of the graphic novel they have become a respected part of contemporary culture. There is something very communicative about comics, which makes it easy to understand each other in spite of all the cultural differences.”²⁰

In today’s globalizing world, Chinese duli manhua share a lot with alternative comics from other countries. For example, visually they appear remarkably trans-cultural. This fact leads us to look at alternative comics as a domain of true international exchange within the field of comics, or a universal mode of expression. In other words, whereas American comics give a “typical American” impression, and Japanese manga evoke a certain “Japaneseness”, alternative comics cannot be easily traced back to a particular national culture, and neither can duli manhua. Unsurprisingly, *SC3* received an award at the International Comics Festival of Angoulême in 2011²¹, after a previous nomination of *SC2* in 2007.

If we compare *SC2* with another anthology which was published almost concurrently in

²⁰ Christian Gasser, 2010:2.

²¹ See the website:

<http://www.bdagoulêmepro.com/professional-page,2014-alternative-comics-award,16.html>

Germany, *Es war einmal* (Once upon a time, 2009), many similarities show up, including the horizontal typesetting, the consequent monochrome rendering and the similar panel layout. For example, Milva Stutz's "Samstagabend Samedi Soir" (fig. 4-39) and "Hair Phobia" created by the female Chinese artist known as Menz²² (fig. 4-40) are difficult to distinguish from each other stylistically, and so are Andreas Bertischi's "2074" (fig. 4-41) and "Hui Longguan Cun" (Back To Longguan Town) by Jiu HaoMing (fig. 4-42).

Many SC artists put emphasis on experimental and individual expression, as in the case of alternative comics in contemporary Europe and America. For example, SC3 features the short story "Yi li fang yang" ((O³)³) by Twoqee (aka Shuang Kin Guo), a rather abstract work which depicts the trip of one cubic meter of oxygen from a tree to the atmosphere. This work consists of simple pencil drawings in abstract style, and there is no "traditional" comics story; the whole story develops with the journey of the cube (the symbol of oxygen) and the changing shapes of objects. Meanwhile, Duo Xi's "Da Luan Ji" (Story of a Huge Penis) which retells a folk tale from Sichuan about a couple with huge genitals is made in traditional Chinese scissor-cut style, which today cannot be found in commercial comics but only in the fine-art world (fig. 4-24). These two works are noteworthy in that they employ techniques which are not used in commercial comics.

Hong Kong artist Craig Au Yeung, who works also as a magazine editor, said the following about the self-determination of duli manhua artists in SC2:

"Vital is the artist's self-determination within the work, the possibility to organize picture planes, breakdowns and words in a way which allows for reflecting on how to relate to oneself and to others, to society, to the universe. The reason why Independent Manhua can be independent is the very fact that one artist plays several roles concurrently, serving as director and ticket-issuer and cleaning personnel. Precisely because of this multitasking the

²² Zhang Wen (b. 1983).

artist gains a deep and more comprehensive understanding of things. In this sense, the creation of Independent Manhua is a training ground for personal growth.”²³

To rephrase, duli manhua and alternative comics artists show a strong inclination towards interpreting their life, environment and society from their own angle. It doesn't make much of a difference whether to call these works “underground” or “alternative” or “independent”; they share the same characteristics. Unlike mainstream comics, their artists do not care much about commercial success or recognition. What they do care about is interpreting the world and expressing their perspectives creatively and freely. It goes without saying that this tendency is not peculiar to China but rather common within the worldwide alternative comics scene in the era of globalization.

1-2-2. The “Independence” of Duli Manhua

Is the “independence” of duli manhua the same as the independence of alternative comics in Europe and America? It was pointed out in *Yi Shu Yu She Ji* (Art and Design) magazine that “underground”, “alternative”, and “independent” are all relative terms which would not exist without “above ground”, “mainstream” or “dependent”.²⁴ However, in China, a domestic mainstream does not exist. Long-format and almost cinematic graphic narratives which form the mainstream in America, Japan or Hong Kong, are rarely produced in the People's Republic. Once we focus on questions like “alternative to what?” or “independent from what?”, historical and cultural differences make themselves felt. And these differences

²³ “人自主性，画面剪接字里行间都在调度轻重，把自己与自己，自己与他人与社会与太空的关系理清。有别于一般商业漫画操作，独立之所以独立，作者一人分饰编导演售票和清洁多个身份角色，也因为角色的重叠互调，就有机会对人对事物的看法更深刻更多角度，独立漫画创作竟也就像一种生涯规划成长训练。”Au Yeung, Craig, 2007:2.

²⁴ *Yi Shu Yu She Ji* (Art and Design), Art & Design Publishing United, vol.10, 2007.

apply, first of all, to the relationship with mainstream comics.

In the 1960s, underground comix developed in America along with the then-counterculture. Closely related to hippie culture, they picked up on sexuality and drugs, war and other social issues.²⁵ Robert Crumb, Robert Williams and S. Clay Wilson were some of the most representative artists. As Japanese scholar Tadahiro Saika explains, the birth of “alternative comics” came right after. Following the American underground comix movement, a new category, referring to works with strong autobiographical traits, has established itself in the West since the 1980s, that is, alternative comics.²⁶ The term “alternative” means “another option” beside the mainstream. In America, for example, an alternative to Disney or superhero comics was sought for, while in France, the tradition of *Tintin* as well as the publication format of the so-called album were targeted. In Japan, *Garo* served as “another option” in relation to commercial manga magazines, while in Hong Kong “duli manhua” developed as a term opposed to traditional martial-arts manhua²⁷. But in the comics culture of the People’s Republic, no such opposition can be found. For example, Yao Fei La (b.1974), who is well known for his manga-style story *Meng Li Ren* (The Dreamer) (fig. 4-71,72),²⁸ published a short work in *SC3* not at all like manga, but in the style of Chinese ink-brush painting: “Ming Chao Na Xie Ji” (The Mobile Chickens of the Ming Dynasty) (fig. 4-73,74). Another example is the artist Ruan Jun Ting (also known as Rain, b. 1980), who usually works for mainstream magazines, but also contributed one work to *SC4*, “Hui Shou” (Recycling) (fig. 4-31), which looks exactly like her commercial manhua works. Consequently, these independent manhua are not alternative works which break away from mainstream comics, and as such they are dissimilar to alternative comics in America, Japan or Hong Kong. As “enclaves” of foreign culture, they are rather similar to comics in manga

²⁵ Hong Pei Qi, 2007:787.

²⁶ Tadahiro Saika, 2010:96.

²⁷ These *wuxia manhua* had formed the mainstream in Hong Kong since the late 1970s. See Wendy Siuyi Wong, 2002.

²⁸ Serialized in *Beijing Cartoon* (1995-2001, Beijing Publishing House), 5 volumes available also in French under the title “La rêveuse”.

style, also resulting from an encounter with overseas comics in the era of globalization. To put it another way, in contemporary China, comics following the model of Japanese manga—which play the role of mainstream comics now—and independent manhua—which are supposed to be “alternative”—are actually both foreign culture. Under these conditions, duli manhua appears rather aligned with other comics from abroad (mainstream included) than independent, providing Chinese artists with one more choice.

A similar situation existed also in Japan’s comics culture. In the later 1960s, Osamu Tezuka (fig. 4-75,76), Shotaro Ishi[no]mori (fig. 77), Leiji Matsumoto and other well established artists published in both major commercial manga magazines and in *COM*²⁹, which may be called “alternative” in retrospect. In other words, although back then the opposition between “major” and “minor” (as it is called in Japanese) still existed, resistance, independence and avant-garde were apparently less pursued than in Europe and America. It is debatable whether this can be compared to the emergence of Japanese manga and duli manhua in the People’s Republic since around the year 2000, but it is beyond debate that the “independence” of duli manhua means a distance towards all forms of mainstream comics in regard to creative intention, expressive disposition and distribution.

1-2-3. Critical Function as Cartoon: Chinese Society and Duli Manhua

Above, the internationality of duli manhua as well as its similarities with comics from other cultures have been pointed out. Below, the focus will be shifted to its potential within China. Is there anything particularly “Chinese” about duli manhua? Glancing through the issues of *SC* reveals not only an astonishing stylistic and thematic variety, but also one

²⁹ *COM* (㇏㇏, January 1967- 1972) was a manga magazine started by Osamu Tezuka. Similar with *Garo*, *COM* was a platform for manga artists to show avant-garde and experimental works. For example, Osamu Tezuka published the first seven parts of “Phoenix” (*Hi no tori*) in *COM*.

commonality, that is, the awareness of social issues. Precisely here resides the “Chinese” particularity of duli manhua.

In his introduction to *SC3*, art critic Zhu Qi points at the distinctiveness of the compiled works in this way:

“Astonishingly, experimental comics which address social criticism take up more than half of this issue; they touch, for example, upon the system of entrance exams, life at the bottom of society, travelling, the one-child family, and totalitarian sports.”³⁰

Also, in the introduction to *SC4* he characterizes duli manhua as follows:

“In comparison to foreign “alternative comics”, Chinese duli manhua have seemed to me, from the moment of their formation, to taste somehow bitter. Whether escaping reality, or focusing on purely aesthetic experiments, they lack the ease, simplicity and warmth inherent in the style of so many foreign comics [...] Under the conditions of this typically Chinese capitalism, the young generation can escape neither the complicated, almost inexpressible zeitgeist nor its Chinese flavor, whether they try to represent reality, or to find an exit, if not stronghold, in imagination, illusion and fantasy.”³¹

A good example of the “somehow bitter taste” and “Chinese flavor” can be found in the 6-page work “Qian Tu Wu Xian” (Unlimited Future) by Old Congee (also known as Lao Mi Zhou) published in *SC3* (fig. 4-78, 79, 80). It tells the story of a little boy who gets scolded by his teacher for doubting the government propaganda during an epidemic, but becomes infected eventually and dies. Set against the background of the SARS epidemic in 2002-2003, this short story satirizes the state and other authorities. “Tuo Ren Wu Tuo Bang” (The

³⁰ Qi Zhu, 2009:8.

³¹ Qi Zhu, 2010:6.

Ostrich man's Utopia) (fig. 4-26) by Ann Xiao, a female artist who is living in England, provides another good example of the bitter tone in Chinese duli manhua. Its protagonist, an ostrich, sees a heavenly light upon his birth and sets out to find it. Forced to eat, work and love exactly in the same way as the other ostriches around him under collectivism, he finds out eventually that the light is emitted by the earthen image of a giant ostrich. This work raises doubts about a society which values uniformity, and questions the worth of individual life. One other work, Duo Xi's "Zai Jian, Hai Zi" (Goodbye, my Child!), which can be taken as a third example, relates how a mother and a father look for their dead child in an elementary school destroyed by the Sichuan earthquake. Based on actual events that took place in 2008, this work expresses from a naïve point of view the reaction of ordinary people to the disaster.

The social consciousness which appears in the above-mentioned works deserves attention. It resembles the social criticism characteristically found in 1960s underground comix. In line with the then-counterculture, underground comix seized on aspects of American society which had been tabooed, and thereby contributed to the emergence of a pluralism in values from the late 1970s onward.³² Related to that change, underground comix lost their countercultural function of social criticism, last but not least due to economic reasons, and they turned into alternative comics, favoring aesthetic possibilities and reflections upon personal life. In contrast, the duli manhua of the early 21st century do not put as much emphasis on depiction of violence and sexuality as the former underground comix, but they exhibit a much stronger will to resist the social mainstream's values than recent alternative comics in Europe and America. Duli manhua emerged at the same time when China began to make the transition from a uniform society based on a centrally planned economy to a more plural society rooted in market economy, and precisely this transition has been accompanied by duli manhua with a countercultural awareness:

³² Makoto Tsuiuchi, 2002:228.

“The consolidation of the reform and liberation policy could not be changed back even after the Tiananmen Incident, and with the beginning of a social market economy, based on Deng Xiaoping’s decisions, the emphasis shifted from a plan-centered system of administering the economy to a market-centered one [...] What is happening today in China under the conditions of globalization signals a systemic change in the essential sense.”³³

To rephrase, *duli manhua* with its social criticism may be defined as a kind of underground comix in the form of alternative comics. Its independence efforts are directed to the market and industry, which sustain the comics mainstream, as well as the political regulations by the state. Considering the state of the public sphere in China, it becomes visible that *duli manhua* is not just a product of globalization, but a kind of comics which brings together a form of expression imported from abroad under the conditions of globalization and issues taken from the social reality of the People’s Republic. Precisely because *duli manhua* claims independence from both commercialism and political censorship, it provides an indispensable alternative for all those artists who seek to be actively engaged in social matters.

1-2-4. *Special Comix* as Avant-garde Movement and Contemporary Art

In 2002, Anke Feuchtenberger’s works started to spread across Chinese websites, and in 2003, they were introduced to the public by *Art and Design* magazine. At that time, Chinese artists did not know much about Feuchtenberger’s background as a pioneer of new German

³³ 「...改革・開放政策の深化は天安門事件を経過してすら後戻りできず、鄭小平の決断による社会主義市場経済の開始より「計画」を主とする経済管理体制から「市場」を主とするものへと重点を移動させてきた。...今日のグローバリゼーション下の中国で起きている現象は、本質的な意味でのシステム転換の兆候である。」 Ryosei Kokubun, 2002:16.

comics but were attracted to her way of combining image and text, and her dream-like narration style. Her comics were very different from Japanese manga already popular at that time but could not satisfy young artists' need to tell more private and localized stories. Young artists like Yan Cong started to make similar works which had more personal elements. These were published in the German anthology *Orang*³⁴, along with works of another male artist, Zuo Ma (fig. 4-30).

Feuchtenberger's style and approach to storytelling had great influence on Chinese young artists. It even inspired the establishment of the leading independent comics anthology *Special Comix*: the initial idea was to gather artists who had a style or alternative approach to comics similar to Feuchtenberger's. Yan Cong is one of the earliest members of the Special Comix group, and Zuo Ma an important artist. In October 2013, when Feuchtenberger, *Orang* and *Special Comix* held an exhibition at the Art Museum of Nanjing University of the Arts, Zhang Xun, one of the editors of *Special Comix* described Feuchtenberger as "the starting point" of both *Orang* and *Special Comix*.³⁵

There are certain characteristics that put *Special Comix* closer to the art movement than to mainstream comics. First, this affinity can be deduced from the group's approach to publications and to the dialogue with the audience. Second, it is supported by the members' expressive stance.

1) Publication policy

One of SC's editors Zhang Xun, an artist himself, said that from the first issue of SC on they had paid great attention to the quality and design of the book and tried to achieve the impression of an art book rather than a fanzine (although with regards to production, they

³⁴ *Orang* (2003-2013) was an alternative comics magazine started by graphic artist Sascha Hommer when he was still a college student in Hamburg. *Orang* was a platform for the exchange of German contemporary comics and world comics.

³⁵ Xun Zhang, 2013:6

were partly inspired by Japanese fanzine³⁶, and also by Feuchtenberger's books³⁷). *Special Comix* can be regarded as an art movement stretching from gathering artists' works to publishing the anthology, to selling it via the internet, to holding exhibitions in art museums. Compared with alternative comics in the West and Japan, the publishing process of the anthology *Special Comix* and the purpose of publishing it are more complicated.³⁸

First of all, this is an underground publication. It involves a certain political attitude, because it is difficult to get ISBN and CIP from the Chinese government due to economic and censorship problems. For an official publication with a legal publisher a certain number of copies is required to make a deal, and the contents is unavoidably censored. Books without ISBN and CIP are not allowed to be printed or sold in bookstores. This situation is similar to American underground comix and samizdat activities. SC editors had to find printers in Hong Kong, or make an agreement with some gallery, as they did with Badger & Press. An independent publisher from Beijing focusing on art and design books published SC5, as well as works of Weng Ling (aka 54 boy), Yan Chong and Wang Shuo (aka Anusman).

SC generally has small print runs and sells via internet and galleries. With that income, they hold exhibitions and publish new issues.

Other aspects concern price and quality of the book. From the first issue, size and design of *Special Comix* have been quite exceptional. Issues 1 and 2 are not in the comics form, and issues 3 to 5 are bigger than average comics. Additionally, the color of every page in issue 5 was randomly selected and composed by computer. The quality of paper is better than in mainstream manga. SC anthologies are also more expensive than *xin manhua* or fanzines, their prices on a par with art books.

Finally, the SC group often holds exhibitions in contemporary art museums together with

³⁶ For example, artist Tang Yan's (唐彦) fanzine-like work.

³⁷ For example, Yan Cong's (烟囪) work.

³⁸ Interview with Zhang Xun, Nanjing, China 2 October, 2013

other alternative comics groups. Among these museums are the Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou in France, the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing, the Zhejiang Art Museum, and the Rock Bund Art Museum. Exhibitions include both original drawings and printed books. In 2013, the exhibition held at the Art Museum of Nanjing University of the Arts featured not only drawings and books (the German alternative comics anthology *Orang* included), but also works in other forms, such as animation, oil painting, and installation art. As Zhang Xun explained in his interview³⁹, the exhibition aimed not only at displaying art works but also at giving the artists around the country a chance to communicate directly with each other and their audiences. Zhang Xun noted that such face-to-face communication was especially important in modern communities dominated by Internet anonymity. He also believes such events would relieve alternative comics artists, who do not have many chances to communicate in real life, from the sense of isolation.⁴⁰ The main motivation of the SC project founders has been to give artists a chance to publish their works and stimulate them to continue their creative activity. This also applies to *Orang*, the German alternative comics anthology. After a decade of annual publications Sasha Hommer, the editor of *Orang* and an artist, decided to close the magazine and switch to exhibitions. He also explained that he had started *Orang* to create a site where artists could communicate with each other through their works, since at that time it was hard for alternative artists to publish their works and get in touch with each other. But nowadays, neither communication nor publication is a problem anymore, thanks to the Internet, and new alternative comics magazines have appeared; so Hommer decided to do what he thought was important for artists in a different way: gathering them and getting them to communicate in real life.⁴¹

³⁹ Interview with Zhang Xun, Nanjing, China, 2 October, 2013.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ From his lecture in October, 2013 at the Art Museum of Nanjing University of the Arts.

2) Editors and Comix Artists in *Special Comix*: Weng Ling and Others

If the *SC* group's publishing policy puts it close to the art movement, the artists who publish their work there are also close to the avant-garde art scene. They are different from comics artists in the traditional sense, whose goals are popularity, fan service and financial success. Most of the *SC* artists have graduated from art universities or received formal artistic training otherwise, but they have chosen comics as a way to express themselves.

One of such artists is Weng Ling who is also the founder of Green Bus and who contributes to *SC* constantly. He is a classically trained artist who studied at the Central Academy of Fine Art's painting department and who has worked in the fine arts scene after his graduation. But since the end of 2009, he has been using comics as a means of expressing his observations about and emotional reactions to everyday life. According to Aimee Lin, Weng Ling divides his drawings into two kinds, "graffiti" and "comics"⁴². The later are rendered in blunt black lines on a simple white sheet of a notebook or A4 size paper. Recently he adopts the traditional comics paneling more directly, folding a sheet of A4-size paper into sixths and getting straight to work. Once complete, he shares his work on his comics website⁴³ and on forums such as Douban, in order to get feedback from other users (most of whom are completely unrelated to the art scene).

Aimee Lin explains how Weng Ling brings "high" art to a "low" position through the way he is working:

"This process allows Weng Ling to create the humble profile he has always sought, the profile that represents precisely Weng Ling's strong opposition to exploitation of general audiences by contemporary art".⁴⁴

⁴² Aimee Lin, 2011.

⁴³ www.potot.com

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Furthermore, what he wants for his creations is the widest audience possible. But this does not make him a comics artist or an independent comics artist, because making comics is not his goal, just a way to gain more freedom in expressing himself and communicating with the audience.

“As Weng Ling sees it, he is in his very bones an artist and not a comics artist. [...] he wants to change the way ‘contemporary art and its audience have no relationship with each other’ and to have his work exert a subtle influence over his viewers’ way of thinking. Weng Ling has managed to enter popular culture while maintaining a humble posture – publishing a photo blog, making animation, and planning to make music in the future. [...] he invites possibilities that could not otherwise emerge on their own.”⁴⁵

In 2011 I went to Beijing to meet Weng Ling, and found that he made prints from some panels in his comics and exhibited them in a gallery (Star Gallery). This is also one of his ways to present his ideas. He shared that exhibition with Yan Cong, who also graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Art’s painting department and is already a signed artist of the gallery.⁴⁶

Even though these young artists call themselves comics artists, their goal is not to make comics specifically or to join the comics industry. They make comics because this is the form they have come to be familiar with, under the influence of Japanese-style manga, and they use this form for self-expression. They are more like artists who use graphic narratives to gain a freedom they cannot have in other genres. In this sense, compared with “traditional comics artists” who draw for a general audience and seek success in the mass market, they stand closer to contemporary art.

⁴⁵ Chang Chang, 2011 (no pagination).

⁴⁶ See the artist’s introduction on star gallery’s website: <http://www.stargallery.cn/artist/26>

2. The Connection and Similarities between the Artists in *Special Comix* and Me

Most of the alternative artists in China were born under the one-child policy (starting in 1980), and have been influenced to different degrees by Japanese manga culture during their childhood and youth. Most of them later learned art or design in university and chose to use comics to express their thoughts and feelings. They publish their own comics in high quality and circulate them via Internet.

Like those young artists who work in the alternative comics scene, I too belong to the generation influenced by foreign comics cultures, although in my case, especially European alternative comics. I decided to express my personal feelings and tell local stories within this medium, and experiment with the combination of pictures and texts. But because of differences in experience and creative activity, my works differ from those artists' works, just like all of them are different from each other.

3. My Work: *Red Rabbits* and *The Seeker*

Nothing characterizes comics artists more precisely than Christian Hill's description:

"Artists are experimenters. We don't wear lab coats nor carry notepads, but whenever we leave the beaten path to text out ideas, we sometimes make a discovery that adds to our vocabulary or we may even create new forms of expression."⁴⁷

In order to characterize the ambiguous borderline between alternative comics and contemporary art, I shall use two of my works: *Rad Rabbits: Fantasy of Totalitarianism* and

⁴⁷ Christian Hill, 2007:6

The Seeker.

3-1. *Red Rabbits: Fantasy of Totalitarianism* (2010)

3-1-1. Material and Form

This work was made by pen and calligraphy ink. It consists of eighteen drawings and three block texts (fig. 4-81). Each drawing (65cm x 42cm) has its own meaning as an isolated work but is at the same time compositionally connected with the other five drawings in its chapter. In total, there are three chapters titled “Plants”, “God of Death”, and “Falling Star”, each prefaced by a short text telling the story. Their contents is as follows:

1) The “Plants” chapter describes a situation where surveillance and intelligence are used to scare and control people. I chose plants as a symbol of secret police; they can hear peoples’ whisper and eat those whose opinions the government dislikes. Rabbits, on the other hand, symbolize the ordinary people (fig. 4-82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88).

2) The “God of Death” preface is told in the first person by the god of death himself. In the reality of the depicted country, people are taken from the street, home or any other place and executed. The god of death explains why he likes this country the most: people die anywhere and anytime (fig. 4-89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95).

3) The “Falling Star” chapter is about the failure of revolution. Fighting against oppression and other attempts to resist the regime happened throughout our history, but failed. In this chapter, I describe the process of such fighting and the miserable situation the rabbits—the people—have to face after their failure (fig. 4-96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102).

3-1-2. Motivation and Inspiration

I am mainly interested in political issues and social criticism. When I studied in Japan, I found lots of documents and books about the history I had never been told, because public discussions of such topics are forbidden and censored in China. For common people, these documents are only available in foreign countries like Japan. When I arrived in Japan, I felt it was my responsibility as a critical cartoon artist to work on this topic, as such work also gives me a chance, as a citizen, to relearn the history hidden from the masses and realize rights which existed only on paper, for example, the right to vote, the right to express and discuss opinions. Such work, however, could be created and published only outside China.

I have been influenced by artists who worked on social issues. The works that inspired me include Käthe Kollwitz's *Weavers* (1892-1896) and *Peasant War* (1902-1908) as well as works by Otto Dix, George Grosz, Francisco Goya and Sue Coe, but also Max Klinger's series of ten etchings *Paraphrases about the Finding of a Glove* (printed in 1881). The idea of using rabbits as a symbol is derived from British novelist George Orwell's anti-utopian novel *Animal Farm* and Russian writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago*, in which rabbits are used to symbolize the prisoners in the Soviet forced labor camp. That book was first published in the West in 1973, thereafter circulating in samizdat form in the Soviet Union until its official publication in 1989. I chose rabbits as a symbol of the people living under totalitarianism because of the similarities between the two subjects. Rabbits are weak compared to other animals like cows or sheep, so they do not fight openly with their natural enemies, but escape and hide. Besides, the number of rabbits exceeds the number of carnivores. Their physical weakness combined with huge numbers, as well as their heightened alertness and cautiousness are all characteristics typical of people living under totalitarianism: unprotected and nervous all the time. It does not matter if these people lived under the Stalin government, in the latter Mao period or even nowadays. In my story, the

giant monster (the symbol of the national totalitarian power) reveals itself but in one scene (and there only partially, as a foot). This is another characteristic of the specific situation and period: threats are invisible but can affect any place at any time, and inability to understand the mechanism makes people even more afraid.

3-1-3. Making *Red Rabbits*

To create *Red Rabbits*, I mentally put myself into periods of totalitarianism and imagined what position I would have been in back then, for example, how I would have felt during the Tian An Meng incident. I achieved this immersion by watching documents, reading memoirs and articles not accessible in China on the website of the Independent Chinese PEN Center⁴⁸, and then I visualized these feelings. This was the reason for using first-person narration in my story. The reason I did not work on this topic in China was that the materials of Tian An Meng incident were censored there for political reasons. I learned about it only after I had come to Japan. This situation is probably similar to that in Tan's *The Arrival*.

3-1-4. *Red Rabbits* as an Experiment

In *Red Rabbits* I give critical preference to critical meaning over satire, and I address a general audience. The structure of *Red Rabbits* is not that of a commercial picturebook or comics. In this work, I tried to grasp the situation people face under totalitarianism and the resulting conflicts by mixing elements I chose from picturebooks and early Soviet movies. I

⁴⁸ See website: <http://www.chinesepen.org/Index.shtml>

wanted to create a picturebook stylistically referring to the specific period of totalitarianism, while connecting that to contemporary life. I used rabbits as a symbol of people in general, not belonging to a particular culture or historical period. But the audience can discern the implications of this symbol and its connection with a specific history. At that time which my story refers to, Chinese art was strongly influenced by Soviet aesthetics. I found inspiration in early Soviet movies, especially the silent film *Battleship Potemkin*⁴⁹ which employed montage to create the dramatic and intense atmosphere of a conflict between the powerful and the powerless. Also, the way *Battleship Potemkin* combined image and text (as a silent film) fitted my concept of using drawings and texts separately.

I chose an eclectic, that is, multi-genre approach to this work because I could not find a picturebook that would fit my goal to present strong conflicts. I could not find an example in Käthe Kollwitz, Otto Dix, George Grosz and Francisco Goya's works either. Both comics and picturebooks have their typical characteristics and form, but I felt limited using just one form, and I thought that if I could borrow other expressive means, the idea would be presented better. So instead of using one typical form of any genre, I chose elements and forms from various genres if I found them effective for presenting the idea, and combined those. Therefore I also decided to take elements from *Battleship Potemkin*, which was closer to my work in the concept and atmosphere.

3-1-5. Publication and Exhibition

Red Rabbits was published in 2011 by Polish publisher Hanami, which specializes in more or less alternative Japanese manga. The size of the book is 24cm x 17cm; so it is very small

⁴⁹ *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), Sergei Eisenstein's silent film, describes the mutiny on the Russian battleship Potemkin in 1905, when the crew rebelled against their officers and the Tsarist regime.

compared to the original drawings. The pen touch of the drawings is hardly visible, which deviates from my original concept. I wanted the drawings to be of an art book quality. However, after another exhibition, where my original work was displayed (fig. 4-255, 258, 260), I found that putting together both prints and original works matches my original idea best (fig. 4-255, 258, 260). With the book only, the audience cannot appreciate the quality of the drawings and instead concentrates mainly on the contents, which is only one part of the idea (fig. 4-257, 259). But if only the drawings are exhibited without the text, the audience cannot understand the connection between the drawings and motivation behind them (fig. 4-625). My intended effect can only be achieved by shifting between words and pictures: this work is a combination of both. Text, pictures and the way of presentation are all important for this work; without any of them the whole meaning cannot be seen.

I displayed two works—the book *Red Rabbits* and a copy of *The Seeker*—during the exhibition of *Special Comix, Orang* and Anke Feuchtenberger at the Art Museum of Nanjing University of Arts in 2013.

3-2. *The Seeker: Journey of a Spirit* (2013)

3-2-1. Materials and Meaning

The Seeker is a 300 meter-long scroll (fig. 4-102~222). Consisting of nine parts, it tells the story of a rabbit who sees the meaningless self-sacrifice of his fellow rabbits and decides to go on a journey to find a solution to his own questions and anger. During his journey, the rabbit witnesses both creation and annihilation, and starts to understand the harmony, the balance, and the rules of the universe, ultimately finding a way to bring life back to his people, which is by sacrificing himself. And he actually sacrifices himself. There is no text in

this work. The change of time, place and mood is presented via the changing of scenes and colors.

3-2-2. Motivation, Inspiration and the Making Process: Art Therapy

In 2010, after I had graduated from the master's course, I wanted to create a critical work on the Nanjing Massacre, similar to *Red Rabbits*. I chose that topic because, on the one hand, I am a Nanjing local, on the other hand, thinking about the Second World War was a part of my original motivation to make critical art. But when I started to collect, watch and read images and documents in an attempt to gather relevant materials and project myself into that period, I could not separate history and real life and fell into depression. Also, I could not get out of the emotions left from my preceding work on *Red Rabbits*.

Eventually, I could not continue the project for one year, until I decided to make a work that would express that situation and stage of internal turmoil. I chose a rabbit as the symbol of myself, and two colors, black and red, to represent the atmosphere around me at that time and the way I felt about my environment.

3-2-3. Form and style

In the process I found that the work had started to run on its own wheels and I could not figure out what the ending was going to be. So I decided to give up the topic of the Nanjing Massacre temporarily and focus on recording my own mental changes. At first my drafts were single pictures (because I wanted to make something similar to *Red Rabbits*), and I felt it was not the right way to present my feelings and their evolution: time changes in a certain

rhythm without gaps, but emotion changes with the change of a scene. So I started research to find the form appropriate for this specific concept, and found emaki, Japanese scrolls, and the Buddha's Life Murals in the Cave 290 in Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes. In both, scenes change without any gap, which suits well the story of a long journey and subsequent transformations. So I started to arrange the drafts into that form. In the process, I took elements from other genres, when they seemed helpful. I liken this technique to Philip Glass's minimal music or Alexander Sokurov's *Russian Ark*⁵⁰, in which the entire film consists of one long take.

I didn't know the ending of *The Seeker* until I finished the final draft, and discovered the central theme: a spiritual journey. There is not a single word, nor any specific objects in this work. The whole story is more like a mental process revealed by changing combinations of black and red, and transformations of patterns and shapes which imply real objects, such as cave, snake, cloud or growing plants.

In this sense, my work, similar to abstract comics, stands closer to abstract art, contrary to works where transformations of shape and changes of color are accompanied by verbal narration (fig. 4-247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254).

3-2-4. Publication and Exhibition

The Seeker has been exhibited in art museums and galleries, as an alternative comic, but it was displayed in different ways. In Bandung, Indonesia, in June 2013, I presented it in a form most close to the original idea—as a scroll. Because of space limitations I had to divide the scroll into two parts but mainly I kept the sequence. During the exhibition, one of the curators approached me and said that my wish to visit the local temple had surprised her at

⁵⁰ *Russian Ark* (2002) is a historical film directed by Alexander Sokurov.

first, but she was not surprised anymore. Apparently, she changed her mind when she saw my work and discovered spiritual meaning in it (fig. 4-263, 264). When I prepared *The Seeker* for exhibitions in the Art Museum of Nanjing University of Arts (2013) and Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art (2013), I divided it into several same-length horizontal strips, which I then arranged vertically. I adopted this strategy partly to deal with the problem of limited pace, but also because I wished to show the flexibility of *The Seeker*: since it combines narrative and expressive functions, it can be appreciated both as a story and as a painting (fig. 4-261, 262). During the exhibition, Feuchtenberger criticized my work, praising its expressiveness, but noting that as a comic it lacked narrative potential. I suppose, the narrative becomes evident only when *The Seeker* is presented as in one piece as a scroll, preferably in a wide space, so that the audience can appreciate both sequence and composition. In this sense, it is close to Gallery Comics⁵¹ which is made to be displayed on the wall and provide the experience of gallery viewing. As Joanna Roche explains: “These works can be studied and absorbed fairly fast, but lend themselves to continued contemplation, both up close and from a distance.”⁵² Gallery Comics is considered a new genre but they “do not seek to obscure their lineage to a medium traditionally grounded in popular culture.”⁵³ Christian Hill regards them as “comics for the wall”⁵⁴ which have more connections with fine arts.

Unlike Gallery Comics, however, this work is meant to be published. Since I decided to make a scroll, I have been trying to decide whether to publish it as a scroll or as an ordinary book. The way this book will be read depends on the form of its publication. For example, if it is published as a scroll, then it can be read in a traditional way, unfolding from right to left. Since there will be no gaps between the chapters, the work can be appreciated as one piece.

⁵¹ Gallery Comics: The case of Mark Staff Brandl, setting shockwaves and motion lines in gallery spaces, is considered the first experiment of such kind.

⁵² Joanna Roche, 2007:14

⁵³ Christian Hill, 2007: 10

⁵⁴ Christian Hill, 2007:9

In consideration of a possible double publication, I designed the work so that all its parts join seamlessly into one, but at the same time could be broken down into separate pages of the same size. -Even if published in book format, it can be read page by page because I separated the whole scroll into 360 small sections. They can be arranged as six scenes per page (with the total of 60 pages), or four scenes per page (90 pages), creating a faster pace, or even two scenes per page (130 pages). If I divide the work in the middle, there will be two parts with symmetrical structure and composition. And it is also possible to transform *The Seeker* into a comics work.

3-2-5. Connections between *The Seeker* and Pre-modern Asian Picture Scrolls

The similarities are in the form and means of expression, but not in the narrative techniques. Even if emaki is not the origin of Japanese manga, as a narrative vehicle, or just as an art form, it can still be a source of inspiration and reference for artists from different backgrounds and areas. If expressive means found in emaki can be reapplied by contemporary artists and included into manga (as Yoko Yamamoto suggests in her essay⁵⁵), then emaki can also be used or quoted directly as a form, under the premise of an agreement between audience and artist. Even if the original meaning and expressive effects of picture scrolls have disappeared in the course of history, the contemporary artist can still discover and use similar expressive means. For instance, *The Seeker* can be categorized as a graphic narrative as well as picture scroll, because similar expressive means are used in all these formats.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Yamamoto Yoko, 2011:23-28

⁵⁶ A part of Bandainagon emaki (伴大納言絵巻) has been changed into manga form by rearranging the characters and scenes (with the text added later) and published in *Emaki and Narrative: The Stage of Medieval Drama in the Art Japanesque Series* [Jap. 「絵巻と物語＝中世紀ドラマの舞台」, アート・シャパネスシリーズ, Kodansha], Junji Wakasugi, 1995:136.

However, I must make clear that my goal was not to make a traditional scroll. I simply borrowed form and expressive means to express my idea. So even if *The Seeker* looks similar to picture scrolls and can be called “emaki” because of these similarities, this is not emaki in its original meaning.-I am not an “emaki” artist.

3-3. Works Preceding *Red Rabbits* and *The Seeker*

It is no coincidence that I gave these two works different forms. Before *Red Rabbits* and *The Seeker*, I made some works which can be regarded as preparation for them. These earlier works were influenced by the artists I described in the previous three chapters.

3-3-1. *Father's Moon: Picturebook* (2007)

When I studied cartoon and comics in university, I was influenced by Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* and wanted to make something similar on social issues but in the form of a picturebook (in China, *The Arrival* was regarded as a picturebook, since the concept of graphic narrative/novel had not been introduced widely yet). So I created *Father's Moon* as my graduation project. The work consists of twelve single-page drawings (40cm x 40cm) (fig. 4-223-234) and three two-page drawings (40cm x 80cm) (fig. 4-225-237). The materials are charcoal, water color and brown paper.

The verbal narration in this story is told in first-person. The main character is a young boy who lives in slums and has to stay in bed because of his illnesses. His father has to go out to work and comes back home very late every day. But in the little time they spend together, his father tells him stories about the moon and about what happens in the cities where the moon

shines. He promises his son that one day they will leave the city and go to see the moon together. Carrying hope, the young boy tries to find the moon at night but fails, because the sky is covered by the dark clouds from factories. But the boy does not understand this. So he asks his father one day why he cannot find the moon and when they can leave. His father says nothing and leaves the boy to hope. This work is based on my own experiences of witnessing the air pollution and feeling helpless, emotions of the powerless side of society.

In this work, I combined two themes—people who cannot change reality, represented by the incapacitated boy, and air pollution problem, which became serious in China at that moment, due to the increasing industrialization.

3-3-2. *Garden: Altarpiece (2009)*

This work, made in 2009 in color ink and pen, consists of three drawings (fig. 4-241, 242, 243), two of 118cm x 84cm and one of 118cm x 168cm. My inspiration was *The Garden of Earthly Delights* by Hieronymus Bosch. The central theme of this work is human desire, and this is presented in three different ways. The contents of each piece were chosen from different fairytales.

The first piece is “Heaven” from British writer Oscar Wilde’s *The Happy Prince*. In Wilde’s story, the Happy Prince’s statue feels pity towards poor people and gives gold to them voluntarily. But in my version, people pull the Happy Prince’s statue down and take his gold. The gold symbolizes the desire for happiness (fig.4-241). The second and central piece pictures a scene from another Oscar Wilde story, *The Selfish Giant*. In Wilde’s story, the Giant is the owner of a magnificent garden, where children play. In my work, people enter a similar garden to have dance, sex, baptism, bath and other parties in and around the red waters of the fountain. The red water is the symbol of the original sin. The dance party and

baptism party represent spiritual desire, while the sex party and bath party symbolize sensual desire (fig. 4-243).

The third piece shows “Hell”, taken from a Chinese fairytale about a peach banquet. According to Chinese legends, a person can stay young and live forever if she eats a heavenly peach; the leader of the gods holds a peach banquet for gods and goddess only. In this piece, ordinary people find heavenly peaches and eat them, but end up devouring too much that they either die or fall into depression. The peach is the symbol of desire to stay young and live long (fig. 4-242).

In all three cases, I changed the development of events, but not the ending of the story: in the outcome, people still get the gold, play in the Giant’s garden, and eat the peaches of youth. However, the original giving and receiving gifts is replaced by robbery, and the original motivation of the givers (such as the Happy Prince, or the Giant) is destructed.

These changes reflect the central idea of this work, “the triumph of desire”. I chose Wilde’s fairytales because they scarcely have happy endings, and there are rarely “good” and “evil” characters. Wilde touched upon social issues and the evil in people’s hearts. But the traditional fairytales and legends belong to the past, reflecting past conventions and social order. Applying new values to these old settings had to bring out new conflicts and meanings I was interested to show. Moreover, there are lots of cultural products nowadays similar to fairytales, such as Hollywood movies, video games and fashion items, but their influence on people’s lives is much more profound. So I wanted to show in my work what could happen to people who let their desire for the illusionary control their real lives.

I chose the form of an altarpiece because I am interested in Christian art, especially the altarpieces made by Netherland masters of the Northern Renaissance. Artists like them who used their unique skills to present spiritual and supernatural issues were later considered “craftsmen”, while “artists” were supposed to focus more on pure self-expression. However, even though they created their works within a strict religious paradigm, they were not limited

by it. On the contrary, they constructed multiple layers of meaning to express their beliefs and values. For instance, Hieronymus Bosch, who inspired me, expressed his heterodoxy through the traditional Christian art forms.

Moreover, an altarpiece as an art form demonstrates the value of craft in pre-industrial society. “The triumph of desire” presented through an altarpiece stands not only against Christian faith, but also against modern industrial society. In this sense, it is anti-religious as well.

3-3-3. *One Day in Hamburg* (2010) and *How to Keep You Safe beside Kamogawa* (2010)

One Day in Hamburg, consists of two 55.5cm x 40 cm drawings and one 61cm x 43cm drawing which is made by pen and ink. I made it during Anke Feuchtenberger’s workshop in 2010. I used pine cones, local beer bottle caps, and feathers which I had picked up in the streets of Hamburg as symbols of the locale. I ascribed to them dialogues that, to my mind, could happen between local people.-The first scene happens in the morning (fig. 4-244): the taller pine cone asks the smaller one if he will ever become such a great figure as Hamburg’s city hall tower in the background. The smaller one replies: “Sure. At some point.” The second scene happens at noon (fig.4-246). One sea bird feather tells two others: “They will never reach places we have been to”, referring to the balloon in the background. This is a balloon for advertisement, and it is fastened to the ground, so it can go up and down, but cannot fly away. The third scene happens at night (fig.4-245). A beer bottle cap asks the other if they can be a couple. But the second cap refuses, saying: “Sorry, but I think that we are different brands.” The background in this last scene is the sea beside Hamburg.

In all three scenes the background is some Hamburg scenery; furthermore, all of them take place near the river or the sea, also reflecting the special character of Hamburg. I used my

own photographs for references. In this work, I wanted to juxtapose heavy and light, permanent and temporary, history and daily life. I also wanted to relate what I noticed, observed and imagined as a stranger in a particular city.

As for *How to keep you safe beside Kamogawa*, I made it during the workshop held by two French BD artists, Jean-Claude Mézières and Pierre Christin.⁵⁷ This work consists of three A4-size pages. It is a comical sketch based on my own experience walking along Kamogawa River in Kyoto, demonstrating that the only way to protect oneself from hawk attacks is to be a couple.

This was the first time I had made a multi-framed story. All the works I made before were one-panel works which looked like one-panel cartoons or paintings.

4. Aiming at Artistic Comics

During an autograph session in Poland in 2011 (at the Baltic Comics Festival in Gdansk), I was asked by local people if the situation in China was really as horrible as in *Red Rabbits*. I answered that my book was about a period of history that I had not experienced, and that this history had already passed. In other words, that this work does not represent China today or in the past. And even if I take the current situation in the country as a topic, there will still be differences between the reality and its depiction in my works. Additionally, I myself can access this history only through documents, indirectly. Whatever I create is not a documentary but a subjective commentary which cannot taken for the historical truth. On the other hand, it is probably easier for me to create works on such topics because I am not traumatized by them (as distinct, perhaps, from Peter Sis's *Tibet: Through the Red Box*). However, my answer did not satisfy the audience at that time. And when I returned to China,

⁵⁷ They held a lecture and a BD workshop at Kyoto Seika University, 7 May, 2010.

my relatives blamed me for choosing the “wrong” topic, a topic that stirred their fears about our history. They were also afraid that this work could bring them and me into a dangerous situation. On top of that, I was troubled with my own motivation. Even though I felt sorry for people of the past and their miserable situation, I quite enjoyed creating works on this topic, which made me doubt my motives.

Because of the complicated motivations for making such works and the different techniques and forms I used, it is hard for me to place myself within a specific genre or between genres. Instead, I would like to briefly indicate the characteristics of my works and creative activities, and point out similarities with the artists I discussed in the previous chapters.

4-1. Motivation and Drawing as an Action

I have other ways than drawing to express my thoughts, but I am interested in drawing more than any other medium. For me, making a big drawing (especially with a fine pen and by hand) is like a practice or training from which I can learn and through which I can develop my thoughts. In other words, it is more than just a set of activities serving a specific goal. For me, the final work is simply the result of this whole process. In this sense, drawing is an important private performance.

4-2. Different Forms and Affiliation with “Art”

As an artist who does not work for the market (whether of alternative comics or mainstream comics, or art) I first and foremost want to express my own thoughts and

feelings. And as an artist who chooses form depending on contents, I have doubts about categorizing artists and their works according to chosen materials and forms. I made works in different forms and different ways, from one-panel cartoon, to comics, to a scroll. And in some cases I started working without any definite concept, as it happened with *The Seeker*. That was the first time I had made a scroll, and the process was completely different from those of *Red Rabbits* and my other works.

I borrowed elements and forms from fine art. But the definition of “art” is also unreliable. For instance, an altarpiece was not considered art at certain times, and in the case of emaki, there was no concept of “art” at the time these scrolls were made. When I used these forms, I did so not because I wanted to make “art” or legitimize my work by leaning on the authority of “high” art. I was trained as a cartoonist and an illustrator, and I have stayed apart from mainstream comics or art markets. I only turned to these “art” forms because they fitted the contents and the intended mood better than others.

4-3. Combining Self-expression and Critical Meaning

My works are mostly combinations of social criticism and self-expression. However, they are not aimed at the mainstream market or a general audience, and they can be hardly compared to alternative comics like *Maus*, which focus on narrative more than drawing. For example, in *The Seeker*, images come first and all the narration is constructed afterwards; on the whole it is self-expression in the form of emaki. And even if *Red Rabbits* takes historical events as its topic, it is still largely about self-expression. *Red Rabbits* is not a purely political work, but an “artistic” expression of the negative side of society, an approach only reasonable in the art world, but not in historical or political studies.

If my works possess a certain critical function, it is because of my personal interest in

social and political topics, which makes it unavoidable for my works to be ascribed certain meaning when put in social context. There are ideas and motivations behind each work, but these ideas only make sense for the artist during the creative process. These ideas and motivations are not taken into account by the audience, and readings of the work vary depending on the audiences' background and other unpredictable factors.

My priorities as an artist lie not in serving the audience or catering to its tastes, but in expressing my opinions about the outside world, and my attitude to the society I live in with a form most suitable for the task. My goal is not to find easy ways to make the audience understand my thinking, for I believe that full understanding is impossible due to the differences in cultural background, experiences etc. So I leave it to the audience to interpret the work. If the audience finds some messages or meanings in the work, these are born from the combination of my ideas and their own thinking, but not from an autonomous “original” contents of the work. The more readings, the better. If any sort of self-determination is required, I would like to place myself in the same area as Shawn Tan, Sue Coe, and *Special Comics*.

Conclusion

All the artists I discussed in this thesis adapt form to the contents, that is, what they want to say, but do not mold works to fit into a certain form or genre. Some of them started as fine artists, some of them started as professional comics artists, and some of them have never accepted any official art or comics education. But all of them finally found their own ways to express and present their thinking and feelings by doing “experiments” on the combinations of picture and text, mostly because their demands on narrative and expression made them go in the same direction. This kind of “artist comics” has basic characteristics of what so-called “alternative comics” because of the strong connection with the form of comics, and their independence of both making process and circulation.

The contents of such artist’s works show both strong personal approach (autobiography) and critical tendency of political issue, social issue and modern value. Even they consider the audience to a certain degree, but still, expressing their own thoughts or feelings is more important for them than putting themselves into the mainstream market (that of comics or art), or catering to audience’s taste (though some of them have to do this in their early period) One important reason is that they are not controlled by mainstream market so they have enough space to explore their own language. In these cases, alternative comics as form is actually one way for these artists to express their thinking and criticize modern society, which artist can gain more freedom and relieve themselves from conventional art system, like gallery or agency; or popular taste of art. In this kind of art, prints and publication as the way they gaining freedom and main tool to present their thinking, are more important if compare it with other genres.

Because of the independence of market and popular taste of art, such artists don’ t limit themselves in just one genre, they can remain open-minded towards all the genres, from ones of the high art, to picture books, to comics, and borrow elements from different genres. They digest these elements with their own understanding but not the common opinion from art history, and

mix them together to create new means of expression, new forms and particular atmosphere that can satisfy their particular requirements for presenting the contents. When they create their own system and meaning, they don't present the original meaning of the element or form; the genre and the problem of "high" or "low" is not important, and the idea and thinking can be presented in different ways. This approach makes their works have the characteristic of post-modern art. And in the narrow sense, they are comics artists or picture book artists who break the walls between different genres and innovate the genre with their different creative activities. However, these artists cannot be labeled or categorized by the form or genre of their works¹ – the range of variations found there is too big. Even their books cannot be solidly categorized into any specific genre like comics or picture book, because the format specifics of each book distinguish it from others.

So these artists with their works are positioned somewhere between contemporary art and alternative comics. Alternative comics here refers more about form and circulation, in essential, these works are contemporary art. It is because of these artists' creativity and the necessity to express their thinking that they are the same as other contemporary artists who work in other fields and with different media.

As one genre, following characteristics can be observed in contemporary artistic comics: 1) artist show their own critical thinking of society, political issue and modern value, in content or style; most of time the contents has strong connection with artist's own personality and life experiences; 2) have all basic characteristics of alternative comics, from making process, circulation, publication, to the form, such as combination of image and text; 3) the way artists approach alternative comics is not as a label, but as one way to gain freedom, which makes them not comics artist who makes comics in an alternative way, but contemporary artists who uses alternative comics as form.

In 21st century, the differences between all the genres are becoming blurred, and the

¹ In this paper, I only discuss about their books without analyzing their other artistic activities

borderlines between them are disappearing, so more discussions about alternative comics as contemporary art are necessary. I hope that after comics are ideologically legitimized, this genre can have more freedom to communicate with other art genres equally, but not as a “low” art which can only steal or accept the expressive forms from other genres, or borrow their authority. Because of the limitation of time there are still problems and questions that need to be discussed, and there will be more questions rises in future because the development of technology and visual language, but I hope that this thesis can become a step in that direction.

