

GRAPHIC



INDIGENITY

Comics in the Americas and Australasia

GRAPHIC INDIGENITY

Comics in the Americas and Australasia

Edited by Frederick Luis Aldama

University Press of Mississippi / Jackson

Contents

ix **Nourishing Minds and Bodies with Indigenous Comics: A Foreword**
Lee Francis IV

xi **Graphic Indigeneity: Terra America and Terra Australasia**
Frederick Luis Aldama

Part I: Mainstreamed Indigeneities

5 **“We the North”: Interrogating Indigenous Appropriation as Canadian Identity in Mainstream American Comics**
Brenna Clarke Gray

27 **Jack Jackson, Native Representation, and Underground Comix**
Chad A. Barbour

53 **“Goin’ Native!”: Depictions of the First Peoples from “Down Under”**
Jack Ford and Philip Cass

75 **Representations of Indigenous Australians in Marvel Comics**
Dennin Ellis

100 **The Wisdom of the Phantom: The Secret Life of Australia’s Indigenous Superhero**
Kevin Patrick

Part II: Decolonial Imaginaries *Terra South*

127 **Outsmarting the Lords of Death: An Amerindian Cognitive Script in Comics**
Arij Ouweneel

144 Memory in Pieces: Chola Power's Origin Story and the Quest for Memory in Peru
Javier García Liendo

168 Visualizing an Alternate Mesoamerican Archive: Daniel Parada's Comic Series *Zotz* in Historical Perspective
Jessica Rutherford

181 Critical Impulses in Daniel Parada's *Zotz*: A Case Study in Indigenous Comics
Jorge Santos

197 The Battle for Recollection: Maya *Historietas* as Art for Remembering War
Brian Montes

210 *Turey El Taíno* and *La Borinqueña*: Puerto Rican Nationalist and Ethnic Resistance in Puerto Rican Comics Dealing with Taíno Cultural Heritage
Enrique García

Part III: Decolonial Imaginaries *Terra North*

237 Securing Stones in the Sky: Word-Drawn Recreations of Oral Trickster Tales
Jordan Clapper

254 Super Indians and the Indigenous Comics Renaissance
James J. Donahue

273 Seeing Histories, Building Futurities: Multimodal Decolonization and Conciliation in Indigenous Comics from Canada
Mike Borkent

299 Deep Time and Vast Place: Visualizing Land/Water Relations across Time and Space in *Moonshot: The Indigenous Comics Collection*
Jeremy M. Carnes

316 Deer Woman Re-Generations: Re-Activating First Beings and Re-Arming Sisterhoods of Survivance in *Deer Woman: An Anthology*
Joshua T. Anderson

340 **Indigeneity, Intermediality, and the Haunted Present of *Will I See?***
Candida Rifkind and Jessica Fontaine

361 **Afterlives: A Coda**

Susan Bernardin

365 **List of Contributors**

371 **Index**

Graphic Indigeneity: Terra America and Terra Australasia

Frederick Luis Aldama

I learned to read with a Superman comic book. Simple enough, I suppose. I cannot recall which particular Superman comic book I read, nor can I remember which villain he fought in that issue. I cannot remember the plot, nor the means by which I obtained the comic book. What I can remember is this: I was 3 years old, a Spokane Indian boy living with his family on the Spokane Indian Reservation in eastern Washington state.

—Sherman Alexie, *Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 1998

For as much as Alexie is today *persona non grata*, he speaks a truth here. That many of us raised in the ethnoracial and socioeconomic margins found our way to our ABCs along with a reprieve from poverty in and through our encounters with comics. It also speaks to how, in spite of the history of mainstream comic books focusing on creating superheroes that *don't* look like us or come from our communities, we have long cocreated them on our own.

Times are changing. While there continue to be egregious misrepresentations of people of color in mainstream comics, there are some who are getting it right. And, we're seeing, too, how creators of color are not sitting around waiting for a sea change. They are clearing important spaces of self-representation—and from everywhere around the world.

