

NEH Application Cover Sheet (TD-277901)

Media Projects Development

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Field of expertise: Philosophy, Other

INSTITUTION

Filmmakers Collaborative, Inc
Melrose, MA 02176-3933

APPLICATION INFORMATION

Title: *Kaboom! How Comics Changed America*

Grant period: From 2021-07-05 to 2022-07-01

Project field(s): American Studies; Arts, General; History, General

Description of project: A three-part series that looks at the history of comics in America, and how a lowbrow art form rose to the heights of legitimacy. The series explores how outsiders and outcasts have used the medium tell their versions of the American story. We present a broad and inclusive treatment of the many genres that have defined American comics, with a particular emphasis on the lesser-known underground and alternative traditions, and the current wave of creator-owned, creator-driven content.

BUDGET

Outright Request	75,000.00	Cost Sharing	24,405.00
Matching Request	0.00	Total Budget	99,405.00
Total NEH	75,000.00		

GRANT ADMINISTRATOR

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Attachment 1: NARRATIVE

A. Nature of the Request

We request \$75,000 in development funding for *Kaboom! How Comics Changed America* (working title), a three-hour television series that looks at the history of comics in America, and how a lowbrow art form associated with youth rose to the heights of legitimacy. Comics are now used in every corner of academia and have been called one of the “last bastions of literacy” by Art Spiegelman, whose comic series *Maus* won the Pulitzer Prize. Our series will show how this change came about, how the form and content of comics have shifted over time, and how outsiders and outcasts have shaped the medium as they have used it to tell their own versions of the American story.

Our series will offer a broad, inclusive treatment of the many genres that have defined American comics, with a particular emphasis on the underground and alternative traditions, and the current wave of creator-owned, creator-driven comics. While superheroes are important to any treatment of comics, because they have been so widely covered in other films our focus will be on the lesser-known stories and people that have shaped and expanded the world of comics today.

With NEH funding, we will conduct preliminary interviews and archival research, begin conversations with broadcasters and other partners who might be interested in showing our films, and create detailed scripts for each episode. The development period will culminate with a production funding proposal to the NEH and other funders.

B. Program Synopsis

Since this is a development application, we have not included a synopsis but we have provided a detailed Treatment, which lays out the content of each episode. It is included as Attachment 2 of this proposal.

C. Humanities Content

Comics defy easy explanations or definitions. The word “comics” itself can trip people up: it is sometimes plural but is also a singular noun – as with other art forms like film or painting. Many people define comics as sequential panels that tell a story, but the term also encompasses single-panel cartoons, which have been appearing for hundreds of years. Comics is a hybrid form, and its formats include strips, comic books, and graphic narratives.

For the last twenty years, the scholarship in this field has been exploding, with comics studies now encompassing the fields of art, culture, history, literature, psychology, philosophy, and semiotics. In the humanities themes below, we examine what we consider to be four of the most significant and timely threads in comics scholarship today.

1: The Language of Comics

As Jan Baetens writes in *Comic Studies: A Guidebook*, co-edited by our advisor Charles Hatfield, word and image have never been considered as equal partners. “Western history is rooted in logocentrism, which considers language more valuable than images, and its corollary iconoclasm, which mistrusts or devalues image in favor of language.” This logocentrism was famously codified in 1766 when the German philosopher Gotthold Lessing argued the supremacy of words versus images in *Lacoön*, his essay on “The Limits of Painting and Poetry.”

A combination of both word and image, the hybrid medium of comics has always had low cultural capital. It has been seen as an impure literary form, and described variously as a crutch for slow or reluctant readers, a bridge between light and more complex reading, and a comfort to motivate readers on to something more complex. But recent scholarship, including work by several of our series’ humanities advisors, reveals that the visual language used in comics is every bit as complex as verbal or written language; it just has not yet received the same scrutiny and study that we have applied to other languages.

Cognitive scientist and comics theorist Neil Cohn, who is an advisor to this project, notes that verbal languages are not so different than the visual languages of graphics used in comics. His research has shown that both verbal and visual languages, which combine in comics, actually involve similar organizational principles and processing in the brain. He says, “I’m not saying that visual language is like verbal language, but rather that both speaking and drawing are part of a shared overall system of communication.”

Combined, they deliver a complexity and richness together that is impossible to achieve separately. In his essay “Of Course Comics Reading is Hard,” Hatfield cites Eleanor Davis’ children’s comic, *The Secret Science Alliance and the Copycat Crook*, as an example. This popular graphic novel uses page layout, color, and texture as well as words to tell the story of three middle-school outsiders who bond over science. The pleasure is as much in the minute visual details on each page as in the story. “It is a work of such layered complexity and fragmentation,” Hatfield writes, “with such baroque interweaving of text and image, and such plain *busyness* at every level, that it’s hard for me to imagine it as a simple crutch. What we’re looking at here seems to call on ... a specialized literacy or passion.”

In his seminal book *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, cartoonist and comics theorist Scott McCloud describes the interplay between comics and reader, with the reader the “accomplice” that completes the text. “McCloud has made a huge dent in how people in the U.S. critically analyze comics,” notes advisor Charles Hatfield. “His term for reader inference, “closure,” is one of the most common terms in comic studies, both inside and outside the academy.”

Hatfield and advisor Hillary Chute both talk about the “elliptical” nature of comics, with pictures part of the writing, moving the narrative along rather than merely illustrating it. This allows for self-paced reading and re-reading, with the reader “not merely a spectator but a co-

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constructor of meaning,” as Chute puts it. Hatfield adds, “Whereas visual tools such as storyboards for cinematic storytelling flow at a rate determined by the filmmakers, not the viewers, comics flow at a rate determined by the readers, not the writers.”

The comics-reading process can also have an ideological dimension, with gaps and ellipses offering “a constant self-reflexive demystification” of what is being represented, points out Chute. “Comics accommodates the interaction between the seeable and the sayable without attempting to smooth over the gap of reality that each puts in motion.”

Drawings are fundamental to human nature, says Cohn. They are our oldest records, appearing across cultures and history. Sequential drawings, which make up visual narratives and are found in comics, picture stories, and storyboards, are presumed to require minimal effort to decode. But this is not the case; years and decades of research suggest that visual narratives can be complex and more difficult to decode than widely assumed. Like any other language, their understanding requires a fluency to be learned, and this might vary between the types of “visual languages” that are used. For example, comics from Asia and the United States differ across many of their conventions – style, visual symbols, layout, storytelling – and readers in each case determine how those conventions are understood and processed.

In a world bombarded daily with visual media, it is clear that mastery of alphabetic literacy is no longer sufficient. Young people must develop the analytic tools necessary for critically ‘reading’ of all kinds of digital media. It is no wonder that graphic novels for children and young adults have become the most prolific and profitable comics-publishing category in the United States. Some of the most daring, heartbreaking art being created now, in the verbal and visual categories, are graphic novels on every conceivable subject. This entwined nature of the verbal and visual languages is reflected in the comments of Will Eisner, considered the father of the American graphic novel, who observed, “This is in every sense a singular form of reading.”

2: Black Representations in a Medium of Stereotypes

In minstrel shows of the early 19th century America, white performers in blackface would act out stereotyped Black characters including Uncle, Sambo, Zip Coon, and Mammy. These same well-known characters were used in some of the earliest American comics, including *The Johnson Family*, which chronicled a middle class Black family visiting the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. The conceit behind this 15-week serial, drawn by Peter Newell and published in *Harper’s Weekly* magazine, was that the Black family could never understand this exhibit on American strength and power. In her essay “And the Negro thinks in hieroglyphics,” Qianna Whitted notes that Mr. and Mrs. Johnson and their son correspond to the Uncle, Mammy, and Pickaninny stereotypes from minstrelsy. And there was “a third set of onlookers – the readers of *Harper’s Weekly*, who would have enjoyed seeing the “emasculatation of Mr. Johnson and the ridicule of his family.”

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These offensive racial stereotypes persisted over the next hundred years, in every popular medium of the day, beginning with the newspapers that published comic strips to attract readers. Advisor Rebecca Wanzo, a race, gender and culture scholar at Washington University in St. Louis, points out that “Even a strip as important as *The Yellow Kid* by Richard Outcault (1895), and as gorgeous as *Little Nemo* by Winsor McCay (1905) had racist representations of Black people.” The same was true during the so-called Golden Age of Comic Books from the late 1930s through the 1950s, when Black characters were offered mainly as offensive stereotypes, such as cannibals, and drawn with exaggerated features to resemble apes more closely than humans.

Wanzo notes that comics depend on the language of exaggeration and excess, citing Charlie Brown’s giant head and tiny body as an example. “It’s really easy for representations of Black people to slip into racist caricature,” she notes. “How do you get away from caricature in a medium built upon it?” This sentiment is echoed by Will Eisner, who observes in *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative* that oversimplifications are a risk inherent to the form – although as advisor Hillary Chute points out, it is precisely this distillation that give comics its power and force.

In the early 20th century, George Herriman was popular for his editorial and entertainment comics, with the gender-questionable Krazy Kat his most enduring legacy. Herriman was born in New Orleans to Creole parents of mixed race, but appears to have passed as white most of his life; he was listed as “colored” on his birth certificate but “caucasian” on his death certificate in the 1940s. His colleagues nicknamed him “The Greek” in a nod to his dark appearance. Despite his heritage, Herriman engaged in the typical racial stereotypes of the day. In a 1902 strip, *Musical Mose*, Herriman portrays Mose as trying to pass as a Scotsman, wearing plaid knickers and playing a bagpipe. He’s drawn in typical minstrel-show strokes, with large white lips like a clown and white eyes peering out of a coal-black face. When two white women turn a hose on Mose for impersonating a white man, he wails “I wish mah color would fade.”

If Blackness was marginalized in the mainstream white press, the Black press offered the same genres of comics as found in white papers, (soldiers, adventurers, reporters, love comics, kids, etc.) but with Black protagonists. “It was a counter to how white newspapers excluded or treated stories about Black people,” Wanzo points out.

Jackie Ormes, the first Black female cartoonist to be published nationally in the 1930s, made comics that were widely read in the *Pittsburg Courier*, one of the premiere Black newspapers of her day. Ormes’ characters were all self-possessed females – Torchy Brown, Candy, and Patty-Jo ‘n’ Ginger – who challenged the racial dynamics of the time. In a 1937 comic strip, Torchy Brown’s character sits in a “whites only” section of a train. “I’ll jus’ pretend I can’t read very well,” reads her thought balloon. She is protected from removal by an Italian-American man who thinks she’s white.

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While a ground-breaking character such as Torchy Brown existed in publications read by a Black audience, Will Eisner, a contemporary of Ormes who drew for a largely white audience, continued to rely on racial tropes visually, even while imbuing his characters with admirable traits. Ebony White was the Black sidekick to a detective hero, The Spirit, in a comic book supplement to the *Register and Tribune Syndicate* newspapers from June 1940 until October 1952. The innovative storytelling and adult themes of the series made it one of the most influential comic books in the history of the field. Unfortunately, while the Spirit was drawn in the square-jawed, realistic fashion of comics at the time, Ebony White was a Jim Crow stereotype, with exaggerated features that made him appear more simian than human. Even so, he was an able detective, often picking up on clue details that others had missed.

Eisner responded to criticism of his stereotyping on Ebony White by saying he tried to do it responsibly, and noting the pitfalls of the medium. He told *Time Magazine's* Andrew Arnold in 2003, "...if you go back and examine how I handled Ebony, I was aware that I was dealing with something that was volatile, and I had a responsibility. The only excuse I have for [that portrayal] is that at the time humor consisted in our society of bad English and physical difference in identity. Later I attempted to depart from it by having a Black character, a detective, who spoke proper English, and I had an airplane pilot who was Black."

Advisor Charles Hatfield, who knew Eisner, told us that he remained uncomfortable about this for the rest of his life. He also notes that Eisner's late works, *To the Heart of the Storm*, *Fagin the Jew*, and *The Plot*, were dissections of antisemitism, and that he sought to confront prejudice in these works. Nevertheless, even in his late works he relied on stereotyping.

EC comics, which introduced wildly popular series about horror, suspense, and science fiction as well as *Mad* magazine, provided a much different window on the world. As Qianna Whitted notes in her book, *EC Comics: Race, Shock, and Social Protest*, in EC stories you can typically find Black characters who are "completely victimized by difficult circumstances. Many are injured, killed, and some commit suicide as a kind of object lesson to young white readers about the damage that hate can do."

These lessons are woven through EC comics, especially in the so-called preachies, which emphasized social realism. The racists are not punished through the criminal justice system, but they are made to feel ashamed. Whitted writes: "In one story, 'Blood Brothers' [by Wallace Wood and Al Feldstein], there is a white family man named Sid who is upset because he finds out that his neighbor has Black ancestry. Sid does everything he can to get this man with 'Negro blood' to move out of the neighborhood and terrorizes him to the point where he commits suicide. However, in the end, when Sid confesses his crime to the coroner, he finds out that he received a blood transfusion as a child from a Black person – *he* has 'Negro blood' too. The story ends with this realization and Sid's shame as he is slumped over, crying, presumably with regret."

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This sensibility is also found in the horror and sci-fi EC comics. *Judgment Day*, for example, features an astronaut from the Great Galactic Republic who lives 1,000 years in the future. An inspection of a planet inhabited by orange and blue robots reveals that segregation practices have kept the blue robots in an inferior position, so he warns his orange guide that they are not “matured enough to join the Republic.” He wears a space suit that covers his face for the majority of the comic, notes Whitted, “but when he leaves and takes off his helmet, safe in his rocket, readers see that he is a Black man.” It was the kind of surprise ending that EC comics were known for. There was some backlash, but EC comics have stood the test of time, and influenced generations of readers who would go on to make comics of their own.

It wasn't until the summer of 1966 that the first black superhero in mainstream comics was created, when Marvel Comics' Stan Lee and Jack Kirby premiered the character of Black Panther, aka T'Challa, king and protector of the fictional African nation of Wakanda. He was the first superhero of African descent in mainstream American comics, and the only Black hero with superpowers.

T'Challa was a minor character in the Marvel pantheon, reintroduced every few years as a guest in other Marvel character's films. “Folks didn't quite know how to actually use him,” explained the author Ta-Nehisi Coates, who would himself create a series of new *Black Panther* comics in 2016. Although as advisor Rebecca Wanzo points out, “I don't know that I would say he was minor, as the question always is: minor to whom?” Clearly he was not minor to the thousands of fans at San Diego's Comic-Con conference that year, who wore “Black Heroes Matter” tee-shirts. And two years later, when the new *Black Panther* movie was released, it was blockbuster that broke box office records and went on to win three Academy Awards.

The Black Panther will soon star in a television series now in development at Disney Plus. There are Black comics conventions, including Wakandacon, the Black-centered fan convention based in Chicago. There are many prominent new Black creators and publishers, including Joel Christian Gill, Sanford Green, John Jennings, Ben Passmore, Spike Trotman, and David Walker. Charles Hatfield describes these as “some of the ripples that have moved outward from the *Panther* phenomenon.”

3: Women and Gender in Comics

The comics industry in America has long been seen as a masculine domain, with brawny superheroes and the stereotypical male adolescent fans. And it is true that over the years the majority of writers, artists, and editors have been men, as well as the majority of comics characters.

But women have made significant contributions throughout the history of comics, and today women are pushing the boundaries of what is possible in comics storytelling, with richly textured stories that feature female characters.

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One of the earliest comic strips featuring a woman was *Fritzi Ritzi* by Ernie Bushmiller. *Fritzi* was one of the “new woman”/flapper girl-type comics, along with *Tillie the Toiler*, about young working women. Nancy, a spunky eight-year-old girl, was a minor character in the *Fritzi* strip, but “the little dickens was soon stealing the show,” as Bushmiller put it, so he made her the focus of her own daily strip, *Nancy*, which premiered in 1938. It featured Nancy and her friend, Sluggo Smith, from the “wrong side of the tracks.”

Little Orphan Annie was created two years later, featuring Annie, her dog, and her benefactor, “Daddy” Warbucks. Created by the ardently anti-Roosevelt Harold Gray, in the midst of Depression-era America, it was a grim, downbeat comic strip, filled with untrustworthy politicians and other authority figures. A bitter twist at the end of every story cycle left Annie in a tough spot. She lost her looks and her friends, and struggled to keep her positive attitude as her station in life fell. Audiences loved this little heroine, who Gray described as “tougher than hell, with a heart of gold and a fast left, who can take care of herself because she has to.”

Over time, Annie became “a kind of 20th century truth,” says advisor Hillary Chute, “spawning her own radio show, several films, and a Broadway musical.” Little Orphan Annie became one of the most popular cartoon characters ever created, as well as the subject of numerous parodies, including “Little Arf ‘n Nonnie” in Walt Kelly’s *Pogo*, “Little Orphan Melvin” in *Mad* Magazine, and “Little Annie Fanny,” in a Playboy magazine series by Harvey Kurtzman.

Little Lulu was another huge hit, and the first comics character created by a woman, Marjorie Henderson Buell who worked under the pen name Marge. Lulu premiered in 1934 as a flower girl at a wedding, strewing the aisle with banana peels instead of flowers. “A girl could get away with more fresh stunts than in a boy would seem boorish,” Marge explained. Lulu became one of the most iconic comic strips of all time, eventually syndicated, and translated into at least ten languages for overseas fans.

Jackie Ormes, the first Black female syndicated cartoonist, created groundbreaking portrayals of Black women, showing them well-dressed, politically savvy, and able to move in and out of spaces commonly reserved for men and white women. In one of her strips, *Torchy Brown: Dixie to Harlem*, Torchy is a young professional who moves from the segregated South to New York in search of fame. The strip touched on serious issues of the day, but overall was upbeat.

Candy – later updated as *Candy, Patty-Joe, and Ginger* – was another of Ormes’ popular comics. It featured a pretty but sharp-tongued maid in an upscale home, providing a subversive critique of the politics behind domestic servitude. And her *Torchy Heartbeats* was a weekly action and romance comic strip, à la Brenda Starr. It was one of the first strips to feature ongoing stories on social issues, such as rape and environmental justice.

As comics scholar and artist Trina Robbins writes in “Gender Differences in Comics” in 2002, representations of both men and women in comics have changed greatly over the years. In the early days, young women were beautiful while men at best were grotesque. George McManus

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may have introduced this tradition with his 1909 strip, *The Newlyweds*, featuring a pretty wife and her classically cartoony husband. He used this same gender stylization in his most famous strip, *Bringing up Father*, in 1913, with the parents and the son extremely unattractive (although the mother had a great body), and the daughter a beauty. There were exceptions: Elzie Segar's Olive Oyl was as visually odd-looking as her boyfriend Popeye, but Chic Young's Blondie, created in 1930, was much better looking than her beau, Dagwood.

Describing the superhero comics of the 1990s, Robbins writes that artists were exaggerating certain sexual characteristics on both male and female characters. "Males grew progressively more muscular... while females developed longer legs, and their breasts attained incredible proportions, often larger than their heads." Charles Hatfield reminds us that these characters were part of a continuum of highly sexualized figures that had been around since the 1940s, like *Miss Fury*, by female cartoonist Tarpé Mills. "She was a very sexualized, cheesecake-y sort of figure, anticipating Emma Peele, the Black Widow, and other such characters." But the field of comics is becoming feminized, Robbins adds, as more women are drawing comics, especially for indie publications.

As Hillary Chute writes in *Why Comics? From Underground to Everywhere*, girls have become the stars, especially clever teenage girls, such as "the effervescent Hopey Glass and Maggie Chascarillo from Jaime Hernandez' *Love and Rockets*, or the smart, sulky, and funny Enid Coleslaw and Rebecca Doppelmeyer from Daniel Clowes' *Ghost World*." Girls are increasingly featured in *Marvel Rising*, a unit of the Marvel Universe. *Ms. Marvel* debuted in 2014 and is one of the company's top sellers; she is Kamala Khan, a New Jersey student by day, and shape-shifting superhero by night. *Ironheart* is an African American genius who creates her own suit from discarded tech she finds on the MIT campus, and *Unbeatable Squirrel Girl* features a girl with abilities to communicate with squirrels to help defeat enemies.