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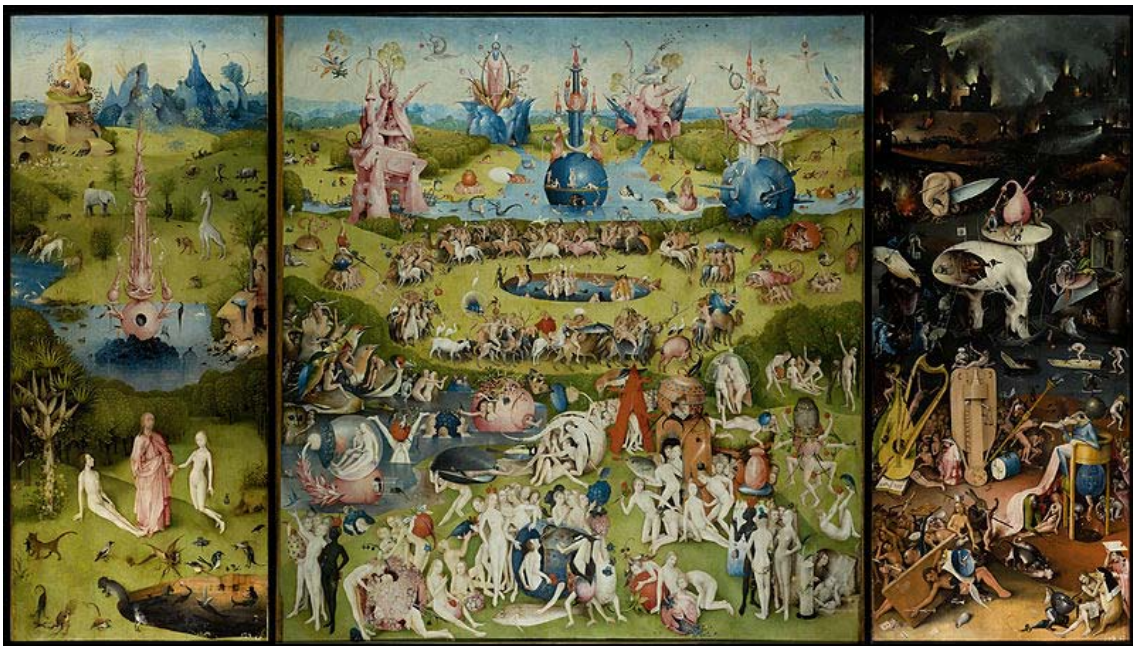


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Chapter1 Joe Coleman and Sue Coe

Fig.1-1.*The mystery of woolverine woo-bait*, Self-published, 1982

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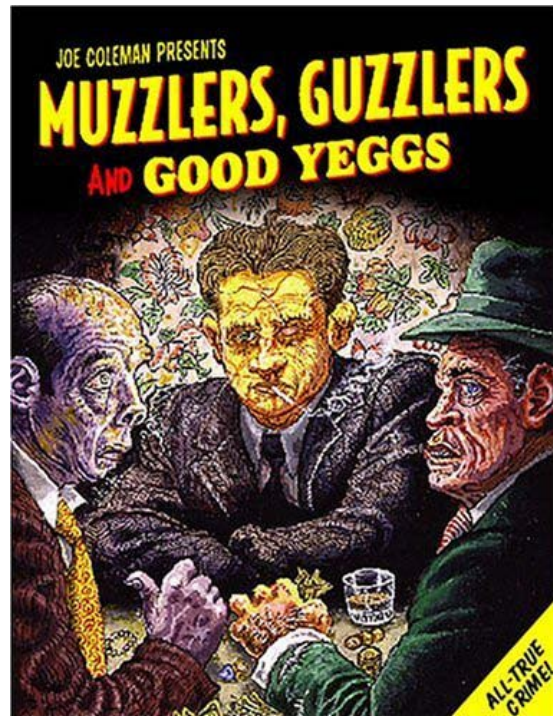
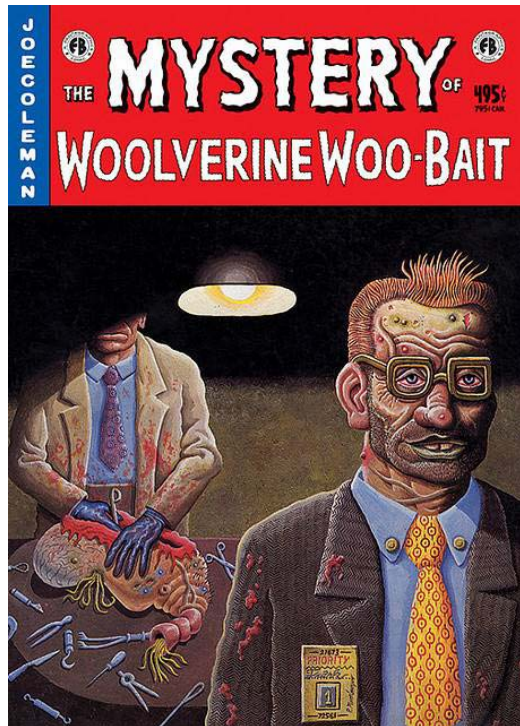


Fig.1-3. Page from *The mystery of woolverine woo-bait*

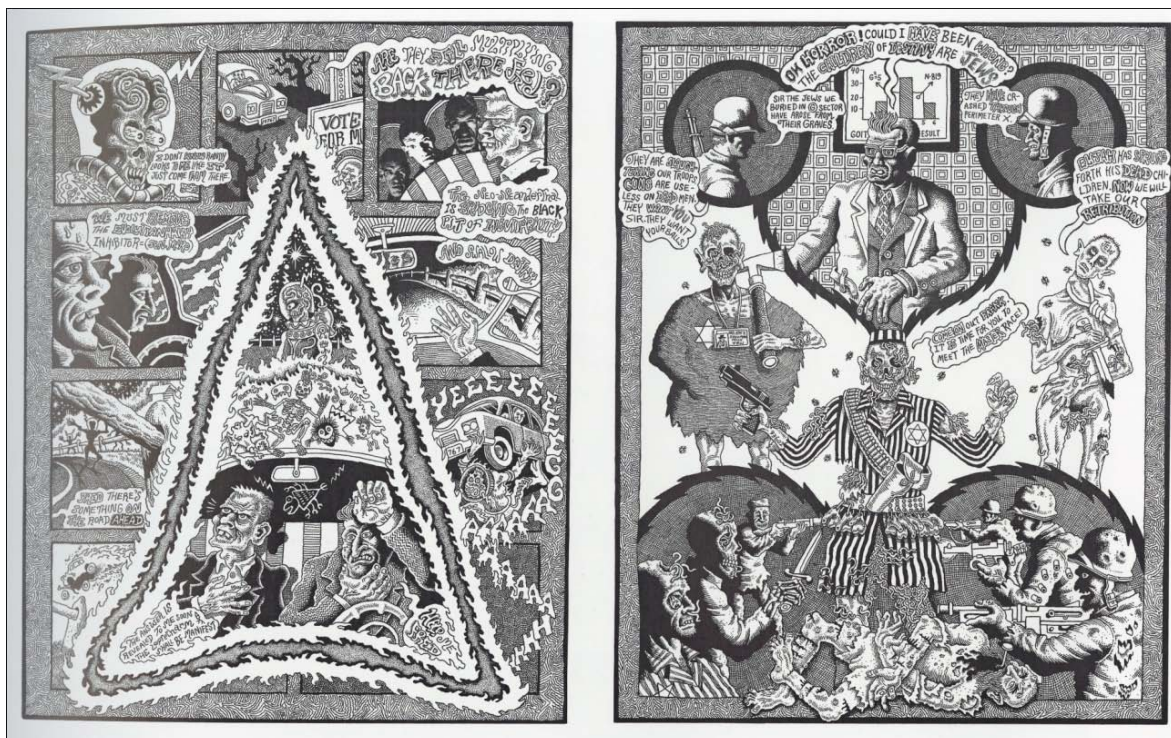


Fig. 1-4. “You can’t win: The autobiography of Jack Black”, in: *Cosmic Retribution*, Fantagraphics, 1992, p.39

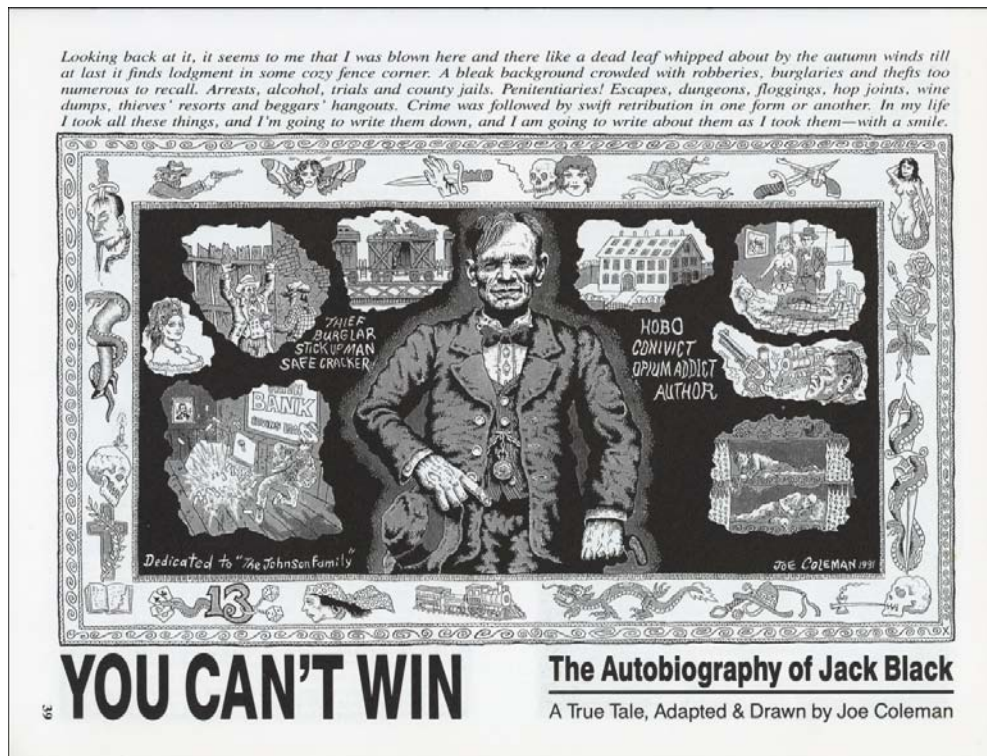


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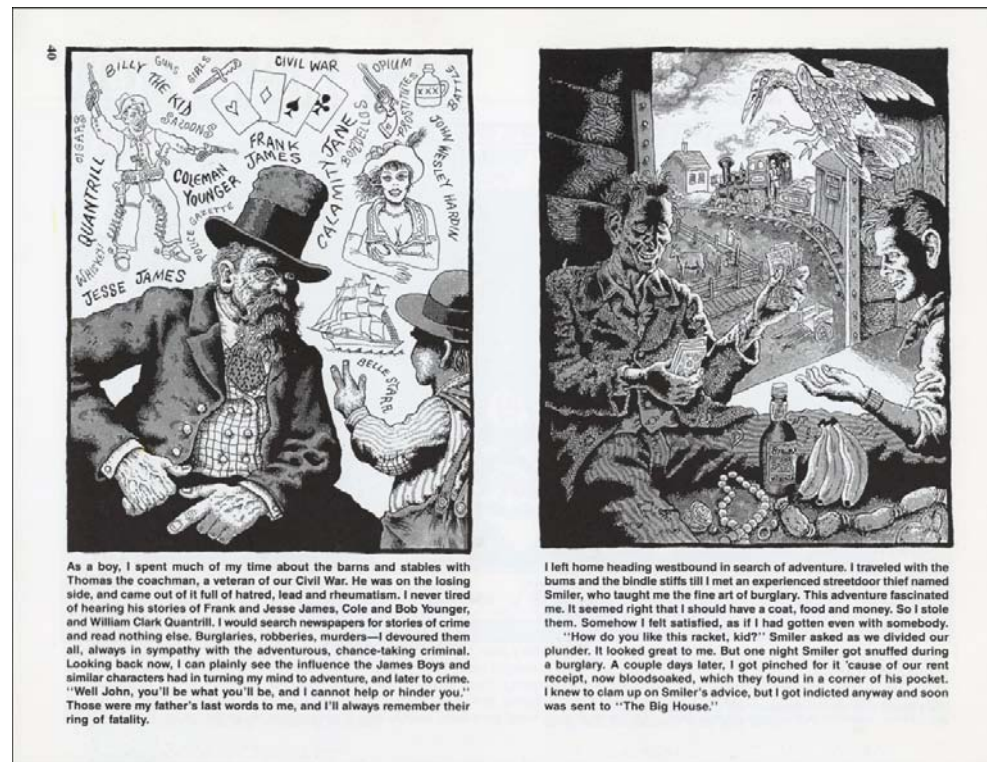


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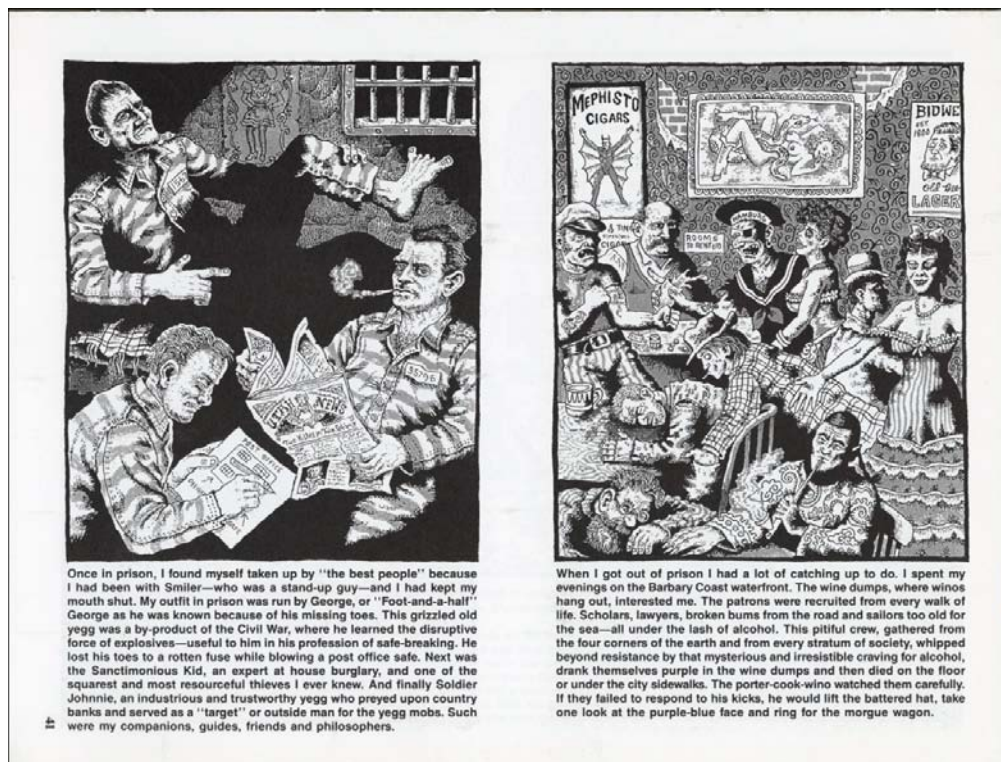


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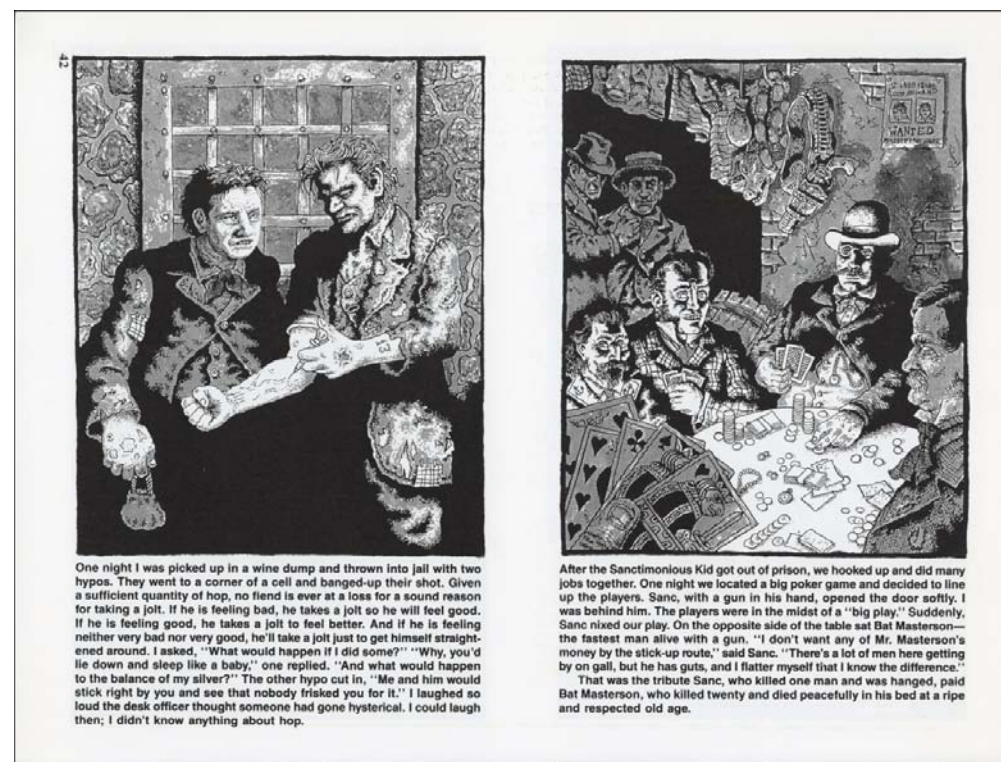


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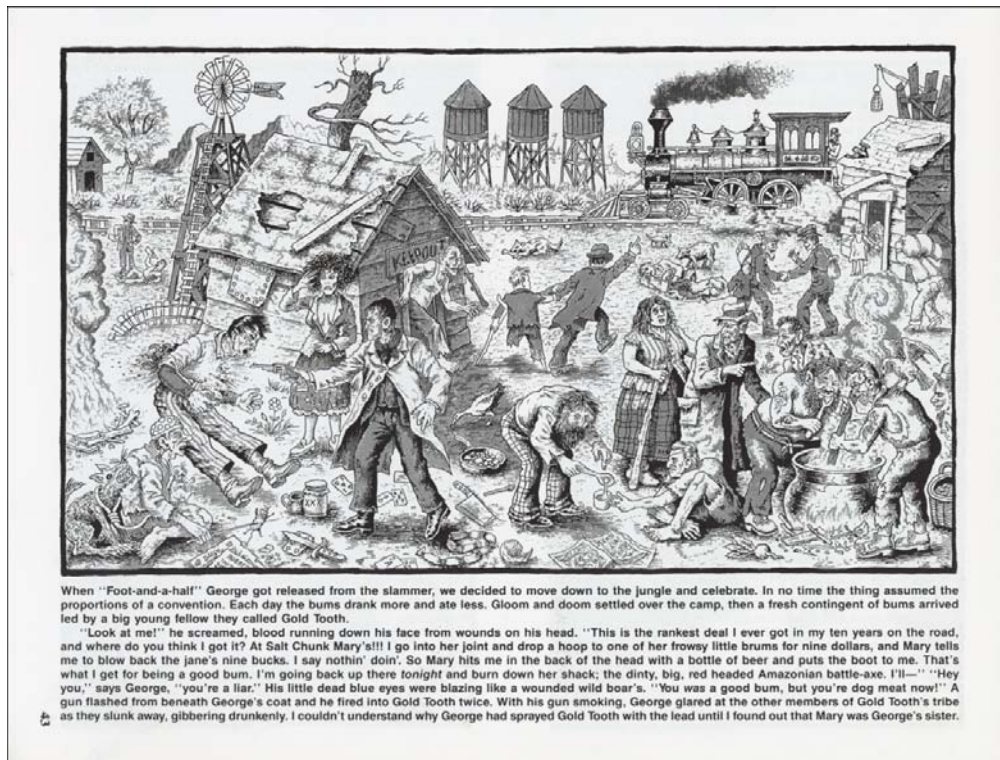


Fig.1-9. "You can't win: The autobiography of Jack Black", in: *Cosmic Retribution*, Fantagraphics, 1992, p.44

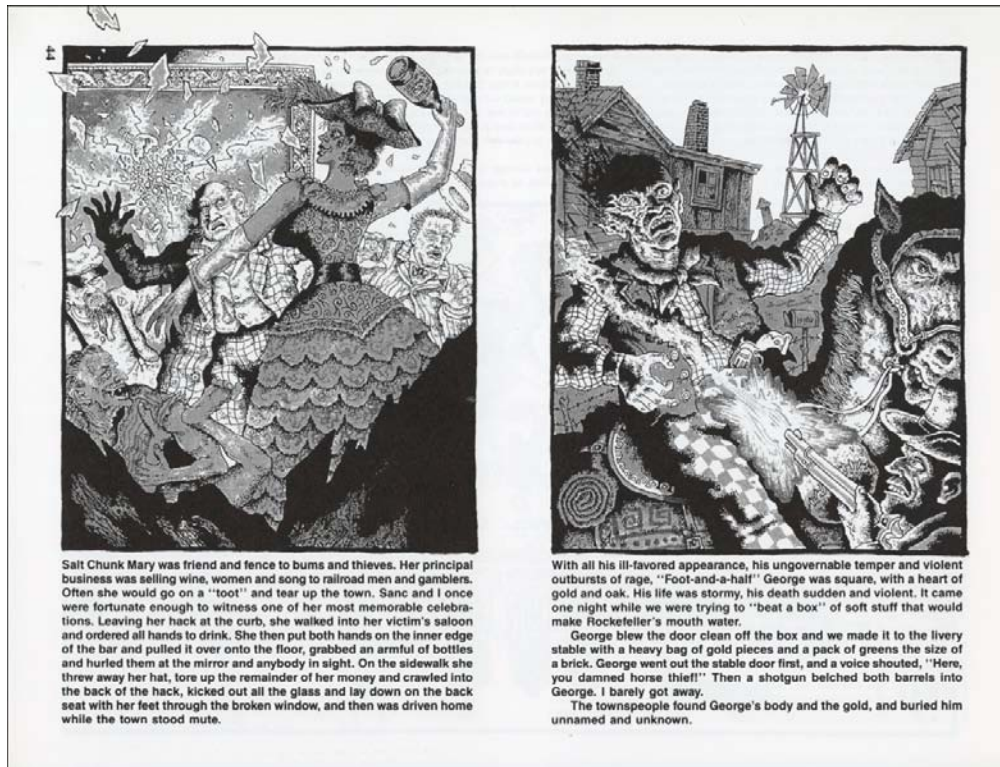


Fig 1-10. “You can’t win: The autobiography of Jack Black”, in: *Cosmic Retribution*, Fantagraphics, 1992, p.45.

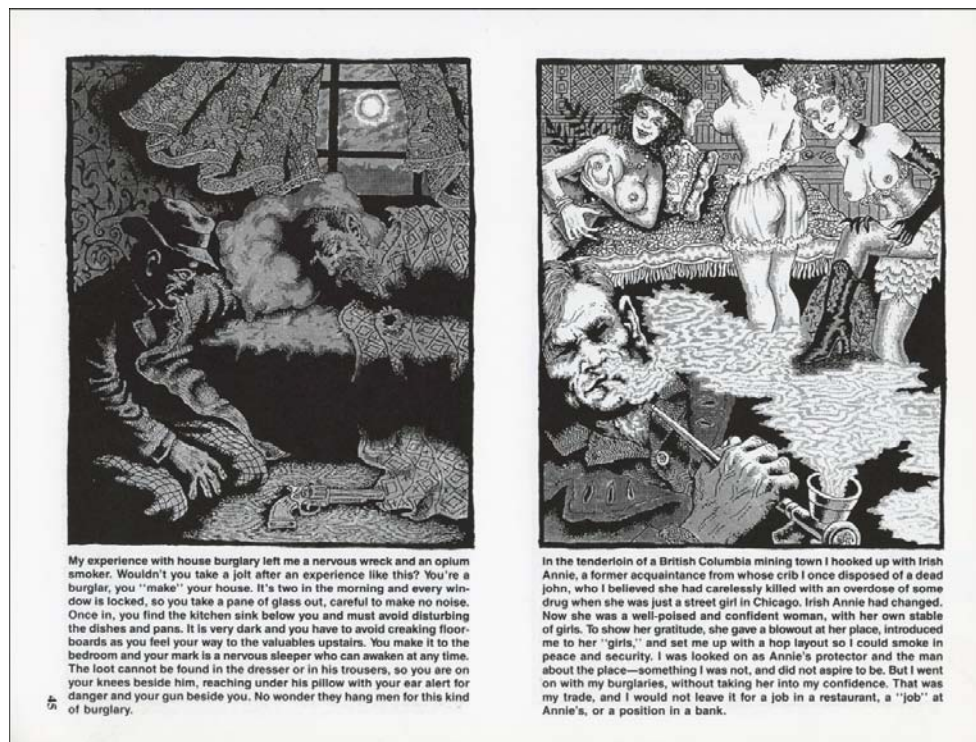


Fig 1-11. “You can’t win: The autobiography of Jack Black”, in: *Cosmic Retribution*, Fantagraphics, 1992, p.46

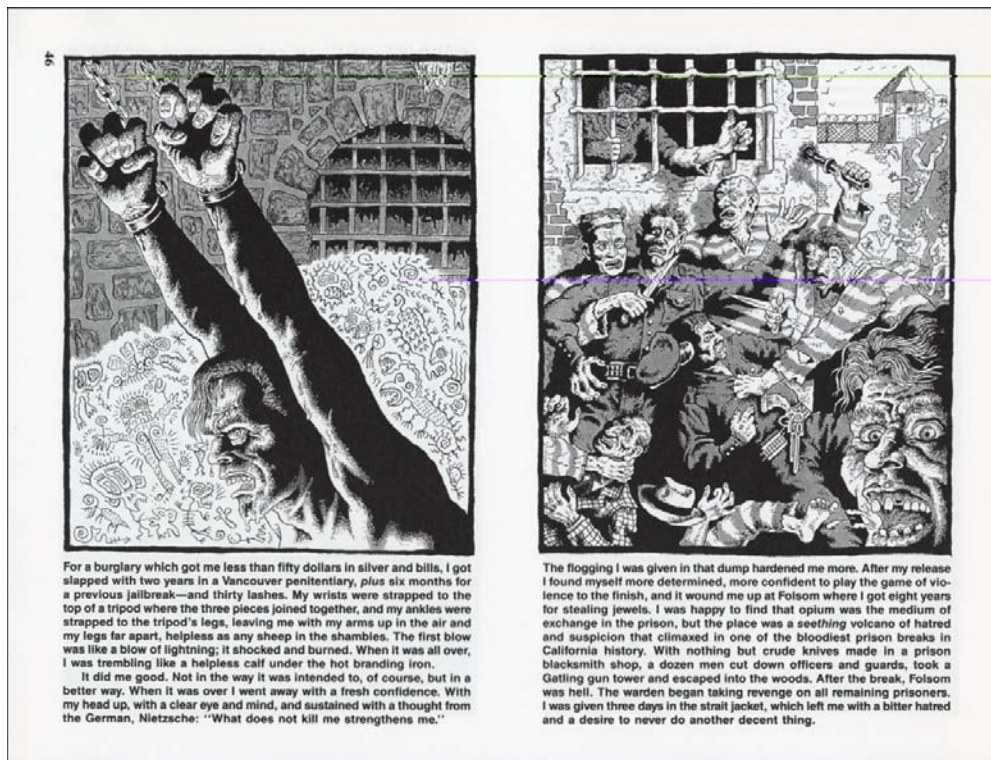


Fig. 1-12. “You can’t win: The autobiography of Jack Black”, in: *Cosmic Retribution*, Fantagraphics, 1992, p.47

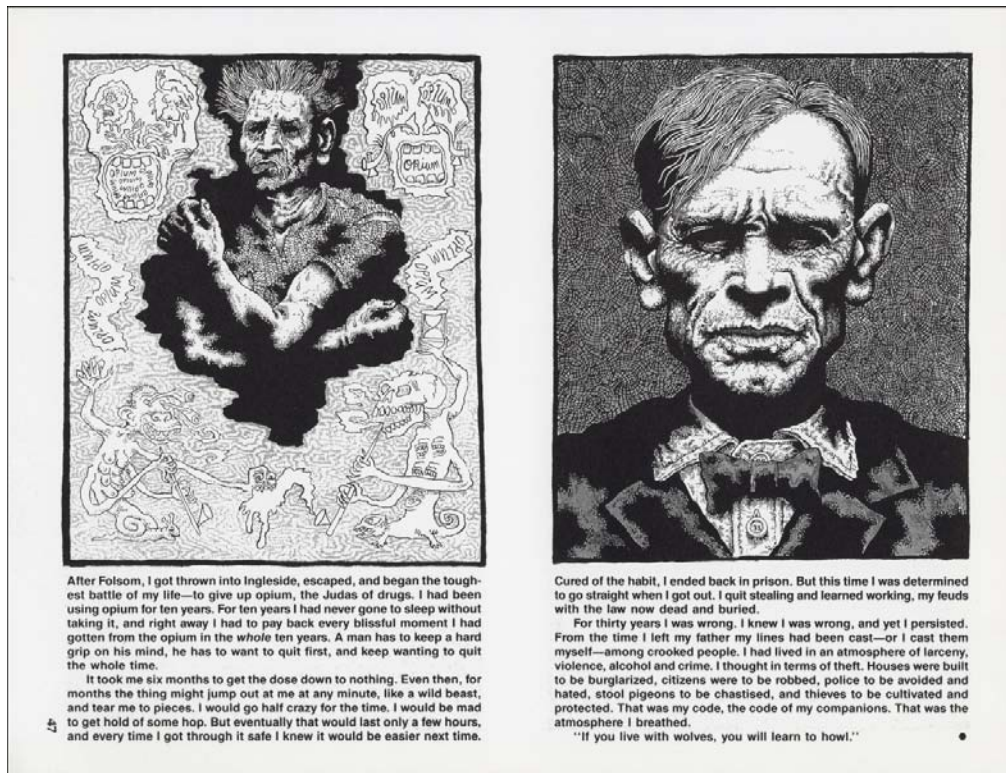


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Fig.1-14. *Portrait of Carl Panzram*, Acrylic on panel, 71 x 55cm, 1993

Fig. 1-15. *The Holy Saint Adolf II [Adolf Wölfli]*, Acrylic on panel, 86 x 71cm, 1995

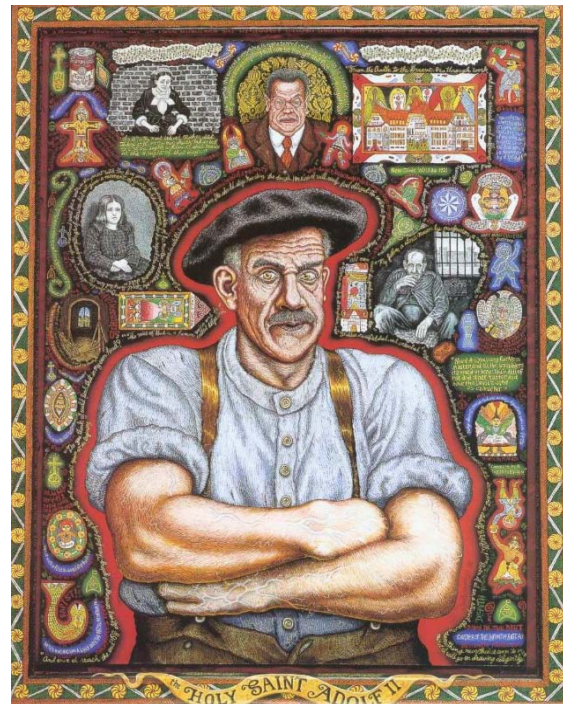
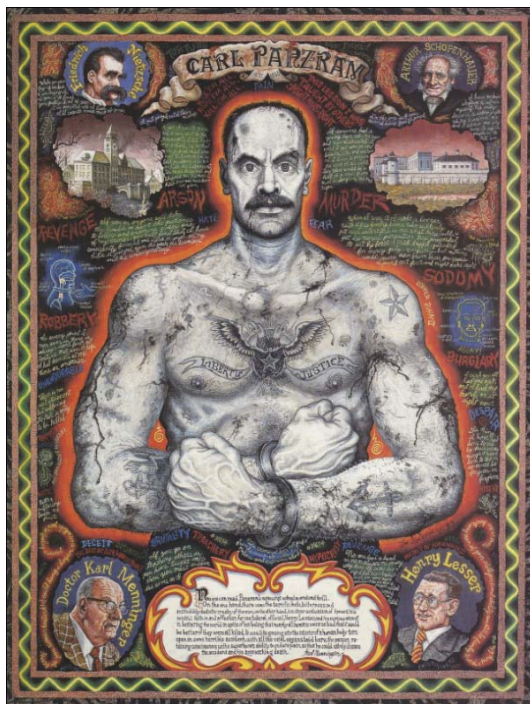
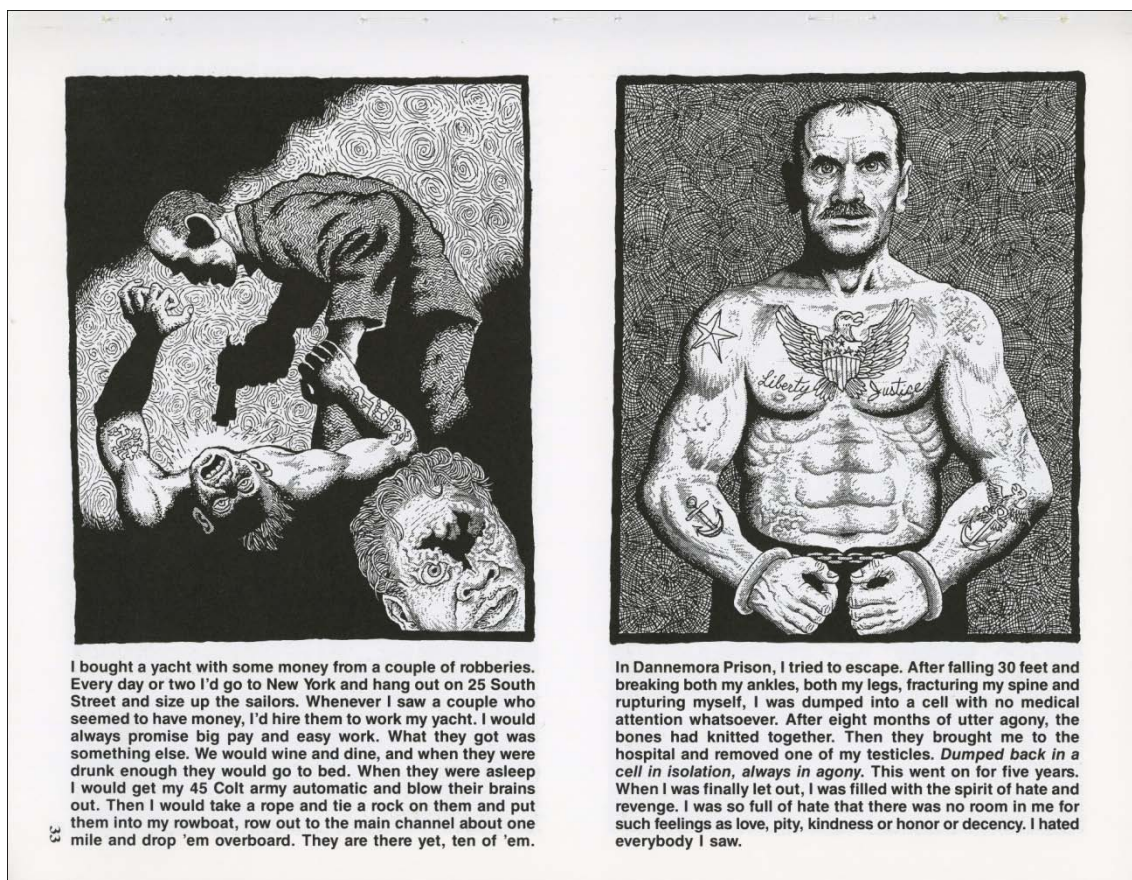


Fig. 1-16 .in *Cosmic Retribution*, Fantagraphics, 1992, p.33



I bought a yacht with some money from a couple of robberies. Every day or two I'd go to New York and hang out on 25 South Street and size up the sailors. Whenever I saw a couple who seemed to have money, I'd hire them to work my yacht. I would always promise big pay and easy work. What they got was something else. We would wine and dine, and when they were drunk enough they would go to bed. When they were asleep I would get my 45 Colt army automatic and blow their brains out. Then I would take a rope and tie a rock on them and put them into my rowboat, row out to the main channel about one mile and drop 'em overboard. They are there yet, ten of 'em.

In Dannemora Prison, I tried to escape. After falling 30 feet and breaking both my ankles, both my legs, fracturing my spine and rupturing myself, I was dumped into a cell with no medical attention whatsoever. After eight months of utter agony, the bones had knitted together. Then they brought me to the hospital and removed one of my testicles. Dumped back in a cell in isolation, always in agony. This went on for five years. When I was finally let out, I was filled with the spirit of hate and revenge. I was so full of hate that there was no room in me for such feelings as love, pity, kindness or honor or decency. I hated everybody I saw.

Fig.1-17. *The Man of Sorrows*, Acrylic on panel, 71 x 55cm, 1993



Fig. 1-18. Page in: *The Man of Sorrow*, Gates of Heck, 1993

Fig.1-19. Page in: *The Man of Sorrow*, Gates of Heck, 1993

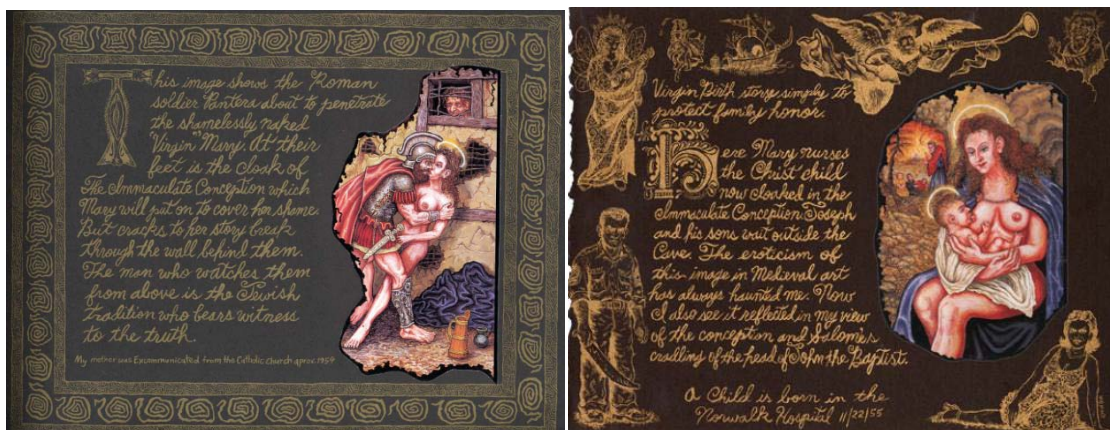


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Fig.1-21. Page in: *The Man of Sorrow*, Gates of Heck, 1993

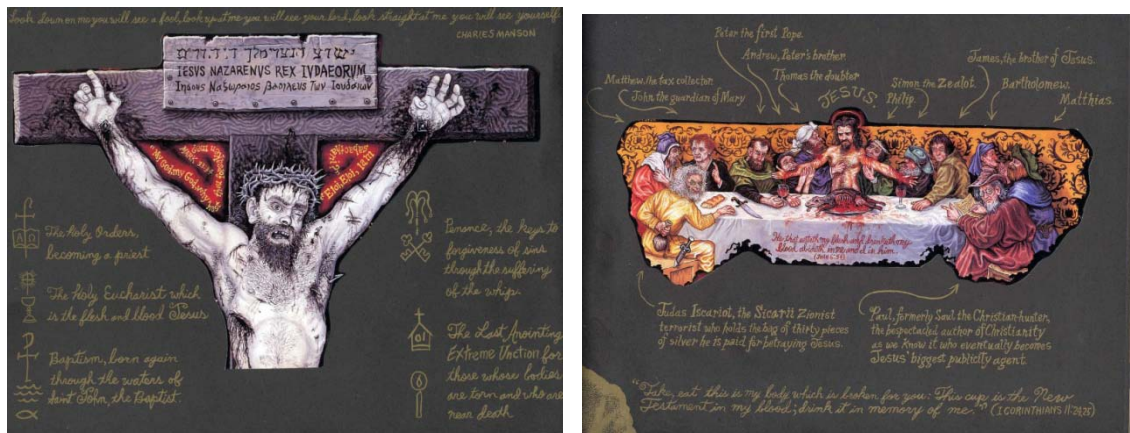


Fig. 1-22. *Isenheim Altarpiece* (The first view), Matthias Grünewald, Oil on wood, 269 x 154 cm, 1512–1516

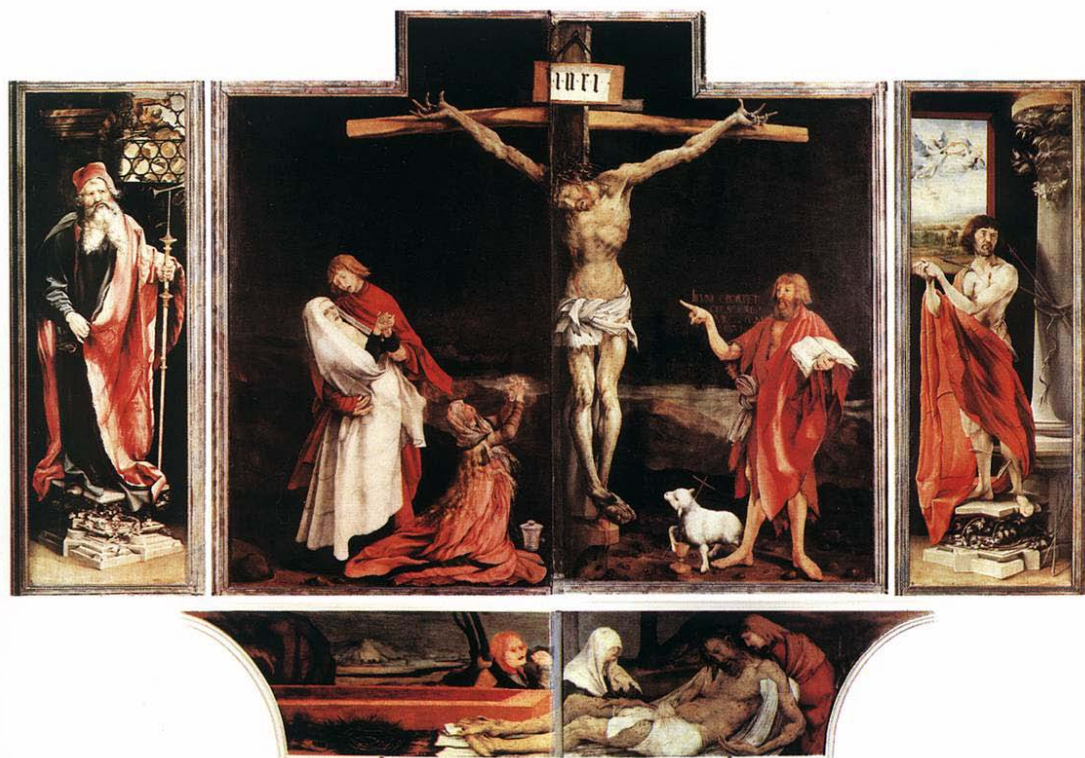


Fig. 1-23. *Altar to Sex, Violence and Death*, Acrylic on panel (hinged triptych), 24 x 25 x 3 cm with doors open, 2001



Fig. 1-24. *Pandora's Box*, Acrylic on found triptych Overall (open): 21 x 25 cm Overall (closed)), 2010



Fig. 1-25. *I Am Joe's Circulatory System* (Cover of *Cosmic Retribution*), Acrylic on panel, 50 x 66cm, 1991

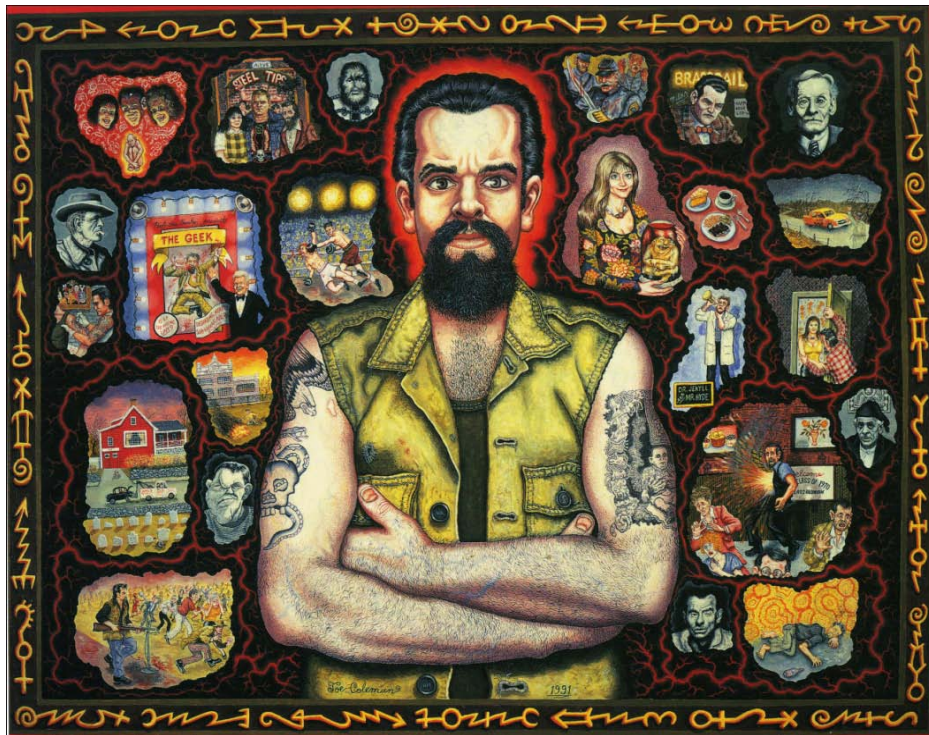


Fig. 1-26. *I Am Joe's Fear of Disease*, Acrylic on panel, with medical paraphernalia, mounted on hospital gown, 86 x 101cm, 2001

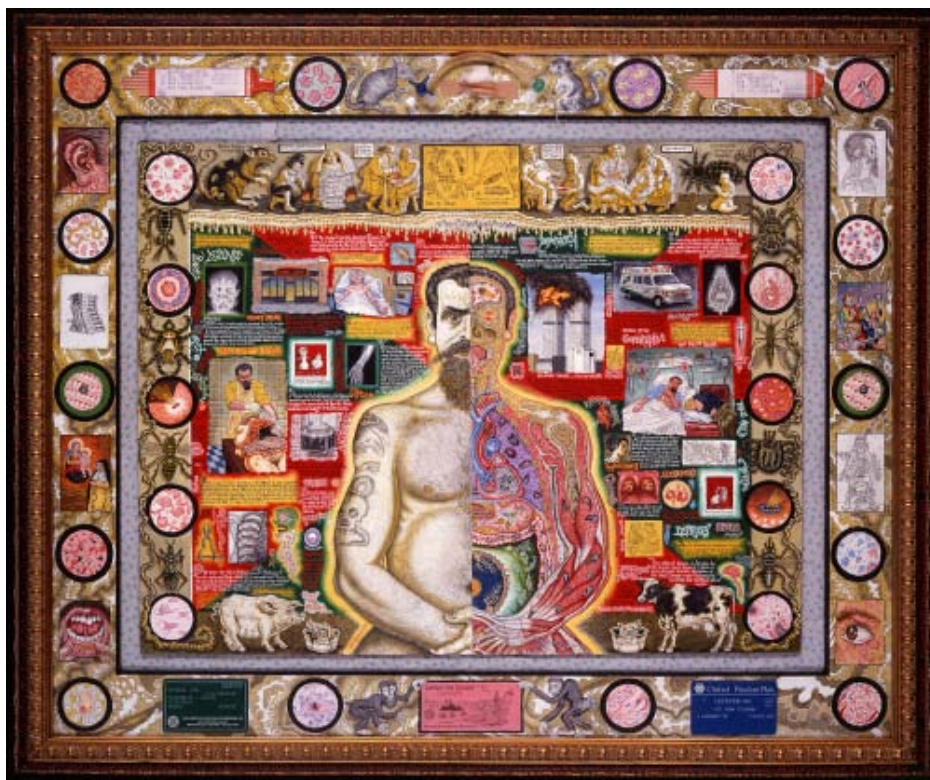


Fig. 1-27. *Faith*, Acrylic on panel, 71 x 86cm, 1996

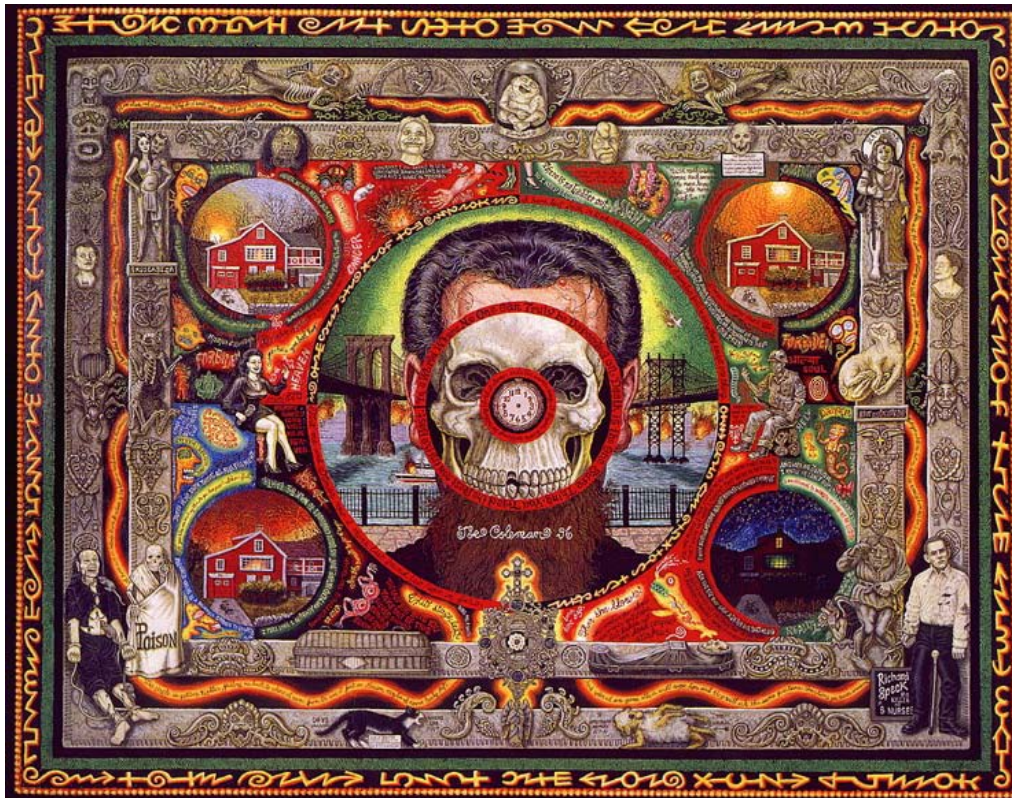


Fig. 1-28. *Coal Man*, Acrylic on panel, 71 x 86cm, 1997



Fig. 1-29. *Self-Portrait*, Acrylic on panel, 40 x 25cm, 1986

Fig. 1-30. *Portrait of Professor Momboze-o*, Acrylic on panel, approx. 152 x 106cm, 1986

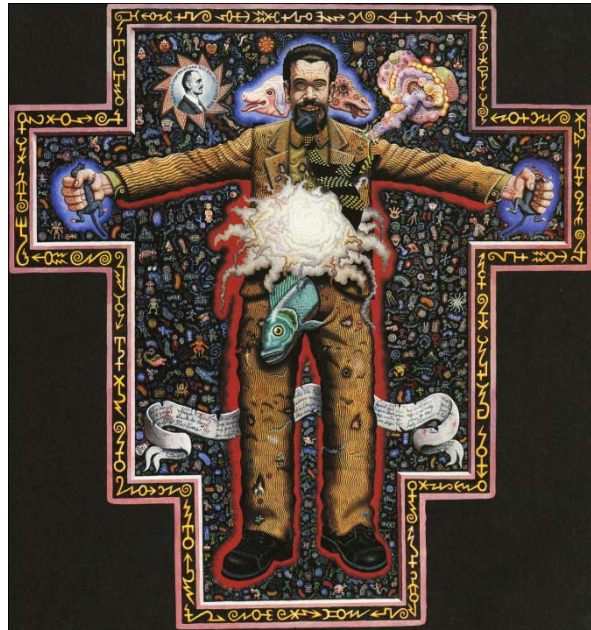


Fig. 1-31. *Auto-Autopsy*, Acrylic on panel, 35 x 28cm, 1992

Fig. 1-32. *Je and Ill*, Acrylic on panel, 15 x 15cm, 1993

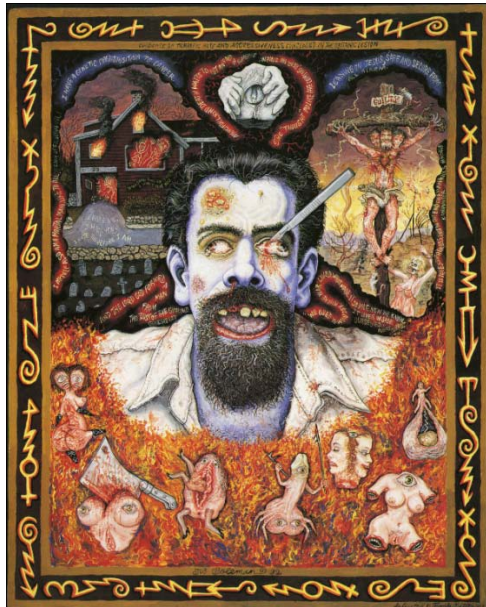


Fig. 1-33. *Public Enemy No. 1 [John Dillinger]*, Acrylic on panel, 71 x 86cm, 1999



Fig. 1-34. *And a Child shall lead them*, Acrylic on panel, girl's school uniform, 71 x 86cm, 2000



Fig 1-35. *American Venus [Jayne Mansfield]*, Acrylic on panel, 86 x 71cm, 1997

Fig 1-36. *A Picture From Life's Other Side [Hank Williams]*, Acrylic on panel, 86 x 71cm, 1998



Fig 1-37. *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*, Acrylic on panel, 27 x 41cm, 2000

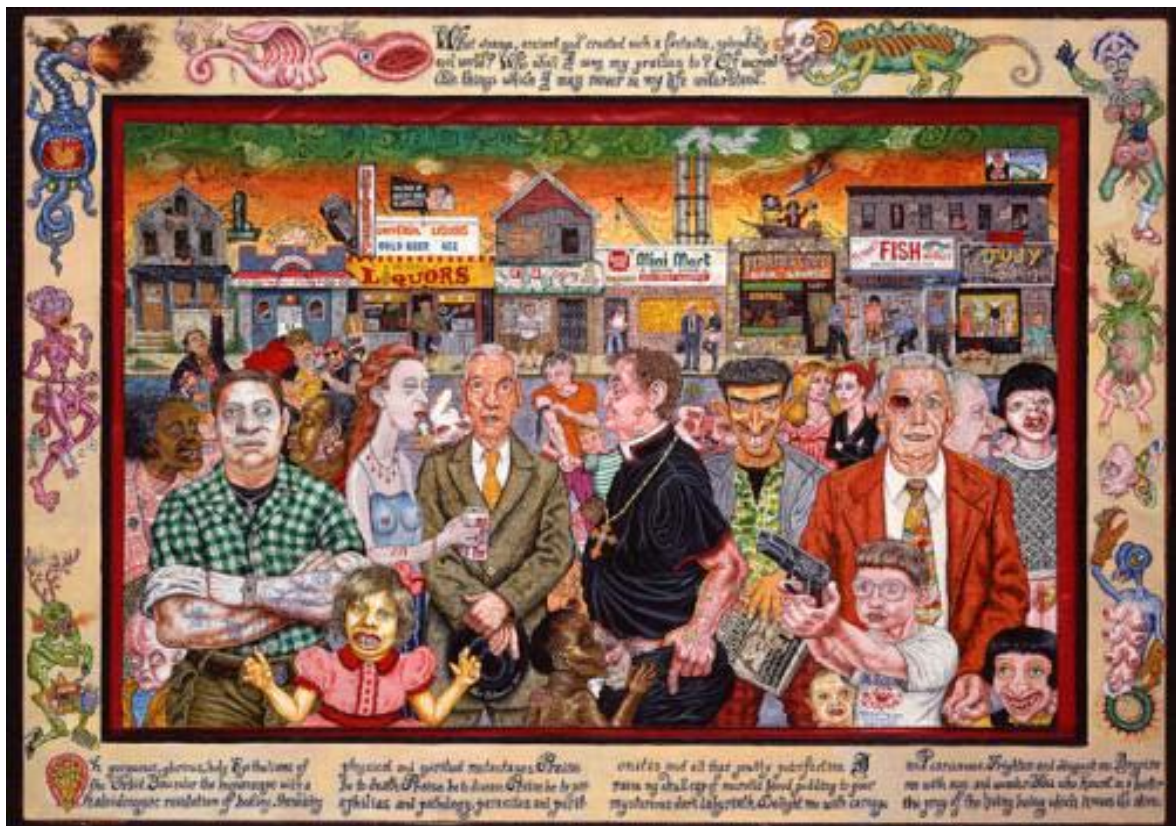


Fig. 1-38. *Vietnamese Prostitutes*, Acrylic on panel, 28 x 43cm, 1994



Fig. 1-39. *As You Look into the Eye of the Cyclops, So the Eye of the Cyclops Looks into You*, Acrylic on masonite, mixed media console, audio soundtrack, mounted on smoking jacket worn in film, 168 x 95 x 53cm (in console), 76 x 76 cm (painting only), 2003



Fig.1-40. *Woman Walks into Bar-Is Raped by Four Men on the Pool Table-While 20 Watch*, Mixed media, 232.7 x 287.7 cm, 1983



Fig.1-41. *Untitled*, Etching on paper, 28 x 45cm (sheet),25 x 28 cm (image), 1984



