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Graphic novels are often accused of exploiting women and being excessively violent. To date there has been little research on graphic novels, but this relatively new medium is rapidly increasing in popularity. This study examines graphic novels at a crucial point: they are circulating widely but they have not yet been subjected to revised collection development policies in most libraries.

To determine whether graphic novels collection development policies need to be adjusted, this study used a feminist framework to analyze the content of ten percent of the graphic novels collection at the School of Information and Library Science (SILS) Library at the University of North Carolina (UNC). The content analysis results indicate that more men than women are protagonists, men are likelier to commit physical violence, and women are more likely to be suggestively clad or naked. Recommendations for collecting pro-feminist books to supplement existing graphic novels collections are included.

Headings:

    Graphic novels -- Evaluation

    Graphic novels -- Selection

    Feminism

    Collection Development -- Evaluation

    Women in literature

NAKED LADIES AND MACHO MEN: A FEMINIST CONTENT ANALYSIS OF A
BURGEONING GRAPHIC NOVELS COLLECTION

by
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Approved by

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David Carr

**Table of Contents**

**Table of Images**

## Introduction

Over the past decade, graphic novels have risen from relative obscurity to become one of the hottest items today. Combining the sophistication of complex narrative with the visual artistry of their comic book forebears, graphic novels are extremely popular with their dominant audience, young adults, as well as with adults and children. In the library of the School of Information and Library Science (SILS) at the University of North Carolina, where the majority of patrons are students seeking master's degrees, the 178 books in the small graphic novels collections circulate more than any of the other 86,000 materials in the branch. In a remarkably short time, graphic novels have become a very sought-after medium.

The popularity of graphic novels is welcome news: librarians appreciate the high circulation rates, and educators have a new tool to encourage reluctant readers. The content of graphic novels, however, is prone to the same criticisms that have plagued American comic books since the 1930s. Like comic books, graphic novels frequently favor masculine sensibilities: the protagonists are usually men, while women serve secondary roles as sexual objects. Furthermore, graphic novels tend to feature violence— and, as their name implies, they do so graphically. The high-impact power of visual art has the potential to readily emphasize violence and sexual disparities and stereotypes. By no means do all graphic novels contain violence or subjugate women, but many of them do, as a quick glance through any graphic novels collection will show.

Unfortunately, most collection development policies do not reflect an awareness of sex and violence in graphic novels. In many cases, collection development policies have not been able to keep up with the recent, rapid influx of graphic novels. In other instances, the policies have been amended to account for graphic novels but not the content of those novels specifically. The SILS Library collection development policy, for instance, was modified in December of 2003 to make provisions for the collection of graphic novels in the SILS Library, but it focused on the collection of award-winning graphic novels and books in the PN class of the Library of Congress Classification, rather than their content (2). With only these development criteria, there is no way to anticipate the presence of books that emphasize sex and violence. Indeed, a collection development policy that does not specifically address the content of graphic novels will likely develop a disproportionate number of titles geared toward masculine readers. A collection that adequately represents feminist and feminine graphic novels cannot be achieved without a deliberate awareness in the collection development policy. Yet, according to graphic novels expert Stephen Weiner, if the policy *does* purposefully address feminist concerns, it is quite possible to "build a credible graphic novel collection that does not focus on violence and sexual exploitation" (56). The chance to build collections in this vein is the ultimate goal of this research.

To illustrate the need for feminist-friendly materials in graphic novels collections, and to recommend appropriate changes to graphic novels collection development policies, this paper samples and analyzes the content of the SILS graphic novel collection, concentrating on sex and violence and guided by a feminist framework. Because there are many kinds of feminisms, this study narrowly defines feminism as a

perspective that condemns violence and sexual subjugation. This framework is a basis, not a hard rule—exceptions do exist. Generally, however, instances of violence and sexual subjugation are seen as evidence of anti-feminism. Furthermore, the presence of a female protagonist constitutes evidence of feminism. Male antagonists are not necessarily anti-feminist, but the rarity of female protagonists in graphic novels usually indicates indifference to feminism. Finally, feminism in the context of this research will be used to improve, not to destroy. In other words, this study of the SILS graphic novels collection hopes to illuminate existing feminist issues, and to suggest positive changes to the collection development policy; it does not, however, advocate for de-selection or censorship.

There exists no strict definition of "graphic novel." The phrase was coined by Will Eisner to distinguish his 178-page *Contract with God* (1978) as a more substantial work than typical comic books (Gorman 3). Most library professionals today use the term "graphic novel" to refer to either a book-length work published in comic book style or to a collection of previously published comic books (xii). The graphic novels addendum to the SILS Library collection development policy loosely defines "graphic novels" as "any novels with artwork," but within that definition the collection is diverse: among others, there are comics, graphic non-fiction, and serialized novels, as well as generic graphic novels.

Regardless of the exact definition of "graphic novel," the materials contained in the SILS graphic novels collection mirror those found in many school and public libraries. It consists of some of the most successful of the graphic novels currently in print, meaning that the books are fairly representative of the medium at large. It is

therefore an ideal body to study, especially since it is less than two years old. This paper studies the collection by focusing on images of females and males and making comparisons between the two. Three main elements, in particular, are examined: the sex of the protagonists; the perpetrators of violence; and the clothing of the female and male characters. A three-part hypothesis follows:

- more men than women will be protagonists

- more men than women will be perpetrators of violence

- women's clothing will be more sexually suggestive than men's clothing

In essence, it is hypothesized that the SILS graphic novels collection—developed with few constraints, in a *laissez-faire* environment—will have inadvertently collected a disproportionate number of non-feminist books.

*Importance of Study*

At present, graphic novels are a comparatively new form. Will Eisner's *Contract with God*, the first modern graphic novel, was published only 27 years ago, in 1978; Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, the first graphic novel to achieve widespread critical success, was published only 19 years ago, in 1986. Graphic novels did not become truly popular in libraries, bookstores, and publishing journals until the mid-1990s (Weiner, *Faster* 55). This newness begs for scrutiny. Because graphic novels are still new, there has been little chance for scholarly appraisal. Yet this newness means that graphic novel collections are young enough that they have developed naturally, without outside conditions to constrain them; the chances to study them in their unfettered form will dwindle as libraries are able to adjust their collection policies.

The time for study is ripe, and the need is clear. For good or ill, the messages of graphic novels are reaching a wider audience than ever before. For the past forty years men have been the primary readers of comics and graphic novels, but the trend is changing. Michael R. Lavin exhorts librarians to "understand an important truth about comic books: just because the audience for comics has been traditionally comprised of pre-teen and young adult males, that doesn't mean the medium holds no interest for other readers, particularly older males, young girls, and women" (93). Recently, young women have been especially targeted by publishers, as evidenced by the rise of *shoujo*, which is *manga* (Japanese comics) written for girls between the ages of six and eighteen (Gorman 10-11). Graphic novels have even been introduced into the classroom by teachers who recognize their appeal to reluctant readers (Weiner, *Faster* 61). The sheer popularity of graphic novels begs for study.

## Literature Review

Graphic novels are widely held to be violent and sexually exploitative—yet, despite their

immense popularity, surprisingly little feminist scholarship on the subject exists. Indeed,

surprisingly little research on graphic novels exists, feminist or otherwise. Most of the

current literature on graphic novels tends toward the prescriptive, with annotated

bibliographies of "must-haves" for the aspiring graphic novel collection. For the purposes

of this study, then, the literature reviewed will be that which deals with comics. The

distinction between comics and graphic novels can be murky, and many graphic novels

collections—the SILS Library collection among them—contain books that are

compilations of comics and comic strips. While comic compilations qualify as graphic

novels in the sense that they are "novels with artwork," they do not meet the more

stringent definition of being "sophisticated [stories] told between two covers" (Weiner,

"Beyond Superheroes" 55). Nonetheless, the same criticisms that apply to comics—

namely, those concerning sex and violence—apply to graphic novels, and so a review of

the literature of comics is appropriate.

*Historical Overview*

In their longitudinal survey of the topic of comics in library literature, "About Face:

Comic Books in Library Literature" (2000), Allen Ellis and Doug Highsmith illuminated

the context in which comics are, and have historically been, understood by librarians. Their decade-by-decade content analysis of library criticism from the 1940s through the 1990s revealed a slow swing in the library profession from avowedly anti-comic book to cautiously pro-comic book. In the 1940s and 1950s comic books were almost unanimously held to be destructive for youth (with no mention of the implications for adults, presumably because children constituted the overwhelming readership of comic books in that decade). Comics were attacked for being low-brow, shoddy, and violent— though noticeably absent were criticisms of sexual content; presumably that tamer era did not produce comics racy enough to warrant complaints. During this time, the sole exception to these accusations in the literature was one article that praised comics for improving students' reading abilities (30).

The universal library condemnation of comics ended in 1968, with the astute observation in *Library Journal* that "all comics are not degrading, violent, and a sure route to delinquency" (qtd. in Ellis and Highsmith 31). In the 1970s, many library articles began recommending the inclusion of comics in public libraries, not necessarily for their content, but because of their popularity with readers. While criticisms of comic books did not disappear in the 1970s or 1980s, the trend decidedly began to favor their inclusion in libraries. By the 1990s the trend was irrevocable: though some librarians still had reservations about comic books, they almost unanimously favored collecting them so as to serve their patrons. Tellingly, though—and with implications for the current research—librarians since the 1970s have favored comic books because of their appeal to readers, not because of their content. In the Ellis and Highsmith article, the only

objections to violence were in the 1950s and 1950s, and nowhere is there a clear objection to sexual content.

