
Introduction

Intermediality: Genetics and Enrichment of the Language of Comics

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Abstract

The introductory article to this special issue on intermediality and comics focuses on exploring the richness of graphic narrative beyond the conventional understanding of comics as a multimodal medium that often combines text and images. Primarily using diverse examples of Spanish comics as its focus, this essay investigates intermedial relations between comics and music, adaptation and animation, as well as the extension of comics beyond physical and digital spaces. Drawing on existing research on intermediality more broadly and specific scholarly literature that examines comics as an intermedial cultural production or in relation to other media, the article argues that intermediality has been a consistent theme throughout the history of Iberian comics and key to new aesthetic and conceptual explorations in the medium.

Keywords: comics, intermediality, adaptation, animation, digital

Comics studies has experienced a revolution since the early 2000s with the consolidation of the graphic novel format and the marketing label associated with it, which has opened up a wider readership and gained comics an entry into general bookstores, hence normalising their presence on the shelves. The success of works such as *Arrugas (Wrinkles)* (2007) by Paco Roca, translated into 14 languages, and its adaptation into an animated film in 2011 (which won the Goya for best Spanish animated film in 2012) have expanded comics readership, although with the caveat that the medium is nowhere near regaining the popular appeal it enjoyed in the 1940s and 1950s.

All translations from Spanish to English our own unless otherwise indicated.

In Spain, new publishing houses emerged around the 2000s working (not only) with Spanish comics and added to the existing Ikusager Ediciones (1976–2000) founded by Ernesto Santolaya, Norma Editorial (created in 1977 by Rafael Martínez), Ediciones La Cúpula (since 1979 when it began editing the magazine *El Víbora* [The viper]), Edicions de Ponent (under a different name in 1995–1998) until the tragic death of Paco Camarasa in 2016, Ediciones Sinsentido (founded by Jesús Moreno in 1999) and Astiberri (Javier Zalbidegoitia, Fernando Tarancón, Héloïse Guerrier and Laureano Domínguez) since 2001. Some of these new publishing projects such as *¡Caramba!*, which originated as a zine led by Manuel Bartual, evolving into a publishing label in 2011 and later integrating within Astiberri in 2015, and Entrecomics (2012–2016) were short-lived due to the precarious industrial infrastructure of comics. Others such as Apa-Apa (founded in 2008 by Toni Mascaró) and Dibbux (2004–2023, created by Ricardo Esteban Plaza) have enjoyed a longer lifespan, and they all kept the comics community in Spain alive until other publishing outlets were developed, crossing the virtual space into transmedia ventures (by crowdfunding and online publishing such as TikTok and Tris Tras comics).

In Latin America, only Brazil, Argentina and Mexico have developed a comics industry at certain moments in their history, but online publishing and a very active zine community provide alternative possibilities for producing, reading and engaging with comics in the region.¹ Despite the precarious working conditions of many artists and the modest industrial development of comics in the Iberian Peninsula and Latin America, increased institutional support in Spain (the National Prize for Comics since 2007 or the recent declaration of March 17 as Comics Day in Spain) indicates a shift towards inclusivity and recognition. Partly responsible for this new trend is intermediality, the focus of this special issue, through adaptations of classical or recent works of literature into comics or indeed that of successful comics into animated films, as well as through expressive explorations of diverse artistic and narrative forms, creating a dynamic interplay between different media.

The authors of this special issue focus on this dynamic and evolving field. They are part of a large consortium formed by academic and non-academic participants in twenty European and five Latin American countries grouped together under the research project ‘Investi-

1 For a brief analysis on the Latin American comics industry and production with suggestions for further reading, see Jorge Catalá and James Scorer, ‘Comics, Cartoons, Graphic Novels’, in *Oxford Bibliographies in Latin American Studies*, ed. Ben Vinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1093/OBO/9780199766581-0279>.

gation in Comics and Graphic Novels in the Iberian Cultural Area' (iConMICs). Directed by Viviane Alary (Blaise Pascal University of Clermont Ferrand) and Jesús Jiménez Varea (University of Seville), iConMICs is the first action of the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) programme to be entirely devoted to comics and their cultural industry and is, so far, the largest international programme on Ibero-American comics. COST is a funding programme for research projects based on a dual requirement, which iConMICs also fulfils to promote (a) dialogue between the academic world and the private sector and (b) mobility and cooperation between Europe's most advanced countries and their less-developed counterparts in order to contribute to the establishment of a unified European Research Area that emphasises excellence in research.

Specifically, from this network of relationships and sharing of insights, intermediality emerged as one of the research lines identified as a consistent theme throughout the history of Iberian comics, particularly within two iConMICs working groups: the historical approach to Iberian comics' cultural heritage (coordinated by Jorge Catalá and Lisa Maya Quaianni Manuzzato) and the metamorphoses of contemporary Iberian comics (whose first coordinators were Benoît Mitaine and José Manuel Trabado Cabado). This special issue (the first of two to be published consecutively by *European Comic Art*) challenges the compartmentalisation of knowledge by examining processes that involve different media and cross disciplines. The aim is to analyse the richness of graphic narrative beyond the conventional understanding of comics as a multimodal medium that often combines text and image. By investigating intermedial relations in the realm of comics, we draw on existing research on intermediality more widely,² as well as on specific

2 What follows is not an exhaustive bibliography on the topic, but we would like to share suggestions for further reading: Dick Higgins, 'Statement on Intermedia', in *Dé-Collage (décollage)* *6, ed. Wolf Vostell (Frankfurt: Typos Verlag / New York: Something Else Press, 1967), <http://www.artpool.hu/Fluxus/Higgins/intermedia2.html>; Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Gunther Kress, *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication* (London: Routledge, 2010); Lars Elleström, ed., *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Antonio J. Gil González, *+Narrativa(s): Intermediaciones novela, cine, cómic y videojuego en el ámbito hispánico* [+Narrative(s): Intermediations of novel, film, comic and video game in the Hispanic sphere] (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2012); Carlos A. Scolari, 'Transmedia Storytelling: Brands, Narratives and Storyworlds', in *Handbook of Brand Semiotics*, ed. George Rossolatos (Kassel: Kassel University Press, 2015), 151–169; Carlos A. Scolari and Indrek Ibrus, eds, *Crossmedia Innovation: Texts, Markets, Institutions* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2012); Carlos A. Scolari, *Narrativas transmedia: Cuando*

scholarly literature that investigates comics as an intermedial cultural production or in relation to other media.³ This introduction focuses on four themes: format, adaptations, music and animation.

todos los medios cuentan [Transmedia narratives: When all media counts] (Barcelona: Deusto, 2013); Carlos A. Scolari, Paolo Berteti and Matthew Freeman, *Transmedia Archaeology: Storytelling in the Borderlines of Science Fiction, Comics and Pulp Magazines* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Jan-Noël Thon and Lukas R. A. Wilde, 'Mediality and Materiality of Contemporary Comics', *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 7, no. 3 (2016), 233–241, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21504857.2016.1199468>; Domingo Sánchez Mesa and Jan Baetens, 'La literatura en expansión: Intermedialidad y transmedialidad en el cruce entre la literatura comparada, los estudios culturales y los new media studies [Literature in expansion: Intermediality and transmediality at the intersection between comparative literature, cultural studies and new media studies]', *Tropelías: Revista de Teoría de la Literatura y Literatura Comparada* 27 (2017), 6–27; Carey Jewitt, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 2017); Sonya Petersson, Christer Johanson, Magdalena Holdar and Sara Callahan, eds, *The Power of the In-Between: Intermediality as a Tool for Aesthetic Analysis and Critical Reflection* (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2018); Antonio J. Gil González and Pedro Javier Pardo, eds, *Adaptación 2.0: Estudios comparados sobre intermedialidad* [Adaptation 2.0: Comparative studies on intermediality] (Binges: Éditions Orbis Tertius, 2018); Niklas Salmose and Lars Elleström, eds, *Transmediations: Communication across Media Borders* (London: Routledge, 2020); Lars Elleström, ed., *Beyond Media Borders, Volume 1: Intermedial Relations among Multimodal Media* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021). As general entry point, Carlos A. Scolari's blog, *Hypermediations*, <https://hipermediaciones.com>, provides a road map to media ecology.

