THE GRAPHIC NOVEL / COMIC-BOOK IN TRANSMEDIA AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY: AN EXPERIMENTAL WORK-IN-PROGRESS

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DRAFT EDITION: 2023/07/11

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ABSTRACT

Contemporaneous analysis of auto-ethnographic graphic novel (or comic-book) modes of storytelling and self-representational authorial positionality situate critical reflection as a mode of analytic inquiry. In this, authorial identity is analysed in deference to both the psychologically transformative imprinting of a fan's love of (sometimes described as "addiction" to) the medium and its subsequent influence on pedagogic practice bridging the Academic and the creative. So too, this authorial positionality is being problematized by the nature of graphic self-representation in, primarily, drawing. These auto-ethnographic works additionally begin an incorporation of graphic imagery (drawings) within traditional Academic research report formats but separate their reflective analytical inquiry from the evocative nature of the included drawings, and thus in layout and graphic design keep the drawn graphic content also distinctly separate from the text, which serves as an after-the-fact exegesis: product over process. Likewise, the sequential nature of comic-book panel art is included only as example graphic for textual reflection. The auto-ethnographic work presented in this paper is less a "paper" in the traditional sense than an auto-ethnographic "graphic novel" incorporating sequential panel art, colour graphics, photo-montage, collage and critical reflection to render the transformative, transient effect/affect of temporality in hybridized multimedia In fusing the analytical and the evocative as an auto-ethnographic "comic-book", it presents an experimental hybridization of multimedia-based narrative inquiry (text, graphics, hypertext) and related rendering of authorial self-representation in multiple concurrent modes of identity construction. The auto-ethnographic comic-book presented herein was initially designed as a graphic novel tie-in to a longitudinal auto-ethnographic transmedia project centred on a videographic series of films (the first part completed and pending online journal hosting / screening in the USA in 2024) and related independent research report further detailing the political context referred to in both the comic-book and film. Links to online hosting of the first film in the intended videographic series, as well as the related Academic report, are integrated into the final section of this work.

KEYWORDS: auto-ethnography, comics, graphic novels, transmedia, narrative inquiry

BEING IN TIME
AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

TRANSMEDIA TIE-IN EDITION

PREMIERE ISSUE

* Temporal-Political Positionality
* Anxiety at the Prospect of a US/China War
* Interpretivist Reflections of a Comic Book "Addict"
* Fieldwork Photography & Interpretivist Phenomenology
* Cultural Artefacting in Meta-Cognitive Identity Construction
* Graphic Storytelling in Transmedia Autoethnography

CETTL

BEING IN *TIME*

AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

The China that Westerners see and hear about in their mainstream media [MSM] is filtered. This ethnocentric, propagandising MSM filter would have its target audience believe that China suppresses human rights, indoctrinates its citizens and imposes a system of totalitarian surveillance. Intended to demonize the Communist Party of China [CPC], this Western MSM discourse conceptualizes China as a civilizational Other, a "China threat" (Armbruster, 2023) posed to the unipolar hegemony of US Capitalist Imperialism rhetorically delineated as "democracy" and "(international) rules-based order" in related discourse construction.

Indeed, US "think tank" the Hudson Institute even offered a course on 2023/06/01 to 203/06/03 (delivered by Dr, Miles Yu, former China Policy advisor to former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo) called "The China Threat": "Candidates will test their skills of negotiation and strategic planning during a war game in the South China Sea" (Hudson, 2023). So too, *The Washington Post* on 2023/06/26 opined that "China's threat should be a major campaign issue" (Hewitt, 2023).

Preparing for war with China?

I am a stranger here myself.

Hello, I'm Robert.

WALDORF ASTORIA
BEIJING
北京华尔道夫酒店

Nice to meet you.

EDITORIAL [2022/07]: IN MEDIA RES

I am, at time of writing, in an unstable position: I currently live and work in China and am unable to return to my home country of Australia, primarily for financial reasons. So too, distance is obstructing settlement of a legal matter, the future of which may require me to return to Australia - a proverbial "catch-22" under current Covid-19 travel restrictions in China (not impossible but difficult, not least because I have no home, family, income nor employment in Australia). However, that now seems one step closer to eventual resolution. Although such is
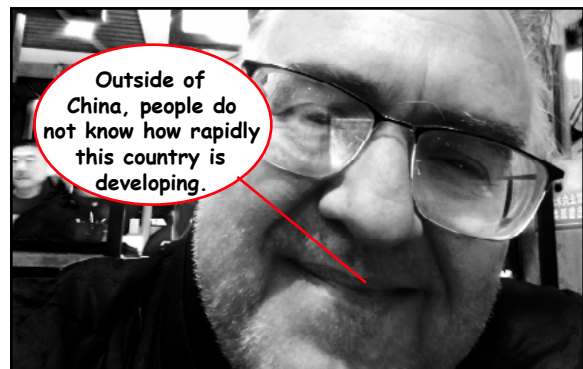
a slow process and one which admittedly causes me much anxiety, to the point of obsessive distraction: the psychological toll of which following my father's death affected completion of a Graduate Diploma in Research Methods [GDRM] as a possible gateway into a subsequent PhD, resulting in withdrawal. With remittance proceedings for student debt pending an appeal I must complete within a year, I face a debt I cannot repay under my current financial circumstances. Likewise, where I had once perused a body of Academic research extolling what Lynch & Kuntz (2019) held as "the journey *of becoming* (italics added) in Academia" and the epiphanic triumph in such, my opportunity to add "value" to that body of work is now splintered and perhaps non-existent. My own "journey of becoming in Academia" thus ended... withdrawn due to stress-related illness, leaving me to reflect on what I initially conceptualize as personal failure: my fault? Entirely? Not sure about that last part given the circumstances of supervisory communication, but... c'est la vie for fear of further legal complications should I get into more specifics.

Or, to quote a pop song: "I fought the law and the law won". Or another; "Moving on". "Don't give up"?

About incompleteness though... transience: as a research topic in itself perhaps? How do you render transience? Drifting from mindset to mindset in a stream of consciousness?

What inter-personal memories, emotions, recollections of pop cultural artifacts inform linguistic or semiotic self-expression?

How can any single medium or genre render the complexity of transience? How can I? I am at once present and absent.

"I am" I said. But who am I really? "And I am lost, and I can't even say why..."

During the time I was working on my research project - at least the proposal (which had to undergo serious changes due to Covid-19 occurring after I had initially delineated a proposed research field which I could subsequently no longer pursue: Quainoo, 2020) - my interest systematically focused on the autoethnographic, something my supervisors discouraged to the point where I could not delineate a workable alternative, partly due to ethics considerations about using student data obtained under the initially confusing workplace circumstance of China's Ministry of Education [MOE] Covid-19 "emergency response" conditions. I may return to what I was deliberating before time elapsed and no further extension could be given, but if so, from a position on the fringes of Academia: I have an HBA (Hons), GCTESOL, GDIS and MTESOL and live and work as an EFL teacher at a university in Shandong, China. However, middle age is becoming old age and further Academic qualifications no longer seem an option worthy of much consideration as they potentially have little bearing on financial matters which, at time of writing, are far more pertinent and immediate a concern to me.

Outside of China, people do not know how rapidly this country is developing.

Especially under Xi Jinping's leadership.

The elimination of poverty...

... the successful removal of Uygur terrorism in Xinjiang...

... the increasing globalization of EFL education.

As a foreign EFL teacher in China...

... I have been witness to China forge its place in a new multi-polar world.

Autoethnography still interests me though, but increasingly the experimentally evocative (within reason) alongside the analytical (Wall, 2016: Major, 2016: Rogers-Shaw, 2021), especially given Rogers-Shaw (2021)'s incorporation of graphic design sensibilities. While I have read works in this field, however, very little pertains directly to my specific interest - transmedia autoethnography (incorporating film and graphic novels / comics cross-over: experimental visual anthropology driven) - and the peculiarities of autobiographical circumstance: place memory, or locality (Beattie, 2019: Beattie, 2022 [ii]). While I retain an Academic disciplinary approach to my writing - at least in hybridized part - my investigation of the autoethnographic in incorporating montagist short film, graphic design / layout and independent research paper departs from the delimiters in the body of research consulted in the lead-up to the work you are now reading: I am now more overtly informed by the specifically Chinese discipline of Confucian self-cultivation as a form of self-directed learning (Tan, 2017). As this approach is inclusive of autobiography, I would argue it facilitates a form of specifically inter-cultural autoethnographic inquiry, positioning the "self" in (in my case - foreign) teacher identity construction in formative trans-cultural experience (Liu, 2020).

For added socio-political context at time of writing: to return to my initial point, my stability in China is also no longer certain in part following the visit of US Speaker of the House [D] Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan and China's subsequent military drills fuelling a blatant US warmongering rhetoric, a position my home country of Australia has seen fit to mimic obediently. Although this situation is increasingly radicalizing me, reflection / self-cultivation has for the moment trumped activism (whatever such might be on social media and other platforms should I lean that way). On that, I remain in a kind of low key limbo in my social media presence online, trepidatious about developing any higher profile, at least until a semblance of stability returns, partly for warranted concern over any repercussions from taking a pro-China stance in the current political climate, which seems headed for war. As to that nevertheless: being a foreigner in contemporary China is the ostensible topic of this autoethnographic work (a transmedia accompaniment to a film of the same name); however, for reasons that will be explored in media res, in a transient comicbook styled integration of the analytically reflective and the evocative, incorporating a graphic storytelling methodology, at times non-linear and "open" in its stream of associations (Tervahartiala, 2021).

BEING IN TIME
AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY
by CETTL

Being in Time #1 | November 2022

济南 · 山东 · 中国

#1:
Where There's Smoke, There's Fire

2022/08/02 | 22:40 Nancy Pelosi's flight to Taiwan is descending into Taipei. Chinese planes fly above the Taiwan Straits as US military aircraft near and air defense warnings sound in Xiamen, Fujian province. Anxiety over unfinished legal matters in my home country of Australia and an uncertain personal fate have conspired to give me insomnia, though I try to distract myself. I am not a young man anymore: what life have I left? What life have I lived as a foreigner in China over the last decade?

Hmm. Where to start in an autoethnographic comic. Thiessen (2020) and Shaf-fer (2020) did draw on autoethnographic comicbooks for which they then wrote reflective exegesis in standard Academic report format. Valuable but conventional, and analytical at the expense of the evocative (Wall, 2016).

DeHart (2020) reflects on comics as epiphanic in liter-ary and personal development. As triggering a sub-cultural journey with its own stages or rites of belonging.

Wright (2015) referenced social class and comics as influ-ential in her journey into becoming an Academic while Blanch (2017) root-ed autoethnography in an analysis of Academics who used graphic novels in classes. As pedagogic practice.

As an EFL teacher in China, I once used comic storytell-ing in writing class, including referencing my own incipient comics work.

My Chinese students were so fond of Marvel movies, and intrigued by comics. Many of them knew who Stan Lee was. In writing class thus we did an exercise in the Marvel comics method as pioneered by Lee: I gave them three pages of artwork, with blank voice balloons and text boxes - no dialogue or text. Based on the graphic content, they had to fill in the dialogue and descriptive boxes - the Marvel method.

Increased peer group participation, discus-sion and collaborative writing: lexis and syntax in dra-matic dialogue.

I was investi-gating this for a paper on Content-Based Instruction [CBI] in EFL Inter-cultural Communication classes, but that seems another world away now. Gradually sidelined with more pressing concerns as a for-eigner here in China.

Citing Chang, DeHart (2020) suggests autoethnography's primary challenge is writing a self-narrative as an "entirety from the beginning".

DeHart (2020)'s own autoethnography thus looks at his formative comic-book experiences in shaping his subsequent use of graphic storytelling in pedagogic practice.

Specifically, his engagement with key superhero texts encountered during his youth.

He relates this as formative in his incipient identity construction: "Gone is the question mark of my identity as I began to increasingly identify with characters who wanted to reshape their world and do good."

Extrapolating from this to his present: "It is no small wonder, with these kind of textual heroes, that I would one day become a teacher, intent on helping others and making the world a better place."

In drawing his own comics, DeHart (2020) also references his appropriation of culturally significant texts - images, music, films - as a form of "asserting textual authority".

"Hello darkness my old friend, I've come to talk with you again."

Long time my friend. Hope you've been keeping well.

Been passing time looking at YouTube videos of comic collectors going through their purchases and collections. I miss that.

In practice, this was tantamount to "owning" the characters, re-working them into more personalized conceptions, turning heroes into villains and so forth.

A kind of "fan fiction" or "mashup" reclamation of pop cultural artefacts into personal identity construction: self-expression as fictionalized, evocative narrativization.

It's made me nostalgic. A wave of memories, favorite books, characters, images.

Maybe you should try doing your own?

Hmm. At the very least it might distract from following this Pelosi Taiwan debacle on social media.

Interestingly enough, in relating his fan preferences, DeHart (2020) mentions the ubiquitous Marvel and DC but also independent outfits Dark Horse, Valiant and Malibu.

DeHart (2020) also mentions that "Within the stream of media I was consuming, comic books were an essential site for my literacy development and shaped me personally."
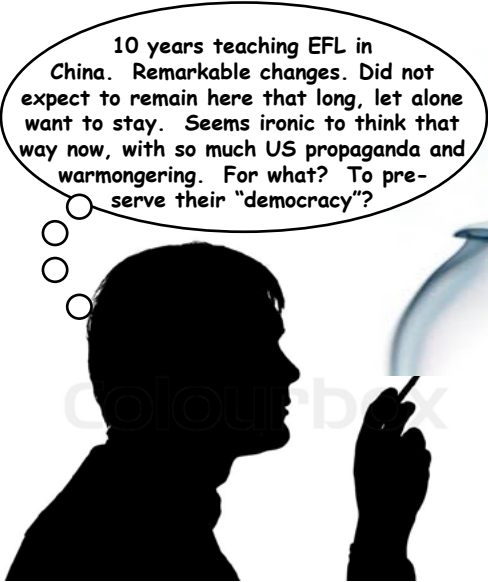
He also isolates the key "identity" dialectic behind much of the genre: "these ideas about identity and duality likely shaped me in ways that stand beyond the limitations of this study."

Try fill in the gap on identity construct dialectics in autoethnographic comic-book storytelling left by DeHart (2020)?
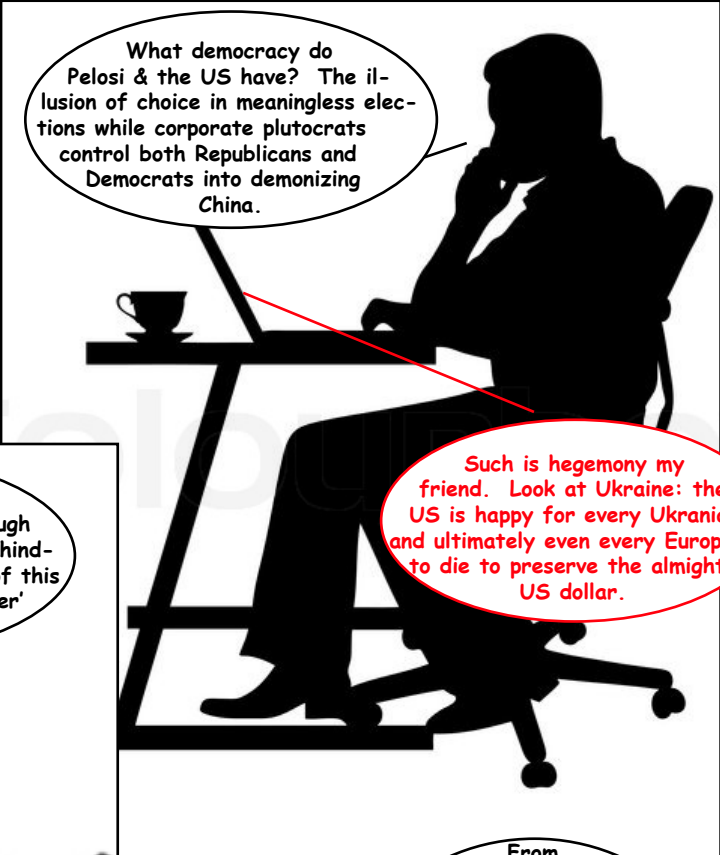
Not a bad idea my friend, not a bad idea at all.

That witch Pelosi though. Damn!

7
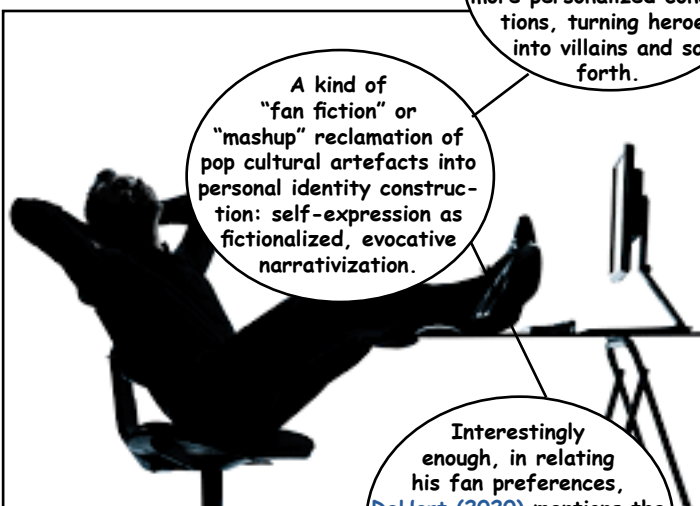
10 years teaching EFL in China. Remarkable changes. Did not expect to remain here that long, let alone want to stay. Seems ironic to think that way now, with so much US propaganda and warmongering. For what? To preserve their "democracy"?