While Ellis and Highsmith studied the historical perceptions of comics, Maurice Horn studied the historical content of comics with his three-volume *Women in the Comics* (2001). Specifically, he examined how women characters have been portrayed, starting with females from the yellow journalism days of the early twentieth century and finishing with contemporary heroines. Horn's history is particularly valuable because it emphasized the relationship between women comic characters and society as a whole. Comics were a "barometer closely attuned to the temper of the times," he explained, citing the female characters in the first decade of the twentieth century, who reflected the "slowly changing status of woman in the post-Victorian society of urban America, from her almost complete relegation to the shadow of man to her first steps into a more assertive role" (1: 19). *Women in the Comics* is also noteworthy for its final chapter, which addresses female cartoonists, a topic rarely addressed in the literature at large.

A similar history of women in comics is Michael R. Lavin's article "Women in Comic Books" (1998) which looked at female characters from the World War II through the 1990s. Lavin's examination led him to the overarching conclusion that the role of female comic book characters has been ambiguous and often contradictory. One contradiction, for instance, was between strength and dependence/subservience; for instance, Superman promised to look after Supergirl like a big brother, though her impressive powers should have precluded the need for a protector. Another contradiction Lavin discovered was that between women as sex objects and as role models: heroines such as Wonder Woman and She-Hulk could overwhelm any opponent, but only in

scanty costumes (94). Like Horn, Lavin also mentioned the scarcity of women in the comics industry, not only as writers and artists but as publishers and editors.

Preeminent amongst all scholars of women in comics is veteran cartoonist and ardent feminist Trina Robbins, who has published three different histories on the subject since 1996. The first of these, *The Great Women Superheroes* (1996), examined fifty years of selected comic book super-heroines, from the perennial Wonder Woman to the queen of Hell, Lady Death. As in all her books, Robbins repeatedly addressed issues of sex, gender, and violence. For instance, Robbins critiqued the Invisible Girl of the Fantastic Four, who frequently fainted or broke into hysterics; her hobbies were "fashion, cooking, cosmetics and reading romance novels" (110). Though few women characters were as ridiculously stereotypical as the Invisible Girl, Robbins found that almost all of them suffered from some ill effect of sexual stereotyping. Their impractical wardrobes hindered them, their weak emotions betrayed them, or their romances distracted them from fighting crime. Despite the shortcomings of the characters, however, Robbins tempered her criticisms with praise for the feats they did achieve. This balanced approach is a hallmark of Robbins's research, which never allows feminist frustration to overwhelm the positive aspects of the comics.

In the same vein of research as Horn and Lavin was Robbins's 1999 book *From Girls to Grrlz: A History of Women's Comics from Teens to Zines*, which examined female comic characters—not just the superheroes—through four stages of female comics history. Representative of the first stage, Girls' Comics (1941-1957), were the two female leads from the *Archie* series, Betty and Veronica, who dressed modestly and dabbled in comedy rather than violence. Robbins emphasized an important characteristic

of this stage: comic book readers were primarily female. Even the ads in the *Archie* books were for bracelets, purses, and girdles (12). In the second stage, Women's Comics (1947-1977), female readership declined as comic books gave way to male crime fighters such as Batman. Instead, comics publishers mostly marketed romance comics to the dwindling pool of female readers. During the third stage, Womyn's Comix (1970-1989), underground feminist comics began circulating. Their content was far more radical than that of mainstream comics; topics included lesbianism, pornography, sexual assault, and sexual pleasure. The final stage Robbins identified was Grrrlz' Comix (1990s), which addressed a plethora of issues, many of which dealt only indirectly with feminism. These comics were usually self-published or published independently, either in zines or on the web. Robbins's book is of particular importance to this study because it confirms that comics targeted toward women do exist.

Similarly, Robbins's 2001 book, *The Great Women Cartoonists*, confirmed that comics *written* by women do exist. She covered over one hundred years of female cartoonists, starting in 1896 with Rose O'Neill, creator of the Kewpies, and ending with contemporary self-syndicated cartoonists. Significantly, Robbins examined the tensions between women cartoonists and cartoons as a whole. She cited a 1988 interview in the *Amazing Heroes* magazine with Ramona Fradon, who drew *Aquaman* for DC Comics: "I was really not interested in drawing super heroes—male fantasies, you know? People hitting each other or scheming to take over the world… There's not much sweetness to [male comic art]. It's the tradition, the look" (105). Other women cartoonists indicted the world of male comics in the same issue of *Amazing Heroes*. According to artist Mary Wilshire, "we [women] seem to be interested in telling different kinds of stories. I wish

there wasn't so much obsession with violence… when it's gratuitously violent and horrible, it doesn't do anything for me." Echoing the sentiment, cartoonist Cynthia Martin said that "there are things I can't stand drawing… I can't handle drawing guns or cars" (107). Robbins's research suggested that much of the violence characteristic of comics was a result of the males who created them. *The Great Women Cartoonists* also includes a list of several hundred women currently writing, editing, and publishing comics, which is extremely helpful from a collection development perspective. Along with *The Great Women Superheroes* and *From Girls to Grrrlz*, *The Great Women Cartoonists* effectively established a serious, feminist discourse about women and feminism in comics. The present research is therefore strongly influenced by Trina Robbin's seminal scholarship.

*Violence.*

Despite the protests of women cartoonists, comics have continued to feature violence. Co-authors Steven J. Kirsh and Paul V. Olczak Kirsh and Olczak agree: "the overwhelming majority of comic books available today still contain violent themes… and many comic books are laden with graphic gore and sexual themes" ("Violent" 48). In their study "Violent Comic Books and Perceptions of Ambiguous Provocation Situations" (2000), Kirsh and Olczak investigated the effects of comic book violence on ambiguous provocation situations. After reading either a very violent comic book or a mildly violent comic book, participants interpreted ambiguous provocation stories— stories in which harm could be interpreted as hostile or benign. Male participants who read the very violent comic books responded more negatively to the ambiguous

provocation stories than did the male participants who read the mildly violent comic

book. The females' response to the ambiguous provocation stories, however, was

determined by their trait hostility.

In Kirsh and Olczak's subsequent study, "Rating Comic Book Violence" (2001),

the research focused on the degree to which subjects perceive violence. Again,

participants read either a very violent or a mildly violent comic book. As to be expected,

everyone perceived higher levels of violence in the extreme-violence comic books than in

the mild-violence comic books—but females perceived more violence than males in the

extreme-violence comic books. Females preferred mild-violence comic books and found

them more humorous, while males preferred extreme-violence comic books and found

them more humorous. In both of the Kirsh and Olczak studies, the gender differences

bear heavily on the current research: when collecting comic books, collection developers

should be aware of the gender composition of their target audience, because the violence

in the books will likely affect females and males differently.

*Violence and Race*

If violence in comic books affects individual readers, imagine the effect on an entire

society. Costa and Matzner speculated on the effect of comic book violence on the Thai

culture in their disturbing study "Abusing Images: Domestic Violence in Thai Cartoon

Books" (2002), a content analysis of violence. In an attempt to understand "gender,

marital relations and ultimately women's rights," the authors studied comic books, a very

prevalent medium in Thailand, popular with young and old alike (2). The analysis found

domestic violence to be rampant, especially heterosexual spousal abuse. Interestingly, the

abuse usually came at the hands of the wife, with the husband being the victim. Though domestic abuse against women in Thailand is a tremendous problem, the comic books examined in the study were entirely produced by men; the study's authors speculated that the producers of the comics were (perhaps intentionally) misrepresenting the truth about domestic abuse. In effect, argued the authors, the denial of violence against women actually condoned wife abuse. This study of comic book violence differs significantly from the two Kirsh and Olczak studies, which investigated the effects of comic book violence on individual men and women; Costa and Matzner's study, in contrast, studied how comic violence reflected (or failed to reflect) society, and how in turn that violence affected society.

Costa and Matzner's work also has the distinction of examining the Other. Thais in Thailand do not see themselves as the Other, of course, but the study nonetheless focused specifically on a specific nationality. Jack G. Shaheen focused Otherness as well as violence. Responding to a lack of scholarship on Arabs in comic books, Shaheen studied the portrayal of Arab characters in comics from the late 1950s through the early 1990s in "Arab Images on American Comic Books" (1994). Though the Code of the Comic Association of America prohibits degradation of "national, ethnic, cultural, or socio-economic" groups, Shaheen found that Arab characters are consistently stereotyped in a negative way. He studied 215 comics and presented a content analysis of thirteen representative examples. He found 218 distinct Arab types, including 249 individual characters who were presented as "commoners," and none of whom were featured as heroes or heroines. Shaheen identified three Arab villain categories: the repulsive terrorist, the sinister sheikh, and the rapacious bandit. Furthermore, Shaheen considered

the stereotyping of Arabic sex roles, wherein Arab males are patriarchal oppressors and Arab women are disempowered victims. He concluded that Arabs are represented unfairly in comic books, especially as compared to the portrayal of other groups of people. In many ways Shaheen's work presages the current study; instead of a feminist lens, his content analysis employs a complementary racial lens to uncover violence and oppression in comic books.