The period between the 1970s and 1990s is considered the First Wave of Comics Feminism, when female artists began showcasing their own and other women's work. In 1970, Trina Robbins and Barbara "Willy" Mendez co-produced the first all-female comic book, *It Aint Me, Babe Comix*, and an anthology, *Wimmen's Comix*, that was focused on sex, homosexuality, politics, and other feminist concerns. The first issue featured what is considered the first women's autobiographic comics story: Aline Kominsky-Crumb's *Goldie: A Neurotic Woman*. As Kominsky-Crumb told advisor Hillary Chute, her aim was "to completely deconstruct the myth or romanticism around being a woman," so she showed herself on the toilet and in other unflattering scenes. Says Chute, "Kominsky-Crumb's work stood out for its striking attention to the routine functions of the female body, both painful and pleasurable – and for producing such work under the rubric of the first person."

In 1972, Gloria Steinem featured Wonder Woman, the first female superhero, on the cover of the debut issue of *Ms. Magazine*. As she explained it, "She symbolizes many of the values of women's culture that feminists are now trying to introduce into the mainstream: strength and

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self-reliance for women; sisterhood and mutual support among women; a diminishment both of 'masculine' aggression and the belief that violence is the only way of solving conflicts."

By the 21st century, much of the innovation in the comics field was coming from women. Longtime artist Lynda Barry released her *One! Hundred! Demons!* in 2002, a heartbreaking and very funny look at her violent, lonely, and difficult childhood. As she explained it to Hillary Chute, she realized that a comic strip "could contain something sad, like a song. A song could be happy or sad, and I thought a comic strip should be the same."

Alison Bechdel did something similar in *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*, her 2006 graphic memoir of her experience growing up gay in rural Pennsylvania with a closeted father who later committed suicide. It was nominated for numerous awards, adapted for musical theatre, and became a Tony-award winning Broadway play in 2015.

"The energy around comics and the relation of comics to questions about narrating lives are palpable," says Chute. Indeed, many academic programs now include comics in their literature syllabi, a recognition that the form is particularly good at expressing life stories. The drawings move along the story instead of merely illustrating it. Chute adds, "Because of spatial conventions, comics can map a life, not only figuratively but literally," making them one of the most powerful of media.

4. Immigrants and Ethnicity in American Comics

Despite the allure of the American Dream and the Statue of Liberty's invitation to the "tired, poor, huddled masses" from around the world, America has not always been hospitable to immigrants. Despite this, they have not only found a voice in America; they have created and continue to sustain major American industries including movies, theatre, television, finance – and comics.

It has been an uphill struggle. The Immigration Act of 1924 enacted quotas for immigrants admitted from Western European countries, since America's "social construction of nation, nationality, and race favored Nordic peoples and their whiteness," writes Michael Boatright in *Graphic Journeys: Graphic Novels' Representations of Immigrant Experiences*. This led many comics creators to alter their names to sound more "American." Alfred Caplin became Al Capp, for example, and Stanley Lieber became Stan Lee. The Katzenjammer Kids comic strip was renamed "The Captain and the Kids" after World War I, because of strong anti-German sentiments.

Jews in particular have not only thrived, but have also largely defined the medium of comics. One reason for this, argues Derek Parker Royal in *Visualizing Current Jewish Narrative: Jewish Comics and Graphic Novels*, is the lack of other respectable fields where Jews could express their creativity. "Those with backgrounds and training in the illustrative arts were limited to the less desirable, and more lowly regarded, jobs where there was no discrimination, such as in pulp magazines and comic books," he writes. "According to Al Jaffee, one of Mad magazine's

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legendary artists, only the rare 'super-Jew' could break through into newspaper strips and magazine art." And as Will Eisner put it, "There were Jews in this medium because it was a crap medium. And in a marketplace that still had racial overtones, it was an easy medium to get into."

Advisor Jeremy Dauber agrees that low barriers to entry were important. He says, "Once you hit the underground era, and especially the mini-comix and zine era, comics became very cheap to produce. The equivalent nowadays is iPhone movies: they are so cheap and easy to make, anyone can do it. Comics got there first."

The first person to put together an American comic book was Maxwell "Charlie" Gaines (né Max Ginsberg). In 1934, he and his colleague Harry L. Wildenberg persuaded Eastern Color Printing to collect the comic strips that had previously been published in Sunday newspapers, print them in half tabloid size, and sell them as *Famous Funnies*. Other early Jewish pioneers were Jerome Siegel, Joe Shuster, Bob Kane, Bill Finger, Jerry Robinson, Joe Simon, Jack Kirby, Stan Lee, Larry Leiber, Gil Kane, Will Eisner, Jules Feiffer, Will Elder, Harvey Kurtzman, and Joe Kubert. Together they gave us most of the iconic characters of the Golden Age of Comic books in the 1930s and 40s: Superman, Batman, Captain America, the Guardian, the Boy Commandos, the Green Lantern, and the Spirit. Jewish editors including Lee, Gaines, Kurtzman, as well as Mort Weisinger, Julius Schwartz, and Al Feldstein, all worked with the industry's leading publishers: DC Comics, Marvel, and EC Comics.

These pioneers brought the language of their urban Jewish neighborhoods to their comics and turned it into comic strip art. Milt Gross created a graphic novel decades before the term was even invented, a 300-page wordless masterpiece, *He Done Her Wrong: The Great American Novel and Not a Word in It – No Music, Too* (1930). As advisor Hillary Chute points out, this book was making fun at serious, mostly socialist wordless novels of the 1920s, such as by Lynd Ward, who is considered another very early pioneer of the graphic novel.

When Gross did use words, they were often Yiddish-English malapropisms, inflected with immigrant accents and nonsensical catchphrases. Combining this language of the streets with a seemingly informal, improvisatory drawing style and frantic tempo, Gross can be seen as a jazzman of New York Jewishness. Gross was a profoundly urban artist. He portrayed the city as the home of exaggeration and intensity. His great character Count Screwloose of Tooloose would often escape to the city from his insane asylum, only to find that the real craziness was in the streets. Gross's legacy can be seen still today in cartoonists such as Ben Katchor, Leela Copman and Liana Finck, who depict the vanished world of the Jewish immigrant "greenhorn" in New York in fresh and powerful ways.

Each issue of Harvey Pekar's *American Splendor* cartoon series proudly triumphed that it was from the streets of Cleveland. Pekar grew up on the city's East Side speaking Yiddish and working in his parent's grocery store with its clientele of Jews, Italians, Blacks and "some Slavs,"

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as he described it. His autobiographical comics depict his interactions with the city and its people, and earned him the reputation of unofficial poet laureate of Cleveland. Pekar was also a key figure in the underground comix movement of the 1970s. His self-published *American Splendor* was considered counter-cultural, radical in form and content, but also showed a heartwarming faith in the democratic possibilities of urban life. On the cover of the first *American Splendor*, three men, one named Harvey, sit on the steps of a Cleveland street and rap about politics. Pekar wrote the words while others, including his friend Robert Crumb, created the graphics. He helped make comic books an art form for adults.

The Hernandez Brothers took the comic book world by storm in the 1980s, with their representations of the Mexican-American community where they grew up. In an era dominated by DC and Marvel's corporate superheroes, Jaime and Gilbert (Beto) Hernandez' characters included barefoot women selling pambazos in Mexican towns, and female mechanics rocking it in Southern California. Their streets were mainly Chicano rather than Jewish, West not East Coast, and the ethos and energy was of punk not jazz.

Los Bros Hernandez, as they called themselves, and the indie comic movement they started brought the DIY spirit back into comics. With their older brother Mario, Jaime and Beto self-published *Love and Rockets*, which was initially crudely printed, drawn in black and white, and sold for a dollar. Their stories were protean and not easy to define, thick with cultural allusions and an embrace of tele-novellas, parody, magic realism, and contemporary multiculturalism. No longer were comics directed solely to young white men. Los Bros and their vast cast of characters highlighted women, the marginalized, the LGBTQ. They were funny and they felt real. "Without Los Bros Hernandez, I probably wouldn't be studying comics today," says Charles Hatfield. "*Love & Rockets* made all the difference – the most important periodical comic book of the 1980s, in my opinion."

Lalo Alcaraz is also an immensely influential comics artist. He grew up in San Diego close to the Mexican border, which he says gave him a dual outlook on life. His comic strip *La Cucaracha*, was first published in 1992 and syndicated ten years later, is the first politically themed Latino daily strip, and one of the most controversial. The main character is an anthropomorphic, militant Chicano cockroach who reflects on current events. Detractors have called it "anti-white" while fans call it "truthful."

Alcaraz co-wrote a book, *Latino USA: A Cartoon History*, with our project advisor Ilan Stavans, who notes that it has become a staple in Ethnic, Hispanic, Latino, and Cultural, and Pop Culture Studies curricula. It encourages students to see U.S., Latino, and Latin American civilizations from a contrarian position, e.g., away from the mainstream approach, Stavans says, and also invites audiences to use the comic strips as tools to investigate the past and question the present, thus breaking away from standard academic discourse. In that sense, he adds, "It has furthered the approach, explored by Will Eisner in his book *The Plot: The Secret History of the Protocols of the Wise of Zion*, of understanding comics as more than sheer entertainment."

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A transformative moment for comic books came in 1978 with the first hints that they may one day be embraced as high literature. Will Eisner released *A Contract with God* – with its tales of the poor Jews who once lived in a New York tenement building – and popularized the idea of the graphic novel.

At the same time, Art Spiegelman was back to work on his *Maus* story, which he had started in the early 1970s. When the collected comics were published a decade later in two volumes, they would be feted by highbrow literary critics and featured on best-seller book lists. Spiegelman became the only cartoonist to win the Pulitzer Prize, and *Maus* became the subject of plentiful academic analysis. *Maus* crossed over genres: a tortured family history shaped by world events, containing oral history, psychotherapy, autobiography, and a blurring of the line between fiction and real life. In it, Spiegelman's quizzes his father, a Polish born Jew, about his experiences during the Holocaust. He answers in immigrant English, full of errors, that highlights the communication gap between father and son. But when the story flicks in time back to the Holocaust, the world of the camps and multiple European languages, it is portrayed in fluent colloquial English. Spiegelman uses these very different versions of English as a sort of time machine, to bring the past together with the present, but also to show how distant the past and the present are from each other. Spiegelman's *Maus* was a towering achievement.

Lynda Barry was born in Wisconsin to a father of Irish-Norwegian descent, and a mother from the Philippines. Growing up in a racially mixed family, Barry was seen by the outside world as white, but never felt she fit in. Much of her series *Ernie Pook's Comeek* focuses on the traumas she experienced as a child, and the painful complexities of race and racism. In her work, which shuns easy categorization, fiction and autobiography are blurred. Her principal theme is childhood, and through language as well as her bright, expressive visual style, her use of collage, photographs and diaries, and her frequent inclusion of comics drawn on note paper, she portrays childhood as both funny and deeply disturbing. As she describes it, she is attracted to the unspeakable and to the unthinkable.

Charles Hatfield notes a trend towards graphic memoirs about immigration and assimilation, with powerful offerings like Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese*, about a boy who desperately wants to fit in with the "all-American" students. "It came out in 2006 and is already considered an absolutely classic," Hatfield says. Thi Bui's *The Best We Could Do*, about her family's escape from Vietnam to new lives in America, has won numerous awards and made Bill Gates' top five book list, while Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, about growing up in Tehran both before and during the Islamic revolution, has earned the most international attention of any graphic novel in the last fifteen years. It looks like a trend that will continue.

D. Creative Approach

We want to capture the experience and joy of reading comics in our films, which is different from the experience of watching an animated movie. To achieve this we plan to film eye movement, page turning, and shoot our interviews in a studio against a green screen, so that

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we can later place the interviewee in the frame of the comics they are talking about, or just outside the frame. This is a technique that the director, Asaf Galay, used in his film *The Hebrew Superhero*, which is included as a work sample with this proposal.

Color, texture, and layout are also important elements of the comics-reading experience, which we will also play with in the films. We want to evoke a feeling with hand-drawn lettering, and see the differences of cheap newsprint paper, the standard four-color comic books, and the beautiful lithography and work featured in many later comics. Some artists used a stark black-and-white palette, which we will also mimic in the film.

We want to show how comics are drawn, and how the old masters worked, so we will ask contemporary cartoonists to show us how they did it, with Art Spiegelman drawing in Al Capp style, for example, or R. Crumb drawing like George Herriman. This will help us emphasize the complexity of this art form, and is a way to bring the older subjects to life. It is also, incidentally, how many learn the art of painting: by going to a museum and copying the old masters.

To get a sense of the passion that fuels the world of comics, we will also film at several conventions, including San Diego's Comic-Con, Comic Arts Brooklyn, MOCCA, and Small Press Expo, where we will capture cartoonists showing their new books and meeting with fans. We will also film in museums, art galleries, and in comic book stores.

Finally, we plan to pair younger creators in conversations with older creators. The younger group, which is more diverse, will reflect on their influences, and on what they take from icons of the industry like R. Crumb, Art Spiegelman, and others.

E. Digital Component

At this early stage of development, we have not yet planned for a website or other digital components for this project.

F. Collections to be Used by the Project

Library of Congress

The largest publicly available collection of comic books in the United States is housed in the Newspaper and Current Periodical Reading Room at the LOC. The collection includes U.S. and foreign comic books – over 12,000 titles in all, totaling more than 140,000 issues. The head librarian is Georgia Higley. Here is a link to the exhibits she has curated:

<https://loc.gov/exhibitions/comic-art/about-this-exhibition/>
<https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/cartoonamerica/cartoon-laughs.html>

Billy Ireland Library

The Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum is a research library of American cartoons and comic art, affiliated with the Ohio State University library system in Columbus, Ohio. Formerly

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known as the Cartoon Research Library and the Cartoon Library & Museum, it is the world's largest and most comprehensive academic research facility documenting and displaying original and printed comic strips, editorial cartoons, and cartoon art. The collection includes 450,000 original cartoons, 36,000 books, 51,000 serial titles, and 3,000 feet of manuscript materials, plus 2.5 million comic strip clippings and tear sheets.

<https://cartoons.osu.edu/digital-resources/links/>

Michigan State University Library

There are over 300,000 items in this comic art collection, most of them American comic books but also including over 1,000 books of collected newspaper comic strips, over 50,000 international comic books, and several thousand books and periodicals about comics. The international comics are especially strong in the areas of European, Latin American, and Asian comics. The collection contains comics published as early as the 1840s up to the present day. Although there are some archival materials, the focus of the collection is on published work in an effort to present a complete picture of what the American comics readership has seen, especially since the middle of the 20th century.

<https://lib.msu.edu/comics/>

Iowa State University – Underground Comix Collection

This collection consists of comic books authored as parodies of mainstream society and/or reflecting less acceptable behavior as would be depicted in more conventional publications. Topics include feminism, marijuana legalization, Black Power, anti-abortion and anti-war themes, and gay and lesbian issues. The collection extends from the 1960s through the 1980s. The collection also contains several files of correspondence between Special Collections Department staff and comic book artists and dealers.

Society of Illustrators, New York

Founded in 1901, the Society of Illustrators is the oldest nonprofit organization dedicated to the art of illustration in America. The Museum of Illustration was established in 1981. The Permanent Collection houses 2,500 pieces that are cataloged for scholarly use and displayed periodically. Since the establishment of the Society's Permanent Collection in the mid-1930s, the holdings have included many examples by noted comic and cartoon illustrators.

<https://www.societyillustrators.org/>

Cartoon Art Museum, San Francisco

Founded in 1984, this is the only museum in the Western United States dedicated to the preservation and exhibition of all forms of cartoon art. Their collection includes comic strips, comic books, anime, political cartoons, graphic novels and underground comix – over 7,000 original pieces in their permanent collection. They are also a community resource, hosting screenings, workshops, and classes for professional and aspiring cartoonists.

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Butler Library at Columbia University

The Columbia University Libraries collect both graphic novels for the circulating collection in the Butler Library stacks and also creator archives in the Rare Book & Manuscript Library. The circulating collection was launched in 2005, when the libraries held three titles, and by the end of 2018 the collection featured roughly 14,000 titles in over two dozen languages. These holdings include mainstream and alternative titles, archival reprints, and independent comics.

G. Rights and permissions

During the development phase for which we are seeking funding, we will begin tracking down rights holders and estimating costs for the comics we want to use in our series. For daily newspaper strips, Georgia Higley, head of Newspapers and Comics at the Library of Congress, will be an invaluable help.

Collector and publisher Denis Kitchen is also a big fan of the project, and has already agreed to give us rights-free use of the many books he has published. These include underground comics by R. Crumb, Howard Cruse, and Trina Robbins. Kitchen also manages the estates of Will Eisner, Harvey Kurtzman, Al Capp, and George Herriman, which will be a huge help in securing permissions for these works.

H. Humanities Advisors

Paul Buhle is a retired Senior Lecturer at Brown University, and founder the Oral History of the American Left archive at New York University. He is author or editor of 53 volumes including authorized biographies of C.L.R. James and Abraham Lincoln Polonsky, five volumes on the Hollywood Blacklist, a dozen non-fiction comic art volumes, and several scholarly volumes on comic arts including *Jews and American Comics* and (with Denis Kitchen) the prize-winning *Art of Harvey Kurtzman*.

Hillary Chute is a comics and graphic novels columnist for the *New York Times book Review*, and a professor of English and Art and Design at Northeastern University. She is author of the recent *Why Comics? From Underground to Everywhere*, as well as *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics*; *Outside the Box: Interviews with Contemporary Cartoonists*; and *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form*. She is also associate editor of Art Spiegelman's *MetaMaus*.

N.C. Christopher Couch is a Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He was Editor in Chief at Central Park Media, and Senior Editor at Kitchen Sing Press, and has taught at both Smith College and Columbia University. With a Ph.D. in Art History from Columbia, his specialties include Comic Art and Graphic Novels, Popular Culture in the US, Latin America and Japan, Science Fiction, Native American Indian Art, Pre-Columbian and Spanish Colonial Art, and Aztec Manuscripts.

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Neil Cohn is a cognitive scientist internationally recognized for his research on the overlap of the structure and cognition of sequential images and language. His research explores the structure and cognition of drawings and visual narratives, like comics. His books include *The Visual Language of Comics*, which introduces a broad framework for studying visual narratives in the cognitive sciences, and *Who Understands Comics?* which explores the comprehension processes and fluency involved in understanding comics. His work is online at visuallanguagelab.com.

Jeremy Dauber is the Atran Professor of Yiddish Language, Literature, and Culture at Columbia University, where he taught the first course on comics and graphic novels. He serves as director of its Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies and teaches in the American Studies program. His books include *Jewish Comedy: A Serious History*; *In the Demon's Bedroom: Yiddish Literature and the Early Modern*; *Antonio's Devils: Writers of the Jewish Enlightenment and the Birth of Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literature*; and *The Worlds of Sholem Aleichem*. He frequently lectures on topics related to Jewish literature, history, humor, and popular culture.

Charles Hatfield is a professor of English at CSU Northridge, author of *Hand of Fire: The Comics Art of Jack Kirby* and *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature*, coeditor of *Comics Studies: A Guidebook*, and curator of the exhibition *Comic Book Apocalypse: The Graphic World of Jack Kirby*. His essays have appeared in *ImageText*, the *Oxford Handbook of Children's Literature*, and other books and periodicals. He has chaired both the International Comic Arts Forum and the MLA Forum on Comics and Graphic Narratives, and co-founded the Comics Studies Society (comicsociety.org).

Ilan Stavans is a Mexican-American essayist, lexicographer, translator, author, publisher, and teacher. He is the Lewis-Sebring Professor of Latin American and Latino Culture at Amherst College, where he has taught courses on diverse subjects including Latin music, Jewish writers, comics, Spanglish, the history of dictionaries, and U.S.-Latino culture, among others. He is the publisher of Restless Books, a nonprofit devoted to translating contemporary literature into English. He has a Doctorate from Columbia University, between 2001 to 2006, was the host of the PBS show *Conversations with Ilan Stavans* on PBS, and is currently the host the NPR podcast "In Contrast."

Rebecca Wanzo is a professor and chair of the Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Washington University in St. Louis. Her books include *The Suffering Will Not Be Televised: African American Women and Sentimental Political Storytelling*, and *The Content of Our Caricature: African American Comic Art and Political Belonging*. Her research interests include African American literature and culture, critical race theory, fan studies, feminist theory, and graphic storytelling. She has also written essays for media outlets such as *CNN*, the *LA Review of Books*, *Huffington Post*, *The Conversation*, and the comic book *Bitch Planet*.

