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operating across multiple media. This means reckoning with the creative work of genre activated by different kinds of comics readers and viewers despite industrial constraints inside and outside the United States, across multiple platforms, including film, TV, games, and internet forms of digital comics.

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Graphic Novel

Tahneer Oksman

In a now well-cited interview, Art Spiegelman, creator of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Maus*, a two-volume memoir-in-comics recounting his parents' experiences of living through the Holocaust, once famously explained that he had been interested in making a comic book that would require a bookmark (Juno and Spiegelman 1997). Sometimes referred to as the father of the graphic novel, Spiegelman has nonetheless admitted to a beleaguered acceptance of the increased circulation and popularity of a term that he, and other cartoonists, have often seen as troubling. "The Faustian deal is worth making: it keeps my book in print," he admitted in a more recent interview (Mitchell and Spiegelman 2014, 24). Indeed, the history of the keyword *graphic novel* is a contentious one, as evidenced by the extent to which it has been variously claimed, defined, or disavowed—as everything from a medium, a genre, a marketing term, a movement, a format, and a form to a way of reading. These discrepancies point to misapprehensions and complexities surrounding the term as well as the ideological and historiographical implications of such categorizing and naming.

The term *graphic novel* famously graced the cover of Will Eisner's *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories* in 1978, and it was largely through this usage that the term became popularized. Eisner employed it as a way to describe his work of short stories about tenement life in 1930s New York in order to appeal to a trade book publisher and, he hoped subsequently, an audience beyond

the world of already avid comics readers. While some, including Eisner himself for a while, attributed the neologism to Eisner, comics historians have evidenced how the term had been evoked at least over a dozen years earlier (Hatfield 2005; Kunka 2017a). In the mid-1960s, fanzine writer Richard Kyle deployed the term, along with “graphic story,” to distinguish a different kind of comic book from the majority of those in circulation at the time, one with a so-called serious, or at the very least what could be seen as forward-looking, artistic or storytelling ambition (Harvey 2001; Kunka 2017a). The term was then used by editor and publisher Bill Spicer in his *Graphic Story Magazine*, a sophisticated fanzine published in the late 1960s through the mid-1970s (Hatfield 2005). For Eisner, the term was primarily meant to differentiate the content and tone of what he was composing from the broader comics market and especially from works presumably aimed at young audiences or those trading primarily in humor or satire. As a marketing strategy, the term has had an outsize influence on what would eventually become an overhaul in the production and distribution of many works of comics by the turn into the twenty-first century; one of its immediate effects was to increase the cost of many comics publications for individual consumers (Hatfield 2005; García 2015). In addition to his part in catalyzing such seismic shifts in the industry, Eisner is perhaps best remembered for the ways in which he experimented with formal conventions of comics storytelling, including most notably a restructuring away from a fixed grid to more narrative-driven arrangements of the comics page or pages. He outlined many of his innovative narrative techniques in his 1985 work, *Comics and Sequential Art*, a book widely seen as the first English-language attempt to appraise and codify the properties of comics (Sabin 1996).

The era of the graphic novel is generally said to have started more or less in England and in North America

in the 1970s and 1980s, with other important principal works published around then, in addition to Eisner’s, including (though not limited to) Justin Green’s forty-two-page-long autobiographical work from 1972, *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary*; Spiegelman’s aforementioned *Maus*, published in book form as two volumes in 1986 and then 1991; writer Frank Miller and illustrators Miller and Klaus Janson’s collected miniseries riffing on the story of Bruce Wayne, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, published in 1986; and writer Alan Moore, artist Dave Gibbons, and colorist John Higgins’s *Watchmen*, a series reimagining the superhero myth and collected in a single volume in 1987 (Sabin 1996; Chute 2010; Baetens and Frey 2015). As a number of scholars and practitioners have argued, this supposed turn to the graphic novel was actually more of a return. First, it was a return to the albums heralded by the generally accepted progenitors of the medium, such as Swiss teacher and caricaturist Rodolphe Töpffer (1799–1846). Töpffer’s early nineteenth-century, self-described *histoires en estampes*, which were fictionalized, humorous, character-driven stories composed in comics and eventually printed and consumed internationally, have long been recognized as the original “comic strips” (Kunzle 2007; García 2015). Second, the so-called development of the late twentieth-century graphic novel can be understood as a revival of sorts, a rekindling of an investment in comics by adult audiences, who had been the principal readers of comics in the nineteenth century, from humor magazines popularized in Europe to widely admired North American newspaper strips (Sabin 1996; Groensteen 2009; Baetens and Frey 2015). Other commonly cited forbearers to what we now think of as the “graphic novel,” whether based in content, form, style, audience, or a mix of these elements, include, as some examples, Belgian-born Frans Masereel’s woodcut wordless novels, published beginning