This brings me to the pulse that beats at the center of *Graphic Indigeneity*: to throw scholarly light on how mainstream comics have clumsily (mostly) distilled and reconstructed Indigenous identities and experiences of *terra America* and *Australasia*; and to spotlight how Indigenous comic book creators are themselves clearing new visual-verbal narrative spaces for articulating more complex histories, cultures, experiences, and identities. To this end I bring together scholarship that explores both the (mis)representation of Indigenous subjects and experiences as well as scholarship that analyzes and brings to

the fore the extraordinary work of Indigenous comic book creators. As Lee Francis IV so beautifully and forcefully identifies above, the volume seeks to center-stage Indigenous creators and their work as important, powerful transformative forces within the shaping of the visual-verbal narrative arts writ large.

Of course, the scholarship that makes up this volume doesn't exist in a vacuum. Important scholarly inroads have been made on Indigenous comics, image-text, and mixed-media creations generally by scholars such as Chad A. Barbour, Susan Bernardin, Jorge L. Catalá Carrasco, Sarah Henzi, Sheri Huhndorf, Elizabeth LaPensée, Claudia Matos Pereira, Nickie D. Phillips, Dean Rader, Deanna Reder, Candida Rifkind, Michael Sheyahshe, Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, Lindsay Claire Smith, Miriam Brown Spiers, and Staci Strobl, among others. *Graphic Indigeneity* seeks to build on and solidify these important incursions that shed light on the ways in which indigeneity is *geometrized* in the comic book narrative arts of *terra America* and *Australasia*. By this I mean the way comic book creators (mainstream and Indigenous) use the shaping devices of comics (layout, balloon placement, ink lines, perspective, character posture and facial expression, among others) to distill Indigenous subjectivities and experiences (past, present, and future) then reconstruct this in word-drawn narratives. Artful drawing and word craft skills along with a responsibility to subject matter leads to the geometrizing of narratives that adds kinetic energy to the word-drawn narrative; that directs our eyes, our minds, and our hearts in the filling in of motion and emotion; that breathes life into Indigenous identities and experiences. When not done well, it can and does lead to the reproducing of denigrative stereotypes: sidekick buffoons, thieves, threatening hordes, hypersexualized seducer, frozen-in-time mystics, noble savages, alcoholics, and preternatural race-betrayers, and criminals. When not done well, they destructively delimit what has happened, what is happening, and what might happen in the future for Indigenous subjects.

The volume's wide-armed embrace of comics by and about indigeneities of *terra America* and *Australasia* is ambitious. It is also a first step to understand deeply how the histories of colonial and imperial domination across the globe connect the violent wounds that continue to haunt the existence of Indigenous peoples across hemispheres and continents. We feel very present yesteryear's coloniality of power as it swept across the Americas and *Australasia*—the globe. We see today the scars of this in our communities that continue to suffer external and internal forms of racism, sexism, and classism.

Wounds connect us, but so, too, do resistance movements create a global web that connects Indigenous and first nation peoples across the planet. Resistance to histories (past and present) of expropriation, oppression, exploitation, and genocide also connects Indigenous communities. I think readily of the resistance movements of the Indigenous Māori and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, who share deep decolonial re-occupations and revolts with those in

the Northern Americas: the Māori resistance movement against the Treaty of Waitangi in Aotearoa, New Zealand, shares a like impulse with the Indigenous resistance movement of Columbus Day and, as well, with resistance movements to the US annexation of the Hawaiian Islands, the occupation of Alcatraz, the Trail of Broken Treaties, the occupation of the BIA in Washington, DC, the revolution at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, and many others. (See Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior's *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee*.)