*Feminist Analyses*

The final two pieces of literature under consideration are two analyses of comic strips by co-authors Sarah Barbant and Linda A. Mooney. "The Social Construction of Family Life in the Sunday Comics: Race as a Consideration" (1999) examined the intersection of race and domesticity in "Dennis the Menace" and "Calvin and Hobbes"—both with white families—and in "Curtis," with a black family. The analysis found that family unity and social interaction was more common in the black family than in the white families. Family roles were also studied in the longitudinal analyses of the article "Sex Role Stereotyping in the Sunday Comics: A Twenty Year Update" (1997). A sample of comic strips from 1994 was analyzed for gender-stereotypical images in family-cartoons, and these findings were compared to comparable research from 1974 and 1984. While there had been some improvements since the 1970s, Brabant and Mooney found that many stereotypical gender images, such as the apron, were still prominent even in the 1990s. Though these findings are not as harmful as the images of domestic abuse in Costa and Matzner's article, Brabant and Mooney uncover a similar implication: comics may

actually be influencing society at large. In this light, a study of the sex and violence in

graphic novels becomes essential.

## Methodology

It may be common knowledge that graphic novels contain sex and violence, but quantifiable, repeatable analyses must be performed to examine that common knowledge empirically. Consider the words of Mrs. Erin Leary, whose 1946 tirade against comics was documented in Ellis and Highsmith's review of library literature:

> Today savage mobs are dominating the government and intimidating the men in power. This is the destruction which threatens us from within. Let us go to the source of such wrong doing. I say it without hesitation. The Comic books, Super Man, Bat Man, Human Torch, Captain Midnight—all fashioned of the same pattern—these furnish the ideal for the mad orgy (qtd. in Ellis and Highsmith 26).

Whether Mrs. Leary's vituperative had any basis in reality cannot be determined from the evidence she herself presented. Without specific examples from the offending comics, her opinion was just that—an opinion.

Rather than crying wolf at the sex and violence that may or may not dominate graphic novels, this research relies on the empirical findings of content analysis. A classic definition posed in 1952 describes content analysis as a "research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (qtd. in Budd and Thorp 1). Because they are widely read but not widely studied, graphic novels need to be understood with the "objective, systematic, and quantitative" discipline that content analysis provides. Quantitative content analysis has long been used to research different media. The method permits researchers to interpret meaning in media, allowing for "apparently general statements to be made about aspects

 of representation which non-specialists, journalist, and experts alike can understand"
(van Leeuwen and Jewitt 13). Content analysis is especially appropriate for this research,
which poses "apparently general" claims about sex and violence in an entire genre.
Content analysis is further appropriate because it is a logical choice for studying cultural
artifacts, and it is favored by feminist researchers (Babbie 314).

Quantitative data was collected by analyzing the images on the pages in a random
sample of the 178 graphic novels in the SILS collection. The titles were listed
alphabetically by author and every tenth book on the list was selected, for a total sample
size of eighteen books (N=18); these are listed in Appendix A. The entirety of each book
was examined, with the exception of advertisements, the title page, and other preliminary
pages. Cover art was excluded; though certainly worth studying, many cover pages in the
sample have been unfortunately sacrificed to library binding. Within these eighteen
books, the manifest images were coded for sex and violence. In accord with the three-part
hypothesis of this study, the coding comprised three stages, described as follows:

*Part I. Sex of Protagonist.*

| Title of book | Male | Female |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |

In the case of more than one protagonist, a tally was made for each one. For compilations of
short stories, a tally was made for the protagonist(s) of each one.

*Part II. Perpetrators of Physical Violence.*

| Title of book: | Male | Female | Indeterminate Sex | Multiple: too many to count |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mild violence | | | | |
| Extreme violence, not resulting in death | | | | |
| Extreme violence resulting in death | | | | |

A tally was made for every instance of perpetrated physical violence. A tally for "Multiple: too many to count" was made when the characters were overwhelming in number or depicted so that their exact numbers were indeterminable.

*Part III. Sexual Suggestiveness of Attire.*

| Title of book: | Male | Female | Indeterminate Sex | Multiple: too many to count |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fully clad; clothes do not emphasize sexual characteristics | | | | |
| Fully clad; clothes emphasize sexual characteristics | | | | |
| Partially clad; nipples, back, buttocks, and/or genitals are visible | | | | |
| Naked | | | | |

A tally was made once for each character, and again every time the character altered her or his attire. A tally for "Multiple: too many to count" was made when the characters were overwhelming in number or depicted so that their exact numbers were indeterminable. Tallies were also made for images of non-characters, such as models on calendars within the novels. "Sexual characteristics" was understood to be physical characteristics linked to sex, such as genitals and breasts. Only the parts of the body that were depicted were considered; for instance, if a character wore a shirt, it was assumed to be fully clad, even if the character's lower half was not drawn. Non-human characters (i.e. animals, aliens, or mythical creatures) were considered to be fully clad, even in the absence of clothing, unless they were conspicuously and deliberately naked. A tally was made for naked even if characters were wearing hats, shoes, jewelry, or other accessories that did not interfere with the main body.

To strengthen the reliability of the researcher's coding, assistance was sought from two colleagues. Acting as inter-coders and using the coding guidelines shown above, they each analyzed the same two graphic novels, randomly selected from the sample. Inter-coder reliability approached 84%.

The following two examples illustrate the coding process. Image 1, from *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, demonstrates the process of coding for violence, as indicated by the added red arrows.  In the first panel, there is one act of extreme violence that does
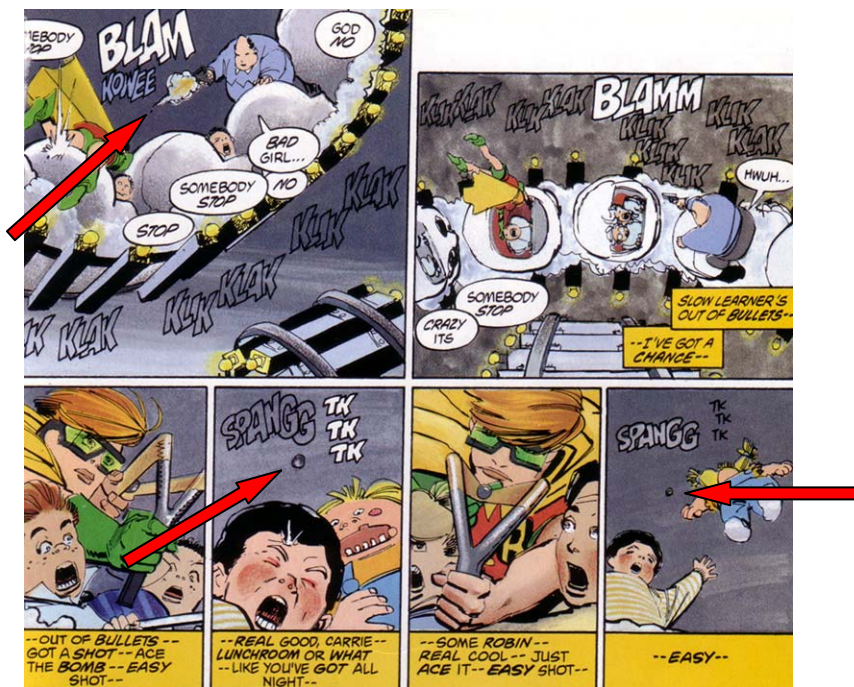


Image 1: Coding for Violence: *Batman*



Image 2: Coding for Sexual Suggestiveness: *Sandman*

not lead to death, which is perpetrated by a male. In both panel four and in panel six, there is one act of mild violence, perpetrated by a female. Thus there are three distinct acts of violence in Image 1. Image 2, from *The Sandman: Dream Country*, demonstrates the process of coding for the sexual suggestiveness of attire. Two tallies are made for this panel: one for a fully dressed female whose clothes emphasize her sexual characteristics, and one for a fully clad female whose clothes do not emphasize her sexual characteristics.

## Analysis of Results

The content analysis of eighteen graphic novels—roughly ten percent of the SILS graphic novels collection—supports all three parts of the hypothesis. Part I of the hypothesis predicted that more men than women would be protagonists; Part II predicted that more men than women would be perpetrators of violence; and Part II predicted that women's clothing would be more sexually suggestive than men's clothing. There were 54 protagonists in the eighteen graphic novels, comprising 48 males and 6 females. Males committed 805 acts of violence and females committed 89 acts of violence. Of characters that were suggestively clad, partially clad, or naked, 107 were males and 296 were females. See Appendix A for complete results.

*Part I. Sex of Protagonist.*

Male protagonists outnumbered female protagonists by an eight to one ration. Three of the six protagonists in *Dicks and Deedees* were women, and there was one female protagonist each in *100 Bullets, Freddy Lombard,* and—the title notwithstanding—*The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. In all, six of the 54 protagonists identified in the sample were female, while 48 were male. All of the female protagonists shared the spotlight with one or more male protagonists. In other words, every single book featured at least one male protagonist, but only four books featured female protagonists. Fourteen books depended on male heroes exclusively.