Fig.1-42. *Pit's Letter*, Four Walls Eight Windows, 2000

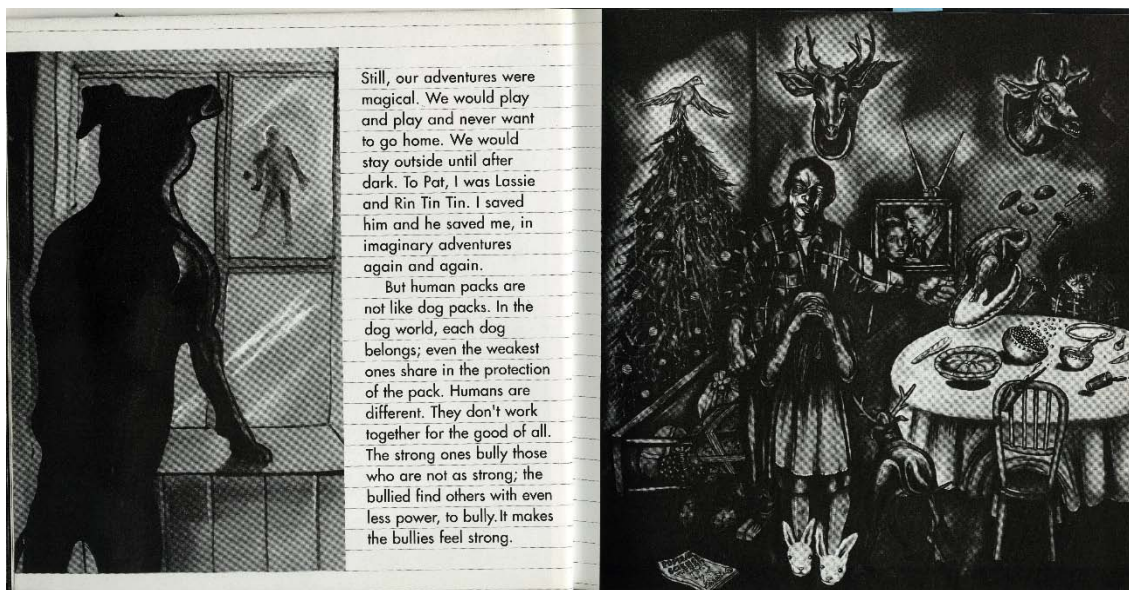


Fig.1-43. *Pit's Letter*, Four Walls Eight Windows, 2000

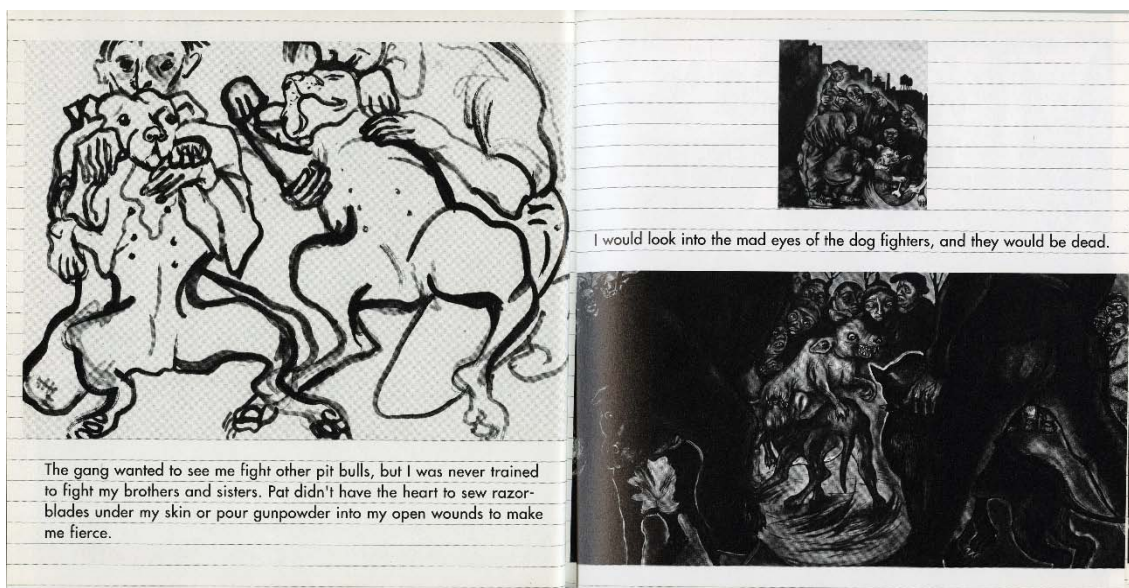


Fig. 1-44. *Pit's Letter*, Four Walls Eight Windows, 2000

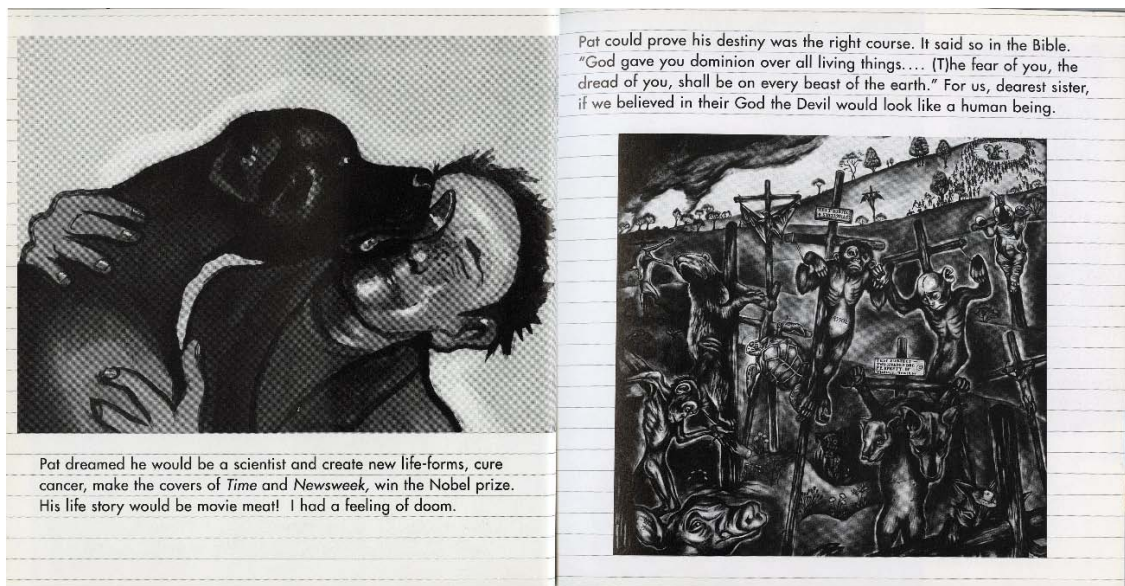


Fig. 1-45. *Pit's Letter*, Four Walls Eight Windows, 2000



Fig.1-46. *Pit's Letter*, Four Walls Eight Windows, 2000



Fig.1-47. *Pit's Letter*, Four Walls Eight Windows, 2000

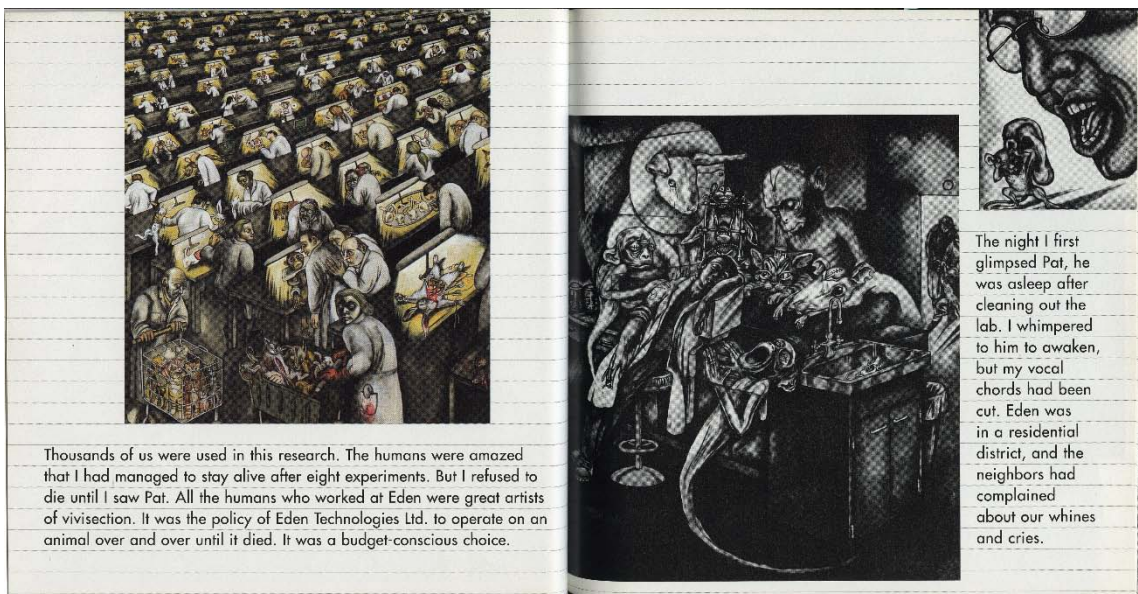


Fig.1-48 *Pit's Letter*, Four Walls Eight Windows, 2000

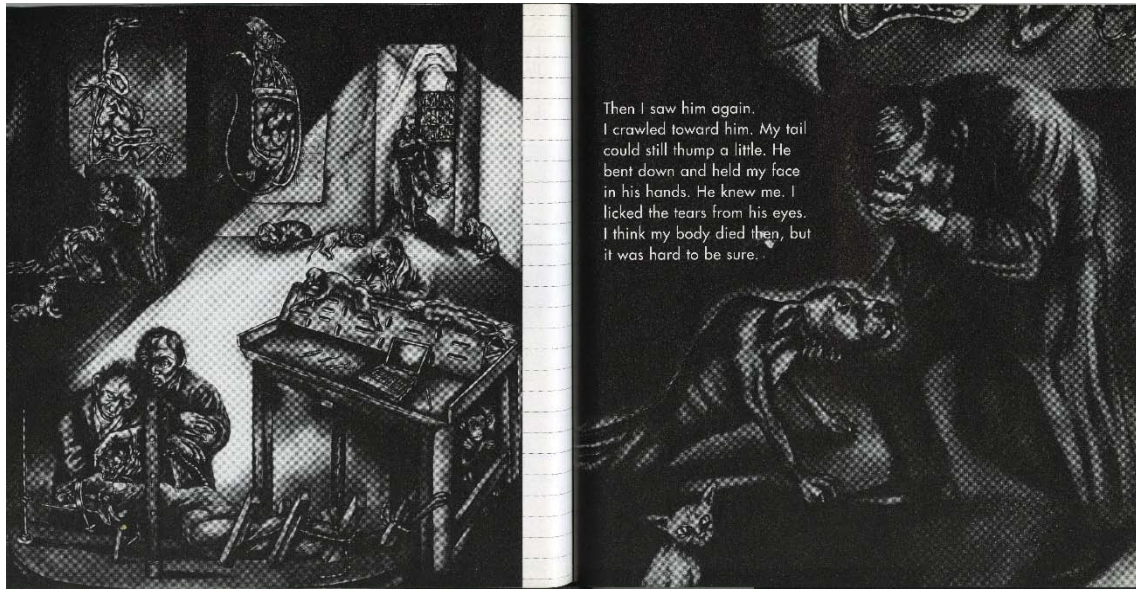


Fig.1-49. *Second Millenium*, Serigraph on paper, 56 x 57cm, 1998



Fig.1-50. *Sheep of Fools: a song cycle for 5 voices*(cover), with Judith Brody, Fantagraphics, 2005, Cover

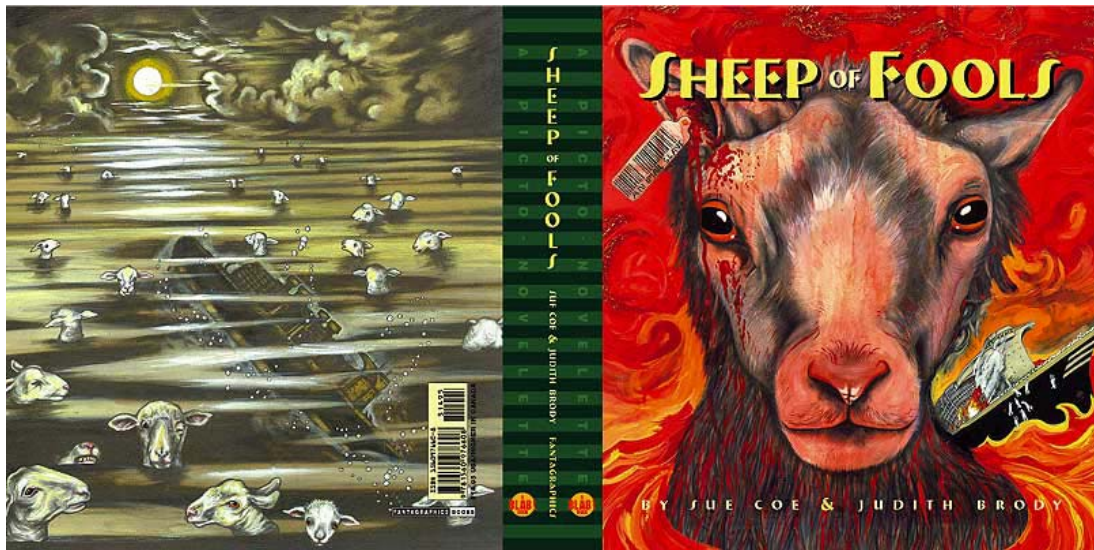


Fig.1-51. *Sheep of Fools: a song cycle for 5 voices*, with Judith Brody, Fantagraphics, 2005

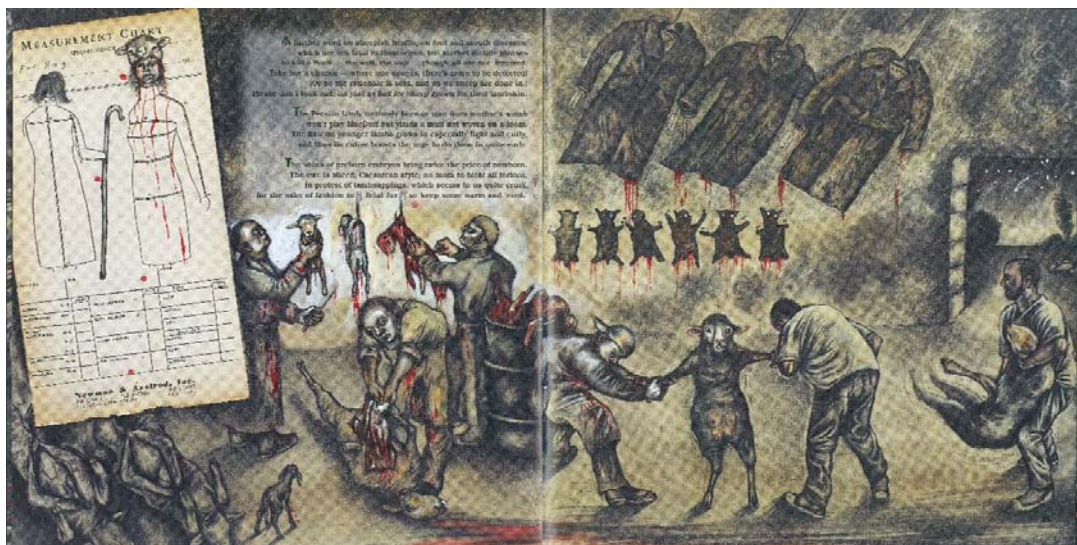


Fig. 1-52 *Sheep of Fools: a song cycle for 5 voices*, with Judith Brody, Fantagraphics, 2005

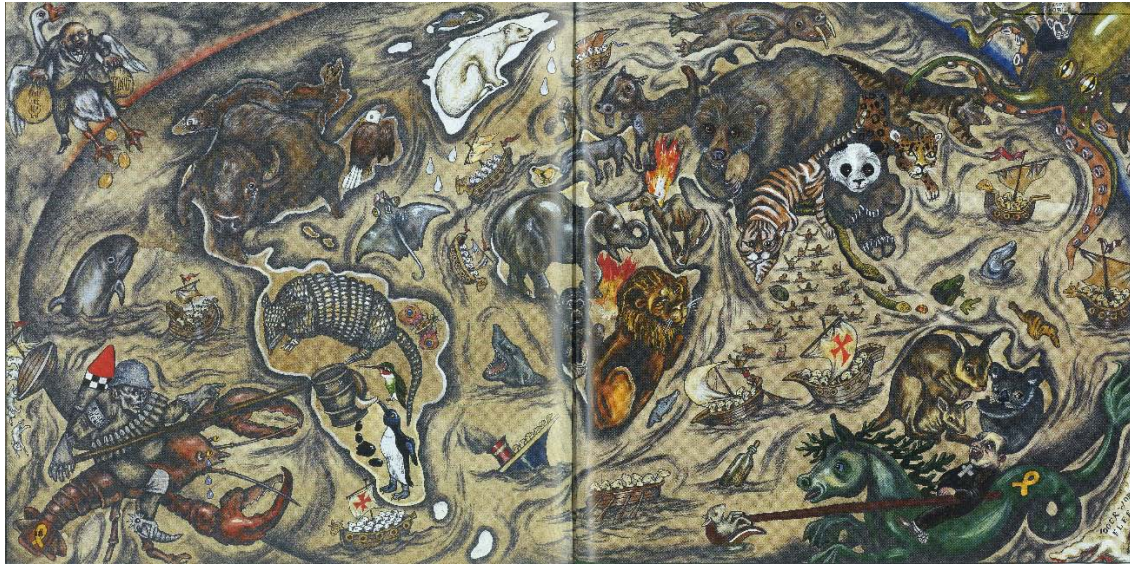


Fig. 1-53 *Sheep of Fools: a song cycle for 5 voices*, with Judith Brody, Fantagraphics, 2005

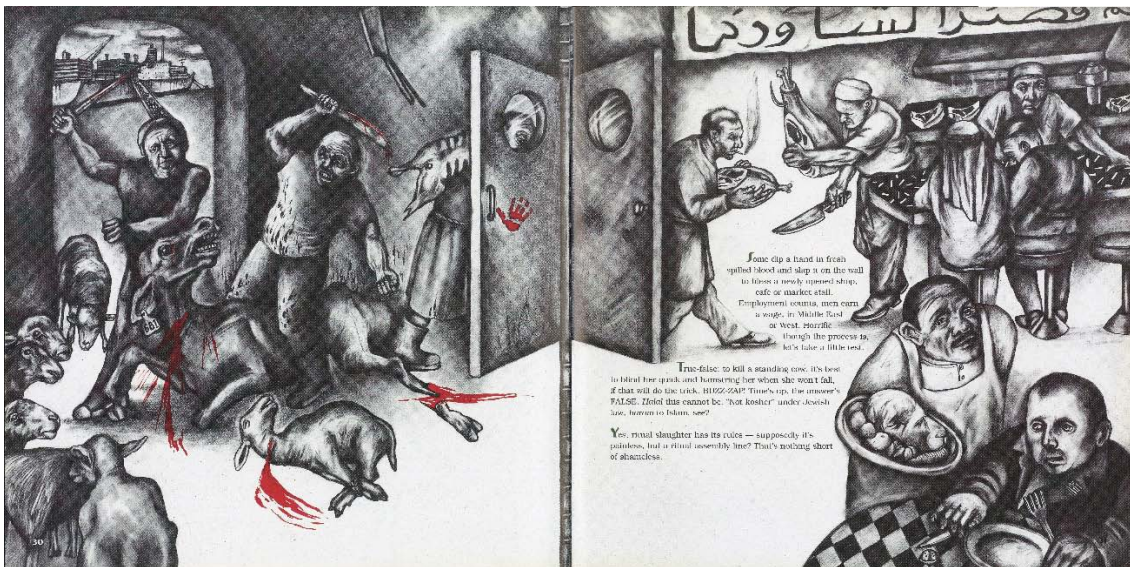


Fig 1-54. *X-Pictures: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, New Press Publishing, 1986, Cover

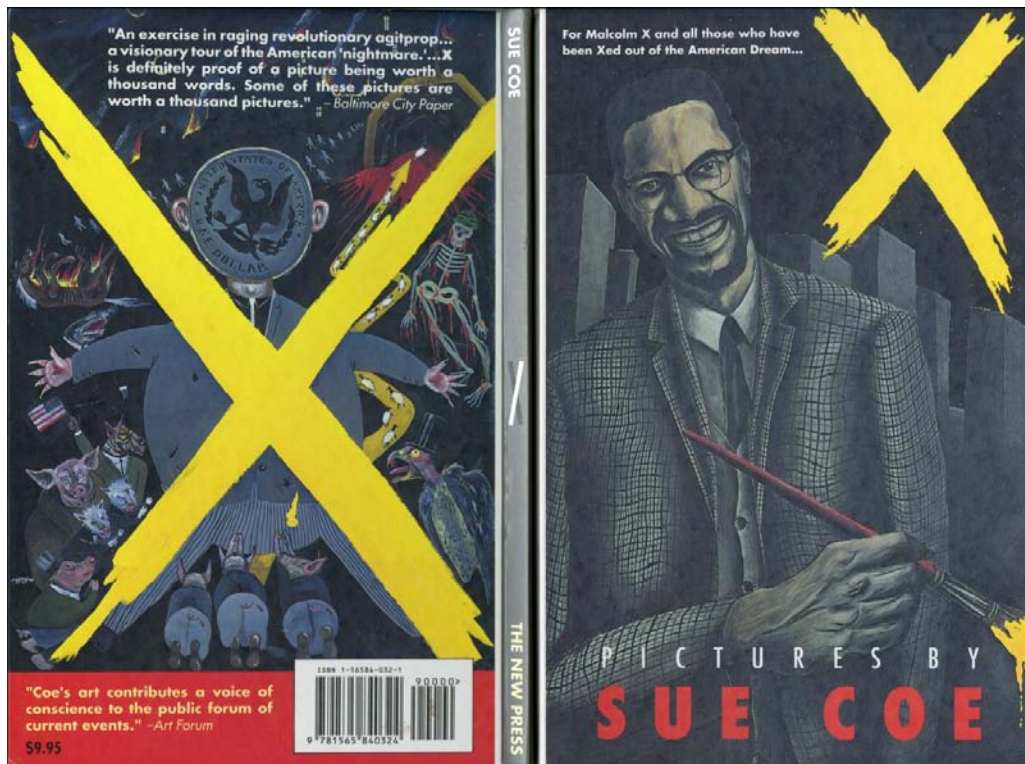


Fig 1-55. *X-Pictures: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, New Press Publishing, 1986



Fig. 1-56. *X-Pictures: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, New Press Publishing, 1986

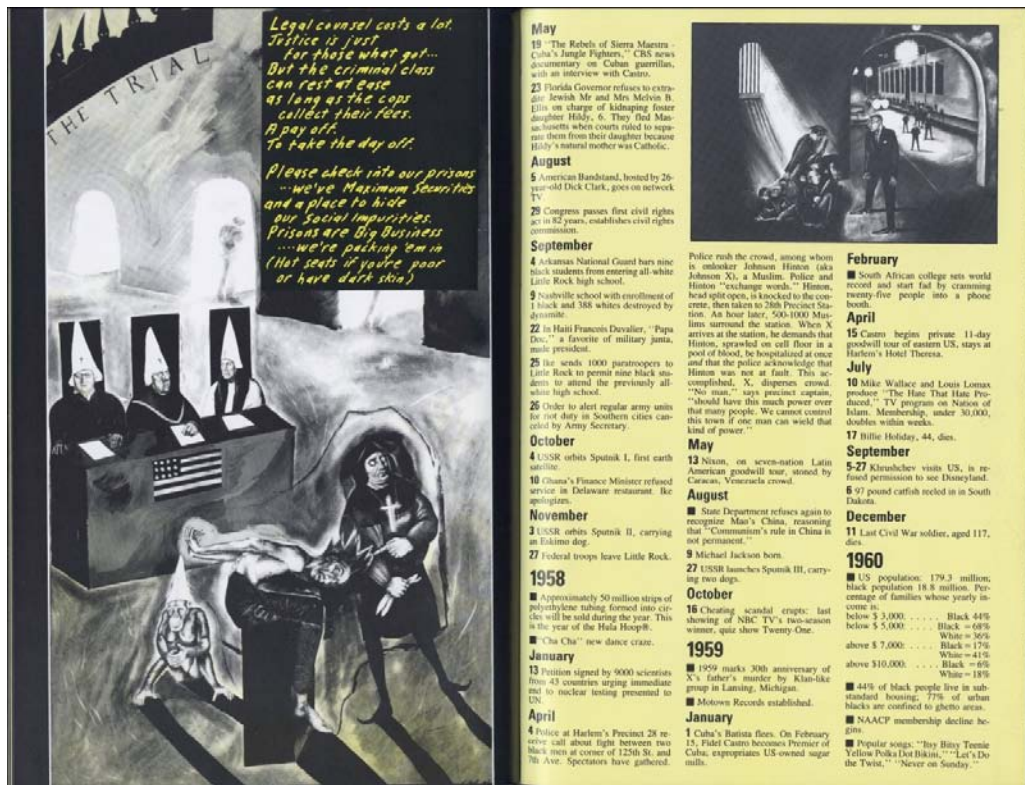


Fig. 1-57. *X-Pictures: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, New Press Publishing, 1986

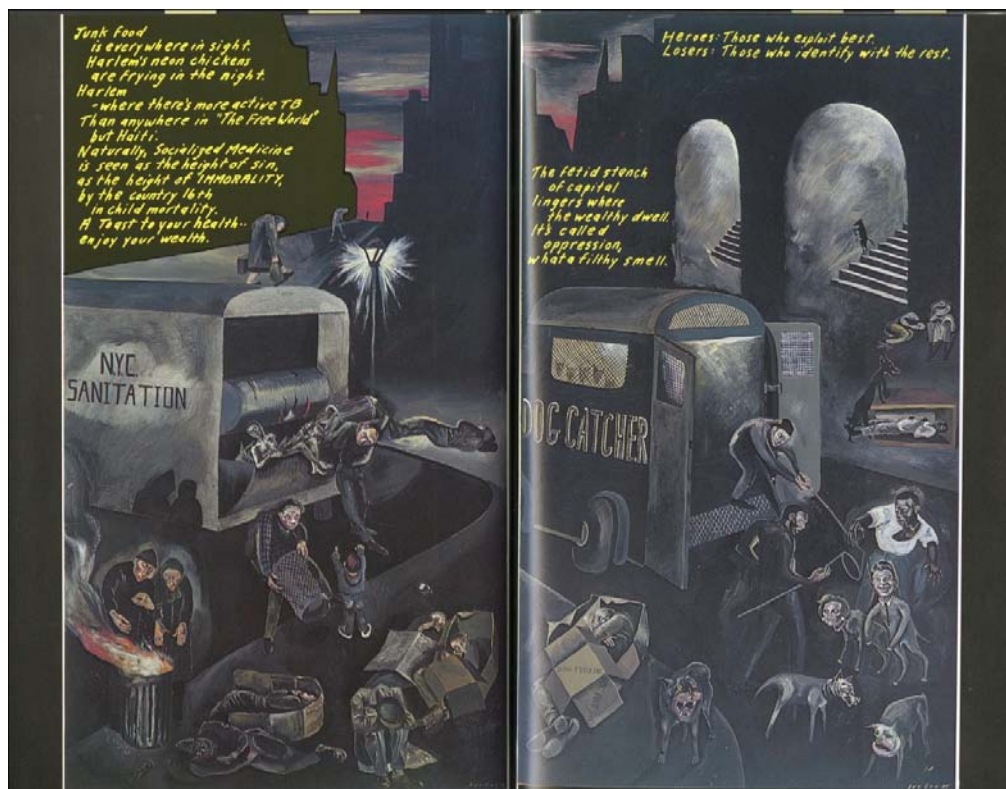


Fig. 1-58. *X-Pictures: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, New Press Publishing, 1986

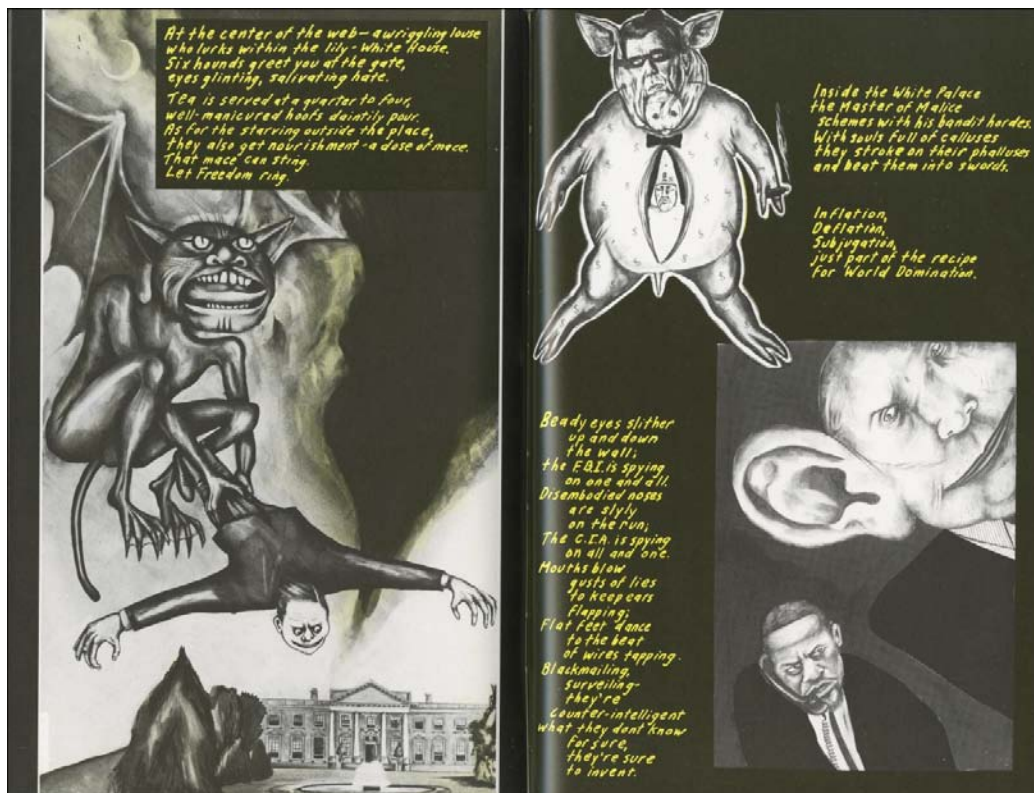


Fig. 1-59. *X-Pictures: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, New Press Publishing, 1986

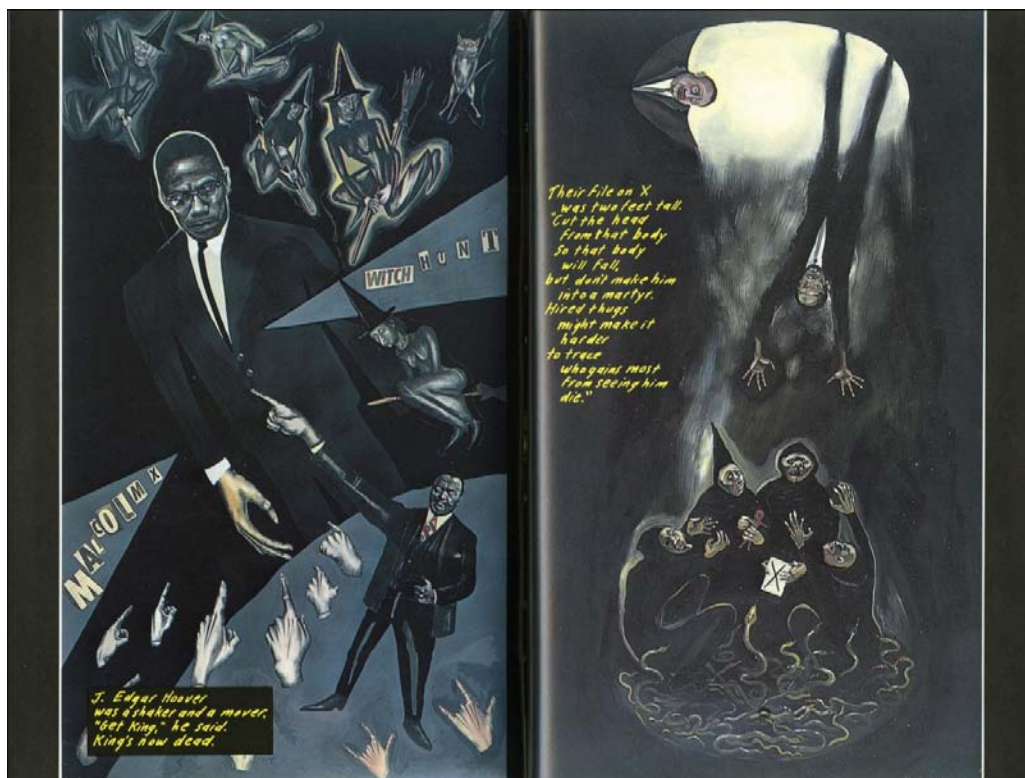


Fig.1-60. *Bully!: Master of the Global Merry-Go-Round*, Four Walls Eight Windows, 2004, Cover

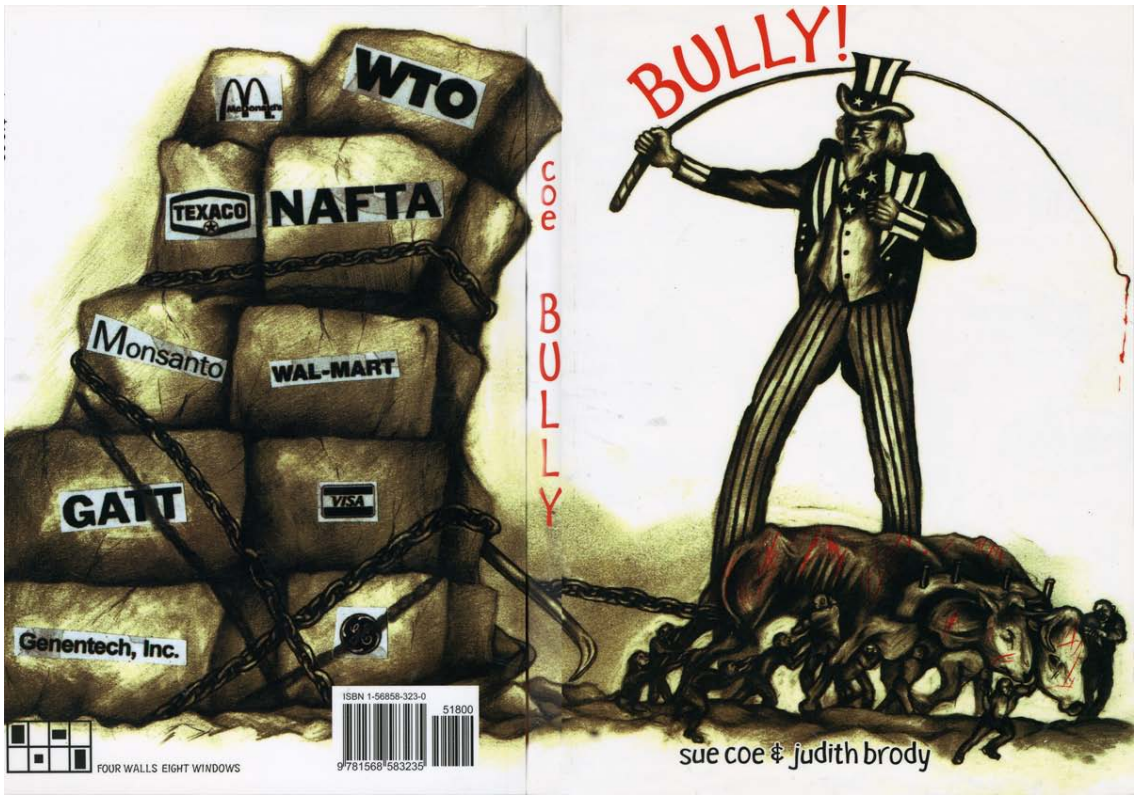


Fig.1-61. *Bully!: Master of the Global Merry-Go-Round*, Four Walls Eight Windows, 2004, p. 31-32



Fig.1-62. *Bully! Master of the Global Merry-Go-Round*, Four Walls Eight Windows, 2004, p. 37-38

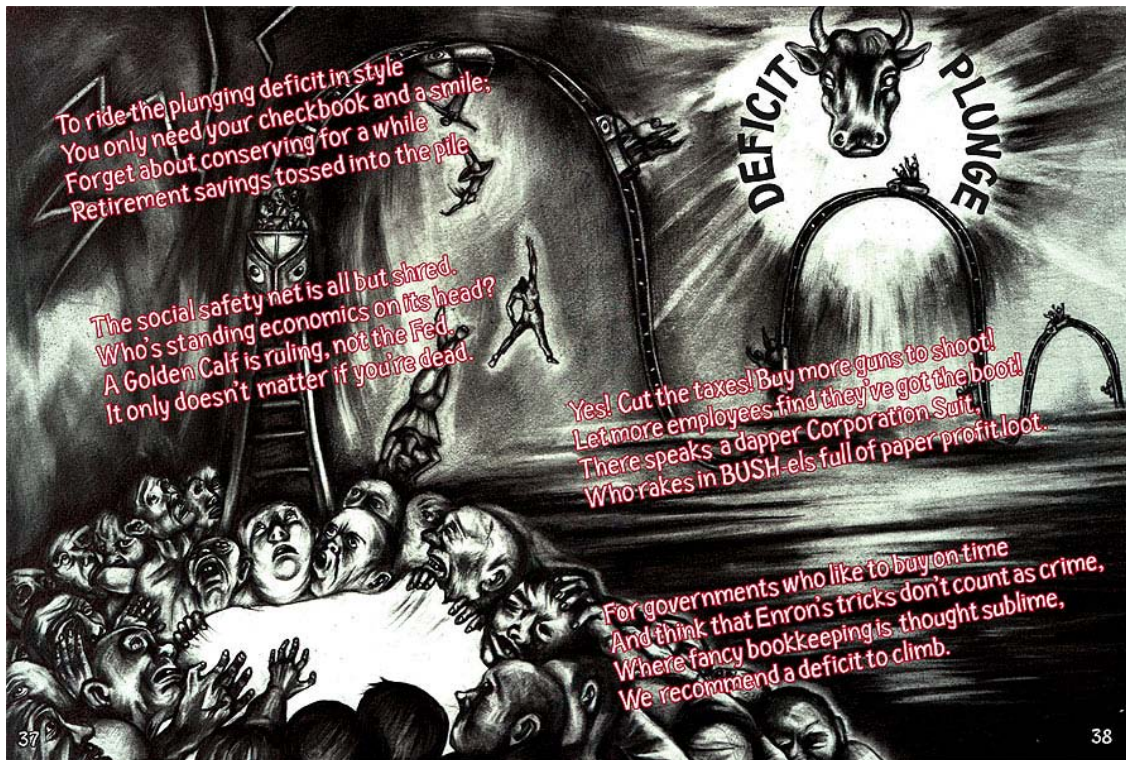


Fig.1-63. *Bully! Master of the Global Merry-Go-Round*, Four Walls Eight Windows, 2004, p.71-72



FREAKSHOW stage right

Don't see; can't hear, they
Only sermonize, certain
God loves their actions.
Medieval left overs
Armed and dangerous

Fig.1-64. *Bully!: Master of the Global Merry-Go-Round* , Four Walls Eight Windows, 2004, p. 117-118

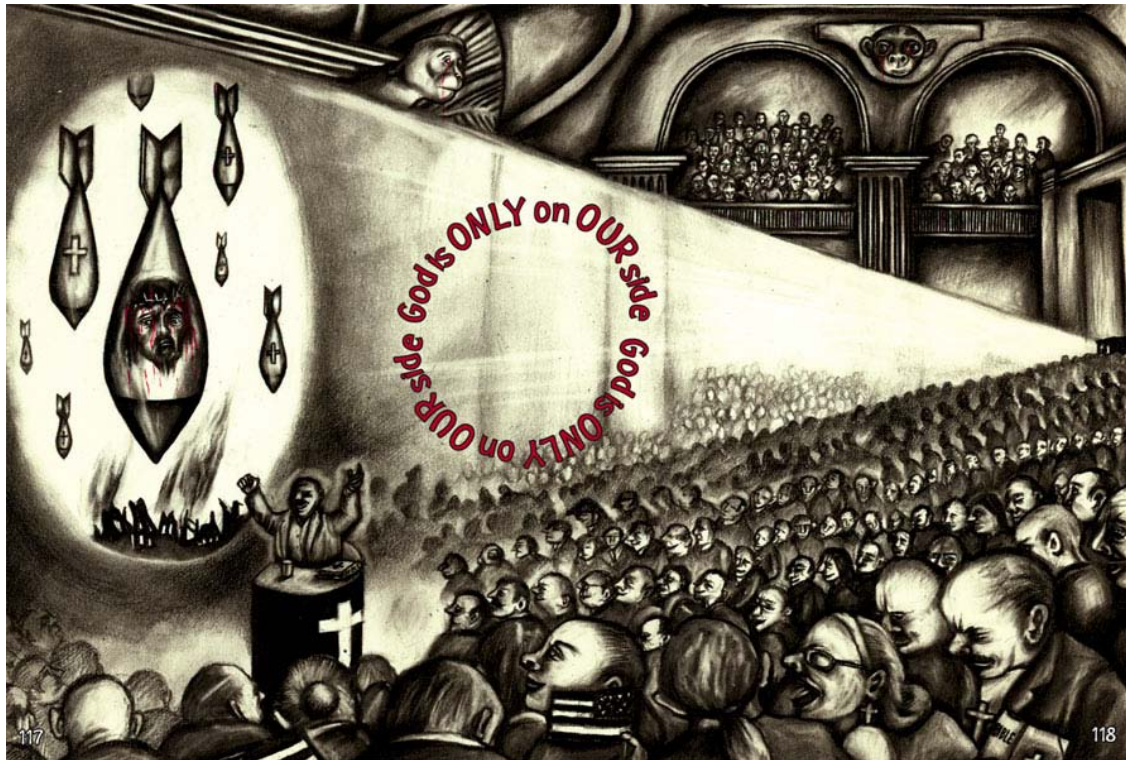


Fig.1-65. *Bully!: Master of the Global Merry-Go-Round*, Four Walls Eight Windows, 2004, p.136-137



Fig.1-66. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, with Holly Metz, Random House, 1984, Cover

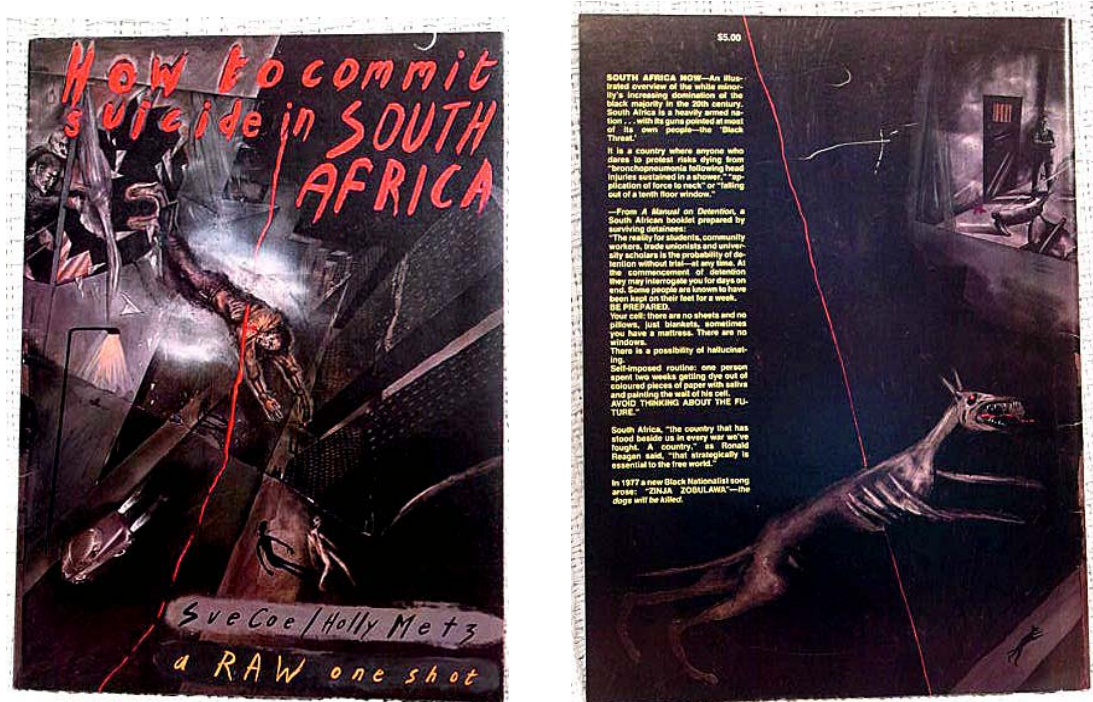


Fig.1 -67. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, with Holly Metz, Random House, 1984, Title page



Fig 1-68. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, with Holly Metz, Random House, 1984, p. 6-7



Fig 1-69. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, with Holly Metz, Random House, 1984, p. 8-9



Fig 1-70. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, with Holly Metz, Random House, 1984, p. 10-11



Fig 1-71. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, with Holly Metz, Random House, 1984, p. 12-13



Fig 1-72. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, with Holly Metz, Random House, 1984, p. 14-15



Fig 1-73. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, with Holly Metz, Random House, 1984, p. 16-17



RURAL LABORERS

The South's rural laborers are a diverse group. They work in a variety of fields, from agriculture to manufacturing. They are often the backbone of the rural economy, but they are also the most vulnerable. They live in poverty, and they are often the victims of discrimination. They are the forgotten people of the South.

W O M A N

Now you have touched a rock, you have struck a rock, you have dislodged a boulder, you will be crushed. (Lament, 1968)

DOMESTICS

In South Africa, an African woman who works as a domestic is often treated as a second-class citizen. She is often the victim of discrimination and abuse. She is the forgotten people of South Africa.

EDUCATION UNDER APARTHEID

Education under apartheid was a system of racial segregation. It was designed to keep the races apart and to maintain the white minority's dominance. It was a system of oppression and discrimination.

18 STRIKING A ROCK

YOUTH PREPAREDNESS 19

[illegible]

Fig.1 -76. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, with Holly Metz, Random House, 1984, Center fold

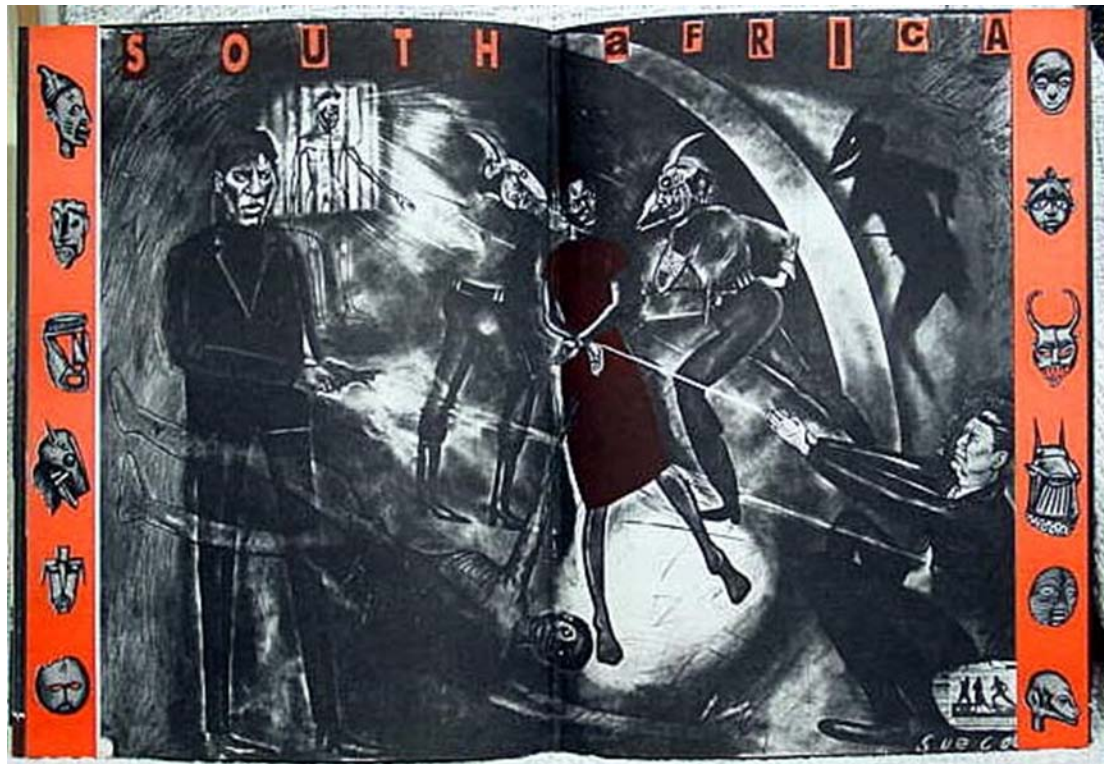


Fig.1-77. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, with Holly Metz, Random House, 1984, p. 24-25



Fig 1-78. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, with Holly Metz, Random House, 1984, p. 26-27



Fig 1-79. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, with Holly Metz, Random House, 1984, p. 28-29



Fig 1-80. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, with Holly Metz, Random House, 1984, p.30-31

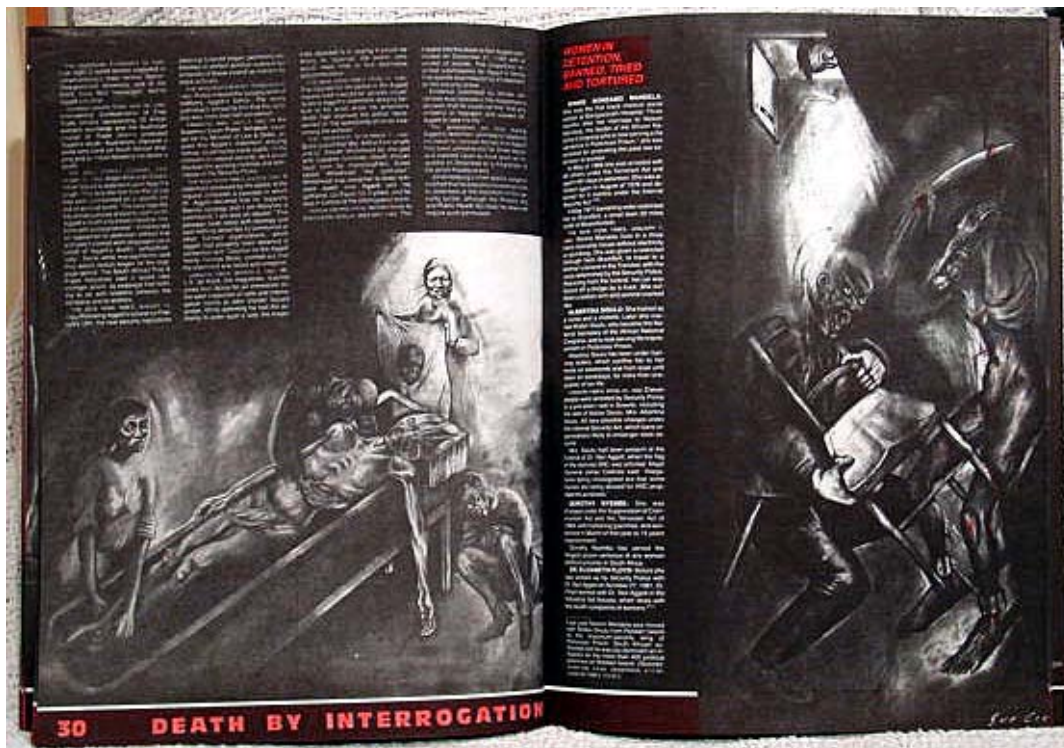


Fig 1-81. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, with Holly Metz, Random House, 1984, p. 32-33



Fig.1-82. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, with Holly Metz, Random House, 1984, p. 34-35



Fig.1-83. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, with Holly Metz, Random House, 1984, p. 36-37



Fig 1-84. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, with Holly Metz, Random House, 1984, p.38-39



Fig 1-85. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, with Holly Metz, Random House, 1984, p.40-41



Fig 1-86. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, with Holly Metz, Random House, 1984, p. 42-43



Fig 1-87. “Hanasaka jiji” (「ハナサカヂヂイ」) in: *Zenei manga kessakushuu* (『第2期現代漫—前衛漫画傑作集』), Genpei Akasegawa, Chikumashobo, 1971, p. 46-47

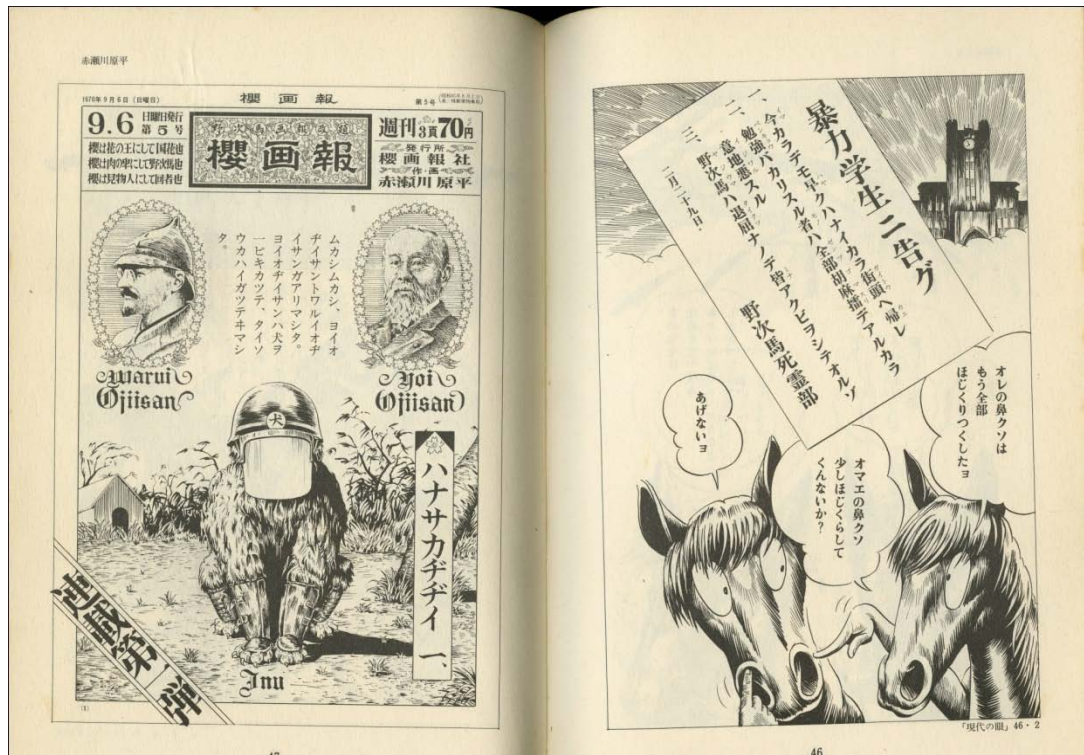


Fig.1-88. "Hanasaka jiji" (「ハナサカヂヂイ」) in: *Zenei manga kessakushuu* (『第2期現代漫画—前衛漫画傑作集』), Genpei Akasegawa, Chikumashobo, 1971, p. 48-49