- 3 Luis Gasca and Ariel Mensuro, *La pintura en el cómic* [Painting in comics] (Madrid: Cátedra, 2014); Jared Gardner, 'Film + Comics: A Multimodal Romance in the Age of Transmedial Convergence', in *Storyworlds across Media: Towards a Media-Conscious Narratology*, ed. Marie-Laure Ryan and Jan-Noël Thon (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 193–210; Diego Mollá and Jordi Revert, eds, 'Veinticuatro viñetas por Segundo: Trasvases entre cine y cómic' [Twenty-four vignettes per second: Transfers between cinema and comics], special issue, *L'Atalante: Revista de Estudios Cinematográficos* 16 (2016); Javier Muñoz-Basols and Marina Massaguer Comes, 'Social Criticism through Humour in the Digital Age: Multimodal Extension in the Works of Aleix Saló', *European Comic Art* 11, no. 1 (2018), 107–128, <https://doi.org/10.3167/eca.2018.110107>; Julio Gracia Lana, 'Intermedialidad en el cómic adulto en España (1985–2005): De la historieta a la pintura, el audiovisual y la ilustración' [Intermediality in adult comics in Spain (1985–2005): From comics to painting, audiovisuals and illustration]. (PhD diss., Universidad de Zaragoza, 2019); Julio Gracia Lana and Gonzalo M. Pavés, eds 'De la página en blanco al espacio fílmico' [From the blank page to the film space], special issue, *Neuróptica: Estudios sobre el Cómic* 2 (2020); Francisco Sáez de Adana, 'La relación del cómic con el cine y otros medios' [The relationship of comics with cinema and other media], *Tebeosfera* 18 (2021); Francisco J. Ortiz, ed., 'Cine y Cómic' [Cinema and comics], special issue, *Quaderns de Cine* 15 (2020); Francisco Sáez de Adana and Héctor Tarancón, eds, 'Cómic y Cine' [Comics and cinema], special issue, *Tebeosfera* 15 (2020); Julio A. Gracia Lana, *El Cómic español de la democracia: La influencia de la historieta en la cultura contemporánea* [The Spanish comic of democracy: The influence of comics on contemporary culture] (Zaragoza: Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, 2022), chaps 4–6; José Manuel Trabado Cabado, ed., *Encrucijadas gráfico-narrativas: Novela gráfica y álbum ilustrado* [Graphic-narrative crossroads: Graphic novel and illustrated album]

Comics and the Expanded Page

An intermedial critical approach challenges the idea that each sense has its own domain, as proposed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau: ‘The domain of music is time, that of painting is space’.⁴ Reading comics is an embodied experience, which exceeds an ocular-centric approach insofar as the materiality of comics implies tactile interactions as desirable and pleasurable.⁵ When we attend to the page in a comic, three main activities take place: touching, seeing and reading. In the interstices ‘between the linear and the tabular . . . , between the story (*récit*) and the setting (*tableau*) . . . , or between the linear and the holistic, between the sequence and the surface’,⁶ comics relate to other media highlighting shared affordances and formal and aesthetic arrangements that exceed the page. For instance, a certain *poiesis* is shared by comics and poetry through message condensation and the use of metaphor and metonymy in page compositions that evince the relevance of materiality and the reader’s involvement in turning the page.⁷ Similarly, comics are intimately related to theatre and music, as Spanish artist Javier Olivares has indicated reflecting on the creative process of *La cólera* (Rage) (2020), a comics adaptation of Homer’s *The Iliad* made with Santiago García:

The theatrical text, in essence, is very similar to a script: it is a beginning, a starting point that you have to interpret, like a score or a map . . . I know that my drawing has different tonalities, that I can use it as if I were a musician.

(Somonte-Gijón: TREA, 2020); Trabado Cabado, ed., *Lenguajes gráfico-narrativos: Especificidades, intermedialidades y teorías gráficas* [Graphic-narrative languages: Specificities, intermedialities and graphic theories] (Somonte-Gijón: TREA, 2021); James Scorer, ed., *Comics Beyond the Page* (London: UCL Press, 2020); Enrique del Rey Cabero, (*Des*) *montando el libro: Del cómic multilineal al cómic objeto* [(Dis)assembling the book: From multilinear comics to object comics] (León: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de León, 2021); Andreas Rauscher, Daniel Stein and Jan-Noël Thon, eds, *Comics and Videogames: From Hybrid Medialities to Transmedia Expansions* (London: Routledge, 2021); Jorge Catalá, Benoît Mitaine, Maya Quaianni and José Manuel Trabado Cabado, eds, *Multimodalidad e intermedialidad: Mestizajes en la narración gráfica contemporánea ibérica y latinoamericana* [Multimodality and intermediality: Mestizajes in contemporary Iberian and Latin American graphic narration] (León: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de León, 2022).

- 4 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ‘False Analogy between Colors and Sounds’, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Gottfried Herder, *On the Origin of Language*, trans. John H. Moran and Alexander Gode (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 61–64 (62).
- 5 Ian Hague, *Comics and the Senses: A Multisensory Approach to Comics and Graphic Novels* (London: Routledge, 2014), 98.
- 6 Cabero, (*Des*) *montando el libro*, 44.
- 7 Francisco Saéz de Adana and Enrique del Rey Cabero eds, *Dúplex* (Alcalá de Henares: Marmotilla, 2020).

If I increase the intensity of the ink or the stroke, I get violence without having to draw it.⁸

This highlights the importance of considering comics as a form of material culture that is embedded in wider cultural processes. Comics, with their ability to adapt and intersect with other media, are an apt example of contemporary cultural production as cross-medial.

In addition to these modes and semiotic affordances, comics also utilise narrative techniques and structures such as panel layout, gutters, word balloons and sound effects, which further enrich the multimodal nature of the medium, as the contributors of this special issue demonstrate in their articles. Comics also frequently borrow from and reference other media, often through literature, film or fine arts remediations, adapting them to the specific affordances of the comics form. These intermedial processes are not limited to the creation of comics but also extend to their reception and circulation, as comics are often adapted into other media such as films, television shows and video games and are subject to various forms of transmedia storytelling. For example, David Miranda Barreiro, in his analysis of Jacobo Fernández Serrano's biographical comic book *Lois Pereiro: Breve Encontro – Un Achegamento comiqueiro á biografía e obra do poeta* (Lois Pereiro: Brief encounter – A comics approach to the poet's life and work), allows us to discover the work and the life of the great Galician poet Lois Pereiro (1958–1996). The study, true to its title, 'Intermediality and Transmedial Thanatography in Jacobo Fernández Serrano's *Lois Pereiro: Breve encontro*', sets out to decipher the multiple intermedial resources used by Fernández Serrano to capture the complexity of the different facets and cultural dimensions that shaped Pereiro's life and work (literature, films, music and comics). Miranda Barreiro demonstrates here how the hybrid nature of comics allows an impressive range of strategies for carrying out medial transpositions, media combinations and intermedial references.

Comics, qua 'artistic form',⁹ have a long intermedial history and are intrinsically multimodal since several 'modes', to use Gunther Kress's

8 Gerardo Vilches, 'Santiago García y Javier Olivares, autores de "La cólera": "Toda la estética occidental se basa en la guerra y la violencia"' [Santiago García and Javier Olivares, authors of 'La cólera': 'All Western aesthetics are based on war and violence'], *The Watcher and the Tower* (20 December 2022), <https://thewatcherblog.wordpress.com/2022/12/20/santiago-garcia-y-javier-olivares-autores-de-la-colera-toda-la-estetica-occidental-se-basa-en-la-guerra-y-la-violencia>.