From these violent wounds we have survived. We are mestizos. We are Mexipinos. We are Asiatic and Indigenous admixtures. We are Canadian métis. We are Taíno, African, Latinx métissage. And from these wondrous new spaces we have been able (against the odds) to create dynamic, syncretistic cultural phenomena, comics included. As Rudy P. Guevara sums up the colonial and capitalist global practices in the trans-Pacific, they have created "a long historical web of interconnectedness that underpins the mestizaje that began in the sixteenth century" (*Becoming Mexipino* 327). From the trans-Pacific to and from the Canadian arctic to the Southern Cone, nations that make up Americas north and south can, as Earl E. Fitz states, "claim a Native American history and cultural heritage, and in many, if not all, of these modern nation-states this heritage lives on, becoming finally, the common denominator of our multiple American identities" (15). In *Comparative Indigeneities of the Américas* Arturo Aldama and his coeditors identify how a "shared history of colonization, genocide, displacement and Eurocentric racism and sexism" (1) connects Indigenous peoples globally, and thus necessitates a hemispheric approach to the study of cultural phenomena by and about Indigenous subjects. It's from our shared open wounds (Gloria Anzaldúa's *heridas abiertas*) that Rachel Adams asks that we consider how "transnational cultural networks" (5) from New York to Quebec to Mexico City interconnect Indigenous spaces, creating a vital Indigenous transnational imaginary.

This volume likewise seeks to articulate a transnational framework. In this regard, it seeks to build on scholarship of those like Rachel Adams just mentioned along with Shari Huhndorf, James H. Cox, Daniel Heath Justice, and Chadwick Allen. And, like these scholars the scholars that make up this volume are respectful of the situated histories and politics that have shaped different Indigenous subjectivities and experiences. In *Continental Divides* Rachel Adams sums this up nicely when she writes how a transnational framework "does not seek to ignore borders or to bypass the nation altogether, but to situate these terms within a broader global fabric" (18). For Adams, the identifying of these transnational cultural networks are not just reactions "to the fractious power of the nation-state" (35). They are the "resumption of alliances and networks of filiation that were severed by the conquest and its aftermath" (35). In *Mapping the Americas* Shari Huhndorf's analysis of post-1980s Native art and literature puts

front and center how national and Indigenous nationalist political structures along with global capitalist structures of power have shaped in contradictory ways the Native cultural phenomena such as fiction, performance, photography, and film. Likewise, in their introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Indigenous American Literature Online*, editors James H. Cox and Daniel Heath Justice discuss the transnational move in Indigenous literary criticism as one that seeks to identify and build on “coalitions among Indigenous and allied scholars across institutional, tribal national, and settler-colonial borders” (1). We see this transnational scholarship in action in Cox’s *The Red Land to the South*. Cox analyzes early and mid-twentieth-century Native American (northern) authors such as Todd Downing, Lynn Riggs, and D’Arcy McNickle and how Mexico’s precolonial indigeneity became inspiration for these authors to once affirm local, tribal national spaces and to create a revolutionary “indigenous American transnational” imaginary (19).

In putting coalition building and networks of coalition Indigenous imaginaries front and center, these scholars destabilize the concept of “transnational” that has historically privileged the colonizer and settler-invaders. As such, the concept of transnational has been deployed as a tool of, in the words of Chadwick Allen, “scholarly deracination of the Indigenous” and the “engulfment of the Indigenous within and beneath systems of meaning-making dominated by the desires, obsessions, and contingencies of non-Indigenous settlers, their non-Indigenous nation-states, their non-Indigenous institutions, their non-Indigenous critical methodologies and discourses” (“A Transnational Native American Studies? Why Not Studies That Are Trans-Indigenous?”). In a like spirit, Danika Medak-Saltzman warns of the scholarly deployments of Indigeneity in ethnic studies. This can erase important specificities of historical, political, and cultural contexts. If we do not become conscious of such moves in our scholarship, we simply perpetuate the colonial and imperial logics of power) that continue to haunt critical ethnic studies fields (paraphrase 29).

It’s this kind of critical self-conscious about one’s position as a scholar of Indigenous cultural phenomenon that at the heart of scholars like Cox, Huhndorf, and Allen among others. For instance, Alice Te Punga Somerville declares that while she is doing comparative work on Indigenous texts from a number of contexts, she does so as a Māori scholar inhabiting Māori lands—a situatedness that, she identifies, “both guides and underpins my comparisons” (25). And we see in Chadwick Allen’s book, *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies*, a careful and critical articulation of a trans-Indigenous approach to Indigenous cultural phenomena by those of the US America, Canadian First Nations, Indigenous Hawai’i, New Zealand Māori, and Aboriginal Australia. For Allen, cultural creators and intellectuals who “self-identify as Indigenous and/or who are claimed by Indigenous communities” are situated within specifics of time and places of “survivance” as well as across

trans-Indigenous layers of “diversity and complexity,” made up of “seeming paradoxes of simultaneity, contradiction, coexistence” (xxxii).