Fig.1-89. "Hanasaka jiji" (「ハナサカヂヂイ」) in: *Zenei manga kessakushuu* (『第2期現代漫画—前衛漫画傑作集』), Genpei Akasegawa, Chikumashobo, 1971, p. 50-51



Fig.1-90. "Hanasaka jiji" (「ハナサカヂヂイ」) in: *Zenei manga kessakushuu* (『第2期現代漫画—前衛漫画傑作集』), Genpei Akasegawa, Chikumashobo, 1971, p.52-53

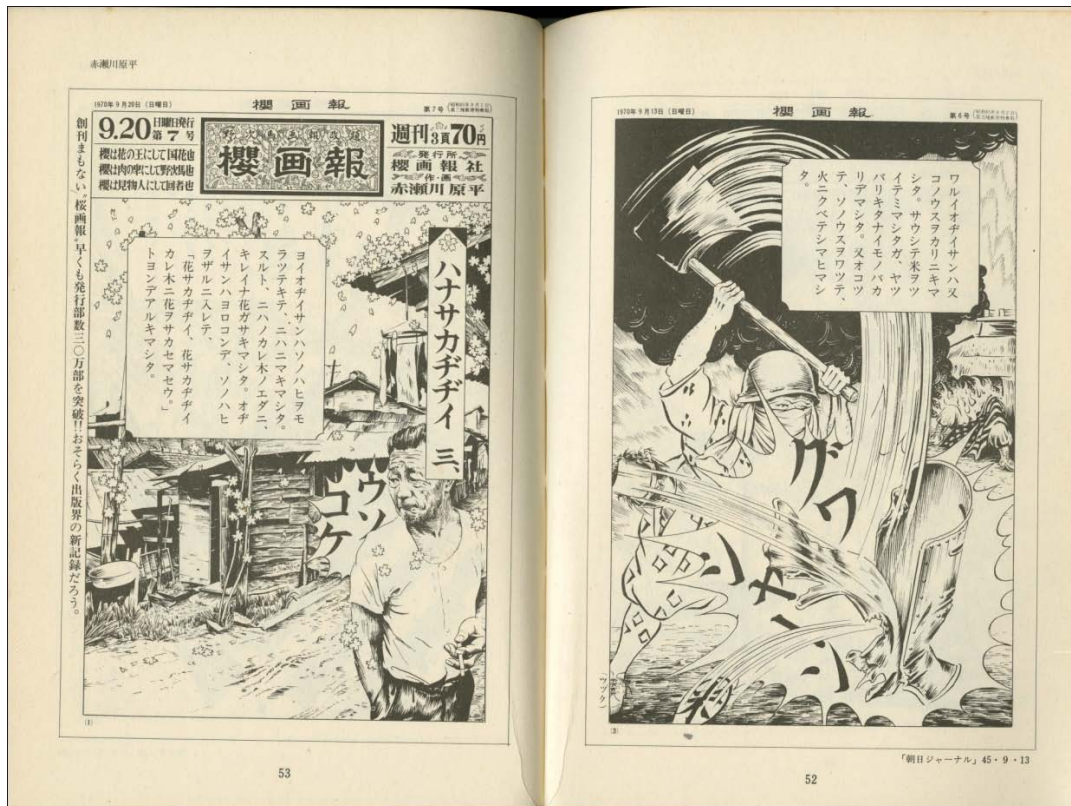


Fig.1-91. "Hanasaka jiji" (「ハナサカヂヂイ」) in: *Zenei manga kessakushuu* (『第2期現代漫画—前衛漫画傑作集』), Genpei Akasegawa, Chikumashobo, 1971, p.54-55

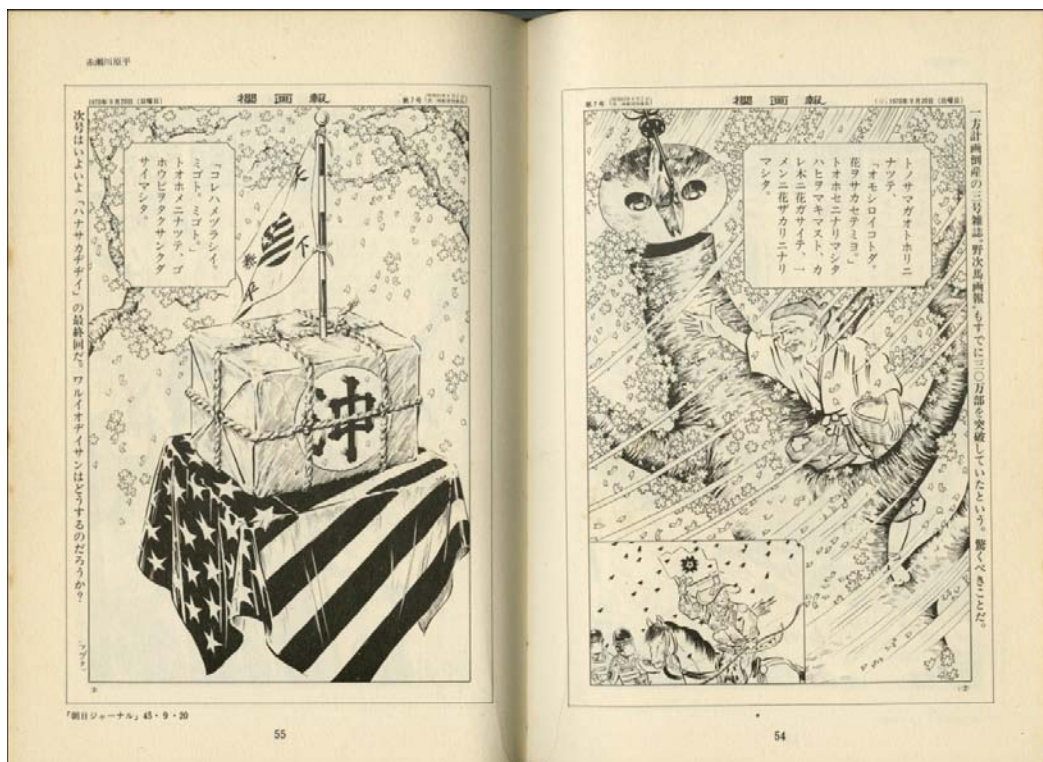


Fig.1-92. "Hanasaka jiji" (「ハナサカヂヂイ」) in: *Zenei manga kessakushuu* (『第2期現代漫画—前衛漫画傑作集』), Genpei Akasegawa, Chikumashobo, 1971, p.56-57

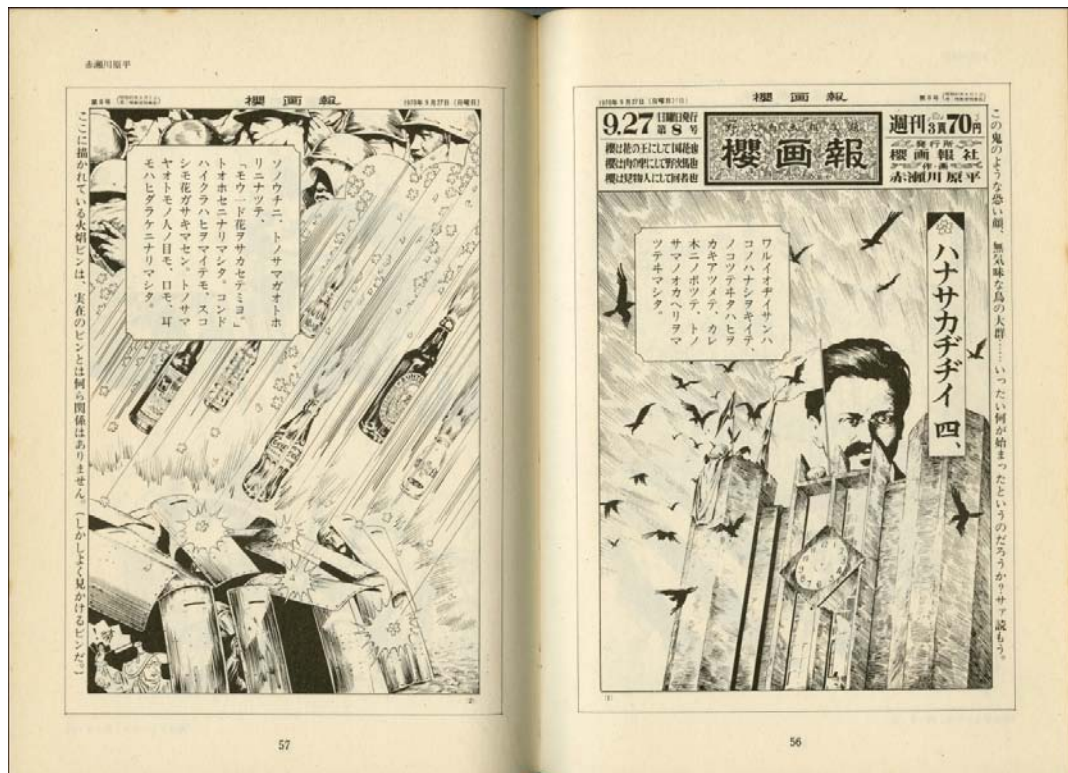
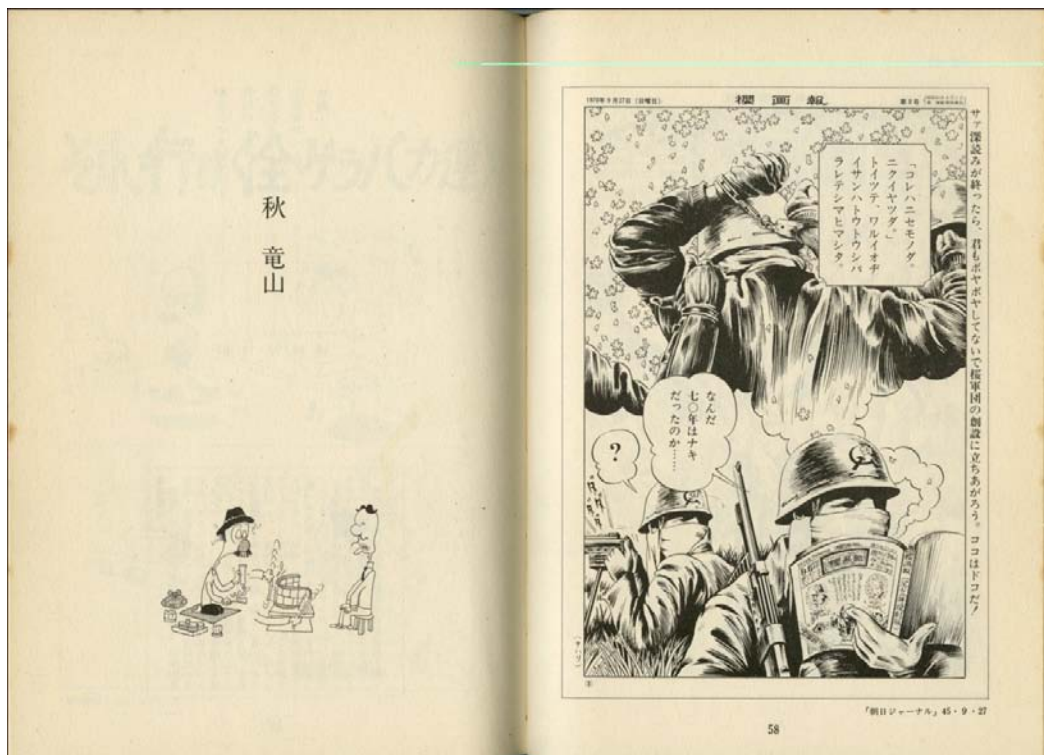


Fig.1-93. "Hanasaka jiji" (「ハナサカヂヂイ」) in: *Zenei manga kessakushuu* (『第2期現代漫画—前衛漫画傑作集』), Genpei Akasegawa, Chikumashobo, 1971, p.58-59



Chapter 2 Shaun Tan and Peter Sis

Fig.2-1. *The Viewer*, written by Gary Crew, Simply Read Books, 1997

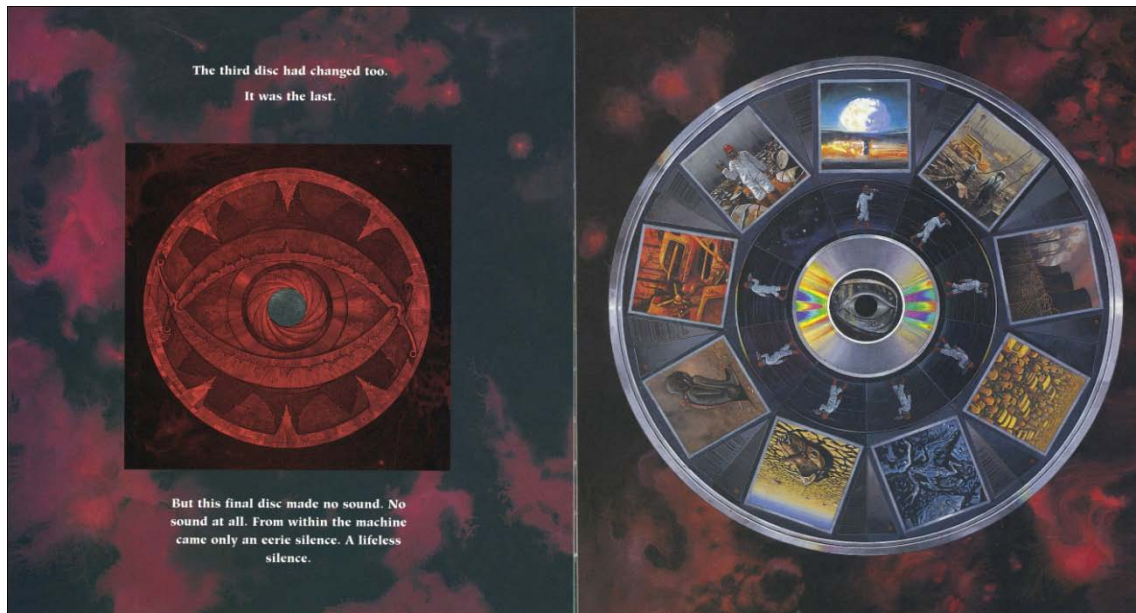


Fig.2-2. *The Viewer*, written by Gary Crew, Simply Read Books, 1997



Fig 2-3. *The Rabbits*, written by John Marsden, Lothian Children' Books, 1998

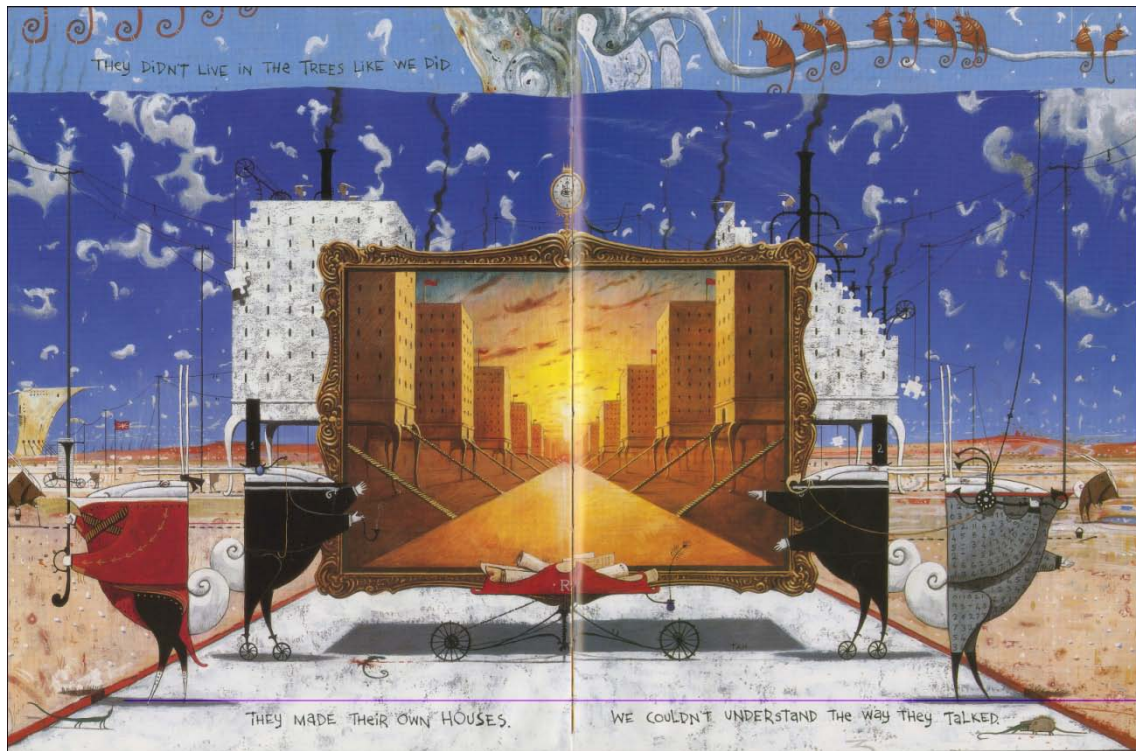


Fig 2-4. *The Rabbits*, written by John Marsden, Lothian Children' Books, 1998

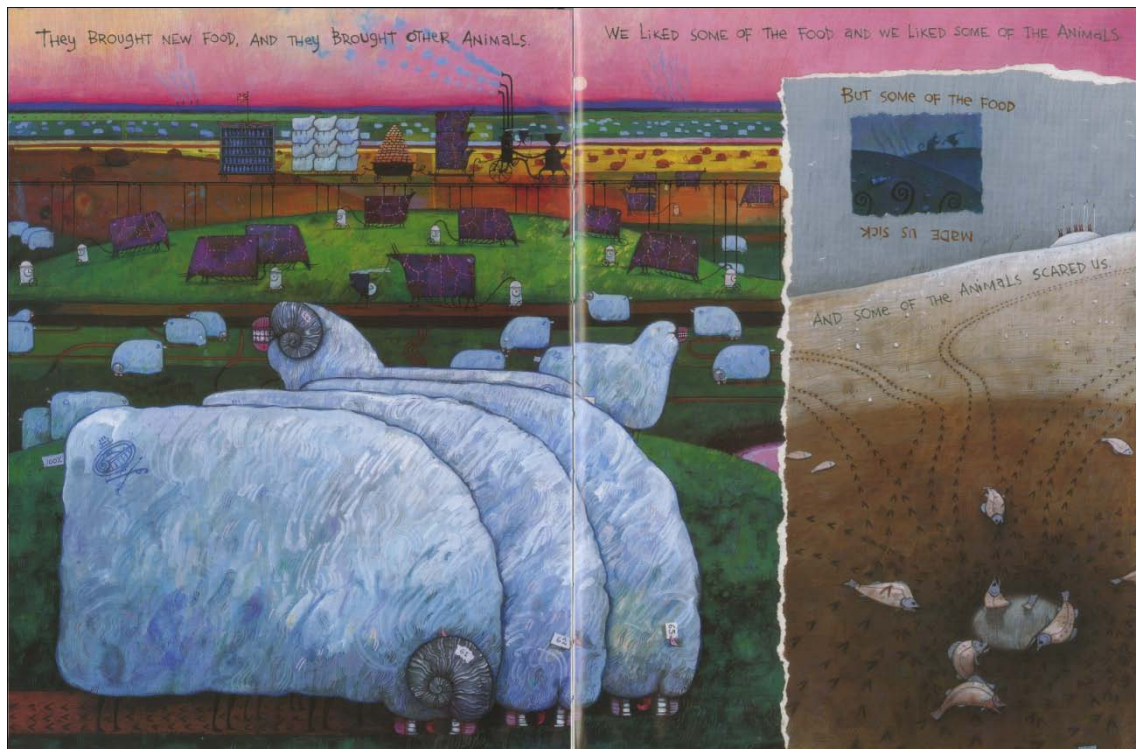


Fig 2-5. *The Rabbits*, written by John Marsden, Lothian Children' Books, 1998



Fig 2-6. *The Rabbits*, written by John Marsden, Lothian Children' Books, 1998

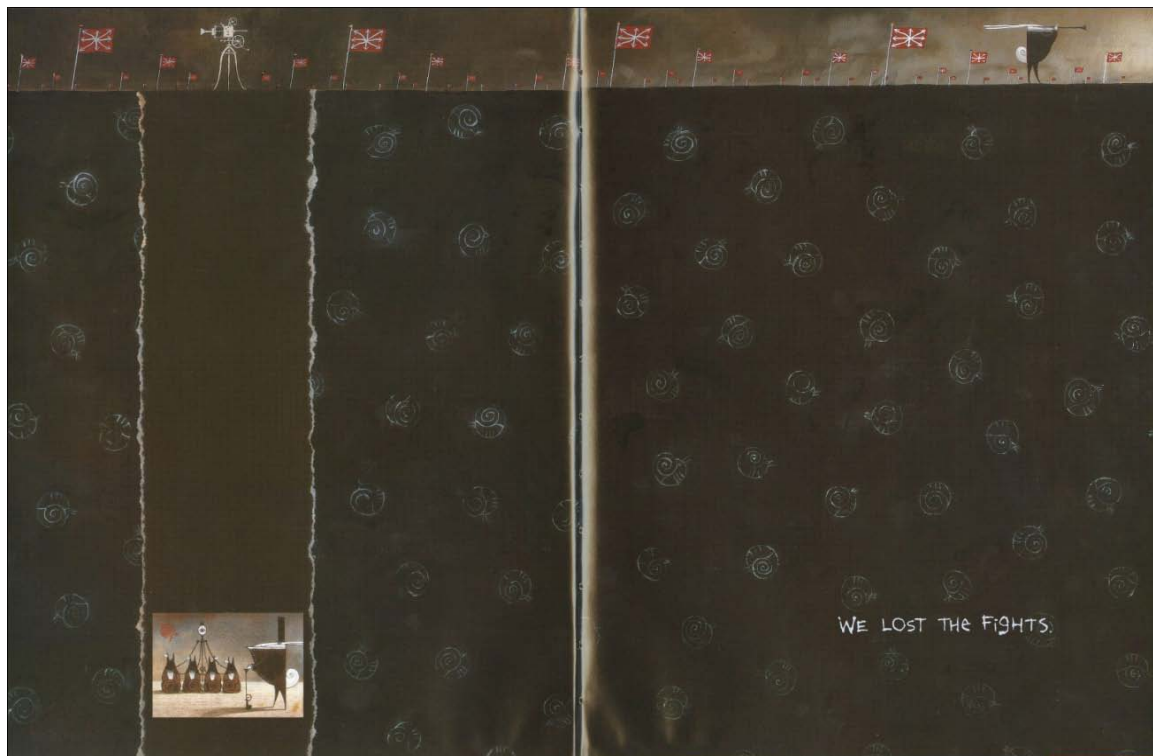


Fig 2-7. *The Rabbits*, written by John Marsden, Lothian Children' Books, 1998

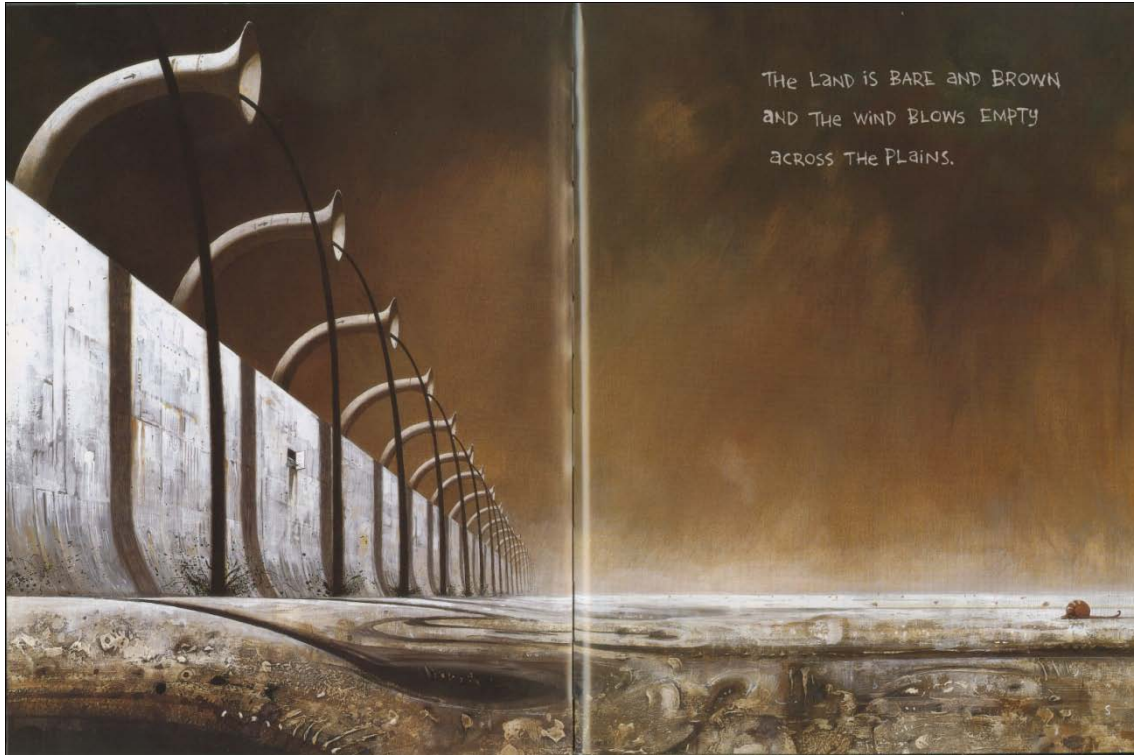


Fig 2-8. *The Rabbits*, written by John Marsden, Lothian Children' Books, 1998



Fig 2-9. *The Lost Thing*, Lothian Children's Books, 1999

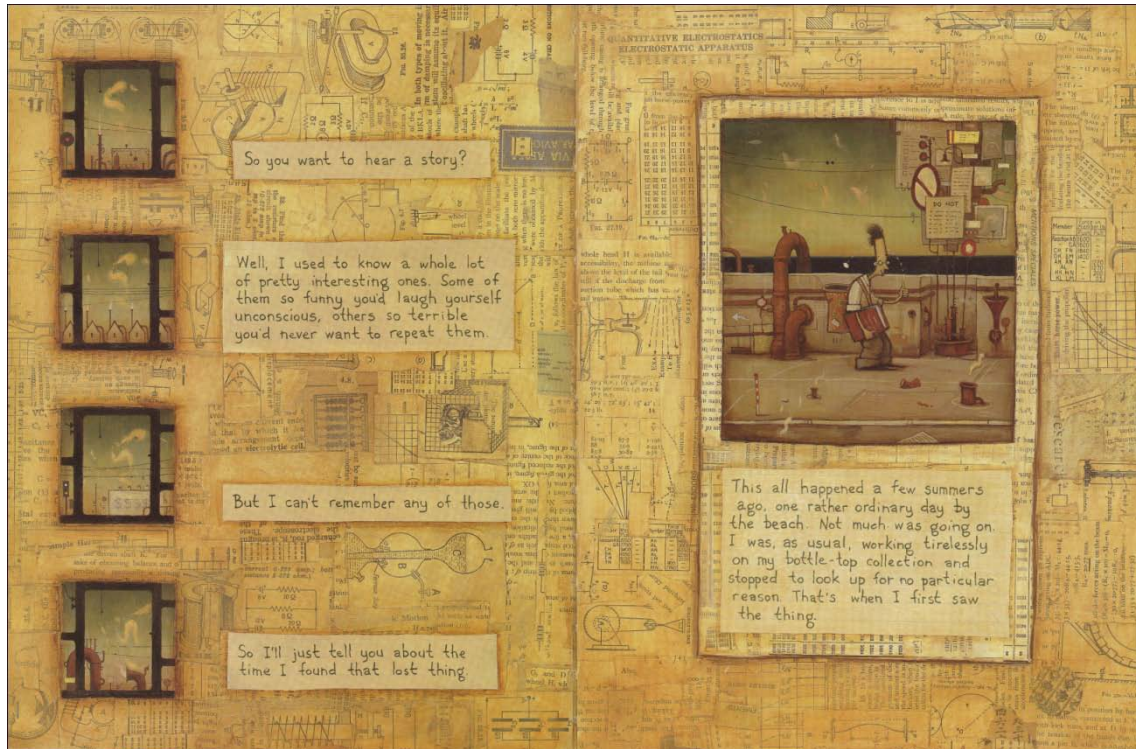


Fig 2-10. *The Lost Thing*, Lothian Children's Books, 1999



Fig 2-11. *The Lost Thing*, Lothian Children's Books, 1999

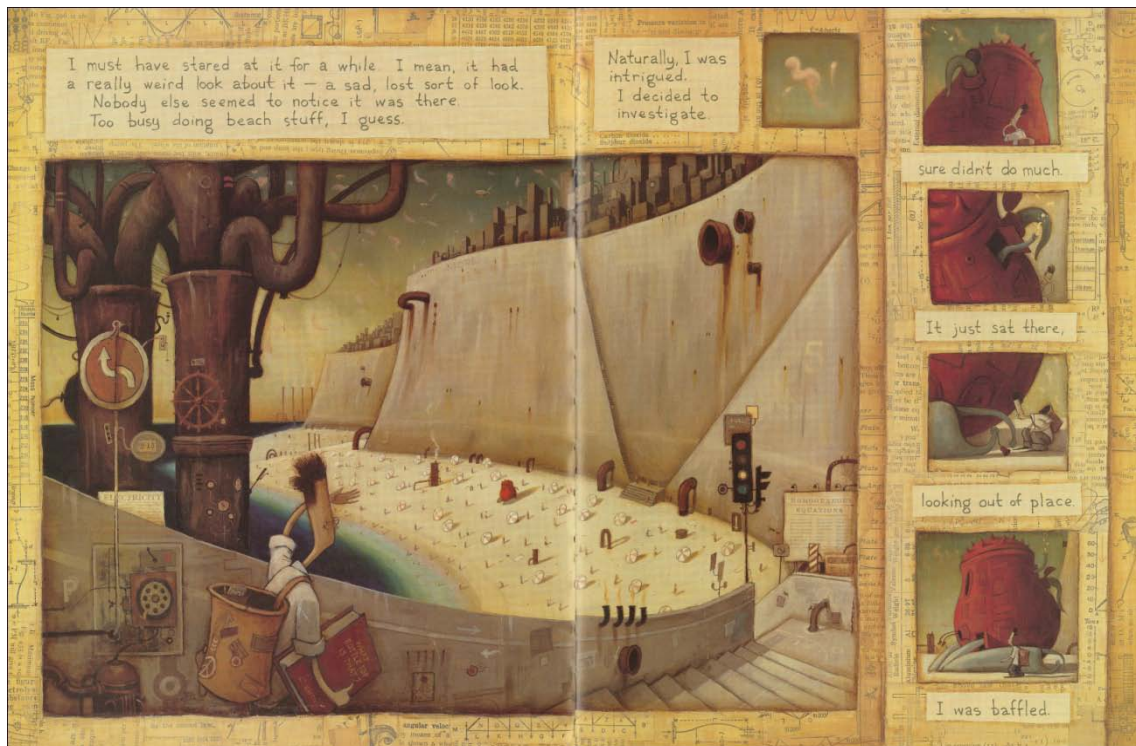


Fig 2-12. *The Lost Thing*, Lothian Children's Books, 1999

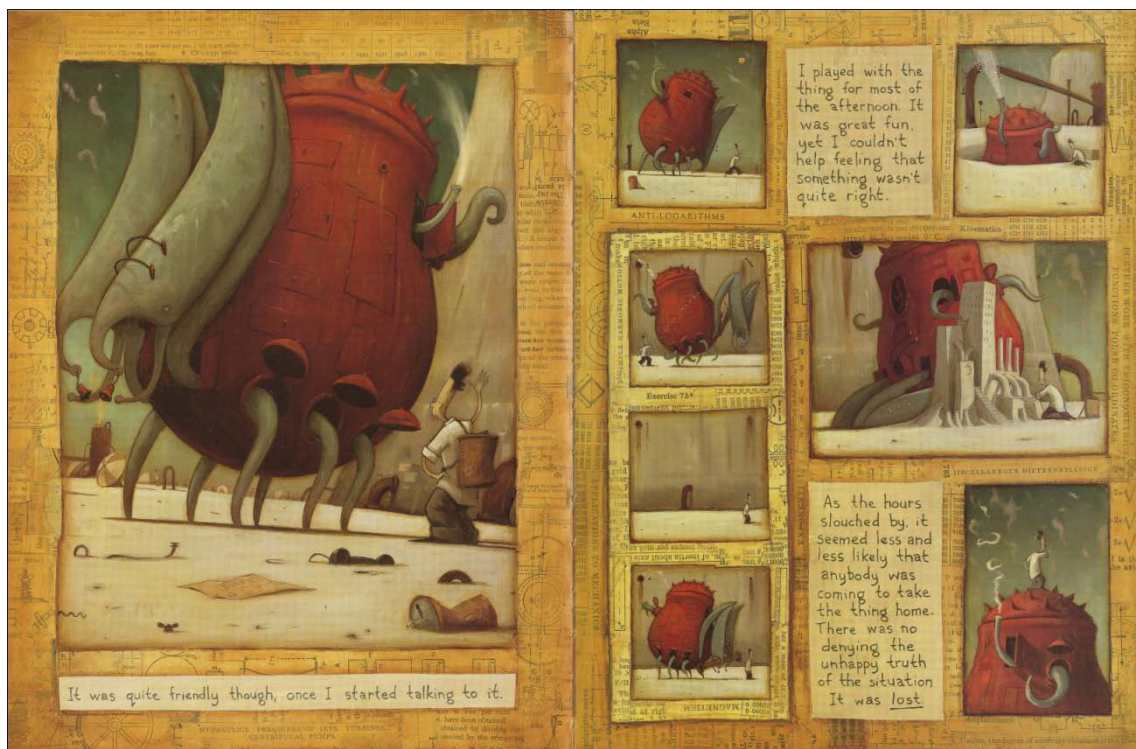


Fig 2-13. *The Lost Thing*, Lothian Children's Books, 1999

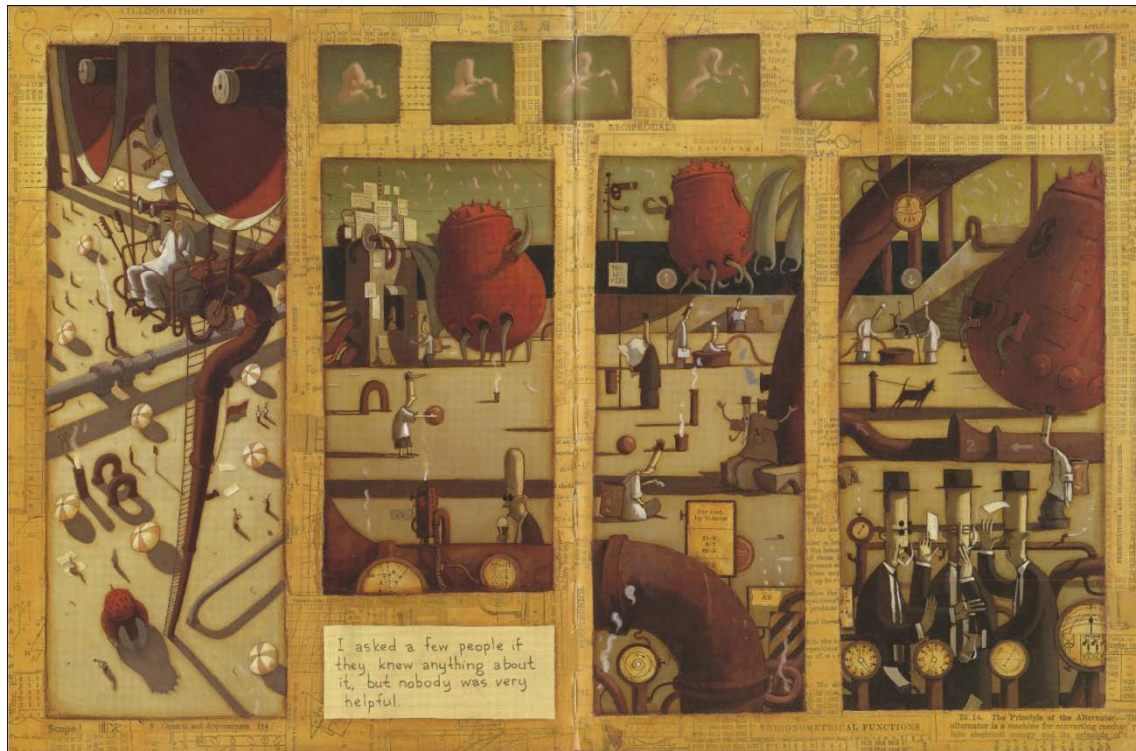


Fig 2-14. *The Lost Thing*, Lothian Children's Books, 1999

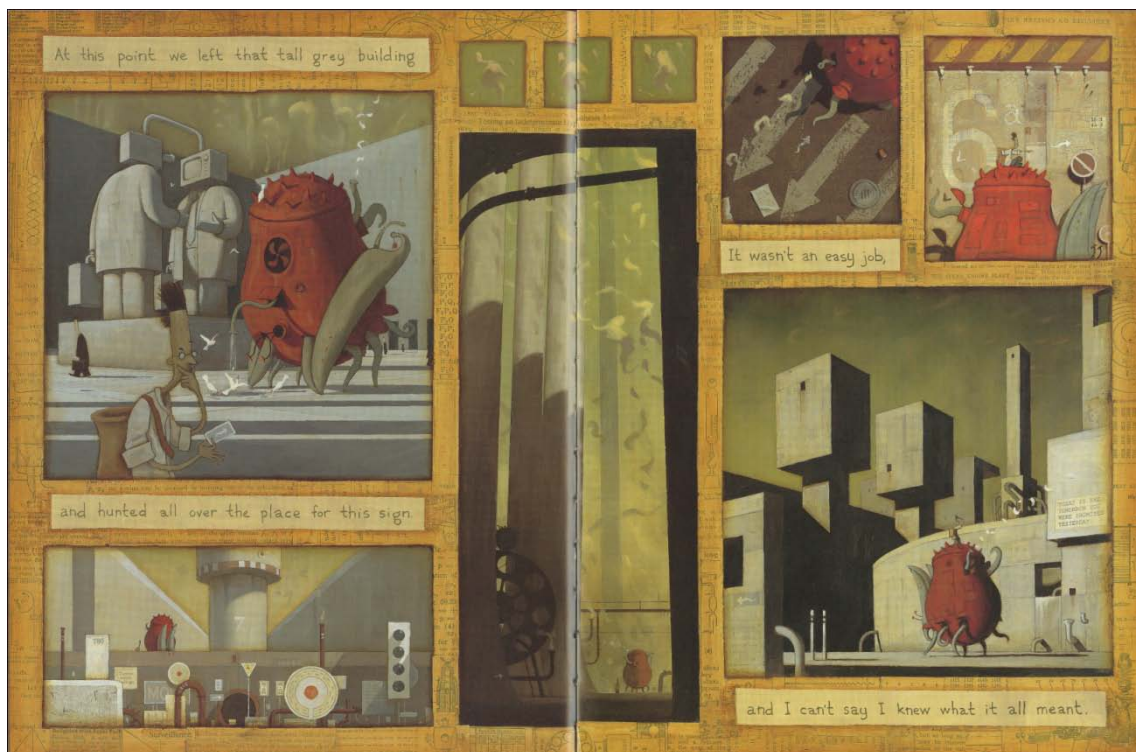


Fig 2-15. *The Lost Thing*, Lothian Children's Books, 1999

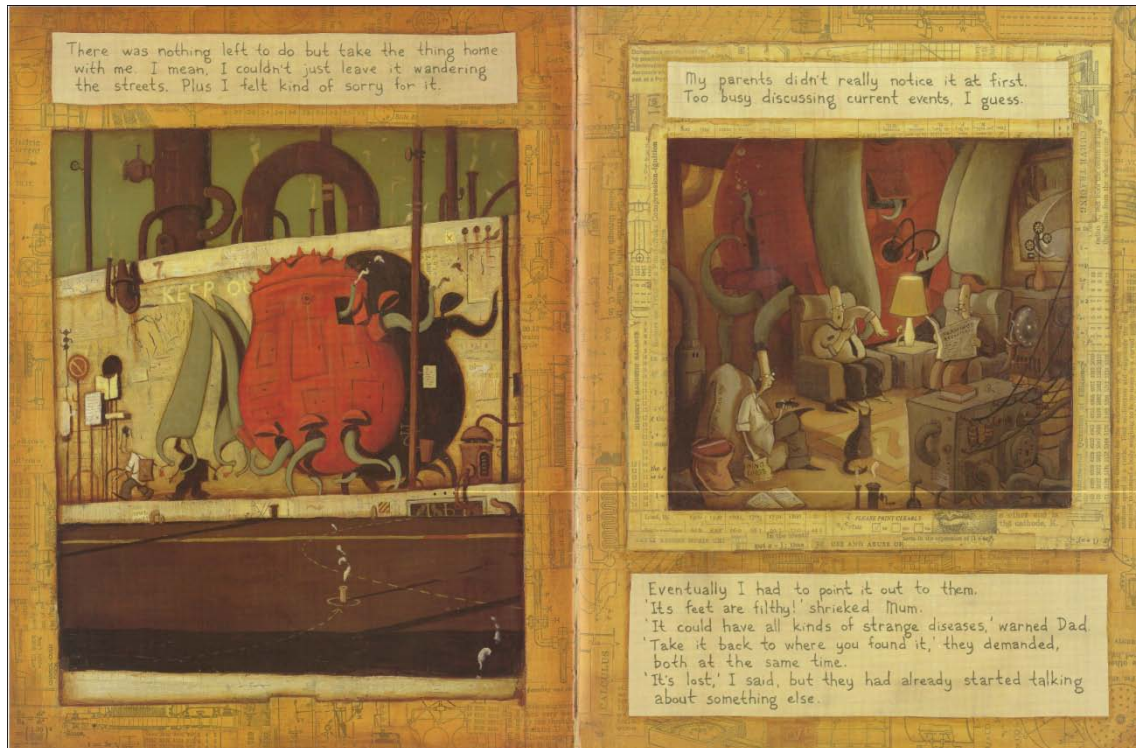


Fig 2-16. *The Lost Thing*, Lothian Children's Books, 1999



Fig 2-17. *The Arrival*, Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007

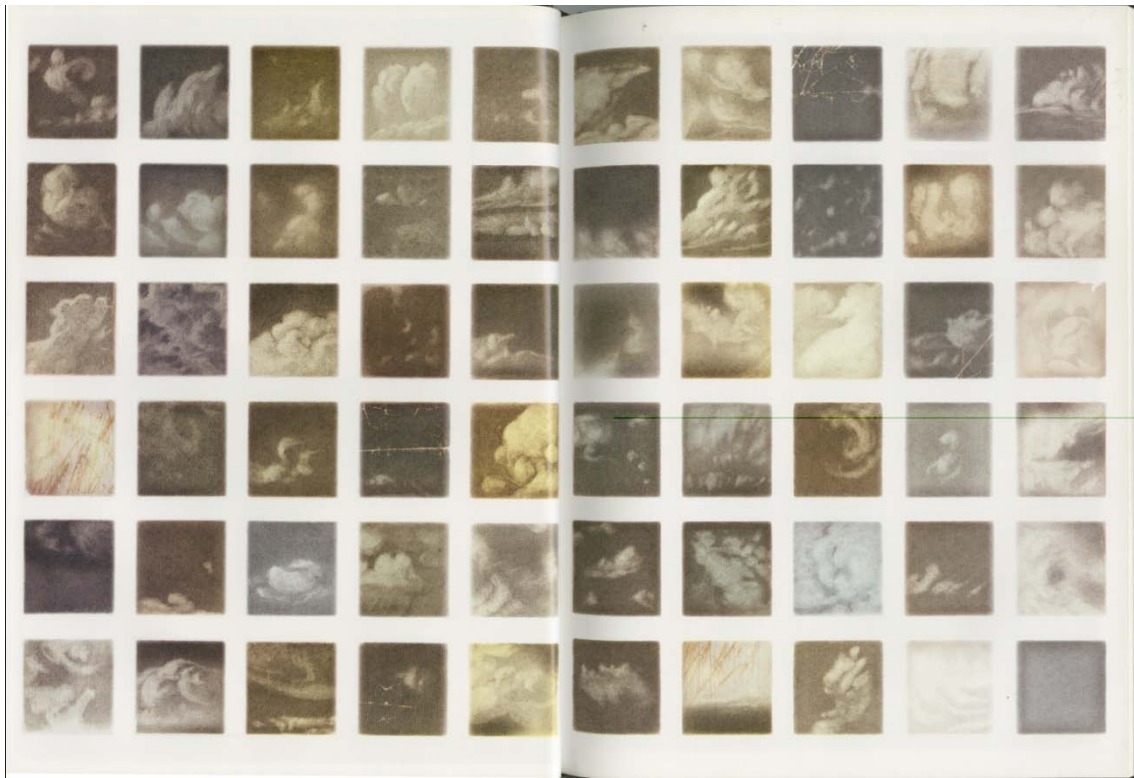


Fig 2-18. *The Arrival*, Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007

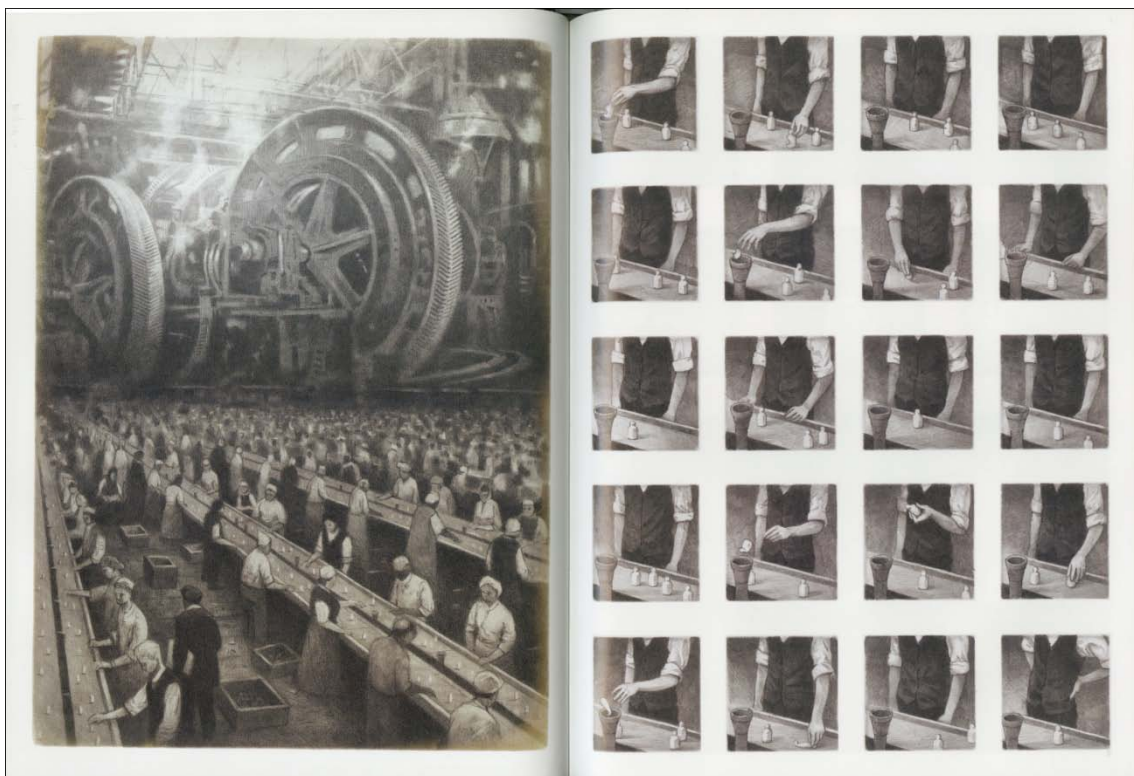


Fig 2-19. *The Arrival*, Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007



Fig 2-20. *The Arrival*, Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007

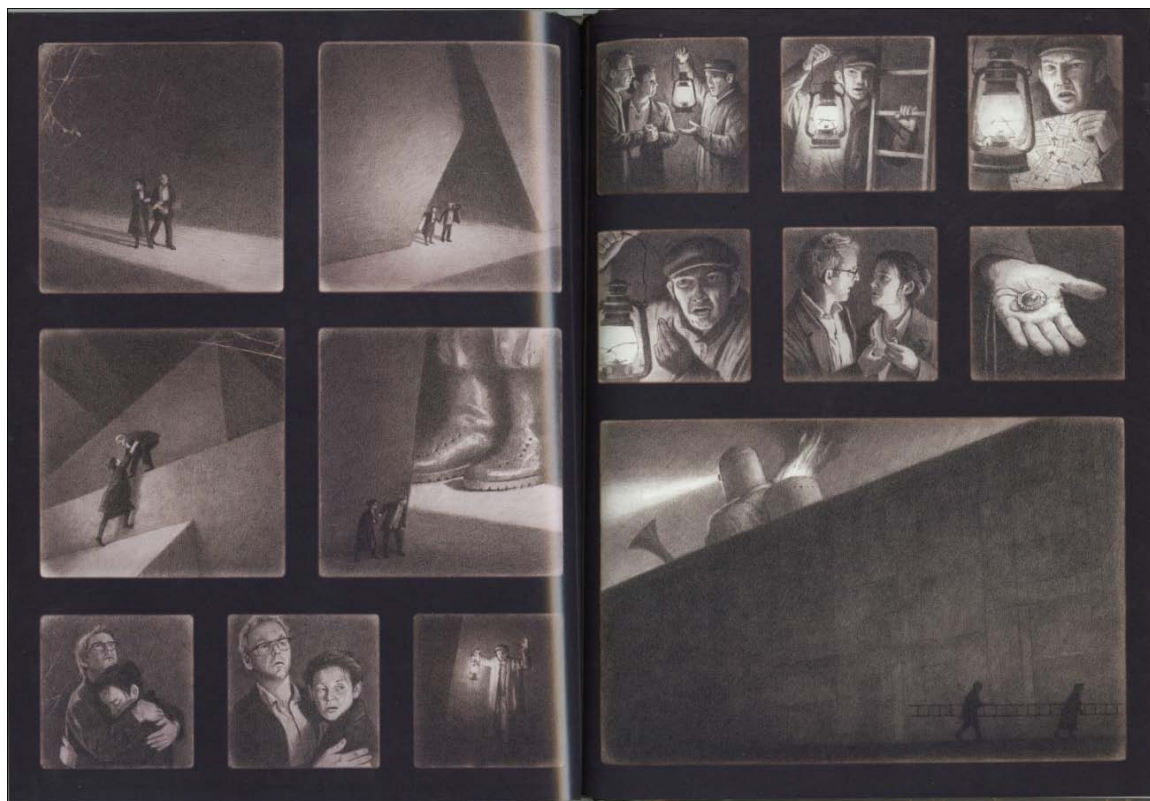


Fig 2-21. *The Arrival*, Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007



Fig 2-22. *The Arrival*, Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007



Fig 2-23. *The Arrival*, Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007

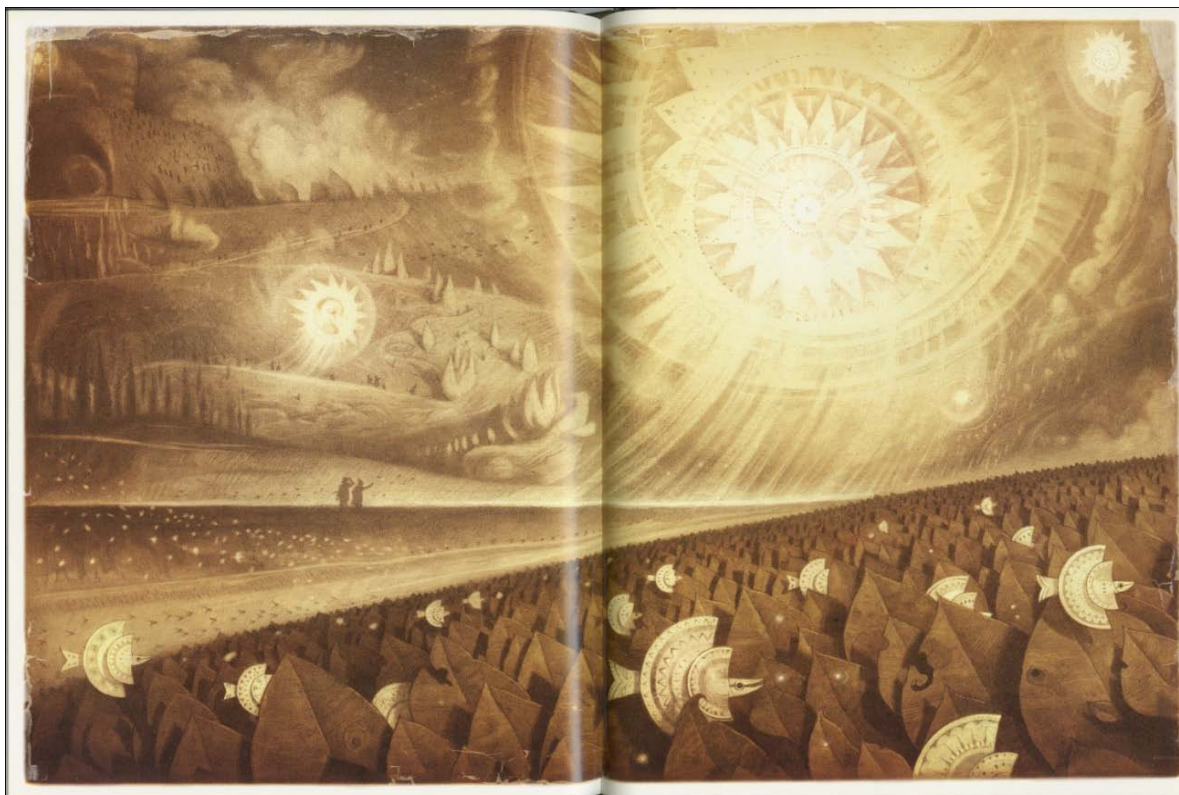


Fig 2-24. *The Arrival*, Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007



Fig 2-25. *Memorial*, written by Gary Crew, Simply Read Books, 1999

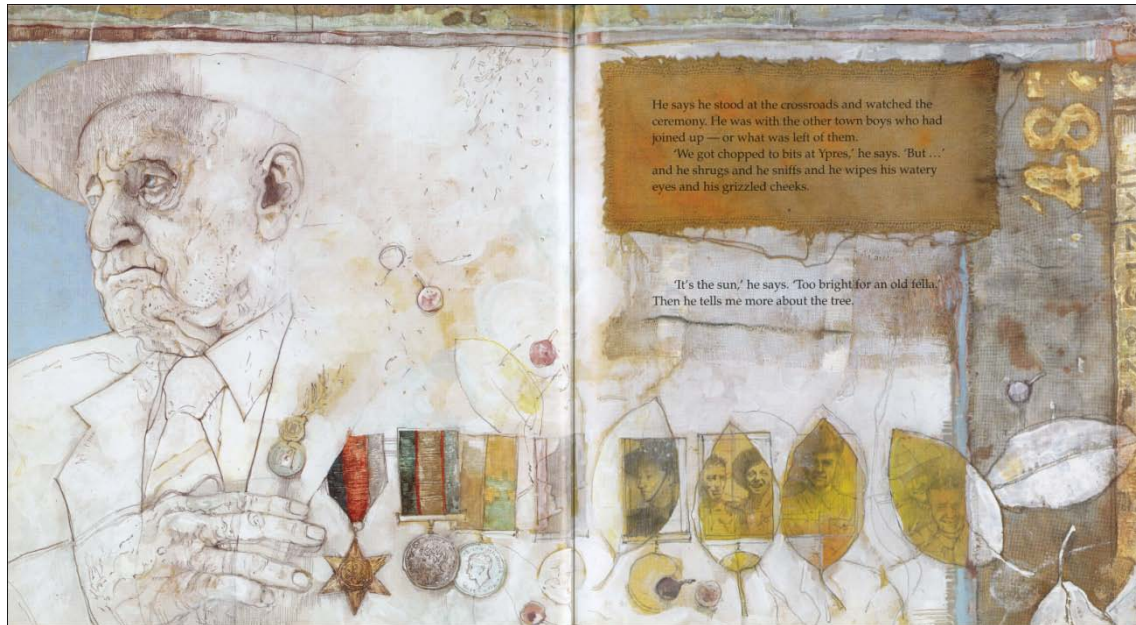


Fig 2-26. *Memorial*, written by Gary Crew, Simply Read Books, 1999

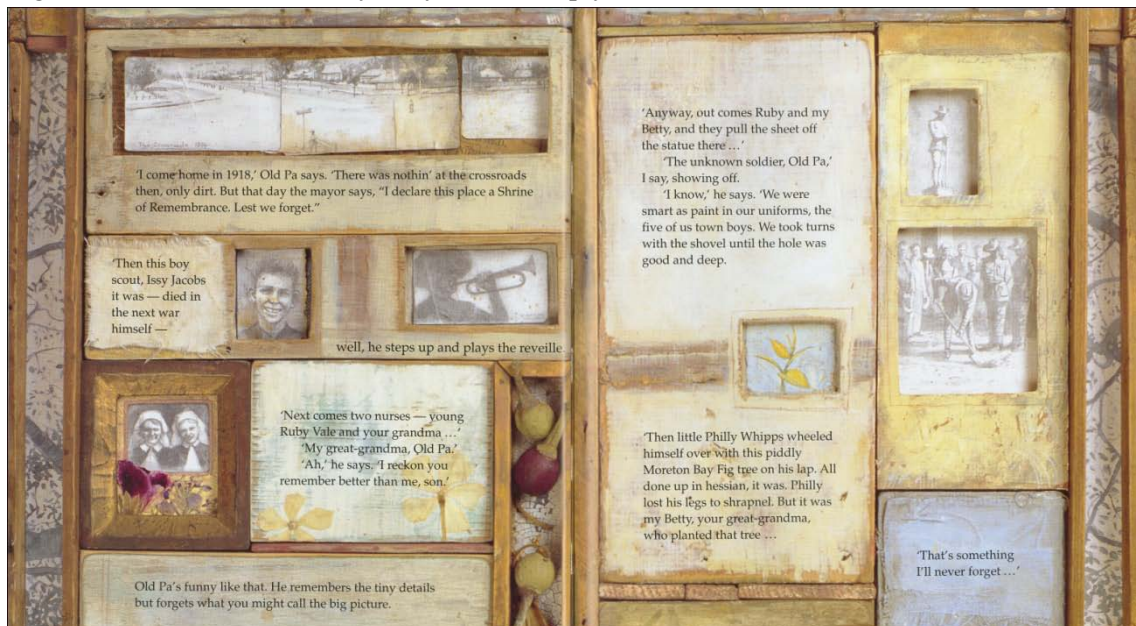


Fig 2-27. *Memorial*, written by Gary Crew, Simply Read Books, 1999



Fig 2-28. *Memorial*, written by Gary Crew, Simply Read Books, 1999

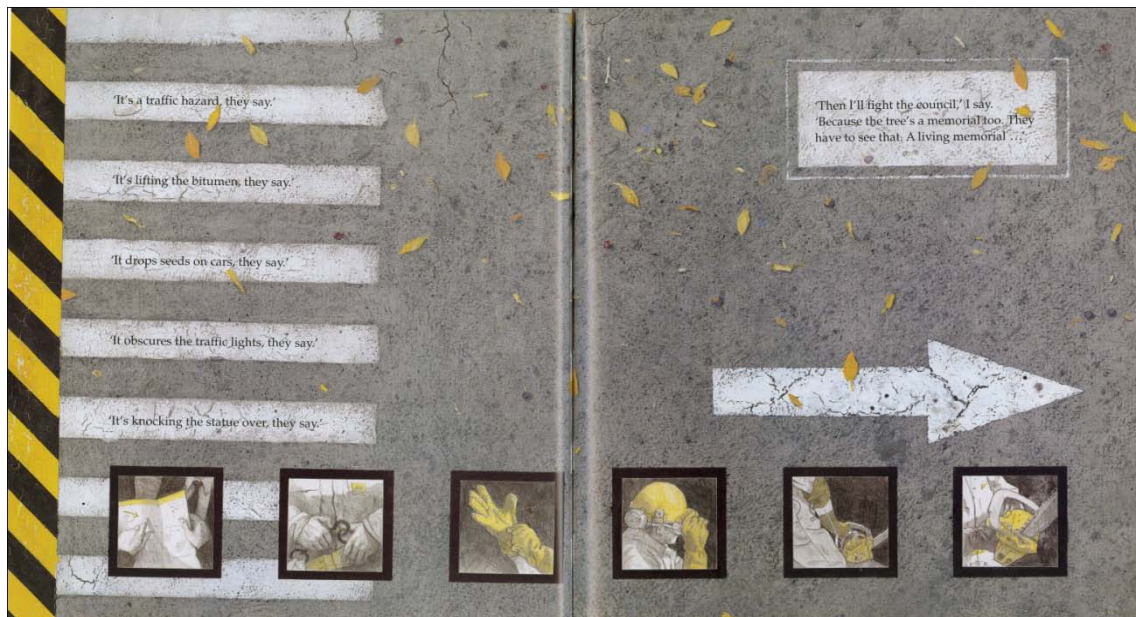


Fig 2-29. Raymond Briggs, *The Snowman*, Hamish Hamilton, 1978



Fig 2-30. Peter Kuper, “Cap versus Rarebit” Story #6, in: *Captain America: Red, White & Blue*, Marvel, 2007