What democracy do Pelosi & the US have? The illusion of choice in meaningless elections while corporate plutocrats control both Republicans and Democrats into demonizing China.

Such is hegemony my friend. Look at Ukraine: the US is happy for every Ukranian and ultimately even every European to die to preserve the almighty US dollar.

Culture shock. To come from Australia to China, although where I bagen my career was in hindsight indicative of the diversity of this country. It was an 'eye-opener' as the saying goes.

From where I began to where I am now - wherever that is spiritually. From Xinjiang [XUAR] to Shandong to Shanghai. Coming to China for the first time to live and work in XUAR: ironic now given the Western media attention on that Autonomous Region. What BS the US musters to preserve its "interests": what lies it will spread in its shameless historical revisionism.

The US is censoring information now, you know that, right? Ukraine mostly: "disinformation" they justify this under. Hypocrites! China next.

Did you expect anything different? This is EMPIRE we're talking about. Founded on gullibility, 'one nation under God'. 'In Gott mit uns'!

But if I too speak out, as a foreigner in China, what will they do to me? I see the vitriol on social media lashed out against other foreigners.

There's a story in there or two, of the time in-between then and now, with so much happening in China that the world has not seen: that the US does not want the world to know.

That my friend, is between you and your conscience.

EDITORIAL [2022/08]: CULTURAL SOCIALIZATION

As a foreign EFL teacher in China, I am now increasingly geo-politically contextualized by what is an evident Sinophobic trend emerging in Western media (Ratuva, 2022), a revival of "yellow peril" fearmongering (Luo, 2021). This misrepresentation of China is driven primarily by Western mainstream media [MSM] discourse over Xinjiang [XUAR], in relation to the "forced labor in Xinjiang" as methodologizing "genocide" narrative. Anyone who questions this narrative is dismissed as a "genocide denier" in a smear campaign which makes a mockery of Holocaust denial while ironically inverting its tactics to invent a supposed "genocide" where none exists beyond biased anecdotal accounts delivered through Uygur NGOs with the financial support of the US National Endowment for Democracy [NED]. Foreigners who have visited XUAR - most notably Jerry Grey - and whose experiential testimony counters this US narrative are dismissed as Communist Party of China [CPC] "shills" and inferred (without proof) to be on a Chinese state media payroll. Ironically, I too was in XUAR. As a matter of fact, I lived and worked there for a year - my formative in-practice EFL pedagogic experience and, as such, a major factor in my subsequent development (and "identity") as a foreign EFL teacher in China. But to date I have not spoken out autobiographically about my experiences there, despite having taken hours of home video footage, partly because I am not sure how to raise the subject in due personal narrativization and not attract the same derision as has greeted Grey et.al.

Indeed, shortly after completing an autoethnographic video travelogue of my experiences in XUAR in 2011/12, I offered the film to Australia's National Film & Sound Archive [NFSA] where, immediately prior to coming to China, I had been a SAR Research Fellow researching (with South Australian government grant support) representations of disability (physical, psychological, intellectual) in Australian film. My travelogue was rejected sight unseen: since then I have always wondered about this decision, given that Australian and international MSM on XUAR at that time was busily promoting a Uygur "cultural genocide" narrative, while my film (and the informational background surrounding it - specifically Uygur terrorism in XUAR and Australia's covert support for Uygurs implicated in sharing information with the World Uyghur Congress [WUC] during the 2009 Urumqi riots) did not support that narrative. As an ironic aside, the NFSA building in which I was resident while doing my research did not even have disabled access, preventing any visitation or consultation on premises with repre-

Contemporary "yellow peril" iconography in two recent (mid-2022) European magazines, centred on ominous, malevolent dragon imagery, ethno-centrically imposing on the Chinese dragon the Western mythos of monstrousness.

Original poster art for the 1963 Nicholas Ray film *55 Days at Peking*, emphasizing US/European dominance over the violent threat of Chinese rebellion against Western Imperialism.

sentatives of the disabled community.

Either way, contemporaneously my outrage at mounting anti-China sinophobia continues. The images that I see as essentially "yellow peril" updates owe much to pulp fiction of yore - the legacy still of Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu. As a Westerner, such pulp fiction portrayals were how I was initially introduced to China, Chinese culture and Chinese people: through depictions rooted in fearful Otherness and politically biased towards blatant US Imperialism. In fact, one of my favorite films as a child concerned China - *55 Days at Peking* (1963: d. Nicholas Ray). At the time, as a child, I liked Westerns; and American actor Charlton Heston - after seeing him in the post-apocalyptic sci-fi trilogy of *Planet of the Apes* (1968: d. Franklin J. Schaffner), *The Omega Man* (1971: d. Boris Sagal) and *Soylent Green* (1973: d. Richard Fleischer), films which began an interest in dystopic visions of the human condition - and Heston as a US Marine Corps officer in China during the 1900 Boxer revolution provided an iconographic continuity within which I was introduced to Hollywood's xenophobic conceptualization of China. But that cultural Other fascinated me nonetheless, despite the majority of leading Chinese characters being played by Western actors: the set and production design in particular - the aesthetics of what I glimpsed of Chinese architecture, interior design, color palette, costuming and production design. Exotic Orientalism to a degree, but captivating nonetheless. Most tellingly, on repeated viewings of the film (as was my wont), I was neither on the Europeans' side nor that of the USA, and even began to question the heroism with which I had previously conceived Heston and the USA. The Americans in this film, and the Europeans, were ugly: military occupiers protecting the (unacknowledged) Opium traders from rightful rebellion and overthrow by the Chinese, to the point of humiliating them in one notable scene involving Heston's demonstration of his fighting prowess. But that was my reading of the film and it was not evidently intended that way, portraying American military heroism in a traditionally jingoistic manner - instead of facing the Indians, they were facing the Chinese. Indeed, the film is callous in its endorsement of US militarism, with Heston - in response to a young Chinese woman's curiosity about a US Marine - telling his troops that everything has its price, they should pay their way and not expect any freebies: that this endorsement to his troops to prostitute Chinese women (and that all women are whores) is treated as a validation of the American character is ideologically reprehensible, but an apt summation of US Imperialism - prostitute, plunder and (much later) pornographize. Director Nicholas Ray's avowedly leftist politics seem almost absent from this film, which is frightful in its caricature of the Chinese, racist in its attempt to sentimentalize a half-Chinese / half-American child and Imperialist in its depiction of a prototypical UN microcosm dependent on the US military to save itself from what is an early evocation of "China threat".

My resistance to the Imperialism inherent in *55 Days at Peking*, in tandem with an aesthetic interest in the "Other" culture (in part due to the exotic Orientalism with which it was realized on screen) led to a similar questioning of the representations of China and Chinese characters that I subsequently encountered, specifically in such as the Hammer horror versions of Fu Manchu starring Christopher Lee (I did not see the earlier Boris Karloff versions until much later), Peter Sellers' caricaturish Charlie Chan in the detective pastiche *Murder by Death* (1976: d. Robert Moore) - a comedy in which racial stereotyping was acknowledged as just that, even if the context of homage prevented much critical interrogation of it - and the Asianization of the villainous Ming the Merciless in *Flash Gordon* (1980: d. Mike Hodges). Nevertheless, the notion of a Chinese arch-villain interested me as I was once again able to see through the xenophobia and begin to develop inter-cultural critical/analytical deconstruction skills. These served me well as a precursor to later film study as an undergraduate in Australia and - via international student exchange scholarship - the USA. What made this Other Asian civilization - China - supposedly so menacing? Why does Western MSM still depict current Chinese leader Xi Jinping as a similar arch-villain to the stereotypes of yore? With film school at that time (the late 1980s and early 1990s) being far less technical and business oriented, I was exposed to Chinese cinema for the first time in the films of Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige, alongside an influx of Hong Kong productions that used to be shown once a week at my local Adelaide cinematheque, including the work of Tsui Hark and John Woo. Film, and film study (psycho-analytic semiotics), thus played a significant role in shaping my early views on representations of China, as I remained resistant to the Westernized propagandization underlying much of this non-Chinese initiated discourse on the evident civilizational Other.

It was the pulp oeuvre of Fu Manchu and martial arts cinema that fascinated me nonetheless, for its stark contrast to the work of the Chinese filmmakers and the malevolence of its Orientalism. Bizarre genre hybrids like *Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires* (1974: d. Roy Ward Baker) and the onset of kung fu mysticism in *Circle of Iron* (1978: d. Richard Moore) (a project unfortunately taken out of the creative control of Bruce Lee), but these were again Westernized, replete with connotations of China as civilizational Other. Even the TV series *Kung-Fu* had an American actor (David Carradine) playing the Asianized leading role: that Tarantino would later mythologize Carradine and ridicule Lee is an ethical disgrace typical of that director's self-aggrandizing arrogance. As an early James Bond fan, what I found most entertaining was, of course, *Enter the Dragon* (1973: d. Robert Clouse) and the leg-

endary Bruce Lee. However, it was the similar combination of kung fu and Bondian espionage in the Doug Moench authored **_Master of Kung Fu_** comicbooks of the 70s and 80s which soon preoccupied me: how Marvel comics in this instance sought to negotiate the legacy of Fu Manchu through the character of his son, Shang-Chi, allegorically positioned to save the world from the designs of his evil father: I.e. assert his new national loyalty to the USA (and "identity") over the apparently innate threat posed by his Chinese patriarchal heritage. Ideologically problematic as this premise was, it was handled with considerable aplomb and even sensitivity to Asian-American identity, humanizing the Otherness of Orientalism (at least to some degree) while maintaining an interest in Oriental mythology and kung-fu mysticism. Indeed, **_Master of Kung Fu_** was one of the rare exceptions in my comicbook reading that I allowed for Marvel, perhaps as - not being either American or in the USA - American culture to me was also something of an Other, although over time Australia was increasingly Americanized to the point where now, politically, it has become a de facto 51st state influenced by the US Military Industrial Complex sponsorship of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute [ASPI], even colluding with the afore-mentioned NED on one of the four Uygur NGOs allowed policy input (as "NED grantees") into the formulation of the recent Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act [UFLPA].

As is evident, I circle back from autobiographical socio-cultural reflection as memoir (Scott, 2014), to contemporary socio-politics. As a mode of discourse, this juxtaposition is deliberate: then and now, as what Beattie (2022) outlined as "symbiotic temporality": as a foreigner in China, my identity is informed by the historical antecedents that shaped my awareness of China prior to coming here, my pedagogic practice and the socio-political factors that have refined it to date since first arriving in XUAR in 2011. It is regretful, on reflection, that my supervisors would not allow me to pursue this particular autoethnographic positionality in respect to my research proposal, going so far as to claim it "incidental", guiding me to write a simple methodological account of actions taken without any consideration of why they were taken and how this in turn related to student performance yields, a bind that left me unable to complete the required work to their satisfaction. That I had circulated an independent inquiry into Western MSM discourse on XUAR (promoted in social media) mere days before receiving notification of a supervisory suggestion to withdraw from my official enrolment may be coincidence, but also gives me pause for consideration: however, as mentioned, the deadline is the stated consideration in my case. Either way, the autoethnographic component was essential to my long term Academic objectives.

But is my personal narrative also inherently political beyond that?

Tellingly, Chen (2016) posited her inquiry into autoethnographic research via storytelling in animation and video games with the following conceit: "Society restrains my impulses to create conflicts... what I can do, at least, is to find an outlet to ease the tension between my feeling of powerlessness and my rebellious personality... Therefore, through this study, I challenge the academic norms as a way to demand my freedom of expressing my pessimistic attitude" (p. 19). I too have a pessimistic attitude, one of tempered bitterness and often barely restrained vitriol if it comes to that. Academic norms no longer mean anything to me following my illness. It is, however, a disciplinary framework I still respect in my current research interest in the role of formative in-service EFL pedagogic experience in XUAR in the shaping of foreign teacher identity in contemporary China where the Western MSM discourse on XUAR is highly politicized and counter to my own authentic lived experience. In this, Chen (2016)'s methodological commencement is intriguing:

> "The first research question is based on the main purposes of this thesis—to decrease my feeling of alienation from myself by understanding my psyche within sociocultural contexts. The other research question is based on a more ambitious goal of this thesis—to seek understanding from others." (p. 20)

Indeed, especially in the afore-mentioned context of my "journey of becoming in Academia" ending... incomplete, I thus initially begin with a tacit appreciation of both research questions. Furthermore, I empathize with Chen (2016)'s intent to "find out the hidden, underlying social issues that cause my discomforts, and find effective ways to have a voice in design and visual language to expose the dark side of society" (p. 21).

My interest in the dark side of society is, however, specifically trans-cultural in context: Western demonization, exploitation and misrepresentation of China since the popularization of "forced labor in Xinjiang" as methodological "genocide" narrative politically platformed as a justification for economic cold warfare against China during the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. Discourse analysis of such is actually a topic on which I wrote independently about, (perhaps mistakenly) deciding it futile to seek peer reviewed publication in the current Western political climate on XUAR discourse centered on policing and censoring supposed "disinformation". This is a question of the power of mass media, which Chen (2016) also seeks to target in what is a radical politicization of self-narrative and positionality in autoethnographic research:

> "Because of mass media's power for manipulation, I construct stories with the help of this strong patriarchal power as a way to challenge patriarchy itself, in other words, to combat poison with poison. As a creator, I have the power to control what the viewers can see or do in my storytelling, which, to me, means I am given the dominant power at the moment when the viewers are engaged in the stories I create. I use highly accessible media including animation and video games to spread my values and compete with the dominant value." (p. 23)

Where Chen (2016) reflects on this political radicalism in the context of a Masters dissertation, I - no longer enrolled within the Academic establishment - apply a similar methodology independent of "the system", using graphic storytelling and mixed media. But there is one qualifiable difference between us, beyond the appeal to "youth genres": I am inclining to activism - will I too be labelled a "genocide denier"? And, if so, how will that affect my future either in China or elsewhere should I have to leave? It's a dilemma that few can empathize with outside of those foreigners in China who have also been to XUAR or see through the smoke and mirrors of Western MSM parlour games.

But it obsesses me, a vicious spiral. Incomplete? Transient? Like tears in rain? Like...

AARGH!
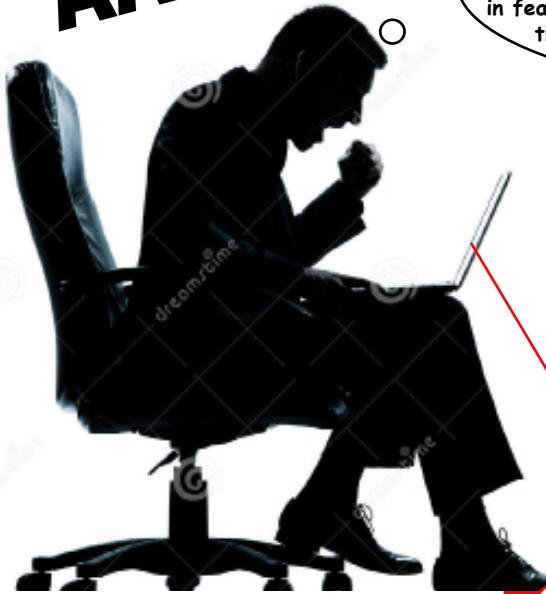
I'm afraid! I've always been afraid of consequences, of losing the little I have. That's what capitalism does to the poor wretch like me: hounds them to despair and anonymous death, punishes and persecutes them if they speak out, or revolt. Keeps them in fear while dangling the carrot of prosperity before them, theirs if they work harder, their fault if it is dangled forever out of reach and they can never work hard enough.

My mother and father died for... what? In quiet anonymity, my father denied elective surgery because my country's government would rather save beds than spend on Covid contigency centres!. And given a US mRNA vaccine known to cause myocarditis! Before dying of a heart condition they will not elaborate on?

An "interim" death certificate they give me. Interim? What: like he's in limbo, or purgatory awaiting final judgment?

Remember where your head was at when we began? You were tearing yourself apart. You still are. Take a step back and reflect perhaps.

Maybe it's not like that. Maybe it's not how slow your journey moves, just that you do not stop.

Yes, I remember. Yes, you're right. But every time I reflect on patience being a virtue, I hear Leonard Cohen: *Waiting for the Miracle* - "I waited half my life away".

I think it's time. It's a question of methodology though. One thing that intrigued me about autoethnography was Ellis, Adams & Bochner (2011): "as a method, autoethnography is both process and product".