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I. Media Team

This series will be directed by **Asaf Galay**, an acclaimed international film director with a passion for stories on Jewish subjects that illuminate the human condition. His most recent documentaries include *Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story* (in production), *The Adventures of Saul Bellow* (2020), *Army of Lovers in the Holy Land* (2018), *The Hebrew Superhero* (2015), and *The Muses of Bashevis Singer* (2014).

Writer and producer is **Kathryn Dietz**, who worked with Mr. Galay as a writer and executive producer on his *Bellow* film and is producing *Cartooning America*. She has also produced several award-winning feature documentaries for PBS' *Frontline* and *American Experience* series, many of them funded by the NEH. She teaches the business of film at Emerson College, and is the former executive director of Filmmakers Collaborative, our nonprofit partner.

Cinematographer for production is **Avner Shahaf**, who will shoot the green screen scenes during development that will help us test our creative approach. He has more than a decade of experience, with recent documentary work including *Cartooning America* with Galay and Dietz, now on hiatus because of coronavirus; *Zero Days* by Alex Gibney; and *The Gatekeepers*, by Dror Moreh, which was nominated for an Oscar in the documentary category.

J. Progress

In March of 2020, we (Asaf Galay, director, and Kathryn Dietz, producer) were in production and shooting interviews for our NEH-funded film, *Cartooning America: the Fleischer Brothers Story*, when the coronavirus pandemic hit. When it became clear that we would not be able to film again for a while, we switched gears to develop this series about comics, which Mr. Galay had been wanting to pursue since 2012, when he made *The Hebrew Superhero*. That film compared the history of comics in Israel to America superheroes, and caught the eye of comics collector and publisher Denis Kitchen. "Kitchen urged me make a film about comics in America," Galay says. "It's a great fit, because I love comics and graphic novels. (b) (6)

We began by speaking with several scholars to get their ideas. We had phone and Zoom conversations with Ilan Stavans, Chris Couch, Charles Hatfield, and Paul Buhle, all of whom were very enthusiastic, gave us helpful advice, and offered their support if we decided to move forward. We then drafted a short proposal, laying out the subject matter into four episodes (later changed to three), and sent this to our NEH program officer, David Weinstein, for his feedback. (b) (5)

Mr. Galay began archival research, reaching out first to Denis Kitchen, who manages the estates of several prominent cartoonists. He promised to help us secure rights to many of the underground comics we will want to use in the film. Galay also did preliminary research at the Library of Congress, the Billy Ireland Library, the Cartoon Art Museum, and at several university libraries that have excellent collections of comics arts.

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Meanwhile Ms. Dietz began gathering books and articles by all potential scholars, and then reached out to several of them for their help in identifying the most important humanities themes to support this project. She spoke Rebecca Wanzo of Washington University in St. Louis, who helped craft the race and gender themes; Charles Hatfield of California State University and author of *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature*, who helped frame the overall history; Neil Cohn, a cognitive scientist and comics theorist at Tilburg University, who helped with the language theme; and Ilan Stavnas, a Latino culture and comics professor at Amherst College, who helped with the immigrant and outsider theme.

We invited Hillary Chute of Northeastern University and author of *Why Comics? From Underground to Everywhere* to be on our board and she immediately agreed. Jeremy Dauber, who teaches Yiddish language, literature, and culture at Columbia University, also came on board with overall advice and help with the immigrant theme.

In the process of writing this proposal, we have worked closely with all of the advisors, especially on the subject of superheroes and how much to include them. Our instinct has been to not feature them, because they are so well covered in other documentaries. Jeremy Dauber argued that, “given the corporate nature of superhero comics, it’s hard for them to serve as vehicles for individual expression.” Rebecca Wanzo talked about the importance of *Black Panther*, which we have written about in the humanities themes, but she felt other genres deserved more attention. Charles Hatfield warned that if we focused overly much on superheroes, we’d miss the “slew of other genres, including adventure fiction; Westerns and war stories; funny animals and other children’s humor comics; teenage-themed humor in the Archie vein; science fiction; morally improving, adult-sanctioned comics; and outrageous, less-approved genres such as crime, horror, and scurrilous satire à la Mad.” In the end, we agreed to downplay the superheroes so that we could tell stories that are fresh and new to most people.

K. Distribution Plan and Audiences

Kaboom! How Comics Changed America will be the first series to bring together the rich and varied history of comics in America. It is also the first in-depth look at the world beyond the superheroes that most people know. Our attention will be on the early comic strips, EC Comics, alternative comics, and graphic novels, and in understanding them in the context of social and historical events in America.

We are confident that *Kaboom! How Comics Changed America* will have a national primetime broadcast on PBS. The most likely outlets are American Masters at WNET New York, which is premiering director Galay’s new film on Saul Bellow, or American Experience at WGBH Boston, which has shown Kathryn Dietz’ films on Eleanor Roosevelt and Mary Pickford. Together, our team has a tremendous track record, producing and placing nearly 20 hours of national prime time programming on PBS.

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We also anticipate a strong world market for *Kaboom! How Comics Changed America*. Asaf Galay has placed at least 50 hours of programming on Israeli Television, and has shown his films in Poland, France, and Japan.

Today comics are a more than billion-dollar-a-year business, with hundreds of thousands of passionate fans. During production, we will work to attract these audiences, with a website that includes comics and interviews with cartoonists who drew them or can speak about them. We will also reach out to the passionate fans of manga, which has outsold and out-influenced almost all DC and Marvel comics over the past twenty years.

We believe that *Kaboom! How Comics Changed America* will be widely used in educational settings. Certainly all of our humanities advisors will want to use them in their classrooms. We will work with a distributor such as Kino Lorber in New York or Documentary Educational Resources in Boston to place the films in educational markets, and during development will look for an agent to help us find other distribution partners. Our aim is to disseminate the film as widely as possible, including via electronic media; we will work with our distributors to make this happen.

L. Project Evaluation

(applies only to Production applications)

M. Fundraising Plan & Project Costs

For the development phase, we are asking the Endowment for \$75,000, out of a total budget of \$99,405. To meet the shortfall will approach several other funders who we know have an interest in comics and cartoons. Our intention is to raise funds to make up the shortfall, while establishing relationships that will allow us to return to (or apply to) targeted funders for production funding in 2022.

There are two foundations created in memories of cartoonists that look promising: the Herblock Foundation named for political cartoonist Herb Block, and the Charles Addams Foundation named for Charles Addams. We are exploring the Swann Foundation for Caricature and Cartoons, as well as the Hobson/Lucas Family Foundation, knowing that George Lucas, Jr. is a huge collector of comic art. We will also explore Canvas, a Jewish funders network whose mission is to “elevate the ecosystem of Jewish arts & culture in North America” by supporting creative Jewish artists and secular media. As both the producer and director are based in Massachusetts, we will also apply to the Massachusetts Cultural Council and possibly to the Mass Foundation for the Humanities.

At the end of the development phase we will return to the NEH for production funding. Knowing that we will need additional funds for a three-part series, we will also look to American and international broadcasters for completion funding.

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N. Work Plan

Because we are submitting this proposal during a time of uncertainty because of the global pandemic, we have decided to stretch the work over a full year, rather than condense it to the six months typically needed for development. This builds in plenty of time for us to finish other work that has been stalled by the pandemic, and allows for some flexibility in the schedules of everyone with whom we will work on this project.

We plan to begin in July 2021 and finish a year later, in July 2022, submitting a production funding application to the NEH in August of 2022.

The team will meet with potential interviewees, cartoonists, collectors and others who may be helpful during production, in person when possible but otherwise by phone and Zoom. We will hire an archivist to do preliminary archival research, set up a database, and begin assessing costs to use the sources we want. We will write new, detailed scripts for each episode based on the preinterviews and visuals collected, and will work with our humanities advisors to deepen the themes that are the intellectual backbone of the series. Our nonprofit partner, Filmmakers Collaborative, will help us with all programmatic, financial, and legal issues.

A detailed Work Plan can be found in Attachment 5 of this proposal.

O. Organizational Profile

Filmmakers Collaborative is the lead applicant for this proposal, and as the nonprofit entity it will be the recipient of record and assume all programmatic, financial, and legal responsibilities associated with the award. Kathryn Dietz Productions LLC is the independent production company partnering with FC on this series. Kathryn Dietz is a longtime filmmaker member of FC and was the organization's executive director for four years, so is very familiar with the strengths that FC brings to the table for *Kaboom! How Comics Changed America*.

According to FC's current executive director, Laura Azevedo, "We are excited to help advance the work of Kathryn Dietz and Asaf Galay in making this wonderful series! We have worked with them on their *Cartooning America* film and are impressed with their professionalism, talent, and the integrity that they bring to any subject they tackle." She further writes that FC will monitor our activities as necessary to ensure that NEH funding is used for authorized purposes, in compliance with all federal statutes, legislative requirements, regulations, and the terms and conditions, and that clear performance goals are achieved. She has also offered to organize screenings with other FC filmmaker members as needed.

P. Social Media and Audience-Generated content

At this early stage we have no plans for social media or audience-generated components to this series.

Attachment 2: TREATMENT

The following Treatment lays out the narrative thread that we will follow in each episode in our series, Kaboom! How Comics Changed America. At this preliminary stage, we have not included preinterviews or extensive visuals; during the development period we will conduct preinterviews and finish archival research, and then weave these elements into detailed scripts for each episode.

This series will offer a broad and inclusive treatment of the many genres that have defined American comics, with a particular emphasis on those that are lesser-known, especially underground and alternative comics, and the current wave of creator-owned, creator-driven content. This means that our focus will not be on the superheroes who have helped expand and define the industry; they have already been the subject of many documentary films.

Episode 1: From Box to Strip: Changing the Political World

The world of comics began with one-frame cartoons, most of them on political subjects. They were popular with readers and boosted circulation of papers, prompting editors to hire more artists to create more cartoons, and eventually have them serialized into strips with continuing stories on an ever-wider range of subjects.

The very first American cartoon was published by Benjamin Franklin in his *Philadelphia Gazette* in May 1754. It was an image of a snake cut into eight pieces and titled “Join, or Die.” The snake represented the first American colonies, and its message, reinforced by Franklin’s editorial, was that the colonies needed to unite or they would not survive French expansion into North America. The image went “viral,” reprinted in more than half a dozen other colonial newspapers. Franklin also mailed a copy, along with his editorial, to a merchant who got it to London. Viewing colonial unity as a threat to their control, British politicians sent their own army to fight in the conflict that became known as the French and Indian War.

The cartoon took on a life of its own: an early meme. The severed snake became a symbol of protest against Britain’s unfair taxation. It became part of the masthead of *The Massachusetts Spy* newspaper. “Join, or Die” became the battle cry of the American Revolution a few years later. And this early cartoon persists even today, the subject of new comics including one that we have attached in the Images section of this proposal.

Nearly 75 years later, Thomas Nast became known as the “father of the American cartoon.” German born, Nast drew some of America’s most enduring symbols: the Republican elephant, the Democratic donkey, and Uncle Sam. He was a staff artist for *Harper’s Weekly* during the Civil War, and created powerful cartoons that championed the dignity of black people and urged all men to join the Union army – prompting President Abraham Lincoln to call him his “best recruiting sergeant.”

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After the War, Nast led a crusade against political corruption, attacking Democratic “Boss” Tweed and his Tammany Hall cronies, who were accused of stealing \$200 million from the public coffers. The New York Times reported this figure, but it was Nast’s cartoons showing a bloated Tweed with a money bag for a head that made the news more compelling and kept the public focused on Tweed and his ring of friends. In a quote that became legendary, Tweed complained, “I don’t care a straw for your newspaper articles, my constituents don’t know how to read, but they can’t help seeing them damned pictures.”

Under increasing pressure, some of Tweed’s associates eventually fled the country and his political machine fell apart. In one last cartoon in late 1871, Nast drew Tweed as a defeated Roman emperor seated among the ruins of his empire.

Nast also went after the Catholic church. He drew the Pope and other clergy atop St. Peter’s Basilica, peering out at America as their next conquest. He drew a priest trying to convert a recently freed African-American family, but hiding shackles behind his back to enslave them again. In another, the bishops are alligators snapping at defenseless school children. Nast also hated Mormons, and drew them as foreign reptiles. These cartoons would not have been as widely popular if people disagreed with them, shedding light on the social prejudices that existed in America in the late 1800s.

Political cartoonists Tom Toles and Ann Telnaes, both of the Washington Post, will comment on Nast’s work as a caricaturist, and on the power of his work. Joe Sacco, a comics journalist and writer of political graphic narratives, will comment on why the medium of comics is particularly good for making political statements and changing peoples’ minds.

Austrian-born Joseph Keppler was a contemporary of Nast and founder of *Puck*, America’s first successful humor magazine. Keppler drew most of the cartoons himself, which were famous for both their caustic depictions of political figures and their beautiful color lithography. Keppler’s caricatures of President Ulysses S. Grant helped ordinary voters understand the depths of his corruption. But he had a special animosity to the Jews, and in 1881 published a two-page color cartoon called “The Modern Moses,” with Uncle Sam cleaving the waters of the Atlantic to allow top-hatted, bearded, hook-nosed Jews to cross over to the “land of promise,” as America was described at the time. Keppler drew this cartoon with Frederick Burr Opper, another anti-semitic Austrian.

Al Jaffee, a longtime contributor to Mad magazine, will analyze Keppler’s work on Puck. Jaffee, who is Jewish, will also comment on complex questions of Jewish anti-Semitic visual depiction. And Bob Mankoff, who was cartoon editor of The New Yorker for nearly twenty years and is the author of many books, including “Have I Got a Cartoon for You! The Moment Magazine Book of Jewish Cartoons, will add his thoughts to this subject.

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As people clamored for more cartoons, newspapers created Sunday supplements of comics and magazines put out comic weeklies, and the single-frame cartoon became the sequential narratives we now call comic strips. The first commercially successful comic strip was *Hogan's Alley*, created by Richard Outcault in 1895. It featured a character known as "The Yellow Kid," a bald, barefoot street urchin whose thoughts and words were written on his yellow nightshirt.

The strip ran in *New York World*, a paper published by Joseph Pulitzer, a Hungarian Jew who had moved to the U.S. at age seventeen. Comic strips helped grow the circulation of his paper from 15,000 to 600,000, making it the largest newspaper in the country, and Pulitzer a media giant.

One of his chief rivals was William Randolph Hearst, whose papers were known for their sensationalism. The Pulitzer-Hearst rivalry shaped the history of news at the end of the 19th century, and the world of comics. Hearst outspent Pulitzer and lured away Outcault to draw *The Yellow Kid* for his own *New York Journal*. The tug of war over this comic strip eventually inspired the term "yellow journalism."

Ben Katchor, whose comics are also set in early 20th century New York City, will introduce the Outcault landscape, while Garry Trudeau, whose Doonesbury comic strip has run in newspapers since the 1970s, will explain why newspapers are the perfect medium for comics, and will never be separated from them.

The cartoonist George Herriman elevated the medium and became a big influence on artists in the later underground comics movement. He was raised in New Orleans by mixed-race Creole parents, and was the first person to create a funny cat and mouse cartoon, *Krazy Kat*, in 1913, six years before Felix the Cat and fifteen years before Mickey Mouse. Herriman's strip was funny, featuring a simple-minded cat named Krazy and his unrequited love for a bad-tempered mouse, Ignatz, who despised him. There were bold colors and scenery of the rural Southwest, and the heavy dialects of New Orleans. It was one of the first comic strips to be praised by intellectuals as serious art. According to cartoonist Edward Sorel, *Krazy Kat's* lack of popularity owed more to his publisher (Hearst)'s editorial policies and the "lowbrow" readership at whom he aimed his papers, than to Herriman's style.

We will interview Edward Sorel, Robert Crumb and Chris Ware, all of whom can talk about Herriman's influence on their own work.

By the 1930s, the world of comic strips was exploding, with new cartoonists upping the level of the art form, and funny new strips, some of which have lasted nearly a century. The first of these was Alfred Caplin, who worked under the name Al Capp. Born in Connecticut of Latvian Jews, Caplin recalled that his family was so poor, his mother would go out at night and sift through ash barrels looking for bits of reusable coal. The strip he launched in 1934, *L'il Abner*, featured the Yokum clan who lived in the fictional town of Dogpatch, USA. It was the first comic strip set in the rural South, and with its ramshackle log cabins, barefoot and buxom women, and blood feuds, its syndication in 28 countries shaped the way the world viewed the American

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South, according to M. Thomas Inge, author of *Comics as Culture*. As a socially-aware comic strip that featured an American family, observing and mocking politics, business, and the media, *L'il Abner* was a forerunner of family strips like *For Better or Worse*, *Stone Soup*, and *Baldo*, and humorous and trenchant strips like *Pogo*.

Matt Groening, creator of The Simpsons, will comment on the development of the all-American family as seen in comics and later extended to other media.

Milt Gross also came from a Jewish immigrant family, and brought street talk to the comics. In his strips including *Count Screwloose of Tooloose*, about a man who escaped from an insane asylum, *Dave's Delicatessen*, *Otto and Blotto*, and *Draw Your Own Conclusion*, readers were introduced to the New York slang of immigrant groups, mostly Yiddish. But Gross is most remembered for elevating comics to the world of literature, creating a graphic novel decades before the term was even invented. His 1930 masterpiece was a 300-page parody of popular novels, called *He Done Her Wrong: The Great American Novel and Not a Word in It – No Music, Too*. His way of competing with the high art of literature was to laugh about it in the style of Jewish comedians.

We will speak with cartoonists Ben Katchor and Liana Finck about Gross' influence on their work, and with Art Spiegelman, who won the Pulitzer Prize for his graphic novel Maus. He says that it was Gross who helped him decide to write his father's dialogue in heavily accented Yiddish-English.

Jews have always had an outsized role in the comics industry, in part because in the beginning it was a “crap medium” according to Will Eisner, with low barriers to entry. But comics attracted artists of legendary skill and humor. Reuben Lucius Goldberg was one of them: an inventor, engineer, sculptor, writer, and cartoonist, known to the world as Rube Goldberg.

Goldberg's screwball comic strips appealed to the children and immigrants readers of the newspapers of his day. One was *The Inventions of Professor Lucifer Gorgonzola Butts, A.K.*. He said that he modeled Professor Butts on a couple of college professors he had met at the University of California's Mining and Engineering College from 1901-1903, but Butts was clearly also an alter ego for Goldberg himself. As Goldberg described him in an unpublished memoir, Butts “invented elaborate machines to accomplish such Herculean tasks as shining shoes, opening screen doors, keeping moths out of clothes closets, retrieving soup in the bathtub, and other innocuous problems. Only instead of using the scientific elements of the laboratory, he added acrobatic monkeys, dancing mice, chattering false teeth, electric eels, and other incongruous elements.”

The contraptions Goldberg drew were so visual and filled with motion that they were perfect for movies. His friend Charlie Chaplin created a Goldberg-style lunch-feeding machine in his *Modern Times* movie. In *Soup to Nuts*, a movie that Goldberg wrote, there is an anti-burglar device that foreshadowed the one Kevin McCallister would build in the *Home Alone* movies many years later.

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Cartoonist Roz Chast will talk about Rube Goldberg, and what it is like to have a “cartoon point of view” of the world. Like Goldberg, Chast has not limited herself: she is a cartoonist for the New Yorker, a graphic novelist, and a contributor to Scientific American and the Harvard Business Review. She is inspired by Goldberg’s drawings, inventions, and political cartoons.

By the late 1930s, many popular comic strips were being refashioned into animated films: *Popeye* and *Little Orphan Annie* in 1932, *Flash Gordon* in 1936, *Blondie* in 1938, and then *L’il Abner* and *Little Lulu* in 1940. With their success, more new artists joined the fray, creating a new genre of comics that would soon overtake them all: superheroes.

Episode 2: Comic Books and the Transformation of a Medium

Comic strips had long helped sell newspapers, but in 1930s they began to be viable on their own. George Delacorte, founder of Dell Publishing, had an unsentimental view of how comics fit into his publishing world. “First we publish a group of magazines ...which are read by more or less literate people,” he wrote. “Then we publish a group of pulp paper magazines which are read by less literate people ... Third, we publish a group of magazines called comics for children between the ages of about 3 and 8, who have not yet learned to read, who perhaps mumble with their lips as they read.” His first prototype comic book, culled from the Sunday comics, was called *The Funnies* and priced at ten cents.

