

Introduction

Spanish Comics

Historical and Cultural Perspectives

Anne Magnussen

It is probably impossible to pinpoint anything that is unique about Spanish comics.¹ Since the beginning of modern comics history at the end of the 19th century, comics as a medium has been truly transnational, with comics artists and publishers interacting and inspiring each other across national borders. In the case of Spanish comics, a common language unites the Spanish and Latin American comics and markets, but interactions with European (mostly Italian and Franco-Belgian) comics, US comics and, more recently, Asian comics and manga have also been and are at work. This basic transnational characteristic invites us towards studies that move beyond the nation state and focus on comics, artists, publishers and readers as part of ‘multidirectional flows of peoples, ideas and

1 ‘Comic’ is used here as a general term (including comic strips, series, books, and graphic novels).

goods' across national borders rather than as phenomena defined by national origins.²

Following this transnational logic, Spanish comics are not unique in comparison with comics from other countries, but they do stand out because of the particular interrelation between the country's national history and that of other parts of the world.³ This makes it worthwhile zooming in on Spanish comics, both to study them in their own right and to see them as a prism through which the comics field at large can be understood. This was the main reason behind the *European Comic Art* editors' decision to publish two special issues about Spanish comics in 2018. These issues have now been turned into this anthology.⁴ Its 12 chapters show how their objects of analysis can be understood when taking into account regional, national, transnational or global processes.

Spanish comics history involves the trends that characterize western comics history in general.⁵ These include adult caricature and satire from the beginning of the 20th century; the golden age of children's comics especially in the 1950s and 1960s; the emergence of new comics and comics genres specifically for an adult audience from the 1960s (including pornographic, intellectual and social protest comics); and, especially within the last 30 years, the graphic novel. Although these comics genres and trends have changed in visibility and popularity over time, today they are all present alongside each other, making for a comics field that is highly heterogenous and truly exciting.

As part of the Spanish context, the above trends have been shaped by broader political, social and cultural changes in Spain, not least the political repression and conflicts during the 20th

2 Shelley Fisher Fishkin, 'From the Editors', *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 1, no. 1 (2009): 1–4 (1). An explicit example of a transnational focus in comics studies is Shane Denson, Christina Meyer and Daniel Stein, 'Introducing Transnational Perspectives on Graphic Narratives', in *Transnational Perspectives on Graphic Narratives: Comics at the Crossroads*, ed. Shane Denson, Christina Meyer and Daniel Stein (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 1–12.

3 In accordance with Doreen Massey's definition of space as a product of interrelations, see Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 9.

4 Volume 11, numbers 1 (spring 2018) and 2 (autumn 2018). This introduction is a thoroughly revised and rewritten version of the original introductions to the two special issues. Apart from minor corrections and updates, the chapters are identical with the journal articles. I want to thank my co-editors at *European Comic Art*, Ann Miller and Laurence Grove, for their invaluable participation in creating the two special issues as well as this book.

5 Antonio Martín, *Historia del comic español: 1875–1939* [The history of Spanish comics: 1875–1939] (Madrid: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 1978). According to Martín, Spanish comics history begins around the end of the nineteenth century, primarily with illustrations and cartoons in newspapers.

century that set Spain apart in Western Europe, i.e. the Civil War (1936–1939), the Franco dictatorship (1939–1975) and the succeeding transition to democracy. This history not only influenced the comics during the 1930s to 1970s, but it has also to a very large extent shaped the development and characteristics of comics from the 1980s and onwards. Today Spanish comics evolve around the same topics as those that are current in other parts of the world – memory, documentary, social protest and activism among many others – while they are also shaped within the particular Spanish context. This will be apparent in the chapters in this anthology.

At the same time, *research* into Spanish comics is part of transnational processes. Comics research is today largely international, which is apparent from publications and conferences, as well as in bibliographic references in academic work. However, language plays a key role, as English language comics research seems to dominate, while much of the research on Spanish comics is written in Spanish. Therefore, it is important to make research in languages such as German, French, Arabic – and Spanish – visible on an international stage. Ironically, one way of doing this is through a publication such as this – in English. Some of the book's chapters are written by Spanish scholars who have published primarily in Spanish, and all the chapters draw on Spanish language research. I have furthermore strived to include references to scholarly texts (mostly in Spanish or in English) in this introduction, offering a sketch of the field with a specific focus on the academic literature published since 2000.⁶ In this way, the anthology highlights not only Spanish comics, but also comics scholarship about these comics.

The 12 chapters in this anthology were, as mentioned, first published as articles in the peer-reviewed journal *European Comic Art*, and they were the result of an open call for papers about *Spanish Comics* in 2017. The call resulted in 21 promising abstracts, and as any journal or book editor will know, getting from abstracts to the final chapters is the result of a long, complex and sometimes arbitrary route. It could therefore have proved something of a challenge to present them in a coherent manner in this introduction. As it turned out, the difficulty was not to figure out how the 12 studies relate to each other, but rather to choose from the many different ways in which they connect.

6 Due to the limited pages available, this introduction is in no way an exhaustive discussion of research into Spanish comics. With few exceptions, research in languages other than English and Spanish will not be included here.

The presentation of the chapters more or less follows a conventional chronological order with regards to the time periods and comics discussed in the chapters. Some of the chapters span a relatively long historical period, but most of them are centered on one of the two historical periods that have attracted the most interest both in Spanish comics research at large and among the contributors to this volume, namely the mid-century repression and conflict (1940s–1970s) and contemporary comics (2000s–2010s).