Also: "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience... challeng(ing) canonical ways of doing research and representing others and treat(ing) research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act" (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011).
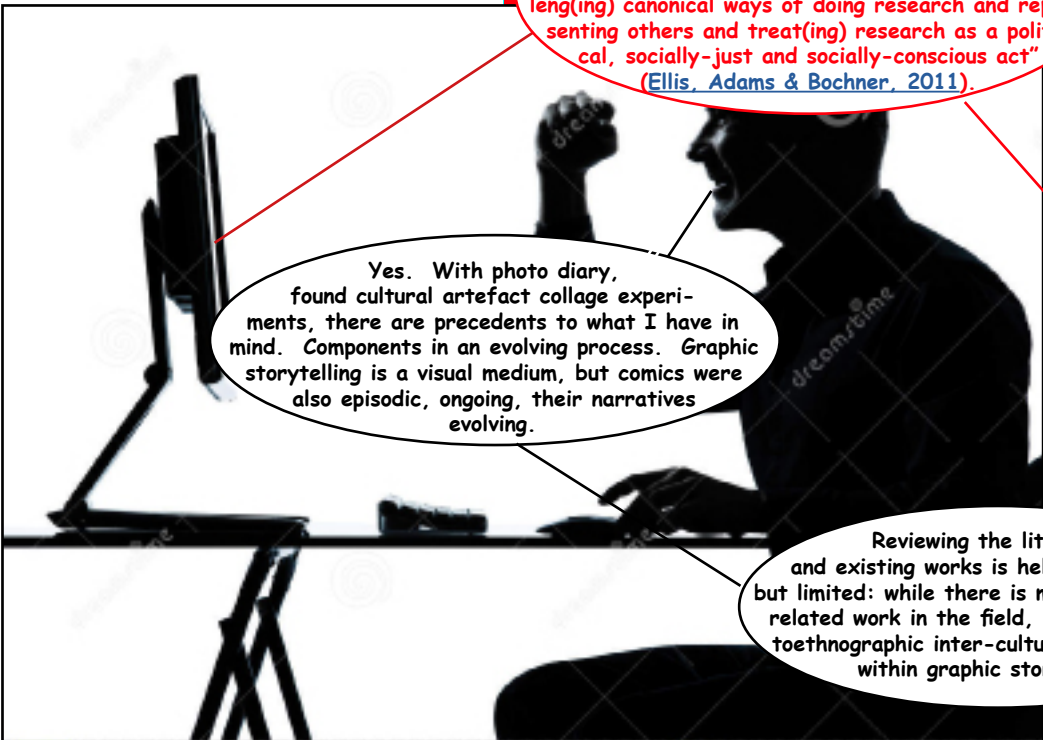
Yes. With photo diary, found cultural artefact collage experiments, there are precedents to what I have in mind. Components in an evolving process. Graphic storytelling is a visual medium, but comics were also episodic, ongoing, their narratives evolving.

Remember Lao Zi: "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

Reviewing the literature and existing works is helpful of course, but limited: while there is much autobiography related work in the field, less so about autoethnographic inter-culturality specifically within graphic storytelling.

Rendering auto-ethnography in graphic storytelling multi-media is an unexplored field. Partially because of Academic bias against the medium itself. Early researchers thus had to justify their interest.

This justification was rooted in its narrativized relation to their later development as pedagogic professionals integrating a beloved medium of their youth into their pedagogic practice.

What narrativized visual autoethnography that emerged began by integrating photography into collage. Specifically to render key epiphanic moments in a manner abstracting (or aestheticizing) traditional photo-realistic mimesis.

Once again however, the analytic reflection was kept formally distinct from the evocative experimentation.

And also presented after the fact: a reflection on product to infer, but not only textually render, transformative praxis, though such was acknowledged as inherent in the format.

The research gap in this incipient body of work is specifically thus that of self-reflective meta-textual autoethnographic researcher positionality within the transformative praxis of comic book narrativization itself as participant-observation..

To fill this research gap, the work you are now reading seeks to meta-textually and self-reflexively integrate analytical and evocative modes as fused praxis in graphic comicbook storytelling tropism.

In this way, I do not separate the analytical from the evocative, instead aestheticizing my own positionality within reflective, sometimes therapeutic graphic storytelling specifically as a foreigner in China.

Thus: presentation in the comicbook mode commences with the autobiographical evocation of the role of comics in my own formative identity construction - as an introductory context.

In doing so, I use comicbook images from the texts that influenced me personally, in order to render the role of cultural artefacts in identity construction: as interpretivist phenomenological praxis.

DeHart (2020) explores the comic book fan's love of the comicbook medium (and specific works) to reveal how graphic novels and visual storytelling form an essential aspect of their literacy history and incipient identity (in his personal case as a teacher), The autoethnography was presented in both narrative and visual format by integrating reflection on four comic page images based on his personal stages of literacy. However, the images are presented as critical illustrations to accompany what is an autoethnographic exegesis and thus the author does not integrate graphic storytelling into the report presentation itself, nor renders his own autoethnographic reflection in panel art. While the subject matter remains an intriguing early study of comic book literacy and identity in autoethnographic research, it does not present its findings in the manner of the medium it serves to contextualize in reference to pedagogic practice. Meta-textual self-reference and deconstruction thereof are not attempted within the graphic storytelling mode itself, confined to conventional research report formatting with critical illustrations.

Thiessen (2020)'s reflective exegesis on her autoethnographic comicbook **_Duck Pond_**, however, sought to integrate inter-culturality into the narrativizing of key epiphanic moments in identity construction. The actual comic no longer positioned the author reflexively in relation to comicbook culture's formative imprinting but integrated them fully into an autobiographical narrative represented in, somewhat rudimentary, sequential panel art, advocating the act of drawing such sequential narrativization as a praxis-based interpretivist phenomenology. Once again, the published research report was a conventional Academic reflection on the creation of an autoethnographic comic, separating analysis from evocation and thus divorcing analytical and evocative processes as if distinct, not symbiotic. Likewise, Shaffer (2020) integrated the personal love of comics as a medium justifying its use into a similarly reflective analysis of creative autoethnographic evocative storytelling which rendered praxis again in conventional Academic reflection and exegesis. This stands in stark contrast to what Gilroy (2017) expands on what Hatfield (2005) identified as a dynamic of self-representation in autobiographic comics: the representation of the Self as an Other.

What is absent from specifically autoethnographic explorations of comicbook graphic storytelling is thus specifically the meta-textual authorial positionality as brought to the comics medium itself by author Scott McCloud in his seminal deconstruction of graphic novel narrativization and aestheticization within the terms of the medium itself - **_Understanding Comics_** (McCloud, 1993). Indeed, in light of McCloud's work, it is ironic that rendering the autoethnographic praxis of comicbook creation and its transformative affect on author as participant-observer identity construction has, to date, not been forthcoming. The reason for this remains the text-based dominance of the "Academic format" in which any rendering of a comicbook autoethnography must be in the context of an analytical reflection, tied to specific critical illustrations: i.e. the continued separation of the analytical from the evocative.

The existing research gap is methodological: **_how can the comicbook format integrate in meta-textual creative praxis both analytical and evocative modes of autoethnographic inquiry?_**

The roots of such Self-as-Other participant-observation praxis, however, lie in the legacy of auto-biographical graphic storytelling, ostensibly in the US since the underground "comix" movement since the late 1960s.

With such comic-book creators as Robert Crumb and Harvey Pekar, auto-biographical comics gained visibility and popularity in the market, attracting a greater creator-focused independence.

In narrativizing their daily life self-reflexively in comicbook form, autobiographical creators added a level of complexity to the medium, specifically in the dialectics surrounding self-representation and positionality.

The cartoon "Self" was an interpretivist representation of a conceptualized self identity.

Such a representation in turn rendered Self-as-Other dialectics as a phenomenologically distinct approach to personal narrativization methodology in the graphic medium.

The research into autoethnographic comics thus seeks to situate these dialectics within a narrativized daily-life oriented to a self-identity informed specifically now by inter-culturality as the "autoethnographic" distinction from autobiography.

To this point, I have only used a single original drawing. The intention is not to juxtapose Academic writing with drawing but with sequential panel art storytelling.

My intention is meta-textual. Self-talk. In this I adapt the conventions of autoethnography's claimed therapeutic value (Custer, 2014).

Comic Sans font use here is thus deliberate: at the very least – although perhaps distracting from the "serious" content – it gradually personalizes, even humanizes it.

So too color: red. The red filtered icon is thus distinct from the previous silhouettes. Still "me": formal and impersonal, but the mode of inquiry and related text in the red filtered voice balloons is qualifiably "different", not a distinct other character, but another "aspect" of the same self being rendered in time..

Tervahartiala (2021) addressed this research gap in the formatting of graphic hand-drawn illustrations on the left side of the page, with analytical autoethnographic critical reflection on the role of drawing within Academic autoethnography on the right, adding an aspect of graphic narrativization but still separating the graphic from the textual for the most part: "the words and visuals in this article aim to complement and compliment each other; their open-endedness mirroring the process[es] of not and [un]knowing in/with/by Drawing". Adding an unusual ethical dimension - care for a drawn figure as a representation - Tervahartiala (2021) draws on Sousanis: "In an academic text, it is radical and caring to consciously arouse emotions, to draw as much (or more) as to write and to strive to touch the senses as we are not just '…disembodied…afloat in a sea of words…'". Locating this drawing specifically in Academia, Tervahartiala (2021) posits its inherent radicalism: "It is radical not to express [re]search [outcomes] solely in words: not to explain the visual puncture or not to have captions in connection with the images... it is caring to act against guidelines if they're devaluing or threatening the entity and the autonomy of Drawing" (p. 86). As to the drawings she incorporates: "Their artistic "value" or "quality" is irrelevant, as drawing here is a research method, methodology and even ontology" (Tervahartiala, 2021, p. 89).

This conceptualization of drawing within Academic autoethnography is acknowledged in reference to "the contemplative (artistic) methods and practices for staying non-judgmentally observant. ... from contemplative photography... to observational sketching... and creative visual/written journaling." However, no case is made specifically for drawing within sequential panel art such as characterizes comics as a visual medium. Continuity between the successive drawing featured in Tervahartiala (2021) is thus inferred alongside the accompanying text. They indirectly interact and engage directly through meta-textual, self-referential autoethnographer positionality: the Self in this inter-related juxtaposition is likewise inferred rather than directly represented as is the methodological trope in autobiographical comics: the result is a dislocation and even alienation from the cumulative "text" as Academic discourse. Indeed, the article itself is conceived to facilitate reader freedom of association in choosing the direction with which to proceed through and process the research: "Drawings and text are organized with care into a constellation: not fixed but negotiable and playful" (Tervahartiala, 2021). Thus, as methodology, in the juxtaposition of drawings and text:

"Maybe you'll find yourself interrupting reading the words on/line(online) and gazing at the drawings instead, choosing your own desire line(s). Drawing relies on your imagination: your ability to fulfill blanks, the empty spaces-places with whatever you desire."
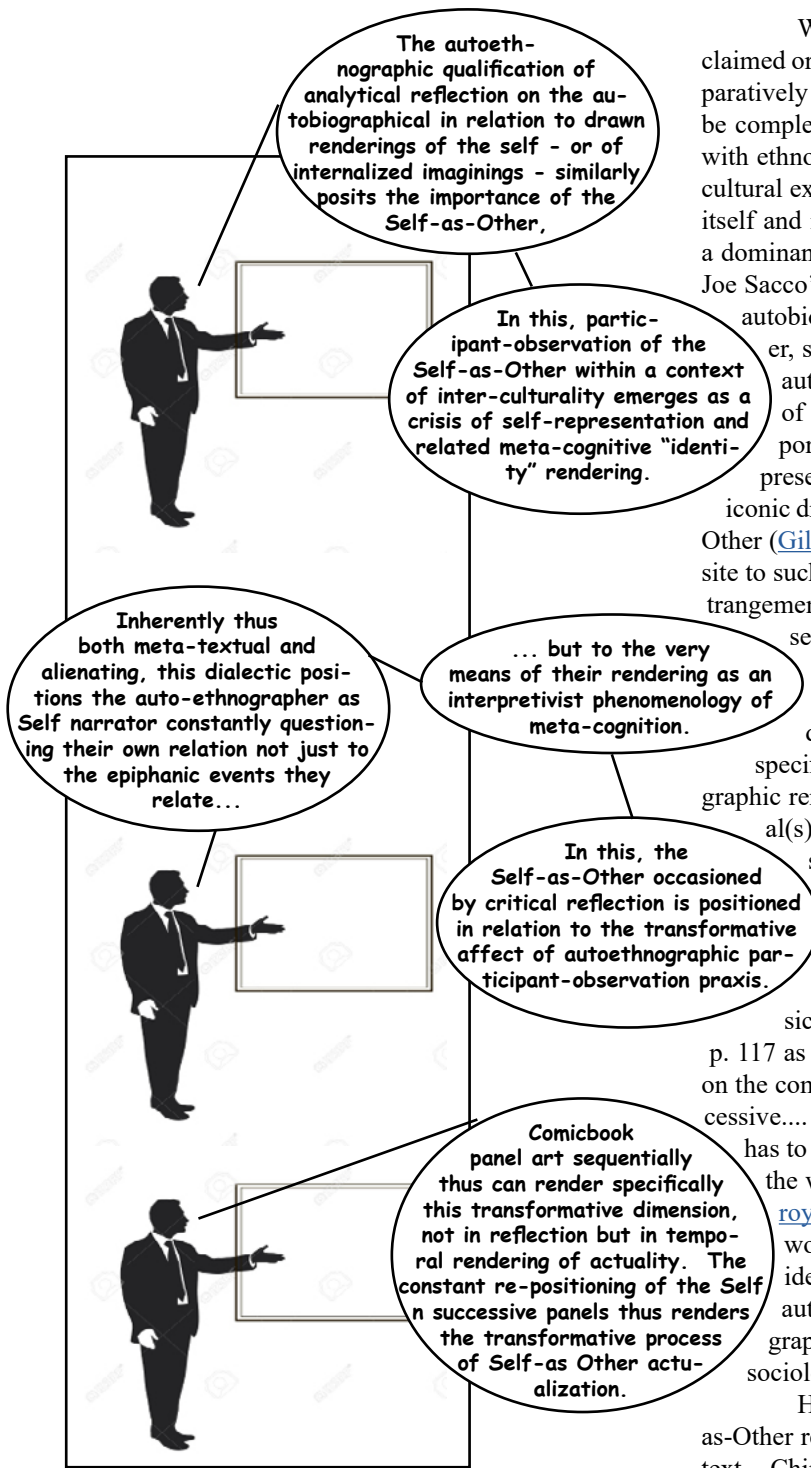
Researching such inter-relationships in decoding texts that combine drawing and Academic writing thus posit a certain interpretive ambivalence: not illustrations in an exegesis but integrated components - even a transgression of Academic standardization.

The autoeth-nographic qualification of analytical reflection on the autobiographical in relation to drawn renderings of the self - or of internalized imaginings - similarly posits the importance of the Self-as-Other,

In this, participant-observation of the Self-as-Other within a context of inter-culturality emerges as a crisis of self-representation and related meta-cognitive "identity" rendering.

Inherently thus both meta-textual and alienating, this dialectic positions the auto-ethnographer as Self narrator constantly questioning their own relation not just to the epiphanic events they relate...

... but to the very means of their rendering as an interpretivist phenomenology of meta-cognition.

In this, the Self-as-Other occasioned by critical reflection is positioned in relation to the transformative affect of autoethnographic participant-observation praxis.

Comicbook panel art sequentially thus can render specifically this transformative dimension, not in reflection but in temporal rendering of actuality. The constant re-positioning of the Self in successive panels thus renders the transformative process of Self-as Other actualization.

In my autoethnographic comicbook fusions of the analytical and the evocative, the rendering process thus centers on transformative participation-observation praxis.

On representing the self as a "cartoon" however, at present I adopt silhouette clip-art copy and pasted images. Is this really "me"? Yes and no: my words but an appropriated iconic rendering.

To date, I am represented by every iconic clip-art image, but each renders a different aspect of what I would refer to as my "identity". But you have seen no evidence I even exist.

Not that I wish to position myself as an "unreliable narrator", just to foreshadow potential changes in your reaction to my work when / if different representations of essentially the same Self guide you through the process of self-narrativization. You read what I write, therefore I am. But is this "I" truthful?

While autoethnographic comics (at least such that have been claimed or self-identified) are scarce, autobiographical comics are comparatively plentiful. Admittedly, the distinction between them may not be completely rigid, but generally these works do not directly engage with ethnographic inquiries into Self/Other dialectics within a specific cultural examination (except in relation to comics creation and fandom itself and random encounters in daily life that infer interaction within a dominant cultural milieu), the most notable exception perhaps being Joe Sacco's *__Palestine__* (Fantagraphics) which combined journalism and autobiography for an incipient ethnographic perspective. However, such Self/Other dialectics are problematic within specifically autobiographical comics, the form itself embodying a core tenet of what lends this sub-genre to autoethnographic inquiry: temporally positioning and representing the Self. In this, comics present a unique, inherent qualifier: in representing the Self as an iconic drawing, the autobiographer essentially renders their Self as an Other (Gilroy ,2017). Hatfield (2005) explained this thusly: "prerequisite to such caricature, it would seem, is some form of alienation or estrangement, through which the cartoonist-autobiographer regards himself as other, a distinct character to be seen as well as heard".

It is thus in a Self-as-Other conceptual framework that the autobiographical comic is rendered, the underlying dialectic being what Gilroy (2017) describes as truthfulness, specifically the tension between emotional and literal truth in graphic rendering of the self: the rendering captures how the individual(s) conceptually "see" themselves is as important, if not more so, than a literal photo-realistic portrait: "the outward image of the cartoon (in comicbook self-rendering) in fact mirrors an internalized self-concept - a self-conscious pre-requisite to personal narrative... the cartoon enacts a dialect tension between impression and expression, outer and inner, extrinsic and intrinsic approaches to self-portrayal" (Hatfield, 2005, p. 117 as cited by Gilroy, 2017). Furthermore, in sequential panel art on the comics page, "the self is presented as literally multiple and successive.... there is not one single self that is unchanging, but the artist has to draw themselves over and over and over again, emphasizing the way in which we are constantly shifting and changing" (Gilroy, 2017). The self-referential, meta-textual quality in these works is thus a confrontational reckoning with transformative identity in participant-observation praxis and inherently also auto-ethnographic, hence the emphasis in current autoethnographic inquiry into comics' role in literacy development as a sociological phenomenon.