To be sure, there is nothing inherently anti-feminist about a male protagonist, and there is nothing necessarily pro-feminist about a female protagonist. Nonetheless, the lack of female protagonists in the SILS collection is unsettling. While the presence of a male protagonist in one particular book might not be noteworthy, the presence of (at least one) male protagonist in one hundred percent of the sample size is startling. The absence of females contradicts the equal-opportunity philosophy of feminism: if men can do it, why can't women? Protagonists of graphic novels certainly enjoy glamorous roles: many of them fight crime, defend justice, or rid the world of pestilence. The protagonists are far more celebrated than the secondary characters, who typically serve as sidekicks or comic relief. Unfortunately, women are often relegated to these lesser roles. Even those women who do achieve protagonist status are unable to carry an entire graphic novel on their own. The implicit message of graphic novels, according to this research, is that caution should be used when assigning women as protagonists, and that they should by no means fill the role without a man to help them out.

Again, there is nothing fundamentally sexist about a graphic novel that has a male protagonist. What is problematic is that *none* of these books features an independent female hero. To some extent this is an accident of sampling, because the SILS collection does have some graphic novels with exclusively female protagonists, but the scarcity of female leads in this sample is surprising alarming. Furthermore, some books exclude female protagonists to an absurd extreme. Consider both *Pete Von Sholly's Morbid* and *The Nightstand Chillers*, with twelve and thirteen short stories, respectively. The protagonist of each story is a male, meaning that these two books alone contributed 25 male protagonists. At best, it is an oversight that there is not one single woman hero

among them. At worst, authors of graphic novels are deliberately excluding women from the ranks of protagonists. Such is the case at the two leading comics publishers, Marvel and DC, says Trina Robbins. She explains the damage that comes from drawing male protagonists exclusively: "Proposals for comics aimed at young girls (or women) are discouraged at both [Marvel and DC], because 'girls (or women) don't read comics.' This is, of course, circular logic. Girls, indeed, do not read comics if there are no comics published for them" (*Great Women Cartoonists* 117). There may be a few girls and women who are perfectly content to read graphic novels geared toward boys and men, but it is entirely unsurprising that males are the primary readers of graphic novels, given that males are the primary protagonists of graphic novels. Certainly some exceptions spring to mind; the publisher Tokyopop enjoys tremendous success in large part because it markets to teenage girls; many of the Tokyopop titles and series showcase female leads (Gorman 10). As the sample in this study suggests, however, the majority of graphic novels are written with a male audience in mind. The upshot is that graphic novels are doing a disservice to female readers, intentionally or not; in turn, libraries are failing to serve their female patrons if they do not consciously incorporate female-friendly graphic novels into their collections.

*Part II. Perpetrators of Physical Violence.*

The word "feminism" can be misleading; because there are so many different perspectives that qualify as feminist, a more accurate word might be "feminisms." Among these feminisms are liberal feminism, eco-feminism, postmodern feminism, cultural feminism, and Marxist feminism. Despite the diverse array, a theme common to

almost every feminism is the condemnation of violence. Most feminisms deplore violence, not only because it causes harm, but because it privileges the perpetrator over the victim. Feminists generally prefer non-hierarchical, non-violent, diplomatic methods to violent means. This stance against violence provides the feminist framework for this research; informed by this perspective, the findings of this study suggest that graphic novels are decidedly un-feminist in their treatment of violence. There were 962 total acts of violence found in the content analysis, comprising 197 acts of mild violence, 451 acts of extreme but non-fatal violence, and 314 acts of lethal violence. They range from relatively innocent acts, such as Charlie Brown getting bonked by a baseball on the pitcher's mound, to tremendously violent acts of mass execution in Nazi Germany [Images 3 and 4].
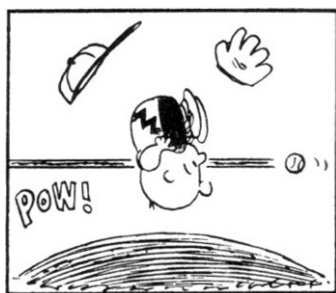


Image 3: *Charlie Brown* gets bonked by a baseball
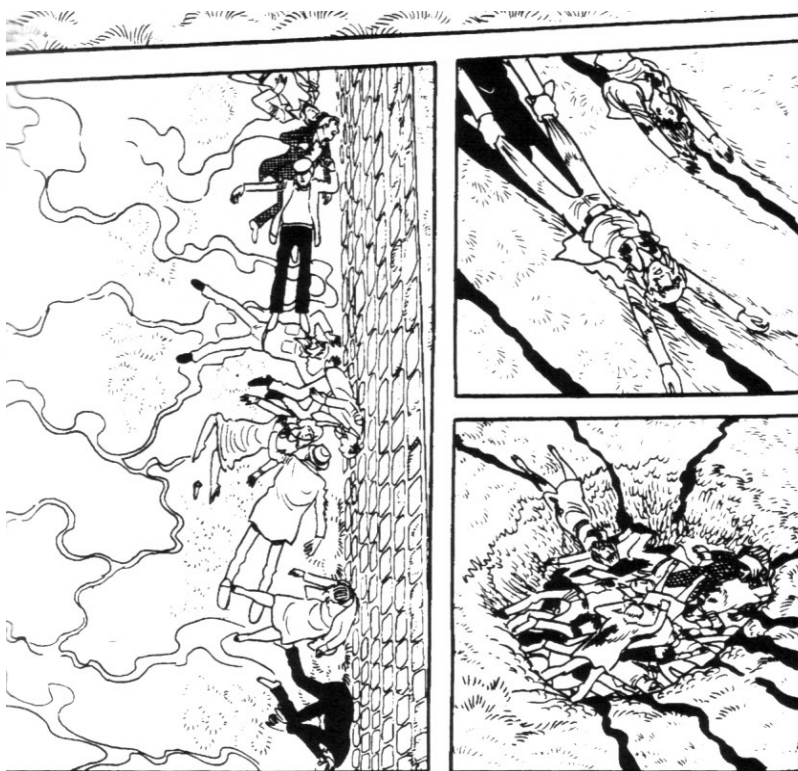


Image 4: Mass execution: *Adolf*

Undoubtedly, Charlie Brown's mishaps on the baseball diamond are not commensurate with the Nazi slaughter of the Jews in Osamu Tezuka's *Adolf*. Nonetheless, violence of any sort can reasonably be understood as counter-productive to feminist values; for this reason alone, every single book surveyed deserves feminist attention, because each book analyzed contained violence. The only book with no instances of extreme or lethal violence was *Who's on First, Charlie Brown?*, with 48 acts of mild violence; the book with the fewest instances of violence was *FLCL*, with thirteen acts of violence. On the other extreme, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* contained 136 acts of violence, 85 of which were lethal.



Image 5: Spider blows up a building: *Transmetropolitan*

While all 962 acts of violence in the eighteen-book sample contradict feminist ideologies of non-violence, it is also important to realize the more practical implications of violence in graphic novels. In their study of the effects of comic book violence upon readers, Kirsh and Olczak warn that "it is possible that exposure to violent comic books may contribute to the development of a hostile attributional bias and thus become a risk factor for aggressive behavior" ("Violent Comic Books" 49). In other words, there is a possibility that violent comic books can promote aggression in the reader. It is certainly true that certain graphic novels showcase violent behavior, often in unrealistic ways. Consider the behavior of Spider, the protagonist of *Transmetropolitan*. His first violent act is to blow up a building [Image 5, previous page]. No criminal or emotional repercussions follow. Later in the book, Spider jabs a lit cigarette into a person's eye; the victim's only response is to shout harmless threats [Image 6]. Another example of
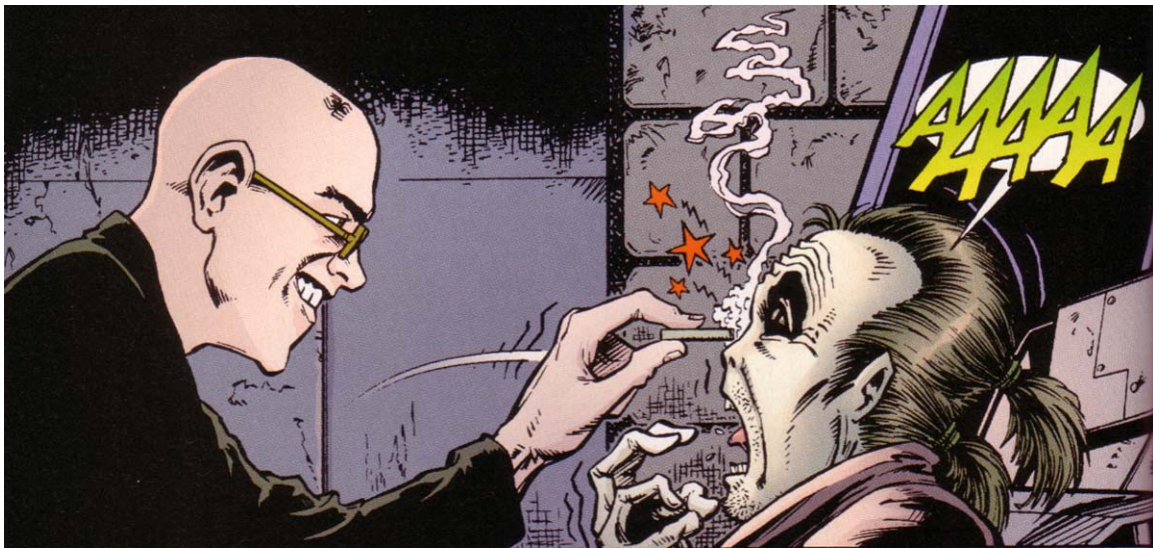