In addition to Native authors of literature mentioned above, the transnational model has also been used in approaching cultural phenomenon such as art and film as specific instantiations of Indigeneity *and* as cross-coalitional. Such an approach can lead to the articulation of “create a cross-genre discourse of resistance,” as Dean Rader states in *Engaged Resistance* (2). Such an approach allows Chris Teuton to articulate and analyze the transcultural connections that inform Mesoamerican writing, Navajo sand painting, and Iroquois wampum belts.

* * *

Cultural phenomena by and about Indigenous identities, histories, and experiences circulate far and wide. However, not all such phenomena are made equal. Not all such phenomena serve to enrich an understanding of the complexity of Indigenous subjectivities. This is the case with films, animations, TV shows—and comic books. In an interview with Elizabeth LaPensée, Michael Sheyahshe decries, “Whether it’s the whooping, attacking horde of Indians in the early ‘cowboy’ movies, the notion of Native American as a crack-shot and/or expert tracker in comics, or the continued (mis)representation in video games (some mentioned above), pop culture media serves to mirror the emotional consensus of how mainstream America sees us.” In *Indian Stereotypes in TV Science Fiction*, Sierra S. Adare critically dismantles a whole range of these destructive stereotypes in sci-fi shows where we see constantly reproduction of “Indian” stereotypes (7). Other scholars have turned their sights to mainstream comic books and comic strips to critically sleuth out and dismantle the “Indian” stereotypes. For instance, in Michelle Bauldic’s analysis of the Canadian comic strip, “Ookpik” (1964–1966), that was meant to be a symbol to unite the Canadian nation, she reveals how Oopik becomes a stand-in for First Nations peoples portrayed as idiots disconnected from land, history, and culture. For Bauldic, Ookpik represents an “imaginary space that is the frontier, empty, white, blank and belongs to Canada; and the ideological North that is an empty page used to project Canianness against the urban Canada” (143). In *Native Americans in Comic Books*, Michael A. Sheyahshe carefully retraces mainstream superhero comic book archaeologies built out of the pernicious stereotyping of Indigenous peoples. He also identifies the tradition in comics of the “Mohican syndrome” whereby white saviors play “Indian” (Plastic Man, Captain Marvel, Superman, Batman, and the Phantom) to fight for justice and restore the white American way of life (10). In *From Daniel Boone to Captain America*, Chad A. Barbour analyzes how white heroes and superheroes slum it in “Indianness” with little connection to the “genuine history, ongoing traditions, and particular peoples” (5–6). In these scholarly archival reconstructions

Contributors

Frederick Luis Aldama is Distinguished University Professor, Arts & Humanities Distinguished Professor of English, Distinguished University Scholar, and Alumni Distinguished Teacher at The Ohio State University. He is the 2018 recipient of the Rodica C. Botoman Award for Distinguished Teaching and Mentoring and the Susan M. Hartmann Mentoring and Leadership Award. He is the award-winning author, coauthor, and editor of forty books. In 2018, *Latinx Superheroes in Mainstream Comics* won the International Latino Book Award and the Eisner Award for Best Scholarly Work. He is editor and coeditor of eight academic press book series as well as editor of Latinographix, a trade-press series that publishes Latinx graphic fiction and nonfiction. He is creator of the first documentary on the history of Latinx superheroes in comics (Amazon Prime) and cofounder and director of SŌL-CON: Brown & Black Comix Expo. He is founder and director of the Obama White House award-winning LASER: Latinx Space for Enrichment & Research as well as founder and codirector of the Humanities & Cognitive Sciences High School Summer Institute. He has a joint appointment in Spanish & Portuguese as well as faculty affiliation in Film Studies and the Center for Cognitive and Brain Sciences. His children's book, *The Adventures of Chupacabra Charlie*, will be published by OSU Press in January 2020.