Hence, Thiessen (2020)'s *__Duck Pond__* seeks to locate this Self-as-Other representational dialectic specifically in an inter-cultural context - Chinese identity and heritage - and the work of Grace Mineta in American-Japanese inter-racial marriage and related inter-culturality (for example: *__Confessions of a Texan in Tokyo__*). It is this context which makes these works also autoethnographic as opposed to merely autobiographical, adding a distinctly self-reflective, meta-textual inter-culturality. Another question thus arises: ***(how) can a fused analytical and evocative autoethnographic inquiry in a comicbook incorporating mixed media form represent inter-culturality and render its experientially transformative praxis in interpretivist phenomenology?***
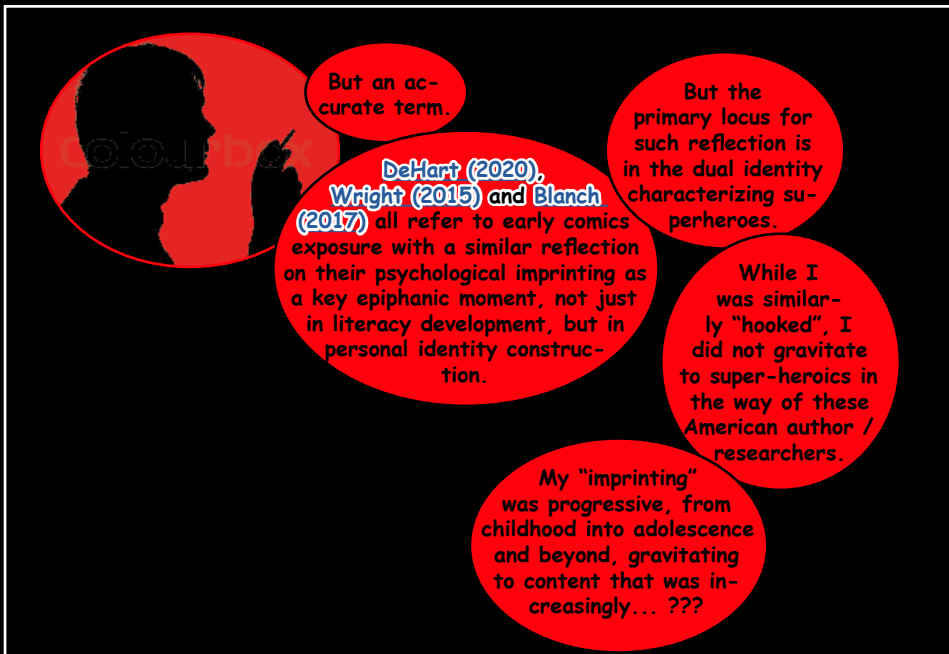
So: let's look at some examples.
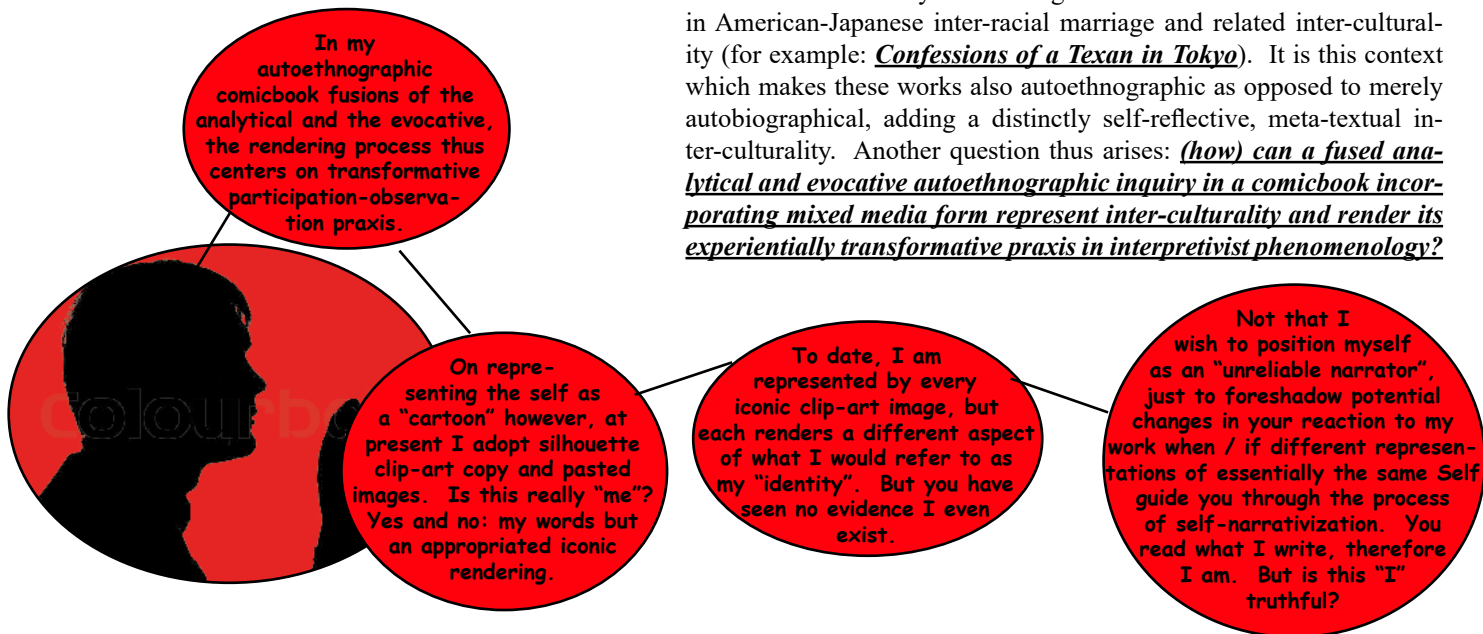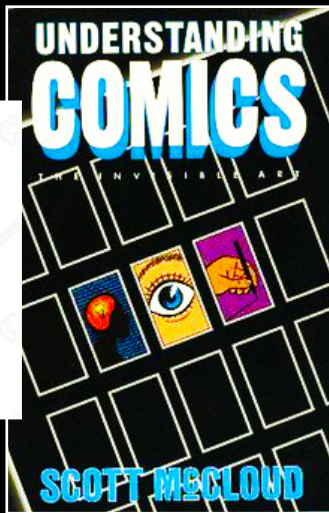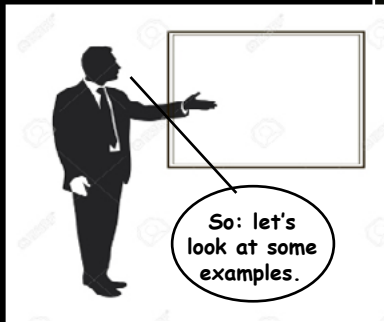
McCloud (1993), in *Understanding Comics*, pioneered a self-referential style of personalized narrativization combining the analytical and the evocative in an aestheticized deconstruction of the comicbook medium as an art form. At a time when the medium was associated in the popular imagination with young readers (children and teens primarily) - and subsequently dismissed as an Academic mode of inquiry - McCloud's work used autobiography to assess comicbook subculture in terms of its effects on literacy development, especially regarding the integration of literal and semiotic discourses.

McCloud's comparison of iconic and realistic rendering relates to a concept of "masking", wherein a simplified drawn characterization facilitates reader indentification, narrative processing enabled by psychologically negotiating the relationship between panels through a form of "closure" in which the connection between successive panels (or content segments) is mentally "filled in" by the reader. This graphic storytelling methodology facilitates what, to McCloud, is a form of "projective identification".

In my autoethnographic storytelling, I seek to meta-cognitively engage with these theories to reflectively render in personalized narrativization my authentic lived experience as a foreigner in China - an EFL teacher - whose own literacy development was autobiographically shaped by the comic medium. As a self-reflective tool for autoethnographic research report formatting, such an approach has - at least I would argue - both conceptual unity and methodological construct validity in seeking to further bridge the existing gap between the analytical and the evocative in autoethnographic research inquiry.

Hooked? An odd term.

But an accurate term.

DeHart (2020), Wright (2015) and Blanch (2017) all refer to early comics exposure with a similar reflection on their psychological imprinting as a key epiphanic moment, not just in literacy development, but in personal identity construction.

But the primary locus for such reflection is in the dual identity characterizing superheroes.

While I was similarly "hooked", I did not gravitate to super-heroics in the way of these American author / researchers.

My "imprinting" was progressive, from childhood into adolescence and beyond, gravitating to content that was increasingly... ???

Howdy. My image, and that of other comic-book characters appearing in this text is for critical illustration and transformative / satirical use only.

The role of cultural artifacts (images) in meta-cognitive identity construction. Or that's what I'm told by the author at least.

A LIFE LISTENING TO TALKING DUCKS

I credit my literary and semiotic interests to Carl Barks. And you can quote me on that.

When I turned 5 years old, my father, encouraged by observing my early love of the movies, soon realized that I related to children's reading material not with simple illustration but with simulated movement in panel progression and gave me enough pocket money to buy comicbooks from the local store (in my then hometown of Coober Pedy, South Australia). Needless to say, I was thereafter always short of pocket money: and that was when comics were still 5c - 10/15c each from the local news-stand and no-one thought of mylar bagging and boarding them, collecting alternate cover variations or buying multiple copies of first or potential "key" issues on speculation. I collected them though, keeping them in numerical order and sometimes trading with my friends.

A dollar or two bought a wonderful range of quality entertainment. My priority was always the Walt Disney Comics' Barks material, though at that age - and with Disney comics carrying no artist or author credits - I did not know it was specifically Barks responsible for the stories I adored. All I knew was that the Disney duck comics - _Donald Duck_, _Uncle Scrooge_ and _Walt Disney's Comics & Stories_ - often had stories of a caliber that stamped them as the work of a single artist. These were fabulous full-color adventures with charm, humor and excitement which stood out in quality from many other stories in the same monthly title. It was something of a gamble purchasing the next issue without knowing if it would feature these better stories, but the anticipation of another issue of optimum reading matter fueled an incipient addiction to the comics medium.

As it turned out, that was many young readers' introduction to Carl Barks - we didn't know who was doing these Disney comics; just that some of them were so recognizable in art and scripting and just so darn good. Proof that children relate to more than mere generic anthropomorphism to be sure; though the triumph of Barks is the appeal of these same comics to adults - yes, they're talking ducks, but they're worth listening to.

Come to think of it now, I could probably credit my discernment abilities also to Mr. Barks.
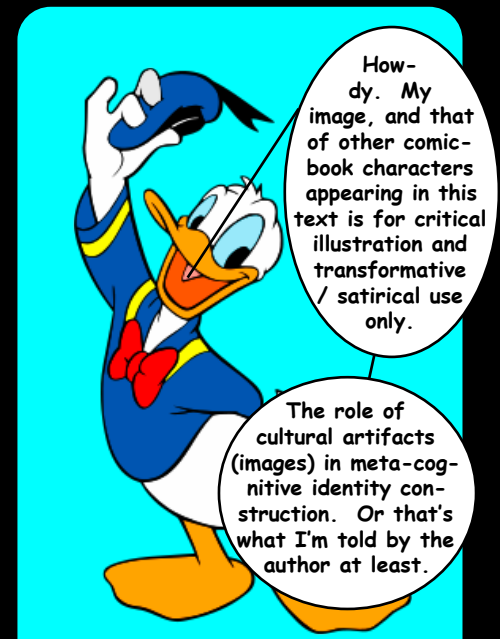
A duck called Luck
said to Doctor Seuss
"a hen may go 'cluck';
but myself as a duck
I go quack."

"Can you make that rhyme Doctor or are you just a *Quack!*"

The first duck I ever listened to introduced himself as Donald. He wore a short blue sailor's outfit, with a cap; but without pants. I was, however, only 5 years old and this did not seem unusual. I was delighted just to understand what he said. When he introduced his family and girlfriend, I knew I had made long lasting friends. Three years later I met Howard. Howard dressed the same as Donald - more or less - but where Donald was merely ill-tempered, Howard was a sarcastic cynic. He also smoked what I imagined were reeking cigars. His sardonic wit, however, I would relate to much better in soft middle age when reflecting on human folly. I met Daffy when I was about 12 but didn't relate to his wacky humor as much as either the mandacity of Donald or the clever irony of Howard. Or, as I would say if I ever met the wonderful Dr. Seuss, of all I met who ever went 'quack', Daffy was by far the only Quack.

[Ed. Comics are a wonderful reading resource for enjoyment and education. Not only do they have a distinct cultural history as a genre, but as a medium, their potential is as limitless as their demographic appeal.]
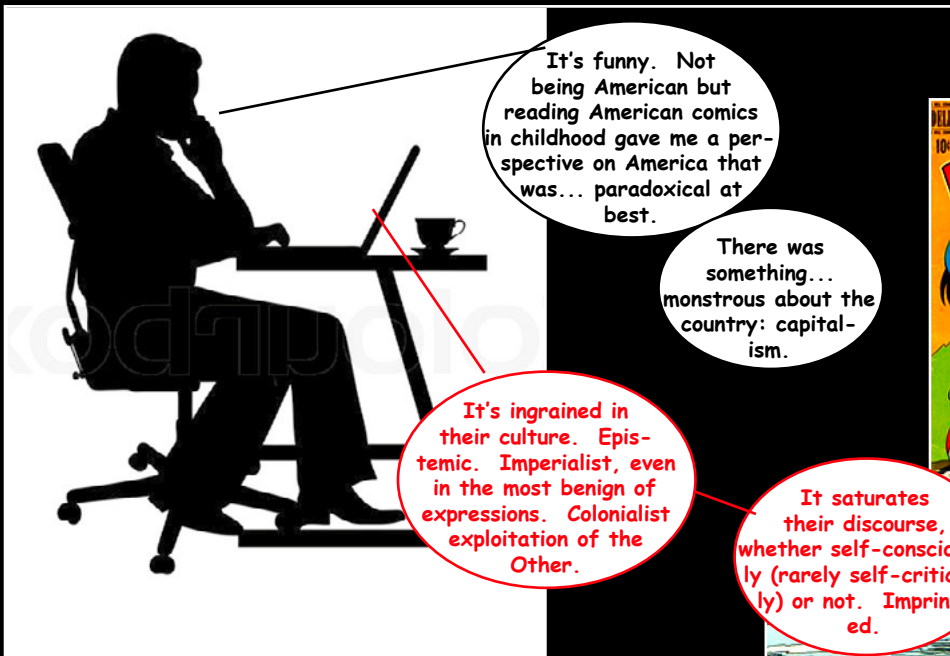
It's funny. Not being American but reading American comics in childhood gave me a per- spective on America that was... paradoxical at best.

There was something... monstrous about the country: capital- ism.

It's ingrained in their culture. Epis- temic. Imperialist, even in the most benign of expressions. Colonialist exploitation of the Other.

It saturates their discourse, whether self-conscious- ly (rarely self-critical- ly) or not. Imprint- ed.
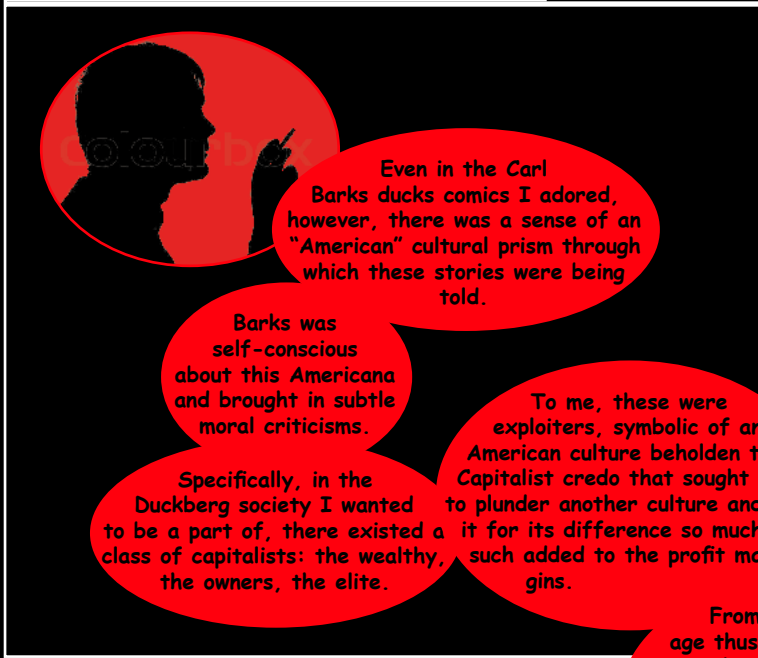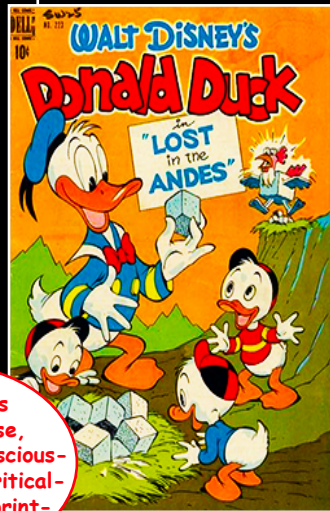
Even in the Carl Barks ducks comics I adored, however, there was a sense of an "American" cultural prism through which these stories were being told.

Barks was self-conscious about this Americana and brought in subtle moral criticisms.

To me, these were exploiters, symbolic of an American culture beholden to a Capitalist credo that sought only to plunder another culture and loot it for its difference so much as such added to the profit mar- gins.