A chronological sketch of Spanish comics history nevertheless begins with a somewhat disconcerting statement, namely that despite the fact that early Spanish comics, i.e. comics 1875–1939, are tremendously interesting, research into this era is rather limited. Admittedly, this anthology does not do much to remedy this situation, and Antonio Martín's account from 1978 continues to be a standard reference for this period.⁷ That being said, several of the anthology's chapters refer to the early period as part of the context of their analysis, and early comics history has attracted more attention in recent years, both with a national and regional focus.⁸

7 Martín, *Historia del comic español*. See also Antonio Martín, 'La Historieta española de 1900 a 1951' [Spanish comics history 1900–1951], in *La Historieta española, 1857–2010: Historia, sociología y estética de la narrativa gráfica en España*, [The Spanish comic, 1857–2010: History, sociology and aesthetics of graphic narrative in Spain], ed. Antonio Altarriba special issue, *Arbor* 187, extra no. 2 (2011), 63–128. Jesús Cuadrado has also contributed considerably to information about this period with his *Diccionario de uso de la historieta española* [Dictionary of the uses of the Spanish comic] (Madrid: Compañía Literaria, 1997). Note that *tebeo*, *historieta* and *comic* may all be translated into English as 'comic', even though they have different connotations in Spanish.

8 Manuel Barrero, 'The Evolution of Children's Comics in Spain', *International Journal of Comic Art* 5, no. 2 (2003): 28–49; Manuel Barrero, 'Orígenes de la historieta española, 1857–1906' [The origins of Spanish comics, 1857–1906], in Altarriba, ed., *La Historieta española*, 15–42; Xulio Carballo Dopico, *Os Pioneiros da banda deseñada galega (1971–1979)* [The Pioneers of Galician Comics (1971–1979)] (Vigo: Xerais, 2019); Jorge Catalá Carrasco, *Vanguardia y humorismo gráfico en crisis: La guerra civil española (1936–1939) y la revolución cubana (1959–1961)* [Avant-Garde and graphic humour in crisis: The Spanish Civil War and the Cuban Revolution] (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2015); Rhiannon McGlade, *Catalan Cartoons: A Cultural and Political History* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016); Pedro Porcel and Vicente Sorní, *Viñetas a la luna de Valencia: La historia del tebeo valenciano, 1965–2006* [Panels to the moon of Valencia: The history of Valencian comics] (Alicante: Edicions de Ponent, 2007); Joel C. Webb, 'Drawing a Glorious Past, Picturing an Uncertain Future', *European History Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (2017): 257–283. Some titles focus on the satirical press during a longer period of time: Enrique Bordería Ortiz, Francesc-Andreu Martínez Gallego and Josep Lluís Gómez Mompert, eds., *El Humor frente al poder: Prensa humorística, cultura política y poderes fácticos en España (1927–1987)* [Humor up against power. The humor press, political culture and the powers that be in Spain (1927–1987)] (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2015); Luís Conde Martín, *El Humor gráfico en España: La distorsión intencional* [Graphic humour in Spain: Intentional distortion] (Madrid: Asociación de la Prensa de Madrid, 2005).

Mid-century repression and conflict: Dictatorship, and political and social protest

In opposition to the limited research into early Spanish comics, the following period, including the Francoist dictatorship (1939–1975) and the political transition to democracy (1970s–early 1980s), has been – and continues to be – a main focus in Spanish comics scholarship. It is hardly a surprise, as the period represents major political and societal changes in Spanish society, coinciding with important international developments within the comics field. Spanish comics of the time were shaped by both.

Severe censorship and a conscious use of children's literature (including comics) for indoctrination of the regime's National-Catholic, authoritarian ideology reigned during the Francoist dictatorship. Western Europe consisted at the time primarily of democratic nation states, which made the closed, Spanish dictatorship (along with Portugal) an exception. This makes it at times easy to overlook the fact that Spanish comics were also similar to foreign comics, and that especially comics from Europe, but US comics, too, were an important source of inspiration also during the dictatorship.

As part of an international trend, Spanish comics for children experienced a golden age especially in the 1950s, which is a main focus in Rhiannon McGlade's chapter, 'Dissenting Voices? Controlling Children's Comics under Franco'. McGlade addresses the interaction between comics publishers, censorship authorities and children's comics during this golden age. She draws attention to the comics themselves and to the ways in which the regime tried to control their content and thereby to force a specific idea about Spain onto the children. Efforts to control children's literature were present in other European countries and the United States in this period, but the very real threat of control and punishment during a dictatorship set the Spanish comics market apart.

In Spanish comics research – particularly in Spanish – children's adventure and humour comics constitute the topic of many studies, including a series of general introductions to the comics of the period.⁹ Other analyses have zoomed in on a particular comic, artist or genre, typically using it as a prism for a more general view

9 Viviane Alary, 'The Spanish *Tebeo*', *European Comic Art* 2, no. 2 (2009): 253–276; Antonio Altarriba, *La España del tebeo: La historieta española de 1940 a 2000* [Comics Spain: Spanish comics from 1940 to 2000] (Madrid: Espasa, 2001); Ana Merino, *El Cómic hispánico* [Hispanic comics] (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2003), 97–145; Pedro Porcel, 'La Historieta española de 1951–1970', in Altarriba, ed., *La Historieta española*, 129–158.

of comics and their context. This is the case with several studies of the adventure comics of that era, with the series *El Capitán Trueno* [Captain Thunder], *El Guerrero del Antifaz* [The Masked warrior] and *Roberto Alcázar y Pedrín* being among the most popular.¹⁰ Yet other studies particularly address comics for girls during the dictatorship.¹¹ Studies of the period's humour comics also often focus on a comics artist, character or series,¹² and within the field of caricature and cartoons during the dictatorship, particularly the semi-satirical magazine *La Codorniz* has caught scholarly attention.¹³ Closely related to the dictatorship is the aforementioned