9 Benjamin Fraser, *Visible Cities, Global Comics: Urban Images and Spatial Form* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2019), 138. Fraser uses the term artistic form to 'reference not just dynamics such as panel composition and page layout, but moreover the very tactile experience of reading itself'.

term,¹⁰ operate simultaneously, each with a wide array of semiotic affordances: writing (handwriting, typeset fonts); drawing (pencil, pen, ink, brush); style (realist, avant-garde, expressionistic, cartoonish, anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, abstract); colour (greyscale, black and white, full colour, sepia) and format (comic strip, woodcut, Sunday page, comic book, Franco-Belgian *bande dessinée*, manga, graphic novel, webcomic, digital, motion comics, game comics, comics on walls or any other physical object), to mention but a few.

The format of comics,¹¹ linked to the periodical press as comic strips in the early twentieth century, determined their ephemerality in daily newspapers. Other formats, halfway between comics and illustration, such as the woodcut novels created by Frans Masereel and Lynd Ward, introduced early examples of what years later would evolve into graphic novels. The ephemerality of many of these early comics was also evident in the cheaply produced and widely distributed comics of the 1950s and 1960s, which were ubiquitous in kiosks and newsagents during the golden age of Spanish and Latin American comics. Will Eisner's popularisation of the graphic novel format in the 1970s, after comics gained traction in the underground publishing community in the 1960s, made graphic novels an accessible entry point for the wider public to read comics.¹²

Indeed, one of the greatest advances in comics creation and scholarship is the exploration of what lies beyond the page. This includes both digital environments and physical spaces that expand the reading experience, providing new cognitive insights into comics, the objects in which they appear, and the social and political resonances of their display in public spaces.¹³ Chris Ware in *Building Stories* (2012) or Carlos

10 Kress, *Multimodality*.

11 Newspapers were the predominant 'technical medium of display' at the time. Elleström uses the term to refer to 'any object, physical phenomenon or body that *mediates* sensory configurations in the context of communication; it realises and displays the entities that we construe as media products'. See Elleström, *Beyond Media Borders*, 34.

12 'The first public use of the phrase, by Richard Kyle, was in a 1964 newsletter circulated to members of the Amateur Press Association, and the term was subsequently borrowed by Bill Spicer in his fanzine *Graphic Story World*'. Hillary Chute, 'Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 123, no. 2 (2008), 452–465 (453), <https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2008.123.2.452>. Will Eisner then famously used the term in a more commercial context to sell *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories* (New York: Baronet Books, 1978).

13 The excellent Pepo Pérez, ed, *Cómic digital hoy: Una introducción en presente* [Digital comic today: An introduction in the present] (Barcelona: Asociación de Críticos y Divulgadores de Cómic de España, 2016), <https://acdcomic.es/comicdigitalhoy>, maps the evolution of digital comics with special attention to Spanish comics.

Villarreal Colunga in *Metrográficas* (Metrographics) (2022) expand what a comic is through their production of intricate and rich diegetic artifacts. Ware reflects on the materiality of comics and their relationship with other cultural objects such as board games, allowing the reader to navigate different logics that result from a careful design in which the reader will make sense of the fourteen printed works – cloth-bound books, newspapers, broadsheets and flip books – packaged in a boxed set. Villarreal Colunga takes inspiration from Ware in compiling a chest containing seven publications in three different formats, which trace the origins of the metro system in Madrid.

To comic,¹⁴ as a verb, implies that comics may undergo intermedial adaptations, from paper to public space, which reveal new affordances and update semiotic resources that are socially agreed upon and determined according to specific cultures for the creation of meaning. The expansion of the physical page to the public street can give rise to what the artist Alberto ‘Tito na Rua’ Serrano has defined as street comics: comics about the street, on the street.¹⁵ Lima Gomes’s analysis of the *Zé Ninguém* street comic created by Tito na Rua suggests that the artist takes up the perspective of a foreign observer to re-signify the experience of belonging to Rio de Janeiro through comics.

A paradigmatic example of the use of comics in urban space is the use of *El Eternauta* (*The Eternaut*) in the aftermath of the 2001 economic crisis in Argentina.¹⁶ The plot involves an alien invasion in Buenos Aires, and its indelible appeal lies in the use of recognisable places for the Argentinean reader, which facilitated a reading experience of resistance emulating the narrative of the comic itself. During the 2001 economic crisis in Argentina, the image of *El Eternauta* began to appear

14 Scorer, *Comics Beyond the Page*, 11. Scorer uses the verb ‘to comic’ to explore comics scenes, digital environments, readership and comics publishing in the continent paying attention to areas that are often overlooked by a focus on the printed text.

15 Ivan Lima Gomes, ‘Comics on the Walls: The Zé Ninguém Street Comics and the Experience of the Outsider View of Rio de Janeiro’, in Scorer, *Comics Beyond the Page*, 158–176 (161). Tito na Rua was born and raised in the Bronx, New York, the son of Puerto Rican parents, but moved to his wife’s country of birth, Brazil, after September 11 to seek new opportunities.

16 *El Eternauta*, created by Héctor G. Oesterheld and Francisco Solano López, was first published from 1957 to 1959 in *Hora Cero*. In 1969 Oesterheld rewrote the story featuring artwork by Alberto Breccia. This version had changes in the story and more political references turning it into an open critique of dictatorial regimes and US imperialism. In the context of the Military Junta dictatorship in Argentina (1976–1983), Oesterheld resumed the story in *El Eternauta II* again with Francisco Solano López. Having joined the leftist guerrilla group Montoneros, Oesterheld and his four daughters disappeared in 1976–1977 after being arrested by the police. They are presumed dead.



Figure 1. The Nestornauta.
Photo taken by Jorge Catalá.

with the face of Héctor G. Oesterheld. The image was sometimes accompanied by the caption ‘Resiste’ (Resist) on banners, streets and demonstrations. In another twist, the cultural and political relevance of *El Eternauta* underwent a process of transmediality by which the image of Oesterheld was replaced by that of President Néstor Kirchner, giving rise to the ‘Nestornauta’ (see Figure 1) in the act of the ‘Kirchnerist youth’ at the Luna Park stadium on 14 September 2010.¹⁷

17 Laura Fernández and Sebastián Gago, ‘Al que le quepa escafandra que se la ponga: La (Re)construcción del relato político peronista a partir de la *El Eternauta*’ [Let him put on a diving suit: The (Re)construction of the Peronist political story based on *El Eternauta*], in *Creencias bien fundadas: Historieta y política en Argentina, de la transición democrática al kirchnerismo* [Well-founded beliefs: Comics and politics in Argentina, from the democratic transition to Kirchnerism], ed. Lucas Berone and Federico Reggiani (Córdoba: Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 2012), 62–75 (67); Cristian Palacios, ‘“The Nestornaut”, or How a President Becomes a Comic Superhero’, in Scorer, *Comics Beyond the Page*, 177–194 (179–180).

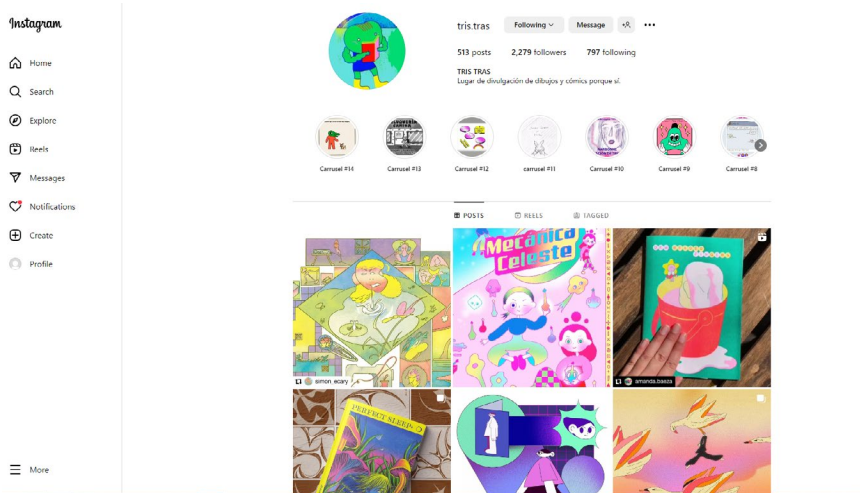


Figure 2. Tris Tras comics, coordinated by Ana Galvañ. Screenshot of Instagram profile @tris.tras.