Specifically, in the Duckberg society I wanted to be a part of, there existed a class of capitalists: the wealthy, the owners, the elite.
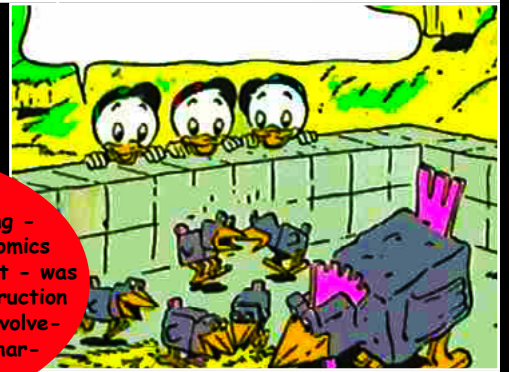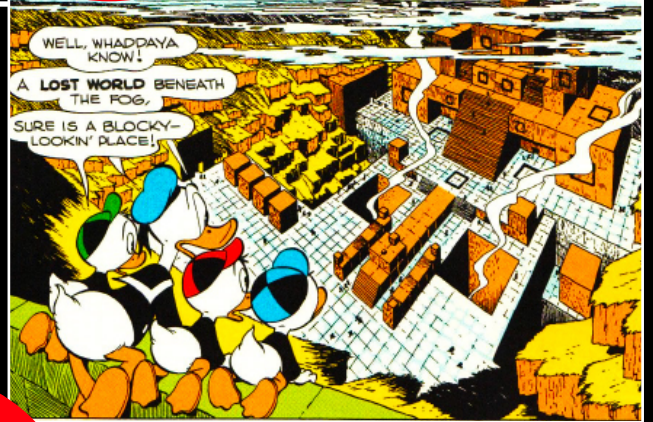
From a very early age thus, my imprinting - as in the influence of comics on my literacy development - was towards analytic deconstruction more so than escapist involve- ment in narrative or char- acter identification.

Social commentary. Inter-culturality in many of the Duck adventures in distant lands imprinted upon me the relativism of cultural social- ization.

And correspond- ingly, how such informs the creative process from conceptual process to product.
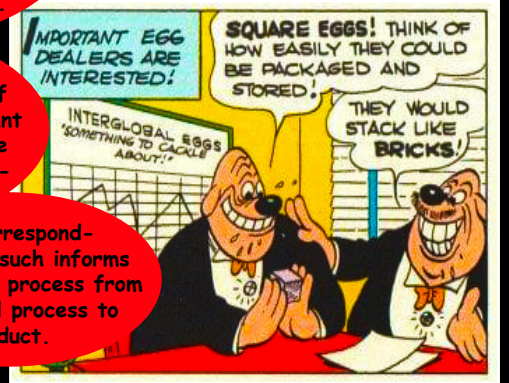
It is the specific confrontation with ethics and morality in Barks' work that contributed to my incipient literary (and semiotic) discernment abilities, particularly in relation to how what Barks depicted as a Capitalist elite would respond to other cultures and peoples, even to extra-terrestrial "micro-ducks": they sought to exploit their natural resources, physical and cultural differences for profit, regardless of any harmful repercussions.
In the context of American Capitalism and Imperialism - with Barks' Scrooge tales in part moralizing money management and social responsibil- ity - humanism (allied to socialism in its sense of justice) underlay comic anthropomorphism in constant tension with Capitalism. From a young age, I became conscious of an ethical dimension determining social actions.

Were these morality tales?

Were comics integral in not only my literacy but my socialization?

Were both developing simultaneously?

Long before I ever got a post-graduate qualification as a librarian / archivist I adored the Coober Pedy school library. The library had a large selection (at least I thought so) of children's books and kept an increasing stock of comics. Many of these comics would find their way into the classrooms.

Indeed, during lunch one day per week, the school set up a recreation room for students, a sort of mini-library stocked with coloring books, comics and large format volumes of _Asterix_ and _Tintin_ books, especially popular in a town with a heavy European population.

It was through the school library that I discovered Marvel comics in the mid 1970s. _Dr. Strange_ made an immediate impression, as did fledgling superhero material and a run of _Master of Kung Fu_ comics gave a glimpse of the martial arts films that my Dad was reluctant to take me to (not for their violence but he disliked them personally). But it was another Duck, _Howard the Duck_, that sold me on Marvel, just as it was an anthropomorphic tale of the last human in a world of talking animals - _Kamandi the Last Boy on Earth_ - that introduced me to Marvel's biggest rival, DC comics (I only started getting into _Batman_ with Frank Miller's run after first becoming intrigued with him via _Daredevil_). My father detested superhero comics though: he thought _Howard the Duck_ was another Disney book until he opened it to look one day and was aghast at a certain Dr. Bong.

These were a long way from the Disney duck tales though.

Ironically, though my father disliked comics, he was charmed by the _Asterix_ books I brought home with me from school. Indeed, _Asterix_ books were just as enthralling as those special duck tales. Soon my father had a mail order arrangement with the Adelaide stockist of _Asterix_ books and I was able to collect an entire set of the initial translated volumes. Nearly 40 years later, my Dad still had them in a bookcase in his retirement home unit, worse for wear but readable. Due to financial difficulties shortly prior to his passing, we ended up selling them, as would be the eventual fate whenever I periodically resumed collecting at varied points in my adult life, the last being circa when DC launched their Vertigo range, though the prize in my collection then was Chaykin's _Black Kiss_ (a work of which my father could not have even imagined conceivable).
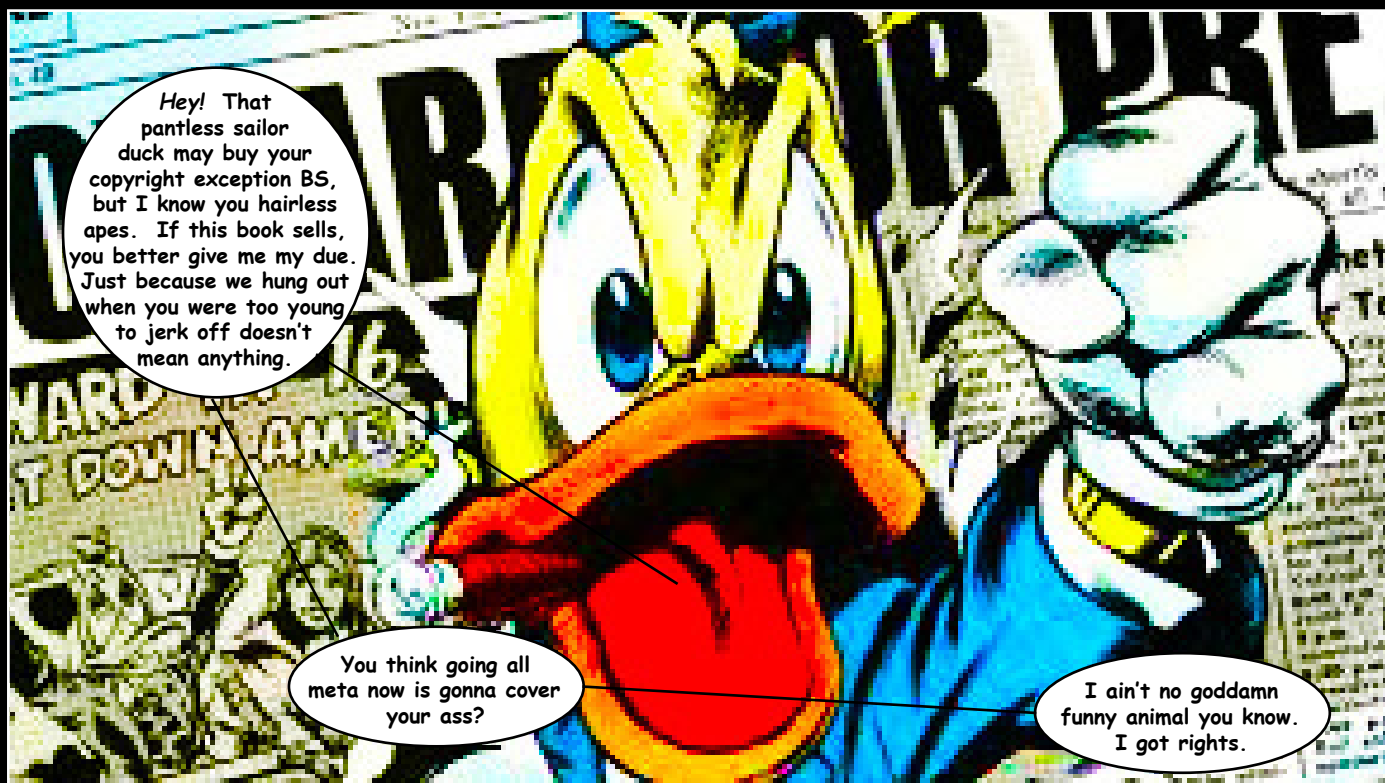
I haven't collected a comic in over a decade now though. The last time I browsed a comic shop in Adelaide, South Australia was about 2017, on a return to my birth country from China to visit my father. It was overwhelming: I'm sure there was good work there to be found but I ended up buying the _Howard the Duck Treasury Edition_, later selling it (I think for a profit but I cant be sure - my speculation efforts never did pan out, except for the original run of _The Crow_ and the first issues of _Hellblazer_ and _Sandman_). And I can't watch the Marvel movies: I tried _Shang-Chi_ but what a ghastly piece of drivel that contemporized lowest-common-denominator bastardization turned out to be: a long way from Doug Moench - and an insult to China to boot.

But does politics belong in comics though? Does morality?

Does autoethnography?

I always wanted to make my own comics. But I can't draw. Something of a problem.

I made some tentative trials when younger at a comic book style work, but these did not eventuate in more than a few images, more inclined to illustrated poetry than comics. I would, however, sometimes photocopy images of characters or images and paste them in collaged narratives of my own device.

However, in using simple silhouette based clip-art, originally intended to accompany a lesson on comicbook story-telling in EFL writing class, I was able to create simple, short comicbook stories which - to my surprise - strongly resonated with my Chinese students. But these were university students and fans of Marvel movies.

I wondered if the comicbook medium had educational potential for younger Chinese EFL learners, but as an EFL teacher, the bulk of my experience was within China's tertiary education system (after my one year of Middle School teaching Han, Uygur and Kazakh students in XUAR).   So I devised, as my first graphic story series, a trial clip-art based scenario of a single male foreigner in China, godfather to a young boy whose parents died and was now being raised in China. Myself being unmarried, childless and unable to father children, there was also a personal aspect to this scenario and over two stories I began to integrate aspects of personal autobiographical experience.

GODFATHER
& YOUNG MASTER in

FIRST STEPS

My first effort at a comic was thus fictionalized auto-biography

Informed by the curiosity of Chinese students as to the foreign teacher.

And a student remark once that emotionally touched me.

In response to a question as to my family and marital status...

... I remarked that I had no wife, nor children; no family...

...to which she replied earnestly that they (students) are my family.

'We are family."

Godfather, why did you come to China to teach English?

Students often ask me that question. Well, it's a long story. So, here we go...

"伟大的人......永远不会失去孩子的心。 面对瞬息万变的世界，保持某种单纯的天真，是避免内心小焦虑的唯一方法。" （孟子，布鲁雅译）

"A great person... never loses his child's heart. Facing the ever-changing world by maintaining a certain simple naivet is the only way to avoid a heart of petty anxieties." (Mencius, translated by Bruya)

When my father was a young man, after World War Two, he left Europe for Australia. A new country, new culture.

He did not speak any English when he arrived.

The Australian government was of little assistance, as they did not know how to teach him English.

Godfather, why not?

Australians did not like Europeans who did not speak English. Australians were unprepared, and ignored or ridiculed these new arrivals.

Oh Godfather, I'm sorry.

My father was a wise man. But he had a hard life in Australia because he could not speak English. I always remembered that. I became an English teacher to help people have a better life.
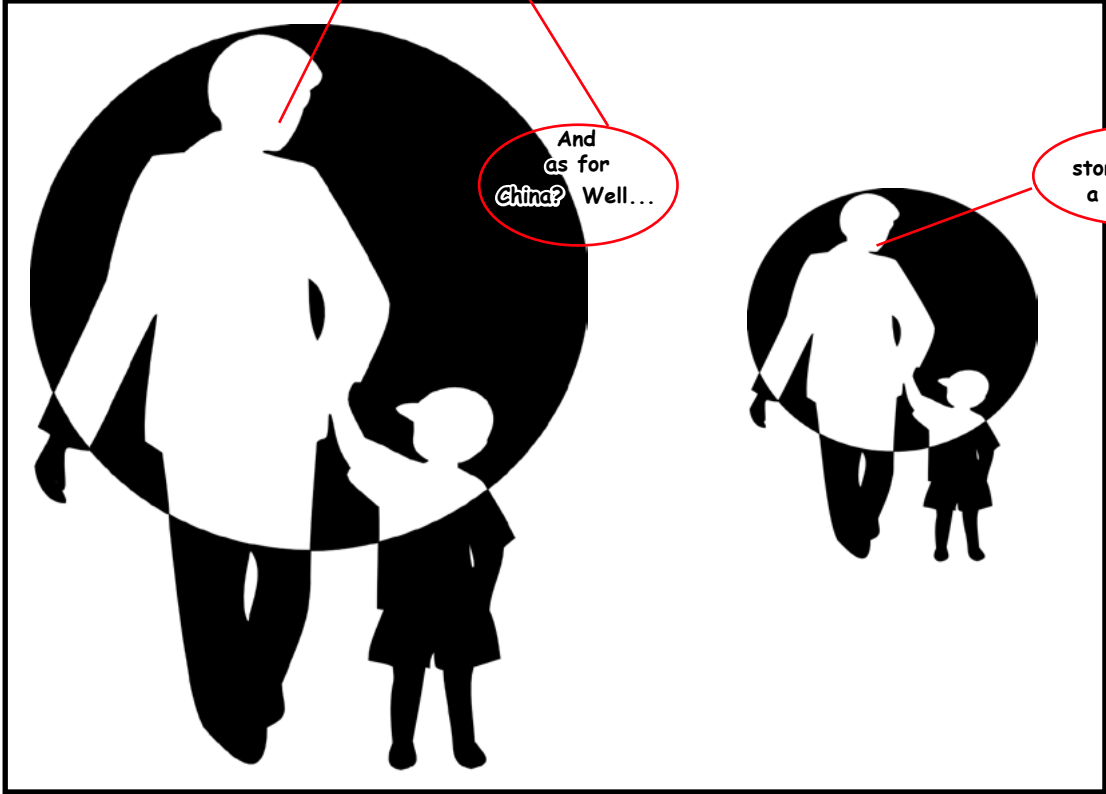
And as for China? Well...

...that story involves a woman...

...and stories involving women are always complex.

...and I found love.

God-father, what is love?

"To love a thing means wanting it to live." (Confucius)

Godfa-ther, I want to play!.
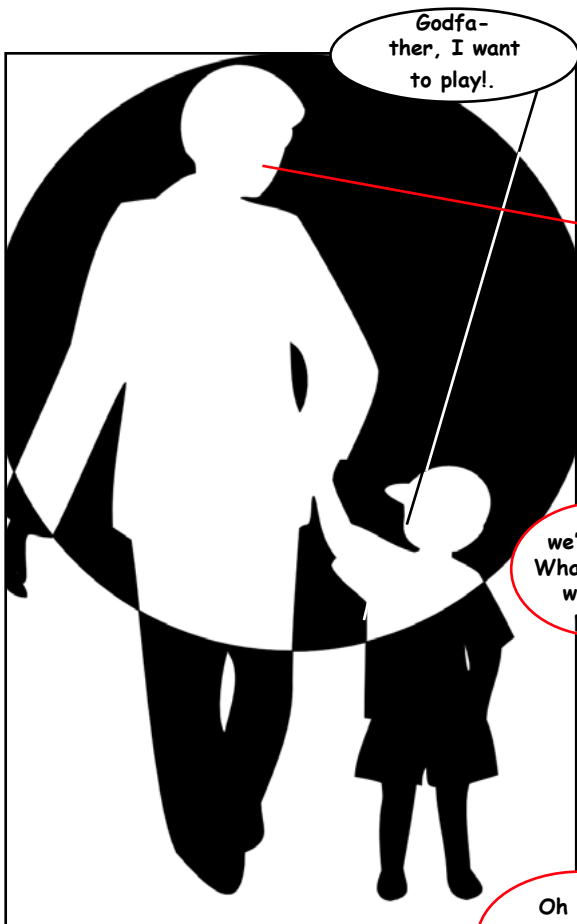
Oh, the young master wants to play?

Of course. You start on the ground. low,

OK, we'll play? What do you want to play?

Yes Godfather!

Then you prepare yourself.

Seesaw! Let's play on the seesaw.

And, working with another person, you both help yourselves off the ground.

A working, win-win partnership.

Oh yes, a good game to learn of life.

Is it Godfather?

"Some people come to knowledge and realization before others. People of prior knowledge and realization can't just keep it to themselves; they should use them to guide others." (Mencius, translated by Bruya)

Do you
remember the
first time we
played basketball?

Yes
Godfather.

You were
too small to
throw the ball
into the hoop
and through
the net.

Yes
I am so small
Godfather.