- 10 Antonio Lara, 'El Guerrero del Antifaz, repaso del cuaderno nº 26: "El crimen de Harúm" (1946)' [The Masked Warrior: A reading of magazine no. 26: 'The crime of Harúm'], in *Historietas, comics y tebeos españoles*, ed. Viviane Alary (Mirail: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2002), 164–173; Lucas E. Lorduy, 'Roberto Alcázar y Pedrín como paradigma sociológico del período de la autarquía en España (1939–1959)' [*Roberto Alcázar y Pedrín* as a sociological paradigm of the autarky period in Spain], *CuCo – Cuadernos de Cómics* 7 (2016): 66–86; José Antonio Ortega Anguiano, *El Capitán Trueno: El Gran Héroe del tebeo* [Captain Thunder: The great comics hero] (Palma: Dolmen Editorial, 2012); Pedro Porcel, *Tragados por el abismo: La historieta de aventuras en España* [Swallowed by the abyss: adventure comics in Spain] (Alicante: Edicions de Ponent, 2010).
- 11 Rosario Jiménez Morales, 'Pequeños defectos que debemos corregir: Aprendiendo a ser mujer en la historieta sentimental de los años cincuenta y sesenta' [Small defects that we should correct: Learning to become a woman in the sentimental comics of the fifties and sixties], in Altarriba, ed., *La Historieta española*, 159–168; María del Pilar Loranca de Castro, "'Mis Chicas" y su influencia en las niñas de posguerra' ['My girls' and their influence on post-war girls], *Historietas* 3 (2013): 71–81.
- 12 Viviane Alary, 'Hito de la historieta española: El caso de K-Hito en la serie "De cómo pasan el rato Currinche y Don Turulato"' [Hito of the Spanish comic: The case of K-Hito in the series 'How Currinche and Don Turulato spend the day'], in Alary, ed., *Historietas*, 142–163; Fernando Javier de la Cruz, *Los Cómics de Francisco Ibáñez* [The comics by Francisco Ibáñez] (Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2008); Óscar Gual Boronat, 'Qué Suerte más perra: Los oscuros años de Jaimito' [What bad luck: Jaimito's dark years], *Historietas: Revista de estudios sobre la Historieta* 3 (2013): 57–69; Jesús Jiménez Varea, 'You Can Never Win: An Analysis of Comic Strips by the Spanish Cartoonist Peñarroya', *International Journal of Comic Art* 5, no. 2 (2003): 50–65.
- 13 Manuel Barrero, 'Martínez de León: Humor gráfico en la guerra civil y bajo el Franquismo' [Martínez de León: Graphic humor in the Civil War and during the Francoist regime], *Tebeosfera* 2 (2008); José Antonio Llera, *El Humor verbal y visual de La Codorniz* [Verbal and visual humour in *La Codorniz*] (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2003); José Antonio Llera, 'De la Palabra a la imagen: El chiste gráfico de Chumy Chúmez' [From word to image: Chumy Chúmez' graphic jokes], *Tebeosfera* 2 (2008); Cristina Peñarroya, 'El Humor gráfico del Franquismo y la formación de un territorio translocal de identidad democrática' [Graphic humor during Francoism and the formation of a translocal territory of democratic identity], *CIC (Cuadernos de Información y Comunicación)* 7 (2002): 351–380.

question of censorship. It is hard to avoid in any study about comics of this period, but some titles have it as their main theme.¹⁴

Even though censorship and control were virulent during the dictatorship, not all children's comics reproduced regime values one-to-one, and it is one of McGlade's main points that some of the children's comics tried to push censorship boundaries. There was nevertheless an enormous difference between the social criticism of these comics and the very explicit political opposition to the regime that came with political satire and fanzines from the 1970s. While the conventional publishing houses undertook self-censorship, the fanzines were published outside of the mainstream and contributed to shaping increasingly widespread protests, especially among young Spaniards, against the dictatorship. The political satire and fanzines were provocative and loud and represented a radical rupture with the children's comics universe. Retrospectively, they constitute one of the most important characteristics of 1970s Spanish comics. At the same time, this material was part of a broader rupture within western comics traditions, in which the new comics for a young and adult audience played a role in youth culture by introducing new themes, but also new aesthetics, genres and formats. Furthermore, they engendered a new group of Spanish comics artists that continued in the field throughout the 1970s and beyond.¹⁵

In this anthology, two chapters specifically analyze and discuss the development during the political transition, namely Gerardo Vilches' 'Satirical Panels against Censorship. A Battle That Raged during the Spanish Transition' and Louie Dean Valencia-García's 'Tintin in the *Movida Madrileña*. Gender and Sexuality in the Punk

14 Ignacio Fernández Sarasola, 'Viñetas truncadas: El control sobre las historietas durante el franquismo' [Truncated panels: Control over the comic strips during Francoism], *International Journal of Iberian Studies* 30, no. 1 (2017): 41–57; Vicent Sanchis, *Franco contra Flash Gordon: La censura franquista aplicada a les publicacions infantils i juvenils (1936–1977)* [Franco against Flash Gordon: Franco's censorship applied to publications for children and the youth] (Valencia: Tres i Quatre, 2009); Vicent Sanchis, *Tebeos mutilados: La censura franquista contra Editorial Bruguera* [Mutilated comics: Francoist censorship against Editorial Bruguera] (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 2010).