The internet provides a creative environment for artists to expand the reach of physical comics pages through social media engagement, feminism and the urban experience. One example is a collective comics project called Tik Tok Cómics, organized by Ana Galvañ in 2013, which has evolved into Tris Tras and is hosted on her Instagram page (@tris.tras) (see Figure 2). Another paradigmatic example is Moderna de Pueblo's highly successful transmedial storytelling project by Raquel Córcoles. The character Moderna de Pueblo originated in 2010 when Córcoles began blogging and then turned viral through Facebook when she used social media to promote her first comic *Soy de pueblo* (I'm a country girl) (2011). Collaborations with *El Jueves* in 2011 and *Cuore* followed, and she has since published five more comics, reaching an international audience.¹⁸ Another example is Aleix Saló's YouTube trailer released ahead of the comic publication *Españistán: Este país se va a la mierda* (Spanistan: This country is going to hell) (2011). The context of unrest and demonstrations, which culminated in the sit-ins in Puerta del Sol in Madrid on 15 May 2011 and in several other Spanish cities in the following days, made the publication of Saló's video on 25 May 2011 timely, turning it into a viral phenomenon with more than 6.5 million

18 Moderna de Pueblo, *Idiotizadas, un cuento de empoderadas* [Idiotized, a tale of empowered women] (Madrid: Planeta, 2017), has sold nearly one hundred thousand copies and has been published outside Spain in Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Chile. *Moderna de Pueblo*, 'Idiotizadas', <https://modernadepueblo.com/idiotizadas> (accessed 11 September 2023).

views to date.¹⁹ The use of multimodal elements such as the lines and shapes of drawings, different fonts, colours, evocative language, orality, mixing codes (including English expressions), music, sound effects and intertextual references²⁰ makes *Españistán* a prime example of inter-medial adaptation.²¹

Adaptation: A New Flower from Old Stories

As we have just seen in these introductory lines, intermediality is a life-blood that nourishes comics production at all levels. If we take a closer look at the case of adaptation, which is considered the quintessential practice of remediation processes, we can observe the dynamism, profusion and courage of the Spanish artistic and editorial field shining through. Adaptation, driven by the industrialisation of culture (resulting in exponential production), globalisation (leading to the global and accelerated circulation of works) and the development of the autonomous authorial voice in the field (allowing comics authors to push technical boundaries while publishers become accustomed to releasing increasingly original and daring projects, works and formats), has, for several decades now, become an insatiable, unstoppable, infinite, multiple and polyhedral phenomenon.

Apart from the broad theoretical frameworks, both visual and narrative, established from the 1980s to the present by researchers such as Gérard Genette, Thomas M. Leitch, Robert Stam, Paul Coremans, Linda Hutcheon, Henry Jenkins, Sandra Eva Boschenhoff and Frank Erik Pointner, Dirk Vanderbeke, Dan Hassler-Forest, Charles Hatfield and others, who provide stable reference points and milestones for understanding the challenges and general grammar of this practice,²² it is impossible to define, let alone provide exact annual figures for, the

19 Aleix Saló, 'Españistán, de la burbuja inmobiliaria a la crisis' [Spain, from the real estate bubble to the crisis], YouTube (25 May 2011), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7P2ExRF3GQ>.

20 Muñoz-Basols and Massaguer Comes, 'Social Criticism through Humour', 113.

21 An example of a full digital comic would be Marta Altieri's *Joselito*, <https://www.137.rehab/joselito>, which is intrinsically linked to a digital environment due to the use of GIFs, reader's digital interaction and scroll movement, making the narrative of this webcomic ideal for digital reading.

22 A relatively comprehensive overview (up to 2015) of European and North American research into adaptation in comics (challenges, issues, forms, contributions) can be found in David Roche, Isabelle Schmitt and Benoît Mitaine, 'Introduction: Adapting Adaptation Studies to Comics Studies', in *Comics and Adaptation*, ed. Benoît Mitaine, David Roche and Isabelle Schmitt, trans. Aarnoud Rommens (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018), 3–28.

entirety of what is being adapted, even within a relatively small market like Spain. To illustrate the complexity and extent of the vast intermedia phenomenon encompassed by adaptation and transmediality, it seems interesting to offer a sample (which may appear extensive to some but in reality is minuscule) of its diversity and richness within a specific market (Spain) in recent years:

- *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution, and Revenge* (1978) by historian Paul Preston and the novel *Soldados de Salamina* (*Soldiers of Salamis*) (2001) by Javier Cercas, adapted by Juan Pablo García (2017, 2019);²³
- *11-M: La novela gráfica* [11-M: The graphic novel] (2009), adaptation of sentence no. 65/2007 of the Audiencia Nacional on the 2004 train bombings in Madrid by Pepe Gálvez, Antoni Guiral, Joan Mundet and Francis González;
- *Four Poets at War* (2007), a biography by Hispanist Ian Gibson, adapted as *Cuatro poetas en guerra* (2022) by Quique Palomo;
- *El olvido que seremos* [The oblivion that awaits us] (2006) by Héctor Abad Faciolince, a biography first adapted into a film by Fernando Trueba (2020) and into a comic book by Tyto Alba (2021);
- *Paradise Lost* (1667) by John Milton and *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) by Sergei Eisenstein, both adapted by Pablo Auladell (2015, 2018);
- *Lluitant contra l'oblit* (Fighting against oblivion) (2014), a journalistic investigation by Laura Ballester, adapted by Cristina Durán and M. A. Giner Bou as *El día 3* (The third day) (2018);
- *Fariña: Historia e indiscreciones del narcotráfico en Galicia* (Cocaine: History and indiscretions of drugs traffic in Galicia) (2015), a journalistic investigation by Nacho Carretero, first adapted into a TV series in 2018 for the Spanish channel Antena 3 and then into a comic book by Luis Bustos (2019);
- *El ministerio del tiempo* (The ministry of time) (2015–2020), a Spanish TV series adapted into a comic by Evolution Comics (2018);
- *Arrugas* (2007), a comic by Paco Roca, adapted into an animated film by Ignacio Ferreras (2011);
- *El vecino* (2004–2007), a comic by Santiago García and Pepo Pérez, adapted into a TV series by Netflix, *The Neighbour* (2019–2021);
- *El tesoro del cisne negro* (The treasure of the black swan) (2018), a comic by Paco Roca and Guillermo Corral, adapted into a series by Netflix, *La fortuna* (Fortune) (2021), directed by Alejandro Amenábar;
- *Blacksad*, a comic by Canales and Guarnido, transformed into a video game (2019);
- *Homeland* (2016), a novel by Fernando Aramburu, adapted in 2020 into a comic by Toni Fejzula and a miniseries by HBO Spain;
- *The Iliad* (under the title *La cólera*) by Homer and *The War of the Worlds* (1898) by H. G. Wells, adapted into comics by Javier Olivares and Santiago García (2020, 2022).

23 By 'adaptation of' or 'adapted into' we mean 'of/into a comic' unless otherwise stated.

This small sample enables us to grasp the complexity and extent of the vast media phenomenon of adaptation and transmediality.²⁴ To begin with, we can observe that the timeline of adapted works is boundless, spanning from *The Iliad* to recently published works, including works from the seventeenth century such as Milton's *Paradise Lost*. There is no longer any generic, commercial, editorial or mental barrier to adaptation, and this fact is more evident than ever before. The previously asserted unsuitability of certain works, which used to be defended due to their 'mediagenic' nature (intrinsic media genius),²⁵ seems to be fading away as the graphic and technical diversity of today's authors continues to progress, both in terms of their professional expertise and artistic autonomy. The fear associated with approaching major, sacred and untouchable works has been extinguished.