Harry Wildenberg, a sales manager at Eastern Color Printing, which printed most of the Sunday comic strips, wondered if comics might be used to sell other commodities, too. His employee, Maxwell Gaines, tested the theory, getting their client, Proctor & Gamble, to agree to a new idea: give customers comic books in exchange for coupons clipped from the backs of P&G soaps and other products. Orders poured in.

Gaines and Delacorte then collaborated on a 36-page booklet called *Famous Funnies: A Carnival of Comics*, and Eastern Color printed 100,000 copies of it as an advertising premium for clients such as Canada Dry and Kinney shoe stores.

Advisor Chris Couch writes and teaches about the evolving distribution models for comics, and will comment on these early marketing efforts.

Conventional wisdom held that readers wanted to see tried-and-true strips from their local papers in their comic books. But pulp magazine publisher Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson had a different idea. His National Allied Publications, unable to afford the reprint rights to popular strips, looked for original material. *New Fun*, released in early 1935, was his first anthology of original humor and adventure strips, many of which he wrote himself. Later that year he released *New Comics*, which became *New Adventure Comics* and then just *Adventure Comics*. Detective stories were especially popular, so in 1937 he launched the first issue of *Detective Comics*. But he needed backers to be sustainable.

Wheeler-Nicholson turned to Jack Liebowitz and Harry Donenfeld, owners of the Independent News Company. They were an odd duo: Liebowitz a quiet numbers man and Donenfeld the publisher of girlie pulp magazines so racy that he had been charged with obscenity and nearly jailed. They agreed to help Wheeler-Nicholson on the condition that they got to be partners in his *Adventure Comics* and *Detective Comics* publications. They later also took control of his *Action Comics*, which introduced Superman to the world.

Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster had created Superman while they were still in high school, and for years had tried to market it, unsuccessfully. When Liebowitz approached them, they agreed to sign a contract, even though it meant releasing the copyright, too – not an uncommon practice at that time. On April 18, 1938, Superman debuted on the cover of *Action Comics #1*, and was a

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huge hit. Over the next two years, *Detective Comics* and its sister company, All-American Publications, would introduce more superheroes: Batman and Robin, Wonder Woman, Flash, Green Lantern, and several others. Timely Comics, the predecessor to Marvel Comics, released the Human torch, the Sub-Mariner, and Captain America, their best-seller. During World War II, these caped crusaders stood up for American values and fiercely battled Axis powers. Meanwhile, their creators opened up the comic book page graphically, with dynamic layouts and visual approaches reminiscent of some of the adventure strips that had first appeared in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s.

Advisor Charles Hatfield will comment on the cultural and aesthetic impact of these early superhero comic books.

Superman ushered in what became known as the Golden Age of Comic Books. As comic book sales soared, publishers launched new titles and expanded into a variety of new genres. Dell Comics offered licensed characters including Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and Tarzan, while MLJ Magazines launched its popular *Archie* series in 1941, in *Pep Comics* #22. It featured a group of teenagers – Archie Andrews, Jughead Jones, Veronica Lodge, and Betty Cooper – and led to more teen-based comics.

Maxwell Gaines had been an industry insider for over a decade but is said to have resented the way comics were becoming increasingly commercial. When his partnership with DC ended 1944 he launched a new enterprise called Educational Comics (EC), with the intention of presenting uplifting stories, comic strip versions of the Bible, and great events in American history. It was an unlikely vision for a man whose biographer described him as “hard-nosed, pain-wracked, loud and aggressive.” Three years after beginning EC, Gaines died in a boating accident and left his company to his son William, a college student at the time.

The two had never been close. Max had a vicious temper that frightened his son away. When he died, the company was \$100,000 in debt. Bill kept the company going with a few educational and funny animal lines, but it was doomed to fail – until he brought in two new young Jewish editors, Al Feldstein and Harvey Kurtzman.

They persuaded him to print more mature stories and delve into genres of horror and crime. Horror had seldom been represented in comic books up to that time; the only such title was *Adventures into the Unknown*. Gaines published *War Against Crime* and *Crime Patrol*, each featuring horror stories.

As sales took off, Bill Gaines restructured his entire comic line around horror (*Tales of the Crypt*, *Vault of Horror*), suspense (*Crime Suspensstories*, *Shock Suspensstories*), and science fiction (*Weird Fantasy*, *Weird Science*). He renamed the company Entertaining Comics (still EC), and looked for dark fantasy and comics noted for their high quality and shock endings. When the Korean War started a few months later, in June 1950, Gaines had writer-illustrator Kurtzman edit a line of war titles (*Frontline Combat*, *Two-Fisted Tales*).

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Charles Burns, the creator of twelve-issue horror series of comics called Black Hole (which later became a graphic novel), will discuss the importance of EC Comics and how they influenced his own series. Author Michael Chabon has extensively researched EC, DC, and Marvel and can talk about the rivalry among them. Advisor Jeremy Dauber will talk about Harvey Kurtzman's brilliance and influence in the early days of alternative comics. So can Jules Feiffer, who was doing a lot of anti-war comics around the same time and was a good friend of Kurtzman.

In the summer of 1952, their first issue of *Mad* appeared, the brainchild of Kurtzman, and the first comic book geared to an older audience. *Mad* soon became a must-read for adolescents who took to Kurtzman's subversive brand of humor. When the Korean War ended, Gaines had Feldstein edit *Panic*, a knockoff of *Mad*, and when the first issue included a story about a divorced Santa Claus, it became a scandal that snowballed and contributed to the Senate hearings on the comic book industry.

In 1954, psychiatrist Fredric Wertham published *Seduction of the Innocent*, linking comic book readership with juvenile delinquency. It whipped up hysteria and led to the Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency. Press coverage presented unflattering images of comics and those who made a living off them. Facing a backlash, the largest publishers banded together to create the Comics Magazine Association of America, a trade organization whose members agreed to comply with a "Comics Code" patterned after the Hays Code in the film industry: every story from now on must show positive values, and end with a triumph of good over evil.

Denis Kitchen was the person behind the first the comics book legal defense fund in 1986, and can speak about the Code's influence on creators. Advisor Chris Couch, along with Amy Kiste Nyberg and David Hajdu, have all written extensively about the Code and can share their insights.

There were more superhero comics, but watered down. Many talented cartoonists went underground, to surface again in the underground comics movement of the late 1960s. Gaines, who had become the industry's main scapegoat, cancelled everything but *Mad*, which he transformed into a black-and-white magazine that evaded the Code.

Kurtzman had no intention of being silenced. He left *Mad* and started a new satire magazine with Playboy publisher Hugh Hefner in 1956, called *Trump*. It was a more risqué version of *Mad* and lasted only one issue, but it opened the door to more depictions of sexuality in comics. Kurtzman continued to publish comics aimed at adults, including *Humbug*, *Jungle Book*, and *Help!*, enlisting young cartoonists like Robert Crumb, Gilbert Shelton, and Spain Rodriguez, who would play a major role in the underground comics movement.

Cartoonists Arnold Roth and Mel Brooks, who worked on Trump, will speak about Kurtzman's visionary one-issue magazine. Advisor Jeremy Dauber will talk about the contradictory culture of the alternative comics world, which was liberal and progressive but had no problem with misogyny and targeted exclusions.

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Kurtzman and Hefner had one more collaboration, a strip called *Little Annie Fanny* that ran in *Playboy* from 1962 to 1988. It was a parody of the *Little Orphan Annie* strip, and a satire of American sexual mores, featuring a buxom blonde who innocently found herself nude in every episode. It was praised for its beautiful colored artwork, and as being the first multi-page comics featured in a major American publication, but it went downhill as Hugh Hefner demanded it become ever more explicit and titillating.

Because distributors wouldn't touch anything without the comics code seal on it, underground comics needed other distribution channels. Some were sold on street corners, at alternative bookstores, and by mail. Many more were sold in headshops, where they were less visible to critics.

By the late 1960s, many comics were definitely not aimed at children. Dark and edgy new magazines were called "comix" to suggest adult content. They were avantgarde, political, and taboo-shattering. Cartoonist R. Crumb published one of the first underground comix in 1968, *Zap #1*, with a banner across its cover: "For adult intellectuals only!" He contributed to all sixteen issues, and by his own confession, there was a lot of racism and misogyny. As advisor Jeremy Dauber describes Crumb, "He had a titanic influence on the industry, with his incredible draftsmanship, and fearless unwillingness to let out all the neuroses, fearfulness, anxieties, and weirdness in his head."

Figuring out identity and honest self-expression in comics was a messy business. Many of the comics created in the underground movement were overtly sexual, almost pornographic. "They were breaking taboos, but sometimes in the worst possible way," notes Dauber. "In their steadfast commitment to saying things that had been unsaid, to shock, they created works that are genuinely shocking – and sometimes troubling."

Howard Cruse was the first editor of *Gay Comix*, a series that showcased his own work as well as that of others, including Roberta Gregory and Mary Wings. When the AIDS epidemic hit, he developed *Wendel*, a strip about a man and his lover navigating the early years of this frightening disease. In 1995 Cruse wrote a pioneering graphic novel called *Stuck Rubber Baby*, the story of a closeted gay man in Alabama who becomes involved in the civil rights movement.

"Cruse is a central figure in the history of gay comics," Dauber notes, Especially in presenting gay Americans as part of the thread of American history. While he obviously wasn't the first person to present same-sex, personally oriented stories, he did tremendous work in creating venues for those stories to be heard, and in a public way."

Women also moved from the margins to the mainstream of the industry. In 1970, Trina Robbins and Barbara "Willy" Mendez co-produced *It Aint Me, Babe Comix*, the first all-female comic book. Their all-female anthology, *Wimmen's Comix*, published from 1972 to 1992, was an outlet for other promising female comics artists.

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The first issue featured Robbins' *Sandy Comes Out*, the first comic strip to feature an "out" lesbian. It also featured what is widely regarded as the first women's autobiographic comics story: Aline Kominsky-Crumb's *Goldie: A Neurotic Woman*. As Kominsky-Crumb half-jokingly told advisor Hillary Chute, it earned her the title "grandmother of whiny tell-all comics." *Goldie* had the kind of confessional humor found in television shows like *Girls* and *Fleabag*, and aimed to "deconstruct the myth or romanticism around being a woman," as she put it, showing herself on the toilet and in other unflattering scenes. Very little was held back.

Genres that had been suppressed by the Comics Code of the 1950s began to come back, but with a twist, like horror comics with a political edge, such as *Slow Death* and *Death Rattle*. One of the most influential new genres was autobiography, with stories by R. Crumb and a 1972 comic book by Justin Green, called *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary*, which was an unflinching memoir of his Catholic boyhood and his struggles with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, told with surrealistic imagery.

The Comics Code had forced artists to find ingenious and alternative new ways of distributing their work, including in head shops. But a 1973 Supreme Court decision held that "obscene" material did not enjoy First Amendment protections, and gave local officials the authority to decide what was obscene. Busts at headshops put an end to comic book sales there, which eventually led to the collapse of the underground comix movement. Soon there would be new ideas and models for the industry.

Interviews for this episode will be with Jules Feiffer, who wrote Great Comic Book Heroes, and Chris Ware; both can deconstruct the Superhero comics and place their narratives in the context of the times. We will also speak with those involved in the underground comix movement: Robert Crumb and Aline Kominsky-Crumb; Denis Kitchen; Trina Robbins; Barbara Mendes; Gilbert Shelton; Justin Green; and Gary Panter, among others.

Episode 3: Narrating Lives in Graphic Novels

In this final episode we will interview prominent contemporary cartoonists mentioned below as we talk about their work. They include Daniel Clowes (Ghost World); Chris Ware (Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth); Charles Burns (Black Hole); Alison Bechdel (Fun Home); The Hernandez Brothers; and Allie Brosh, who created the popular web comics, Hyperbole and a Half.

*We will also speak with those influenced by giants of the industry like Will Eisner. Neil Geiman is a graphic novelist who contributed to an anthology about Eisner's *The Spirit*, and can speak about its importance. Eric Drooker can talk about how Eisner's *Contract with God* influenced his own graphic novel about New York and the Occupy Wall Street protests. Miss Lasko-Gross wrote *Escape from "Special"*, a graphic novel about growing up Jewish in the suburbs, and can talk about Eisner's influence on her work. Art Spiegelman can recall the moment in 2001 when the term "graphic novel" was officially accepted as a category in bookselling. "Graphic novels are still comics," he said at the time. "We're just too ashamed to say so."*

Will Eisner is a legend in the world of American comics. He created his first successful company, Eisner & Iger, when he was just nineteen years old, compiling comics on demand for publishers hungry for content. A talented artist, he believed deeply in the value of the comics medium, and wanted to shatter the stereotype that they were primarily for children. His superhero series *The Spirit*, which ran from 1940 to 1952, was unlike anything offered by DC and Marvel, with its sophisticated combination of crime, drama, noir, lighthearted adventure, mystery, horror, comedy, and love.

Eisner's way of thinking and talking about comics had a profound impact on the industry. While he did not coin the term "graphic novel," he certainly promoted it, placing the words "A Graphic Novel" prominently on the cover of his first long and literary work of comic art, *A Contract with God* (1978). The term has been controversial ever since. Creators and publishers have suggested "graphic narrative," comic-book novel," and "graphic memoir" as more accurate, but "graphic novel" persists today, indicating a book of high literary quality that will appeal to adult audiences. Eisner wanted his book sold in the literary section of bookstores, not the comics section. He was inspired by the artists he knew from the underground comix movement, who considered themselves artists in every sense of the world – the first generation to do so. Eisner believed that the finest artists and best novelists would create comics, if only they could sell.

Art Spiegelman had been part of the underground scene, with an anthology, *Arcade*, that was conceived as a "comix magazine for adults." But as the scene was fading away, he despaired about the future. Meanwhile his wife, Francoise Mouly, had set up a printing press in their fourth-floor loft in Soho, and was experimenting with different bindings and printing techniques for her own small publishing company, Raw Books & Graphics. The two decided to co-edit a magazine – which they called *Raw* – that would be an outlet for younger American and

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European cartoonists who did not feature superheroes or any of the prevailing subjects, and were having trouble getting published. They experimented with size, creating both oversized and minicomics; stylistic moves like ripping off and taping a corner of the cover gave *Raw* cachet and a place in the art world – another step towards adult respectability.

Spiegelman began working on his own comics series, *Maus*, about his father's experience in the Holocaust. It was published serially in *Raw*, creating a buzz that led to an offer from Pantheon, who in 1986 published the first half as a graphic novel, years before the whole was done. It was completed in 1991 and won the Pulitzer Prize in 1992 – a huge new step in respectability for comics. It also sold over a million copies, was translated into over 40 languages, and was exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

Many comic artists who began their careers with *Raw* went on to success. Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth* won the Guardian First Book Prize in 2001, becoming the first graphic novel to win a British literary award. A poignant father-son story, it includes fold-out instructions, paper cut-outs, and other features that made it the subject of a Yale monograph in design. Charles Burns created *Black Hole*, a twelve-issue series about a plague affecting suburban teens and spread by sexual contact that won numerous Harvey Awards, an Ignatz Award from the Small Press Expo in 2006, and was voted "third best foreign comic book" in Japan some years later.

Graphic novels began to proliferate with the rise of independent publishers, such as Kitchen Sink Press and later Fantagraphics Books. But another innovation – the beginning of the direct marketing system and specialized comic book stores – drove the industry into high gear.

In the late 1970s, a high school teacher and comics fan named Phil Seuling came up with the idea of buying comics directly from publishers such as DC and Marvel, and distributing them to individual comics dealers and comic book stores. In exchange for a huge discount, he promised the publishers that he would not return the unsold comic books – an industry practice that resulted in tremendous losses for publishers. This innovation made comic book stores successful, and encouraged devoted fans, who could now find particular issues to any comics in their favorite series. Advisor Chris Couch notes, "Comics is the only field in which those who cared about the literary medium created their own distribution and sales network to keep it alive. They weren't doing it to become millionaires; they did it out of love."

The comic shop system, and the diversity of formats that publishers could now offer – comic books, magazines, books – provided a fertile environment for experimentation and new multi-platform offerings. At Fantagraphics, for example, Daniel Clowe's *Eightball* series spun off a graphic novel called *Ghost World*, based on issues #11-17, which became a cult classic when it was made into a film in 2001. The *Love and Rockets* series by Los Bros Hernandez, as Jamie and Gilbert Hernandez were known, also broke new ground. Based in the fictional Central American village of Palomar, the series treated Mexican-American culture with sensitivity and candor, defying the longstanding masculine bias of comic books by focusing on strong and complex female characters.

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For years, Alison Bechdel had been known for her 1980s comic strip, *Dykes to Watch Out For*, and in the strip, her characters created the “Bechdel Test,” still used to measure representations of women in fiction and film. In 2006 Houghton Mifflin published her graphic novel *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*, which told the story of growing up gay in rural Pennsylvania with a closeted father who later committed suicide. *Fun Home* was adapted into a Broadway musical in 2013, winning three Tony Awards including Best Musical. In 2014, Bechdel was awarded a MacArthur Foundation Genius Grant, only the second cartoonist to be so honored (after Ben Katchor in 2000).

Children’s comics, a staple of the industry from the 1920s to the 70s, had all but disappeared when comic books moved from the newsstands to comic book shops. But in the 1990s, as Japanese manga flooded into bookstores, popularized by new anime series on TV, young readers rediscovered comics and U.S. publishers took notice. Scholastic Books launched its Graphix line in 2005. Among its first successes were graphic novel adaptations of the popular *Baby-Sitters’ Club*, aimed at middle-school readers, and Jeff Smith’s funny fantasy series *Bone*, which had been originally published for adults but become a multimillion seller in the children’s market.

Today, graphic novels for children and young adults are a huge and growing market. Raina Telgemeier is a superstar in this world, known for her autobiographic *Smile*, published by Graphix in 2011. *Smile* recalls her years of dental and orthodontic surgery and humiliation at school. Telgemeier illustrated several of the *Baby-Sitter’s Club* graphic novels, and has a huge following among middle schoolers. A memoir by Jerry Craft recently made history by becoming the first graphic novel to win the Caldecott Award, the most prestigious honor in illustrated children’s books, and be honored by the American Library Association. Craft’s book, *New Kid*, tells the story of a boy starting over at a new school where diversity is low and the struggle to fit in is real. The book jacket touts it as “perfect for fans of Raina Telgemeier”

In 2018, Random House launched Random House Graphic, becoming the latest major New York publisher to create an in-house graphic novel imprint. Its website touts its mission to “put a graphic novel on the bookshelf of every child and YA reader,” which means it is hungry for content. Editors compete to sign the most promising titles, and literary agents prowl independent comics shows like SPX, Comic Arts Brooklyn, and the Society of Illustrators’ MoCCA Festival, seeking their next successful project.

Meanwhile Comics Studies has exploded as a popular program at academic institutions across the world, with undergraduate and graduate degrees possible in Comics & Cartoon Studies, Graphic Narratives, Comics Research, Comics & Sequential Art, and many related fields. There are nearly a dozen new scholarships and awards available for comic creators today, and an increasing number of scholarly journals dedicated to comics studies. Arguably this began in 2009, when advisor Hillary Chute founded the first discussion group on Comics and Graphic Narratives at the Modern Language Association, helping to create Comics Studies as an academic field. Advisor Charles Hatfield notes that the Comics Studies course he founded in the

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English Department at California State University Northridge used to be offered once a year, then twice, now five to six times per semester, “and it consistently fills to capacity.” And advisor Ilan Stavans adds, “With new books every month, new journals, and new stories featuring the diversity of superheroes, Jews, Blacks, Latinos, Asians, LBGTQ, and every other kind of person you can imagine, Comics Studies is a flourishing field.”

Attachment 3: WORK SAMPLES

We are submitting three films directed by Asaf Galay as work samples. The first, about writer Saul Bellow, was also funded by the NEH, with Kathryn Dietz as an executive producer.