15 A few examples of academic books about comics during the political transition are Antonio Altarriba, *Los Tebeos de la Transición: Las historietas española en los setenta* [Comics of the Transition: Spanish comics in the 1970s] (Cuenca: Fundación Antonio Pérez, 2008); Pablo Dopico, *El Cómic underground español, 1970–1980* [The Spanish underground comics, 1970–1980] (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2005); Francesca Lladó Pol, *Los Cómic de la Transición: El boom del cómic adulto 1975–1984* [Comics of the Transition: The boom of adult comics 1975–1984] (Barcelona: Ediciones Glénat, 2001); Francisco Segado Boj, *Un País de chiste: El humor gráfico durante la Transición* [A joke country: Graphic humor during the Transition] (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, 2012).

Comic Book Zine Scene'. Gerardo Vilches discusses the more explicitly political cartoons of the time and the ways in which the Francoist regime tried to delimit their circulation and impact through censorship. In his chapter, Louie Dean Valencia-García zooms in specifically on the underground fanzines of the period and studies how they offered Spanish young people new means of communication and cultural outlets.

As mentioned above, the 1970s and early 1980s Spanish comics scene has become an important object of study. Some of these studies focus on specific publications or series,¹⁶ while others concentrate on a topic such as the representation of women in the magazines.¹⁷ The period of the political transition also saw the emergence of what would become the most popular comics genres of the 1980s: *underground* and *línea clara* comics. These genres have also become key topics for scholarly work, both in monographs and in a long series of scholarly articles.¹⁸

16 Alfonso Cortés González, 'Historieta social y de actualidad: *Martínez el Facha*' [Social and current comics: *Martínez el Facha*], in *Las Dimensiones social y política del comic* [The social and political dimensions of comics], ed. Ana Jorge Alonso, Rocío de la Maya Retamar and Alfonso Cortés González (Málaga: Centro de Ediciones de la Diputación de Málaga, 2006), 53–70; María Iranzo, 'Un Golpe de risa: La gracia de un golpe – Análisis del golpe de estado del 23 de febrero de 1981 por la revista *El Papus*' [A joke of a military coup: The grace of a coup – Analysis of the coup of 23 February 1981 by the magazine *El Papus*], in *La Risa periodística: Teoría, metodología e investigación en comunicación satírica* [Journalistic laughter: Theory, methodology and research in satirical communication], ed. Enrique Bordería Ortiz, Francesc A. Martínez Gallego and Josep L. Gómez Mompert (Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch, 2010), 183–213; Gerardo Vilches, 'La Primera etapa de *El Jueves*: Un análisis de los primeros 26 números del semanario' [The first stage of *El Jueves*: An analysis of the first 26 issues of the weekly], *CuCo – Cuadernos de Cómic* 2 (2014): 137–158.

17 Carla Garrido Zanón, 'La Construcción de la imagen de la mujer en el humor gráfico del semanario *Hermano Lobo* (1972–1976)', [The construction of the image of women in the graphic humor of the weekly *Hermano Lobo*], *Revista de Comunicación de la SEECI* 36 (2015): 20–30; Jessica Lluch Jiménez, 'La Representación de la mujer en la prensa satírica: *Por Favor* (1974–1978)' [The representation of women in the satirical press: *Por Favor*], *Revista internacional de Historia de la Comunicación* 3 (2014): 71–94.

18 Monographs: Dopico, *El Cómic underground*; Lladó Pol, *Los Cómic de la Transición*; Pedro Pérez del Solar, *Imágenes del desencanto: Nueva historieta española 1980–1986* [Images of disenchantment: The new Spanish comic] (Madrid: La Casa de la Riqueza, 2013). Articles: Danielle Corrado, 'Carlos Giménez y el pacto autobiográfico' [Carlos Giménez and the autobiographical pact], in Alary, ed., *Historietas*, 174–194; Pablo Dopico, 'Espustos de papel: La historieta "underground" española' [Spittle of Paper: The Spanish 'underground' comic], in Altarriba, ed., *La Historieta española*, 169–181; Pablo Dopico, 'Lo Femenino y el sexo en el underground español' [Femininity and sex in Spanish underground comics], *Historietas* 2 (2012): 87–96; Marina Hertrampf, 'Katalanischer Comic und movida barcelonesa: La noche de siempre von Montesol and Ramón de España' [Catalan Comics and the *Movida* in Barcelona: 'The well-known night'

Historical Memory, the Nation, and the Regions

The memory of the Civil War and the Francoist dictatorship has loomed large in Spanish society since the transition to democracy. However, it has taken different shapes, from the immediate reactions to the recent past during the political transition, through efforts to avoid it altogether and rather focusing on regional identities during the late 1980s and early 1990s, to the embracing from 2000 of historical memory and its consequences for the idea of the Spanish nation as a key cultural, political and legal topic.

The comics field went through more or less the same phases, where the political and social criticism that defined a large part of the 1970s comics all but disappeared from the mid-1980s. Spanish comics of the late 1980s and the 1990s may rather be described according to broader European comics trends and only to a limited extent as engaging with Spanish society and culture. This is most visible in the choice of topics and themes, as most of these comics zoom in on the intimate sphere or engage in broader existential themes.¹⁹ After the early 1980s, Spain was not particularly visible in the comics.

This assertion of European dominance should be modified on one point, though, as the 1980s and 1990s saw a strengthening in comics from the historical regions of Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia in terms of publication and topics. This regional visibility had very much to do both with historical memory and with the nation. The historical regions and cultures had been harshly repressed during the Francoist dictatorship, and they were very active in the protests against the regime from the late 1960s and onwards, and as part of the newly minted democracy, many

by Montesol and Ramón de España], *Zeitschrift für Katalanistik / Revista d'Estudis Catalans* 25 (2012), 153–170; Anne Magnussen, 'Mara and Paracuellos: Interpretations of Spanish Politics from the Perspective of the Comics', *Scandinavian Journal of Comic Art* 1, no. 1 (2012): 26–44; Elena Masarah, 'Cuando Dibujar es político: Historiografía y memoria de las autoras de cómic en la Transición' [When drawing is political: Historiography and memory of the comic authors during the Transition], *CuCo – Cuadernos de Cómic* 5 (2015): 54–75; Álvaro Pons, 'Micharmut: Más allá de la vanguardia' [Micharmut: Beyond the avant-garde], *CuCo – Cuadernos de Cómic* 3 (2014): 51–65; Maricarmen Vila, 'Historieta feminista y erotismo: Las relecturas del cuerpo' [Feminist comics and eroticism: Rereadings of the body], *Historietas* 2 (2012): 97–104.