Joshua T. Anderson is an assistant professor of American literature at the University of Saint Joseph. He is a non-Indigenous scholar and creative writer from rural North Dakota, and the former editorial assistant at *Western American Literature*, *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, and *Poetics Today*. His work is published or forthcoming in *Inks: The Journal of the Comics Studies Society*, *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, *Transmotion*, and *Weird Westerns: Race, Gender, Genre* critical collection. His short story "Playing Dead," appears in *Bourbon Penn*, and his creative nonfiction work appears in *Sonora Review*.

Chad A. Barbour is associate professor of English at Lake Superior State University. He is the author of *From Daniel Boone to Captain America: Playing Indian in American Popular Culture* (2016).

Susan Bernardin is director of the School of Language, Culture, & Society at Oregon State University, located on traditional homelands of the Mary's River or Ampinefu Band of Kalapuya. Recent publications in *Studies in American Indian Literatures* and *World Literature Today* address contemporary Indigenous comics and transmedia storytelling.

Mike Borkent is a lecturer in the Arts Studies in Research & Writing program at the University of British Columbia on unceded Musqueam territory. He completed a federally funded postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Calgary. He specializes in the study of visual poetry, comics, and cognitive poetics and has published several articles and reviews in such journals as *Visible Language*, *Cognitive Linguistics*, *Canadian Literature*, and *Literature & Translation*.

Jeremy M. Carnes is finishing his PhD in English Literature and Cultural Theory at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. His dissertation explores how comics can help us theorize historicization and temporality differently to more radically dismantle Euro-American power structures surrounding history itself. He has written on indigeneity in Marvel's *The New Mutants* and Tim Truman's *Scout*.

Philip Cass, born in Papua, New Guinea, works as senior lecturer in the communication studies program at Unitec in Auckland, New Zealand, and as an associate editor of *Pacific Journalism Review*. He has published on a wide range of Pacific issues, including climate change-induced migration and Islam in the Pacific. His work with Jack Ford has focused on depictions of Australians and New Zealanders at war and representations of Asia and the Pacific in *Commando* comics.

Jordan Clapper is a doctoral candidate in the English program at Brandeis University. Jordan's research includes Indigenous narratives, video game studies, digital humanities, and narrative theory with ongoing projects in digital representation and immersion, Indigenous new media, and scholarly video games. Jordan is of Ponca of Oklahoma ancestry.

James J. Donahue is associate professor of English & Communication at SUNY Potsdam, where he also coordinates the minor in Native American studies. His most recent books include *Contemporary Native Fiction: Toward a Narrative Poetics of Survivance* (2019) and the coedited volume *Narrative, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States* (2017). His recent articles exploring the politics of race in narrative arts have been published in *African American Review* and *JNT: The Journal of Narrative Theory*.

Dennin Ellis is a long avid reader of comics and a musician. He earned his bachelor's in music and master's in English. He has been an English teacher in the United States and in South Korea. He is a PhD student at The Ohio State University.

Jessica Fontaine has an MA in cultural studies from the University of Winnipeg and is currently a PhD candidate in the Department of Art History and Communication Studies at McGill University. Her dissertation explores the relationships between feelings of belonging and care and affective labor in the professional wrestling media industry. She has presented conference papers on Tanya Tagaq's 2014 Polaris Music Prize Performance and on the visualization of Johnny Cash's songs in Reinhard Kleist's graphic biography *Johnny Cash: I See a Darkness*. She has published in *The Comics Grid*.

Jonathan (Jack) Ford is a member of Australia's Professional Historians Association, with a PhD in history (University of Queensland). Within Brisbane City Council's Heritage Unit (2001–2014), he gained heritage protection for 337 local sites. Jack is the author/contributor to ten books, fifteen commissioned reports, one heritage trail, thirteen journals, and eight conference papers. As a military historian, he, with Phil Cass, have examined how their shared ANZAC legend was appropriated for comics.