Fig 2-31. Thomas Ott, *The Number* 73304-23-4153-6-96-8, Fantagraphics, 2008, p.50-51

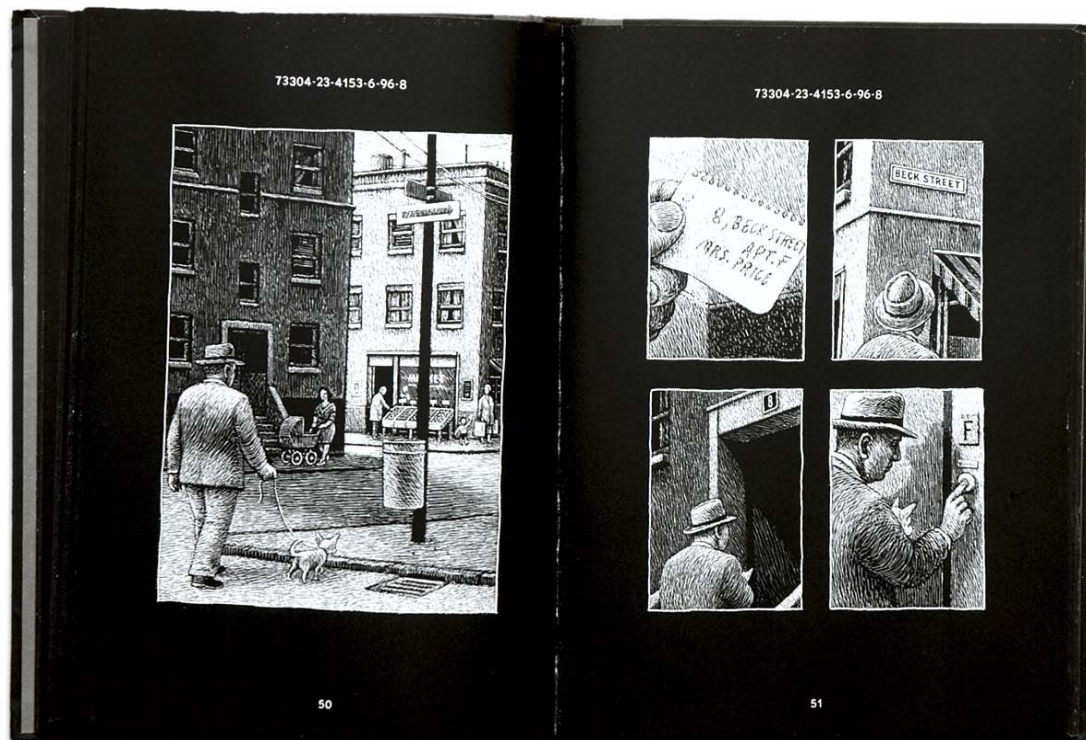


Fig 2-32. Neil Bousfield, *Walking Shadows: A Novel without Words*, Manic D Press, 2010, p.12-13

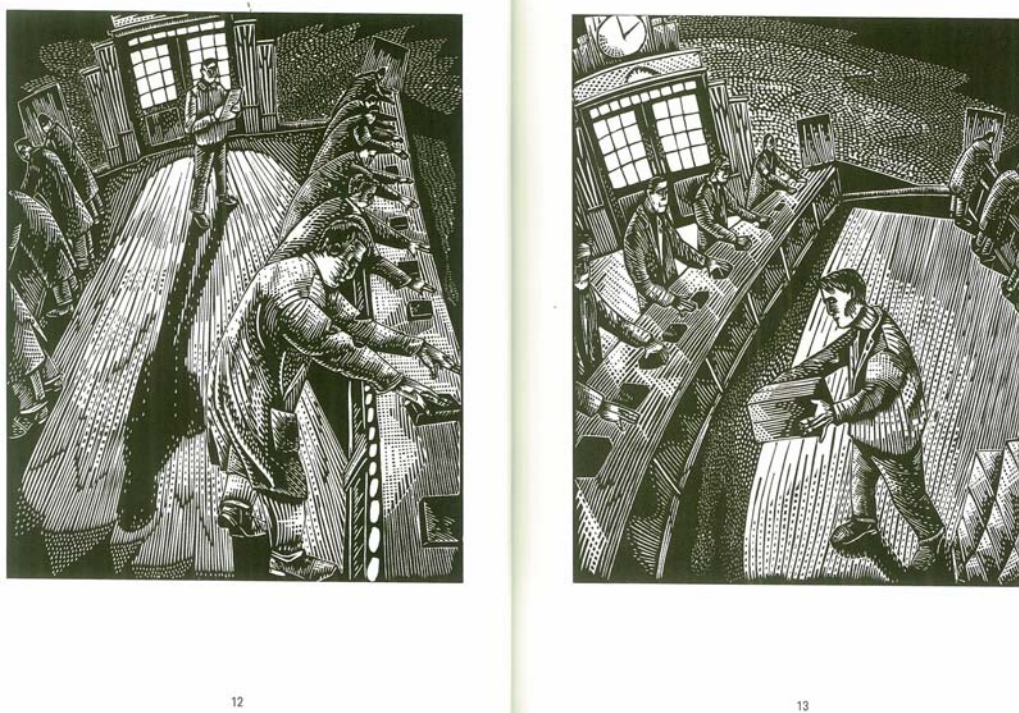


Fig 2-33. *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2007

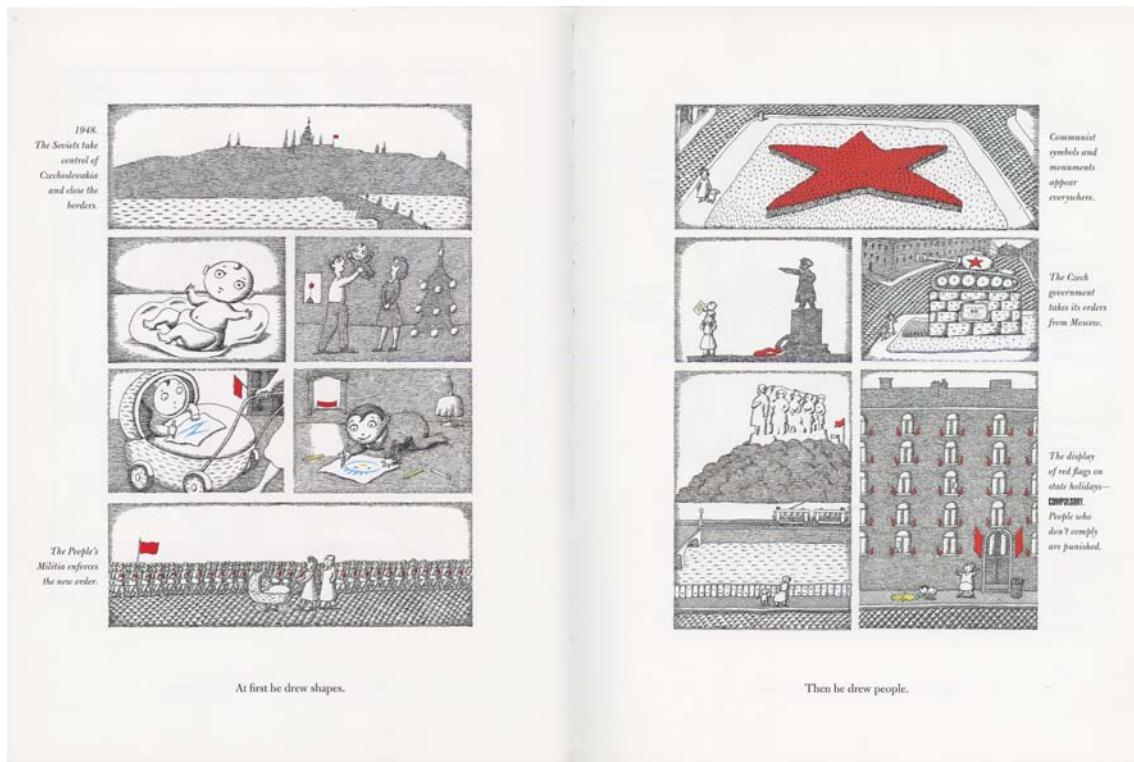


Fig 2-34. *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2007

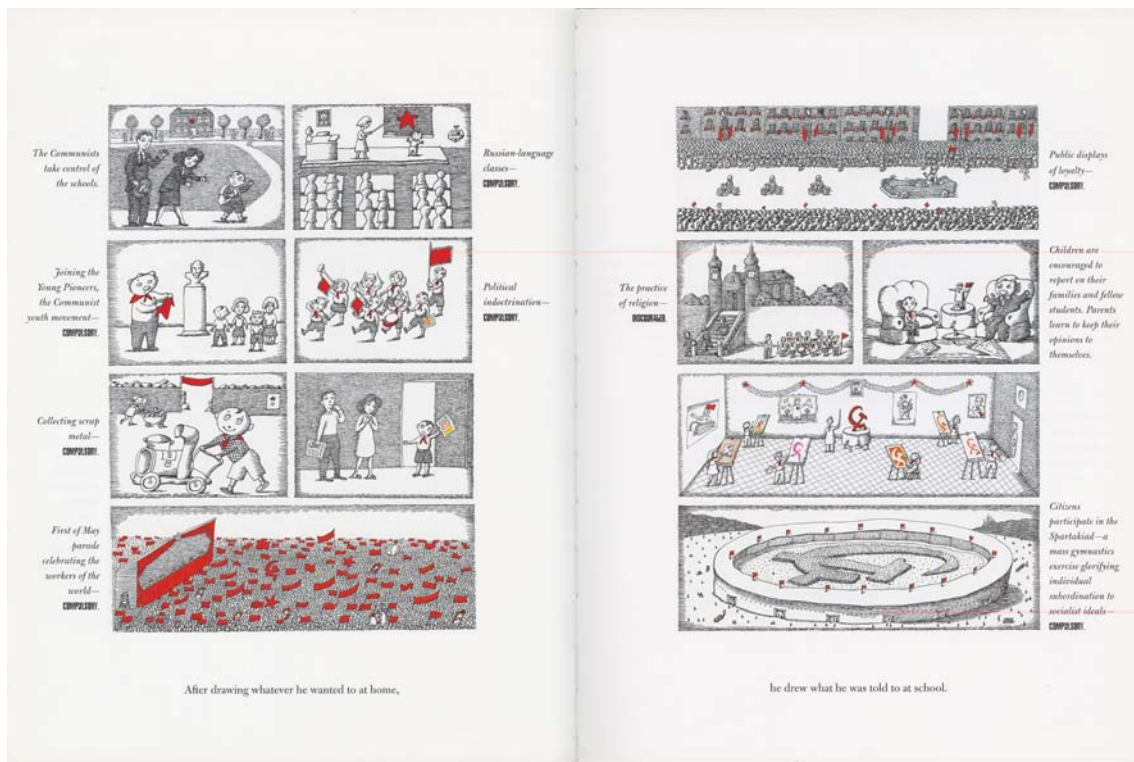


Fig 2-35. *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2007

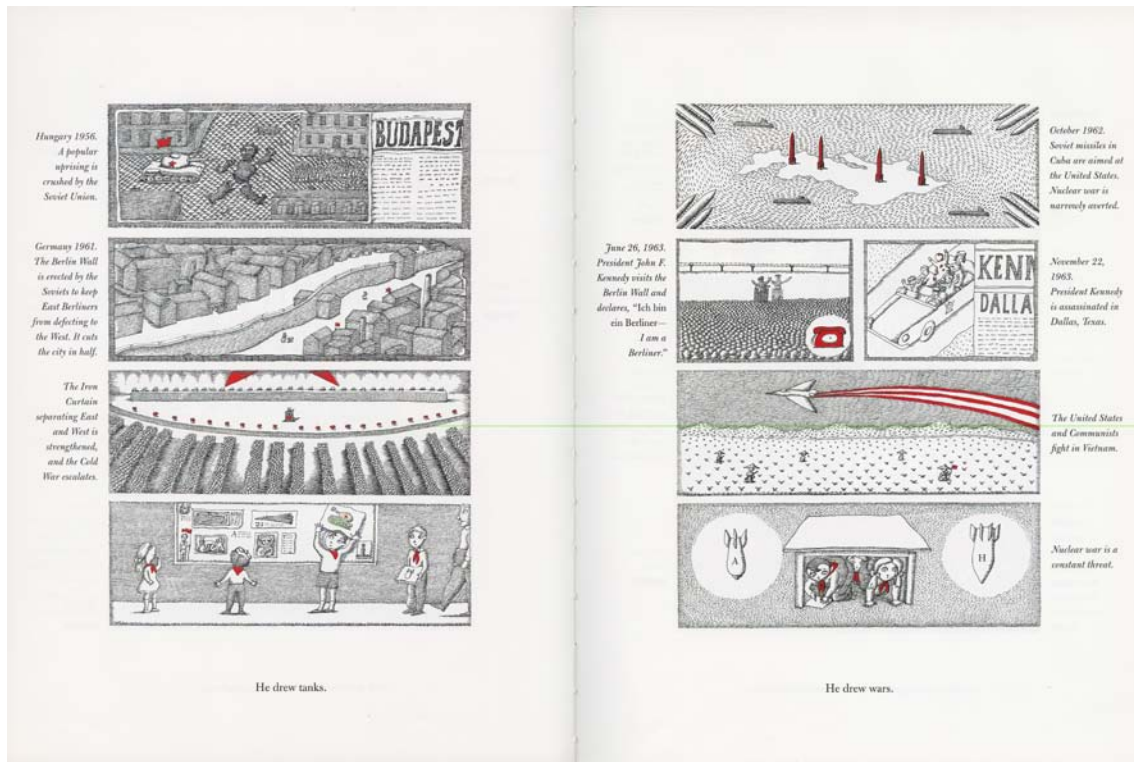


Fig 2-36. *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2007

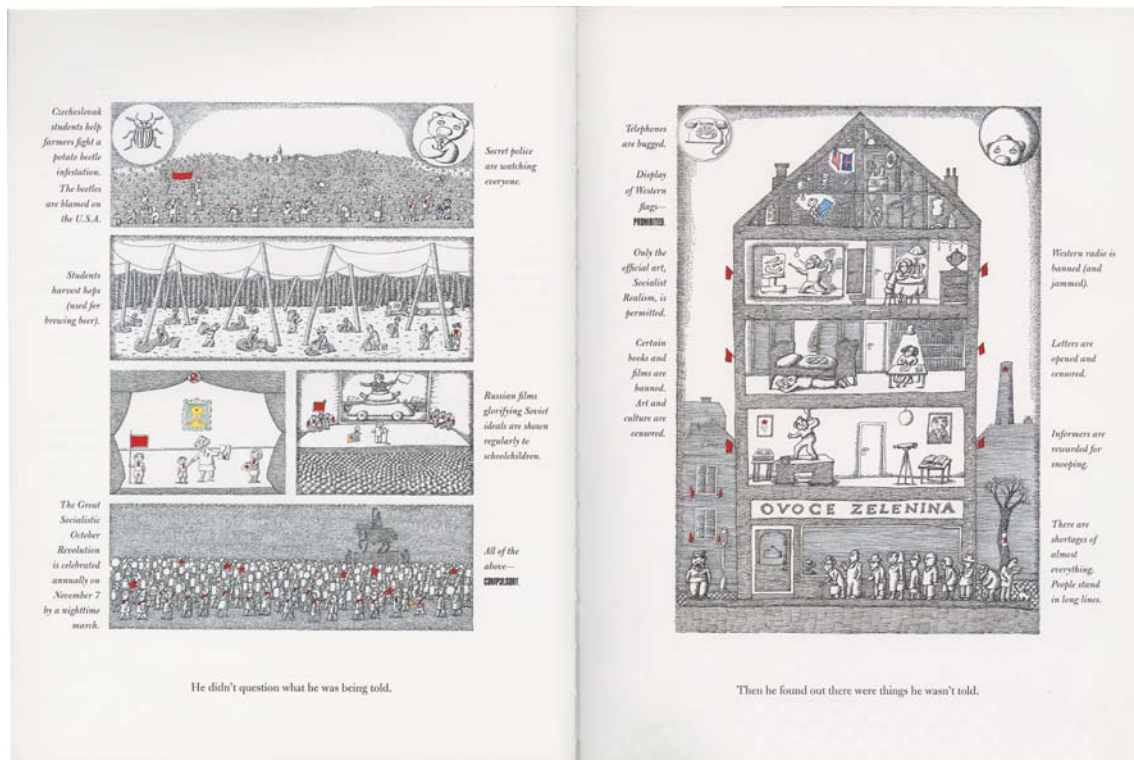


Fig 2-37. *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2007

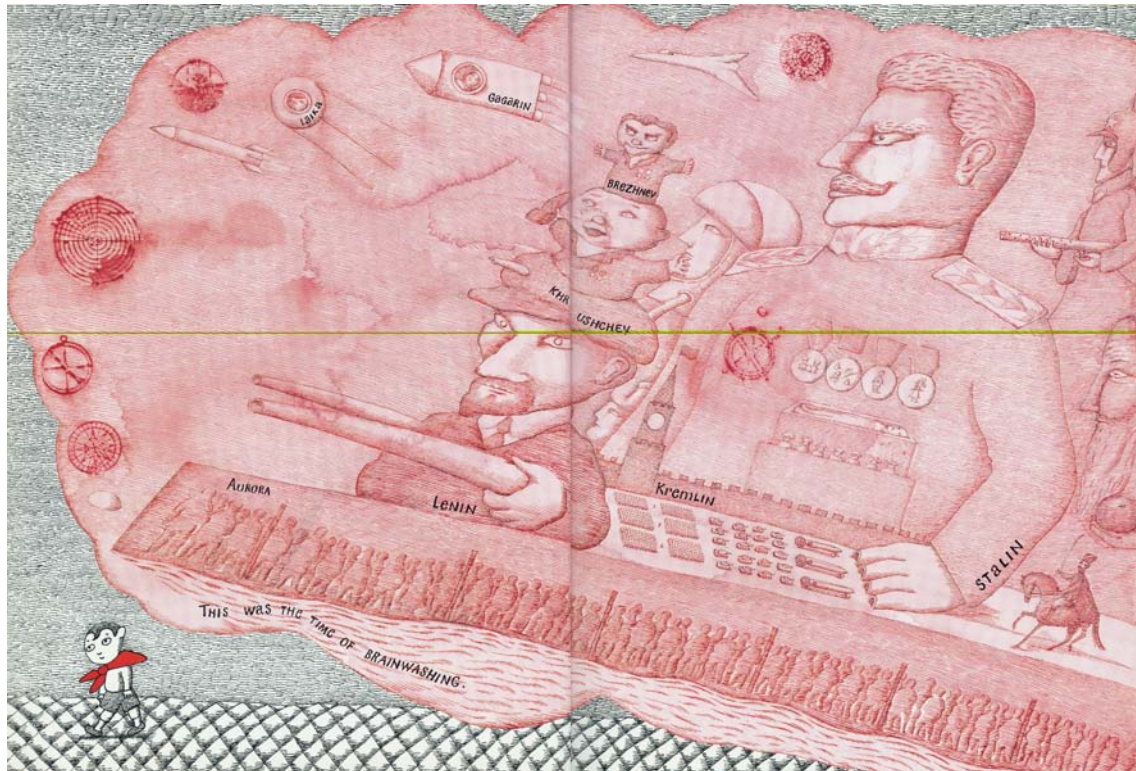


Fig 2-38. *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2007

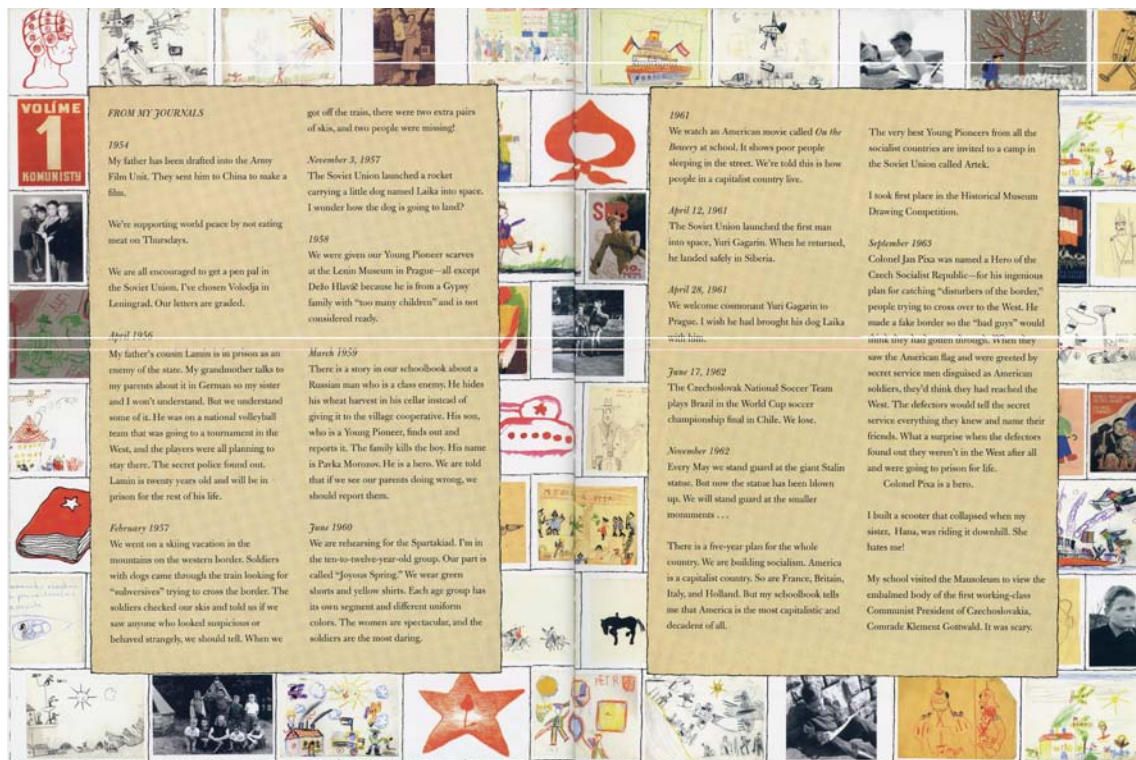


Fig.2-39. *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2007



Fig.2-40. *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2007

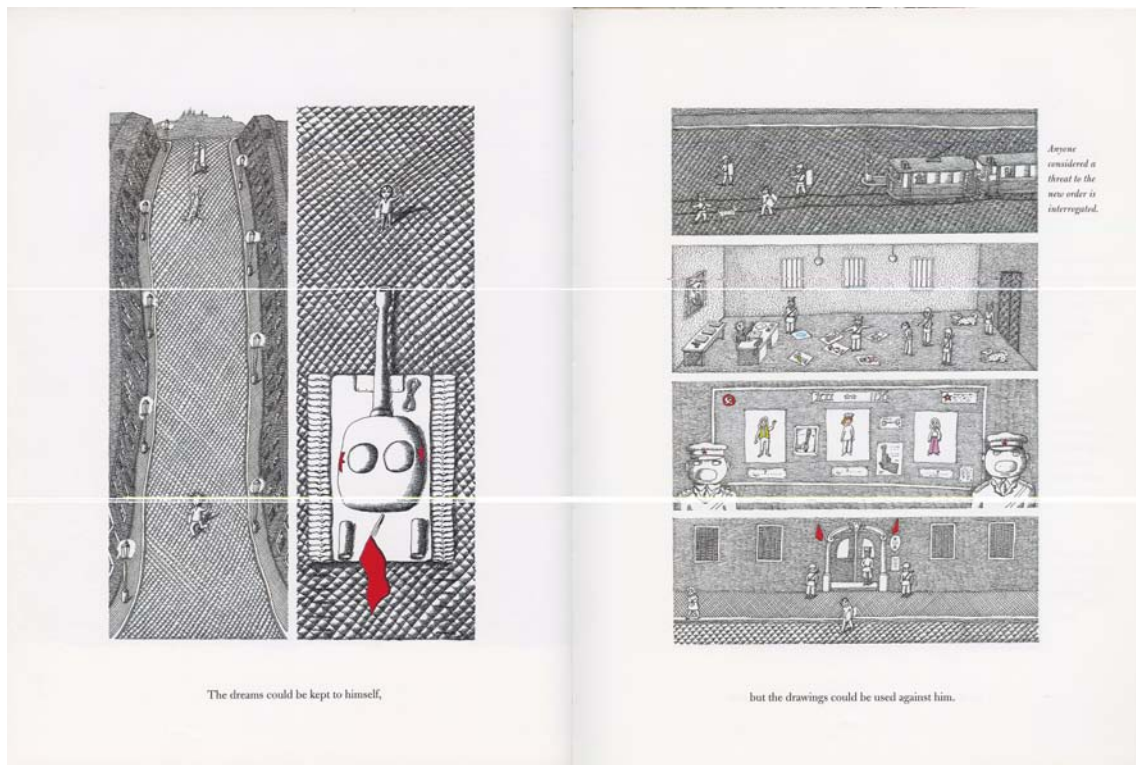


Fig 2-41. *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2007

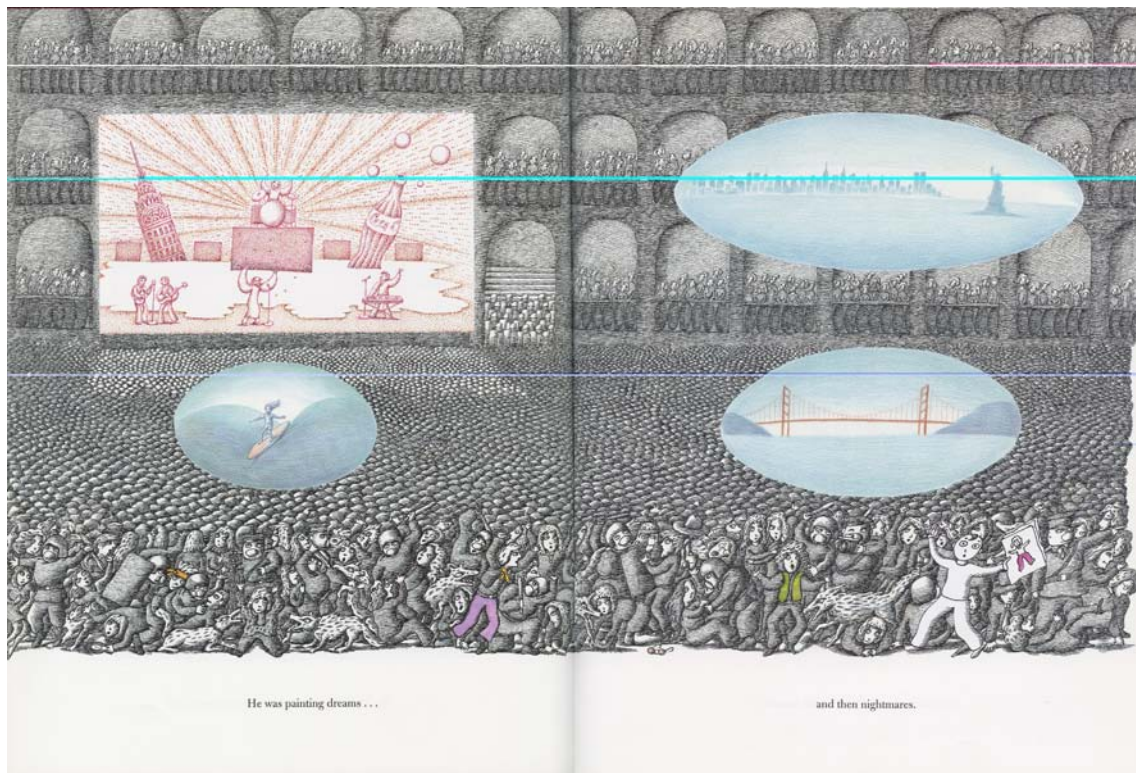


Fig 2-42. *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2007

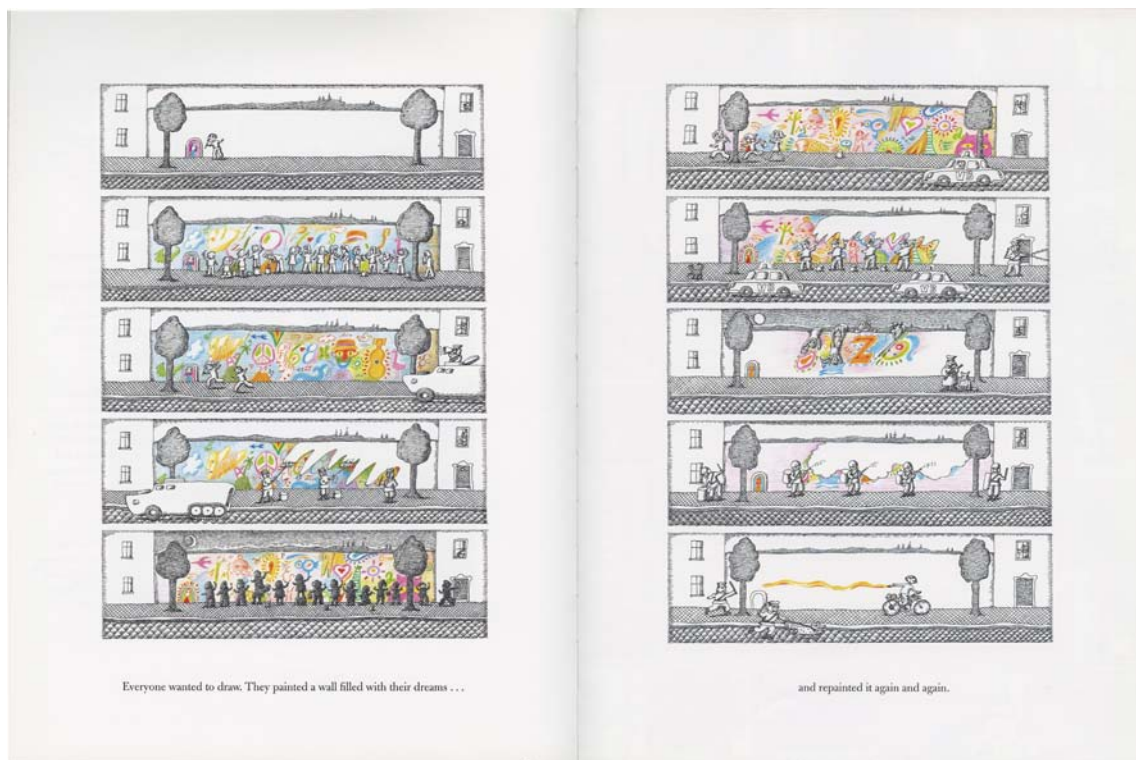


Fig 2-43. *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2007



Fig 2-44. *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2007

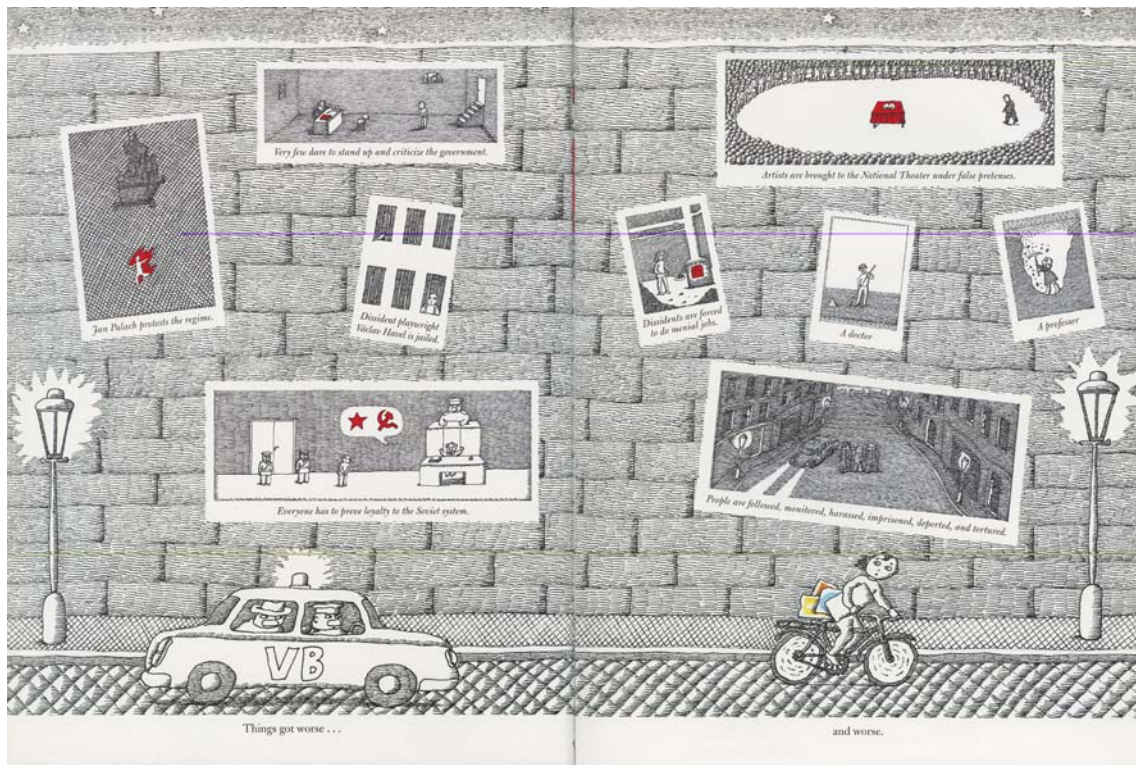


Fig 2-45. *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2007

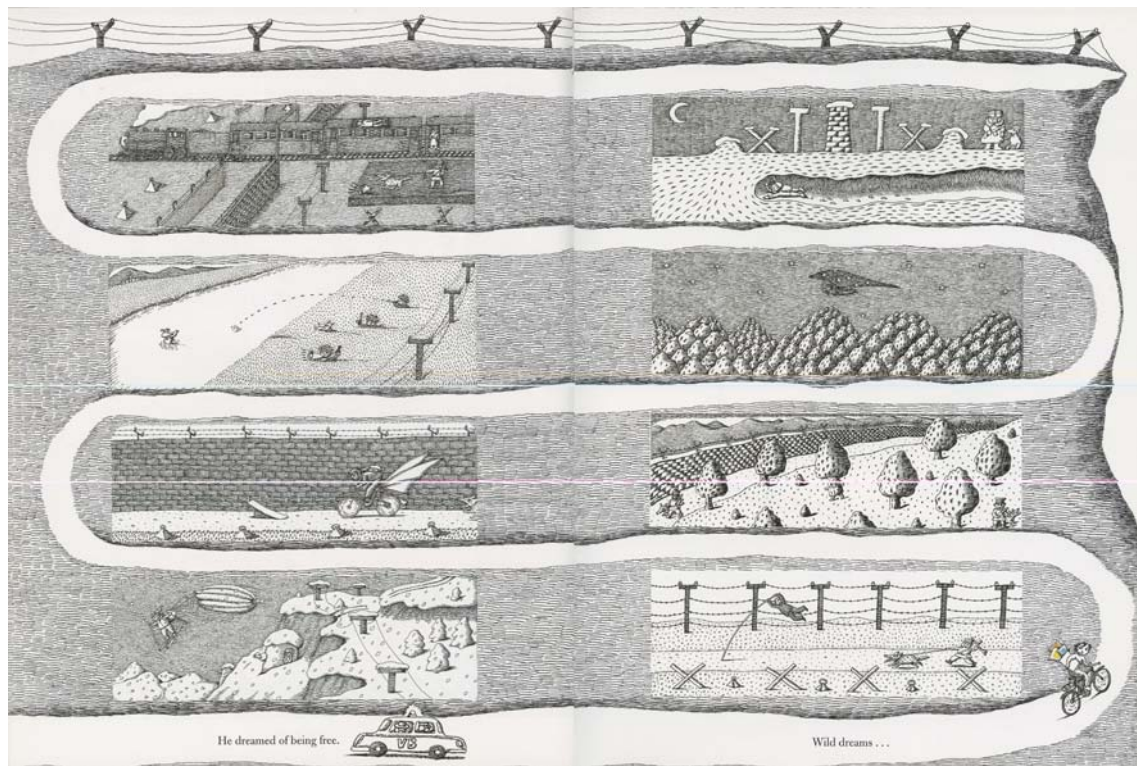


Fig 2-46. *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2007

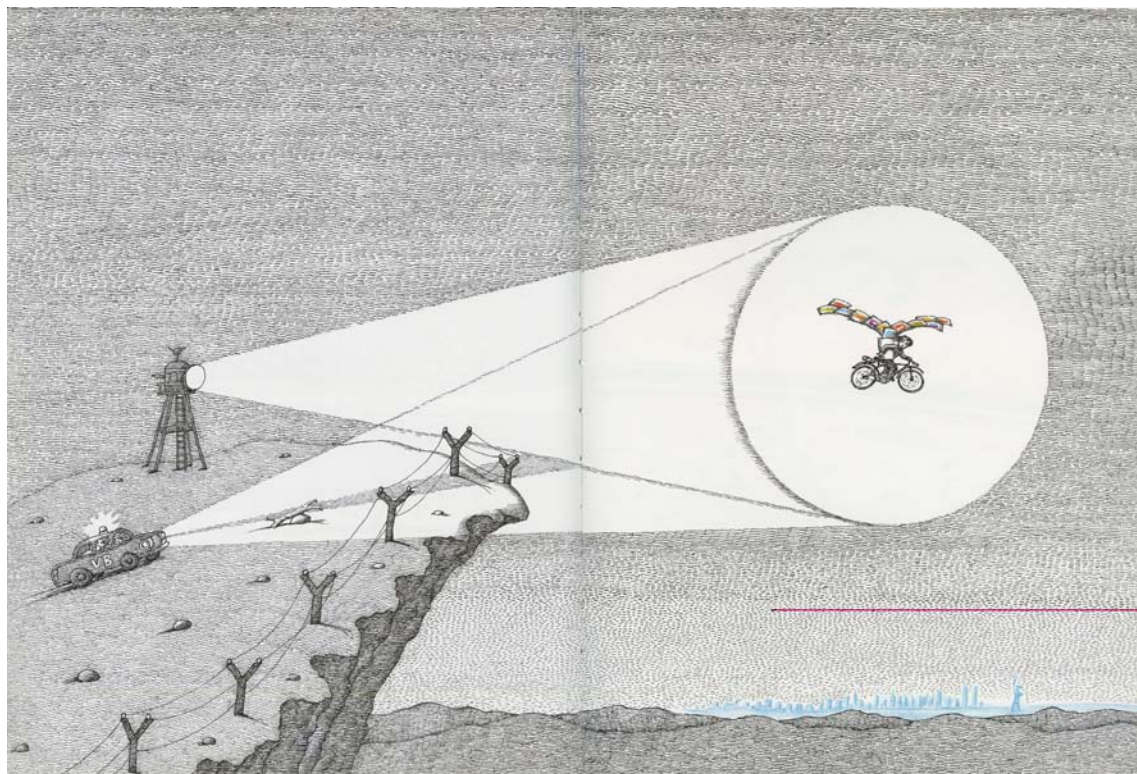


Fig 2-47. *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2007

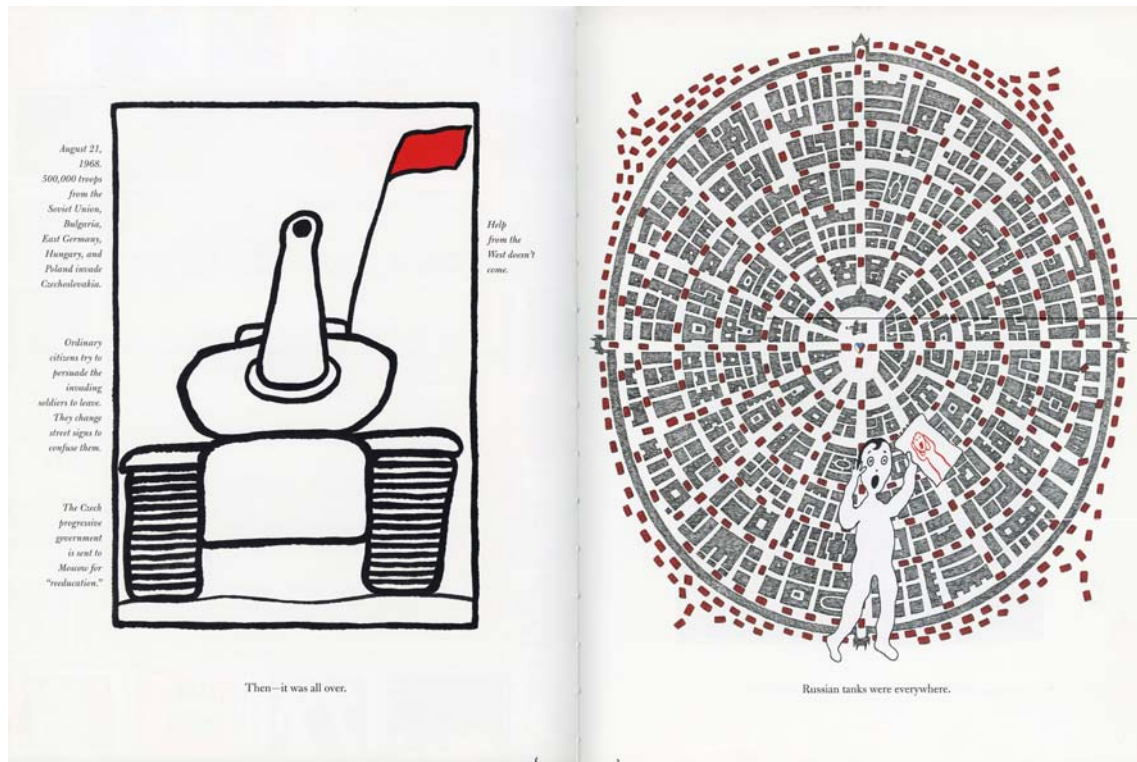


Fig 2-48. *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2007

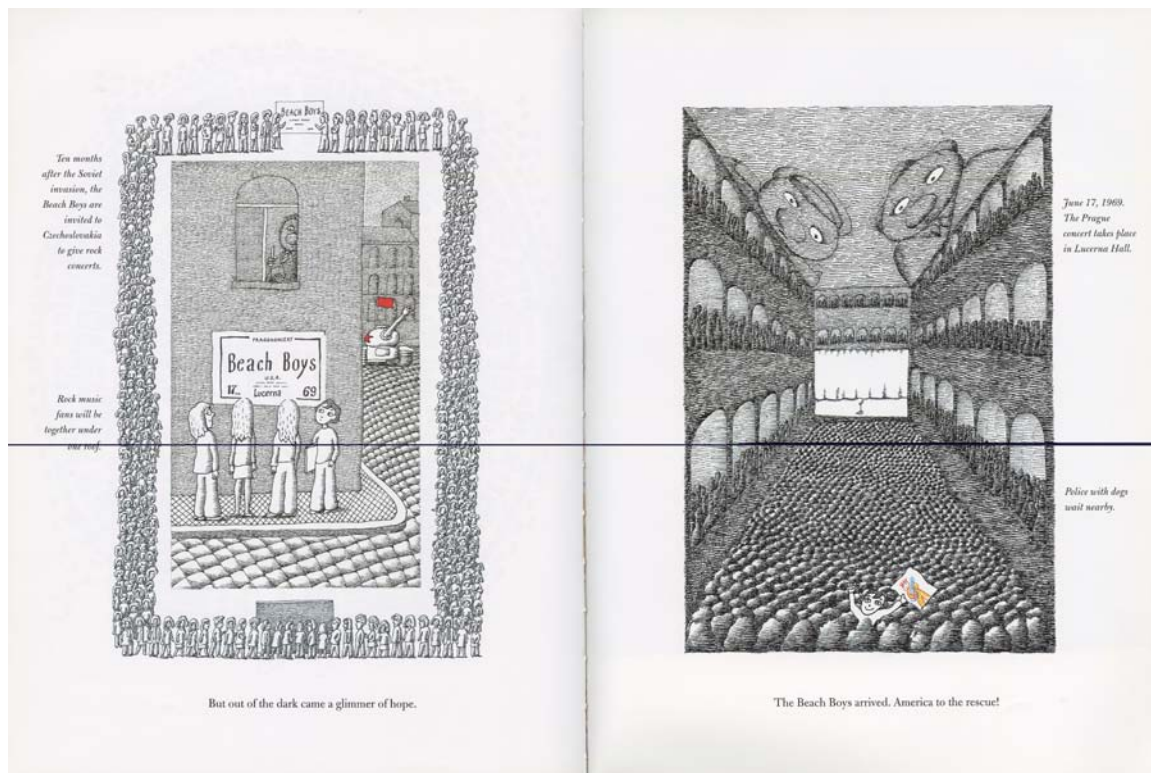


Fig.2-51. *The Tree of Life: Charles Darwin*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2003 [Jap. 『生命の樹 チャールズ・ダーウィンの生涯』 translation by Masaru Harada, Tokuma Shoten, 2005]

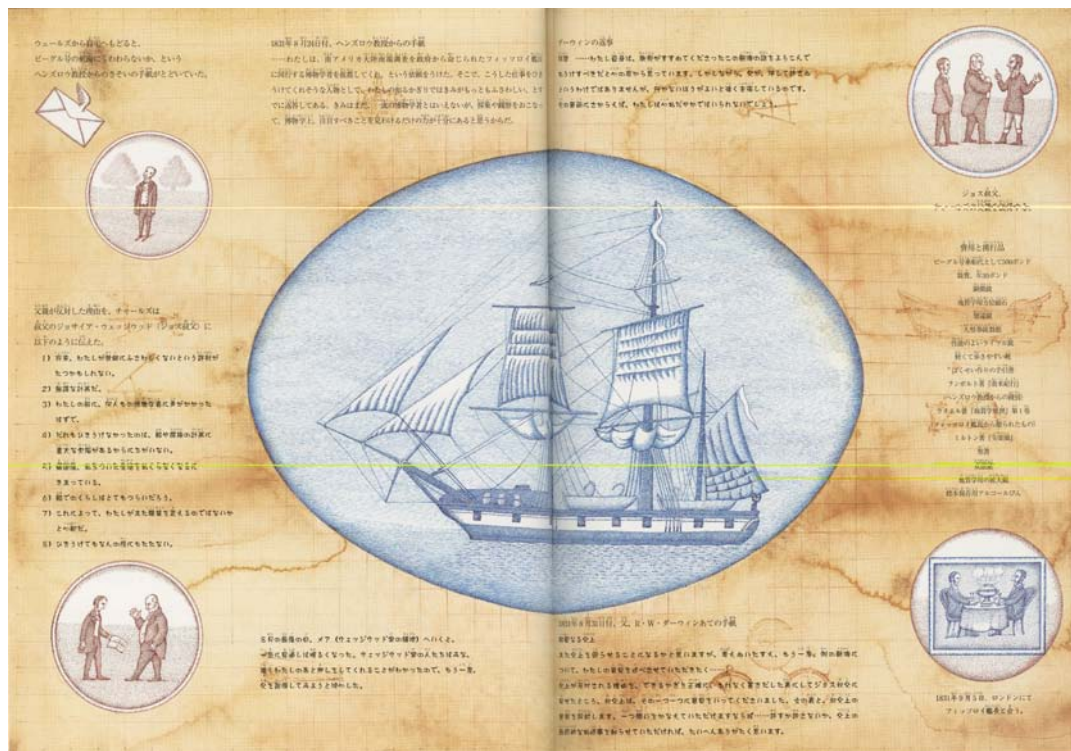


Fig.2-52. *The Tree of Life: Charles Darwin*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2003 [Jap. 『生命の樹 チャールズ・ダーウィンの生涯』 translation by Masaru Harada, Tokuma Shoten, 2005]