But together
we were taller
than either of us
on our own.
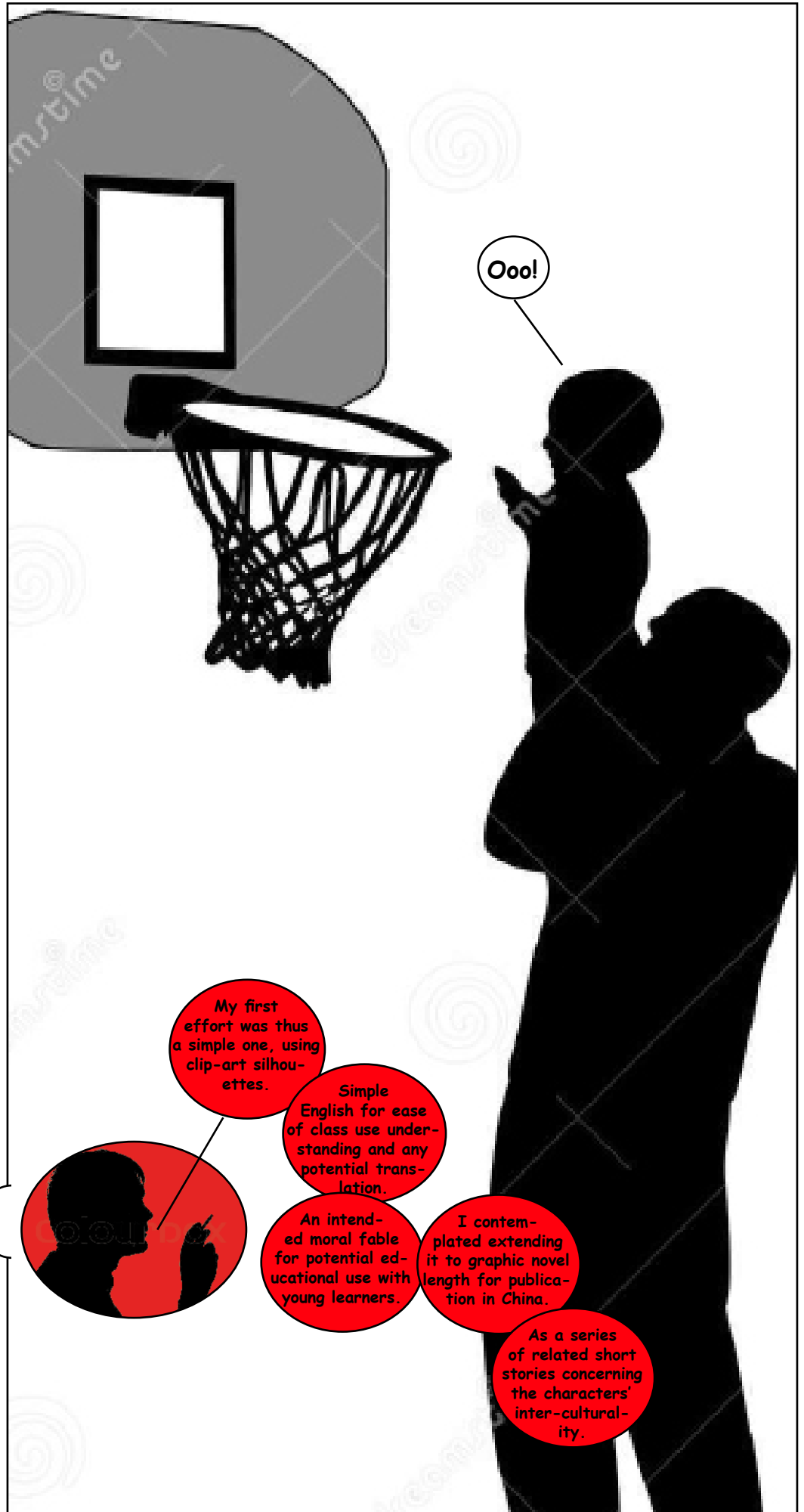
Ooo!

My first
effort was thus
a simple one, using
clip-art silhou-
ettes.

Simple
English for ease
of class use under-
standing and any
potential trans-
lation.

An intend-
ed moral fable
for potential ed-
ucational use with
young learners.

I contem-
plated extending
it to graphic novel
length for publica-
tion in China.

As a series
of related short
stories concerning
the characters'
inter-cultural-
ity.

Godfather, tell me about the woman?
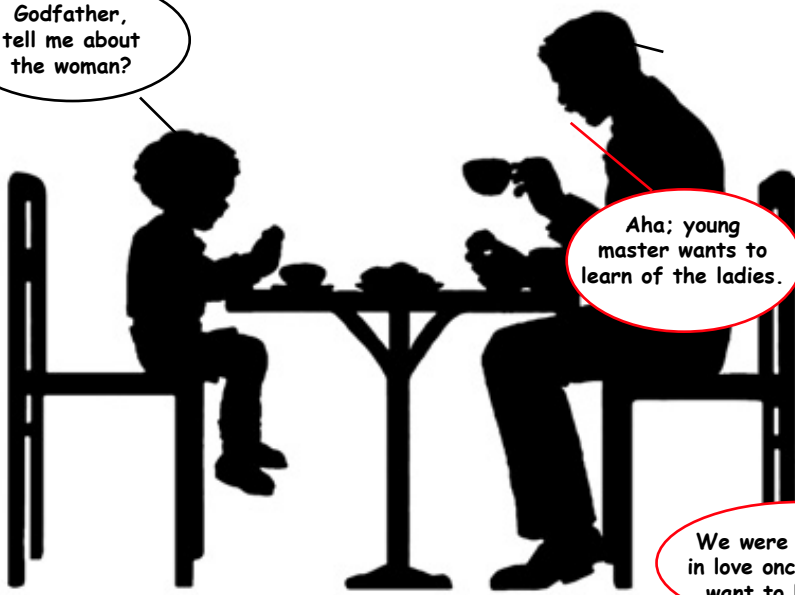
Aha; young master wants to learn of the ladies.

They are a beautiful subject, especially this one.

We were very much in love once. Did not want to be apart.
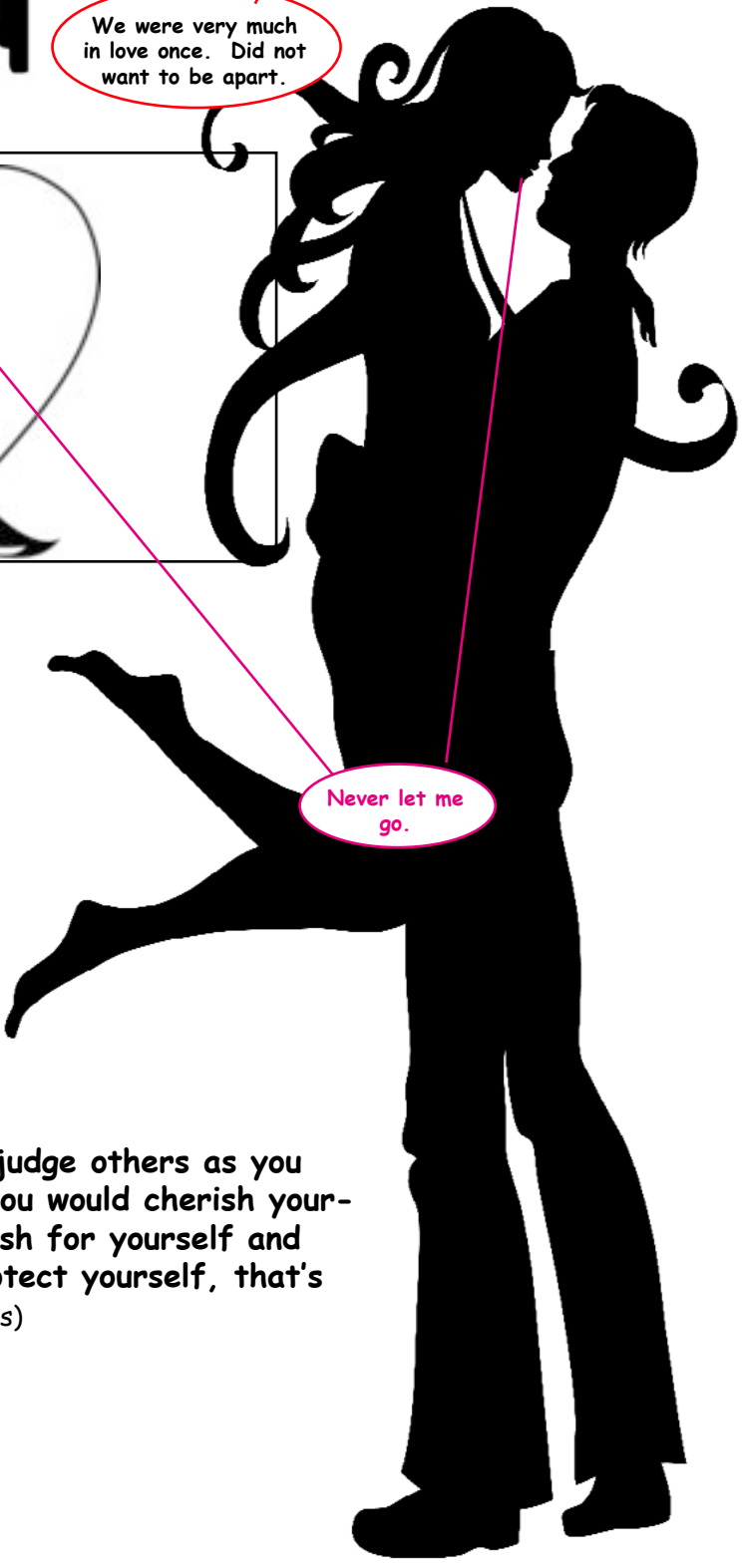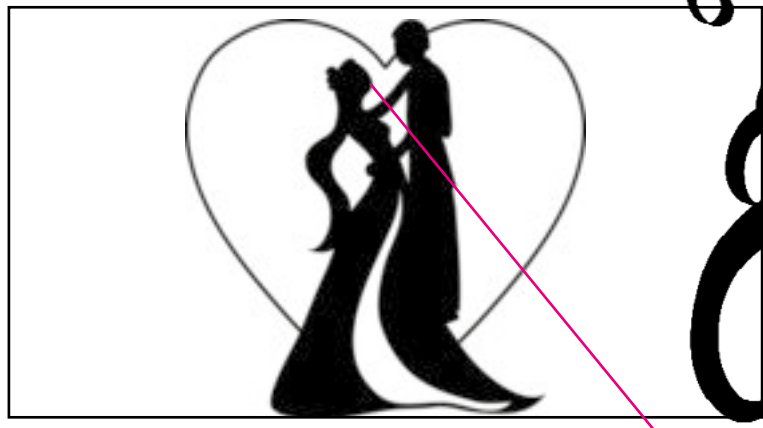
Never let me go.

GODFATHER
& YOUNG MASTER in

ALWAYS, A WOMAN

"Love others as you would love yourself, judge others as you would judge yourself, cherish others as you would cherish yourself. When you wish for others as you wish for yourself and when you protect others as you would protect yourself, that's when you can say it's true love. " (Confucius)

Was she pretty, Godfather?

Oh yes, so much, to me.
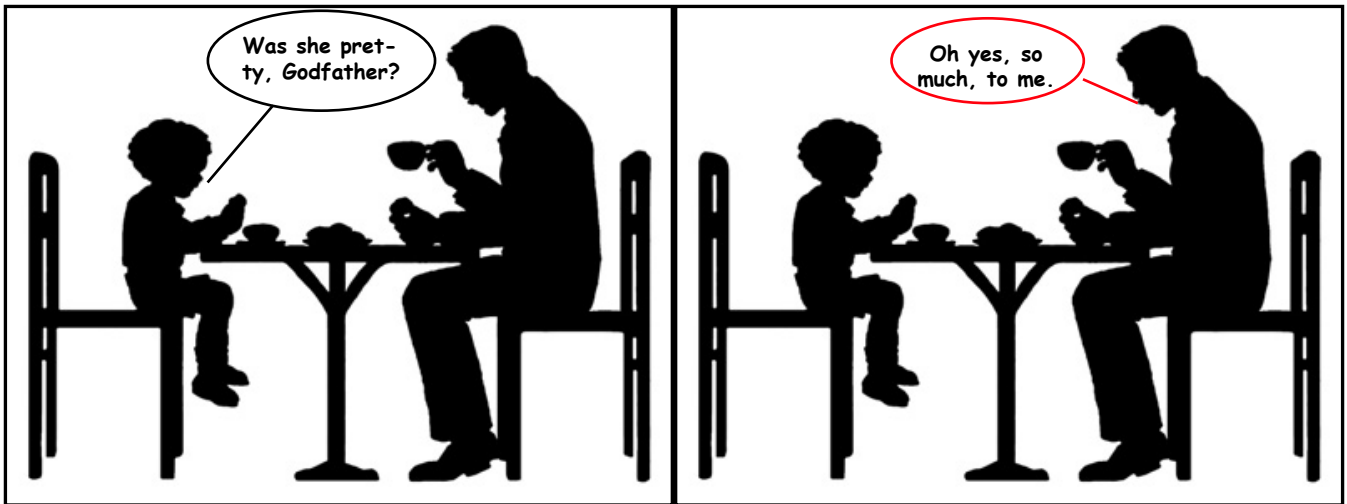
I remember her smile, her eyes.

She was just stunning in a red, floral Xipao or black evening dress. Oh, how I loved to look at her.

The way she had of kissing me in short bursts of three.

She was Chinese. I called her my China Cat.

We began, like lovers do, in a dreamlife. I was poor, a student again. Not yet a teacher. Hadn't considered it seriously. I was... carefree, a decade younger.

She floated in a lightly perfumed air, refreshing like a spring breeze. And so soft, so warm, so gentle. I was.... captivated by her.

She wanted to read what I wrote, see the pictures I took, though most were of her I must admit. I adored her, wanted to do anything for her.

We lived together. Much of the time happy, but...

But what Godfather?...
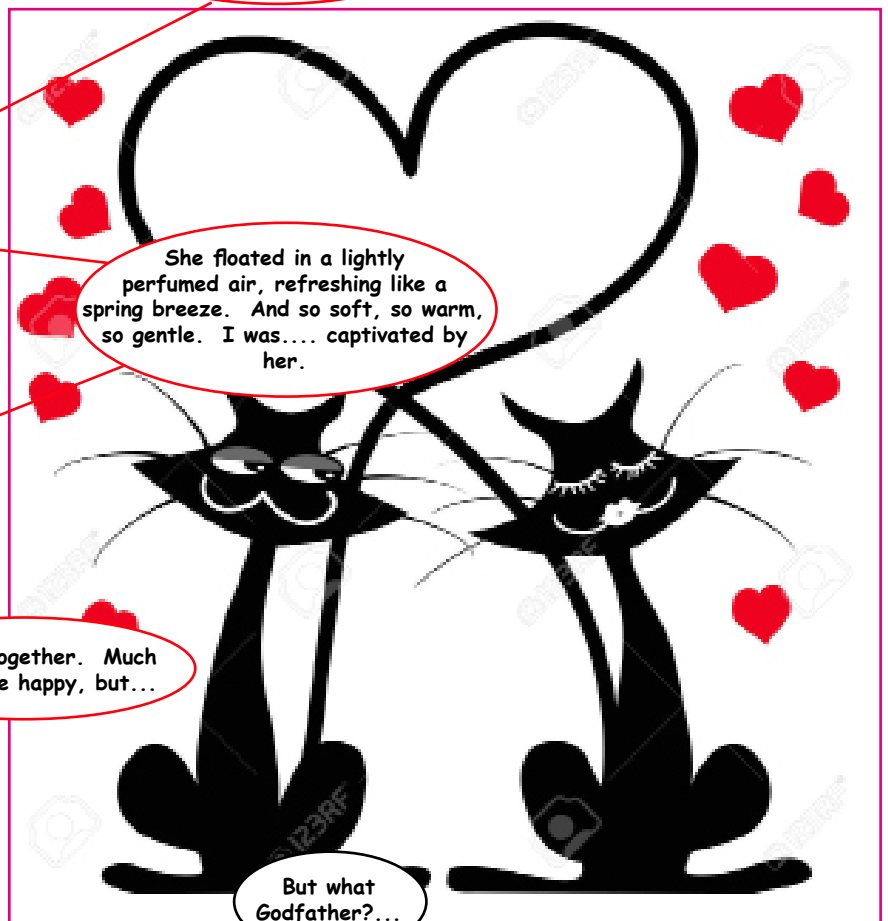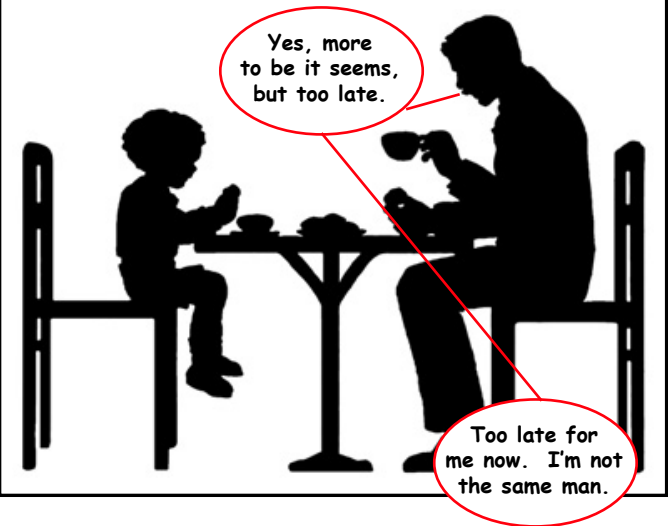
I still think of her though, and remember. Sometimes tearfully at what was lost. What I let go.

I remember how we began, like lovers do, in a dreamlife. I was poor, a student again. Not yet a teacher. Hadn't considered it seriously. I was... carefree.

She was a breath of fresh, lightly perfumed air, refreshing like a spring breeze. And so soft, so warm, so gentle. I was.... captivated by her.