The Adventures of Saul Bellow

The winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, three National Book Awards and the Pulitzer Prize, Saul Bellow transformed modern literature. He illuminated 20th century American life with his philosophical depth and wild sense of humor. Some of the greatest American writers alive today credit him as their main inspiration. Far from an easy hero, Bellow also offended the social sensibilities of many readers, wreaked havoc in personal relationships, and left a trail of unanswered questions in his wake. *The Adventures of Saul Bellow* is the first-ever documentary about him. Winner of the Ken Burns/Library of Congress prize, the film will premiere in 2021 on American Masters/PBS.

<https://vimeo.com/383226289>

PW: (b) (4)

The Muses of Bashevis Singer

Isaac Bashevis Singer, the famous Yiddish writer and Nobel Prize winner, earned his worldwide literary reputation with the help of dozens of Yiddish translators, almost all of them women. These translators were a vital source of his creativity. The inspiration he drew from them came in many forms: friendship, plot material, critique, cultural guidance, and sometimes romance. Intimate, poignant interviews with nine of these remaining translators combine with exclusive archival footage in this film about an author who charmed and enchanted his audiences as he did his translators. This film opened the 2015 Jewish Film Festival in New York and has been shown on television in Israel, Poland, and Japan, and in festivals around the world.

www.vimeo.com/108772809

Password: (b) (4)

3. The Hebrew Superhero

This film traces the little-known history of Israeli comics, from the medium's humble and messy roots to the modern-day characters created by Dudu Geva, Rutu Modan, and Etgar Keret. Often imitating American comics, artists redefined the superhero for Israeli and Jewish contexts. Featuring brilliant uses of animation and interviews with many of these artists, the film is a must for comic book fans and followers of Israeli indie culture. It premiered as the opening film at the Epos Festival in Tel Aviv in 2015, has been featured at Jewish film festivals around the world, and won the audience award at a comics festival in Israel.

<https://vimeo.com/124197219>

Password: (b) (4)

Attachment 4: WORK PLAN

As described in the Narrative portion of this application, we are planning for a full year of development instead of the usual six months, because of delays and other obstacles anticipated as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Our intention is to complete all the work before the NEH summer round for proposals, and submit a production funding application in August 2022.

During this year of work, we will meet with potential interviewees, cartoonists, collectors and others who may be helpful during production, in person and/or by phone and Zoom. We will hire an archivist to do preliminary archival research, set up a database, and begin assessing costs to use the sources we want. We will write new, detailed scripts for each episode based on the preinterviews and visuals collected, working with our humanities advisors to deepen the themes that are the intellectual underpinnings of each film. Our nonprofit partner, Filmmakers Collaborative, will help us with all programmatic, financial, and legal issues along the way.

July - September 2021

Begin development phase in early July. Consult with humanities advisors to solicit their thoughts on interviews, archival resources, and new scholarship. Plan travel as needed for preinterviews. Hire an archivist and begin archival research. Begin new content research, and set up databases to track resources.

October - December 2021

Travel to New York, Washington, D.C., Illinois, Michigan, California, and Washington state, where the main cartoonists we want to interview live, to do preinterviews and evaluate them as characters for the film. Where possible, these preinterviews will be done by Skype and Zoom. Archival work as well can be mostly done online; in cases where that is not possible, our archivist will travel and establish relationships at the major archives. He/she will also explore rights and costs for resources we may want. Identify partnerships with potential agents, broadcasters and distributors, both in the U.S. and abroad.

January - February 2022

Plan a few short interviews to shoot, to test the creative approach to the film. Some of these will be with humanities scholars. Seek their input as we expand upon storylines for each episode.

March - May 2022

Shoot in studio against green screen to test creative approach. Edit into short teaser and send to potential agents and other distribution partners. Begin writing NEH new production proposal, with input from advisory board.

June – July 2022

Complete preliminary content and archival research, preinterviews, and script development. Create production budgets. Begin fundraising, including finishing production proposal to the NEH.

Attachment 5: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aldama, Frederick (ed). *The Oxford Handbook of Comic Book Studies*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Baskind, Samantha, Omer-Sherman, Ranen (ed). *The Jewish Graphic Novel: Critical Approaches*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008.

Beaty, Bart, Hatfield, Charles (ed). *Comics Studies: A Guidebook*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2020.

Buhle Paul, Denis Kitchen (ed). *The Art of Harvey Kurtzman: The Mad Genius of Comics*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2009.

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Chute, Hillary. *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016.

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Cohn, Neil. *The Visual Language of Comics: Introduction to the Structure and Cognition of Sequential Images*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Fawaz, Ramzi. *The New Mutants: Superheroes and the Radical Imagination of American Comics*. New York: New York University Press, 2016.

Garcia, Enrique. *The Hernandez Brothers: Love, Rockets, and Alternative Comics*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017.

Goldstein, Nancy. *Jackie Ormes: The First African American Woman Cartoonist*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008.

Hall, Justin. *No Straight Lines: Four Decades of Queer Comics*. Seattle: Fantagraphics, 2014.

Hatfield, Charles. *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005.

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Heer, Jeet, Worcester Kent (ed). *Arguing Comics: Literary Masters on a Popular Medium*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005.

Jones, Gerard. *Men of Tomorrow: Geeks, Gangsters, and the Birth of the Comic Book*. New York: Basic books, 2004.

Kelman, Ari Y., ed. *Is Diss a System?: A Milt Gross Comic Reader*. New York: NYU Press, 2010

Kunzle, David. *Father of the Comic Strip: Rodolphe Töpffer*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007.

McAllister, Matthew, Sewell, Edward H, Gordon, Ian (ed)., *Comics and Ideology*. New York: Peter Lang, 2001.

McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics*. New York, HarperCollins, 1993.

Miodrag, Hannah (ed). *Comics and Language: Reimagining Critical Discourse on the Form*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013.

Pekar, Harvey, Buhle Paul (ed). *Yiddishkeit: Jewish Vernacular and the New Land*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2011.

Rosen, Alan. "The Language of Survival: English As Metaphor in Spiegelman's *Maus*." *Prooftexts* 15, no. 3 (1995): 249-62.

Royal, Derek Parker. *Visualizing Jewish Narrative: Jewish Comics and Graphic Novels*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.

Schumacher, Michael, Kitchen, Denis (ed). *Al Capp: A Life to the Contrary*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Spiegelman, Art. *MetaMaus: A Look Inside a Modern Classic, Maus*. New York: Pantheon, 2011.

Stavans, Ilan, Lambert, Josh (eds). *How Yiddish Changed America and How America Changed Yiddish*. Amherst, Restless Books. 2020.

Wanzo, Rebecca. *The Content of Our Caricature: African American Comic Art and Political Belonging*. New York: New York University Press, 2020.

Weiner, Stephen. *Faster Than a Speeding Bullet: The Rise of the Graphic Novel*. New York: NBM Publishing, 2012.

Whaley, Deborah Elizabeth. *Black Women in Sequence: Re-inking Comics, Graphic Novels, and Anime*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016.

Whitted, Qiana. *EC Comics: Race, Shock, and Social Protest*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2019.

Attachment 6: RESUMES AND LETTERS OF COMMITMENT

Below please find resumes and documentation of commitment from the following people:

MEDIA TEAM

Asaf Galay, Director

Kathryn Dietz, Writer & Producer

Avner Shahaf, Cinematographer

HUMANITIES ADVISORS

Paul Buhle, Retired Senior Lecturer, Brown University

Hillary Chute, Professor of English and Art and Design at Northeastern University

N.C. Christopher Couch, Professor of Comparative Literature, U Massachusetts, Amherst.

Neil Cohn, Associate Professor, Tilburg University, School of Humanities & Digital Design, and Department of Communication and Cognition

Jeremy Dauber, Atran Professor of Yiddish Language, Literature, and Culture at Columbia University

Charles Hatfield, Professor of English at California State University, Northridge

Ian Stavans, Lewis-Sebring Professor of Latin American and Latino Culture at Amherst College

Rebecca Wanzo, Professor and Chair of the Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Washington University in St. Louis

PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT

Filmmakers Collaborative, Melrose, MA

Director's Letter of Commitment

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my great honor to submit the project proposal for a three-part documentary series on the history of American comics. My enthusiasm derives from the timing of this project in relation to current events: Now is a time of great interest in the comic arts as well as in the political struggles explored within this genre. I believe that American and world audiences will be eager to hear how this alternate genre rose to prominence, mostly thanks to a group of social and artistic outsiders who insisted on telling their stories in the form that they wanted.

But, my enthusiasm is also very personal. Comics combines my two greatest passions—visual arts and literature. As a museum curator at The Museum of the Jewish People in Tel Aviv, I am constantly thinking about how images communicate with people. Over the past few years, I have been proud to curate original photography exhibits, like that on David Seymour, as well as educational exhibits, such as one on Jewish humor, which more than half a million people have seen.

As a documentary film maker, I am also focused on visual language, and how one frame can change an entire narrative. Film has also provided me with a means of expressing my love of literature. To date, I have been proud to direct films on Nathan Alterman, Isaac Bashevis Singer and Saul Bellow. Coming closer to the topic of this proposal, I also directed a film called *The Hebrew Superhero* about Israeli comics. This was an incredibly gratifying project, one that left me thirsty to take work on this topic further and on a larger scale. Creating a documentary television series about American comics will provide me with just such an opportunity.

At different moments in my life, I have drawn special inspiration from Jewish graphic novelists, like Will Eisner and Art Spiegelman, who have done pathbreaking work in sharing Jewish histories and life narratives with the world. Graphic novels have also provided me with a window onto the lives of people whose experiences differ from my own. The works of Lynda Barry, Chris Ware and the Hernandez Brothers have been especially formative in this regard. Somehow, the graphic format helps to put me in someone else's shoes, invites me into their history.

Graphic novels create a bridge between people with different narratives. I also see them as a critical bridge between generations. While I am reading novels by some of the names mentioned above, I often notice that (b) (6) has a stack of graphic novels next to her bed as well, with books by artists like Raina Telgemeier, Vera Brosgol, Cece Bell and Kayla Miller. As of now, (b) (6) people her age do not have ready access to the story that connects these generations of graphic novelists. I believe that a carefully crafted documentary series will help fill in that gap and show the meaningful links between these different artists and their audiences. That story is about how an idea, an artistic genre developed over time. But it is also a broad story about American history.

Lastly, I love the history of American comic arts because it is a story of a group of outsiders who, thanks to their own tenacity and artistic commitments, managed to surprise the world and achieve something big. American comic arts began as a low-brow, marginal undertaking, dismissed by publishers and intellectuals alike. Now, graphic novels and other comic genres are highly sought after for commercial publishing and admired for their intellectual insights. I am eager to tell the story of how this revolution happened, and how that changed the American social landscape.

Sincerely,

Asaf Galay
Director

Curriculum Vitae – Asaf Galay

Personal Details

Name: Asaf Galay

Date of Birth: (b) (6)

Residence: (b) (6)

Email: (b) (6)

Telephone: (b) (6)

Education

Master of Arts in Yiddish Literature, Bar Ilan University

Documentary Filmmaker – Director / Screenwriter

2021 *Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story* Funded by NEH

2020 *The Adventures of Saul Bellow* – PBS/American Masters

Funded by NEH, Winner of Ken Burns/Library of Congress Prize

2018 *Army of Lovers in the Holy Land* – Winner of Haifa International Film Festival

2017 *Hasidstock* – 6 episode documentary series about Jewish pop starts in the Ultra-Orthodox community

2015 *The Hebrew Superhero* – The history of comics in Israel

2014 *The Muses of Bashevis Singer* – The Story of the Yiddish writer and his female translators

2012 *Its Okay to be Sentimental* – A journey with the grandson of poet Nathan Alterman

2010 *Fashion Rules* - 6 episode documentary series on the history of fashion in Israel

2009 *Tel Aviv - Yaffo* - 3 episodes series on the history of Tel Aviv-Yaffo

2004 *The Jewish State – The Story of Israeli Humor* – 11 episode documentary series

Museum Curator

Beit Hatfutsot – the Museum of the Jewish People

-curator of exhibits on Jewish Humor, David Seymour, Jewish Fashion Designers, Amy Winehouse, Bob Dylan.

Helping the Community

Leading figure in the revival of Yiddish in Israel including:

- Organiser and Founder of the Next Generation for Yiddish cultural and language movement
- Co-Designer of the first Yiddish language education program in Israeli state schools outside of the ultra-orthodox system

Producer Letter of Commitment

To: NEH Panelists and Staff

Fr: Kathryn Dietz, Producer & Project Director

Dt: 4 August 2020

Re: Kaboom! How Comics Changed America

Dear NEH Panelists and Staff,

I am delighted to confirm my involvement as producer and project director of *Kaboom! How Comics Changed America*. I grew up reading comics and still have a stack of old Mad magazines and other comics from my childhood. I spent every summer at Lake Winnepesaukee, and a highlight of each week was taking the boat to the Weirs and buying the latest Little Lotta, Richie Rich, Lulu, Casper, and Archie comics. Bob Montana, who drew the Archie comics, lived right down the street from us in Meredith, NH; he was our local celebrity.

When Asaf Galay told me that he wanted to do a series about comics, I jumped at the chance to help him. For one thing, we have worked very successfully together on two other films, *The Adventures of Saul Bellow* which will air soon on PBS, and *Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story*, which we hope to finish as soon as the pandemic lifts. I love his artistic sensibilities and the intelligence and integrity that he brings to his films.

I also love this subject! Until I started doing the research, I knew very little about the history of comics or about the outsiders and outcasts who shaped the medium and told their own versions of the American story. I somehow had also never read a graphic novel, besides the recent ones by Roz Chast. Since working on this series, I have read Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, works by Lynda Barry and so many others. They are powerful, heartbreaking, brilliant, and I am eager to tell the world about them, through our films.

The humanities advisors for this project have all been more than helpful, and I attribute this to their passion for the subject. It is one that I know will engage viewers, and open up a new way of understanding our crazy world.

Sincerely,

Kathryn

Kathryn Dietz

Kathryn Dietz

(b) (6) | (b) (6)

WRITER | PRODUCER

Kaboom: How Comics Changed America

Current

After working with director Asaf Galay as writer and producer or executive producer for his films on Max Fleischer and Saul Bellow, I happily agreed to develop this new series with him, on the history of comics in America. I wrote this development proposal to the NEH and will produce the film when funded.

Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story

Current

I wrote the successful NEH development and production proposals to the NEH for this film, and have been working as the producer, until stalled by the coronavirus pandemic. We all hope to return to it as soon as it is safe to do so.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

The Adventures of Saul Bellow

2017-2019

I wrote the script for this film by director Asaf Galay, about one of the 20th century's most celebrated authors, and oversaw production as the executive producer. It was completed in 2019 and will premiere on PBS next year.

Nasser's Republic: The Making of Modern Egypt

2011-2017

I helped raise production funding for this film about one of the Middle East's most influential modern leaders, and oversaw production of a 90-minute festival version and 60-minute PBS version of the film by director Michal Goldman

WRITER | PRODUCER | DIRECTOR

Getting Better: 200 Years of Medicine

2010-2012

I produced this 3-part digital series commissioned by the New England Journal of Medicine, and produced, wrote and directed one episode: Targeting Cancer.

Big Little Town: The Story of Needham

2010-2012

I made this 60-minute film to commemorate the 300th anniversary of my town of Needham MA. It is still broadcast locally and has aired multiple times on WGBH Boston as a Fourth of July special. First Place winner in Northeast Video Festival of Community Media.

Stories from the Spectrum

2015-2018

I created this series of short films profiling teens and adults on the autism spectrum, and have written, produced and directed two so far: The Snow Ball (about teen boys planning a prom as part of a skills-building class) and Team of Brothers (about a teenaged girl who skates on a men's disability hockey team). Two more are in production.

PRODUCER

1987-2009

In 1987 I created Ambrica Productions in New York with a filmmaker colleague and over the next 23 years helped raise over \$8 million in funding for the following films, which I produced.

Young & Restless in China Released 2008
Premiered theatrically in April 2008, and on PBS/Frontline in June 2008. Winner of Cine Golden Eagle, Hugo Award & Silver Plaque at Chicago International Film Festival, Bronze Telly, and Gold Camera at US International Film & Video Fest.

Mary Pickford Released 2005
Premiered on PBS/American Experience series in April 2005. Received Cine Golden Eagle, Hugo Award, and World Medal at New York Festivals.

Time of Fear Released 2005
Premiered nationally on PBS in May 2005. Was a special selection at Hot Springs (Arkansas) Documentary Festival.

China in the Red Released 2004
Premiered on PBS/Frontline series in February 2003. Received Cine Golden Eagle, Silver Award and 2 Chris Awards.

Eleanor Roosevelt Released 2000
Premiered on PBS/American Experience series in January 2000 and continues to be shown today. Received Gold Camera, and Chris Award from Columbus International Film & Video Festival.

China: A Century of Revolution Released 1989-1997
This six-hour series on 20th century China has won over 20 prizes and awards including Silver and Bronze Apples, Silver Award, Chris Awards, and Red Ribbon from American Film & Video Festival. It consists of three feature-length films:
China in Revolution: 1911-1949
The Mao Years: 1949-1976
Born Under the Red Flag: 1976-1997

INSTRUCTOR | EDUCATOR | SPEAKER Current
I have taught producing and production management at Tufts University, the Massachusetts College of Art & Design, WGBH Boston's Producer's Workshop, and at film festivals and workshops worldwide. Since January 2019 I have been on the faculty of Emerson College, where I teach the business of film.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR 2011-2014
For four years I was executive director of Filmmakers Collaborative, a national nonprofit company established in 1987 to support independent filmmakers, and the nonprofit partner for this project. As its executive I directed two national **Making Media Now** conferences and was founding codirector of the **Boston International Kids Film Festival**.

EDUCATION
Tufts University, Medford MA
Graduated June 1976 with honors, double-major BA in Philosophy and English.

AFFILIATIONS
Emerson College: Affiliated Faculty since January 2019
Tufts University: Visiting Artist, 2015-2018
Babson College: Coaching for Leadership & Teamwork coach since 2015

Cinematographer Letter of Commitment

5 August 2020

I have worked with Asaf Galay on several documentaries: The Adventures of Saul Bellow; Army of Lovers in the Holy Land; and his most recent film Cartooning America: the Fleischer Brothers Story. I always love working with him. His artistic vision for each project calls for an approach that challenges and inspires me in new ways.

This new documentary, Kaboom! How Comics Changed America, is an especially great subject for a film. He wants to show the process of great cartoonists at work, the comics themselves as visual medium, and reflect on the landscape that has produced the artists and comics in each era.

I am very enthusiastic to start to work on this project .

Avner Shahaf

Cinematographer: Avner Shahaf

Avner Shahaf is one of the top cinematographers in Israel, specializing in the field of documentary. In the last 15 years he has been collaborating with documentary filmmakers around the world on major projects such as: The Gate Keepers, Censored Voices and Tze-Out (won Venice Film festival). He has been an Academy member since 2019.

Showreel 2014

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=aYtkGXt5X6c>

Work Experience:

IN PRODUCTION:

Kafka for kids- Fiction/Video Art- Director Roei Rosen

Breakup - Documentary- Director Mor Loushy

The Devil Next Door- Documentary series - Netflix Original -Directors Yossi Bloch and Daniel Sivan

Saul Bellow- Documentary- Director Asaf Galay

Dirty tricks - Documentary- Director Daniel Sivan

2019

Chasing Joshua - Documentary- Director Shay Fogelman

Transkids - Documentary series- Director Hilla Medalia.

2018

Butterflies- Video Art- Director Orit Raff

Army of :overs- Documentary- Director Asaf Galay

****Best Film in Festival's Israeli Documentary Film Competition**

Avenging Evil- Documentary- Director Nick Green

Personal Questions- Documentary- Director Adi Arbel

The Oslo Diaries- Documentary-Directors Daniel Sivan and Mor Loushy

****Sundance Film Festival**

Other Days- Video Art- Director Tal Shohat

2017

The Ancestral Sin- Director David Deri

** DocAviv film festival - Best Direction Award, presented by FIPRESCI, the International Federation of Film Critics

**DocAviv film festival-Best research award

Muhi-Generally Temporary- Directors Rina Castelnovo and Tamir Elterman

**DocAviv film festival-

Mayor of Tel Aviv-Jaffa Award for Debut Film

2016

The Dust Channel- Video Art/ Short- Director Roe Rosen

Don't call me cute- Documentary (short)- Director Julie Shles

Zero Days- Documentary- DP on Israeli part- Director Alex Gibney- nominated-Berlin International Film Festival, Cinema Eye Honors Awards, US, Critics

Choice Documentary Awards, Houston Film Critics Society Awards, Satellite Awards, Writers Guild of America, USA.