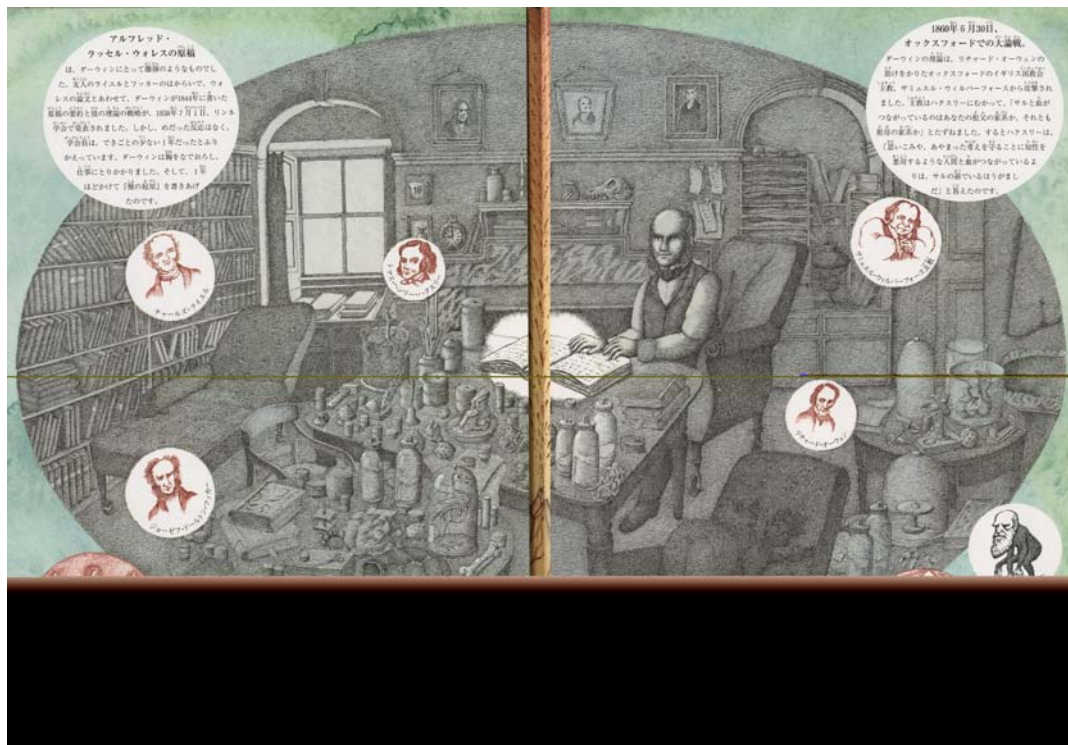


Fig.2-53. *The Tree of Life: Charles Darwin, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2003* [Jap. 『生命の樹 チャールズ・ダーウィンの生涯』 translation by Masaru Harada, Tokuma Shoten, 2005]

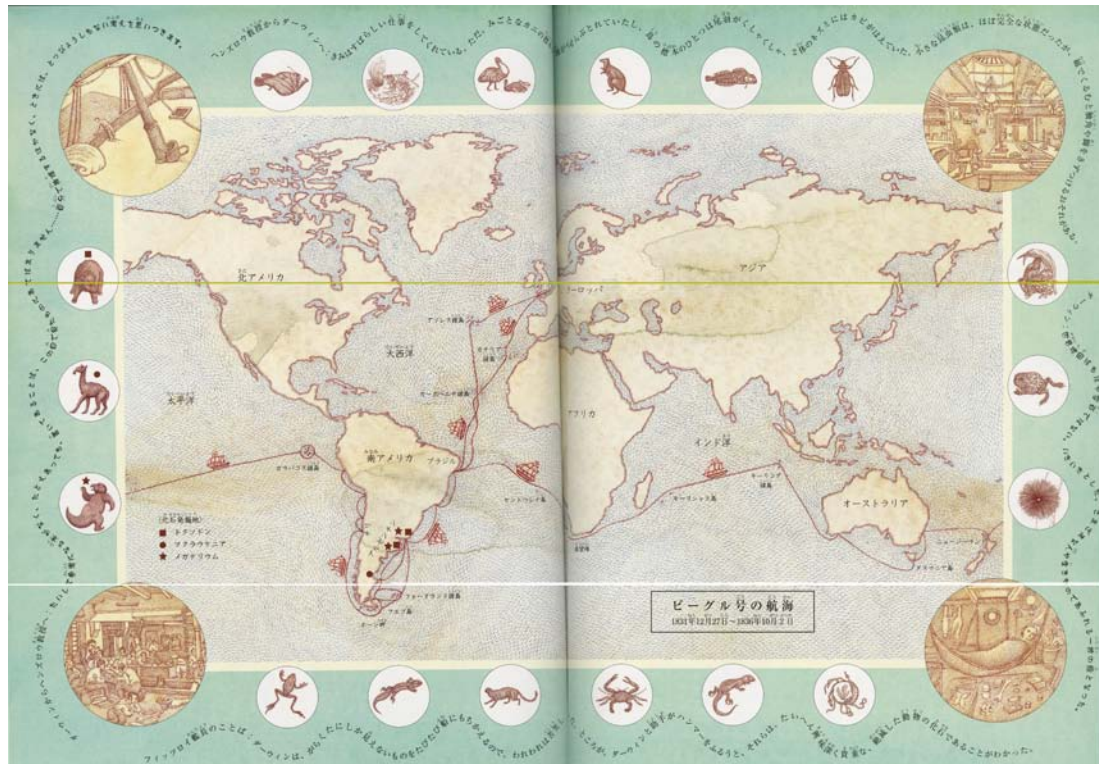


Fig.2-54. *The Tree of Life: Charles Darwin, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2003* [Jap. 『生命の樹 チャールズ・ダーウィンの生涯』 translation by Masaru Harada, Tokuma Shoten, 2005]

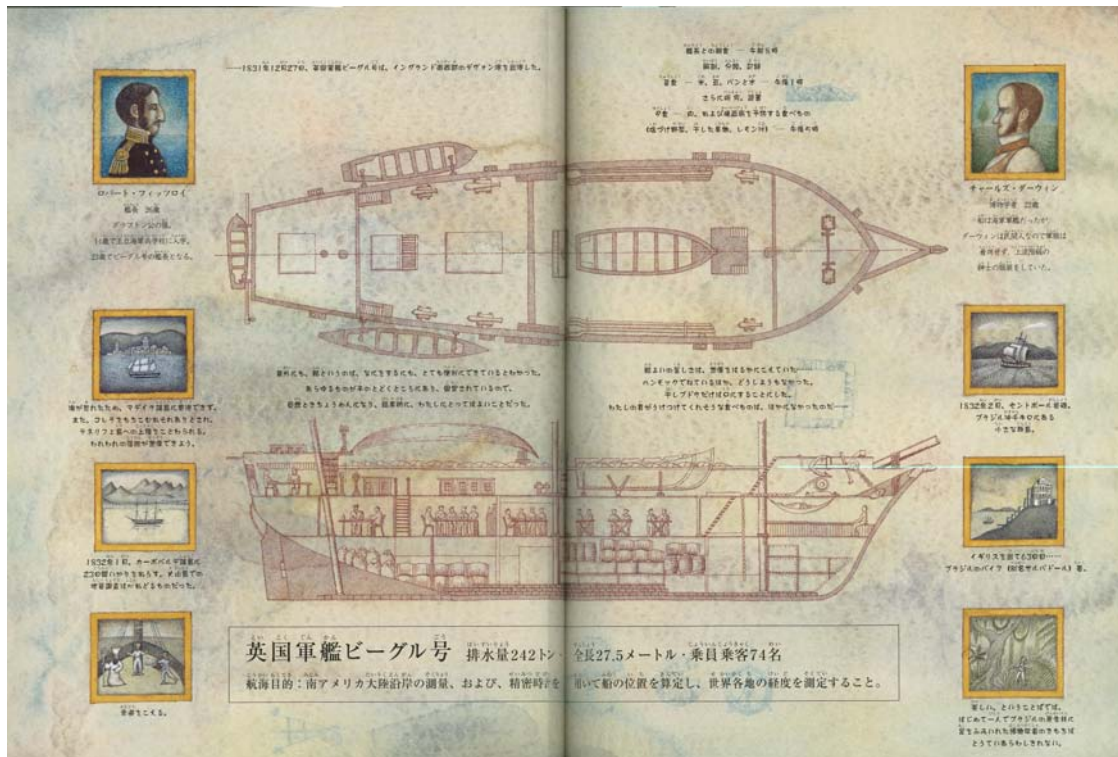


Fig2-55. *The Tree of Life: Charles Darwin, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2003* [Jap. 『生命の樹 チャールズ・ダーウィンの生涯』 translation by Masaru Harada, Tokuma Shoten, 2005)]



Fig2-56. *The Tree of Life: Charles Darwin, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2003* [Jap. 『生命の樹 チャールズ・ダーウィンの生涯』 translation by Masaru Harada, Tokuma Shoten, 2005)]



Fig2-57. *The Tree of Life: Charles Darwin, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2003* [Jap. 『生命の樹 チャールズ・ダーウィンの生涯』 translation by Masaru Harada, Tokuma Shoten, 2005]



Fig2-58. *The Tree of Life: Charles Darwin, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2003* [Jap. 『生命の樹 チャールズ・ダーウィンの生涯』 translation by Masaru Harada, Tokuma Shoten, 2005]

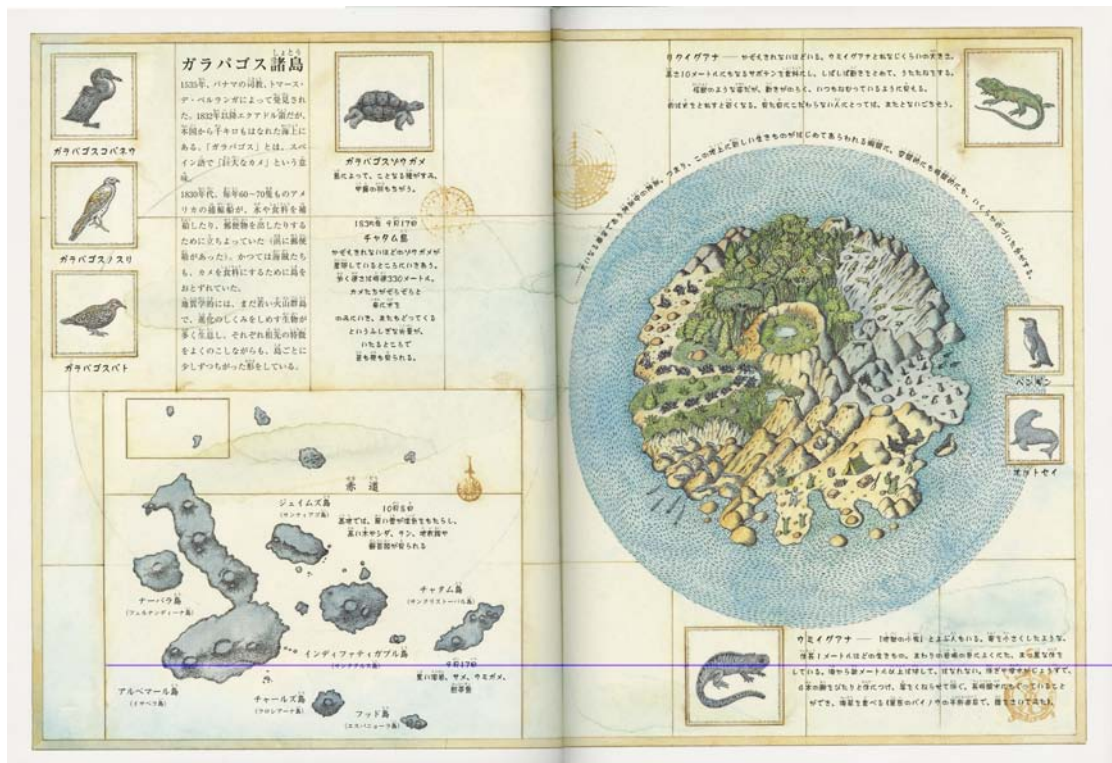


Fig 2-59. *Follow the Dream: The Story of Christopher Columbus*, Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2003

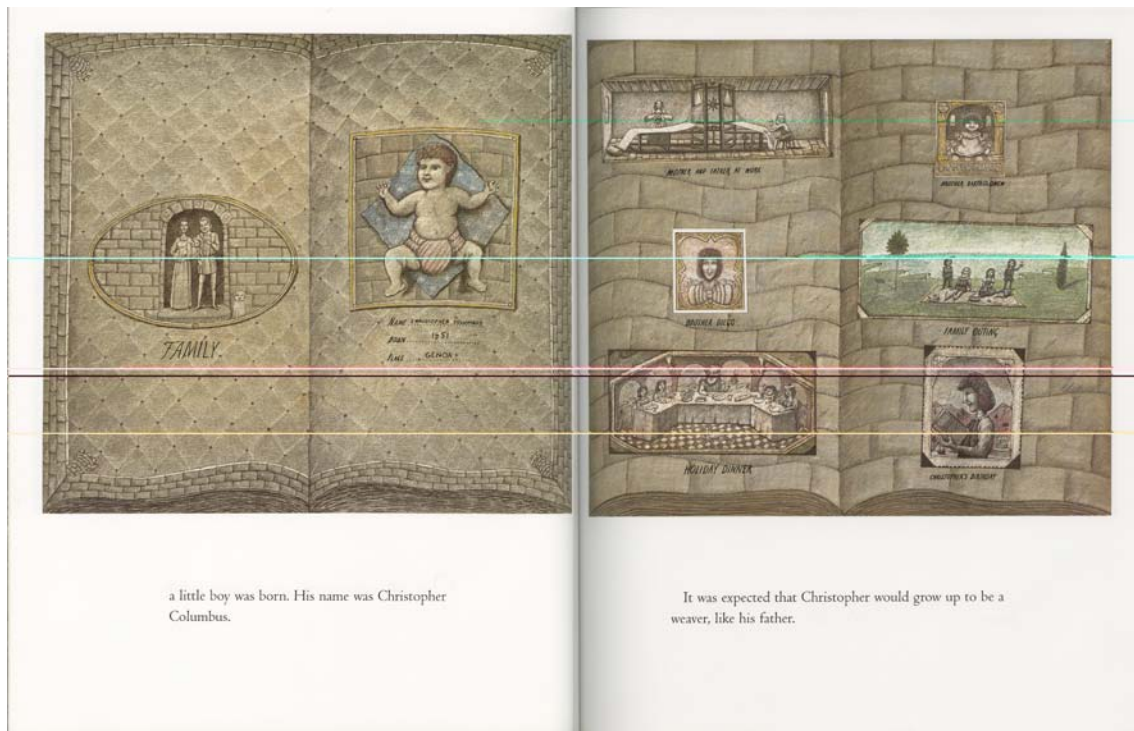


Fig 2-60. *Follow the Dream: The Story of Christopher Columbus*, Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2003

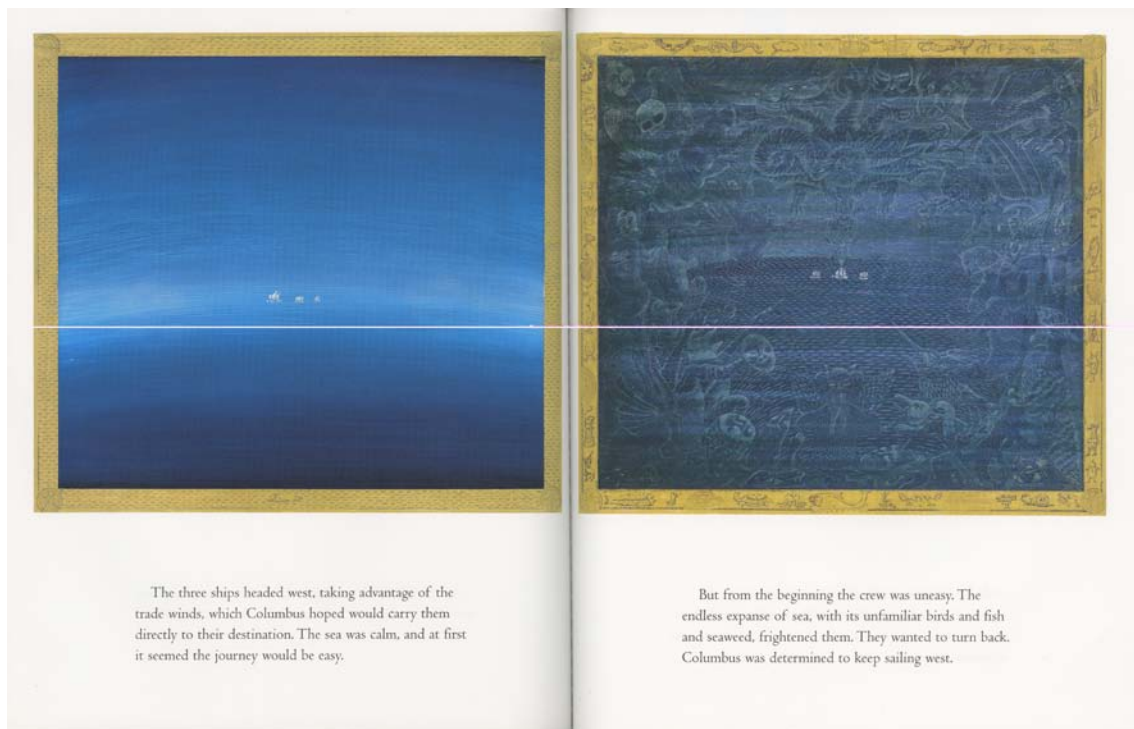


Fig 2-61. *Follow the Dream: The Story of Christopher Columbus*, Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2003

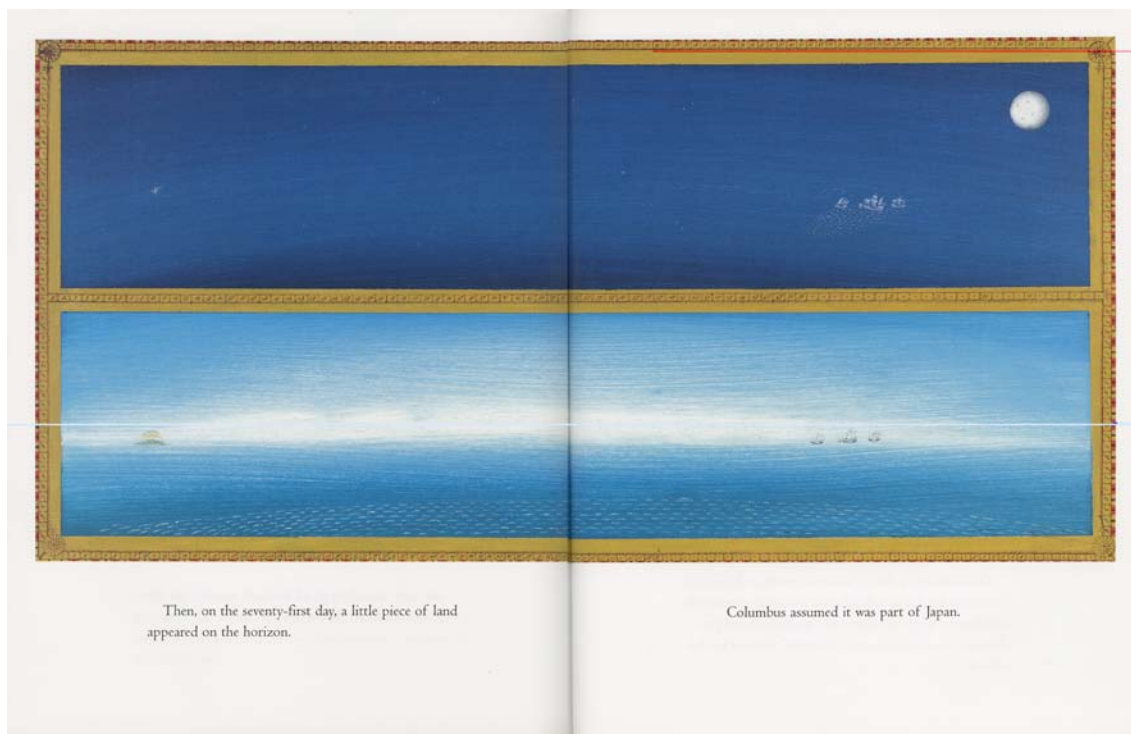


Fig 2-62. *Follow the Dream: The Story of Christopher Columbus*, Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2003

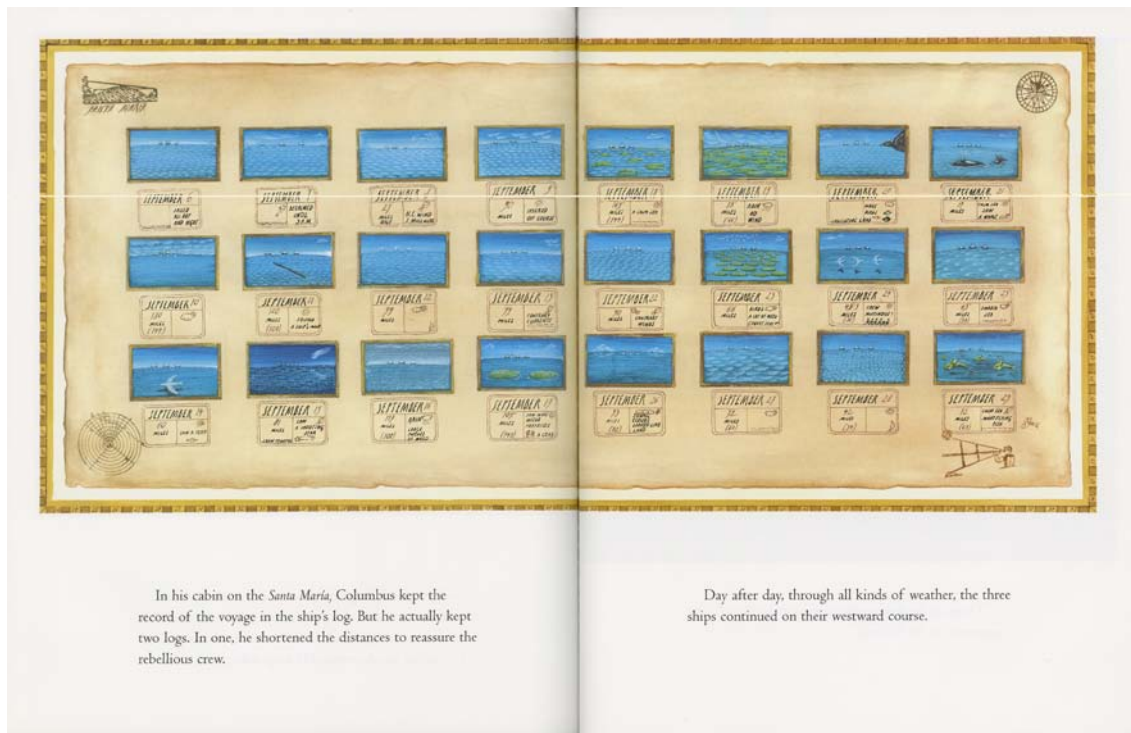


Fig2-63. *Follow the Dream: The Story of Christopher Columbus*, Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2003

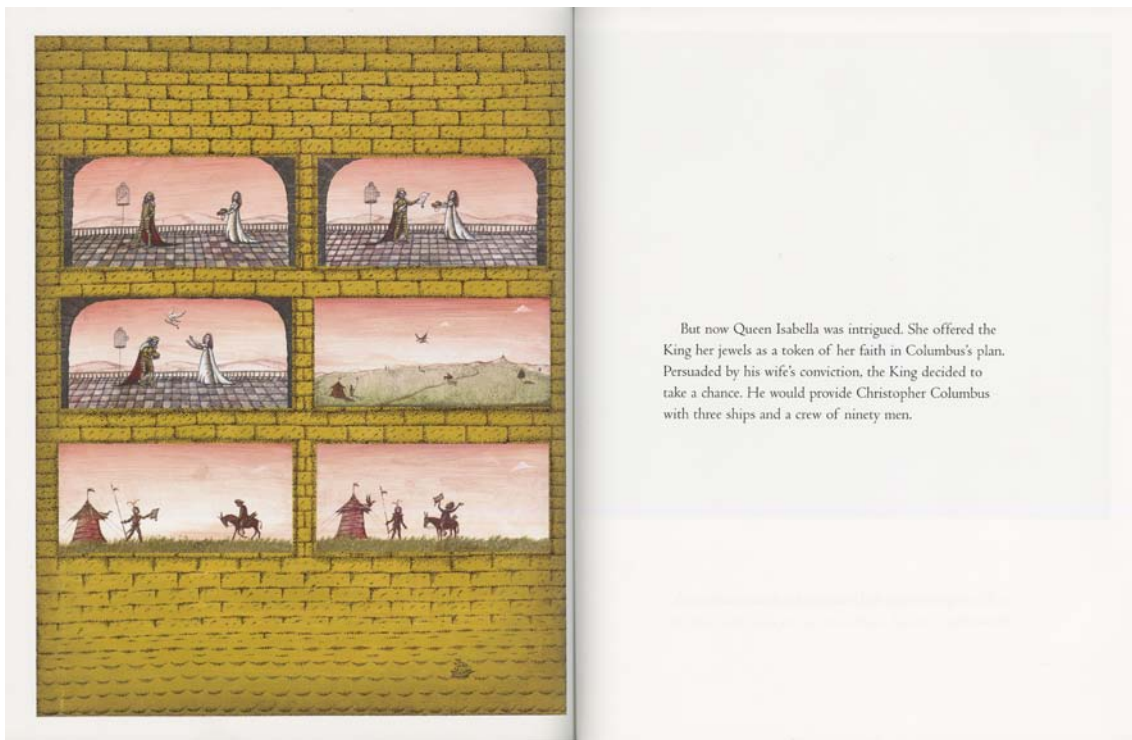


Fig2-64. *Follow the Dream: The Story of Christopher Columbus*, Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2003



Fig.2-65. *An Ocean World*, Greenwillow Books, 1992 [Jap. 『オーシャンワールド』, BL, 1995]

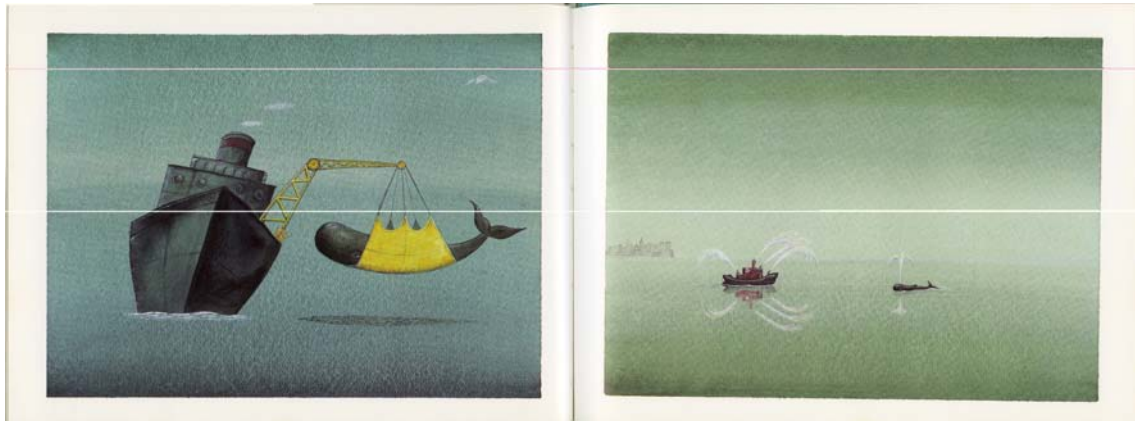


Fig.2-66. *An Ocean World*, Greenwillow Books, 1992 [Jap. 『オーシャンワールド』, BL, 1995]

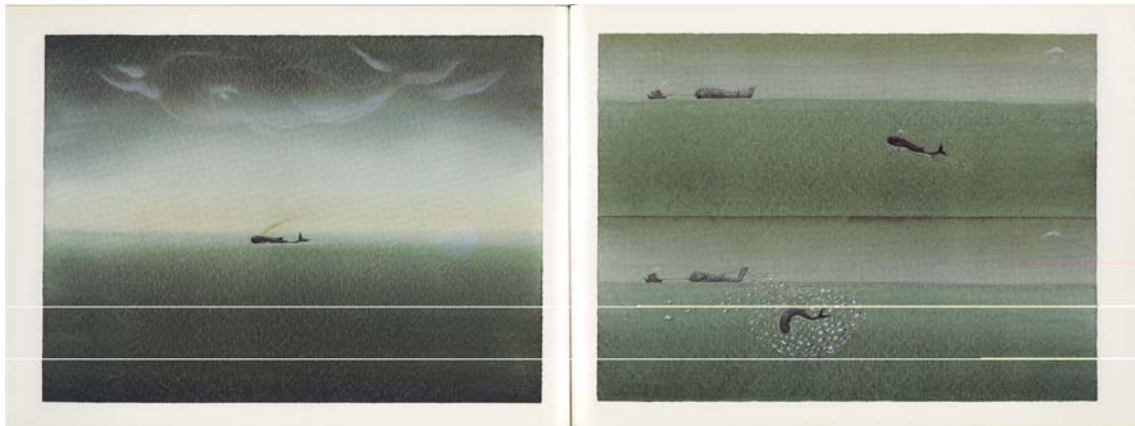


Fig.2-67. *An Ocean World*, Greenwillow Books, 1992 [Jap. 『オーシャンワールド』, BL, 1995]

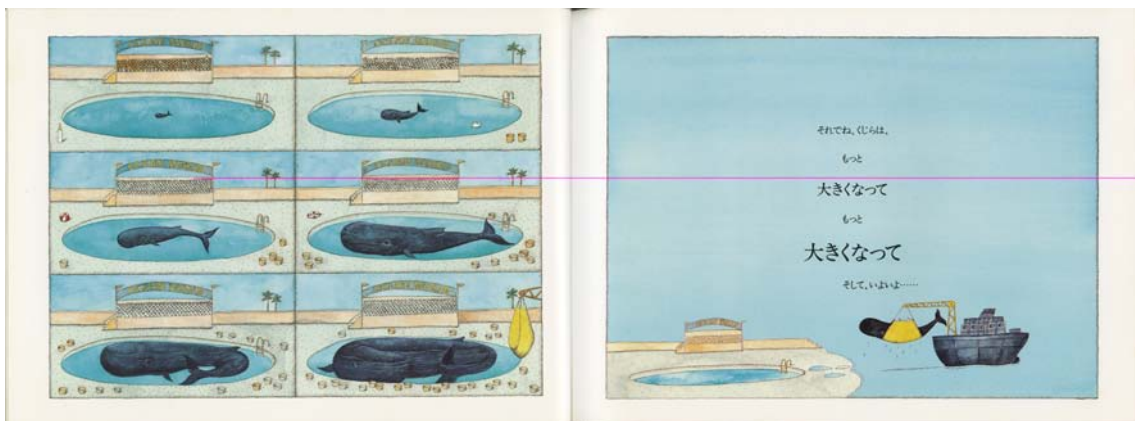


Fig.2-68. *An Ocean World*, Greenwillow Books, 1992 [Jap. 『オーシャンワールド』, BL, 1995]



古い古い巻紙に書かれた物語をぼくは読む。それはぼくが子どものころ聞いた物語だ。

読み終えると、ぼくは一人になっていて、手には鍵がひとつ。

Fig 2-71. *The Three Golden Keys*, Doubleday, 1994 [Jap. 『三つの金の鍵 - 魔法のプラハ』, translation: Motoyuki Shibata, BL, 2005]



Fig 2-72. *The Three Golden Keys*, Doubleday, 1994 [Jap. 『三つの金の鍵 - 魔法のプラハ』, translation: Motoyuki Shibata, BL, 2005]

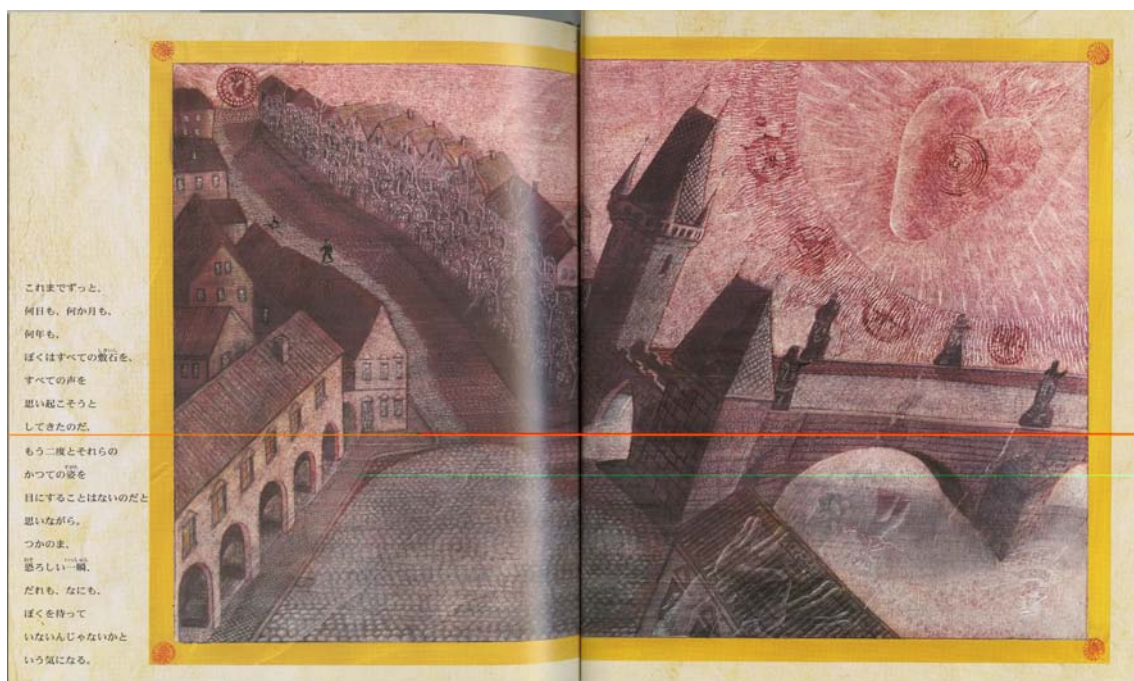


Fig.2-73. *Madlenka*, Square Fish, 2000 [『マドレンカ』, Jap. translation: Motoko Matsuda, BL, 2001]

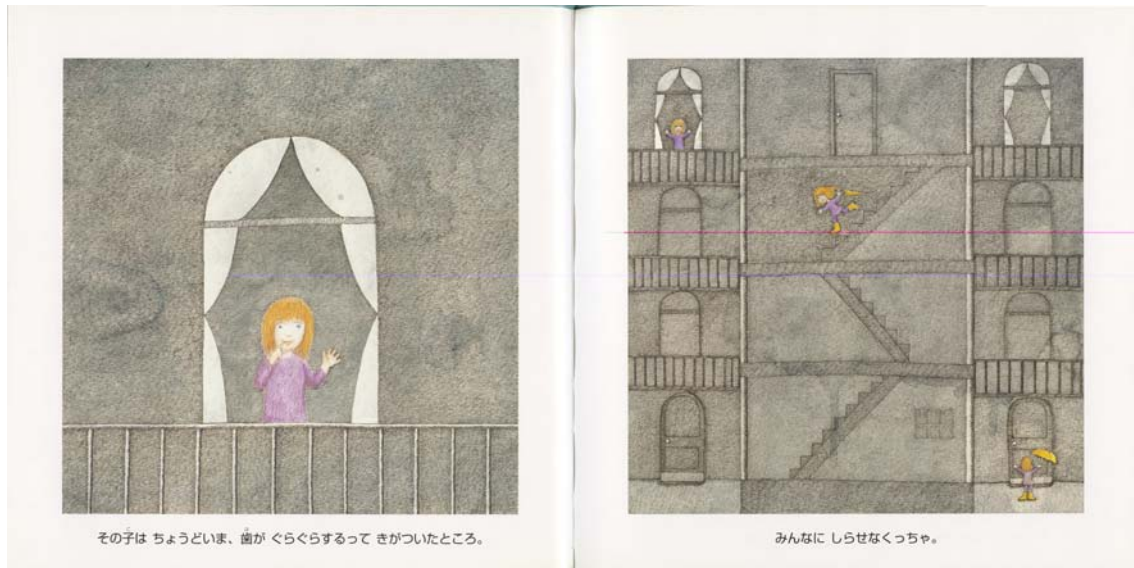


Fig.2-74. *Madlenka*, Square Fish, 2000 [『マドレンカ』, Jap. translation: Motoko Matsuda, BL, 2001]



Fig 2-75. *Tibet: Through the Red Box*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 1998

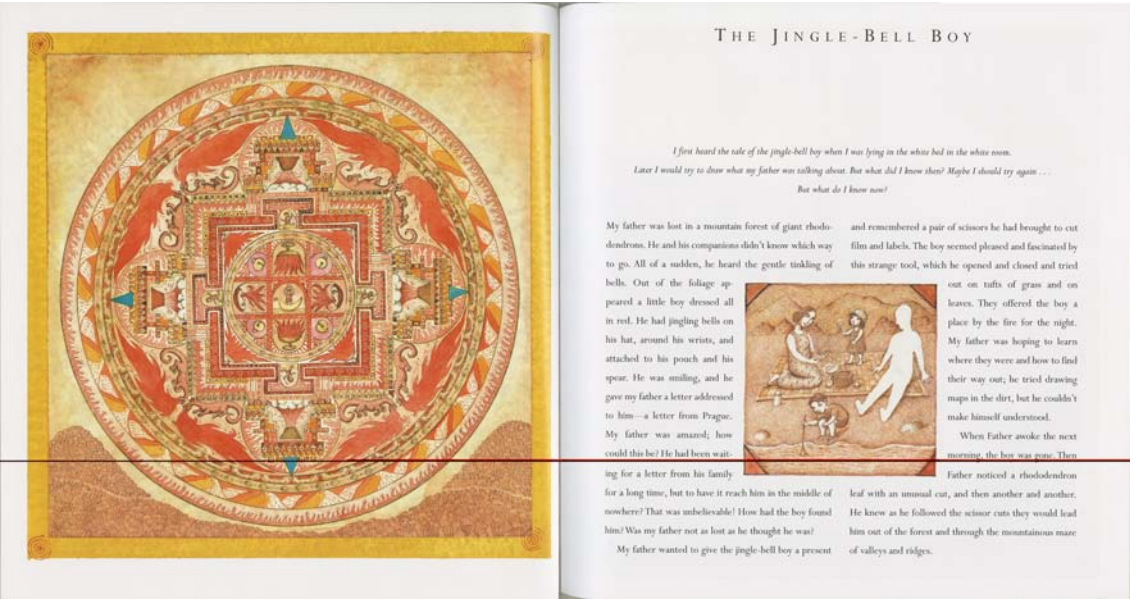


Fig 2-76. *Tibet: Through the Red Box*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 1998

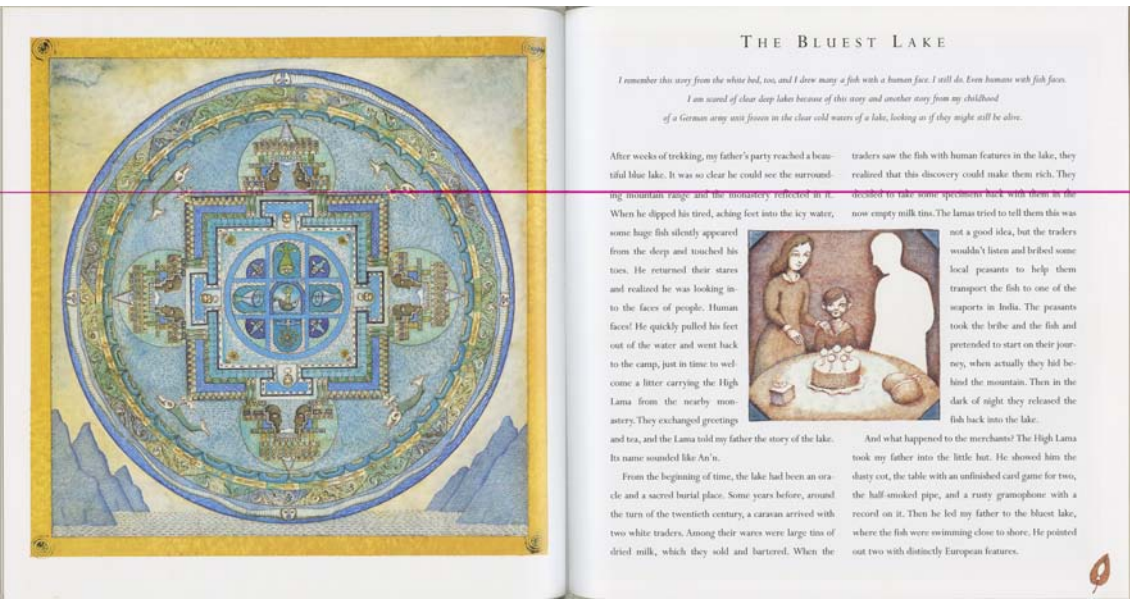


Fig 2-77. *Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth*, Chris Ware, Pantheon, 2003



Fig 2-78. *Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth*, Chris Ware, Pantheon, 2003



Fig 2-79. *Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth*, Chris Ware, Pantheon, 2003

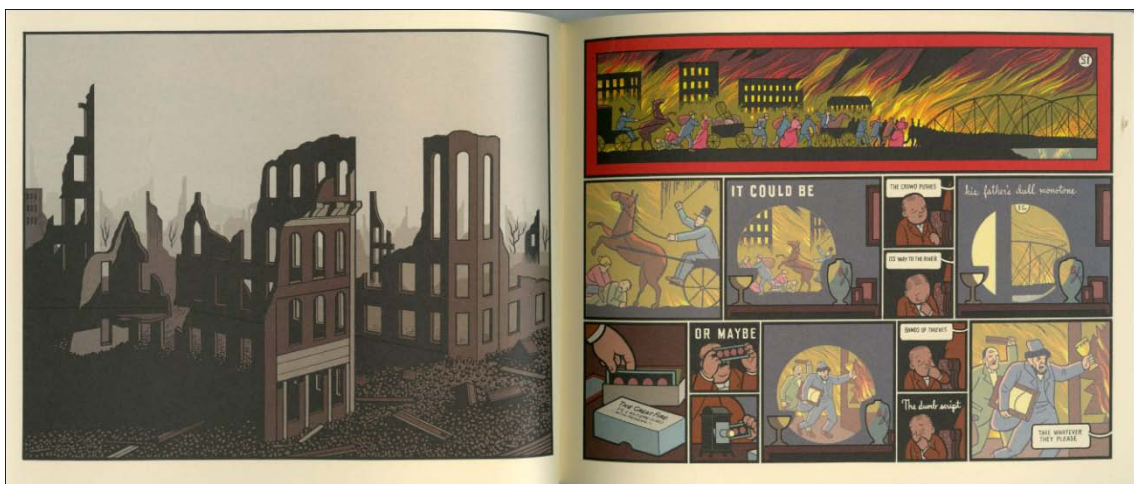


Fig 2-80. *Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth*, Chris Ware, Pantheon, 2003

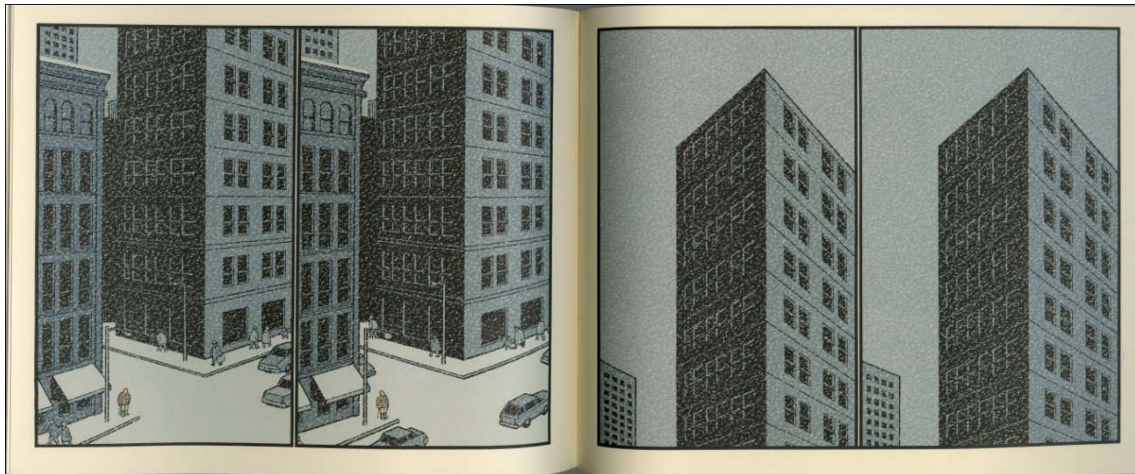


Fig 2-81. *Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth*, Chris Ware, Pantheon, 2003



Fig 2-82. *Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth*, Chris Ware, Pantheon, 2003



BUT.

LORD!

AIR HA?

LORD! YOU CAN SEE YOUR UNDER!

This right

in fact

THERE'S ONE LORDLY

HEY!

He sees as his house
His can see just about
anywhere
house

it seems as if he can
see the whole world
from up here

AND THERE'S NOT
SECOND, IS IT?

WELL I
TRAP HIM!

I'M SURE HE'S
GONE!

I HAVE HIM

Buts
for him
The whole world

is for that moment
THERE'S ONLY
THAT'S ALL
THAT'S ALL

The single strand of
red hair

which dances idly around his nose & eyelids

[illegible][illegible]

Fig 2-86. *Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth*, Chris Ware, Pantheon, 2003

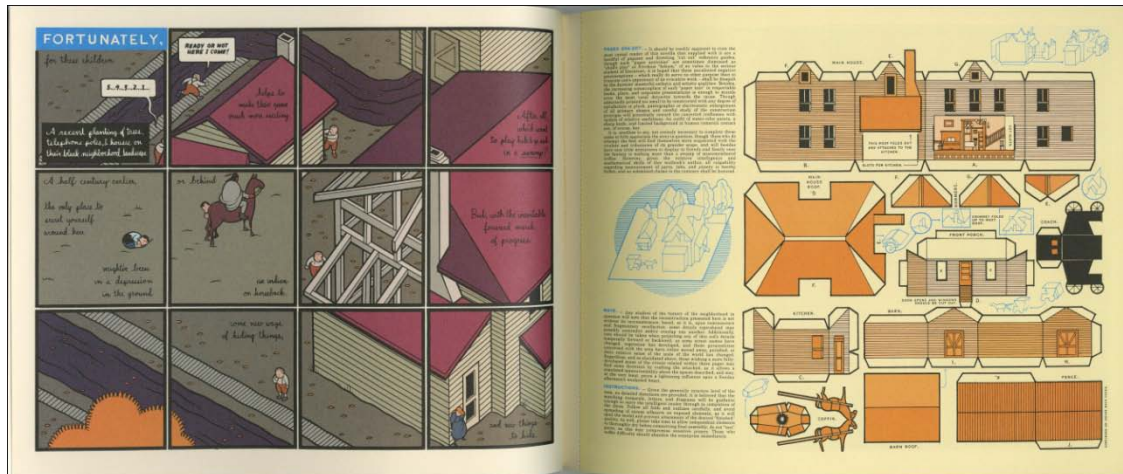


Fig 2-87. *Jimmy Corrigan, The Smartest Kid on Earth*, Chris Ware, Pantheon, 2003

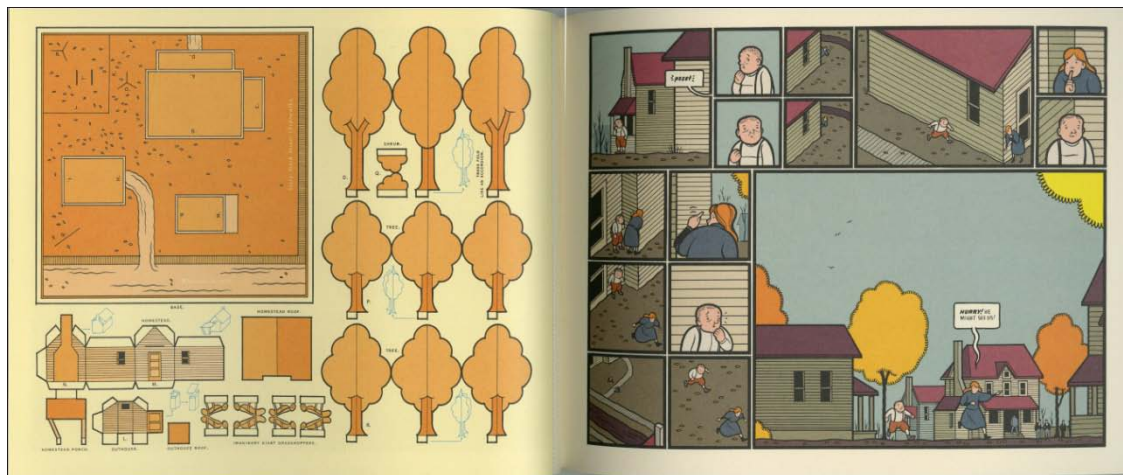


Fig 2-88. *Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth*, Chris Ware, Pantheon, 2003



Fig.2-89. “Mirakuru tama chan” (ミラクルたまちゃん), in: *Palepoli*, Furuya Usagimaru, Ohtabooks, 2003, p.32-33

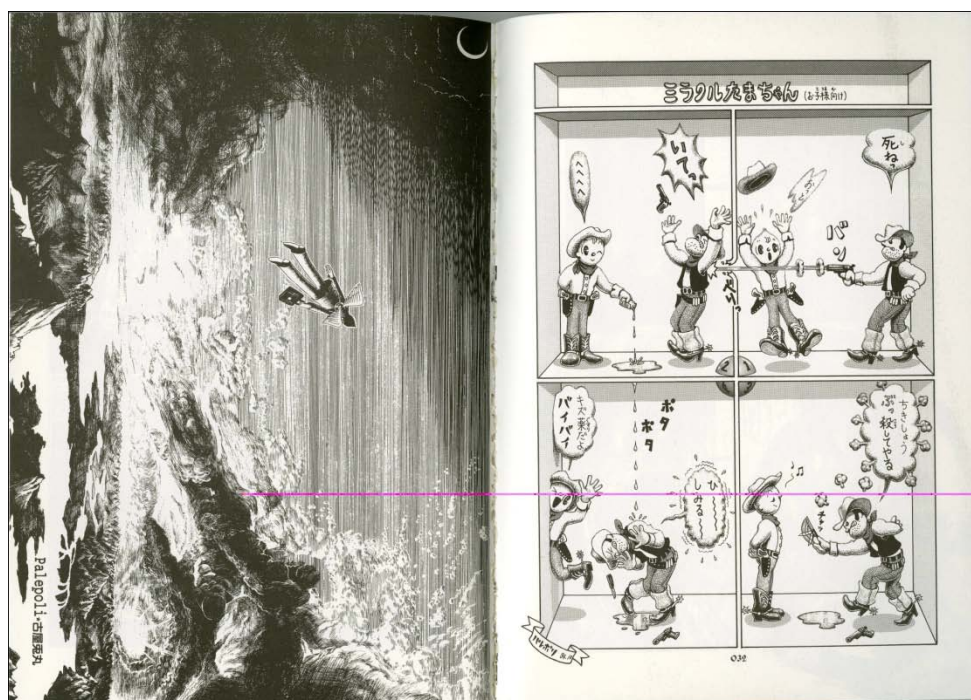
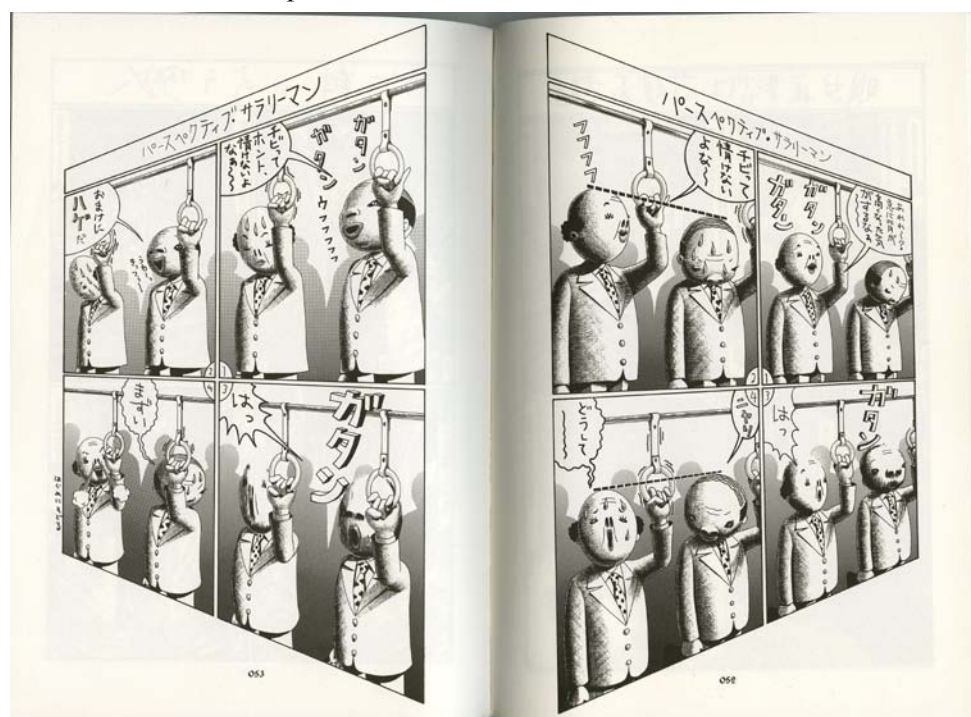


Fig.2-90. “Pasupekuteibu・sarariman” (パースペクティブ・サラリーマン), in: *Palepoli*, Furuya Usagimaru, Ohtabooks, 2003, p. 52-53



Chapter 3 Kazuichi Hanawa and Li Chi-Tak

Fig.3-1. poster for *Moujin shokan shanghai hen* (『盲人書簡 上海篇』), Silkscreen, 102.6 x 72.6cm, 1974

Fig.3-2. poster for *Shinjuku out low show* (『新宿アウトローショー』), 1973



Fig.3-3. poster for *Pastoral: To die in the country* (Denen ni shisu, 『田園に死す』), Offset, 72.5 x 51.5cm, 1974

Fig.3-4. poster for *Pastoral: To die in the country* (Denen ni shisu, 『田園に死す』), 2009



Fig.3-5. “Toi Mutsuo”(「都井睦雄」), in: 28 Famous Scenes of Murder and Verse (『江戸昭和競作無惨絵英名二十八衆句』), Libroport, 1988