Image 6: Spider puts out a cigarette: *Transmetropolitan*

unrealistic violent behavior comes at the beginning of *Hack: Legend of the Twilight*. The

protagonist, Shugo, is violently killed, but only temporarily; he remains conscious during

the short duration of his "death" [Image 7]. These examples demonstrate the casual
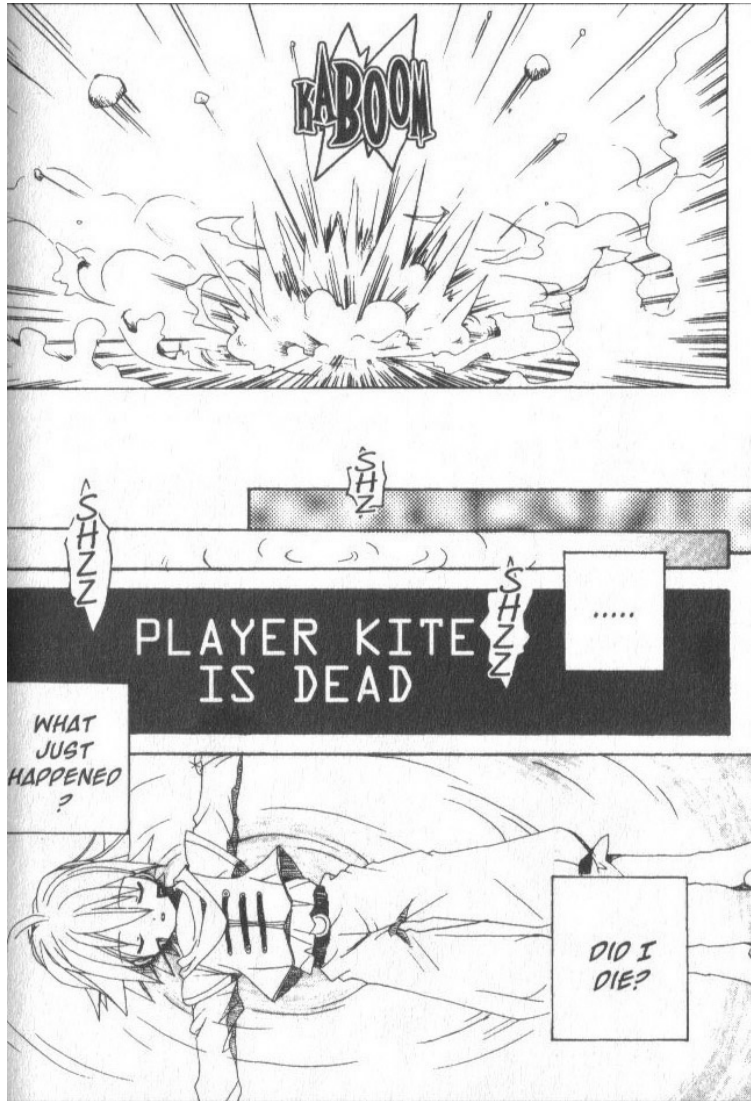


Image 7: Unfazed by death:
*Hack*

approach to violence of many graphic novels; at the very least, the approach departs from

feminist notions of non-violence; at worst, it represents violence unrealistically and

possibly promotes aggressive behavior.

Of the 962 total acts of violence in the eighteen surveyed graphic novels, 68 acts were committed by multiple people or individuals of indeterminate sex; of the other 894 acts of violence, 805 were committed by males and 89 were committed by females. In other words, men committed nine out of ten acts of violence in those situations where the perpetrator was an individual of known sex. The disparity is even more severe when only the lethal acts are considered: men committed 267 acts of fatal violence, while women committed only 17, meaning that men committed 94% of all the violent acts leading to death in those situations where the perpetrator was an individual of known sex. This extraordinary difference in numbers contradicts feminist principles merely by being so lopsided. In an age of equal opportunity, it is unsettling to see men and women acting so very differently.

More importantly, the significantly different numbers reinforce stereotypes that speak poorly of both sexes. Clearly the implications are unfortunate for men. According to the images in the graphic novels, if an act of violence occurs, it is most likely caused by a man. In real life, there are many violent women and non-violent men, but in graphic novels, men are disproportionately singled out as the perpetrators of violence, while women are rarely at fault. Compared to men, women are unfairly depicted as non-violent saints. Furthermore, women are unfairly depicted as helpless creatures. Following the framework of this study, the frequency of violent acts is considered to be anti-feminist; nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that those same violent acts are often used to solve problems. Though violence is a non-feminist problem-solving method, the lack of females participating in violence results in a lack of females participating in problem solving. Thomas Young agrees; in his article "Are Comic Super-Heroes Sexist?," he

concludes that "women generally do not play an important role in the morality drama of comic books, as illustrated by their fewer numbers in battles" (218). The weak showing of female characters in fights poses special problems, as seen in the recollections of comic-reader Esther Vincent:

> I looked for strength, independence, intelligence and courage, but would constantly be disappointed by women who resorted to the costume and accessory method of fighting evil. A magic tiara here, an alluring bust-line to "distract the enemy" there, putting on a pair of glasses to "look smart." These girls didn't truly kick ass… Pop culture sent the message that girls are weak, inactive fashion victims (330).

In comic books and graphic novels, the "weak, inactive fashion victims" are largely free from the burden of committing violence, but only at the expense of being helpless and petty. For better or worse, men make decisions, achieve goals, and advance the plots of their graphic novels through violence. On the whole, the less violent women do not.



Image 8: Crying helplessly as the battle rages: *Transmetropolitan*

The climactic battle in *Transmetropolitan*, for example, is fought by men and witnessed on the sidelines by a crying, inactive woman [Image 8]. Consider also an example from *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* [Image 9, next page]. Mina, an assertive woman accustomed to killing, balks at the violence of a particularly brutal scene and leaves the dirty work in the hands of two male allies (though in all fairness, after looking at the panel, one can hardly blame her).

Image 9: Mina walks away from the carnage: *League*

Regardless of the sex of the perpetrator of violence, it is important to bear in mind that the content analysis in this study does not draw distinctions between different acts of violence, except to note that they are mild, extreme, or lethal. Every single act of violence was recorded, whether it was moral or amoral, gratuitous or warranted, sensible or senseless. Thus some wildly different circumstances received equal representation in the analysis. One tally mark for fatal violence each was given to Garfield smashing a spider with a newspaper, to a racecar forcing another car off a cliff, and to a Nazi shooting a Jew [Images 10-12].

Image 10: *Garfield* kills a spider
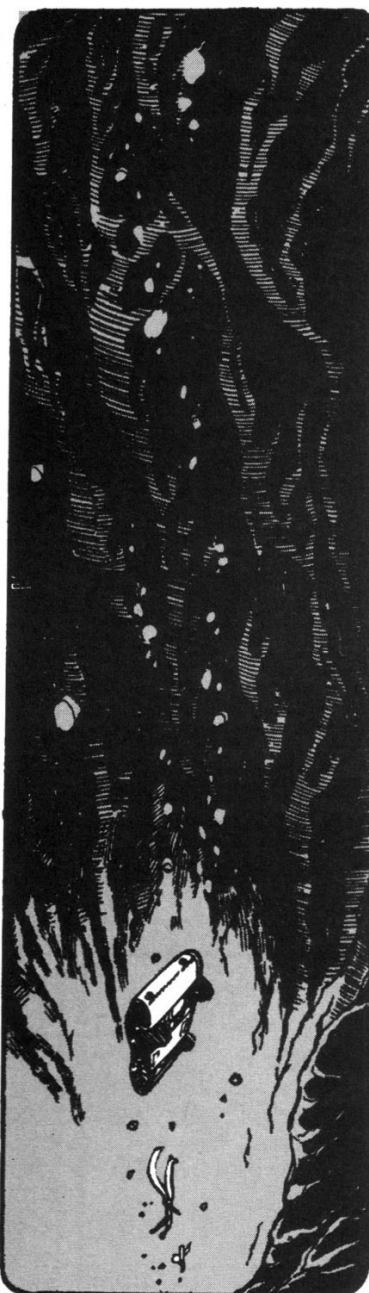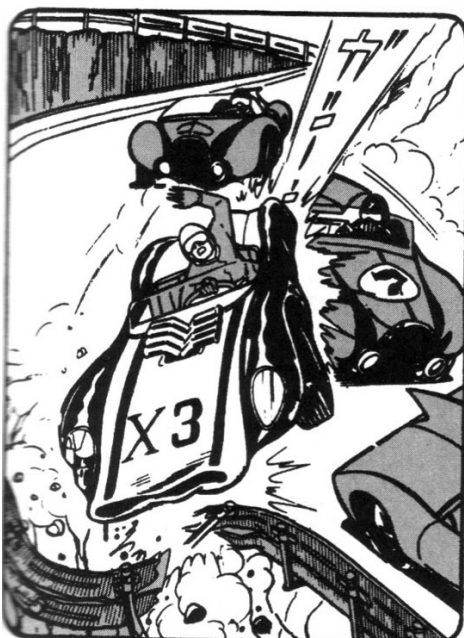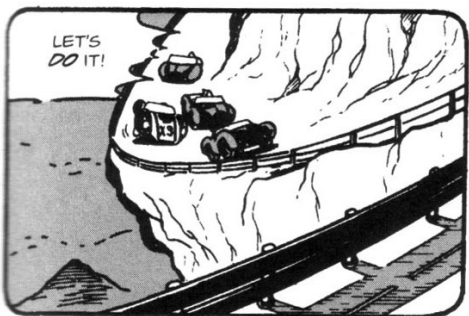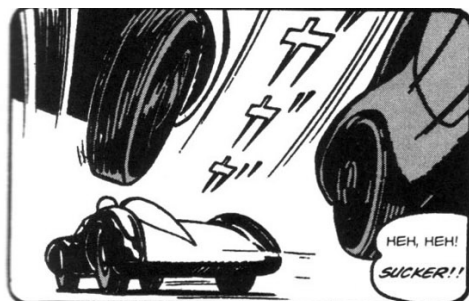