in the late 1910s and soon followed by American Lyn Ward's woodcut wordless novels, including his best-selling *Gods' Man*, which came out a week before the 1929 Wall Street crash; Arnold Drake, Leslie Waller, and Matt Baker's then-racy "picture novel," *It Rhymes with Lust*, an illustrated pulp noir published in 1950; editor and cartoonist Harvey Kurtzman and publisher William Gaines's highly influential humor magazine, *MAD* (later, *MAD Magazine*), launched in 1952; and Japanese cartoonists Shigeru Mizuki, Tatsuo Nagatatsu, and Yoshihiro Tatsumi's *gekiga*, a term coined in 1957 that can be translated as "dramatic pictures" (Eisner [1986] 2008; Hajdu 2009; Mitchell and Spiegelman 2014; García 2015). While all of these various publications can be seen as crucial influences in what would later come to be collectively known as the "graphic novel," other critics have emphasized that whether in terms of length, subject matter, audience, or aesthetic, the so-called graphic novel has existed over the course of the history of comics. Rejections of the notion of the graphic novel as something *novel*, or new, are thus often based in large part on frustration with how the contemporary moment in comics is often separated from a longer, complicated, global, and diversified history and is also often evoked in a way that suppresses and localizes a more dynamic and complex present.

Early rejections of the term in the wake of its increased and more prevailing usage in the late 1980s and early 1990s emerged most vocally from cartoonists themselves, including those whose works are hailed as foundational. Many regarded the term suspiciously, as definitionally vague or confusing, as a commercial invention, and, perhaps most urgently, as potentially damaging to a medium that had for so long flourished not only despite but also quite likely because of its regularly having been considered an "outsider art" that can, in Spiegelman's words, "fly below [the] critical radar"

(quoted in Sabin 1996, 9; Hatfield 2005). Spiegelman's objections to the phrase, like those of many invested in the medium, generally acknowledge that while it may have useful, practical implications, it is neither accurate nor precise, and perhaps most damagingly, it seems to suggest, or reinforce, a hegemonic framework for accepted ways of telling stories (Witek 2007; Spiegelman and Ware 2014). Many from within the field thus find *graphic novel* to be an elitist, misleading bid for legitimacy. Some argue that the term and its attendant status implications potentially even mask problems of cultural illegitimacy that continue to affect the world of creating, distributing, and reading comics and, more broadly, the power dynamics behind various forms of cultural capital (see Pizzino 2016).

In addition to such arguments against the contemporary use of *graphic novel* as problematically portentous and historically misleading, many have rejected the term for its semantic inaccuracies. For some, *graphic novel* has been introduced as a corrective to the more widespread word *comics*, which suggests humor where often there is none. *Graphic novel*, in turn, highlights the supposedly more sophisticated literary and visually artistic nature of a certain kind of work. Nonetheless, as scholars like Catherine Labio have pointed out, with this phrasing, *graphic* serves as a modifier to *novel*, making the focal point words over images and reinforcing the false notion that visuals, or pictures, are somehow "easier," less sophisticated, and potentially even dangerous in comparison with words (Mitchell 2004; Labio 2011). This phraseology points to a broader problem in discussions of comics, which is that the literary element is often emphasized over and above the visual element instead of a recognition that the two, word and image, when both present, function together to form what Thierry Groensteen and others have recognized as a "language" or "system," one that, as Hillary Chute has

observed, has its own internal grammar and logic and can be considered both externally and internally “dialogic” (Groensteen [1999] 2007; Chute 2015).

Perhaps even more distressing for some is that the word *novel* suggests fictional output in addition to a certain requirement of length, seriousness of subject, and physical properties (book format). Scholars and cartoonists have come up with, or brought credibility to, alternative terms, some broadening out and some narrowing the scope of the genre or genres, autobiographical and otherwise, referenced therein. A small sampling of these includes “comic-strip biography,” “comic-strip novel,” “graphic narrative,” “autographics,” and “graphic storytelling” (Brown 2003; Clowes 2005; Chute and DeKoven 2006; Whitlock 2006; Heer and Worcester 2009). Many of the best-known works of what is thought of as the contemporary graphic novel are nonfiction. These include Marjane Satrapi’s two-volume *Persepolis*, published in 2000 and 2004, an autobiographical story of growing up in Iran during and after the Islamic revolution. The critically acclaimed best seller was turned into an animated film in 2007, with a cast including the well-known French actress Catherine Deneuve, and it was nominated for and received a number of prestigious awards. Similarly, Alison Bechdel’s best-selling *Fun Home*, a 2006 work recounting her childhood with a closeted father, was adapted into a musical in 2013, whereby it gained even more recognition and acclaim. Though many practitioners who have helped usher in this era of the graphic novel, from Chris Ware and Charles Burns to the Hernandez brothers and Jessica Abel, have often traded in rich, fictional forms of comics storytelling, the ubiquity of nonfictional texts in the more popularized comics landscape is an additional complication that has invited serious inquiry and also reinforced the importance of carefully scrutinizing questions of terminology (see Chaney 2011a).