Nowadays, not only the classics of world literature are adapted for the school market and young audiences, but all genres and media are being adapted to satiate an eclectic public's hunger for diversity: mythology (*La cólera*), epic poetry (*Paradise Lost*), literary classics (*The War of the Worlds*), journalism (*Fariña, El día 3*), historical essays (*The Spanish Civil War*), contemporary Spanish novels (*Soldiers of Salamis, Homeland*), court sentences (*11-M: La novela gráfica, El tesoro del cisne negro*), biographies (*Cuatro poetas en guerra, El olvido que seremos*), novelised classic films (*Potemkin*), novelised successful TV series (*El ministerio del tiempo*), successful comics adapted to cinema (*Arrugas*) or into TV series (*El vecino, El tesoro del cisne negro*), transmedia books adapted to cinema, TV and comics (*El olvido que seremos, Soldiers of Salamis, Homeland, Fariña, The War of the Worlds*), comics adapted to video games (*Blacksad*), animated films adapted to comics or video games (*Tadeo Jones*) and so on.

Creative processes such as 'filmisation, teleserialisation, novelisation, ludonarrativisation'²⁶ and other forms of transmedia or cross-media transfers that stem from adaptations have become limitless and inextricable. This hustle and bustle also makes it difficult to estimate, as

24 Henry Jenkins, 'Transmedia Storytelling 101', *Pop Junctions* (21 March 2007), http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html.

25 Philippe Marion, 'Narratologie, médiatique et médiagenie des récits' [Narratology, media and mediageny of stories], *Recherches en Communication* 7 (1997), 61–88. For Marion, each medium develops a specific imaginary through its technique and its potential and has a generic imprint that makes its narratives unique. This uniqueness is defined, for the Belgian scholar, as 'mediativity' (79). There are mediagenic stories, more favoured by one medium than by another, hence 'the degree of 'mediagenius' of a narrative project is the extent to which it depends on its original medium' (85–86).

26 González, +Narrativa(s).

has been attempted in the film industry,²⁷ the hypothetical percentage of contribution that adaptations make to the Spanish comic industry (to continue with the same market). Instead, it would be more interesting to explore why adaptation continues to be a phenomenon that, year after year, shows no signs of slowing down and keeps gaining momentum. This phenomenon involves the entire profession, from the greenest novice to the most seasoned and veteran authors and scriptwriters.

As Linda Hutcheon reminds us in *A Theory of Adaptation*, ‘economic lures’ are, in many cases, a compelling argument.²⁸ Comics are one sector among others in the culture industry, and the economic rules will not differ: it is all about generating profits. As confirmed by the study ‘Contribution of Publishing to the Wider Creative Industries’ carried out in 2018 in England by the Publishers Association, ‘compared to original scripts and screenplays, book adaptations attract on average: 44% more in UK film box office revenue (and 53% more globally); 58% higher viewership of “high-end” TV productions; nearly three times more ticket sales for theatre productions’.²⁹ In this sense, when series or video games such as *El ministerio del tiempo*, *La casa de papel* (*Money Heist*) or *Tadeo Jones* are novelised, publishers act not out of philanthropy or love of art but to continue exploiting a potentially fruitful vein.

Logically, one might assume that adaptations are always derivative products, genetically descended from an original piece. However, increasingly, for economic reasons, authors are being asked, particularly in publishing houses like DC or Marvel, to anticipate adaptations by

27 Two surveys conducted in France, one between 2006 and 2013 on French-language productions (French, Belgian and Swiss) and the other on all 731 films released in France from May 2017 to April 2018, indicate an average of 20 percent of films adapted from books. Vince Thomas and Cecilia Lacour, ‘Cinéma: les adaptations en chiffres’ [Cinema: Adaptations in figures], *Livres Hebdo* (4 May 2018), <https://www.livreshebdo.fr/article/cinema-les-adaptations-en-chiffres>. However, this figure rises to 33 percent when considering the highest-grossing films (i.e., those with over five hundred thousand admissions). ‘Les adaptations littéraires au cinéma, une valeur sûre’ [Literary adaptations for cinema, a sure bet], *Centre National du Cinéma et de L’image Animée* (14 March 2019), https://www.cnc.fr/cinema/actualites/les-adaptations-litteraires-au-cinema-une-valeur-sure_957490. Among the highest-grossing adaptations were comic book films such as *Avengers: Infinity War*, *Black Panther*, *Aquaman*, the French adaptation of *Astérix: Le Secret de la potion magique*, *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald* and *Ready Player One*, to name only a few.

28 Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O’Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2d ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), 86.

29 Jasmine Joynson, ‘Film, TV and Theatre and Adaptations of Books Attract More Revenue, Viewers and Critical Acclaim’, *Publishers Association* (10 July 2018), <https://web.archive.org/web/20211202011705/https://www.publishers.org.uk/film-tv-and-theatre-adaptations-of-books-attract-more-revenue-viewers-and-critical-acclaim>.

making scripts appealing to film directors: it is no surprise that economic motivation affects all stages of the adaptation process. As comics artist Cameron Stewart has noted, 'A lot of comic books are being made to appeal to Hollywood studios – they're being written and illustrated as a film pitch'.³⁰ In this sense, there is no doubt that a significant part of mainstream adaptations 'are . . . spawned by the capitalist desire for gain'.³¹ While this system benefits the film industry in particular (with 44 per cent more profit), it also relies on the complicity of publishers and authors who first sell the adaptation rights (corresponding to 2 to 5 per cent of the film's budget, depending on the market and the author's reputation) and then take advantage of the film's release to launch new print runs or new editions of the original book version, thus giving it new publishing life.

Fortunately, not all adaptations are driven by these economic considerations. Many adaptations are still being made because, as Stephen Lotinga, Chief Executive of the Publishers Association, argues, 'story-telling is at the heart of the creative industries, and often the best stories begin with a book'. Indeed, Greek tragedies such as *La cólera* by Olivares and García, as well as canonical stories like *Paradise Lost* and *The War of the Worlds*, continue to be adapted because the history of literature has confirmed them as unsurpassed in their categories. Their exceptional status makes them beacons that enable subsequent creators to benefit from their light and protection. To adapt a classic is to be certain of having a good script and is 'one way to gain respectability or increase cultural capital'.³²

Even more happily, we now have thousands of personal motives, which Hutcheon brings together under the generic title of 'Personal and Political Motives'.³³ For instance, when Cristina Durán and Miguel Ángel Giner adapted *Lluitant contra l'oblit* by Laura Ballester to create *El día 3*, they did so for civic reasons: they were making a political statement by attempting to contribute to and support a media campaign demanding accountability to those responsible for a metro accident in Valencia in 2006, which could have been avoided, saving many lives.³⁴ This comic was created as an act of resistance against impunity and to prevent the truth from being buried. The authors, who are also from

30 Hutcheon and O'Flynn, *Theory of Adaptation*, 88.

31 *Ibid.*, 89.

32 *Ibid.*, 91.

33 *Ibid.*, 92.

34 Jorge Gil, 'Entrevista a Cristina Durán y Miguel Ángel Giner, autores de 'El día 3', *Gráfica* (updated 2 April 2020), <https://grafica.info/duran-giner-el-dia-3>.

Valencia, were committed to contributing to the media fight against those responsible for the metro accident. They used their skills to select, ‘translate’ and transcode³⁵ Ballester’s journalistic essay, expanding the mediatisation and scandal that, in accordance with their personal convictions, could not be allowed to fall into oblivion.