Image 11:
A racecar is forced
off a cliff:
*Speed Racer*

Image 12: *Adolf* shoots a Jew

This study presents evidence of the prevalence of violence in graphic novels, not to the myriad different contexts in which violence occurs. Conscientious collection developers should certainly try to collect graphic novels that feature little or no violence, but the decisions are not, alas, binary. Beyond determining whether or not a book contains violence, collection developers should consider the type of violence. Are men the ones to blame for violence, or are women accountable, too? Is violence presented comically? Horrifically? Casually? These questions need to be asked, not with the goal of censorship, but to ensure that books are not collected blindly.

*Part III. Sexual Suggestiveness of Attire.*

As with the violence discussed in the previous section, a significant difference in the sexual presentation of men and women violates feminist principles by mere virtue of being different. Of course, men and women often present themselves differently in real life, and oftentimes, no one complains: in America, men almost never wear dresses, and very few people mind the double standard. Nonetheless, it is simply not fair to present men in a different way than women, regardless of whether anyone objects to the

unfairness. But with the matter of attire, the issue is far more serious than a matter of equal opportunity. It is no secret that women in our society are viewed as sexual objects far more often than men, be it in the media, in the home, at work, and at play. In fact, the sexuality of women is so heavily emphasized that it often overshadows the many other elements of their identities. A few women profit from their sexualization, but most suffer for it. In many cases, especially in the context of two-dimensional images, the emphasis on women's sexiness and sexuality reduces them to sex objects and nothing else. Their personalities, intelligence, and achievements are dwarfed, ignored, or excluded. The feminist framework for this study recognizes that differences in the sexual portrayal of men and women is inherently unfair, and that disproportionate sexualization of females is especially harmful to women.

Of the suggestively clad, partially clad, or naked individuals of known sex in the eighteen graphic novels, about three times as many were women (296) than men (107); of the naked individuals, about two times as many were women (70) than men (37). These numbers are telling in themselves, but they are even better understood in light of the total representations of men and women. Bearing in mind that a tally was made for each change of clothes of a character, making for higher numbers than a straight character count, in the sample of graphic novels there were 1768 males and 786 females. Of all the males, 6% were suggestively clad, partially clad, or naked; of all the females, 38% were suggestively clad, partially clad, or naked. Of all the males, 2% were naked; of all the females, 24% were naked. It is incredible that almost one out of every four females was, at some point, depicted in the nude.

In some regards, the results are not surprising. According to Michael Lavin, the sexual desirability of women has been a hallmark theme of comic books from their inception, and the phenomenon has only intensified in recent years: "If anything, the comics of today are more blatantly sexist and provocative than ever. For every positive female role model, two negative ones can be found…. The 1990s witnessed the ascension of bad-girl art, focusing on erotic, violent female villains and anti-heroines" (94, 97-98). Comics journalist Kurt Samuels agrees, noting that comics sales have recently been led by "bad girls," who are "buxom characters who… are now planning on controlling the world wearing only a string bikini while getting soaked by buckets of blood" (qtd. in *Great Women Superheroes* 169). Jones and Jacobs further describe the images of bad girls: "Perpetually bending over, arching their backs, and heaving their anti-gravity breasts into readers' faces, defied all laws of physics" (341). The bad girls are the clearest example of hyper-sexed women in comics and graphic novels today, though none of them appeared in the sample for this study. Most other female characters are less overtly



Image 13: Differences in male and female attire: *100 Bullets*

sexual, but even without bad girls to skew the results, 38% of the women in the sample were depicted at some point in sexy attire, partial attire, or no attire at all.

In contrast, 94% of the men in the sample were always depicted in full attire that did not emphasize their sexual characteristics. *100 Bullets* clearly demonstrates this disparity, with 34 females and 0 males appearing in full
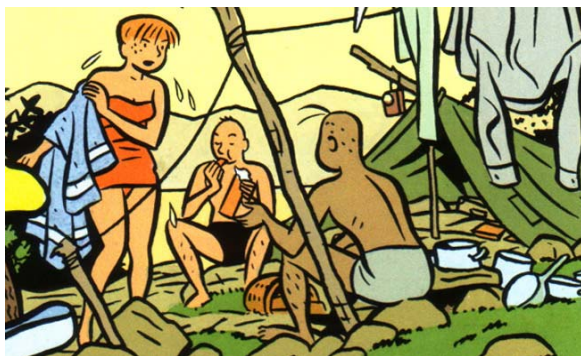
Image 14: At the swimming hole: *Freddy Lombard*

attire that emphasized their sexual characteristics [Image 13, previous page]. Yet the disparities within *100 Bullets* and the seventeen other books in the sample would certainly have been more pronounced if not for a peculiar double standard: men can often go shirtless in public without violating societal norms. This goes a long way toward explaining the seemingly contradictory finding that there were 58 partially clad males and only 37 partially clad females. Neither men nor women can walk freely in public in America without bottoms, but many casual situations allow men to go without shirts. Imagine if Dina had gone topless to the swimming hole with Freddy and Sweep! [Image 14].

Although the findings of this content analysis strongly indicate differences in the sexual representations of men and women in graphic novels, the results should be approached with caution. Just as the tally marks in the previous section made few distinctions between different types of violence, the tally



Image 15: Naked male: *Transmetropolitan*



Image 16: Naked female: *Dicks and Deedees*

marks here make few distinctions between different types of clothing. There are, it seems,

different degrees of naked. Spider's nakedness in *Transmetropolitan* is suggested by

silhouette, while Velvet in *Dicks and Deedees* could be a pin-up girl [Images 15 and 16,

previous page]. There is also a great deal of latitude within the other categories,



especially in "Fully clad; clothes emphasize sexual characteristics."

Reva in *Nightstand Chillers* is fully clad, but the deep cut of her dress

and a short line to indicate cleavage put her in the same category as the

strip-club advertisement woman in *Transmetropolitan*, who is fully

clad, technically, by two suggestive pasties and a miniscule bikini

bottom [Images 17 and 18].

Image 17: Slightly suggestive
female: *Nightstand Chillers*
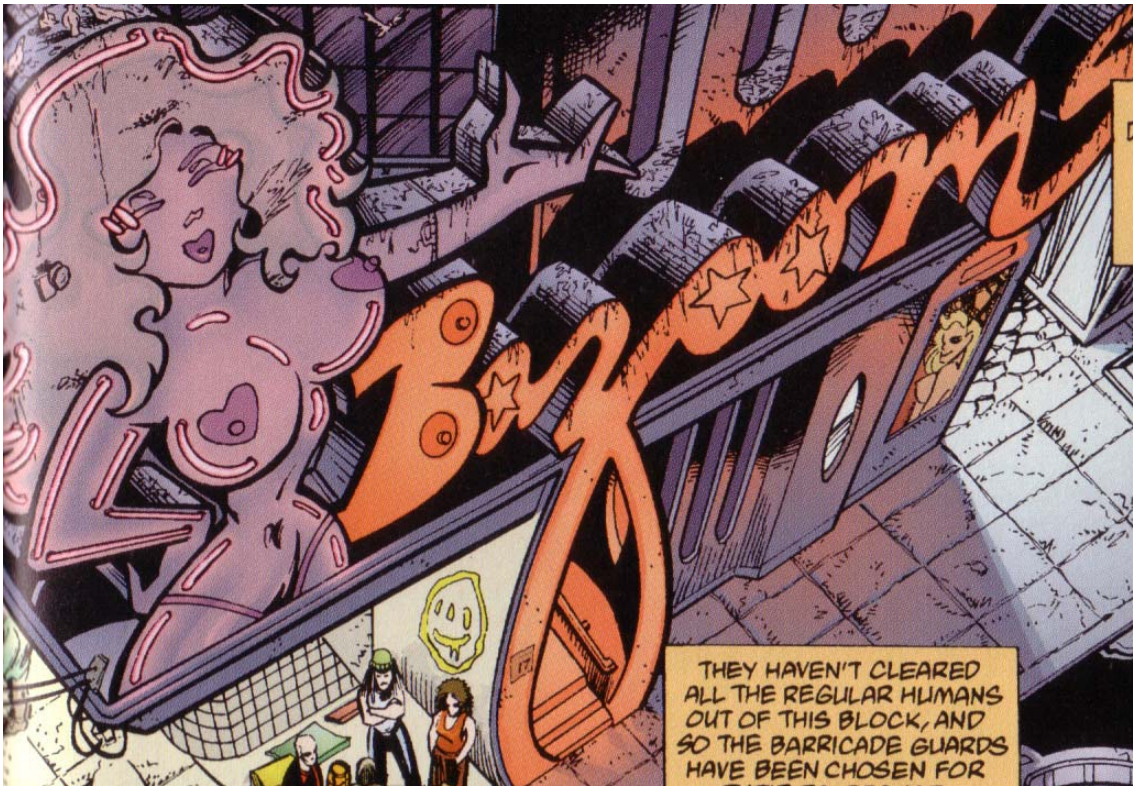


Image 18: Very suggestive female: *Dicks and Deedees*

Image 19: Un-erotic female:
*Dicks and Deedees*

In essence, clothing is an imperfect indicator of sexuality. Certain naked characters are devoid of erotic appeal, like Izzy in *Dicks and Deedees*, while certain others in full, modest attire exude sexiness, like the geisha in *Adolf* [Images 19 and 20]. Sexual suggestiveness is subjective and intangible. It pervades many graphic novels, certainly, but examinations of clothing are only part of the criteria for deciding if a book is sexist in its treatment of men or women.