¹⁹ Anne Magnussen, 'Spanish Comics and Politics', in *Comics und Politik / Comics and Politics*, ed. Stephan Packard (Berlin: Christian A. Bachmann Verlag, 2014), 157–178.

regional cultural initiatives involved the comics medium from the early 1980s and onwards.²⁰

Recently, comics research has caught up with the regional comics development, as it has seen a surge in the interest in regional comics, from historical overviews to analyses of specific works and themes. These studies include accounts of comics history in Catalonia, Galicia, Valencia, Mallorca and Asturias.²¹ Many of the comics and caricatures treated in these studies are also included in general accounts of comics history. This is especially true for Catalan and Valencian comics, as they have had a major impact on the Spanish comics scene at large and are therefore typically also included in national comics histories and accounts. However, what is (relatively) new is that in the regional comics histories focus is on an explicit regional viewpoint.

As an example in point, David Miranda-Barreiro's chapter, 'From Pioneer of Comics to Cultural Myth. Castelao in Galician Graphic Biography' is about Galician comics in its concern with comics representations of Alfonso Daniel Rodríguez Castelao, a Galician comics artist and one of the founders of Galician nationalism from the early 20th century. It has its point of departure in Castelao's own work as a caricaturist during the first three decades of the 20th century, with its main focus on other comics artists' interpretations of Castelao in comics biographies published in the 1970s and 2000s.

An explicit preoccupation with the immediate past and with national history did nevertheless become very visible from around 2000, although it had not been completely invisible before that. In his chapter, 'The Representation of Traumatic Memory in Spanish Comics. Remembering the Civil War and Francoism', Juan Carlos Pérez García addresses the historical memory of repression, as he traces the representations of the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship in comics from the 1970s to the 2010s. In this way the

20 As part of the political transition Spain was divided into 18 autonomies that all engaged with cultural projects in efforts to reassert regional identities. The regional focus did not involve only the three historical regions.

21 Catalonia: McGlade, *Catalan Cartoons*; Jordi Riera Pujal, 'El Còmic en catalán: De la postguerra a la Transición' [Comics in Catalan: From the post-war period to the Transition], *Tebeosfera* 3 (2008). Galicia: Carballo Dopico, *Os Pioneiros*; Valencia: Porcel and Sorní, *Viñetas a la luna de Valencia*; Francisco Tadeo Juan, 'The Valencia School: Pioneer of Spanish Comic Strips', *International Journal of Comic Art* 7, no. 1 (2005): 485–503; Mallorca: Francisca Lladó Pol, *Trenta anys de còmic a Mallorca (1975–2005)* [Thirty years of comics in Mallorca (1975–2005)] (Palma: Edicions Documenta Balear, 2009); Asturias: Mercedes Fernández Menéndez, ed., *Asturias: Imágenes de historieta y realidades regionales* [Asturias: Comics images and regional realities] (Oviedo: Servicio de Publicaciones Universidad de Oviedo, 1999).

chapter introduces the emergence and development of memory as one of the most prominent themes in Spanish comics from 2000 onwards.

The Spanish focus on historical memory was part of an international interest in comics and memory, and in the Spanish case, many comics homed in on memories of the Civil War and the dictatorship as described by Pérez García.²² At the same time, the new memory comics and the accompanying research was part of a pronounced interest and movement in Spain concerned with historical memory. Now, 20 years after this process began in earnest, memory continues to be a central theme in many comics and in comics research, but the focus has shifted, which will be apparent in the next section.

Parallel to many of the comics' explicit representation of the recent past, another genre of historical comics can be found. In his chapter on the Middle Ages in Spanish comics, 'For He Bestirred Himself to Protect the Land from the Moors'. Depicting the Medieval *Reconquista* in Modern Spanish Graphic Novels' Iain A. MacInnes compares the way in which comics in the 1970s and 2010s represent the Spanish Middle Ages and define the (non-Spanish) Other, while arguing that there is a high degree of continuity between the two time periods. The comics analyzed by MacInnes belong to a genre of historical comics that have been part of the Spanish scene since at least the late 1940s and that have developed alongside the more dominant trends within the field.

There is a considerable influence from the Franco-Belgian comics tradition in these historical comics, and MacInnes' analysis draws attention to the fact that Spanish comics are in continuous interaction with comics characteristics and developments beyond national borders. The historical comics also indicate that any period

22 David Miranda-Barreiro, 'Invoking the past in graphic biographies: The life, death and ghostly return of Alexandre Bóveda', *Studies in Comics* 10, issue 1 (2019): 27–48; David Fernández de Arriba, 'La Memoria del exilio a través del comic: *Un largo silencio, El arte de volar y Los surcos del azar*' [The memory of exile in *A Long Silence, The Art of Flying and Twists of Fate*], *CuCo – Cuadernos de Cómic* 4 (2015): 7–34; Anne Magnussen, 'The New Spanish Memory Comics: The Example of *Cuerda de presas*', *European Comic Art* 7, no. 1 (2014), 56–84; Michel Matly, 'El Cómic español y la guerra civil: Transición y primera década de democracia 1976–1992' [Spanish comics and the Civil War: the Transition and the first decade of democracy], *Tebeosfera* 12 (2014); Ana Merino and Brittany Tullis, 'The Sequential Art of Memory: The Testimonial Struggle of Comics in Spain', *Hispanic Issues On Line* 11 (2012): 211–225; Hartmut Nonnenmacher, 'La Memoria del franquismo en el cómic español' [The memory of Francoism in Spanish comics], in *Lugares de memoria de la guerra civil y el franquismo* [Memory sites of the Civil War and the Francoist dictatorship], ed. Ulrich Winter (Frankfurt and Madrid: Vervuert and Iberoamericana, 2006), 177–208.

includes a series of different genres, topics and audiences, although some may be more visible or dominant than others.