At the other end of the narrative arc, to give another example, one could mention the adaptation of Guy de Maupassant’s *Le Horla* (1887) by Felipe H. Cava and Sanyú: *El hombre descuadernado* (The man who fell to pieces) (2009). Cava undertook the adaptation of this universal classic tale of alienation because he saw in the *Horla*, the invisible vampire, a metaphor for Alzheimer’s disease, which was slowly erasing his mother’s memory.³⁶ Furthermore, between adaptation in the name of a struggle (*El día 3*) and adaptation as personal therapy (*El hombre descuadernado*), we find works such as *La vida es sueño* (Life is a dream) (2018) by Ricardo Vílbor, Alberto Sanz and Mario Ceballos based on the theatre classic (1635–1636) by Pedro Calderón de la Barca, analysed in this special issue by Daniela Kuschel. Drawing on Irina Rajewsky’s take on intermediality and the concept of *mise en scène*, Kuschel argues that the design strategies in the comic adaptation highlight a convergence of the modalities of theatre and comic, meaning that populating the stage in theatrical terms and the page layout in comics share similar affordances in relation to poetic visuality and musicality.

Adaptation is a process that can give new life to a work, like sap that grows new branches, leaves and roots on a genealogical tree. This almost Darwinian phenomenon of survival is brought about by specific adaptive strategies, shaped by markets, techniques and the ever-evolving creativity of the authors. In this sense, we are only echoing Hutcheon’s interpretation of Richard Dawkins’s theory in *The Selfish Gene* (1976):

Adaptation, like evolution, is a transgenerational phenomenon. Some stories obviously have more ‘stability and penetrance in the cultural environment’, as Dawkins would put it Stories do get retold in different ways in new material and cultural environments; like genes, they adapt to those new environments *by virtue of mutation* – in their ‘offspring’ or their adaptations. And the fittest do more than survive; they flourish.³⁷

35 Hutcheon and O’Flynn, *Theory of Adaptation*, 16.

36 Benoît Mitaine, ‘In Defense of Freedom of Adaptation: The Case of *El Hombre descuadernado*, an Adaptation of “The Horla”’, in Benoît Mitaine et al., *Comics and Adaptation*, 114–132.

37 Hutcheon and O’Flynn, *Theory of Adaptation*, 32.

This blossoming that grows on the compost made of palimpsests of which Hutcheon speaks allows us to conclude with a nod to the Spanish philologist and historian Ramón Menéndez Pidal. Adaptation is a new flower from old stories,³⁸ a perpetual flowering that knows neither autumn nor winter, an eternal return of the old rejuvenated, a form of immortality . . . or something akin to it.

Comics and the Sound of Silence: Drawing the Music

Adaptation is not limited to the field of narrative. It is also an extremely important discursive practice that links comics and music. A good illustration of this is the collaboration of Santiago Auserón and Max in the adaptation of the song 'El canto del gallo' (The cock crow), originally published in *El Víbora*. The adaptation that brings musical language into contact with the comic even transcends the sphere of the individual to operate, also, in the sphere of the collective. A good example of this is the set of adaptations made by various authors of the songs that make up Iván Ferreiro's album *Mentiroso mentiroso*.³⁹ All of them were published in one volume together with the CD, with the publishing House Astiberri coordinating the editorial project. Another example where the practice of adaptation is collective in nature is the case of the publication *Lagartija Nick: Eternamente en vuelo*,⁴⁰ by the various authors who were linked to the independent project Tebeos de Ultrarradio. Years later, this initiative continued in *Lagartija Nick: Hay ruido todavía*, published in 2013, which adapts songs from the music albums *Larga duración*, *Multiverso* and *Zona de conflicto*.⁴¹ Adaptation therefore has a varied field of action, ranging from collaboration between two artists to the generation of a joint project that can be related to the implementation of a previous idea, which would bring it closer to what could be called a conceptual comic. In any case, as for collective projects there is a disparity of poetics that are all a meeting place between the musical message, the graphic style of the cartoonist and a grammar of the comic that swings between narrative and musical lyric, as well as innovative proposals such as those of Zer, which add infographics to the musical and comic registers (see Figure 3).

This practice of transforming music into graphic narrative is legitimised by the fact that both share a constructive pattern based on

38 A nod to one of his most famous titles: *Flor nueva de romances viejos* (1928).

39 Iván Ferreiro, *Mentiroso mentiroso* [Liar liar] (Bilbao: Astiberri, 2008).

40 *Lagartija Nick: Eternamente en vuelo* [Always in flight] (Granada: Ultrarradio, 2011).

41 *Lagartija Nick: Hay ruido todavía* [It's still noisy] (Granada: Ultrarradio, 2013).

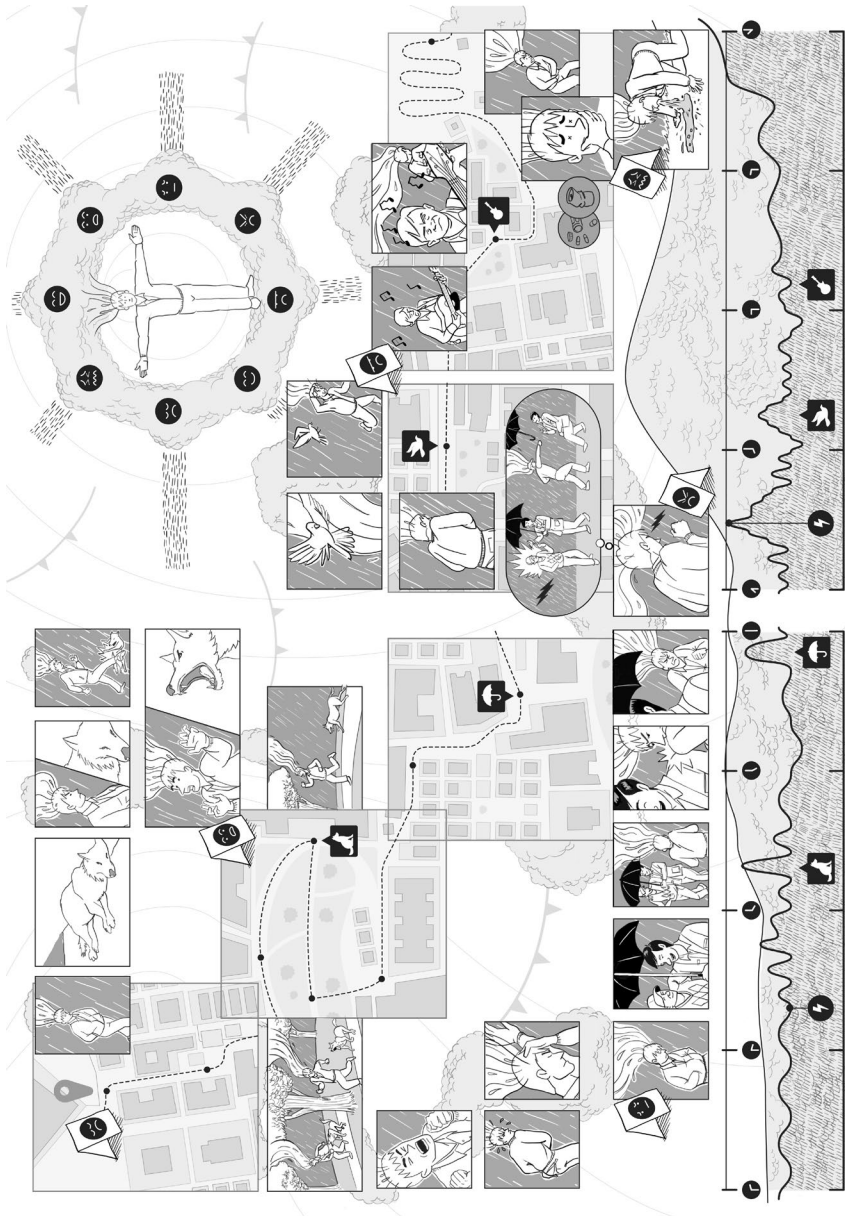


Figure 3. Double-page spread taken from the adaptation by Zer (Sergio Arredondo) of the Fall group song 'C.R.E.E.P'. *Lagartija Nick: Hay ruido todavía* (Granada: Ultrarradio, 2013). Reprinted with permission.

rhythm. Chris Ware upheld this musical rhythmic character for the comic: ‘I did strips without words for years specifically to try and get at that – the music of cartoon. I just wanted to have the panels each . . . as you know from what you’re saying, when you read a comic strip even if there aren’t words it creates tones in your head’.⁴² Thierry Groensteen also advocated this musical status for the comic: ‘Une superbe formule de Jean-Luc Godard définit le cinéma comme “l’art de faire de la musique avec de la peinture”. Cette définition s’appliquerait plus justement à la bande dessinée’ [A superb formulation by Jean-Luc Godard defines cinema as ‘the art of making music out of painting’. This definition is even more appropriate for comics].⁴³ With these ideas in mind, one can think of the deeply rhythmic structure of a work such as *Goya Saturnalia* by Manuel Gutiérrez and Manuel Romero,⁴⁴ which offers a space for dialogue between painting, literature and music based on a profoundly rhythmic scheme that relies on the ternary rhythm of the waltz as a constructive factor (see Figure 4). It is significant that the different sections of the comic are titled ‘movements’, as if they were a symphony.