Fortunately, labor-intensive witch-hunts for low necklines and thong underwear are not necessary to get an impression of the sexual suggestiveness of a book's characters. The sexuality of the characters can usually be gleaned from quickly browsing through a book. If a quick but conscientious perusal of a graphic novels collection suggests that women or men are sexually objectified to a disproportionate extent, then collection developers can seek out books to balance the collection. Recommendations on collecting feminist-friendly books are made in the next section.



Image 20: Attractive, modestly dressed female: *Adolf*

## Conclusions

This study's content analysis of the SILS graphic novels collection strongly indicates the need for librarians to be alert when collecting graphic novels. Unless librarians deliberately and assertively collect pro-feminist books, their graphic novels collections will likely reflect undue numbers of male protagonists, violent males, and scantily-clad females; as Maurice Horn puts it, "big-muscled males and big-busted females [occupy] almost the entire scene," (222). This condition does a disservice to women and men alike: women are unfairly portrayed as weak, sexual creatures, and men are unfairly portrayed as physically violent aggressors. In turn, library patrons suffer for having little variety offered to them by graphic novels collections. They must scavenge for the few (if any) pro-feminist titles available, or they must make due with the violence and sexual exploitation that is so common in graphic novels. Readers—most frequently women and girls—often forego reading graphic novels entirely, rather than suffer reading books filled with explosions and boobs. Considering that graphic novels are growing in popularity among all ages and reading abilities, it is especially unfortunate that women and other groups have been put off by them.

Fortunately, there is a small but growing number of pro-feminist graphic novels that can be used to supplement existing collections, entice new readers, and win back readers who have given up on graphic novels. Not many women are working on mainstream action comics, explains Elizabeth Walker, and "there's plenty of T&A in the

pages of mainstream comics" (210). Nonetheless, Walker contends, women artists and characters do exist: "Women are everywhere these days. They are on the page and behind the drawing table. Female characters are just as prevalent as guys in the pages of alternative comics and graphic novels" (209). Not every female character will appeal to women, of course, just as not every female artist will create books that appeal to women, but collecting materials that are written by women or that feature women is an easy first step toward increasing female readership.

In the past, hunting down comics and graphic novels by women or for women has been a Herculean task. Given that most comic writers, artists, editors, and publishers have been and continue to be men, it is unsurprising that most women's comics have also been underground comics. Some of the best comic art by and for women has been published in zines, fliers, small independent magazines, and, recently, on the Internet. None of these media are easy for libraries to locate or acquire. Fortunately for acquisitions librarians, women's comics and graphic novels have started to find their niche in mainstream venues, and there are a variety of resources available to help librarians sort through them. Trina Robbins discusses women's comics at great length in all of her books, and she includes a lengthy index of Women Doing Comics in *The Great Women Cartoonists*. Elizabeth Walker's article "Suffragettes, Vigilantes, and Superheroes" is also helpful for the pro-feminist collection developer; it contains an annotated bibliography of some of the best comics and graphic novels written by and for women. These resources, and others like them, can guide people who want to purchase graphic novels to supplement their existing collections.

*Limitations of Study*

Perhaps the most obvious limitation of this study is the lack of consideration for the text of the analyzed books. Graphic novels depend heavily on images, but words are sometimes even more important than pictures. The text of a graphic novel may support, deconstruct, or entirely fail to impact its illustrations. But even a content analysis of both images and text would be limited in some regards. Content analysis can illuminate a text but cannot fully decipher it; the procedure should be thought of as a "necessary but not sufficient methodology" for answering questions (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt 13). Furthermore, manifest content analyses, such as the one performed in this study, can be misleading. Though empirically reliable, the results sometimes have questionable validity.

The process of distilling eighteen complex novels to a crude rubric yields crude results. The *overall* findings of the study are probably fair indicators of the content of the SILS graphic novel collection (and, it is hoped, of current, popular graphic novels at large). But the act of reducing sophisticated books to simple tally marks necessarily distorts some of their meaning. There was, for example, a particular instance in which one male who was recorded as being naked; what was not recorded was that he was around two years old. The child was not exploiting the sexuality of men, but the content analysis did not provide for this or other exceptions.

Like the coding rubric, the feminist framework for this study was rigid, sometimes aggravatingly so. Three assumptions were maintained throughout: that the lack of female protagonists was anti-feminist; that violence was anti-feminist; and that the naked, partially clad, or suggestively clad women were anti-feminist. Usually these

assumptions were easy to uphold, but occasionally they led to some distorted interpretations. This is easily understood by examining Tezuka's *Adolf* series. These five books (one of which was analyzed in this study) are excellent examples of historical fiction that interpret World War II from a Japanese perspective. Because of the subject, they necessarily contain a great amount of violence. Very few feminists would object to the violence in the *Adolf* books, however, given the historical context in which it is presented. In other words, the feminist framework for this study—essentially, "violence is bad"—weakens in certain situations. Likewise, the feminist assumption that women are necessarily being exploited if they are drawn in the nude is true a great deal of the time, but exceptions do exist. Consider *Dicks and Deedees*, which, with fifteen nude women, was second only to *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* for naked ladies—yet it was arguably the most feminist of all the books in the study. It dealt with a host of feminist themes, including identity, sexual orientation, and diet. Many of the women were drawn without clothes, but usually their nakedness was a function of plot, not of exploitation. Unfortunately, the boundaries of the feminist framework for the study did not accommodate exceptions to the clothing rule.

*Future Study*

Future studies will be able to expand upon the current study. The same sort of analysis could be performed, but with finer distinctions among the variables: violence could be coded as "legitimate or gratuitous" and nudity could be coded as "modest or immodest." To better understand graphic novels as a whole, a study of their text will also be necessary. A simultaneous content analysis of text and images in tandem would be

especially beneficial. Another important avenue to consider would be the study of pro-woman or pro-feminist graphic novels, to see how they differ in terms of sex and violence from a typical collection of graphic novels. This could be a study of feminist-themed graphic novels, graphic novels written by women, or graphic novels with women protagonists. Furthermore, a wide variety of feminist lenses could be applied to any sample of graphic novels; the current study examines them in terms of sexual subjugation and violence, but any number of pertinent feminisms could be employed, such as eco-feminism, Marxist-feminism, or radical feminism. Finally, graphic novels deserve to be studied through an array of critical perspectives. The dynamics of race, ethnicity, and class, in particular, would surely yield fertile results.

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## Appendix B: Coding Results

*Part I. Sex of Protagonist: Grand Total*

| Male | Female |
|------|--------|
| 48 | 6 |

*Part II. Perpetrators of Physical Violence: Grand Total*

| | Male | Female | Indeterminate Sex | Multiple: too many to count |
|---|------|--------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Mild violence | 134 | 36 | 26 | 1 |
| Extreme violence, not resulting in death | 404 | 36 | 10 | 1 |
| Extreme violence, resulting in death | 267 | 17 | 15 | 15 |
| Total | 805 | 89 | 51 | 17 |

*Part III. Sexual Suggestiveness of Attire: Grand Total*

| | Male | Female | Indeterminate Sex | Multiple: too many to count |
|---|------|--------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Fully clad; clothes do not emphasize sexual characteristics | 1661 | 490 | 51 | 104 |
| Fully clad; clothes emphasize sexual characteristics | 12 | 189 | 1 | 0 |
| Partially clad; nipples, back, buttocks, and/or genitals are visible | 58 | 37 | 1 | 0 |
| Naked | 37 | 70 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 1768 | 786 | 53 | 105 |

## Sex of Protagonist

|  | Male | Female |
|---|---|---|
| **100 Bullets** | 1 | 1 |
| **Adolf** | 2 | 0 |
| **Batman** | 1 | 0 |
| **Dicks and Deedees** | 3 | 3 |
| **FLCL** | 1 | 0 |
| **Freddy Lombard** | 2 | 1 |
| **Garfield** | 1 | 0 |
| **Green Arrow** | 1 | 0 |
| **Hack** | 1 | 0 |
| **League of E.G.** | 4 | 1 |
| **Nightstand Chillers** | 13 | 0 |
| **Peanuts** | 1 | 0 |
| **PVS Morbid** | 12 | 0 |
| **Sandman** | 1 | 0 |
| **Scene of the Crime** | 1 | 0 |
| **Speed Racer** | 1 | 0 |
| **Superman** | 1 | 0 |
| **Transmetropolitan** | 1 | 0 |
| **TOTALS** | 48 | 6 |