Miranda-Barreiro, Pérez García and MacInnes' chapters all involve a longer time span than most of the chapters in the anthology, as they compare comics published primarily in the 1970s and after 2000. All three also exemplify one of the newer developments within comics research (generally speaking), namely the combination of *work-oriented* analyses with historical accounts of continuity and change over time. These two research perspectives were mostly separate until relatively recent times in comics studies: either a study was on comics history and historical context – not delving into the complexities of the comics medium as an aesthetic expression – or it did exactly this, it attended to the single artwork so that the broader cultural, societal context disappeared altogether.²³ Although the time span is less explicit in the following section of chapters, all the anthology's chapters modify to different degrees such a separation between historical account and textual analysis.

Contemporary Comics: Memory, personal spheres, didactics and (again) social protest

Above I mentioned that Spanish comics of the late 1980s and 1990s did not explicitly engage with Spain as a whole, or at least not to any significant degree. Their dominant themes typically either zoomed in on the intimate sphere or outwards to locations that were not immediately recognizable as Spain. On a very general level it could be argued that the Spanish comics of that period had become truly European, paralleling the country's societal development as Spain became part of a democratic, European community along with the political transition. At the same time, though, the comics represented a series of characteristics that both related back to the new material of the 1970s and forward to the 2000s and 2010s. In the 1980s and 1990s, Spanish comics experimented with new themes, as well as with aesthetics and the comics format, and the period saw the consolidation of a series of renowned comics artists and

23 Anne Magnussen, 'Forestillinger om Middelalderen under det Franquistiske Diktatur. Tegneserier som historiske kilder [Imagining the Middle Ages during the Francoist Dictatorship. Comics as historical sources], in *Visuel Historie. Tilgange og eksempler* [Visual history. Approaches and examples], eds. Anne Magnussen, Kirstine Sinclair and Casper Sylvest (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2018), 123–138. For further discussion of comics as historical source material in between textual analyses and general historical accounts, see also Anne Magnussen, 'Comics as Historical Source Material: Race, Ethnicity and Power According to Texas History Movies', *Studies in Comics* 7, issue 1 (2016): 99–125.

auteur comics that became more and more visible also beyond Spanish borders. In spite of the fact that the period was characterized by faltering sales, it represented important aesthetic developments that became crucial from 2000, where Spanish comics (as comics elsewhere) seemed to reemerge against all odds and in competition with new media and technologies.

Within comics scholarship, the first overviews of comics development and publishing from the 1990s onwards are emerging.²⁴ However, most studies of late 1980s–1990s comics are concerned with comics as literary or artistic works in their own right, including a variety of themes, from intertextuality and monstrosity to the representations of place.²⁵ Other comics studies of this period zoom in on the comics medium and aesthetics, using individual Spanish comics as their main examples.²⁶

- 24 Juan Manuel Díaz de Guereñu, 'El Cómic español desde 1995' [Spanish comics since 1995], in Altarriba, ed., *La Historieta española*, 209–220; Santiago García, 'En el Umbral: El cómic español contemporáneo' [On the threshold: Contemporary Spanish comics], in Altarriba, ed., *La Historieta española*, 255–263; Anne Magnussen, 'Spanish Comics and Politics'; Álvaro Pons, 'La Industria del cómic en España: Radiografía de un mito o una realidad?' [The comic industry in Spain: X-ray of a myth or a reality?], in Altarriba, ed., *La Historieta española*, 265–273.
- 25 Sarah D. Harris, 'The Monster Within and Without: Spanish Comics, Monstrosity, Religion, and Alterity', in *Representing Multiculturalism in Comics and Graphic Novels*, ed. Carole Ayaka and Ian Hague (Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 2014), 113–129; Ana Merino, 'Intertextuality: Superrealist Intertextualities in Max's *Bardín*', in *Critical Approaches to Comics: Theories and Methods*, ed. Matthew J. Smith and Randy Duncan (New York: Routledge, 2012), 252–264; Miguel A. Pérez-Gómez, 'Analizando Neurope: La construcción de mundo en la obra de Miguel Ángel Martín' [Analyzing Neurope: The construction of the world in the work of Miguel Ángel Martín], *CuCo – Cuadernos de Cómic* 6 (2016): 34–61.
- 26 Guy Abel, 'Trazo de tiza de Miguelanxo Prado: El improbable relato entre novela y cuadro' [Streak of chalk by Miguelanxo Prado: The improbable story between novel and painting], in Alary, ed., *Historietas*, 196–209; Jean Alsina, 'La narración en *El artefacto perverso*: Algunas Calas en un objeto inagotable' [Narration in *The Perverse Artefact*: A few slices of an infinite object], in Alary, ed., *Historietas*, 210–228; Viviane Alary, 'Briefness in Spanish Comics: A Few Landmarks', *International Journal of Comic Art* 5, no. 2 (2003): 5–27; Benjamin Fraser, 'Tactile comics, disability studies and the mind's eye: on "A Boat Tour" (2017) in Venice with Max', *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* (2020): 1–13; Argelio García, 'Una Viñeta memorable y su pericampo en 36–39 *Malos tiempos*' [A memorable panel and its hyper frame in 36–39 *Bad Times*], *CuCo, Cuadernos de Cómic*, no. 12 (2019): 71–93; Óscar García López, 'El Cómic como experiencia (única Beta-test de la narratividad del medio a partir de la obra de Begoña García-Alén)' [Comic as Experience (Beta-testing comics narrativity based on Begoña García-Alén's work)], *CuCo, Cuadernos de Cómic*, no. 12 (2019): 27–50; Anne Magnussen, 'The Semiotics of C. S. Peirce as a Theoretical Framework for the Understanding of Comics', in *Comics and Culture: Analytical and Theoretical Approaches to Comics*, eds. Anne Magnussen and Hans-Christian Christiansen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2000), 193–207; Jesús Jiménez Varea, 'Formas y contenidos: Evolución del lenguaje y de los argumentos en la historieta española' [Form and content: Evolution of language and arguments in Spanish comics],