Musical rhythm is also perceptible in a work such as Roberto Massó’s *Cadencia*.⁴⁵ The title is very illustrative. This work is series of five-page sections in which various grids of vignettes with strokes of different thickness and orientation are articulated as variations on the same theme: a visual music. Massó has also produced another work in which comics, dance and music come into contact: *El ruido secreto*,⁴⁶ in which a masked dancer performs a routine whose choreography is inspired by the dances of Lōie Fuller. The comic creates a visual rhythm to translate the choreography by sequentially breaking down the fluid movement of the dance.

Memory also plays a particularly important role in the relationship between comics and music. Juanjo Sáez manages to create an emotional bridge between both languages in *Hit emocional*.⁴⁷ The germ of this work lies in the section he published in the magazine specialising in music, *Rock de Lux*, in which he talked about certain songs from an emotional perspective, narrating the effects and memories that each

42 Jean Braitwaite, ed., *Ware Conversations* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2021), 30.

43 Thierry Groensteen, *Système de la bande dessinée* [Comics system] (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999), 56.

44 Manuel Gutiérrez and Manuel Romero, *Goya Saturnalia* (Barcelona: Cascaborra Ediciones, 2022).

45 Roberto Massó, *Cadencia* [Cadence] (Vigo: Fosfatina, 2019).

46 Roberto Massó, *El ruido secreto* [The secret noise] (Badajoz: Spiderland/Snake, 2017).

47 Juanjo Sáez, *Hit emocional* [Emotional hit] (Madrid: Sexto Piso, 2015).



Figure 4. Pages from *Goya Saturanalía* that show the parallelism between comic and other artistic languages. Manuel Gutiérrez and Manuel Romero, *Goya Saturanalía* (Barcelona: Cascaborra Ediciones, 2022), 104–105. Reprinted with permission.

song aroused in him when he listened to it. With all these chronicles, and other pages he produces for the occasion, he creates a mosaic of an autobiographical nature in which he narrates his past based on the songs he listened to. It is a kind of autobiographical jukebox that is in line with works such as those of Charles Berberian or Summer Pierre⁴⁸ in the field of comics or, in narrative, Rob Sheffield.⁴⁹

If music and comics share a rhythmic structure and can arouse a whole gale of emotions, it will not be strange to find that music is integrated as a soundtrack within the narrative. The soundtrack responds precisely to this double point of contact. On the one hand, it serves to create a structure that gives cohesion to the narrative as a whole, and, on the other hand, the music generates a series of connotations that tinge the atmosphere with a marked emotional component. This double function can be seen perfectly in *El largo tortuoso camino* by Christopher and Rubén Pellejero, in which Ulysses' journey is narrated by tracing the memories of his father who has just died.⁵⁰ The map of this journey also follows a whole soundtrack that is listed at the end of the work. It also includes a soundtrack of Josep Maria Beà's *La esfera cúbica*.⁵¹ Originally published as a series in the magazine *Rambla*, it is now being re-released as an album by Glénat. This new edition is accompanied by a series of electronic musical pieces, composed by the artist himself and Sergi Puertas, which allude to each of the stories. Other cases of comics with soundtracks are the works of Jesús Colomina, such as *Hoy es un buen día para morir*, a futuristic story in which a virus causes a death in which the tears bleed,⁵² or *El piano rojo* (The red piano) by Max, a narrative that accompanies the songs of Pascal Comelade.⁵³

Continuing with this gradual process of dialogue between music and comics that starts in the adaptation and continues in the soundtrack, we should not forget a work in which this relationship is crucial to the

48 Charles Berberian, *Jukebox* (Paris: Audie-Fluide Glacial, 2011); Summer Pierre, *All the Sad Songs* (Washington, DC: Retrofit Comics, 2018).

49 Rob Sheffield, *Love Is a Mix Tape: Life and Loss, One Song at a Time* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2007).

50 Rubén Pellejero and Christopher, *El largo y tortuoso camino* [The long and winding road] (Bilbao: Astiberri, 2017).

51 Josep M. Beà, *La esfera cúbica* (Barcelona: Glénat, 2008).

52 Jesús Colomina Orgaz, *Hoy es un buen día para morir* [Today is a good day to die] (Madrid: Dibbuks, 2016).

53 See e.g. 'Pascal Comelade & Max: XX Festival Poesia de la Mediterrània – Concert i il·lustracions en directe' [Pascal Comelade & Max: 20th Mediterranean Poetry Festival – Concert and live illustrations], *Teatre Principal* (13 April 2018), <https://www.teatreprincipal.com/en/ficha/detalle/92/pascal-comelade-max>.

creation of a joint project: *Crossroads* by Paco Roca and José Manuel Casañ, the leader of the band Seguridad Social.⁵⁴ The work arose from an invitation from the musician to the artist to use illustrations to accompany the songs he was creating in the form of a concept album in which each song would be a tribute to a musical style. The process entered a creative crisis because Paco Roca was not comfortable with his illustrations. Out of that crisis came a graphic novel in which Roca documented the entire creative process from the moment the idea was conceived to the recording sessions. Thus, different layers can be seen: the musical concept album by Casañ, the illustrations by Roca, which were later taken on and integrated into the making of the graphic novel finally produced by Roca.

The functional versatility that comics are achieving has also served to make them a suitable language for the historicisation of certain processes. Luis Bustos has created a history of music in the form of a comic book called *Pop* in which an editorial design alludes ironically to the shape of vinyl. It must be read as if it were a record, as it has two sides. At the beginning of each chapter is a graphic motif of a record player's needle moving forward in its playback. Listening and reading are parallel activities.⁵⁵ Continuing this dialogue between music and comics, this link can be identified in other fields. Liniers is in charge of drawing Kevin Johansen's concerts in what is a graphic translation of the songs and their staging.⁵⁶ It is also common to make a biopic of a famous musician or singer, as Muñoz and Sampayo do in *Billie Holiday*,⁵⁷ or Carla Berrocal in *Doña Concha: La rosa y la espina*.⁵⁸

Cover art has also been a space for dialogue between music, illustration and comics. Within the fabric of popular culture, such collaboration is perfectly natural. Iconic are Robert Crumb's cover for Big Brother and the Holding Company's album *Cheap Thrills* (1968), Guy Peelaert's cover for David Bowie's *Diamond Dogs* (1974) and Moebius for the French editions of Jimi Hendrix's albums. There are many examples of it in Spain such as Jordi Bernet for the eponymous *Callejones* (1990); Ceesepe for Kiko Veneno's *Seré mecánico por ti* (I'll be a mechanic for you) (1982); Das Pastoras for Siniestro Total's *Policlínico*

54 Paco Roca and Seguridad Social, *La encrucijada* [The crossroads] (Bilbao: Astiberri, 2017).

55 Luis Bustos, *Pop* (Bilbao: Astiberri, 2019).

56 Kevin Johansen and Liniers, *Oops!* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 2008).

57 Carlos Sampayo and José Muñoz, *Billie Holiday* (Barcelona: Paneta DeAgostini, 2005).

58 Carla Berrocal, *Doña Concha: La rosa y la espina* [Doña Concha: The rose and the thorn] (Madrid: Reservoir Gráfica, 2021).