She wanted to read what I wrote, see the pictures I took, though most were of her I must admit. I adored her, would do anything for her.

Sometimes, I just want to stay forever in my dreamlife.

"There is no greater delight than to be conscious of sincerity on self-examination"
(Mencius as translated by anonymous)

After my initial venture into graphic storytelling mode, however, I had a career change. After a brief visit to Australia via Sydney - ostensibly to visit my father by connection to Adelaide and make a short film at a graffiti-covered "squat" nearby where I resided in Adelaide's Onkaparinga region - I took up a position in Shanghai, working for one of the then-leading EdTech EFL corporate sector providers.

I was soon aghast at the pedagogic practices I found, and overwhelmed by the expat scene in Shanghai, which revolved around an open view of morality that was, not only not Chinese, but was fomenting an atmosphere of corruption and vice. It was seductive though, having been raised in Western views.

Not that I regret the choices and actions I made mind you, just that in retrospect they were characterized by a barely rationalized emotional need, an effort to find intimacy that was doomed to failure. Not that I would call myself one of the best minds of my generation, but all around me were destroyed by this madness.

I was motivated by introspection at what was an epiphanic, cathartic experience in Shanghai...

Of this, I took fieldwork photography, profiling an encounter with an "expat" subculture.

This was circa 2017-19, however, and the onset of Covid-19 policy changes in China and exodus of many such "expats" relegated this subculture to history.

For my second comic work thus, I sought to experientially render this bygone inter-culturality as a participant-observer. Self-represen-

McCloud (1993), in _Understanding Comics_, delineated the dialectics of self-representation in relation to cartooning traditions that had traditionally informed comicbook development since its onset in newspaper strips. He reasoned that iconic representations rendered a conceptualization of a character (or of the self) which determined audience reaction: thus an initially important part of positionality was inherent distanciation, if not exactly alienation, informing the dynamics of reader identification in narrative storytelling.
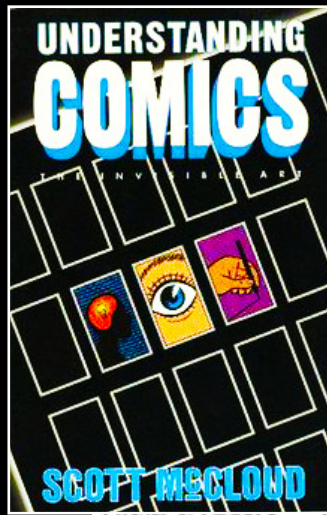
McCloud's concept of "masking" here is problematized by self-representation: how is the reader to be affected by the rendered Self as a signifier of truthful personal narrative storytelling? Indeed, a central question thus in autobiographical comics is self-representation - as a drawing of the Self, the iconic representation is also thus an Other, a conceptualized aspect of the Self, no longer confined to the photo-realist or mimetic arts. As such, self-representation in effect doubles as persona, reader identification with which thus involving a complex psychological interrogation of what constitutes "truth" in such renderings, especially if action, place, daily life and personages are aestheticized for deliberate affect in the storytelling process.

In my autoethnographic storytelling, I seek to deliberately engage with these dynamics of self-representation. In this volume thus I begin with representations of myself gradually interacting and engaging with drawn found objects that have played a role in my socialization to date: in effect to simultaneously construct and de-construct a simulacrum of meta-cognitive "identity" construction. In this, I seek to position myself in relation to a symbiosis of lived, authentic inter-cultural experience informed by a complex prism of socio-cultural references through which I process and render them, as interpretive phenomenological praxis.

-- WHILE THE GENTLE CURVES AND OPEN LINES OF CARL BARKS' UNCLE SCROOGE CONVEY A FEELING OF WHIMSY, YOUTH AND INNOCENCE.

IN R. CRUMB'S WORLD, THE CURVES OF INNOCENCE ARE BETRAYED BY THE NEUROTIC QUILL-LINES OF MODERN ADULTHOOD, AND LEFT PAINFULLY OUT OF PLACE--

--WHILE IN KRYSTINE KRYTTRE'S ART, THE CURVES OF CHILDHOOD AND THE MAD LINES OF A MUNCH CREATE A CRAZY TODDLER LOOK.

THAT'S WHY I DECIDED TO DRAW MYSELF IN SUCH A SIMPLE STYLE.

WOULD YOU HAVE LISTENED TO ME IF I LOOKED LIKE THIS??
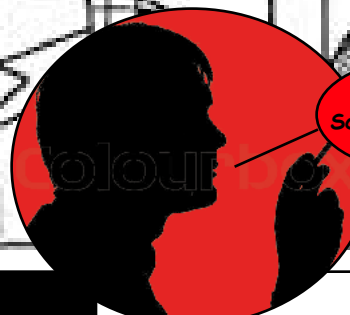
That's great Scott, but I can't draw.

How can I represent myself in any evocative interpetivist phenomenological rendering in comic book format?

Besides... I like color comics..

"PHENOMENOLOGY OF PERCEPTION IN EXPERIENTIAL META-COGNITION OF TRANSIENT TRANSCENDENT SELF-ACTUALIZAtION"

"STREAMING CONSCIOUS-NESS OF BEING IN TIME: A MAINLINE TO SELF-CUL-TIVATION"

"TRUE KNOWLEDGE IS SUMMATIVE ACQUISITION OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE"

"PINNACLE SUMMATION OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE FACILITATES SENTIENT BEING IN PERFECT HU-MAN CONDITION"

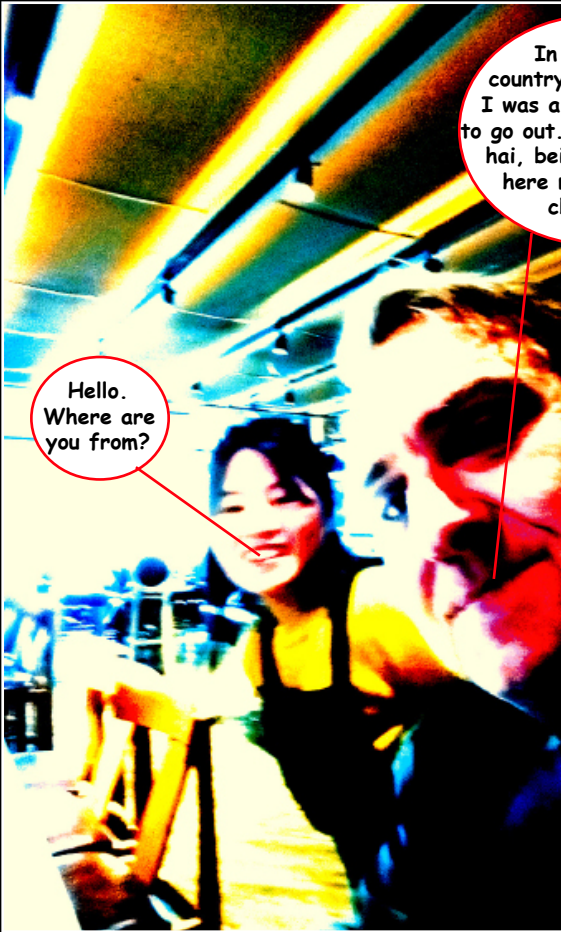千里之行・始于足下 | *Shanghai New Year 2017-2018 was an intoxicating winter wonderland.*

"INTERPRETIVIST EXPERIEN-TIAL AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHIC SIMULACRA OF EPISTEMIC PARADIGM SHIFT INTO TRANSCENDENT HIGHER LEVEL CONSCIOUSNESS"

I didn't think I could feel so happy, released from melan-cholia. Indeed, so free.

It feels like a dream, a vivid corncupia of sensorial and meta-cognitive delights.

I want forever to live in this dreamlife, imprinted.

Some expat bars in Jing An had cultural associations for me, to movies I had seen in the case of Porky's Bar and Grill, not quite like the movie, but I knew some Americans were involved in that business enter-prise.

There were many expats in Jing An in 2017-2019.

Young. 20s and 30s looking for startup investments.

Hello. Where are you from?

A dynam-ic social scene had sprung up around them: clubs like Mint, Bar Rouge, Revolucion serving a clien-tele that wore designer label status sym-bols.

Through a businessman I met I was shown this expat scene in detail.

"TEMPORALITY OVERLAPS IN SYNCHRONOUS AWARENESS OF THE SELF IN PAST AND PRESENT: PROJECTING A FUTURE YET TO MANIFEST?"

But though I thought him a friend at first, he was unethical as it turned out: a sexpat. Indeed, so were many foreigners, es-pecially the more money they had.

停车行为违法
请立即驶离
电子警察监管
（违法停车）

Nevertheless, I adored Jing An, hoping one day to live in the area.

On holiday, I would just wander with a camera: daily life, street scenes.

Even the mundane seemed magical. So far from what Western MSM had once had me believe.

But beyond the intoxication of initial fieldwork photography: rumination. It was another world. Where many in it succumbed to the Western imposed hedonism, however (and it was seductive), I turned introspective.

He remembers the film noir quality the downtown Jing An streets held, before the "house-cleaning" by the Chinese authorities under Xi Jinping. That brooding nocturnal sense that inside any club could be an oasis, a sanctuary from the winter drizzle, the drops tinged with energy.

Each intersection held new photogenic discoveries: so much in a single area as the night people plied their trades. Carrion comfort perhaps, but... it was an "expat" identity ritual: a rite-of-passage into Shanghai foreigner society, replete with the values and morals that characterized the US attitude towards Chinese culture that came with opening up Chinese investment to these Imperialist pariahs.

He met many of these ugly Americans, fugazis resplendent in Gucci sunglasses and tailored clothes, 30-something Masters of the Universe entitled to buy favors. Because what else is money for.

Devil's advocates corrupting the Chinese Dream.

Pushing profit motive over people.
Promising fortune for loyalty.

Dangling carrots before workhorses.
Always just out of reach.

He remembers the giddiness.

And... ?
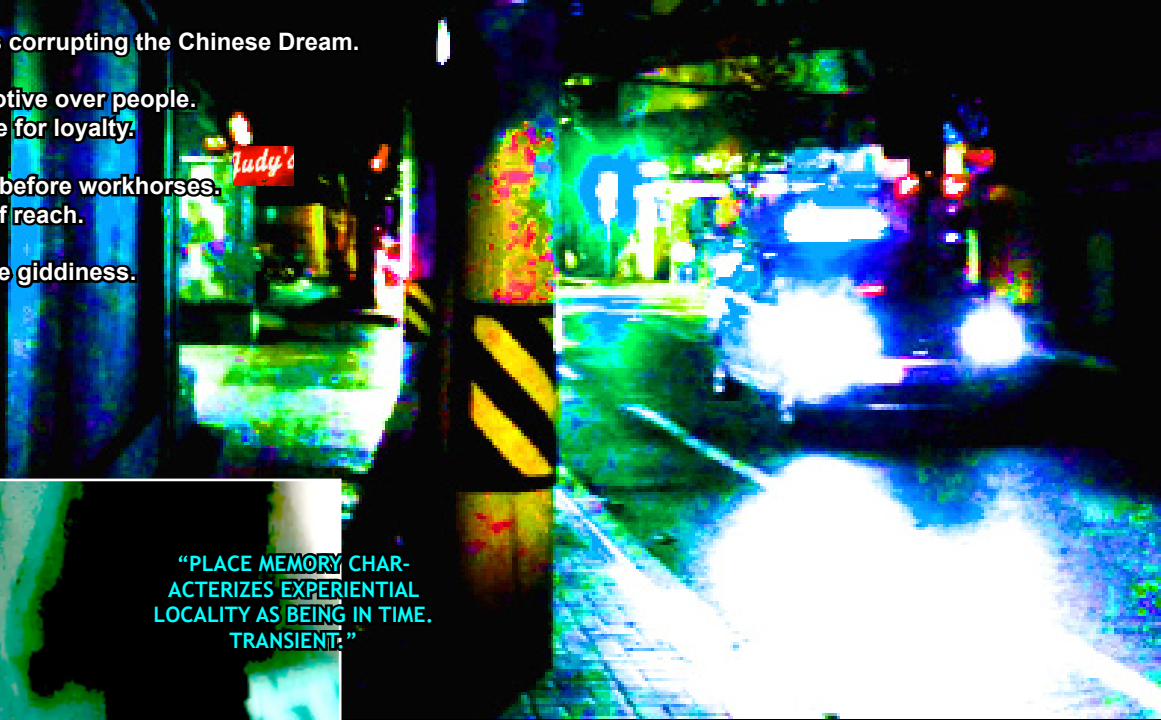
"PLACE MEMORY CHAR-
ACTERIZES EXPERIENTIAL
LOCALITY AS BEING IN TIME.
TRANSIENT."
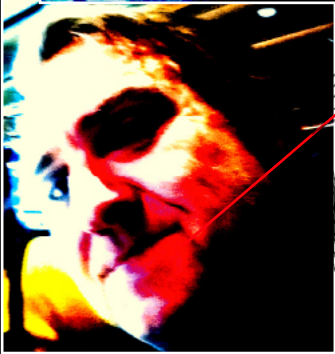
"The girls
are young. The
odds are there
to beat."

"You win a while.
And then it's done. You're
little winning streak. Sum-
moned now to deal with your
invincible defeat."

"You live
your life as if it's
real. A thousand
kisses deep.".
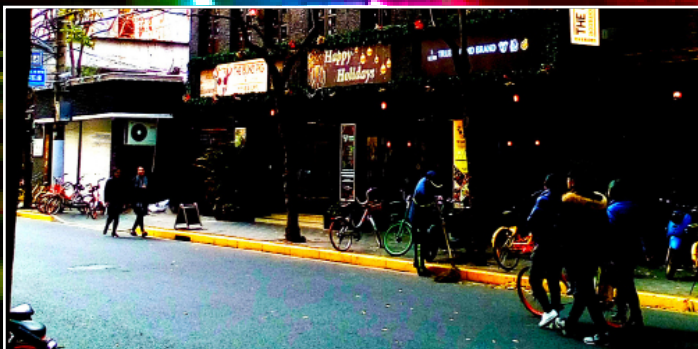
With my childhood spent in a small desert opal mining community with at first no electricity or running water, I often daydreamed of living in another place. In another town, far away from outback Australia in the fictional US state of Calisota. In the fabled Duckburg, city of residence for Barks' talking duck character gallery and created in 1944 especially to suit them by the writer/artist himself as a consistent geographical anchor for the Donald Duck comic book stories. I just knew, 100%, that when I moved there, the talking ducks would be my best friends. All of them.

As a child living in poverty, I was acutely aware of not having money. Yet, I had no point of experiential comparison, never having known any alternative to poverty-level subsistence. I was beholden to "lack", bound by circumstance to a small European immigrant outback Australian community in the same predicament. It was via the uncle of one of my duck friends, Uncle Scrooge - who lived in a literal "Money Bin" and dove through piles of loose currency - that I was able to conceive of an alternative to a life of "lack": namely "abundance". Wow! Duckburg was a paradise. For sure.

While neither I nor my parents had any assets worth stealing, I learned about personal property, ownership and criminality by reading about Duckburg's organized crime family - The Beagle Boys - capers to usurp Scrooge McDuck's vast fortune. The serialized exploits contextualized a social construct in deference to codes of "law and order". Although I knew that The Beagle Boys would never win out - having been indoctrinated early into a "universal law" that thieves never prosper - I felt a guilty pleasure at, and even an admiration for, their perpetual determination and inexhaustible creativity.

Chalk it up to Australia's convict colony culture, but now and then I even rooted for the Beagles. Yet, my incipient cognition of both social ethics and personal morals was triggered by the legal dichotomy between right and wrong embodied in the Scrooge-Beagle conflict. I loved my talking duck friends, but silently wondered why Scrooge McDuck - who had so much - never shared his vast wealth with those who had so little.

> What are you, stupid? Getting hung up about morality?

> Waugh! Enough is enough buddy. Maybe Dr. Bong can help ya.

> I hear he's setting up a legal practice now.

> I can empathize though. We live, we lose.

> This mortal coil and all that jazz, ya know?

> I didn't make the world either Howard.

> I loved her though. Why'd she have to go?

> I'm destined to be alone now Howard.

Most fascinating of all Duckburg's denizens to me also posed something of an ethical conundrum, so too was she a Scrooge foe; albeit a dangerous beauty of a different ilk to the buffoonish Beagles. She was potentially lethal.

Barks' seductive sorceress Magica De Spell brought to so-called children's literature a feminine archetype that while in hindsight can now be labeled "femme fatale", on reading about I could only dream of making my girlfriend.

My future was certain. I was destined to take up residence in Duckburg and marry Magica De Spell. I wasn't sure if we'd raise a family together, and she didn't seem to be enamored of my other duck friends, but I was determined to make it work. I was under her spell and pored over her comicbook appearances, a prelude perhaps to obsessive behavior over later. At least before I discovered Guido Crepax and American underground adult comix.

1   For her just-published work, *Symbiotic Autoethnography*, Beattie (2022) defines 'symbiotic temporality' as "researchers' perceptions of chronological times (subjective) as experienced across different localities (locational) and captured in the moment of writing (evanescence)... a 'snapshot' of our temporal recollections of events, places, feelings and relations caught in their illusory stillness during one specific moment of writing". Though Beattie is solely concerned with the written autoethnographic text, I sought to visualize it methodologically in relation not just to my authentic lived experience, but meta-textually, to the cultural artefacts (comic images) that shaped my literacy development towards graphic storytelling (and film) media.

MEMORY LANE

First transgression I saw was in Chaykin's noir.

Comic seller thought horror porn was immoral, but still sold it to me.

Wasn't really into key issues but bought a few.