## Mild Physical Violence

|  | Male | Female | Indeterminate Sex | Multiple: too many to count |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **100 Bullets** | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| **Adolf** | 7 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Batman** | 22 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Dicks and Deedees** | 0 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| **FLCL** | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| **Freddy Lombard** | 15 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| **Garfield** | 5 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| **Green Arrow** | 11 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| **Hack** | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **League of E.G.** | 9 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Nightstand Chillers** | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| **Peanuts** | 21 | 3 | 23 | 1 |
| **PVS Morbid** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Sandman** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Scene of the Crime** | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Speed Racer** | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Superman** | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Transmetropolitan** | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **TOTALS** | 134 | 36 | 26 | 1 |

Extreme Violence, Not Resulting in Death

| | Male | Female | Indeterminate Sex | Multiple: too many to count |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **100 Bullets** | 14 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| **Adolf** | 42 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Batman** | 120 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| **Dicks and Deedees** | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| **FLCL** | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| **Freddy Lombard** | 7 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| **Garfield** | 5 | 2 | 9 | 0 |
| **Green Arrow** | 61 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| **Hack** | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **League of E.G.** | 37 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| **Nightstand Chillers** | 35 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Peanuts** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **PVS Morbid** | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Sandman** | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Scene of the Crime** | 14 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Speed Racer** | 21 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Superman** | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Transmetropolitan** | 19 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| **TOTALS** | 404 | 36 | 10 | 1 |

Extreme Violence Resulting in Death

| | Male | Female | Indeterminate Sex | Multiple: too many to count |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **100 Bullets** | 18 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| **Adolf** | 23 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| **Batman** | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Dicks and Deedees** | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| **FLCL** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Freddy Lombard** | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Garfield** | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Green Arrow** | 16 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Hack** | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **League of E.G.** | 84 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Nightstand Chillers** | 23 | 0 | 4 | 3 |
| **Peanuts** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **PVS Morbid** | 19 | 2 | 10 | 0 |
| **Sandman** | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| **Scene of the Crime** | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| **Speed Racer** | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Superman** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Transmetropolitan** | 15 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| **TOTALS** | 267 | 17 | 15 | 15 |

Fully Clad; Clothes Do Not Emphasize Sexual Characteristics

|  | Male | Female | Indeterminate Sex | Multiple: too many to count |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **100 Bullets** | 101 | 14 | 0 | 1 |
| **Adolf** | 143 | 51 | 0 | 19 |
| **Batman** | 129 | 40 | 1 | 8 |
| **Dicks and Deedees** | 103 | 66 | 0 | 3 |
| **FLCL** | 5 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| **Freddy Lombard** | 131 | 54 | 0 | 12 |
| **Garfield** | 23 | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| **Green Arrow** | 108 | 34 | 0 | 1 |
| **Hack** | 5 | 10 | 1 | 0 |
| **League of E.G.** | 360 | 62 | 4 | 19 |
| **Nightstand Chillers** | 166 | 36 | 3 | 6 |
| **Peanuts** | 14 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| **PVS Morbid** | 58 | 15 | 1 | 2 |
| **Sandman** | 66 | 32 | 0 | 1 |
| **Scene of the Crime** | 88 | 33 | 6 | 0 |
| **Speed Racer** | 50 | 5 | 11 | 3 |
| **Superman** | 33 | 10 | 2 | 19 |
| **Transmetropolitan** | 78 | 12 | 19 | 10 |
| **TOTALS** | 1661 | 490 | 51 | 104 |

Fully Clad; Clothes Emphasize Sexual Characteristics

|  | Male | Female | Indeterminate Sex | Multiple: too many to count |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **100 Bullets** | 0 | 34 | 0 | 0 |
| **Adolf** | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| **Batman** | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| **Dicks and Deedees** | 2 | 55 | 0 | 0 |
| **FLCL** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Freddy Lombard** | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| **Garfield** | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| **Green Arrow** | 2 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| **Hack** | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| **League of E.G.** | 2 | 20 | 0 | 0 |
| **Nightstand Chillers** | 0 | 29 | 0 | 0 |
| **Peanuts** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **PVS Morbid** | 1 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| **Sandman** | 1 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| **Scene of the Crime** | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| **Speed Racer** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Superman** | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Transmetropolitan** | 0 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| **TOTALS** | 12 | 189 | 1 | 0 |

Partially Clad; Nipples, Back, Buttocks, and/or Genitals Are Visible

|  | Male | Female | Indeterminate Sex | Multiple: too many to count |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **100 Bullets** | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Adolf** | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Batman** | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Dicks and Deedees** | 2 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| **FLCL** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Freddy Lombard** | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Garfield** | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Green Arrow** | 11 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| **Hack** | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| **League of E.G.** | 10 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| **Nightstand Chillers** | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| **Peanuts** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **PVS Morbid** | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| **Sandman** | 6 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| **Scene of the Crime** | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| **Speed Racer** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Superman** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Transmetropolitan** | 5 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| **TOTALS** | 58 | 37 | 1 | 0 |

Naked

|  | Male | Female | Indeterminate Sex | Multiple: too many to count |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **100 Bullets** | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| **Adolf** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Batman** | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Dicks and Deedees** | 3 | 15 | 0 | 0 |
| **FLCL** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Freddy Lombard** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Garfield** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Green Arrow** | 6 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| **Hack** | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **League of E.G.** | 10 | 21 | 0 | 0 |
| **Nightstand Chillers** | 4 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| **Peanuts** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **PVS Morbid** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Sandman** | 7 | 7 | 0 | 1 |
| **Scene of the Crime** | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| **Speed Racer** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Superman** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Transmetropolitan** | 3 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| **TOTALS** | 37 | 70 | 0 | 1 |

## Appendix C: Copyright Acknowledgments

| Image | Page | Source |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Image 1 | 21 | Miller, Frank. *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns.* New York, NY: DC Comics, 1996. Page 147. |
| Image 2 | 21 | Gaiman, Neil. *The Sandman: Dream Country.* New York: Vertigo/DC Comics, 1990. Page 103. |
| Image 3 | 25 | Schulz, Charles M. *Who's on First, Charlie Brown?* New York: Ballantine Books, 2004. Page 68. |
| Image 4 | 25 | Tezuka, Osamu. *Adolf: The Half-Aryan.* San Francisco, CA: Cadence Books, 1996. Page 155. |
| Image 5 | 26 | Ellis, Warren. *Transmetropolitan: Back on the Street.* New York: DC Comics, 1998. Page 8. |
| Image 6 | 27 | Ellis, Warren. *Transmetropolitan: Back on the Street.* New York: DC Comics, 1998. Page 28. |
| Image 7 | 28 | Izumi, Rei. *Hack: Legend of the Twilight.* Los Angeles, CA: Tokyopop, 2003. Pages 46-47. |
| Image 8 | 30 | Ellis, Warren. *Transmetropolitan: Back on the Street.* New York: DC Comics, 1998. Pages 62-63. |
| Image 9 | 31 | Moore, Alan. *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen.* Vol. 1. La Jolla, CA: America's Best Comics, LLC, 2002. Ch. 6, p. 14. |
| Image 10 | 32 | Davis, Jim. *Garfield: Survival of the Fattest.* New York: Ballantine Books, 2004. Page 31. |
| Image 11 | 32 | Yoshida, Tatsuo. *Speed Racer: The Original Manga.* Vol. 1. [New York?]: Wildstorm/DC Comics, 2000. Page 19. |
| Image 12 | 33 | Tezuka, Osamu. *Adolf: The Half-Aryan.* San Francisco, CA: Cadence Books, 1996. Page 153. |
| Image 13 | 35 | Azzarello, Brian. *100 Bullets: First Shot, Last Call.* New York: DC Comics, 2000. Page 43. |
| Image 14 | 36 | Chaland, Yves. *Freddy Lombard: Holiday in Budapest/F.52.* Hollywood, CA: Humanoids Pub., 2003. Page 3. |

| Image | Page | Source |
|---|---|---|
| Image 15 | 36 | Ellis, Warren. *Transmetropolitan: Back on the Street.* New York: DC Comics, 1998. Page 5. |
| Image 16 | 36 | Hernandez, Jaime. *Dicks and Deedees.* Seattle, Wash.: Fantagraphics, 2003. Page 83. |
| Image 17 | 37 | Boyette, Pat. *The Nightstand Chillers.* Lebanon, NJ: Vanguard, 2003. Page 67. |
| Image 18 | 37 | Ellis, Warren. *Transmetropolitan: Back on the Street.* New York: DC Comics, 1998. Page 41. |
| Image 19 | 38 | Hernandez, Jaime. *Dicks and Deedees.* Seattle, Wash.: Fantagraphics, 2003. Page 27. |
| Image 20 | 38 | Tezuka, Osamu. *Adolf: The Half-Aryan.* San Francisco, CA: Cadence Books, 1996. Page 275. |