Lee Francis IV (Pueblo of Laguna) is the Head Indigenerd and CEO of Native Realities, the only Native and Indigenous pop culture company in the United States with the hope to change the perceptions of Native and Indigenous people through dynamic and imaginative pop culture representations. He is the author of poetry, short stories, and comics. His first solo comic book, *Sixkiller*, debuted June 2018. He is an advocate for Native youth, with a focus on community literacy and entrepreneurship. He lives in Albuquerque with his family (and dog).

Enrique García is associate professor of Hispanic Visual Culture at Middlebury College. He is author of *Cuban Cinema after the Cold War* (2015) and *The Hernandez Brothers: Love, Rockets, and Alternative Comics* (2017). His next book is about the role of Puerto Rican culture in the American superhero genre and future projects include a manuscript about orientalist trends in comic books from the Americas.

Javier García Liendo is assistant professor in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at Washington University in St. Louis. His work focuses on Peruvian and Latin American cultural production. He is the author of *El intelectual y la cultura de masas: Argumentos latinoamericanos en torno a Ángel*

Rama y José María Arguedas (2017). His work has appeared in *MLN*, *Latin American Research Review*, and *Discourse*, among other journals.

Brenna Clarke Gray holds a PhD in Canadian literature from the University of New Brunswick, where she was a Canada Graduate Scholar. She is a faculty member in the Department of English at Douglas College in New Westminster, British Columbia. Her research interests include Canadian superheroes and representations of Canada in mainstream American comics.

Brian Montes is assistant professor in Latin American and Latina/o studies at John Jay College, City University of New York. His research, teaching, and writing are grounded in US Latino/a studies, Latin American studies, and Maya studies, with particular interest placed on the lived experience of race and ethnicity within Latin American and Latina/o ethnic groups. Other areas of specialization include Latin American and Latina/o social movements, memory, critical race theory, Indigenous rights, Latinx popular culture, and Maya (Yucatán) identity.

Arij Ouweleen is associate professor at the Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation, Amsterdam, and Professor Emeritus at Utrecht University. His publications include several articles and books like *Freudian Fadeout* (2012) and *Resilient Memories: Amerindian Cognitive Schemas in Latin American Art* (2018). Currently he is working on a project on graphic narratives as public history.

Kevin Patrick, PhD, teaches media and communication studies at Fordham University, Bronx, NY. His scholarship on Australian comic books, pulp novels, and media fandom appears in numerous journals, including the *International Journal of Comic Art*, *Media International Australia*, and *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*. He contributed entries to *A Companion to the Australian Media* (2014), and the *Planetary Republic of Comics* website. He curated a major exhibition on Australian comics at the State Library of Victoria (Melbourne, Australia) in 2006–2007 and is the author of *The Phantom Unmasked: America's First Superhero* (2017).

Candida Rifkind is professor in the Department of English at the University of Winnipeg, Canada, where she specializes in graphic narratives and Canadian literature and culture. In addition to numerous journal articles and book chapters in Canadian studies and comics studies, she is the author of *Comrades and Critics: Women, Literature, and the Left in 1930s Canada* (2009) and coeditor of *Canadian Graphic: Picturing Life Narratives* (2016). She serves on the Executive of the Comics Studies Society, the advisory board for the journal *INKS*, and is

coeditor of the new Wilfrid Laurier University Press book series *Crossing Lines: Transcultural/Transnational Comics Studies*.

Jessica Rutherford is an assistant professor of Spanish in the Modern Languages department at Central Connecticut State University. She received her PhD from the Department of Spanish and Portuguese from The Ohio State University in 2017, specializing in Latin America from the colonial period to the present. Her current research works to decenter historiographical discourse via the study of Latin/x American popular culture to include marginalized perspectives and experiences in the historical archive.

Jorge Santos is Ecuadorian-Salvadorian Latinx and the first in his family to earn a PhD. He is assistant professor of Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States at the College of the Holy Cross. His work has appeared in *MELUS*, *College Literature*, and *Image/Text*. He has contributed work to multiple collections on graphic narrative scholarship. His book, *Graphic Memories of the Civil Rights Movement*, was published in 2019.