Chapter 10
Transmedial and Transformational Practices in Comics Work

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the author relates an analytic description of the composing practices of a digital comics maker, linking print processes and digital processes. This narrative case study includes a focus on the titles that have been salient for the comics maker, as well as the linking that this composer includes in their work across video games, toys, music, podcasts, and other types of texts. The chapter includes a focus on what teachers can learn about the interconnected and intertextual, digital world in which students live, act, and practice.

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2019, I was introduced to the self-published comics work of a comics artist (pseudonym: Miguel) and was informed that I should contact this author and artist as a recent graduate from our university. This meeting and interaction was delayed by the pandemic, but I managed to meet with Miguel online in the fall of 2021. The transmedial practices of this artist, particularly aligning punk rock/metal and comics work, form the basis of this interview and analysis. His work, in particular, highlights a number of affordances for the comics medium, which uniquely position it in relationship to this book and content:

1. Miguel uses both print and digital means to create work, as do a large number of comics artists in the current context of comics creation.
2. Miguel's inspirations hail from a number of sources, both in terms of traditional print and digital sources (including film and video games).

In terms of pedagogical implications, Miguel's story illustrates how a contemporary university school setting served as an inspiring nexus point, along with popular media (including film, music, and comics) to inspire comics and creative work. My purpose in this project has been to descriptively explore this author/artist/creator's first-hand account of his journey to creating and I give attention to both the centrality of educational practices and structures in his training and development, as well as the ways in which media and materials have shaped him. In terms of authorship, his role as a self-promoting and self-producing published author links to the power of inspiration and making as forces that are endemic to both artistry and fandom. As a literacy educator, my questions focus on the descriptions that this author/artist shares of his practices, and I inquire about the ways in which his literacy practices have been shaped for a continual engagement as an adult.

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This narrative case study draws upon the research of the primary author and the experience of Miguel as a co-author in an attempt to capture a visual and verbal rendering of literacy practices in adult education, as well as the creative responses that are made possible in a literacy/comics community. Clandinin's (2006) work on narrative analysis informs the presentation of this study, as does the materials that have been gathered (i.e., Miguel's work, interview materials) to form a case study bounded by this individual's experiences (Stake, 1995), an intrinsically built from his role as a creator, author, and artist.

Brandell and Varkas (2001) pointed to the efficacy of the narrative case study as a methodology for gaining close understanding on an individual and/or experience in descriptive terms. Miguel has first-hand knowledge of what it is to be a creator, as well as a member of fandom, while my experiences as author have only related to fandom itself, beyond research publications. His perspective is unique as an emerging author/artist in the comics medium, and his notes on his process and story position him as a voice for this chapter.

Specific methods included an interview housed in a virtual conferencing space, which generated a transcript. This transcript was then read, cleaned up for technical accuracy, and analyzed by the author. In terms of analysis, a focus on the origins of the author formed an initial thread of inquiry as I sought to locate those areas in which Miguel discussed his traditional schooling and unpack the kinds of descriptions he shared of these pedagogical spaces. As a secondary form of analysis, I located those times that Miguel talked about his creative processes. These processes included notions of collaboration and community, particular intertextual inspirations that were noted by titles, and a description of the process itself that this author/artist embarks on in his work.

FANDOM, COLLABORATION, AND COMMUNITIES

Chief among the content shared in this chapter is the role of comics in literacy. I use the term comics to denote the traditional form and juxtaposition of words and images, rather than to denote a particular type of material as a distinct format, either short or long, print or digital. The interview participant did not delineate his creating in this way, but spoke of comics as both a print and digital material. In alignment with this open-ended framing, I have embarked on this chapter with a similar approach.

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