2015

Censored Voices-

Paul Merlyn Buhle

(b) (6), [REDACTED]

Paul.Buhle@Brown.edu

To: Kathryn Dietz, Producer
Re: Kaboom! How Comics Changed America
A supportive letter
Dt: 31 July 2020

Dear Kathryn,

Only in the last few decades has the field of comic art become a scholarly field, and one suitable for scholarly-popular narrative, as opposed to merely enjoyable presentation, as with so much of popular culture. Indeed, the recognition of comic art as an “art” is so recent, dating to the 1990s in the US, that comic art is only now following film art in college classrooms. Meanwhile, the “Graphic Novel” (a loose term that covers even non-fiction versions) advances swiftly, especially for readers under the age of thirty.

“Kaboom!” offers a fine overall version of the history, with a sense of the rise of comic art in the pages of the booming daily newspapers (from the Gilded Age onward), the handful of “masters” among hack workers, the rise (and fall) of comic books with their notable high points illuminated. It also suggests, as much as a limited series can suggest, the breadth and depth of comic art achievements in “EC” of the early 1950s especially, with war realism, socially critical science fiction, and above all the satirical innovations of the singular genius, Harvey Kurtzman.

I look forward to working with you on this timely and important project.

Regards,

Paul

Curriculum Vitae

Paul Merlyn Buhle, Retired

(b) (6)

Paul_Buhle@Brown.edu

Former Senior Lecturer, History and American Civilization, Brown University
Currently Research Associate, John Nicholas Brown Center, Brown University

Education

University of Illinois, B.A., 1966

University of Wisconsin, Ph.D., 1975

Professional Appointments

Teaching Assistant, University of Wisconsin, 1968-71

Instructor, Cambridge-Godard Graduate School, 1971-73

Director, Oral History of the American Left, Tamiment Library, New York University, 1976-90

Part-Time Faculty, Liberal Arts, Rhode Island School of Design, 1986- 93

Visiting Scholar to Senior Lecturer, 1992-2009, American Civilization, Brown University

Distinguished Lecturer, Organization of American Historians, 2004-

Distinguished Lecturer, American Studies Association, 2007-09

Selected Publications

Editor, *The Labor Joke Book* (St. Louis: Workers Democracy Press, 1985)

Editor, *C.L.R. James: His Life and Work* (London: Allison and Busby, 1986)

Editor, *Popular Culture in America* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minn. Press, 1987)

Co-Editor *Encyclopedia of the American Left* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1990)

Co-Editor, *The Immigrant Left in the United States*. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996)

Co-Editor, *Tender Comrades: Voices of the Hollywood Blacklistees*.

Editor, *A Dangerous Woman: A Graphic Biography of Emma Goldman*. New Press, 2007).

Editor, *TA People's History of the American Empire* (a graphic story version of Howard Zinn's *People's History of the United States*). (New York: Holt-Metropolitan, 2008.)

Editor, *Isadora Duncan, a Comic-Art Biography*, by Sabrina Smith. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008.) Editor, *Students for a Democratic Society, a Comic-Art History*. (New York: Hill and Wang.)

Editor, *The Beats, a graphic history* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009.)

Co-Author with Denis Kitchen, *The Art of Harvey Kurtzman* (New York: Abrams, 2009)

Editor [short comics] *James Connelly and Young CLR James* (PM Press, 2016, 2018)

Co-editor, *Eugene V. Debs, a Graphic Biography* (Verso, 2019)

Major Grants Received

Ford Foundation (1969)

National Endowment for the Humanities (1982 and 1984)

Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities (1986 and 1990)

Harburg Foundation (1995 and 1996),

Faculty Grant, Brown University, 2000-2001

Rubin Foundation, 2004

Prizes Awarded

CHOICE (American Library Association) Scholarly Book Awards, *C.L.R. James' Caribbean* (1993), *The New Left Revisited* (2004)

Will Eisner and Harvey Kurtzman Awards, 2010, for *The Art of Harvey Kurtzman* (2009)



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August 5, 2020

Kathryn Dietz
Producer and Writer
Kaboom! How Comics Changed America

(b) (6)
(b) (6)

Dear Kathryn Dietz:

I was delighted to receive your invitation to serve as an advisor for the historically and culturally fascinating television series “Kaboom! How Comics Changed America,” directed by Asaf Galay. Thank you for considering me for this opportunity.

The value of the series as you have been developing it is in its attention to presenting a rich history of this form to audiences, focusing on how the comics form came to be, in America, and also how the comics form has itself changed American art, literature, and popular culture broadly speaking. The project makes this topic lively by focusing on individual cartoonists across time periods, and on significant social issues that are reflected in comics—such as stereotyping around race and gender—as well as gathering an important group of commentators (artists and critics alike), to frame the dynamics of comics cultural production. I am glad that you and Asaf Galay are undertaking to bring this important story to a wider audience. As an English professor, I am also appreciative that your series will engage how comics has become, recently, a thriving area within the academy, a subject on which I have written widely. It is my keen hope that funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities will help you realize your vision for this vibrant and important series.

My own work as a scholar of graphic novels has taught me how that medium can convey vital humanities content and do it in a way that is both effective and accessible. I look forward to assisting you in your efforts on your advisory board.

Sincerely,

Hillary L. Chute
Distinguished Professor, English and Art + Design
h.chute@northeastern.edu
Direct cell: (b) (6)

HILLARY L. CHUTE

Department of English
Northeastern University
405 Lake Hall
Boston, MA 02115

(b) (6)
(b) (6) (cell)
h.chute@northeastern.edu

ACADEMIC POSITIONS

2018- Distinguished Professor, English, and Art + Design, Northeastern University
2016-2018 Professor, English, and Art + Design, Northeastern University
2016-2017 Fellow, Newhouse Center for the Humanities, Wellesley College
2016 Visiting Professor, English, Harvard University
2014-2016 Associate Professor, English, University of Chicago
2012-2013 Visiting Scholar, American Academy of Arts and Sciences
2010-2014 Neubauer Family Assistant Professor, English, University of Chicago
2007-2010 Junior Fellow, Harvard Society of Fellows, Harvard University

EDUCATION

2006 Ph.D, English, Rutgers University
Dissertation: Contemporary Graphic Narratives: History, Aesthetics, Ethics
2003 M.A., English, Rutgers University
1998 B.A., English, with High Honors, Oberlin College

PUBLICATIONS

Why Comics? From Underground to Everywhere
HarperCollins (Harper imprint), December 2017.
*A Kirkus Best Book of 2017
*A *New York Times Book Review* 100 Notable Books of 2018
*Editions: France
Paperback October 2019.

Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form
Harvard University Press (Belknap imprint), 2016.

Outside the Box: Interviews with Contemporary Cartoonists
University of Chicago Press, 2014.

Comics & Media: A Critical Inquiry Book
University of Chicago Press, 2014. Co-edited with Patrick Jagoda.

MetaMaus, by Art Spiegelman
Associate Editor; Pantheon, 2011.
*Eisner Award, 2012
*National Jewish Book Award, 2011
*Editions: Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, Korea, Netherlands, Spain, UK

Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics
Columbia University Press, 2010.

Heath Anthology of American Literature, 6th Edition (Contemporary Volume)
Contributing Editor on graphic narrative; Houghton Mifflin/Cengage, 2009.

Book in progress:

Maus Now: Selected Writing, under contract with Pantheon.
*Editions: France, UK

Edited Journal Issues

Comics & Media, special issue of *Critical Inquiry*. Simultaneously released as a book.
Edited and introduced with Patrick Jagoda.
Includes co-authored piece “Bartheses” with Alison Bechdel (Spring 2014).

Graphic Narrative, special issue of *Mfs: Modern Fiction Studies*
Edited and introduced with Marianne DeKoven (Winter 2006).

SERVICE

MLA Discussion Group on Comics and Graphic Narratives
Founder (2009)
Chair, Executive Committee (elected position; five-year term, 2010-2015)

MLA Division on Popular Culture
Chair, Executive Committee (elected position; five-year term, 2010-2015)

RELATED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Columnist, *New York Times Book Review*, March 2018-.

Graphics Advisor, *Edge of All We Know*, feature documentary film on philosophy of black hole research by Peter Galison (History of Science, Harvard), Black Hole Initiative, Harvard University. In progress. <http://www.blackholefilm.com>

Advisor, *No Straight Lines: The Rise of Queer Comics*, feature documentary film by Vivian Kleinman. In progress. <http://nostraightlinesthefilm.com>



Neil Cohn, Ph.D.

Tilburg center for Cognition and Communication (TiCC)

P.O. Box 90153, 5000 LE Tilburg, Netherlands

<http://www.visuallanguagelab.com> • neilcohn@visuallanguagelab.com

August 3, 2020

Dear Kathryn and Asaf,

Thank you for inviting me to contribute to your proposed documentary series about comics. I was delighted to hear about your proposal and support it wholeheartedly.

There have been several documentaries about comics that focus on their content, such as the role of superheroes in American culture or profiles on various comics artists and authors. However, your proposal seems more novel, with a thread that focuses additionally on how comics communicate with words and pictures and how this structure relates to other aspects of popular culture and history. I think such a perspective can valuably contribute to the public's appreciation of this oft under-appreciated artform, revealing the vast influence of comics on American and global visual culture, not to mention how comics reveal fundamental aspects of meaning-making and the human condition.

Based on this, I'm happy to be part of the project and to serve as an advisor in any capacity that would assist its success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Neil Cohn".

Neil Cohn, Ph.D.

NEIL T. COHN



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

DEPARTMENT OF COGNITION AND COMMUNICATION , TILBURG UNIVERSITY

P.O. Box 90153, 5000 LE Tilburg, Netherlands

www.visuallanguagelab.com, neilcohn@visuallanguagelab.com

EDUCATION

- 2012 Ph.D. Psychology. Tufts University.
 - 2010 M.S. Psychology. Tufts University.
 - 2005 M.A. Social Sciences. University of Chicago.
 - 2002 B.A. with Honors, Asian Studies. University of California, Berkeley.
-

AWARDS

- 2019 Early Career Impact Award. Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences (FABBS) and the Cognitive Science Society.
 - 2013 Robert J. Glushko Dissertation Prize, Cognitive Science Society
 - 2007 M. Thomas Inge Award for Comics Scholarship
-

SELECTED GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- 2019 Visual narratives as a window into language and cognition (TINTIN). European Research Council Starting Grant. (€1.5 Million)
What happens next? Predictive abilities during linguistic and visual narrative comprehension in individuals with autism spectrum disorders. Co-PI with collaborator Emily Coderre and Trevor Brothers. University of Vermont REACH grant. (\$30,000)
-

PUBLICATIONS	CITATIONS: 2809, H-INDEX: 28 (GOOGLE SCHOLAR, AUGUST 3, 2020)
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SELECTED BOOKS (OUT OF 6 TOTAL)

- 2020 Cohn, Neil. 2020. *Who Understands Comics? Questioning the Universality of Visual Language Comprehension*. London: Bloomsbury.
- 2013 Cohn, Neil. 2013. *The Visual Language of Comics: Introduction to the Structure and Cognition of Sequential Images*. London: Bloomsbury.

SELECTED PAPERS (OUT OF 70 TOTAL)

- 2020 Cohn, Neil. 2020. Visual narrative comprehension: Universal or not? *Psychonomic Bulletin and Review*. 27(2): 266-285
Cohn, Neil and Joseph P. Magliano. 2020. Visual Narrative Research: An Emerging Field in Cognitive Science. *Topics in Cognitive Science*. 12(1): 197-223
Cohn, Neil. 2020. This is your brain on comics: A cognitive model of visual narrative comprehension. *Topics in Cognitive Science*. 12(1): 352-386
- 2019 Cohn, Neil. 2019. Being explicit about the implicit: Inference generating techniques in visual narrative. *Language and Cognition*. 11(1): 66-97.

- Cohn, Neil. 2019. Visual narratives and the mind: Comprehension, cognition, and learning. In Federmeier, Kara D. and Diane M. Beck (Eds). *Psychology of Learning and Motivation: Knowledge and Vision*. Vol. 70. (pp. 97-128). Academic Press
- Cohn, Neil, Jessika Axner, Michaela Diercks, Rebecca Yeh, and Kaitlin Pederson. 2018. The cultural pages of comics: Cross-cultural variation in page layouts. *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*. 10 (1):67-86
- 2018 Coderre, Emily L., **Neil Cohn**, Sally K. Slipper, Mariya Chernenok, Kerry Ledoux, and Barry Gordon. 2018. Visual and linguistic narrative comprehension in autism spectrum disorders: Neural evidence for modality-independent impairments. *Brain and Language*. 186: 44-59.
- 2017 Cohn, Neil, Ryan Taylor, and Kaitlin Pederson. 2017. A picture is worth more words over time: Multimodality and narrative structure across eight decades of American superhero comics. *Multimodal Communication*. 6(1): 19-37.
- 2016 Foulsham, Tom, D. Wybrow, and **Neil Cohn**. 2016. Reading without words: Eye-movements in the comprehension of comic strips. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*. 30: 566-579
- Cohn, Neil and Sean Ehly. 2016. The vocabulary of manga: Visual morphology in dialects of Japanese Visual Language. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 92: 17-29
- Cohn, Neil. 2016. A multimodal parallel architecture: A cognitive framework for multimodal interactions. *Cognition*. 146: 304-323

SPEAKING

SELECTED KEYNOTES

- 2019 *Reimagining the language faculty: A multimodal modal of language*. 40th TABU Dag. University of Groningen. Groningen, The Netherlands. June 2019.
- 2017 *The Visual Language of Comics: What comics can tell us about the mind (and vice versa)*. 11th International Symposium on Iconicity in Language and Literature. University of Brighton, UK. April 7, 2017.
- 2015 *The scientific study of comics' visual language*. Comicology: Probing practical scholarship. Kyoto Seika University and the Kyoto Manga Museum, Japan. September 26, 2015.
- 2014 *What comics can tell us about the mind (and vice versa)*. German ComFor Conference. Berlin, Germany. September 27, 2014.
- The neurocognition of comics: What comics can tell us about the mind (and vice versa)*. Empirical approaches to comics workshop. Berlin, Germany. September 20, 2014.

SELECTED CONSULTATION

- 2020 *Snapchat*. Research Consultant. Consultation on narrative in Augmented Reality.
- 2019-2020 *BBC News Labs*. Research consultant for automatic generation of news comics.
- Google/Unicode Consortium*. Advising on emoji design and structure.
- 2015-2020 *LingoZING! Inc.* Advising on linguistics and cognition for language-learning app through comics.
- 2014 *Microsoft FUSE Labs* Research Consultant on data-driven comics project.
- 2010 *Archie Comics*. Advising for role of comics in education.

5 August 2020

Dear NEH Panelists,

The importance of comic art in American society has unfortunately been lost under the focus on a single genre in the medium, the superhero. Because of the success of adaptations of this genre into other media, primarily film but also television and animation, previous documentary films on comics have been limited, not only to a focus on this genre, but in ways that have missed the key roles of comics in American society. Comics function as social critique, they reflect and illuminate society, and their aesthetic achievements deserve attention. Unfortunately much of this has been overlooked by the single-genre focus. Indeed, it is hardly recognized that comics have a history beyond the success of different superheroes. In fact, the growth of comics outside the superhero genre is key to understanding the power, literary value, and current aesthetic, literary, and commercial success of this universal but often misunderstood medium.

Over the past two decades, comics and graphic novels have gained recognition as important literary and artistic achievements. The naming of multiple graphic novelists as McArthur “Genius” Fellows is a clear indication of the cultural importance of the medium. Other literary honors for comics include the Guardian first novel prize, PEN awards for graphic novelists, and this year the first Caldecott for children’s graphic novel, *The New Kid* by Jerry Craft. Although comics is an international medium, American comics and graphic novels are universally recognized as key influences throughout the world. In order to understand the current status of comic art and graphic novels, one must know the full history of the medium, as is the case with artistic, architectural, literary and poetic traditions.

This proposal by Asaf Galay and Kathryn Dietz is designed to share this history and its social and aesthetic importance with a broader public. Given the current success of many types of comics beyond superheroes, there is surely an audience that would find this of great interest and importance in understanding the medium. Comics other than those in the superhero genre have for most of the history of comics in America sold more copies and been sites of innovation and development in the artistic and literary aspects of the field. From the EC Comics of the 1950s, to the many revolutionary innovations associated with the underground comix of the 1960s, to contemporary independent comics and graphic novels, the key to comics history is outside of superheroes.

This team’s proposal is designed to communicate the sweep and importance of this history. The diverse and influential content of nineteenth century cartoonists like Nast is crucial to understanding comic strips and the power of comics, as are the birth and growth of comic books, which are in fact a new artistic medium. Galay plans to include important artistic voices from multiple eras of comics, from *Mad* magazine’s Al Jaffee to Art Spiegelman, creator of *Maus*, and many more innovators.

This project could not be more timely. As noted in a recent issue of *Forbes*, the sales of superhero comics are now dwarfed by all other genres, particularly middle grade and young adult graphic novels, but the entire field beyond superheroes is growing. *Kaboom!* will add a crucial area of understanding to this important medium, and provide insights that are available nowhere else.

Sincerely,
N. C. Christopher Couch
Senior Lecturer
Program in Comparative Literature
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Amherst, MA 01003

N. C. CHRISTOPHER COUCH

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Program in Comparative Literature,
Department of Languages, Literatures,
and Cultures
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts 01003
(413) 577-1309; (b) (6)

EDUCATION

Columbia University; Graduate School of Arts and Sciences; New York, New York
Ph.D. (1987), M.A. (1980), Pre-Columbian and Native American Art History
Columbia College of Columbia University; New York, New York B.A. (1976), Art History

PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

University of Massachusetts; Program in Comparative Literature, Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures; Affiliated faculty member, Department of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies

Senior Lecturer (September 2005–date)

Amherst College, Department of Art and the History of Art; Amherst, Massachusetts

Visiting Lecturer: (January–December 2016; January–May 2018)

Trinity College, Graduate Program in American Studies; Hartford, Connecticut

Visiting Associate Professor: (January 2009–May 2018)

CPM Manga, Central Park Media; New York, New York

Editor-in-Chief: (September 1999–November 2001)

Kitchen Sink Press, Northampton, Massachusetts

Senior Editor (August 1994–December 1999)

CURATORSHIPS

University of Massachusetts Amherst, Herter Gallery

“Direct Action Comics: Politically Engaged Graphic Novels” Jan.–Feb. 2017.

Smith College Museum of Art; Northampton, Massachusetts

“The Tradition Continues: Native American Art from New England Collections”
(March 10–May 29, 1994)

American Museum of Natural History; Department of Anthropology; New York,
New York

“Pre-Columbian Art from the Ernest Erickson Collection at the American Museum
of Natural History” (June 15–August 15, 1988)

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar, "On Native Grounds: Studies
of Native American Histories and the Land," Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Fellow, June 16–July 20, 2016

Institute for Advanced Study; School of Historical Studies; Princeton University; Princeton, New Jersey

Fellow (January–April 1992)

Dumbarton Oaks; Program in Pre-Columbian Studies; Harvard University; Washington, D.C.

Junior Fellow (academic year 1983–84)

Graphic novels and nonfiction popular culture works that I edited have been nominated for or won seventeen Eisner and Harvey Awards.

PUBLICATIONS (BOOKS)

Jerry Robinson, Ambassador of Comics, New York: Abrams Books (2010). Finalist for the Harvey Award for best nonfiction work.

Will Eisner: A Retrospective, co-author with Peter Myer. New York: Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art—MoCCA (2005).

The Will Eisner Companion, The Pioneering Spirit of the Father of the Graphic Novel, co-author with Stephen Weiner. New York: DC Comics (2004).

Faces of Eternity: Masks of the Pre-Columbian Americas. New York: The Americas Society (1991).

Pre-Columbian Art from The Ernest Erickson Collection at the American Museum of Natural History. New York: American Museum of Natural History (1988).