One of the Spanish ‘post-2000’ comics artists who has gained both national and international renown is Paco Roca. This anthology includes an interview with Roca as well as two chapters about the artist’s work – and even about the same graphic novel, *La casa* from 2015. In the first part of this introduction, I mentioned that the book’s 12 chapters were the result of a serendipitous process from call for papers, through abstracts, proposals and review process to the actual articles or chapters. In this process, the anthology’s substantial – relatively speaking – focus on Roca is not the result of a deliberate decision, but rather a coincidence. It does show, however, that Paco Roca’s work is tremendously popular, and it also offers the reader the possibility of seeing how different perspectives, research questions and conceptual frameworks lead to quite different insights into this one work, *La casa*. Esther Claudio’s chapter, ‘An interview with Paco Roca’, contributes with reflections from the artist himself, which constitute important insights in and of themselves, but also function as contextualization for the two succeeding analyses.

La casa is an example of the significance of the graphic novel as a dominant genre, as well as of how memory continues to be an important theme today, although without a national frame. With an explicit reference to the topic of memory in Spanish comics, Sarah D. Harris discusses the use of metaphors and memory in the chapter, “‘They Tried To Bury Us; They Didn’t Know We Were Seeds’: Intergenerational Memory and *La casa*’, but from a perspective that is intimate and family related rather than collectively political and/or with specific references to Spanish history. The chapter illustrates, therefore, how memory as a theme has evolved from the 1970s to the 2010s, from a denunciation of Francoist dictatorship through historical memory to more intimate and heterogeneous memories in recent years.²⁷ In his chapter, ‘Paco Roca’s Graphic Novel *La casa* (2015) as Architectural Elegy’, Benjamin Fraser analyses how architecture represents grief in sophisticated ways in the graphic novel. The analysis illustrates how *La casa* thematizes the general human condition and refers to broader developments within the fields of European and US comics at large.

The focus on the individual and on the human condition is seen also in another relatively recent genre, namely that of graphic medi-

in Altarriba, ed., *La Historieta española*, 43–61; Óscar Gual Boronat, *Viñetas de posguerra: Los cómics como fuente para el estudio de la historia* [Post-war panels: Comics as a source for historical studies] (Valencia: Universitat de València, 2013).

27 The historical memory of the Spanish past continues as a topic, although seemingly not as dominant as in the 2000s.

cine with its focus on educating and reflecting upon illness and healthcare. The topic is universal rather than nationally anchored, but Spanish comics has contributed with several examples that have gained international renown.²⁸ In her chapter, 'Therapeutic Journeys in Contemporary Graphic Novels', Agatha Mohring analyzes some of these comics and discusses how they use the journey as a metaphor to represent illness as pathography. In this way Mohring's chapter illustrates how Spanish comics participate in the international comics field, but it is also proof of the high standard among Spanish comics artists today, some of which have been part of the national comics field since the early 1980s, if not before.

As a genre, graphic medicine includes a didactic component, and it shows that didactic comics are not (or no longer) to be regarded as primarily efficient in their communication, but uninteresting as artistic works. This is seen also in other, somewhat didactic comics after 2000. Javier Muñoz-Basols and Marina Massaguer Comes' chapter, 'Social Criticism through Humour in the Digital Age. Multimodal Extension in the Works of Aleix Saló', shows how Aleix Saló uses different media in his critical, humorous and informational comments about the economic crisis in Spain from 2008 and onwards. Muñoz-Basols and Massaguer Comes analyze the role of multimodality and Saló's sophisticated uses of digital media. At the same time, they argue, the artist draws on a long tradition of Spanish comics artists and cartoonists, referring back to the political and social activism of the magazines and fanzines for an adult audience that emerged in the 1970s. The analysis of Saló's work draws attention to one of the most exciting developments in the comics field – in Spain and beyond – namely of comics as an actor in the social and political debate.²⁹ Such political and social activism is not new to Spanish comics, as the reference above to the 1970s political transition indicate, but the technological and artistic framework is new, making it highly relevant today too. The chapter therefore also illustrates the point indicated at the beginning of this introduction; that Spanish comics is the result of transnational processes involving both national and international influences.

28 Ryan Prout, 'Mapping Neuro-diverse Alterity in "Social and Sensitive" Comics from Spain', *International Journal of Comic Art* 15, no. 1 (2013): 84–99; Brittany Tullis, 'Paco Roca's *Arrugas*, Miguel Ángel Gallardo's *María y yo*, and the Impact of Social Comics in Contemporary Spain', *International Journal of Comic Art* 14, no. 2 (2012): 77–89;

29 Jorge Catalá Carrasco, 'Neoliberal Expulsions, Crisis, and Graphic Reportage in Spanish Comics', *Romance Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (2017): 172–184; Jorge Catalá Carrasco, 'Cómic, 15M y crisis en España', *Tebeosfera* 3, no. 5 (2017); Ryan Prout, 'From Boom to Bubble and Bust: Comical Economics in Aleix Saló's *Troika Trilogy*', *International Journal of Comic Art* 16, no. 1 (2014): 458–476.