Fig.3-6. “Homunculus”(「ホムンクルス」), in: 28 Famous Scenes of Murder and Verse (『江戸昭和競作無惨絵英名二十八衆句』), Libroport, 1988



Fig.3-7. “Yorimitsu Minamoto and drinking boy”(「源頼光と酒呑童子」), in: 28 Famous Scenes of Murder and Verse (『江戸昭和競作無惨絵英名二十八衆句』), Libroport, 1988

Fig.3-8. “Whitetiger unit”(「白虎隊」), in: 28 Famous Scenes of Murder and Verse (『江戸昭和競作無惨絵英名二十八衆句』), Libroport, 1988



Fig.3-9. “Tuttle man”(「亀男」), in: *Shin Konjaku Monogatari, Nue* (『新今昔物語 鵺』), Futabasha, 1982



Fig.3 -10. *Doing time* (*Keimusho No Naka*, 『刑務所の中』), Seirin Kogeisha, 2000, p.44-45

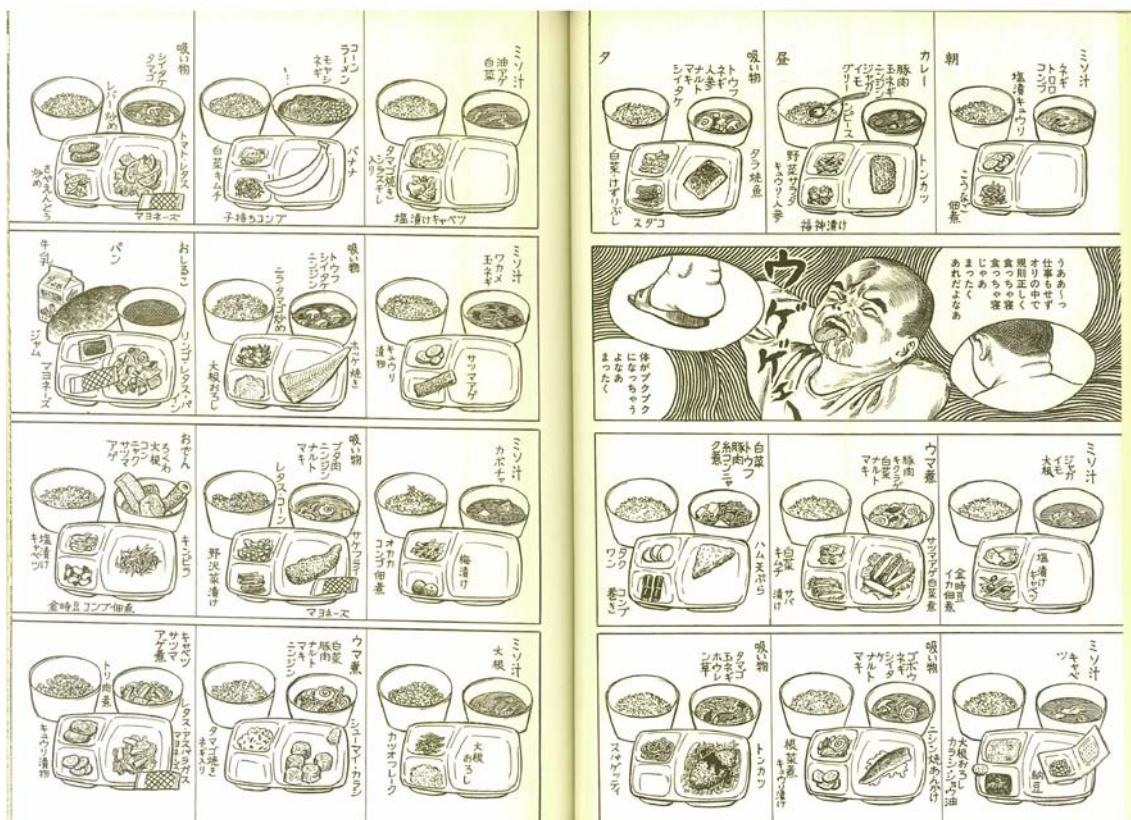


Fig.3-11. “Tatakahu ona”(「戦フ女」), in: *Tsuki no hikari* (『月ノ光』), Seirindo, 1996 (Seirindo, 1980), p.160-161



Fig.3-12. “Tatakahu ona”(「戦フ女」), in: *Tsuki no hikari* (『月ノ光』), Seirindo, 1996 (Seirindo, 1980), p.168-169



Fig.3-13. “kanou” 「感応」), in: *Suzakumon* (『朱雀門』), Seirinkogeisha, 2005 (Nihonbungeisha, 1988), p.204-205

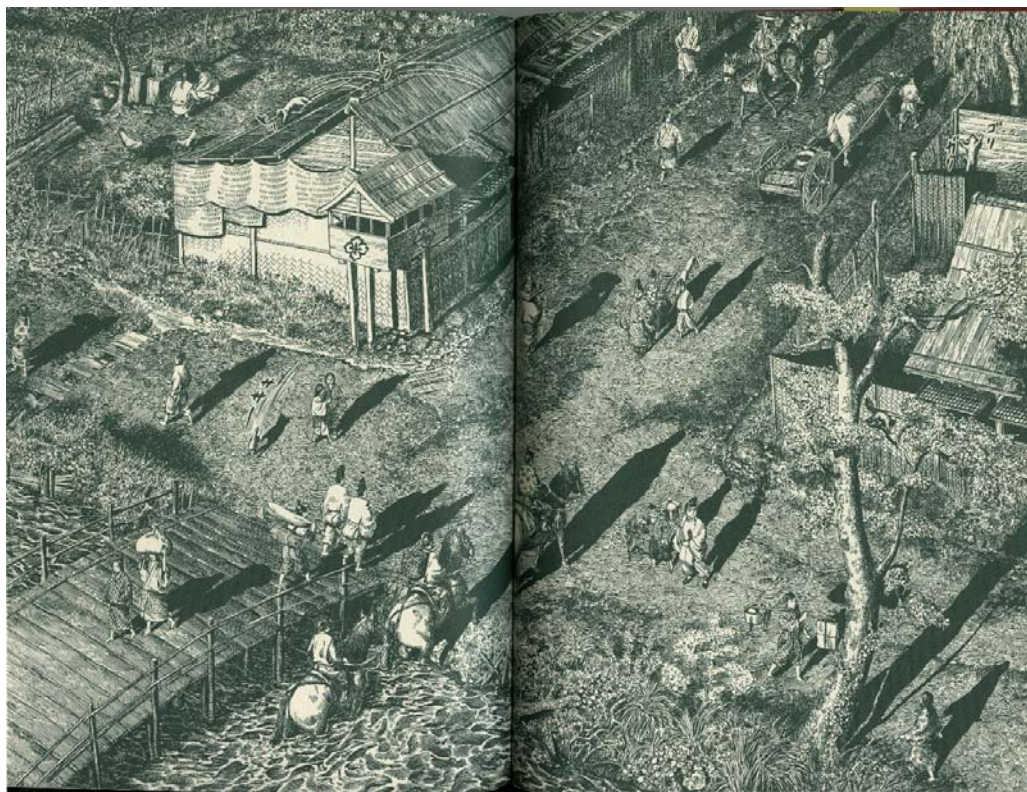


Fig.3-14. “Kenshiri” (「犬尻」), in: *Suzakumon* (『朱雀門』), Seirinkogeisha, 2005 (Nihonbungeisha, 1988), p.98-99

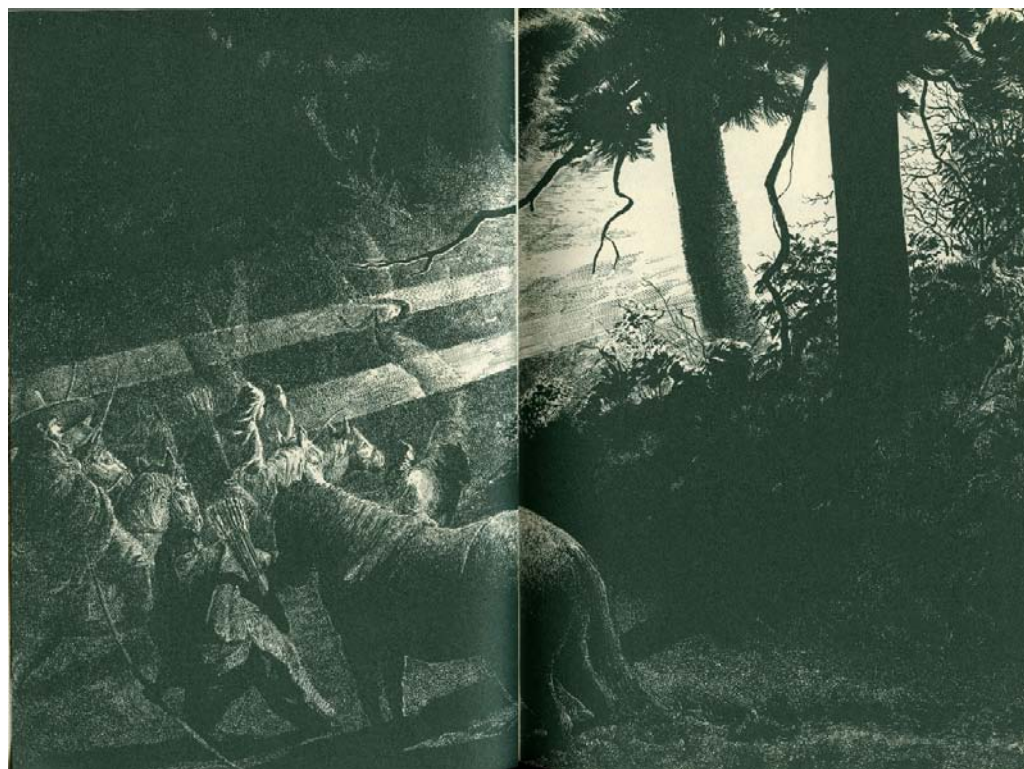


Fig.3-15. “Madowashi shin: oni tokashi”(「まどわし神:鬼溶かし」), in: *Suisei* (『水精』), Bunkasha, 2006 (Peyotorukobo,1991), p.129-130

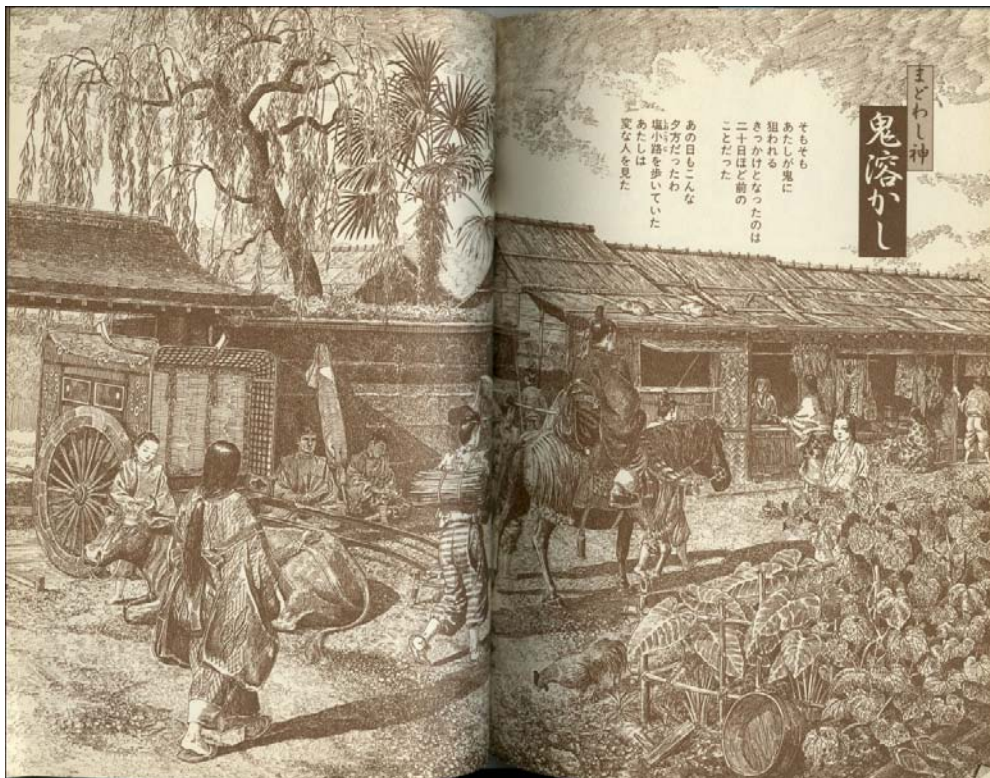


Fig.3-16. “Madowashi shin: reigi”(「まどわし神: 霊蟻」), in: *Suisei* (『水精』), Bunkasha, 2006 (Peyotorukobo,1991), p.118-119



Fig.3-17. *Doing time* (『刑務所の中』), Seirin Kogeisha, 2000, p.48-49

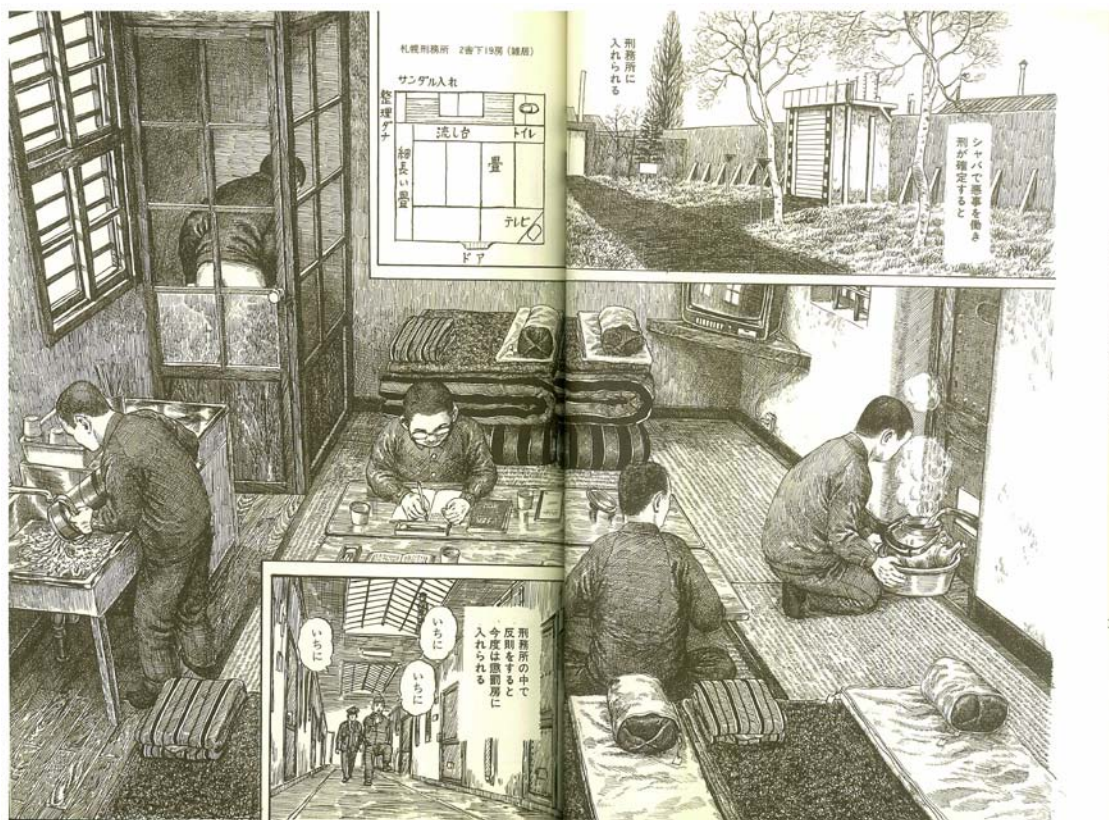


Fig.3-18. *Doing time* (『刑務所の中』), Seirin Kogeisha, 2000, p.224-225

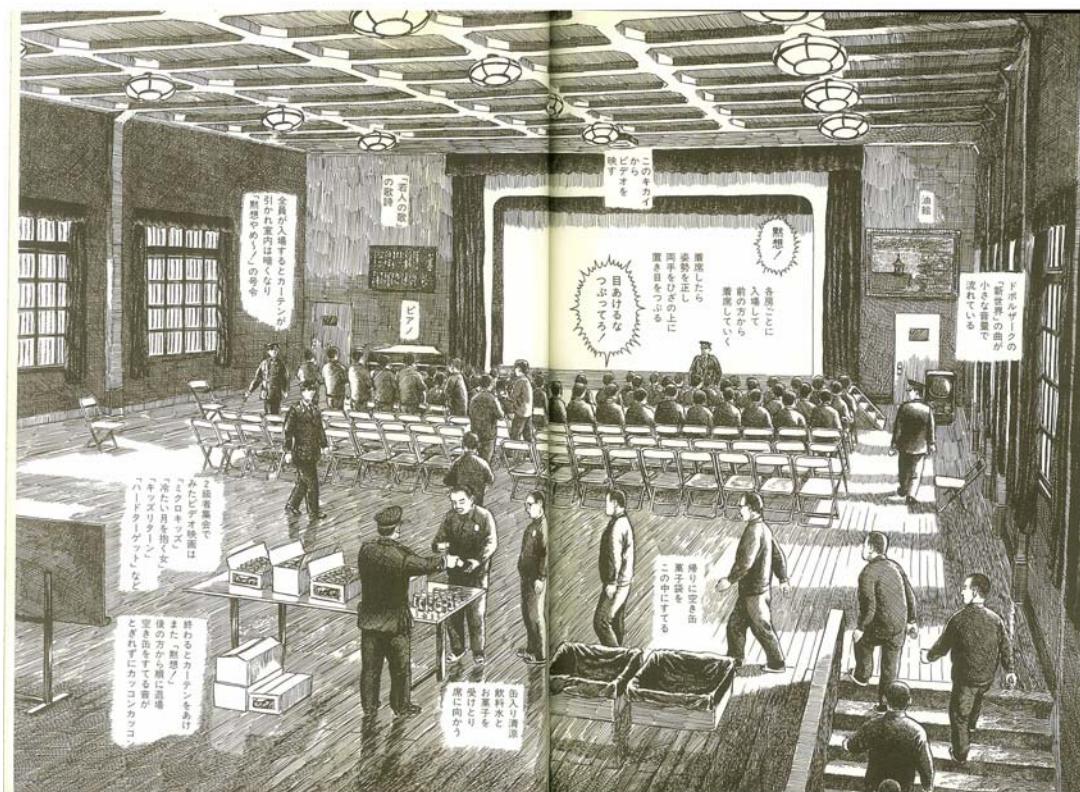


Fig.3-21. *Keimusho No Mae*, vol.3 (『刑務所の前』第三集), Shogakukan, 2007, p.142-143



Fig.3-22. *Keimusho No Mae*, vol.3 (『刑務所の前』第三集), Shogakukan, 2007, p.144-145

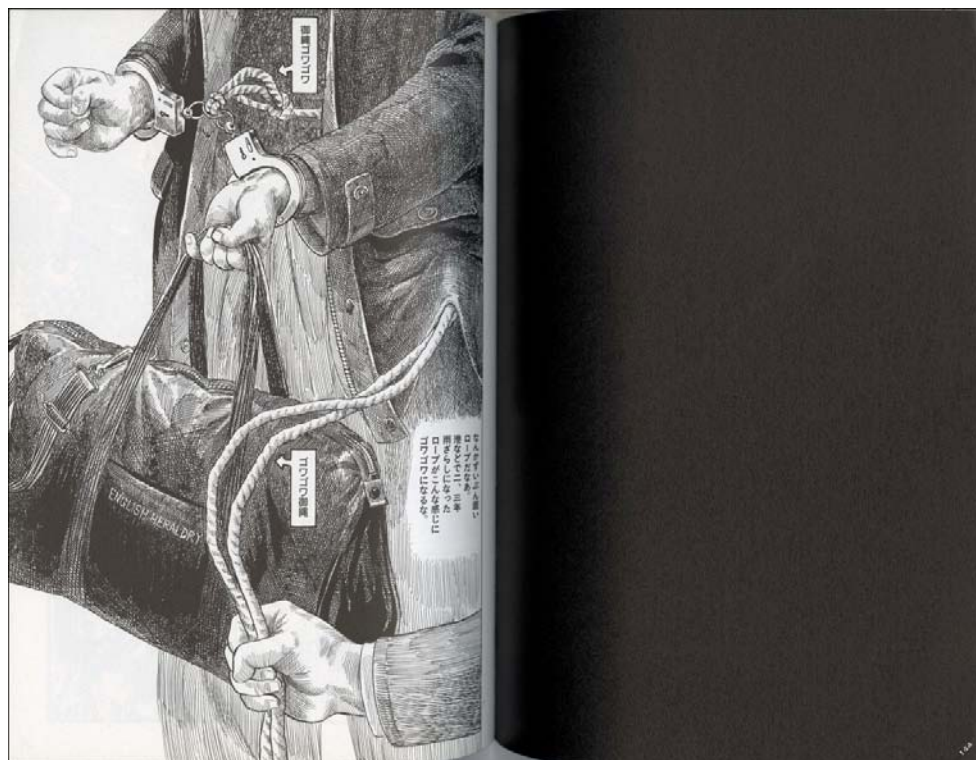


Fig.3-23. *Keimusho No Mae*, vol.3 (『刑務所の前』第三集), Shogakukan, 2007, p.214-215



Fig.3-24. *Keimusho No Mae*, vol.3 (『刑務所の前』第三集), Shogakukan, 2007, p.216-217



Fig.3-25. *Keimusho No Mae*, vol.3 (『刑務所の前』第三集), Shogakukan, 2007, p.2-3



Fig.3-26. *Keimusho No Mae*, vol.3 (『刑務所の前』第三集), Shogakukan, 2007, p.262-263

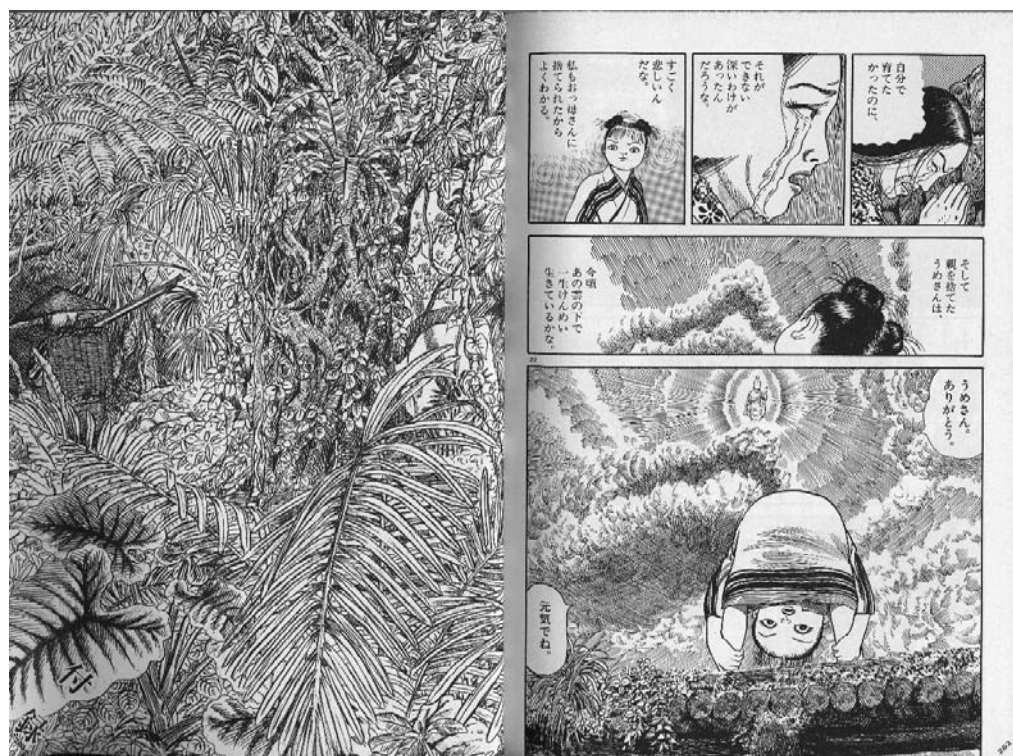


Fig.3-27. “Sushinin niki” (「崇親院日記」), in: *Suzakumon* (『朱雀門』), Seirin Kogeisha, 2005(1988, Nihonbungeisha), p.6-7



Fig.3-28. “Sushinin niki” (「崇親院日記」), in: *Suzakumon* (『朱雀門』), Seirin Kogeisha, 2005, (1988, Nihonbungeisha), p.8-9



Fig.3-29. “Seirei”(「生霊」), in: *Nekodani* (『猫谷』), Seirindo, 1989, p.26-27



Fig.3-30. “Seirei”(「生霊」), in: *Nekodani* (『猫谷』), Seirindo, 1989, p.30-31



Fig.3-31. "Seirei" (「生霊」), in: *Nekodani* (『猫谷』), 1989, p.32-33



Fig.3-32. "Seirei" (「生霊」), in: *Nekodani* (『猫谷』), Seirindo, 1989, p.38-39

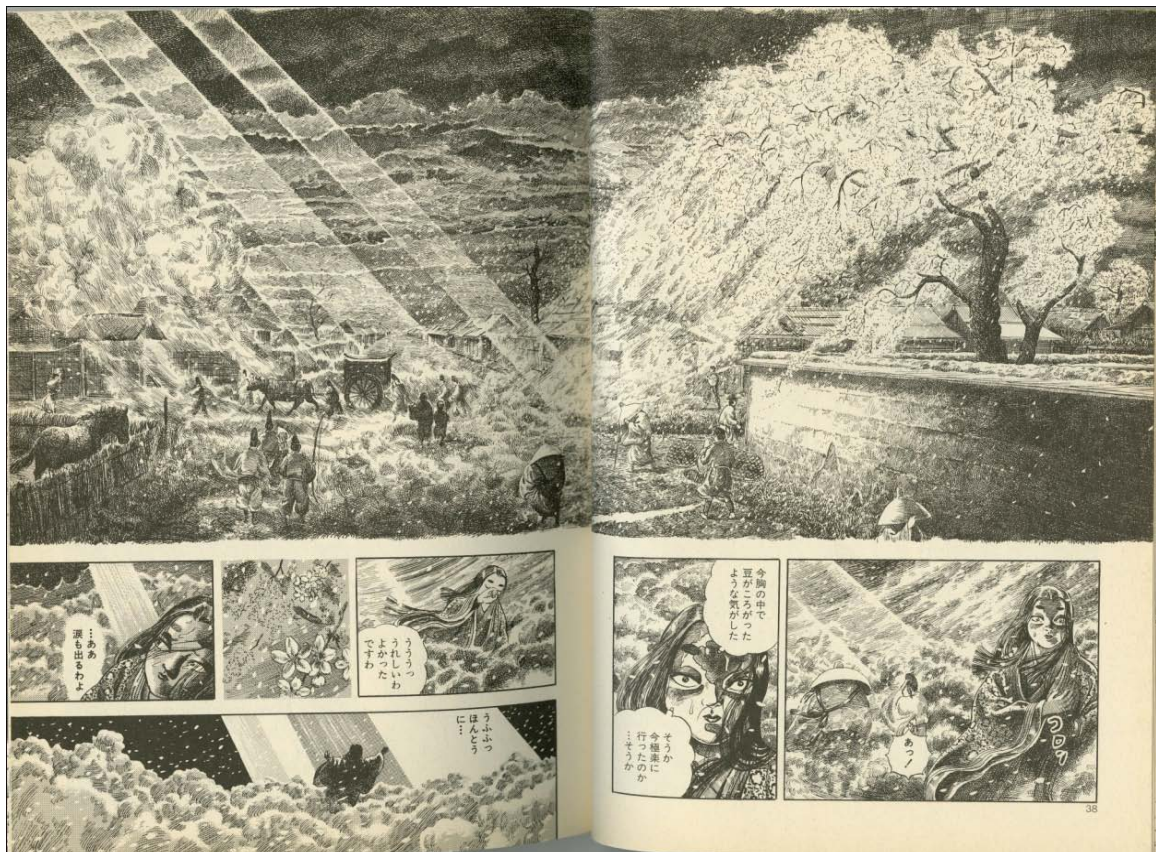


Fig.3-33. “Karahitsu no naka,” (「唐櫃の中」), in: *Nekodani* (『猫谷』), Seirindo, 1989, p.146-147



Fig.3-34. “Karahitsu no naka” (「唐櫃の中」), in: *Nekodani* (『猫谷』), Seirindo, 1989, p.148-149



Fig.3-35. “Karahitsu no naka” (「唐櫃の中」), in: *Nekodani* (『猫谷』), Seirindo, 1989, p.150-151



Fig.3-36. “Karahitsu no naka” (「唐櫃の中」), in: *Nekodani* (『猫谷』), Seirindo, 1989, p.152-153



Fig.3-37. *Tong Meng Shao Nian* (『同門少年』), self-published, 1987

Fig.3-38 *Shi Sheng* (『石神』), Spp, 1993 (French version ; *Spirit - Le Dieu Rocher*, Dargaud, 1998)

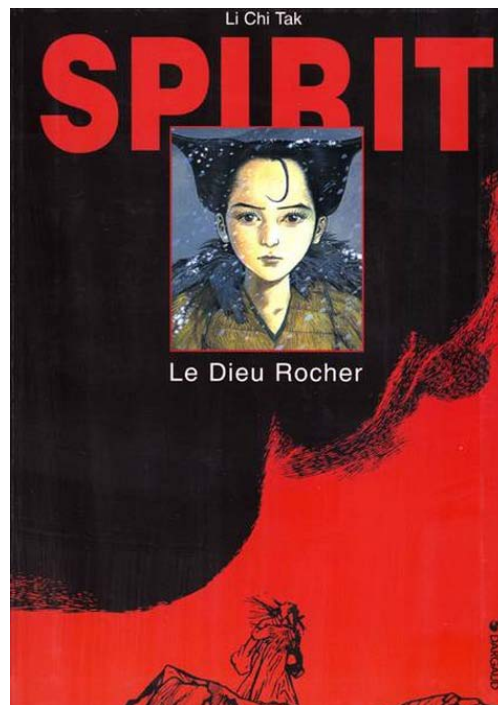


Fig.3-39. *With the boy* (『同門少年』), self-published, 1987

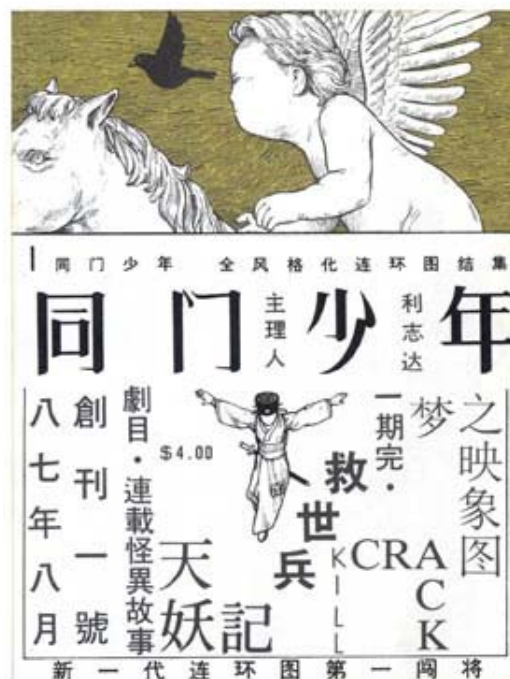


Fig.3-40. *Spirit - Le Dieu Rocher*, Dargaud, 1998



Fig.3-41. *Tian'an Men zhi huo* (『天安門之火』), Subculture, 1989, Cover

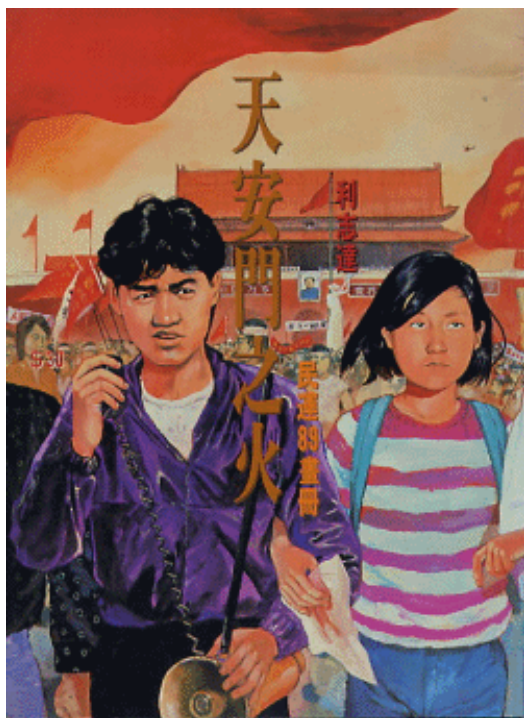


Fig.3-42. *Tian'an Men zhi huo* (『天安門之火』), Subculture, 1989



Fig.3-43. “Dalu” (「大路」): http://lichitak.blogspot.jp/2007/02/blog-post_19.html

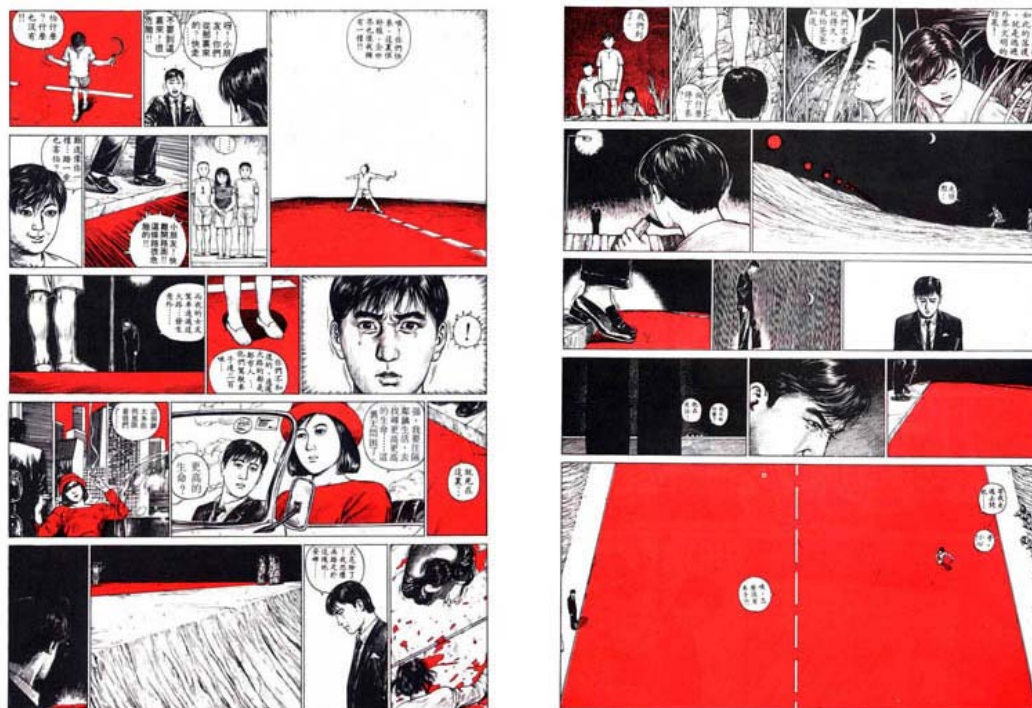


Fig.3-44. *Underground*, self- published, 2002

Fig.3-45. 利志達 X *Underground 1+2*, self- published, 2003



Fig.3-46. *Underground Ver.2.5*, self- published, 2005



Fig.3-47. “Otsukare sama deshita” (「お疲れさまでした」), in: *IKKI*, 2001, November, Shogakukan)

Fig.3-48. *Juicer-mixer* (『ジュースミキサー』, Aida Makoto, 290 x 210.5cm, Acrylic paint, 2001)

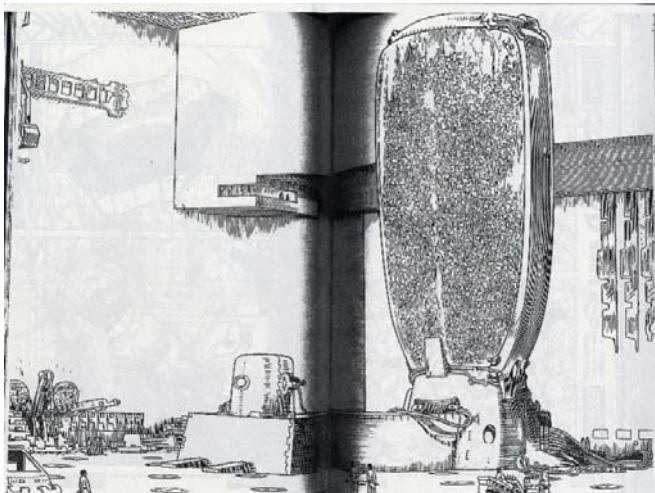


Fig.3-49. *Da hai dao tan* (『大海盜談』), Skywalker Press, 2011, there is no pagination

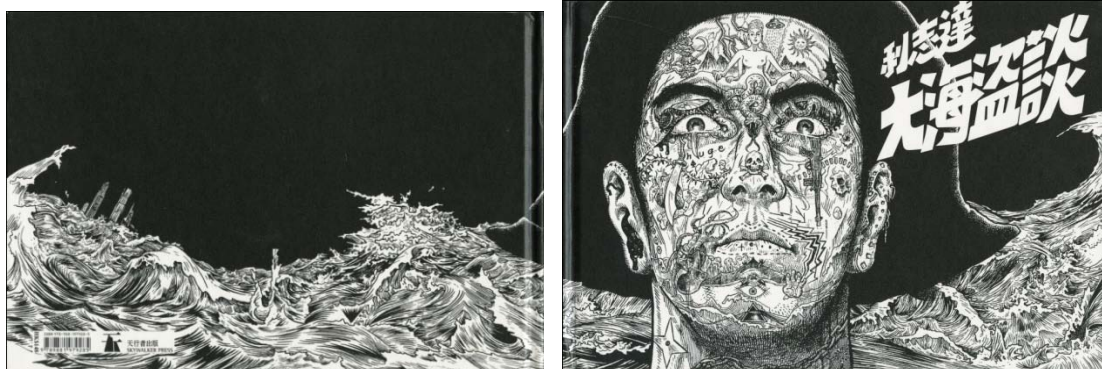


Fig.3-50. *Da hai dao tan* (『大海盜談』), Skywalker Press, 2011, there is no pagination



Fig.3-51. *Da hai dao tan* (『大海盜談』), Skywalker Press, 2011, there is no pagination



Fig.3-52. *Da hai dao tan* (『大海盜談』), Skywalker Press, 2011, there is no pagination

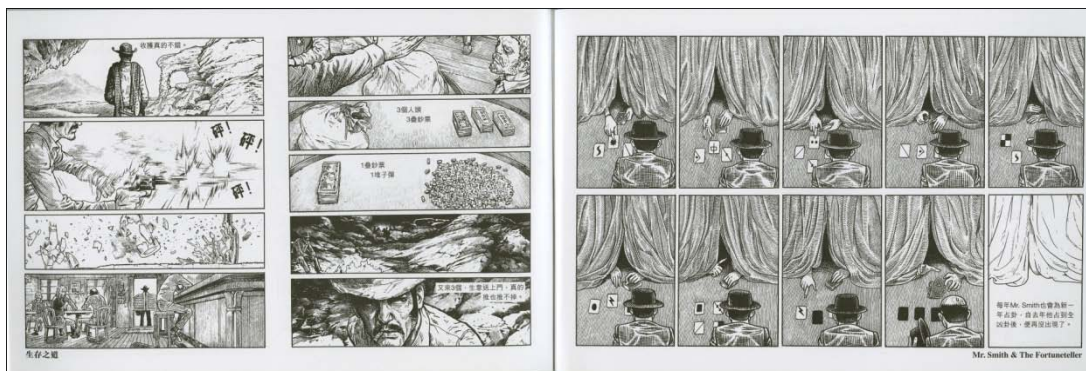


Fig.3-53. *Da ai shen hua* (『大愛神話』), Skywalker Press, 2011, there is no pagination

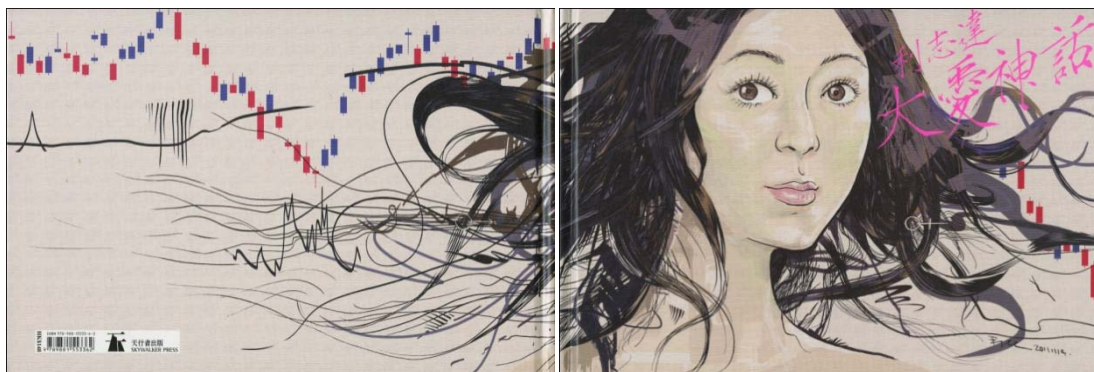


Fig.3-54. *Da ai shen hua* (『大愛神話』), Skywalker Press, 2011, there is no pagination



Fig.3-55. *Da ai shen hua* (『大愛神話』), Skywalker Press, 2011, there is no pagination

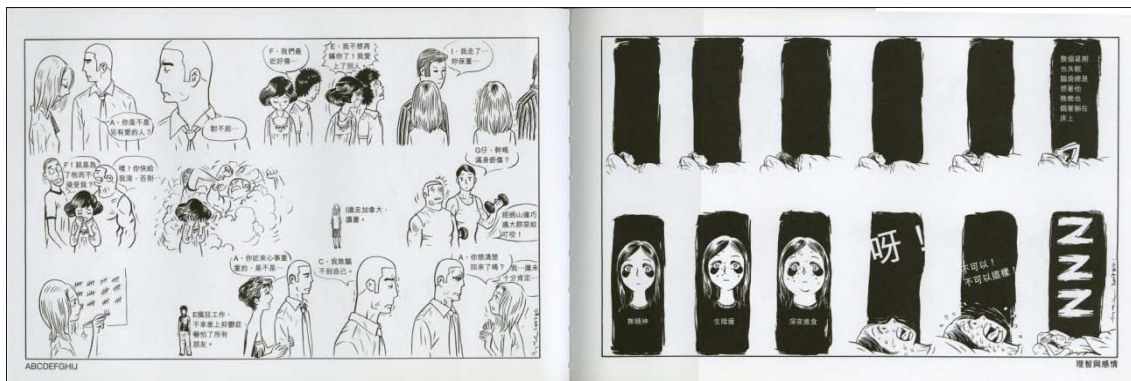


Fig.3-56. *Da ai shen hua* (『大愛神話』), Skywalker Press, 2011, there is no pagination

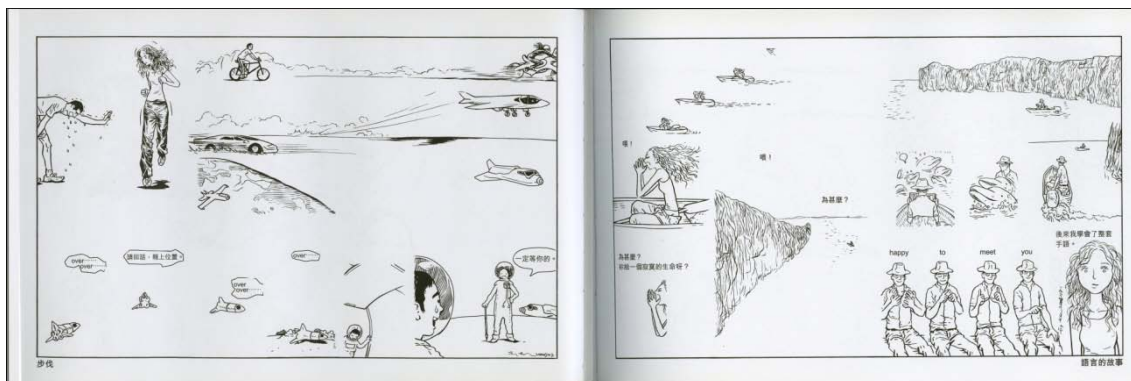


Fig.3-57. *Er Kai* (『二開』), Hong Kong Economic Times, 2011, there is no pagination



Fig.3-58. *Er Kai* (『二開』), Hong Kong Economic Times, 2011, there is no pagination

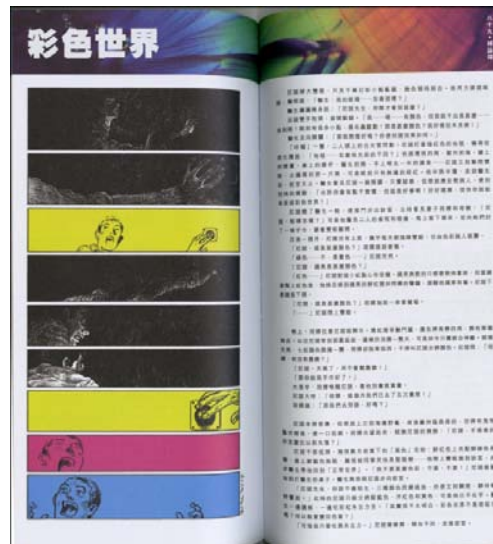


Fig.3-59. *Er Kai* (『二開』), Hong Kong Economic Times, 2011, there is no pagination



Fig.3-60. Lin ren (*Neighborhood*), [Chin. 『鄰人』] Short comic, City Pictorial, 2012

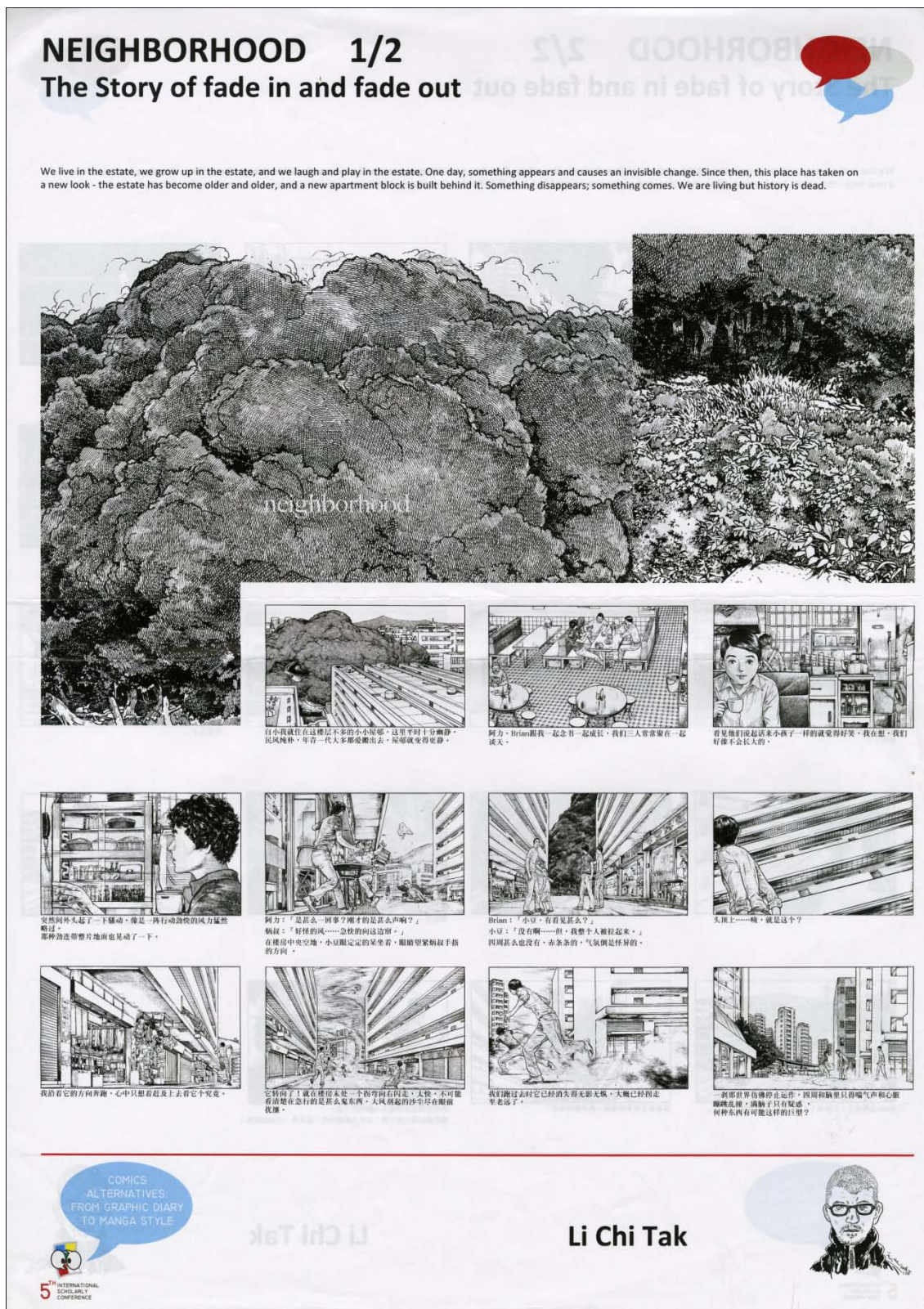


Fig.3-61. Lin ren (*Neighborhood*), [Chin. 『鄰人』] Short comic, City Pictorial, 2012

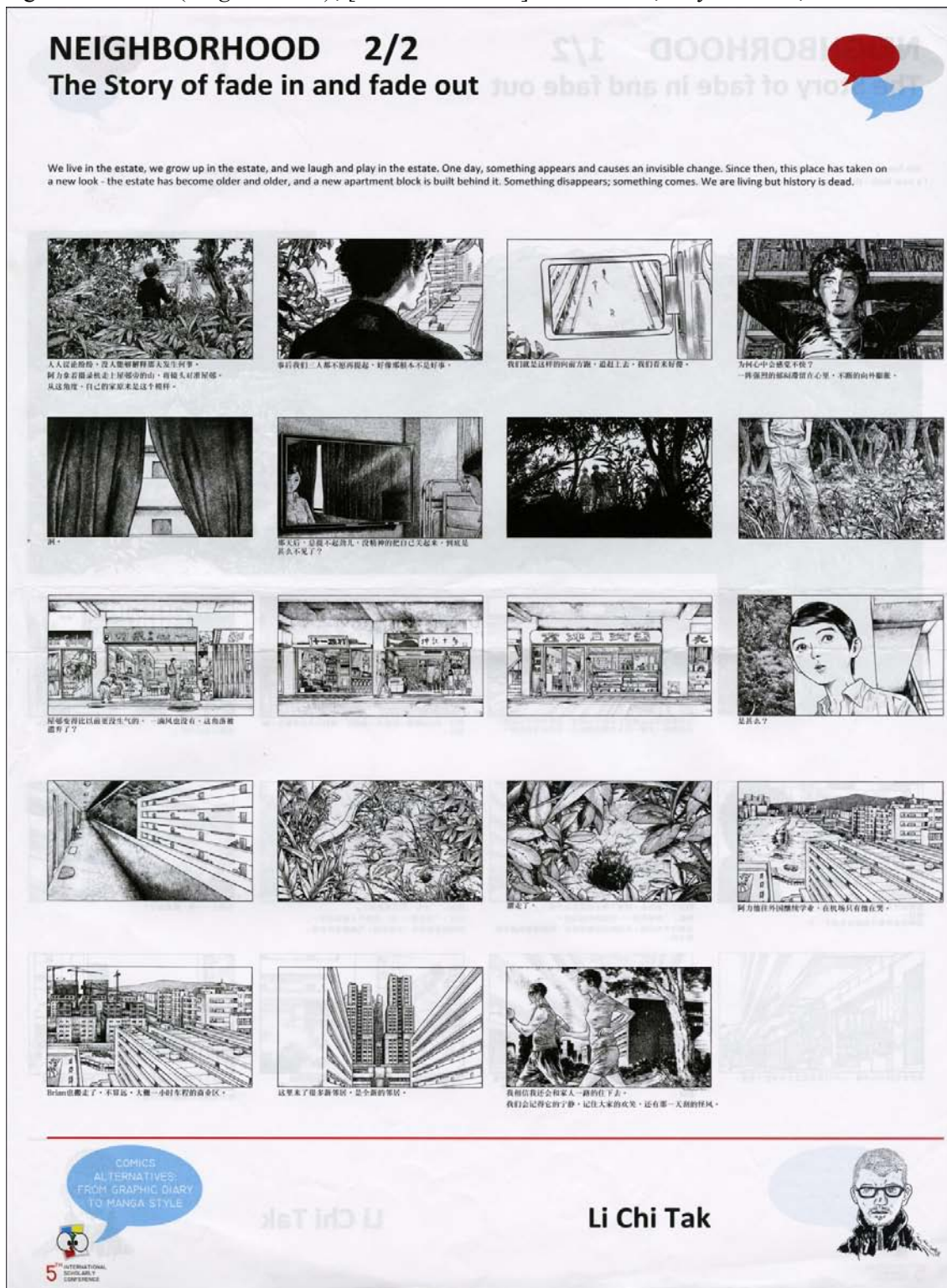


Fig.3-62. *Looking for MIES*, 2009

Fig.3-63. *Looking for MIES*, 2009

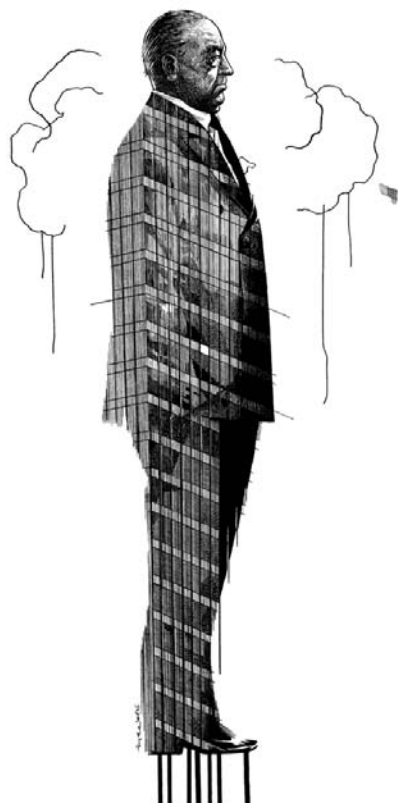
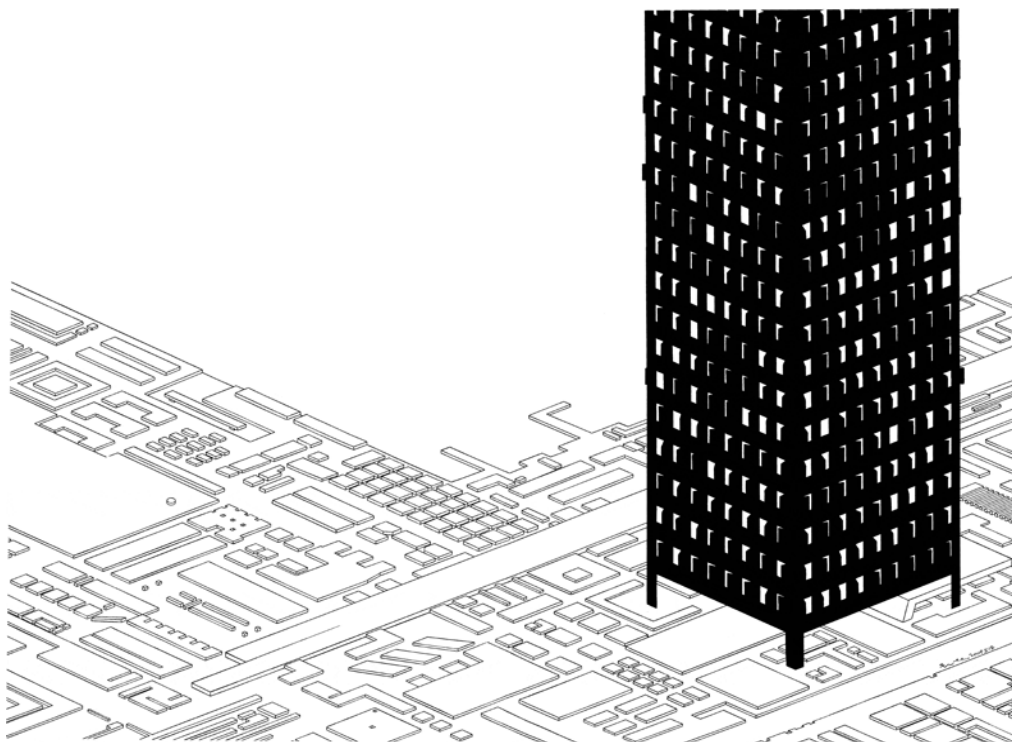