The Festival Cycle of the Aztec Codex Borbonicus. BAR International Series 270. Oxford: BAR (1985).

CONFERENCES AND LECTURE SERIES ORGANIZED

Edgar Alan Poe and the Writers and Artists of New England, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Co-chair, October 27–30, 2009

Anime, Manga, and Freedom of Expression, The Japan Society, New York, November 13–15, 2001

The Graphic Novel: A Twentieth Anniversary Conference on an Emerging Literary and Artistic Medium, (marking the anniversary of the publication of Will Eisner's *A Contract with God*.) University of Massachusetts, Amherst, November 13–15, 1998

PRESENTATIONS (SELECTED)

“Mapping the Circulation of Colonial Indigenous Language Catechisms in New England,” American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting, Boston, Massachusetts, April 5, 2017.

“The Bodies of Realism and Classicism in the *Yellow Kid* Comic Strip,” Interdisciplinary Nineteenth-Century Studies (INCS) Conference, “Odd Bodies”, Philadelphia, PA., March 16, 2017.

“The Studio that Produced the Man of Tomorrow: Joe Shuster, Jerry Siegel and the Creation of Superman Comics,” Campbell Conference 2016/World Science Fiction Convention, Midamericon 2, Kansas City, Mo., August 17, 2016.

“Native Americans Appropriating Prints: Nineteenth Century Images and Reinterpretation as Indigenous Self-Images,” Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) annual conference, Washington, DC, June 5, 2015.

Aug. 4, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

Kathryn Dietz and Asaf Galay have asked me to serve as a consultant on their documentary project on American comics. I was very happy to hear from them; having taught Columbia University's first class on the subject and currently hard at work on a history of American comics for a major trade press, I've spent the last few years of my life immersed in the questions the medium raises, and it strikes me that a documentary project addressing the question from the angles addressed here is an important one, and that these are the people to address it.

A lot of ink has been spilled on the question of what makes comics such a peculiarly American art form. One of the most important answers—the one that Dietz and Galay are wisely focusing on—is that a certain cadre of American comics artists and creators have used the medium to address, and to exemplify, certain fundamental aspects of the American experience. Freedom of expression. The value of individuality, and of limning personal identity through artistic creativity. The idea that a central feature of being American is to express patriotic criticism of where America falls short, and another central feature is to express, in images larger and smaller than life, a picture of American ideals and fantasies. Comics did, and does, all these things.

To trace this path, historically and thematically, is the task Dietz and Galay have taken upon themselves. It is an important task, and I am happy to help them however I can.

Jeremy Dauber
Atran Professor of Yiddish Language, Literature, and Culture
Columbia University

JEREMY A. DAUBER

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jad213@columbia.edu

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SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS

Jewish Comedy: A Serious History (W.W. Norton, 2017). Historical and thematic discussion of Jewish humor from Biblical period to present. Finalist, National Jewish Book Award; Finalist, Natan Book Award. Reviews (selection): *The New York Times*, *New York Review of Books*, *Times Literary Supplement*, *The Jerusalem Post*, *The Economist*, *Bookforum*.

The Worlds of Sholem Aleichem (Schocken Books, 2013). Literary biography of noted Yiddish writer. Finalist, National Jewish Book Award; Honor Medal, 2014 American Library Association Sophie Brody Award. Reviews (selection): *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Nation*, *Commentary*, *Moment*, *Haaretz*.

In the Demon's Bedroom: Yiddish Literature and the Early Modern (Yale University Press, 2010). Analysis of narrative prose in sixteenth and seventeenth Yiddish literature, with particular attention paid to texts concerning the "supernatural".

Landmark Yiddish Plays (SUNY Press, 2006). Anthology of translations of Yiddish plays from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, edited and translated in collaboration with Professor Joel Berkowitz. Contains monograph-length introductory essay.

Antonio's Devils (Stanford University Press, 2004). A look at the use of Biblical and rabbinic allusions in the Hebrew and Yiddish work of the early Haskala, and the development of a historical and methodological approach to the use of intertextuality in Jewish literature. Received Koret Jewish Studies Publication Subsidy in support of work.

ESSAYS AND REVIEW ESSAYS

"The Superhero of the Comics Business," *The Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 16, 2018.

"Jerry Lewis Was the Quintessential American Jew," *New York Times*, Aug. 21, 2017.

"Jewish Comedy is Serious Business," *Paris Review*, Oct. 13, 2017.

"Why Larry David's Holocaust Joke on SNL Was So Uncomfortable," *The Atlantic*, Nov. 7, 2017.

"'Yes, But Is It Still Funny In English?': Translating Jewish Comedy," *AJS Perspectives*, Fall 2015.

"The Great Whitefish Way," *Jewish Review of Books*, Fall 2015.

"Why Read Sholem Aleichem?" *Pakn Treger*, Fall 2014.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY. Professor, Department of Germanic Languages and Director of Yiddish Studies Program. Aside from teaching and research, oversee all aspects of Yiddish Studies at the University, including graduate admissions, training, and dissertation writing, as well as serving on field-related dissertation defenses (list available upon request). Guide undergraduates in developing plans of study; developed Yiddish major and concentration in consultation with Department. Fall 2000-present. Nominated for 2008-2009 Faculty Mentoring Award for excellence in mentoring PhD students.

UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES. Visiting Associate Professor, English Department. Taught undergraduate and graduate courses in Yiddish literature as part of Mellon Program. Winter Term 2009.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY. Visiting Fellow. Received Harry Starr Fellowship in Spring 2004.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY. Lecturer. Co-designed and co-taught seminar course in Faculty of Oriental Studies on "The Literature of Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment." Spring 1999.

EDUCATION

OXFORD UNIVERSITY

Oxford, England

Received D.Phil. in Modern Jewish Studies June 1999. Resident of Magdalen College Fall 1996-Spring 1999. Rhodes Scholarship. Segal Prize for excellence in Jewish Studies.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY. A.B. in Social Studies *summa cum laude*. Hoopes Senior Thesis Prize. June 1995.

August 4, 2020

Dear panelists for the National Endowment for the Humanities,

I am delighted to lend my support, and serve as advisor, to the documentary film project tentatively titled *Kaboom! How Comics Changed America*, to be directed by Asaf Galay and produced and written by Kathryn Dietz. Comics art is a subject crying out for substantial documentary treatment: a popular art that is everywhere in our culture, yet still not well understood. Despite the upsurge in comics studies over the past twenty years—including the dramatic growth of comics teaching in every sector of education—the general understanding of this art form remains hostage to a few brightly colored impressions (such as the current boom in superhero films) and lacks a strong historical foundation. *Kaboom! How Comics Changed America* promises to change this. Galay and Dietz are the ideal team for telling the story of comics in America; each has a record of innovative filmmaking, and together they have produced two outstanding documentaries, *The Adventures of Saul Bellow* (2020) and *Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story* (now in production)—each the first feature-length treatment of its subject. I am confident that they will create a deeply sourced, cogent, and cinematically thrilling account of the comics medium. We need such a treatment.


The world of comics spans everything from graphic novels and memoirs to brief strips, from magazines to webcomics to the memes whirling through social media every day. Fantastical or realistic, humorous or dead-serious, on paper or on screen: comics is a vital, ever-changing global form. The form has been specially inflected by, and in turn has shaped, American culture, and that connection, comics and America, warrants both serious scholarly exploration and accessible cinematic treatment. As a university professor who teaches comics regularly, I am only too aware of the lack of documentary resources in this area. Thus far, documentary filmmakers have mostly been content to chart the rise of the superhero; not since Ron Mann's now sadly-dated *Comic Book Confidential* (1988) has there been a wide-ranging documentary feature about the history of comic books and graphic novels in America. This lack has posed a serious obstacle to teaching. Galay and Dietz's three-part documentary, with its focus on comics' visual language, underground and alternative comics, and the politics of representing race and gender, will fill this gap in a way that will speak to diverse audiences today.

It has been my pleasure to study Galay and Dietz's proposal for the project, including its structure and overarching themes, and to confer with them about their plans in detail. The four major themes they are planning to interweave throughout the film—the visual/verbal language of comics, Black representations, women and gender, and the impact of immigrants and outsiders—will balance artistic and ideological concerns, showing the richness and social urgency of comics. These fundamental concerns will make the film's survey of comics history

more than simply a dogged march through names and events. This approach will make even the oldest examples of comics shown in the film seem fresh, urgent, and topical. Further, as the film moves from early comic strips through comic books and on to the era of graphic novels, its emphasis on creator-driven, personal work will depart from prior documentary treatments and show why comics is such a powerful and versatile storytelling tool today. By the third and final episode, “Narrating Lives in Graphic Novels,” viewers will understand comics as an intimate form that can tell complex, highly fraught stories of identity, witness, and personal and political transformation. Fans and students across the country have been exposed to this way of thinking about comics—but a general filmgoing and television-viewing audience will be surprised and enlightened by this, to them, new perspective. It is precisely this perspective that needs to be captured and explained on film.

Galay and Deitz have conceived an ambitious plan for this film that includes onscreen interviews with a veritable “who’s who” of important comics creators. The comics field, after all, is diverse; covering it truthfully will take great effort. NEH funding will be necessary to draw together the many voices needed to create a thorough and compelling portrait of comics today. Galay and Deitz are up to this challenge; indeed, they are an impressive team. Galay’s work unites historical research and popular appeal, both on film (e.g., *The Muses of Isaac Bashevis Singer*, 2015; *The Hebrew Superhero*, 2015) and in the exhibitions he has curated for The Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfutsot. With *The Adventures of Saul Bellow*, the first-ever biographical film about the famed author, Galay has hit new heights as a filmmaker. Dietz’s work as a filmmaker is just as impressive: she has produced seven documentary features for PBS, including, for example, the 6-hour series *China: A Century of Revolution*. She is also the creator of the ongoing digital media project *Stories from the Spectrum*, a series of honest, affecting films about adult autism. As sometime executive director of Filmmakers Collaborative, she has organized diverse conferences, screenings, and events. Together, Deitz and Galay are now producing *Cartooning America*, an important work on the history of animation—indeed, a landmark exploration of American popular art and Jewish American innovation that bodes well for *Kaboom!*

In sum, *Kaboom!* is an important project; I dearly hope the NEH will lend its support to this groundbreaking film. The time is right—and this team is right—for a genuine history of American comics in film form. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have questions about this letter—I would be happy to say more on the project’s behalf. Sincerely,

Dr. Charles Hatfield 
Department of English, California State University, Northridge
18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330-8248

CHARLES WILLIAM HATFIELD, Ph.D.

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California State University, Northridge
18111 Nordhoff Street
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Research and teaching specialties

Comics; Word/Image Studies; Media and Cultural Studies; Children's and Youth Culture

Selected teaching since 2015

- English 525DC: Graduate seminar: Disability in Comics (Fall 2020; Spring 2017)
- English 333: Comics and Graphic Novels (taught regularly since 2005)
- English 313: Studies in Popular Culture (regularly since 2008)
- English 421: Selected Topics in Popular Culture (Spring 2020; Fall 2019; Fall 2018)
- English 525CSN: Graduate seminar: Comics Studies Now (Spring 2019)
- English 392: Honors seminar: Comics, Childhood, and Children's Comics (Fall 2018)
- English 495SH: The Comic Book Superhero (Spring 2015)

Book publications (CSUN Preeminent Scholarly Publications Award, 2014)

Comics Studies: A Guidebook. Co-edited with Bart Beaty. An anthology and textbook incorporating the work of twenty scholars. Rutgers UP, 2020.

Comic Book Apocalypse: The Graphic World of Jack Kirby. Exhibition catalog, co-edited with Ben Saunders. CSUN Art Galleries and IDW Publishing, 2015.

The Superhero Reader. With co-editors Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester. University Press of Mississippi, 2013.

Hand of Fire: The Comics Art of Jack Kirby. UP of Mississippi, 2011. Will Eisner Comics Industry Award for Best Educational/Academic Work, 2012.

Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature. UP of Mississippi, 2005.

Recent and forthcoming articles and chapters:

"Graphic Novel/Comics." *Keywords for Children's Literature*, rev. 2nd ed., edited by Philip Nel, Lissa Paul, and Nina Christensen, NYU Press, 2021 (forthcoming).

"Alternative Comics." *Keywords in Comics Studies*, edited by Ramzi Fawaz, Shelley Streeby, and Deborah Whaley, NYU Press, 2021 (forthcoming).

"Objectifying the Objectifiers: Academics in the Comics World." Interview. *The Comics World*, edited by Jeremy Stoll and Benjamin Woo, UP of Mississippi, 2021 (forthcoming).

"Fearsome Possibilities: An Afterword." *Uncanny Bodies: Superhero Comics and Disability*, edited by Scott T. Smith and José Alaniz, Penn State UP, 2019. 217-224.

"Curious His Entire Life: Remembering Tom Roberts." With Stephen R. Bissette, Brian Cremins, and Gene Kannenberg, Jr. *International Journal of Comic Art* 20.1 (Spring/ Summer 2018): 453-469.

"Bonding Time or Solo Flight? Picture Books, Comics, and the Independent Reader." With Joe Sutliff Sanders. *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 42.4 (Winter 2017): 459-486.

"Comics Studies, the Anti-Discipline." Foreword to *The Secret Origins of Comics Studies*. Ed. Smith and Duncan. Routledge, 2017. ix-xxii.

Keynote addresses and invited academic talks since 2016

"Making Reading Strange Again, or, Thinking about Comics Literacy." *Humanities in Five* (invited panel). Modern Language Association, Seattle, Jan. 2020.

"Kirby Dreams of War: Contradictory Visions." Keynote, *Expérience autobiographique et bande dessinée de genre*. Université de Lorraine, Metz, France, Nov. 2017.

Keynote, Michigan State University Comics Forum, East Lansing, MI, Feb. 2017.

"Pretty Good Assemblage: Collage in the Work of Eddie Campbell." *Mixing Visual Media in Comics* workshop, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Oct. 2016.

Francelia Butler Lecture, Children's Literature Association, Columbus, OH, June 2016. Co-presented with Joe Sutliff Sanders.

Recent highlights of service to the field

Founding President, Comics Studies Society, 2014-2018

Co-editor, *Studies in Comics and Cartoons* series, Ohio State UP, 2017-

Co-organizer, *Comics and Visual Culture* conference at CSU Northridge, 2016-2018

Curator, *Comic Book Apocalypse: The Graphic World of Jack Kirby*, CSUN Galleries, 2015

Chair, Forum on Comics and Graphic Narratives, MLA, 2012-2013

Ilan Stavans

Lewis Sebring Professor of Humanities, Latin American, and Latino Culture
Amherst College
istavans@amherst.edu | (413) 542-8201

August 1, 2020

Dear Kathryn Dietz and Asaf Galay,

I write to express my enthusiasm for, and full support of, the NEH grant application you and Asaf Galay have prepared for the documentary project *Kaboom! How Comics Changed America*.

I have read the full description of it: it is outstanding. Over the years, I have worked on many NEH-funded endeavors; this one has a uniqueness and cultural gravitas unlike any other.

The exploration of comics in America as a way to understand the nation's psyche and vice versa is intelligent, informed, and clearly thought-out. And the proposed structure of the series is sharp. It all comes at a time when such an endeavor--the use of popular culture to delve into our collective history--is very much needed, given the social unrest we have witnessed. The project looks at diversity in the field of comics, and in America in general, in a thorough and convincing way.

The topic is deep to my heart, as I have published a number of graphic novels (including *Latino USA: A Cartoon History* [2000] and *El Iluminado* [2012]) and have made award-winning, internationally-released animated movies. Plus, I have written substantially on Jewish and Latino cartoon artists.

Let me add my admiration for documentarian Asaf Galay's career. Among others, I have seen his films on Isaac Bashevis Singer, Saul Bellow, and Israeli comic-book artists. They are informative and entertaining and they serve the precious need of reflecting on "serious" cultural matters in formats that are accessible to vast numbers of people.

I have enjoyed the exchanges the three of us have had while preparing this NEH grant proposal. I thus enthusiastically recommend this project and look forward to being further involved in it.

I have attached a two-page CV. I wish you and Asaf much success. Please let me know if you need anything else.

With gratitude and best wishes,

Ilan Stavans
Lewis Sebring Professor of Humanities, Latin American, and Latino Culture
Amherst College
Twitter: @IlanStavans
Restless Books: restlessbooks@com
NEPR Podcast: ["In Contrast with Ilan Stavans"](#)
Co-Founder and Academic Director: [Great Books Summer Camp](#)
TED-Animation: [Why You Should Read Don Quixote?](#)
TED-Animation: [The Magical Fictions of Jorge Luis Borges](#)
Ted-Animation: [The Poetry of Pablo Neruda](#)

ILAN STAVANS

Lewis-Sebring Professor of Humanities, Latin American and Latino Culture
Amherst College
Amherst, MA 01002

Office tel: (413) 542-8201; Mobile: (b) (6)

E-mail: istavans@amherst.edu

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Amherst College	Lewis-Sebring Professor of Humanities, Latin American and Latino Culture, 2001-present
Universidad Diego Portales, Chile	Distinguished Visiting Professor, May 2014
Doshisha University, Japan	Distinguished Exchange Professor, May 2010
Universidad Diego Portales, Chile	Cátedra Roberto Bolaño, May 2009
Stanford University-Chile	Distinguished Visiting Professor, June 2008, June 2009
University of Texas-San Antonio	Brackenridge Distinguished Visiting Professor, 2008
Five Colleges, Inc.	Five College 40 th Anniversary Professor, 2005-2009

EDUCATION

Columbia University	PhD	1990
	M. Phil	1989
	MA	1988
The Jewish Theological Seminary	MA	1987
Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana	BA	1984

LEADERSHIP / INDEPENDENT PROJECTS

Publisher, [Restless Books](#), an award-winning international nonprofit publishing house that includes Yonder Books and is distributed worldwide by PGW, 2013-present
Chairman and CEO, Quixote Productions, LLC. 2003-present
Co-Founder and Academic Director at Large, [Great Books Summer Program](#), 2001-present
Producer and Host, “[In Contrast with Ilan Stavans](#),” an NEPR podcast, 2017-present
Columnist, [Daily Hampshire Gazette](#), “Friday Takeaway,” 2017-present; [El Diario](#) (NY) and [El Planeta](#) (Boston), “[Lengua fresca](#),” 2007-2012; [Cuadernos Cervantes](#) (Madrid), “*El ‘heart’ en la palabra*,” 2002-2005

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS, 2014-PRESENT

A Pre-Columbian Bestiary: Fantastic Creatures from Indigenous Latin America, with Eko. College Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2020.
Popol Vuh: A Retelling, with Gabriela Larios. Brooklyn: Restless Books, 2020.
And We Came Out Again and Saw the Stars: Global Writers Reflect on the COVID-19 Pandemic, edited by Ilan Stavans. Brooklyn: Restless Books, 2020.
How Yiddish Changed America and How America Changed Yiddish, edited by Ilan Stavans and Josh Lambert. Brooklyn: Restless Books, 2020.
The Seventh Heaven: Travels through Jewish Latin America. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019.
Don Quixote de La Mancha: The Graphic Novel, with Roberto Weil. College Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2018.
The Oven: An Anti-Lecture. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018
The Wall. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018
Sor Juana: or, The Persistence of Pop. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2018
Angelitos: A Graphic Novel, with Santiago Cohen. Latin@Graphics. Ohio State University Press: Columbus, Ohio, 2018
Latinos in the U.S.: Everything You Need to Know. Oxford University Press: New York and London, 2017
Words in Transit: Stories of Immigrants. Introduction by Ilan Stavans. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016
Quixote: The Novel and the World. New York: W.W. Norton, 2015

Reclaiming Travel, with Joshua Ellison. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2015

A Most Imperfect Union: A Contrarian Cartoon History of the United States, with Lalo Alcaraz. New York: Basic Books, 2014 (*A New York Times* Bestseller)

SELECTED HONORS AND AWARDS, 2015-PRESENT

2020 International Latino Book Award, Best Travel Book, The Seventh Heaven: Travels through Jewish Latin America

2020 Natan Book Award, The Seventh Heaven: Travels through Jewish Latin America

2020 Samuel Minot Jones Literary Achievement Award

2019 European Independent Film Award, Best Animated Short, The Silence of Professor Tösla

2019 The IndieFEST Film Festival, Award of Excellence Special Mention, Animation, The Silence of Professor Tösla,

2019 Bracket Book Awards, Best in Show and Best Book of the Year, Don Quixote of La Mancha: The Graphic Novel

2018 Massachusetts Book Award, Best Poetry Book, The Wall

2017 International Latino Book Award, Best Fiction Anthology, Oy Caramba!

2016 Arizona and New Mexico Book Awards Best Book in Religion, The New World Haggadah

2016 PRNDI Award, Words in Transit

2015 International Latino Book Awards, Best Graphic Nonfiction Book, A Most Imperfect Union: A Contrarian History of the United States

Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

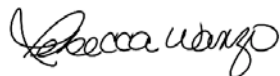
August 2, 2020

This serves as a letter of support for Kathryn Dietz's and Asaf Galay's documentary about comics in the United States, and my willingness to serve as an advisor. There have been some documentaries about comics that focus on individual cartoonists, like the celebrated film *Crumb* (1994). Ron Mann's *Comic Book Confidential* provides a nice history of the comic book medium. But we still do not have a comic book documentary that zeroes in on identity in the medium and how these representations have travelled across U.S culture. Anthropologist Jonathan Gayle's *White Scripts and Black Supermen: Black Masculinities in Comic Books* deals with this issue in relationship to African American superhero comics specifically. But we still lack a thoughtful documentary exploring the importance of discourses of identity in comics and how these archetypes in the medium are embedded in our culture. I think this proposed series can fill that gap.