Spanish comics scholarship and beyond

Spanish comics scholarship has been a recurrent reference in this introduction, but it is worthwhile to sum up, especially as it offers the opportunity of introducing the first emergence of comics research in Spain. More or less at the same time as the surge of the new 1970s comics emerged a first, substantial scholarly focus on the comics form and aesthetics in Spain. In his chapter, 'Historicising the Emergence of Comics Art Scholarship in Spain, 1965–1975', Antonio Lázaro-Reboll analyses how cultural intermediaries – primarily publishing houses, magazines and comics critics – created a first generation of Spanish comics criticism and research in close interaction with similar developments in France and Italy. Lázaro-Reboll describes a crucial period in Spanish comics history that provided original theoretical arguments for its time and that – in spite of its transnational characteristics – has been largely unknown to most comics scholars outside of Spain.

With its European interaction and its theoretical focus, this first group of scholars and critics contributed to the discussion of the complexities of the comics format, which only gained speed from the 1980s within Franco-Belgian comics research.³⁰ However, the group did not to a similar extent focus on Spanish comics history, or present analyses of individual works. Such a specifically Spanish focus did not become dominant until the 1990s.

Since this first wave of comics scholarship in Spain the field has only grown, especially since 2000, and mostly from within Spanish borders. However, the contributors to this book, their chapters' bibliographies, and the bibliographical references in this introduction indicate that there is also a growing international scholarly interest in Spanish comics. The publications relating to Spanish comics scholarship that are mentioned in the following summary are all represented a large number of times in the individual chapter references.

English-language studies of Spanish comics are typically published in either comics research journals, edited books about comics or books with a common theme such as memory. In Spanish, there are several monographs, as well as the open access academic journal *CuCo – Cuadernos de Cómic* (since 2013), which features a focus on academic studies as one of its twice-yearly

30 In his forthcoming memoir, *Une vie dans les cases*, Thierry Groensteen describes his years as editor of *Les Cahiers de la bande dessinée* in the 1980s, offering a fascinating look into part of this process that also involved some of the first generation Spanish comics critics. The memoir's chapter about *Les Cahiers* will appear in English translation in *European Comic Art* 13, number 2 (forthcoming 2020).

sections, and the journal *Tebeosfera* (since 2001) linked to the platform of the same name. Both include a relatively high number of articles about Spanish comics, although they also publish articles about non-Spanish comics.³¹

Moreover, since 2000, a few special issues and edited books specifically about Spanish comics have been published. In English, the *International Journal of Comic Art* (vol. 5, no. 2) published a special issue in 2003. In Spanish, two publications stand out, namely a special issue of the journal *Arbor* in 2011 and an edited book in 2002.³² All three combine articles about Spanish comics history with analyses of specific comics and artists. They include texts by some of the key Spanish comics scholars and constitute an excellent representation of the main topics that were current within the field at the time of their writing.

Apart from conventional academic texts, comics scholars draw on resources that are not considered to be part of comics research proper. The line between academic and non-academic publications is somewhat blurred in comics research, criticism and commentary. Some texts are meant for a general audience and do not necessarily follow academic conventions with regards to for example documentation, argumentation and reference to relevant research fields, but they nevertheless offer valuable information for researchers. Another valuable source is the material relating to exhibitions for example about regional comics that in many ways follow academic standards and conventions.³³ Even though much of this material is difficult to obtain, it is certainly a worthwhile part of research into Spanish comics.

A third kind of alternative resource includes the platforms Tebeosfera and PACE. Tebeosfera.com is a rich and invaluable source of information for many references and much information regarding Spanish comics, authors, works, artists, activities and publications.³⁴ PACE (Plataforma Académica sobre el Cómic en Español) is a relatively new and promising initiative, not so much

31 There is also the apparently short-lived *Historietas: Revista de estudios sobre la historieta* [Comics. Journal of Comics Studies] published by the University of Cádiz, which saw three issues from 2011 to 2013. These were thematic – history, women and the 1940s – and included both foreign and Spanish material.

32 Antonio Altarriba edited the special issue of *Arbor: La Historieta española*, and Viviane Alary edited *Historietas*.

33 As indicated above, comics played an important role in the strengthening of cultural regional identities as part of the democratization process from the 1980s in Spain.

34 Another valuable resource for comics until the mid-1990s is Cuadrado, *Diccionario del uso de la historieta*.

for publications but rather for networking among comics scholars and for the exchange of publications.³⁵

As the chapters in this book indicate, Spanish comics are worthwhile reading and studying in their own right, but they also offer a particular perspective on European comics and the field's history. As the final sketch of Spanish comics scholarship shows, it has become by 2020 a lively research field to which this anthology contributes, hopefully with new ideas and inspiration to future researchers delving into the exciting field of Spanish comics.

Anne Magnussen is Associate Professor, PhD, at the Department of History, University of Southern Denmark. She has published edited volumes and a series of journal articles about comics as well as on visual culture at large, including movies and historical monuments. Apart from her interest in comics, Magnussen's research includes ethnicity and power on the US-Mexican border in the first half of the 20th century. Anne Magnussen is co-editor of the peer-reviewed journal *European Comic Art*.

35 PACE, 'Platforma', <https://pace.hypotheses.org> (accessed 21 June 2020).