Despite these limitations, by now many working in the field embrace the term even as they acknowledge it as confusing or even, like Eddie Campbell, “disagreeable” (“*The Drawn & Quarterly Manifesto*” [2003] 2015; E. Campbell [2004] 2010). As a movement and a popular term, *graphic novel* has come with benefits, including the expanded inclusion of works of comics into institutions of learning, like high schools, colleges, and libraries; the increased share of graphic narratives into the broader book and bookstore market; their inclusion in literary and scholarly conversations and analyses; and the generally improved attention, in various media outlets, brought to the sphere of comics as a storytelling form. As the audience for comics has grown, so too have its practitioners and critics slowly diversified to include, for example, more people of color and more women (though as many continually and rightly point out, comics still have a very long way to go). As Diane Noomin expressed in her own interview in the late 1990s with Andrea Juno, “It’s very frustrating to just have your work sold in comics stores. You know it’ll only sell a small amount. You know a huge section of the population won’t see it. And you know almost no women will see it” (Juno and Noomin 1997, 181–82). By leading new audiences to the wide world of comics, fresh and unexpected ways of playing with, manipulating, thinking about, and discussing comics have also emerged. Perhaps this is why it is no surprise that, for all of their hesitations and misgivings, it is those most invested in comics who have been at the forefront of such broadening marketing strategies. Spiegelman, along with other comics visionaries including Chris Oliveros and Peggy Burns (then working at DC Comics), successfully lobbied the book industry in 2003 to make “comics and graphic novels” an officially recognized subject category (Rogers and Heer 2015). The inclusion of “comics” alongside “graphic novels” suggests a continued

awareness of the problematics surrounding each term individually, while it also reflects an acknowledgment of the marketing potential of *graphic novel* as both alluring and capacious.

As recent histories of the graphic novel make clear, the term is inarguably linked to a significant historical shift. The increased familiarity of the term marks a period brought on by a variety of forces—cultural, aesthetic, technological, political, and economic—that needs to be more fully studied, explored, and prodded if we are to fully understand where comics have been and where it is going (see Lopes 2009; García 2015; Baetens and Frey 2015; Baetens, Frey, and Tabachnik 2018). Ultimately, as Charles Hatfield has judiciously pointed out, “we ignore the term at our peril” (Hatfield 2005, 29). Rather than discount a term that has taken hold, we might instead more carefully track its history and usage. To sidestep it would suggest willful ignorance in the face of a changing cultural landscape, however difficult and tangled that terrain.

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Gutter

Christopher Pizzino

Over the past two centuries, printers and bookmakers have used the term *gutter* in a range of ways. Initially it referred to a grooved device that minimized accidental marks in letterpress printing (Savage 1841, 307–8). Subsequently, it named the small segment of a page behind the seam in a book’s binding (Jacobi 1888, 55); later still, it referred to the seam itself (Darley 1965, 114). All these meanings have some association with efficiency and management of excess or waste, probably echoing the term’s origins in architecture and civil engineering. Such echoes are perhaps still heard in the term’s most widespread usage in publishing today. *Gutter* now names the blank spaces between printed columns, which shorten lines of text to facilitate rapid scanning.

Because gutters arrange and pace reading experience in spatially specific ways to keep our attention flowing, it is easy to see why the term has become the name for spaces separating panels in a comics sequence. Upon first encountering the whole of a comic strip, page, or book, we see immediately how it is divided into parts for our reading attention—usually by the blank space of gutters. When comic book artists discuss their creative process in making a strip or page, there is little talk about gutter placement—or about gutters at all; the focus is on panel shape, layout, and page design. Among comics scholars and theorists, however, the gutter is a notable and sometimes controversial subject.

Scholarly ideas about the gutter have tended toward one of two positions. The first holds that the gutter is