In my own work, I have argued that comic and cartoon art in contributes to a common language of national belonging and exclusion in the United States. Editorial cartoons (typically excluded from scholarship about comics because they are usually single panel) often indict bad citizens. The funnies have given us iconographic children to symbolize innocence, a status shored up by the heavy commodification of characters such as Charlie Brown and Little Orphan Annie. Superhero comics sell the ideal citizen soldier, and underground comics address countercultural citizens. I think of these as citizenship genres that people are called to inhabit. White (often male) caricatures are made a virtue in representations of American identity. Women and people of color, in contrast, often provide counternarratives to these ideals and help us imagine other ways of national belonging.

Scholars frequently discuss the role of identity in literature, film, photography, and television in construction of and resistance to discourses about black identity. But comic and cartoon art have traditionally had a very small role in larger aesthetic histories. This has obviously been shaped in some ways by the inaccurate perception that comics is just for kids. Ignoring this tradition means neglecting a visual and political grammar of idealized and ugly typologies explicated in American comic and cartoon art. I trust that this documentary will give a general audience a sense of the complex history of the medium and the rich work done in our field.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Wanzo
Professor and Chair
Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
Washington University in St. Louis

Washington University in St. Louis, Campus Box 1078, One Brookings Drive, St. Louis,
Missouri 63130-4899

(314) 935-5102, Fax: (314) 935-8678, women@artsci.wustl.edu,
<http://www.wgss.artsci.wustl.edu>

Rebecca A. Wanzo
Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
Washington University in St Louis
rwanzo@wustl.edu

Education:

Ph.D. in English; Duke University, Durham, NC; 2003

Certificates in Women's Studies and African and African American Studies

B.A. in English, History, Black World Studies, and American Studies, *magna cum laude*
Miami University, Oxford, OH; 1997

Current Employment:

Washington University in St. Louis

Professor and Chair, Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Selected Publications:

Books:

The Content of Our Caricature: African American Comic Art and Political Belonging
(New York: New York University Press, 2020).

The Suffering Will Not Be Televised: African American Women and Sentimental Political Storytelling. (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009).

Relevant Journal Articles

Thinking about *Watchmen* with Jonathan W. Gray, Rebecca Wanzo, and Kristen Warner,"
Roundtable moderated and edited by Michael Boyce Gillespie. *Film Quarterly* 73.4
(2020): 50-60."

"Identity Temporalities and *American Born Chinese*" *Inks: The Journal of the Comics Studies Society* 4.1 (Spring 2020): 82-100.

"The Normative Broken: Melinda Gebbie, Feminist Comix, and Child Sexuality
Temporalities" *American Literature* 90.2 (2018): 347-375.

"Precarious Girl Comedy: Issa Rae, Lena Dunham, and Abjection Aesthetics." *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 31:2 (2016): 27-59.

"African American Acafandom and Other Strangers: New Genealogies of Fan Studies."
Transformative Works and Cultures, no. 20. 2015. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2015.0699>.

"Black Love is Not a Fairytale: African American Women, Romance, and Rhetoric."
POROI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Rhetoric and Invention 7:2 (2011).

"The Superhero: Meditations on Surveillance, Salvation, and Desire." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 6.2 (2009): 93-97. Print.

"Wearing Hero-face: The Dilemma of Black Patriotism in *Truth: Red, White, and Black*."
The Journal of Popular Culture 42.2 (2009): 339-362. Print. (Winner of Russel B. Nye Award)

"Apocalyptic Empathy: A Parable of Postmodern Sentimentality." *Obsidian III* 6/7:2/1
(2005/2006): 72-86. Rpt. in *Narrative Power: Encounters, Celebrations, Struggles*.
Ed. L. Timmel Duchamp. Seattle: Aqueduct Press, 2010.

Relevant Book Chapters

- “Caricature.” *Keywords in Comics Studies*, NYU Press (forthcoming).
- “Ms. Marvel Punches Back: Twenty-First Century Superheroes and Alienated Citizenship.” *Popular Culture and the Civic Imagination*, NYU Press, 2020.
- “Popular Culture.” *Keywords in African American Studies*. New York: New York University Press, 2018.
- “Pop Culture/Visual Culture.” *Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*. Mary Hawkesworth and Lisa Disch. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016: 651-672. Print and Online.
- “It’s a Hero: Black Comics and Satirizing Subjection.” *The Blacker the Ink: Constructions of Blackness in Comics and Sequential Art*. Eds. Frances Gateward, and John Jennings. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015. Print.
- “Black Nationalism, Bunraku and Beyond: Articulating Black Heroism and Cultural Fusion in Comics.” *Multicultural Comics: From Zap to Blue Beetle*. Ed. Frederick Aldama. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010. 93-104. Print.
- “Finding Archives/Making Archives: Observations on Conducting Multicultural Comics Research.” With Jenny Robb. *Multicultural Comics: From Zap to Blue Beetle*. Ed. Frederick Aldama. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010. 202-219. Print.

Art Exhibition Catalogs

- “The Black Technological Sublime.” *Black Kirby Presents: In Search of the Motherbox Connection*. Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2013. Print.
- “Infinite Representational Crisis: Race, Gender, the Superhero,” *Faster than a Speeding Bullet: The Art of the Superhero*. Eugene: Jordan Schnitzer Museum, 2009. Print.

Scholarly and Popular Online Publications

Scholarly Journals or Outlets

- “Fantastic and Fatal Coalitions: Revisiting Blood Syndicate,” Milestone Forum, *Black Perspectives*, African American Intellectual History Society. October 8, 2019. (invited)
- “And All Our Past Decades Have Seen Revolutions: The Long Decolonization of the Black Panther.” *The Black Scholar*. February 19, 2018. (invited)

Selected Fellowships, Grants, and Awards

Society for the Humanities Fellow, Cornell University	2015
Washington University School of Arts and Sciences SEED Grant on “Modern Segregation and the Roots of Structural Racism” (\$12,000) with Clarissa Hayward (Political Science) and Iver Bernstein (History)	2013
Visiting Fellow, Du Bois Institute, Harvard University, NEH Summer Institute	2011
Russel B. Nye Award for Outstanding Article published in <i>The Journal of Popular Culture</i> (2009)	2010
Dartmouth Humanities Institute Visiting Fellow	2007
Ford Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship	2006
Kenan Instructorship in Ethics, Duke University (Declined)	2002
Erskine Peters Dissertation Fellowship, University of Notre Dame	2002
Ford Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship for the Humanities	1999
Mellon Fellowship for the Humanities	1997



July 31, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

Filmmakers Collaborative (FC) is pleased to support KABOOM! HOW COMICS CHANGED AMERICA, a three-hour television series that looks at the history of comics in America.

FC maintains a rigorous application procedure and filmmakers with whom we partner demonstrate high professional standards, an innovative aesthetic approach, integrity, and a viable project plan and budget. Asaf Galay and Kathryn Dietz epitomize all of these characteristics. We are excited to help advance the work of the team in making this wonderful series!

For over 30 years, Filmmakers Collaborative has contributed to a diverse group of projects including documentaries for high-profile PBS series including *NOVA*, *American Experience*, and *Frontline*; as well as experimental, animated films, and narrative films. We look forward to continuing on this path with the creation of this worthwhile series!

For more information on the Collaborative, please visit www.filmmakerscollab.org.

Best regards,

Laura Azevedo
Executive Director
Filmmakers Collaborative



Lindsay Simmons
Office of Grants Management
National Endowment for the Humanities
400 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20506

July 30, 2020

Dear Lindsay,

Filmmakers Collaborative (FC) has never had a federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreement. We are instead electing to claim the federal de minimis rate, as allowable by the NEH.

Best,
Laura

Laura Azevedo
Executive Director
Filmmakers Collaborative
781-662-1102 office
laura@filmmakerscollab.org

RESEARCH & RELATED BUDGET - Budget Period 1

OMB Number: 4040-0001

Expiration Date: 12/31/2022

ORGANIZATIONAL DUNS: (b) (4)

Enter name of Organization: Filmmakers Collaborative, Inc

Budget Type: ☒ Project ☐ Subaward/Consortium

Budget Period: 1 Start Date: 07/05/2021 End Date: 07/01/2022

A. Senior/Key Person

Prefix	First	Middle	Last	Suffix	Base Salary (\$)	Months Cal. Acad. Sum.	Requested Salary (\$)	Fringe Benefits (\$)	Funds Requested (\$)
Ms.	Kathryn	Pierce	Dietz		(b) (6)	12.00	(b) (6)	0.00	(b) (6)
Project Role: PD/PI									
Mr.	Asaf		Galay		(b) (6)	10.00	(b) (6)	0.00	(b) (6)
Project Role: Director									

Additional Senior Key Persons: Total Funds requested for all Senior Key Persons in the attached file

Total Senior/Key Person (b) (6)

B. Other Personnel

Number of Personnel	Project Role	Cal.	Months Acad. Sum.	Requested Salary (\$)	Fringe Benefits (\$)	Funds Requested (\$)
<input type="text"/>	Post Doctoral Associates	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	Graduate Students	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	Undergraduate Students	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
1	Secretarial/Clerical	12.00	<input type="text"/>	900.00	0.00	900.00
1	Production Assistant	3.00	<input type="text"/>	3,000.00	0.00	3,000.00
1	Production Management (FC)	12.00	<input type="text"/>	3,750.00	0.00	3,750.00
1	Archival Researcher	3.00	<input type="text"/>	6,160.00	0.00	6,160.00
8	Humanities Advisors	12.00	<input type="text"/>	4,800.00	0.00	4,800.00
12	Total Number Other Personnel					
Total Other Personnel						(b) (6)
Total Salary, Wages and Fringe Benefits (A+B)						(b) (6)

C. Equipment Description

List items and dollar amount for each item exceeding \$5,000

Equipment item	Funds Requested (\$)
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Additional Equipment: <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="button" value="Add Attachment"/>	<input type="button" value="Delete Attachment"/>
<input type="button" value="View Attachment"/>	
Total funds requested for all equipment listed in the attached file	<input type="text"/>
Total Equipment	<input type="text"/>

D. Travel

	Funds Requested (\$)
1. Domestic Travel Costs (Incl. Canada, Mexico and U.S. Possessions)	<input type="text" value="5,700.00"/>
2. Foreign Travel Costs	<input type="text"/>
Total Travel Cost	<input type="text" value="5,700.00"/>

E. Participant/Trainee Support Costs

	Funds Requested (\$)
1. Tuition/Fees/Health Insurance	<input type="text"/>
2. Stipends	<input type="text"/>
3. Travel	<input type="text"/>
4. Subsistence	<input type="text"/>
5. Other <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/> Number of Participants/Trainees	<input type="text"/>
Total Participant/Trainee Support Costs	<input type="text"/>

F. Other Direct Costs

		Funds Requested (\$)
1. Materials and Supplies		1,000.00
2. Publication Costs		
3. Consultant Services		(b) (6)
4. ADP/Computer Services		
5. Subawards/Consortium/Contractual Costs		4,050.00
6. Equipment or Facility Rental/User Fees		3,900.00
7. Alterations and Renovations		
8. Software upgrades & dropbox		500.00
9. Mail, FedEx		850.00
10. Books & other research materials		3,000.00
Total Other Direct Costs		(b) (6)

G. Direct Costs

	Funds Requested (\$)
Total Direct Costs (A thru F)	75,005.00

H. Indirect Costs

Indirect Cost Type	Indirect Cost Rate (%)	Indirect Cost Base (\$)	Funds Requested (\$)
Total Indirect Costs			

Cognizant Federal Agency
(Agency Name, POC Name, and
POC Phone Number)

I. Total Direct and Indirect Costs

	Funds Requested (\$)
Total Direct and Indirect Institutional Costs (G + H)	75,005.00

J. Fee

Funds Requested (\$)
0.00

K. Total Costs and Fee

	Funds Requested (\$)
Total Costs and Fee (I + J)	75,005.00

L. Budget Justification

(Only attach one file.)

1242-BUDGET JUSTIFICATION.pdf

Add Attachment

Delete Attachment

View Attachment

RESEARCH & RELATED BUDGET - Cumulative Budget

		Totals (\$)
Section A, Senior/Key Person		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">(b) (6)</div>
Section B, Other Personnel		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">(b) (6)</div>
Total Number Other Personnel	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">12</div>	
Total Salary, Wages and Fringe Benefits (A+B)		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">(b) (6)</div>
Section C, Equipment		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></div>
Section D, Travel		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">5,700.00</div>
1. Domestic	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">5,700.00</div>	
2. Foreign	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></div>	
Section E, Participant/Trainee Support Costs		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></div>
1. Tuition/Fees/Health Insurance	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></div>	
2. Stipends	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></div>	
3. Travel	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></div>	
4. Subsistence	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></div>	
5. Other	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></div>	
6. Number of Participants/Trainees	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></div>	
Section F, Other Direct Costs		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">(b) (6)</div>
1. Materials and Supplies	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">1,000.00</div>	
2. Publication Costs	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></div>	
3. Consultant Services	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">(b) (6)</div>	
4. ADP/Computer Services	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></div>	
5. Subawards/Consortium/Contractual Costs	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">4,050.00</div>	
6. Equipment or Facility Rental/User Fees	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">3,900.00</div>	
7. Alterations and Renovations	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></div>	
8. Other 1	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">500.00</div>	
9. Other 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">850.00</div>	
10. Other 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">3,000.00</div>	
Section G, Direct Costs (A thru F)		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">75,005.00</div>
Section H, Indirect Costs		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></div>
Section I, Total Direct and Indirect Costs (G + H)		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">75,005.00</div>
Section J, Fee		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">0.00</div>
Section K, Total Costs and Fee (I + J)		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">75,005.00</div>

Kaboom! How Comics Changed America

BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

The total budget for development of our series is \$99,405, of which we are requesting \$75,000 from the Endowment.

I: Total Costs

This line item budget below justifies how we estimated total costs.

Principal Media Team

Director (Asaf Galay)	10 weeks @ (b) (6) /w	(b) (6)
Writer-Producer-PD (Kathryn Dietz)	60 days @ (b) (6) /d	(b) (6)
Production assistant	10 weeks @ \$700/w	\$ 7,000
Bookkeeper	12 months @ \$75/m	\$ 900
Payroll service fee	12 months @ \$60/m	\$ 720
Payroll taxes (producer salary only)	Total x .15	\$ (b) (6)
		(b) (6)

Consultants & Independent Contractors

Humanities advisors	8 @ \$600/ea	\$ 4,800
Archival researcher	24 days @ \$340/d	\$ 8,160
Cinematographer (green screen shoot)	3 days @ (b) (6) /d	(b) (6)
Offline editor	3 days @ (b) (6) /d	(b) (6)
Production Management (FC)	fee based on 5% of 75,000	\$ 3,750
		(b) (6)

Travel

Airfares to CA, NY, Illinois	4 RT @ \$750/ea	\$ 3,000
Ground Transport	est rentals, ubers	\$ 900
Hotels & living	6 nts @ \$250/n	\$ 1,500
Location expenses	1 allow @ \$1,000	\$ 1,000
		\$ 6,400

Administrative Costs

Office rental	12 mo @ \$325/m	\$ 3,900
IT support	est as needed	\$ 775
Software upgrades, subscriptions	est as needed	\$ 500
Mailing, FedEx	est as needed	\$ 850
Books & other research materials	est as needed	\$ 3,000
Legal services	3 hours @ \$300/h	\$ 900
Office supplies	est as needed	\$ 1,000
		\$10,925

TOTAL COSTS \$99,405

Kaboom! How Comics Changed America

II: Cost Sharing

Below is the same budget breakdown, but shown in columns to indicate which costs we are requesting from the NEH and which we will cover through cost sharing. The numbers in the NEH column correspond to those in the Research & Related Budget form. We have indicated the cost sharing details here, as we were not able to put them in the Research & Related Budget since we are not requesting a federal match for the NEH funding. This is how we interpreted the guidelines in Section L, page 21 of the NEH Notice of Funding Opportunity.

	NEH Funds	Cost Sharing
<u>Principal Media Team</u>		
Director (Asaf Galay)	(b) (6)	(b) (6)
Writer-Producer-PD (Kathryn Dietz)	(b) (6)	\$ 0
Production assistant	\$ 3,000	\$ 4,000
Bookkeeper	\$ 900	\$ 0
Payroll service fee	\$ 720	\$ 0
Payroll taxes	(b) (6)	\$ 0
	(b) (6)	(b) (6)
<u>Consultants & Independent Contractors</u>		
Humanities advisors	\$ 4,800	\$ 0
Archival researcher	\$ 6,160	\$ 2,000
Cinematographer (green screen shoot)	\$ 0	\$ (b) (6)
Offline editor	\$ 0	\$ 1,200
Production Management (FC)	\$ 3,750	\$ 0
	(b) (6)	(b) (6)
<u>Travel</u>		
Airfares to CA, NY, Illinois	\$ 3,000	\$ 0
Ground Transport	\$ 400	\$ 500
Hotels & living	\$ 1,500	\$ 0
Location expenses	\$ 800	\$ 200
	\$ 5,700	\$ 700
<u>Administrative Costs</u>		
Office rental	\$ 3,900	\$ 0
IT support	\$ 775	\$ 0
Software upgrades, subscriptions	\$ 500	\$ 0
Mailing, FedEx	\$ 850	\$ 0
Books & other research materials	\$ 3,000	\$ 0
Legal services	\$ 900	\$ 0
Office supplies	\$ 1,000	\$ 0
	\$10,925	\$ 0
Totals	\$75,005	\$24,400

Kaboom! How Comics Changed America

III. Further clarification

This is an international team that will develop the series *Kaboom! How Comics Changed America*. It is led by Asaf Galay, who lives and works in both Massachusetts and Tel Aviv, Israel. We expect to get some of the cost-share funding from sources in Israel, and will apply them to costs that Mr. Galay will generate there: for instance for the cinematographer who will do some green screen shooting to test our creative approach, and the offline editor who will work with this footage. The bulk of Mr. Galay's director line item is on the cost-share side.

The producer-writer is Kathryn Dietz, who is based in Massachusetts and from there will oversee all of the research, and will write the new scripts for the production proposal. Her line item and those for bookkeeper, payroll, production management, and administrative costs are all requested from the NEH.

Many of the comics creators we will want to interview are in New York, Washington, D.C., Illinois, Michigan, and California. Ideally, if the pandemic lets up, we will do some travel to personally meet and preinterview people. We have therefore budgeted four trips, including six nights of hotels. This assumes that most of the work during development can be done remotely, by Zoom, Skype, and phone.

It is especially hard to anticipate travel during a pandemic, but we believe we have covered all contingencies by stretching our work period over a year, and assuming that much of the work will be done remotely. Our main tasks are to do all of the content and archival research, and then spend at least two months revising the project narrative and writing detailed new scripts for each episode in the series.