Animation and Comics

Finally, special attention can be given to the connection between animation and comics, particularly in Spanish production. Comics artists have been fundamental to the history of animation in Spain since its early manifestations. One of the pioneers of the animation was Fernando Marco, an illustrator, *historietista* and director of the first Spanish animated movie, *El toro fenómeno* (The phenomenal bull) (1917).⁶⁰ The various fields of visual and media arts intersect with each other, and we can observe a migration of audiences from one medium to another, as well as multiple intertwining in the careers of the authors themselves.

Furthermore, the history of one medium influences the other. The new wave of the Spanish *novela gráfica* brings a conspicuous number of mature and sensitive subjects to Iberian cinema screens, in addition to the classic adaptations of *Mortadelo y Filemón* (*Mort & Phil*), with professionals from both industries moving between them. Focusing on recent years, it is impossible to deny that Spanish animated production has attracted international attention, thanks to synergies with Spanish comics production. The 2010s began with *Chico y Rita*, an animated feature directed by Fernando Trueba, Javier Mariscal and Tono Errando. Following the film's international success, it was adapted into comic format by Mariscal himself. It was just one of the many animated films aimed at an adult audience that would be produced in the country in this decade.⁶¹ The following year came *Arrugas*, directed by Ignacio Ferreras and based on the renowned graphic novel by Paco Roca, an example of what Pedro Javier Pardo would call translation into another medium.⁶² In 2015, the Galician cartoonist, illustrator and animator Alberto Vázquez Rico brought *Psiconautas: Los niños olvidados* (Bird-boy: The forgotten children) to the screen with Pedro Rivero, marking another milestone and highly original animated product of this period.

60 Giannalberto Bendazzi, ed., *Animation: A World History, Vol. 1: Foundations – The Golden Age* (London: Routledge, 2016).

61 We should also mention the documentary *María y yo* (directed by Félix Fernández de Castro), based on the homonymous graphic novel by Miguel Gallardo, which uses a mixed technique with animated insertion. See Isabelle Touton, 'Apuntes sobre el realismo en las narraciones visuales actuales: El ejemplo de la adaptación cinematográfica del cómic *María y yo* de Miguel Gallardo por Félix Fernández de Castro' [Notes on realism in current visual narratives: The example of the film adaptation of the comic *María y yo* by Miguel Gallardo by Félix Fernández de Castro], *Pasavento: Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 2, no. 1 (2014), 77–99.

62 Pedro Javier Pardo, 'De la transescritura a la transmedialidad: Poética de la ficción transmedial' [From transwriting to transmediality: Poetics of transmedial fiction], in González and Pardo, *Adaptación 2.0*, 41–92.

In these passages concerning meaning, language, aesthetics and the experience of the spectator/reader, we encounter a particularly successful case: *Buñuel en el laberinto de las tortugas* (Buñuel in the labyrinth of the turtles) (2018) (see Figure 6), directed by Salvador Simó and adapted from a graphic novel published in 2008 by Fermín Solís, which was reedited in 2019 by Reservoir Books in the light of the film animation's success. This is a complex transposition involving authors from different historical periods who influence one another, resulting in a fusion of the languages of cinema, comics and animation. The film tells the story of the making of Luis Buñuel's documentary *Las Hurdes: Tierra sin pan* (Land without Bread) (1933).



Figure 6. Film animation based on Fermín Solís's graphic novel *Buñuel en el laberinto de las tortugas*.

Transpositions, even those created by the authors themselves, always involve crossing over different artistic languages. According to Craig Smith:

Although film and comic books share a similar form of systematic structure, they can also differ radically. Firstly, there is the ‘gutter’ between the panels of the comic book, which plays a significant role in the reading process. The intricacies of movement between individual animated frames and the longer durations of movement and perception of time in the gutter space between comic book panels, produce very different impressions on the reader/viewer.⁶³

This process is often studied and analysed, and it poses interesting questions from the author’s point of view, as expressed by Mariscal himself regarding his graphic novel *Chico & Rita*.⁶⁴ At the same time, it is important to consider the different perceptions of space: the gap between panels in a comic book and the gap between one frame and the next in animation. From this perspective, ‘the individual panels have much more in common with the cinematic shot than with cinematic frames or animation cels, for the panels often describe a whole movement, such as individual utterances in a dialogue or the gesture of a character’.⁶⁵

With the selection of articles included in this special issue, we hope to encourage further discussions and research on this ever changing and multifaceted field. Nicoletta Mandolini and Giorgio Busi Rizzi ex-

63 Craig Smith, ‘Conveying Time and Movement within the Comic Book and the Animated Frame’, *Animation Studies 2.0* (28 November 2016), <https://blog.animationstudies.org/?p=1664>.

64 As Mariscal explained in an interview: ‘Algunas veces tienes que inventarte viñetas para explicar lo que pasa en la película y otras suprimir tres minutos de película o resumirlo en una página. Volverlo a dibujar y colorear por completo. Son dos obras completamente diferentes. . . . El cómic es mucho más sintético, no podías poner toda la información que tienen los fondos de la película porque tenía que ser más sencillo. Había que buscar el lenguaje del tebeo’ [Sometimes, new panels need to be created to explain what’s going on in the movie, while other times, three minutes of film need to be deleted or summarised on one page. The comic and the movie are two completely different works. . . . The comic is much more synthetic, and it is not possible to include all the information that the movie backgrounds have. Therefore, the language of comics needs to be adapted to convey the necessary information in a simpler way. This often involves redrawing and recolouring the images]. See Jesus Jiménez, ‘Javier Mariscal: “Es una pena que el cómic de ‘Chico y Rita’ no tenga música”’ [Javier Mariscal: ‘It’s a shame that the “Chico and Rita” comic doesn’t have music’], *RTVE* (13 February 2011), <https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20110213/javier-mariscal-pena-comic-chico-rita-no-tenga-musica/400500.shtml>.

65 Paul Atkinson, ‘Movements within Movements: Following the Line in Animation and Comic Books’, *Animation 4*, no. 3 (2009), 265–281 (267), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1746847709344790>.

plore the intersection of web-based comics and autobiographical narratives in transgender Brazilian comics artists. They focus on two case studies: *Transistorizada* (Transistorised) by Luiza Lemos and *Pequeñas felicidades trans* (Small trans pleasures) by Alice Pereira. These comics were initially posted on social media and later published in print. Mandolini and Busi Rizzi provide a cultural and historical contextualization of Brazilian comics, with a particular emphasis on LGBTQ+ and women creators who are actively engaged online. They present a close reading of these works, examining the implications of intermediality in comics publishing. The researchers highlight the transition of these comics, created by digital activists, from the fluidity of the web to the traditional publishing system.

As a comprehensive overview of intermedial relations, the first article of this special issue reminds us that comics are a kind of language that has been based on a 'mixed medium' from the very beginning. Jan Baetens and Domingo Sánchez Mesa's article can be read as a productive theoretical framework in which other texts included in this volume make sense. One of its purposes is to reduce the number of concepts involved in the idea of intermediality. In this sense, the strategy of establishing a model for analysis of comics from an intermedial perspective is focused on three aspects: equality; remediation; and natural size and format. Closely related to this approach, the two authors carry out a close reading of certain examples such as Jije's *Senserínico* in order to see the structural influences that affect page layout. These designs are strongly connected with the tradition of 'drawn novels' written following melodramatic patterns. *Watchmen* is also a good example to show the remediation strategy that provides comics with a new way of telling by including unusual materials taken from other discursive fields. All these examples lead to thought-provoking conclusions such as that 'intermediality is a multifaceted and multilayered phenomenon' and 'intermediality appears as a deeply historical given'. We hope this collective special issue furthers discussions on comics and mixed media, an area that is constantly changing, demonstrating the endless autopoietic possibilities presented by graphic narrative.

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