Fig.3-64. *Looking for MIES*, 2009



Chapter 4 Special Comix and my works

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Fig 4-2. Da, Xia: *Daremoshiranai tsupuyu*, vol.1 (Jap. 『誰も知らない～子不語～』), Shueisha, 2009



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Fig 4-4. Bing, Ding, *Gakuen God!* (Jap. 『学園 GOD!』), ASUKA, Kadokawa Shoten, 2009-2010



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Fig 4-6. Yi, Jian, *Le Dieu Singe*, Delcourt, 2008

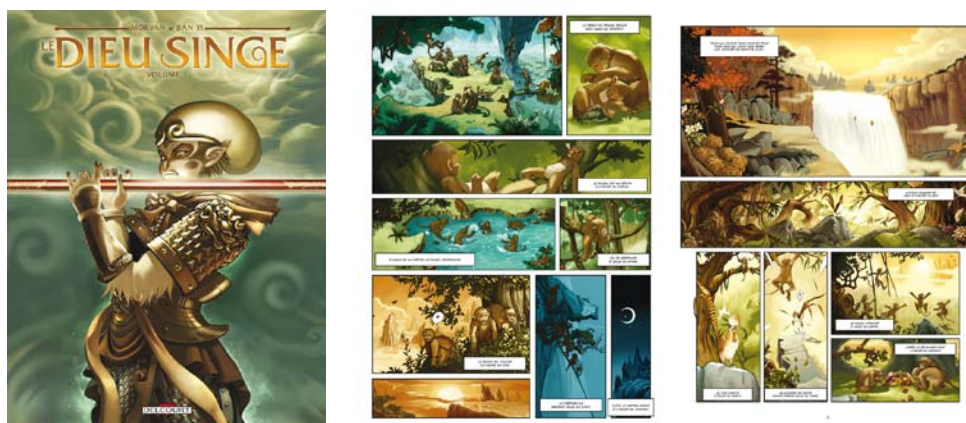


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Fig.4-8. Jia Wei Huang, *Zaya 1*, Dargaud Benelux, 2012



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Fig.4-10. *Au bord de l'eau*, Wang Peng (王鹏), Delcourt, 2008

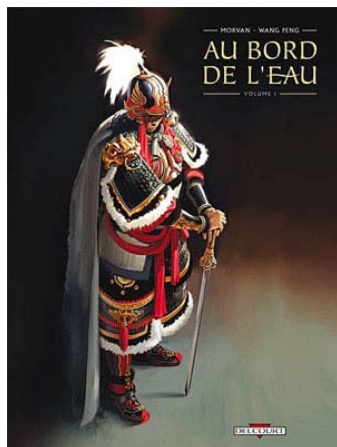


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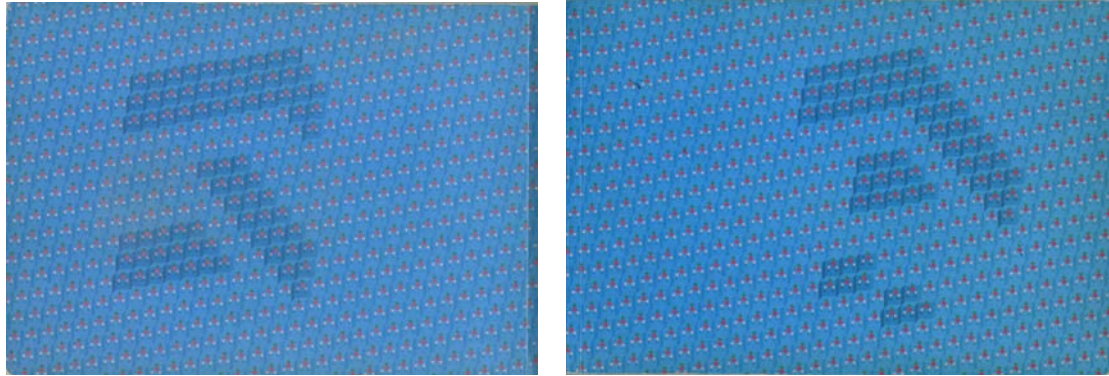


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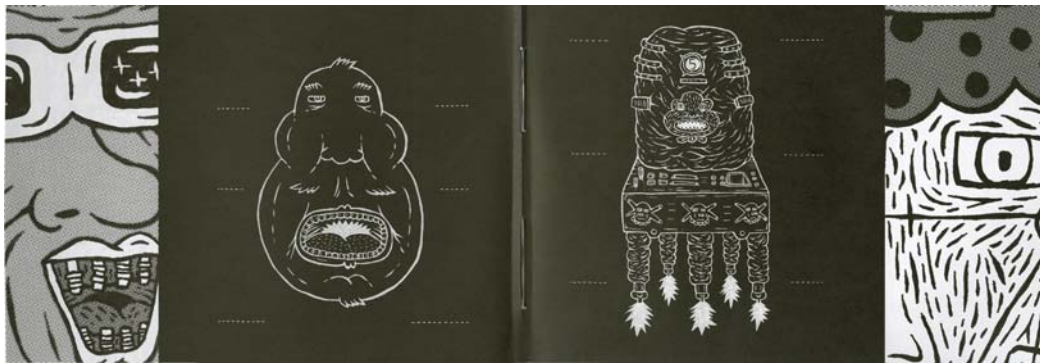


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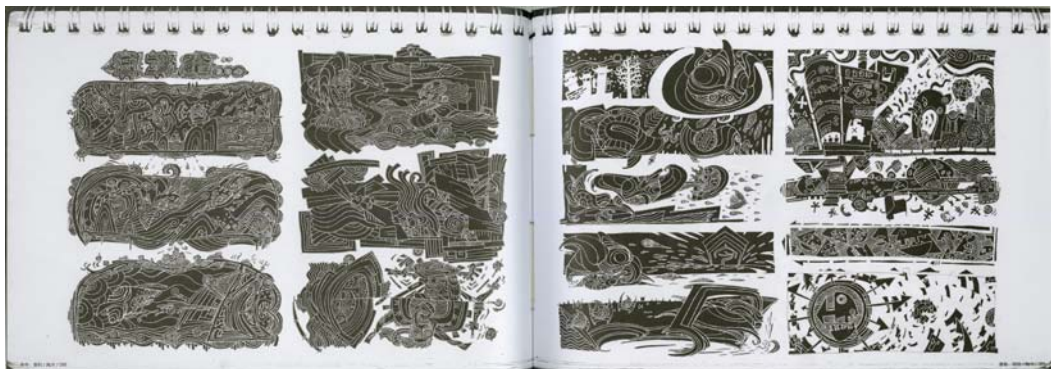


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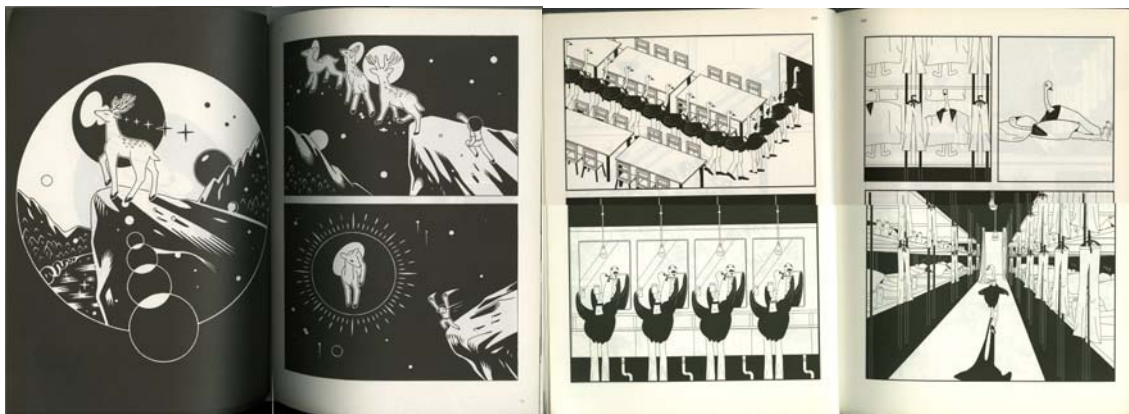


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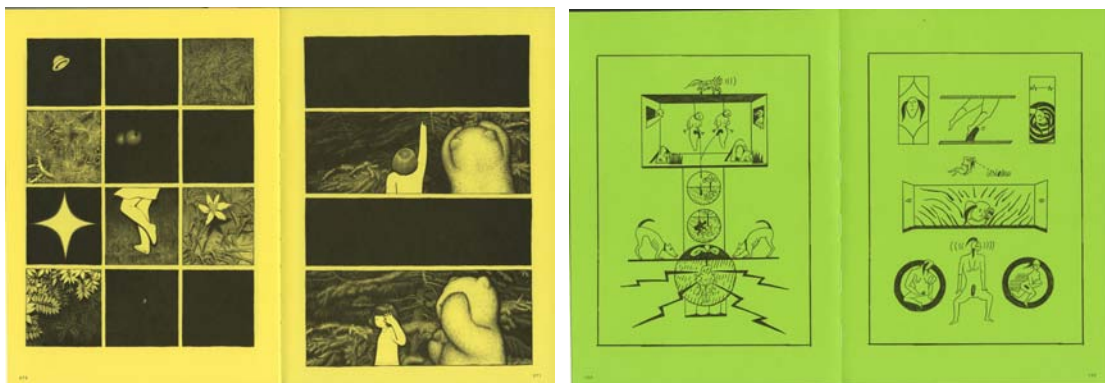


Fig 4-39. “Samstagabend Samedi soir”, Milva Stutz, in: *Es war einmal*, 2008, p.26-27

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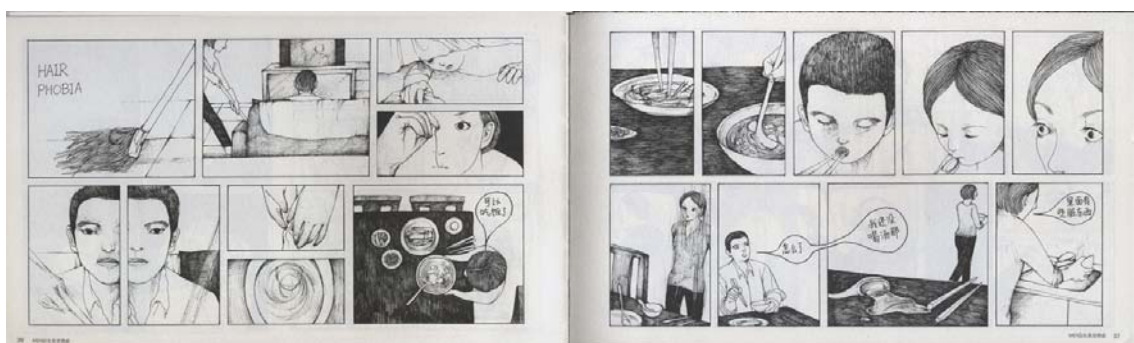


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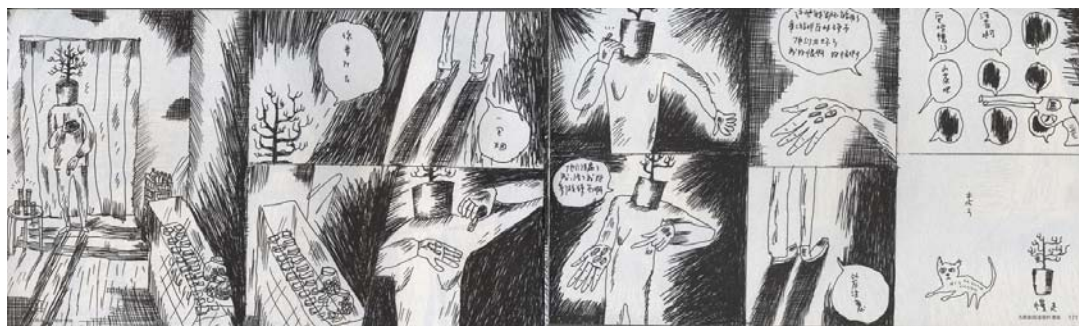


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Fig 4-50. *MAUS: A Survivor's Tale*, vol. 1, Art Spiegelman, Pantheon Books, 1986, Cover

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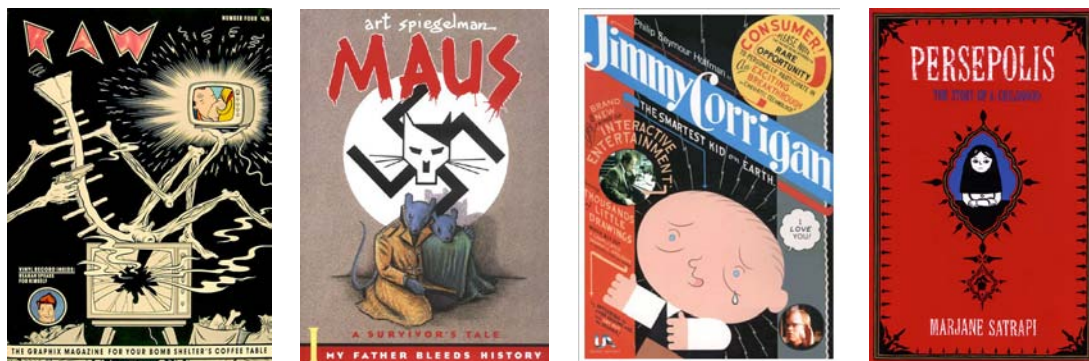


Fig 4-53. *L'Ascension du Haut Mal*, David. B, L' Association, 1996-2003



Fig 4-54. *Archives*, vol. 2, Matt Konture, L' Association, 2002

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Fig.4-61. “Sanmao” (『三毛流浪記』), Leping Zhang (張樂平), *Ta Kung Pao*, 1947

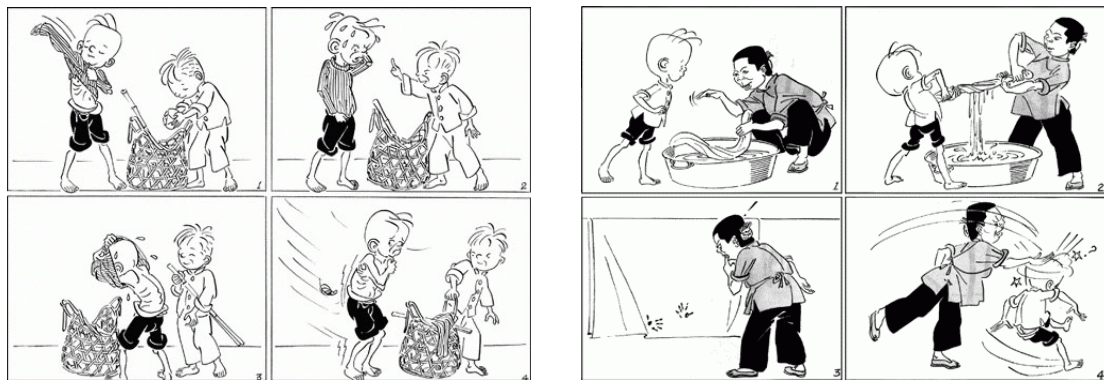


Fig.4-62. *Romance of the Western chamber* (『西廂記』), Shuhui Wang (王叔暉), People’s Fine Arts Publishing House, 1954



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Fig.4-64. *Di qiu de hong piao dai* (Red Ribbon Of The Earth, 『地球的红飘带』), Yaoyi Shen (沈尧伊), China Lianhuanhua Publishing House, 1989



Fig.4-65. *Snow goose* (『雪雁』), Duoling He (何多苓), in: *Picture Stories*, China Art Publishing Centre, May 1984



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Fig.4-69. *Angel Sanctuary* (『天使禁猎区』), Kaori Yuki (由貴香織里), *Monthly Hanayume*, Hakusensha, 1994 vol.15~2000, vol.22 (Eng. VIZ Media LLC; 2004 ~)

Fig.4-70. *1945 zhan zheng qi shi lu* (『1945 战争启示录』), Lu Han (韩露), *Cartoon King*, Shanghai Cartoon King Publishing House, Feb.2005 ~ Aug.2005.



Fig.4-71. *Meng li ren* (『梦里人』), Yao Fei La (姚非拉), Jieli Publishing House, 2006, Cover

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Fig.4-78. “Our Future is Bright and the Sky’s the limit!” (前途无限), Lao Mi Zhou (老米粥), in: *Special Comix 3*, Engl. Transl. by Cheng Xiao Bei (revised for this edition by Rebecca Jennison and Luo RongRong), p.498-499



“Sloan on blackboard” Study hard and make progress every day!

Li Xiao Ming (young boy): My mother says there’s an epidemic, so why are we still having lessons?

Teacher: What nonsense. Children shouldn’t say things like that!

Li Xiao Ming: But, our neighbors, Uncle Niu and Auntie Ma both died because of the disease.

Teacher: Those are rumors! How could there be an epidemic now days when we have peace and prosperity!

Teacher: Come on everyone, let’s listen to the radio broadcast.

Radio: *Recently, someone has spread rumors of an epidemic, but they are completely false, so don’t believe them! Dear people, how could there possibly be a plague in a country that has such a bright and promising future like ours? In a country protected by...how could such a disease exist? Dear people, you are all very clear in mind! Those who spread such rumors are treacherous! Never believe their claims! It’s absolutely safe in public! We care about our people’s health all the time...we have a brilliant future.*

Li Xiao Ming: Eh?

Fig.4-79. “Our Future is Bright and the Sky’s the limit!” (前途无限), Lao Mi Zhou (老米粥), in: *Special Comix 3*, Engl. Transl. by Cheng Xiao Bei ((revised for this edition by Rebecca Jennison and Luo RongRong), p.450-451



Teacher: Did you hear that?

Kids who tell lies have no future.

Hey you! You must copy the text 20 times today. You others musn't follow his example.

More than ten days later...

Li Xiao Ming: Mom, what are those people doing here?

Mother: They've come to put an end to the epidemic.

Li Xiao Ming: Why didn't they come sooner? I want to go out and play...

Mother: Just get well soon, now we are under quarantine.

Another ten days later.

Fig.4-80. “Our Future is Bright and the Sky’s the limit!” (前途无限), Lao Mi Zhou (老米粥), in: *Special Comix 3*, Engl. Transl. by Cheng Xiao Bei ((revised for this edition by Rebecca Jennison and Luo RongRong), p.451-452



Teacher: Dear students, a Li Xiao Ming, our young hero who battled against the disease has left us... we should learn from his bravery!

Boy: Mom. Now I've become an angel, will I have a future?

Old Man: Mao, guess what I hunted down today.

An angel!!!

Go and get some good wine! Today, we ordinary folk will be able to taste an angel taste of an angel.

Radio: Thanks to all of you we have defeated the epidemic! It's a great victory... And it proves that we have a bright a bright future - ... noble sentiment... the sky is the limit!!

Fig.4-78

[スローガン:] よく学び、日々向上しよう。第4課 前途洋洋

リーショウミン: 先生! ぼくの母は今疫病が流行っていると言いました。でも、どうしてまだ授業をやっているのですか?

女性の教師: でたらめを言っていけません。こともなんだから余計な話はしないように。

リーショウミン: でも、ぼくの隣に住んでいるニューおじちゃんとマーおばちゃんはこの病気のせいで死んでしまいましたけど。

女性の教師: それはデマです! 今のような安定し繁栄している時期は...疫病があるものですか?!

さあ、皆さん、一緒にラジオの放送を聴きましょう!

ラジオ: 最近、疫病が流行っているというデマがひろがっていますが、信じないでください! みなさん、明るくて希望のある我が国には、疫病などが存在するものですか? みなさん! ...みなさんはとても賢明な方々だと思います....こんなデマをひろげるのはどんな陰険な奴らでしょう! 彼らの言うことは一言でも信じてはいけません。今はとても安全です。わたし達はいつもみなさんの健康を守るために頑張っていますので....我々には明るい未来があります!

リーショウミン: えっ...

Fig.4-79

女性の教師: 聞きましたか?

嘘付きの子には未来はありませんよ!

君、テキストを20回書き写してきなさい! 皆さん、彼のまねをしてはいけませんよ。

十数日後...

リーショウミン: お母さん。あの人たち何しに来たの?

リーショウミンのお母さん: 殺菌するために来てくれたよ。

リーショウミン: どうして早く来てくれなかったの? 僕、遊びに行きたいよ...

リーショウミンのお母さん: ...早くよくなってね、私たちは隔離されているのよ。

再び十数日後...

Fig.4-80

女性の先生: 皆さん、病気と戦っていた英雄のリーショウミン君はなくなりました。とても残念ですが、しかし、彼の勇敢さを私たちは学ぶべきだと思いませんか?

リーショウミン: お母さん、僕もう天使になったから未来があるでしょう?

おじさん: マオー、今日俺は何を狩ったかを当ててみろ?

天使だ!

うまい酒が飲めるぜ！今日は俺たちのような庶民でも天使を味わえるだ！
ラジオの放送：今回、皆様のお陰で、疫病に勝ちことができました。これはすばらしい
勝利といえるでしょう。これは....を証明しました....我々を明るい未来
が待っています。

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Sep. 2003 - Jul. 2007 China Nanjing University of the Arts, Design Department,
Cartoon Major

Apr. 2008 - Mar. 2010 Japan Kyoto Seika University, Master's Program, Manga Major

Apr. 2010 - Japan Kyoto Seika University, Doctorate Program, Art Major

2003 年 9 月 中国 南京芸術大学 テーサイン学部 カートゥーンコース

2008 年 4 月 日本 京都精華大学 大学芸術研究科 博士前期課程 カートゥーンコース

2010 年 4 月 日本 京都精華大学 大学芸術研究科 博士後期課程 芸術専攻

カートゥーンニスト。2007 年、南京芸術大学テーサイン学部カートゥーン専攻卒業。
2008 年に来日した直後、京都精華大学芸術研究科マンガ専攻に入り、現在、その博士課程在学中。

Cartoonist. After her graduated from the Design Department, Cartoon Course of Nanjing University of the Arts in 2007, she went to Japan, where she entered the Graduate School of Fine Art, Manga Course of Kyoto Seika University. Following the master course, she is now continuing her research and art work as a doctoral student.

Solo Exhibition:

2011 Solo Exhibition and Workshop at LAZNIA Centre for Contemporary Art, Gdansk,
Gdansk, Poland

2014 (tentative) Solo Exhibition: *The Seeker – A journey of Spirit (and other works)*, 3F project
Room, Kyoto, Japan (5.Jan. – 14 Jan.)

Group Exhibition:

2007 *Nanjing University of the Arts Undergraduate Student Exhibition*, Nanjing University of
the Arts, Nanjing, China

2009 Selected Group Exhibition and Workshop: *Weltsprache Zeichnung* [Drawing, a universal
language], Goethe-Institute, Hamburg, Germany (10 Oct.-14 Nov.)

2010 Group Exhibition: *Seika Joshi 5-nin* (精華女子*五人), Kyoto International Community
House, Kyoto, Japan, (29 Sep.-3 Oct.)

2010 *Kyoto Seika University Graduate Student Exhibition*, Kyoto International Manga Museum,
Kyoto, Japan

2010 19th SOSABEOL International Art Expo Flame Show, Pyeongteak Art Centre, Pyeongtaek, Korea

2011 Selected Group Exhibition: *Subarashi*, frappant, Hamburg, Germany (5 Nov.-6 Nov.)

2013 International Group exhibition: *Statement*, 3F project Room, Kyoto, Japan (7 Feb-19 Feb.)

2013 *Group Exhibition in 5th International Manga studies Conference*, gallery of East Campus Center of Institute Teknologi Bandung, Bandung, Indonesia. (14-16.Jun)

2013 Selected Group exhibition: *Narratives - 語り*, 3F Project Room Kyoto, Japan (29 Aug.-10 Sep.)

2013 Selected Group Exhibition: *漫出格 - Anke, Orang, Special Comix交流展*, Art Museum of Nanjing University of the Arts, Nanjing, China (10 Oct. - 18 Nov.)

2013 27th Kyoto art Festival, *International Exhibition of Art and Design 2013*, Kyoto Art Museum, Kyoto, Japan (29 Oct.- 3 Nov.)

Publications:

2011 *Czerwone Króliki*, Hanami, Poland

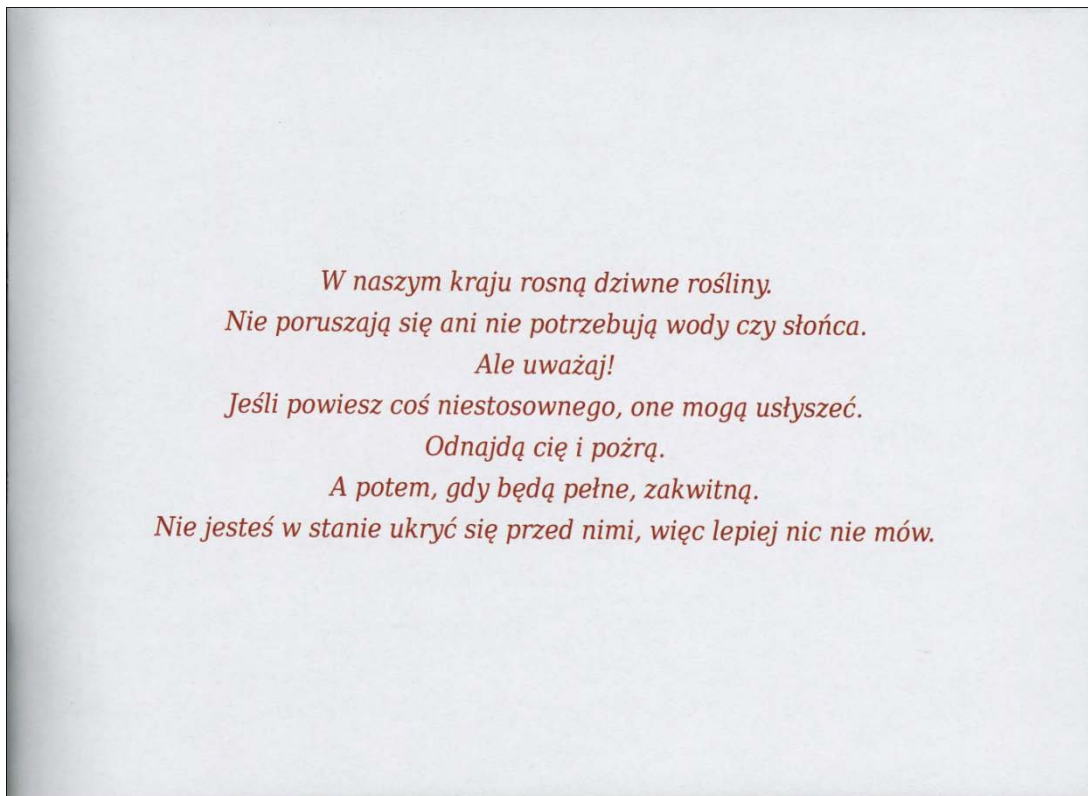
2012 *Manhwa, Manga, Manhua: East Asian Comic Studies*, Leipziger Universitätsverlag, Germany

2014 (tentative) *Czerwone Króliki* (digital/English version) Hanami, Poland

Fig.4-81 *Czerwone Króliki*, Rongrong Luo, Hanami, 2011



Fig.4-82. Chapter 1 Plants



In my country, there are some plants.
They don't move and don't need water or light.
But be careful!
They will hear you if you say something not right.
They will find you and eat you.
And they will blossom when they are satisfied.
So be quiet, because there is no place to hide.

1. Guard
2. The one who disappeared
3. Giant beast
4. Punishment
5. Red Flower
6. Secret

Fig.4-83.The guard

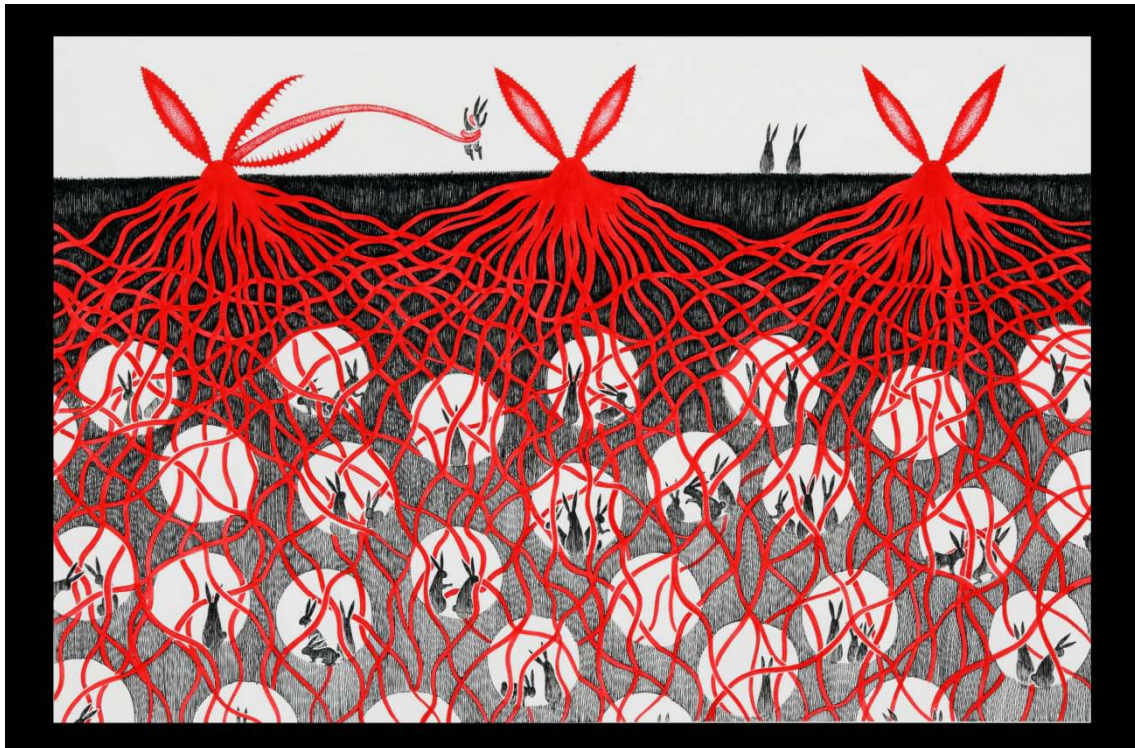


Fig 4-84.The one who disappeared

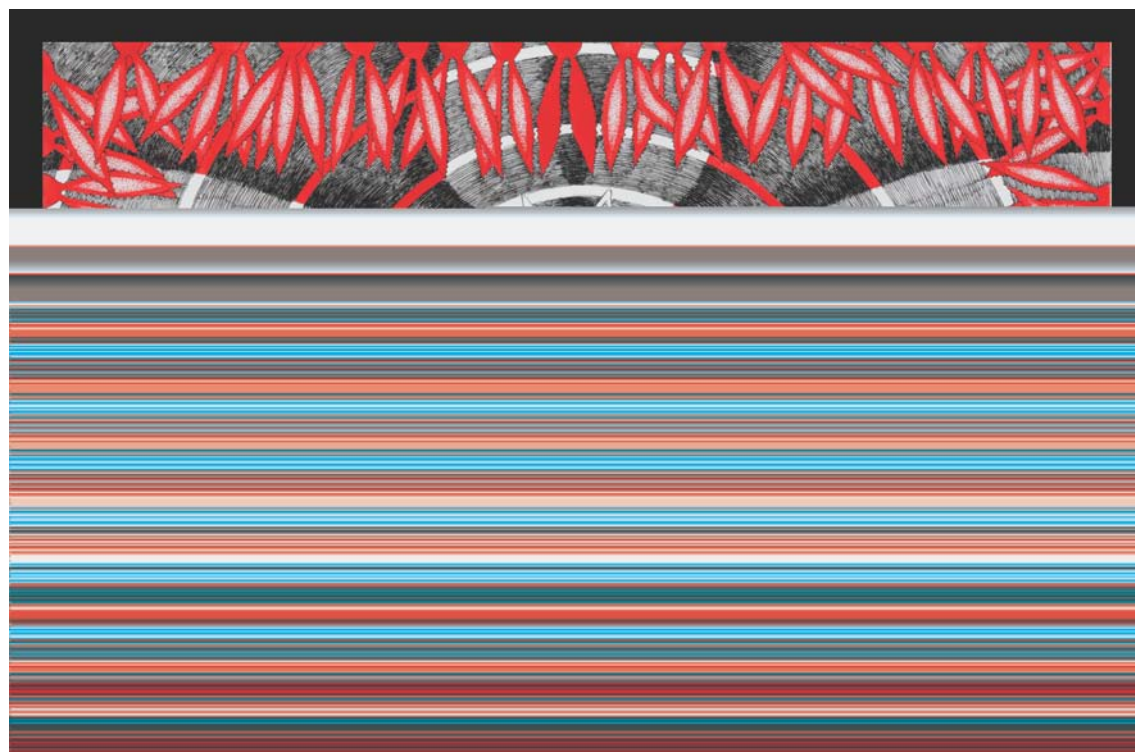


Fig.4-85.Giant beast



Fig 4-86.The punishment



Fig.4-87.Red flower



Fig 4-88.The secret

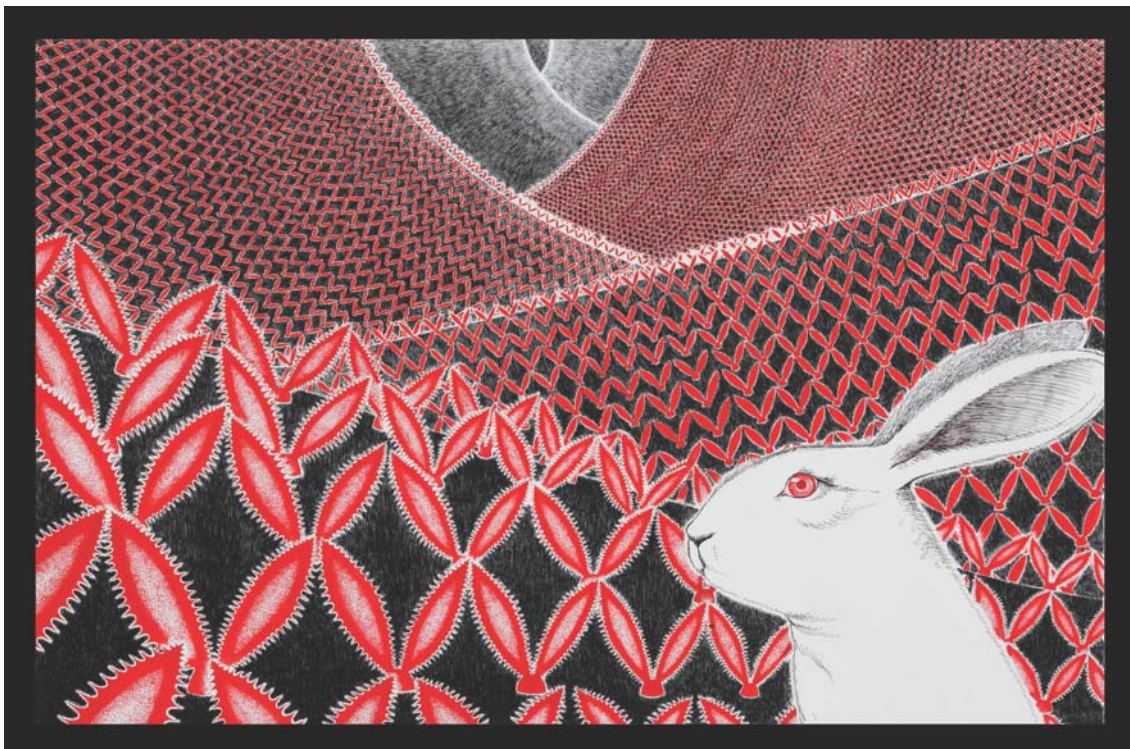
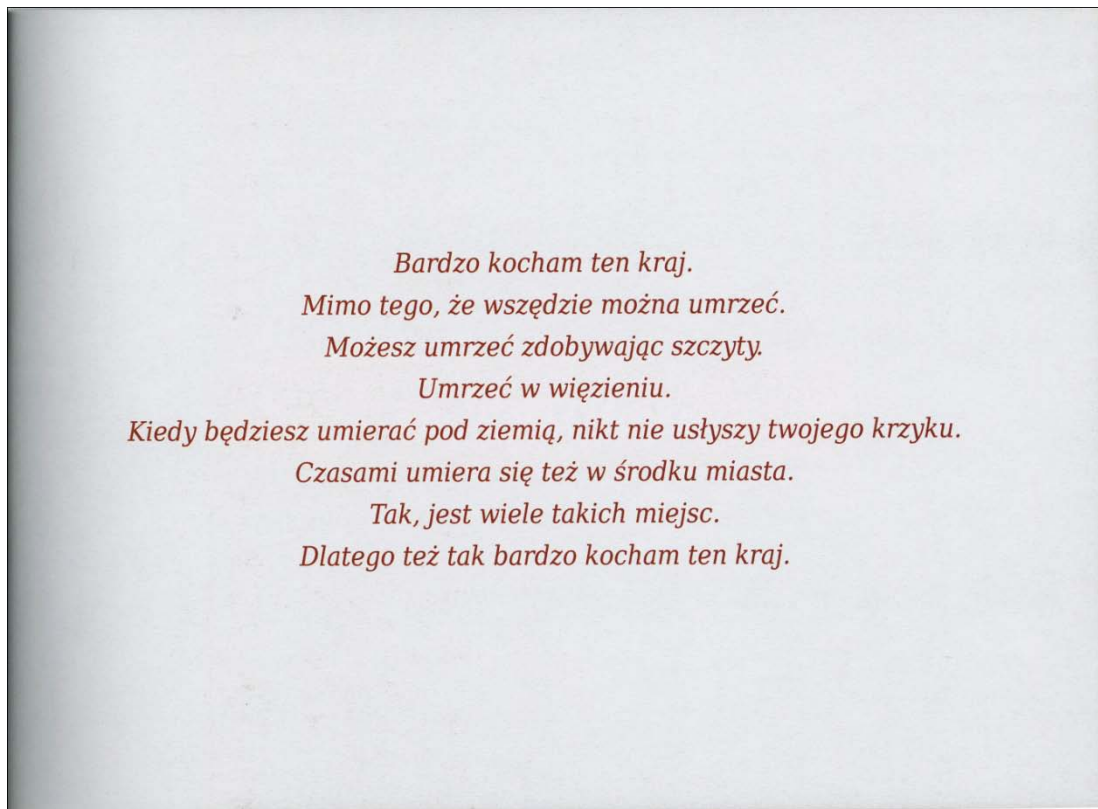


Fig.4-89.Chapter 2 The God of death



I love this country so much.
Because you could die everywhere
You could die on the mountain where you climb.
They could die in the jail where they put you in.
You could die underground and no one will hear your scream.
Sometimes you just die on the street.
Yes, there are so many places you could die.
That's why I love this country so much.

- 1.Entrance
- 2.Endless pain
- 3.One way road
- 4.Silent Underworld
- 5.Landscape
- 6.Soul Stealing

Fig 4-90.The entrance



Fig 4-91.Endless pain



Fig 4-92. One way road

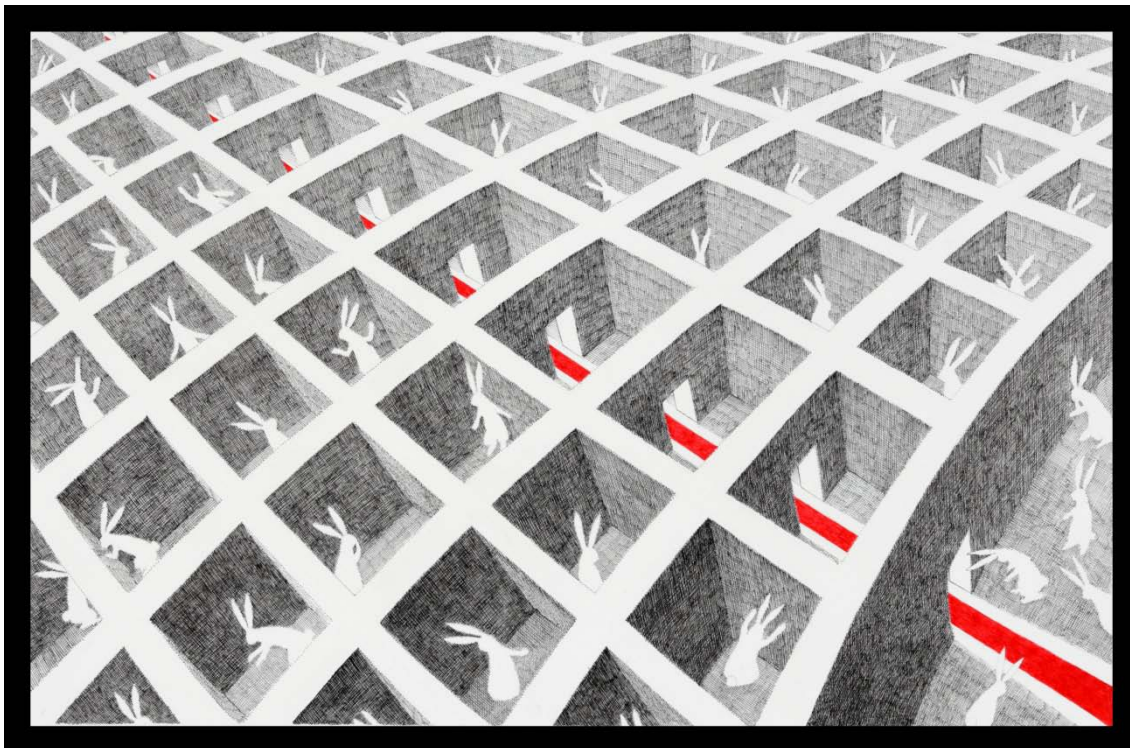


Fig 4-93. Silent underground



Fig 4-94. On the street

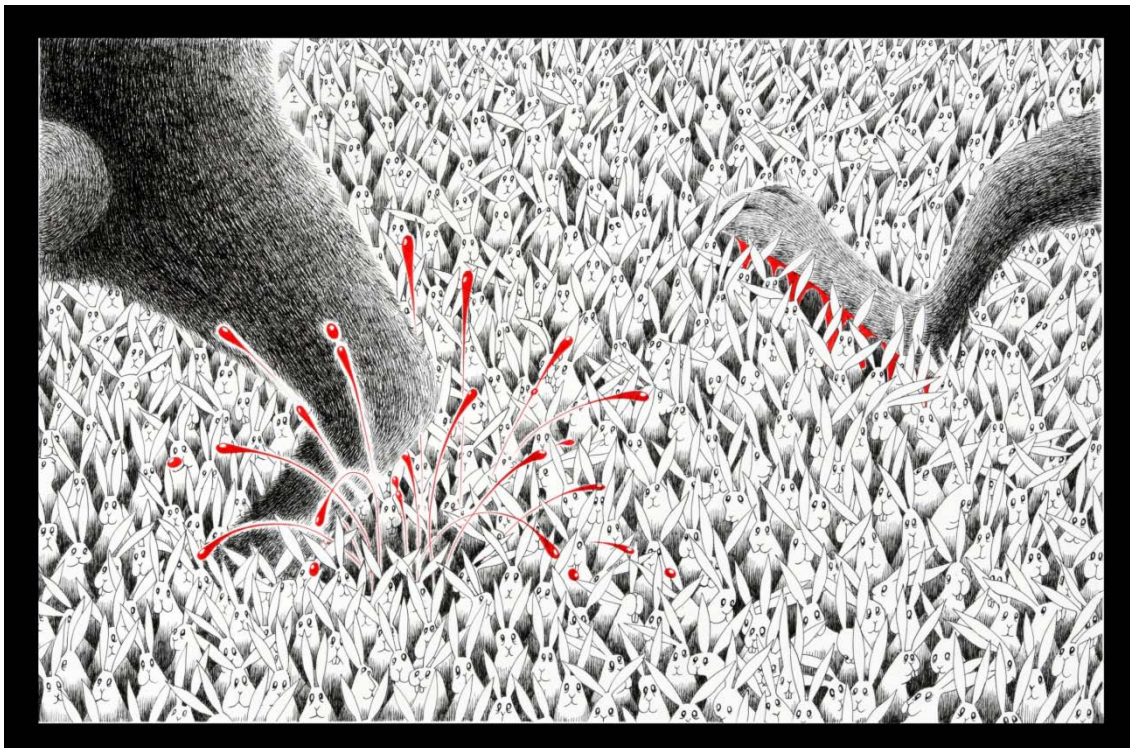


Fig 4-95. Soul stealing

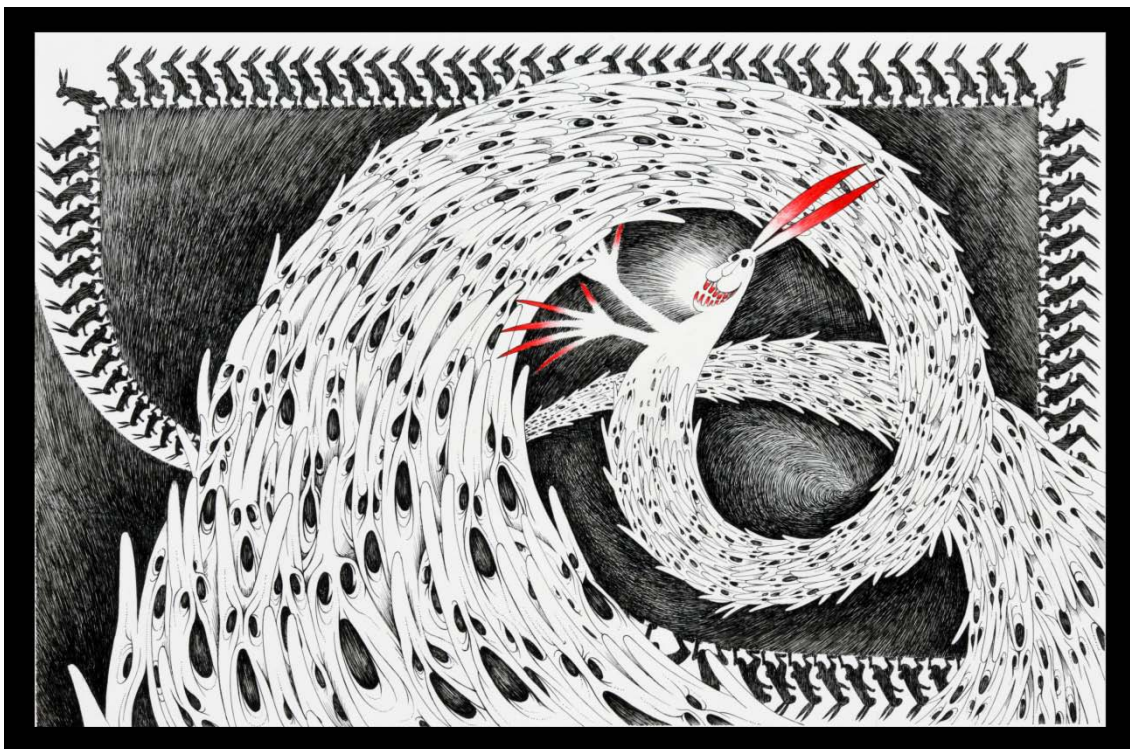
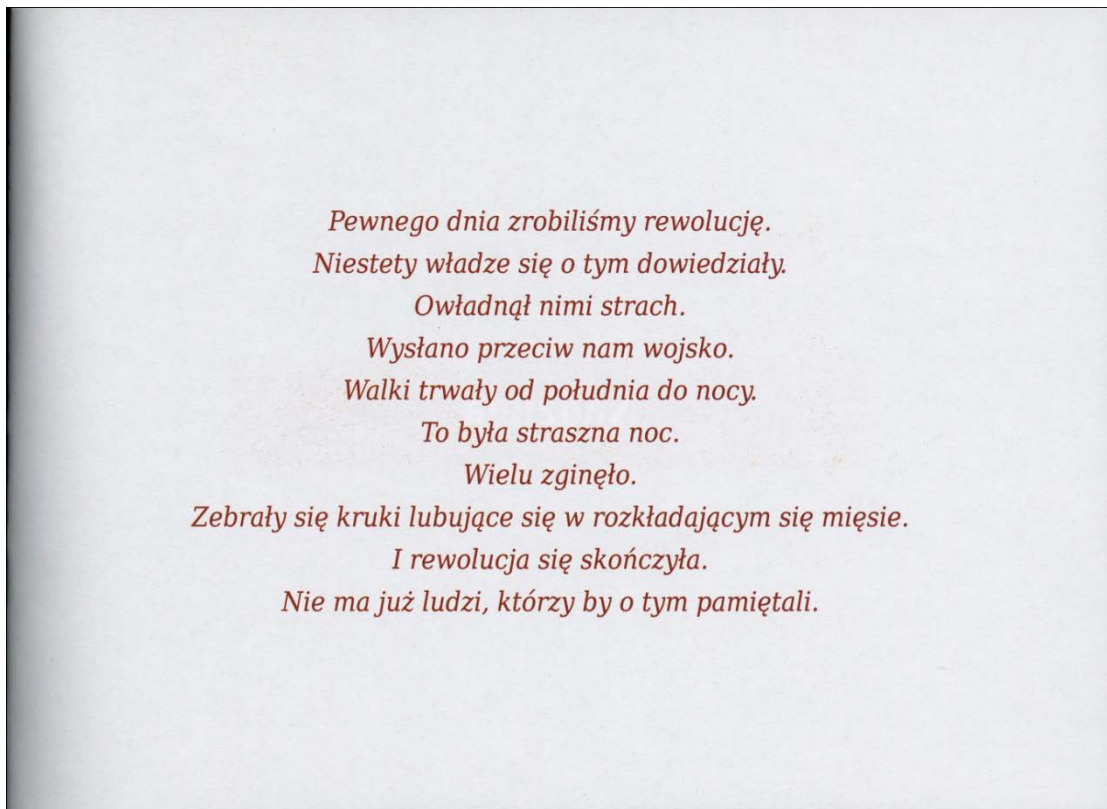


Fig.4-96.Chapter 3 Falling Star



One day we decide to fight back.

But, they know that. They are scared.

They send the army

The war last from day to night.

A horrible night.

So many dead bodies, even the raven who like the rotten meat give up

And the revolution end. And no one will remember what had happened.

1.Coolie

2.Hope

3.Spark

4.Banquet in the night

5.Dawn

6.Falling

Fig.4-97.The spark



Fig.4-98.The hope



Fig.4-99.Coolie



Fig.4-100.The banquet



Fig.4-101.The dawn



Fig.4-102.Following star



紅兎：全体主義の幻想

Fig.4-82

第一章 4 植物

私の国にはある植物がある。

動かない奴らには光でも水でもいらない。

でも気をつけて！正しくない言葉を言ったら奴らは聞こえるよ。

あなたはみつかったら食べられてしまう。

奴らが満足すると花が咲く。

身を隠すところがないから、声を出さないほうがいいよ。

1.監視の網

2 失踪者

3.巨大な獣

4.刑罰

5.紅花

6.秘密警察

Fig.4-89

第二章 死神

わたしはこの国が大好き。どこでもあなたは死ぬことができるから。

Fig.4 あなたは登らされた山で死ぬ。

あなたは入れられた監獄で死ぬ。

地下で死んだあなたの叫びは誰にも聞こえない。

時にはあなたは町で死んでしまうだけだ。

はい。場所は沢山あるよ。

だから私はこの国が大好きだ。

1.入口

2.無限な苦しみ

3.一方通行

4.静かな地下

5.街の風景

6.魂盗び

Fig.4-96

第三章 革命

ある日私たちは革命を起こした。

しかし、政府に知られてしまった。政府は怖がった

私たちの通る道に軍隊は派遣された。

戦いは昼間から夜まで続いた。

恐怖の夜だった。

死体があまりに多くて、腐乱する肉が大好きなカラスたちも諦めた。

そして革命は終わった、これからは思い出す人もないだろう。

- 1.苦力
- 2.希望
- 3.星火
- 4.夜の宴会
- 5.明け方
- 6.墮落

Fig.4-102 ~ 222, *Seeker: Journey of A Spirit*