I usually bought what I enjoyed reading.

I had eclectic tastes really.

Some I bought increased in value, so I sold them to sustain the hobby.

I wish I could get into it again.

Money was the only obstacle. I barely had any.

But money again. Plus, I'm in China now.

Though if I only could, I surely would.

Now I just have memories.

A random sea of images.

My father always used to say to me: "don't get old"...

FIRST ISSUE COMING SOON!

"In analyzing and making judgments, everything has to be thoroughly considered: you can't just make a decision based on one piece of evidence."
(Mencius, translated by Bruya)
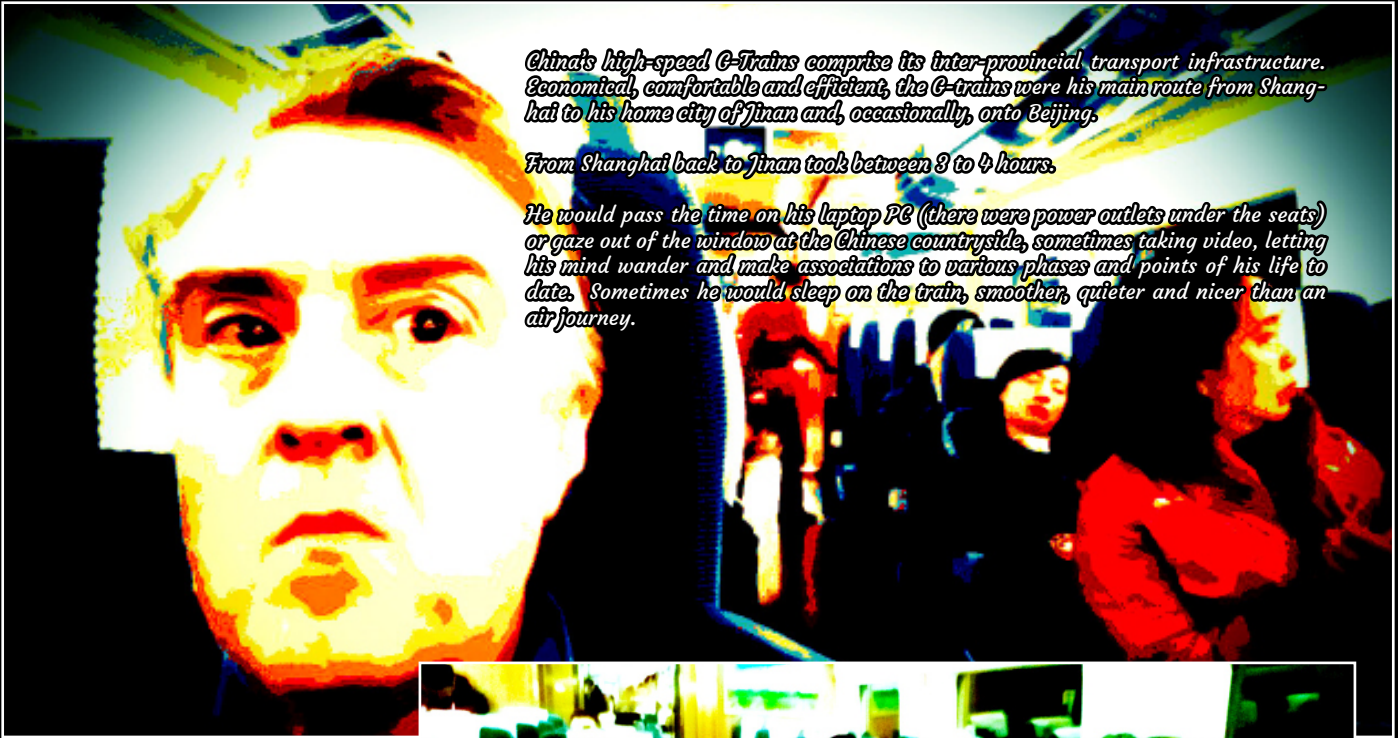
China's high-speed G-Trains comprise its inter-provincial transport infrastructure. Economical, comfortable and efficient, the G-trains were his main route from Shanghai to his home city of Jinan and, occasionally, onto Beijing.

From Shanghai back to Jinan took between 3 to 4 hours.

He would pass the time on his laptop PC (there were power outlets under the seats) or gaze out of the window at the Chinese countryside, sometimes taking video, letting his mind wander and make associations to various phases and points of his life to date. Sometimes he would sleep on the train, smoother, quieter and nicer than an air journey.

It was real. Saying goodbye to Shanghai always made him a touch melancholy, as it usually would be months to a year before he could return, especially once Covid-19's Omicron variant began to spread to China, though he had avoided the Shanghai lockdown that ensued.
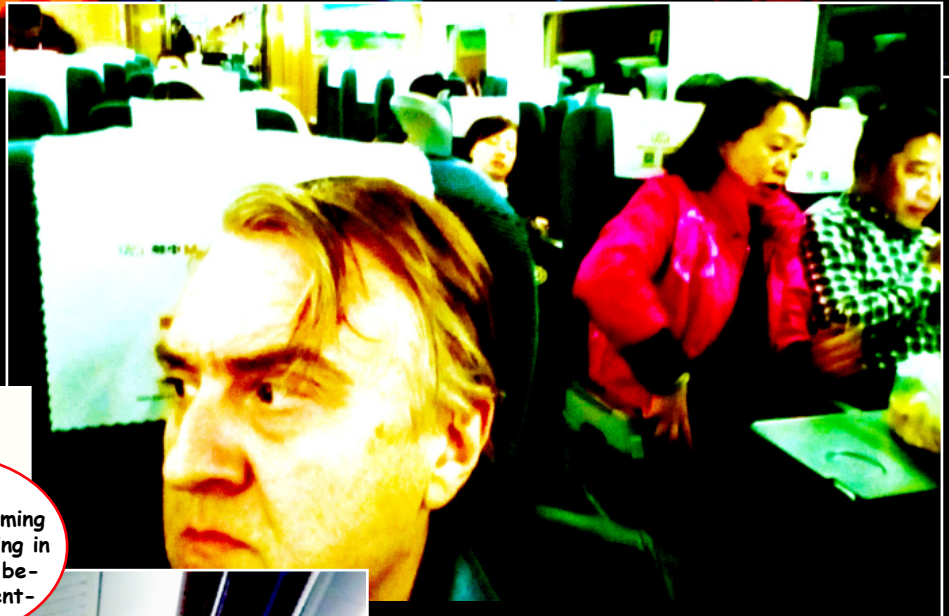
I wonder though in becoming what I am, being in time, if I am becoming disoriented.

Like Billy Pilgrim, I feel I am unstuck in time.
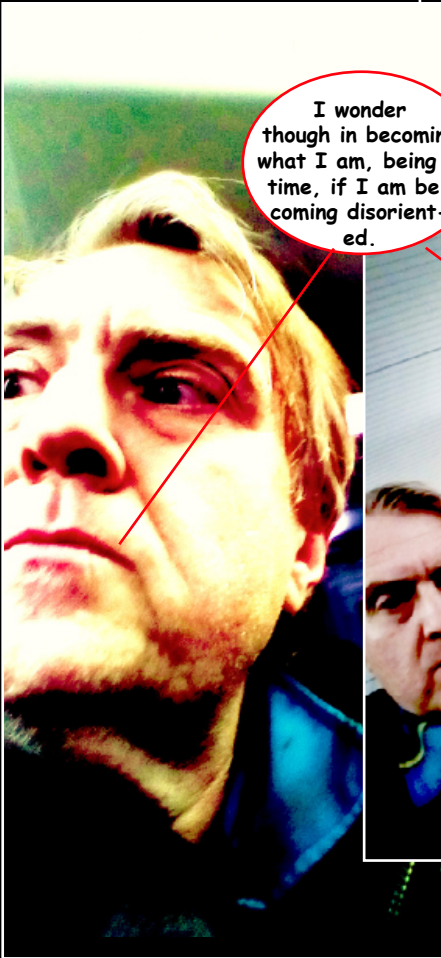
Drifting from memory to memory, but always in reflective solitude.

Reconstructing my life into a new sense of Self. Solitary.

The Jinan West train station taxi rank always was something of a calming relief: Jinan was less tumultuous and high pressure than Shanghai. Not that, as an "expat" on an annual, renewable work visa, he construed it as returning "home" but he had spent almost 7 of the last 10 years in Jinan. But no longer on vacation in Shanghai, personal pressures were bound to also return from their temporary hiatus.

Another 3 weeks of vacation left before the new semester begins and teaching resumes. Makeup exams, one exam entry error to amend and a new batch of presumably freshmen in Speaking and Listening classes. I wonder if current politics will affect their attitude to me as a foreigner.
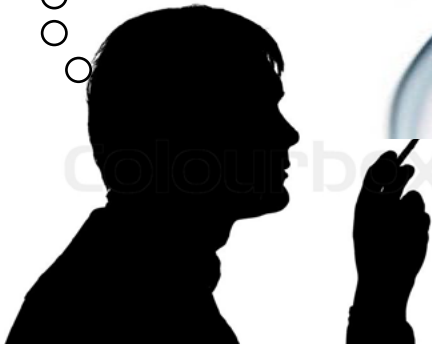
I don't want to be anxious, let alone paranoid. The US has made the world much more dangerous. If it's another "with us or against us" scenario...?
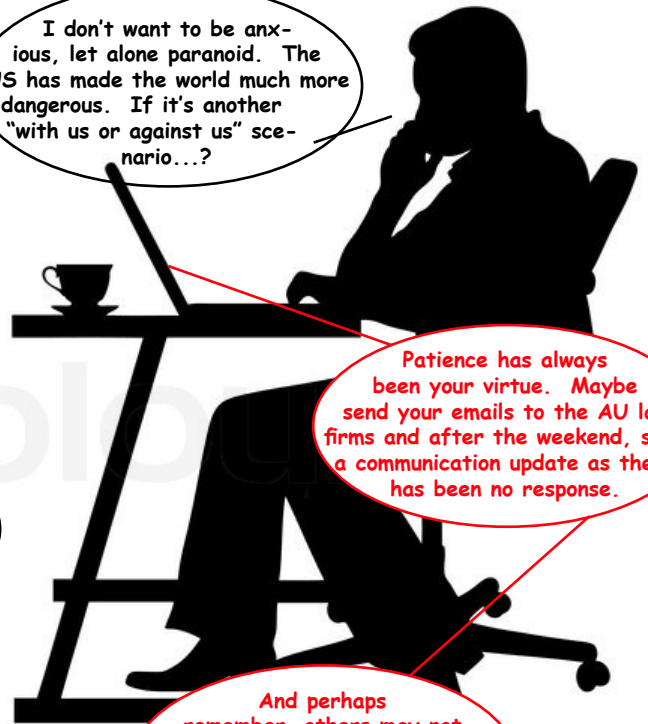
Patience has always been your virtue. Maybe send your emails to the AU law firms and after the weekend, seek a communication update as there has been no response.

Relax. Time may be on my side. Monitor the device. See how it goes. Work on my autoethnographic project - transmedia. Nice, nice, very nice. Take some time out now and then.

And perhaps remember, others may not share your sense of concern. Undue worrying over this is not helpful. Remember, you do have options open.
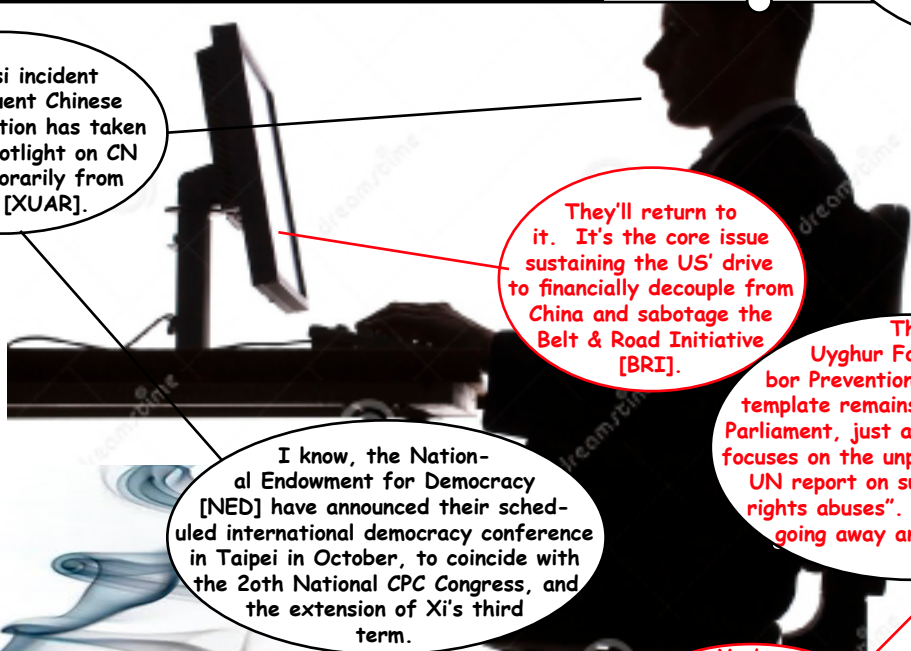
From Covid-19 to the cusp of World War Three over Taiwan. So many lies, so much hypocrisy by the US warmongers. Blinken - the consummate cunt - claims the US acts in the name of stable leadership in ASEAN. What garbage!

The Pelosi incident and subsequent Chinese military operation has taken the media spotlight on CN issues temporarily from Xinjiang [XUAR].

They'll return to it. It's the core issue sustaining the US' drive to financially decouple from China and sabotage the Belt & Road Initiative [BRI].

The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act [UFLPA] template remains before the EU Parliament, just as media attention focuses on the unpublished Bachelet UN report on supposed "human rights abuses". The issue isn't going away any time soon.

I know, the National Endowment for Democracy [NED] have announced their scheduled international democracy conference in Taipei in October, to coincide with the 2oth National CPC Congress, and the extension of Xi's third term.

You've been obsessed with XUAR for months now. Chill.

Subsequent to Ellis, Adams & Bochner (2011) autoethnography was expanded as a "qualitative, transformative research method because it changes time, requires vulnerability, fosters empathy, embodies creativity and innovation, eliminates boundaries, honors subjectivity, and provokes therapeutic benefits... imply(ing) a humanistic stance in which phenomena under investigation are examined through the eyes and experiences of individual participants... (wherein) personal narratives, experiences and opinions are valuable data which provide researchers with tools to find those tentative answers they are looking for" (Mendez, 2013).

In the parent field of anthropology, autoethnographic theory thus expanded upon Hayano's 1979 view that "as anthropologists moved out of the colonial era of ethnography, they would come more and more to study the social worlds and subcultures of which they were a part (such that) in contrast to the detached-outsider characteristic of colonial anthropologists, contemporary anthropologists would frequently be full members of the cultures they studied" (Anderson, 2006).

All right. Go back to comicbook subculture. First principles. Chill. You've got time.

How did that shape your incipient identity?

Take a trip down...

MEMORY LANE

LOST CHILD of the REVOLUTION

The first complete run of comics I ever had was the 5 issue *Kong the Untamed*.

OK. Cool. First one had a Bernie Wrightson cover.

Trashy fake mythopoeic writing, but dinosaurs and Dawn of Man stuff. Of course the hero had blond hair.

Haha. Right. White supremacy for kids.

No shit. So did *Kamandi*, the other series I collected at the time, though incomplete. First Kirby read.

So you started out with DC. Interesting.

My local drive-in played 3-4 double features a week and my Dad would take me to most. After seeing *Planet of the Apes* and the remake of *King Kong* I guess my reading went towards dystopic fantasy.

I even got the Whitman giant treasury movie adaptation.

But as far as a character to identify with, it was Kamandi. None of this superpower nonsense I saw in most Marvel. *Post-apocalypto!*

Dystopic 70s sci-fi cinema fascinated me. Charlton Heston was my hero (long before I knew about his NRA affiliation). I actually got into Marvel primarily because of their _Planet of the Apes_ tie-ins.

Yeah, those were cool.

Between _Ka-mandi's_ world of talking animals and _Planet of the Apes_, I switched from Disney funny animal talking ducks to Marvel's _Howard the Duck_. An introduction to satire and sarcasm.

Howard was a smart-ass though. The Steve Gerber creator rights fiasco, that made the run interesting + the movie sucked.

My Dad went apeshit (if you'll pardon the pun) at issue #15 and Dr. Bong, however. The drug reference was beyond me at the time, but he was horrified by my reading material. Aghast.
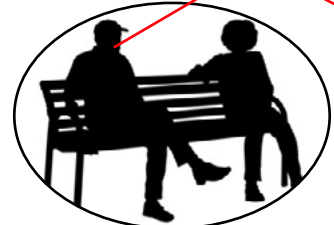
I continued collecting though, selecting première one-off issues of individual characters that seemed potentially of interest.

I'd store them as best as I could - long before bags and boards - and re-read them, always going to the news-stand to see the new arrivals.

The comics and the drive-in movies were the centre-pieces of my childhood.

So I continued unabated with adolescent escapist fantasies, finding an interest in Marvel's _Tarzan_ run...

... with related pulp fantasy beginning to border on pinup erotica and fantasy bondage art, ironically...

... leading to an interest in _Conan the Barbarian_ for his sexy female companion in the first issue I bought of the run.

Conan the Barbarian would some years later prove to be the first comic I actively sought out back issues for.

When my parents made me get rid of my comic collection I was mortified. Like parting with friends.

Yeah, I always feel that way when selling or trading from my collection, unless they're duplicate issues.

I was devastated when they were gone. Like a part of me had... died inside. Strange.
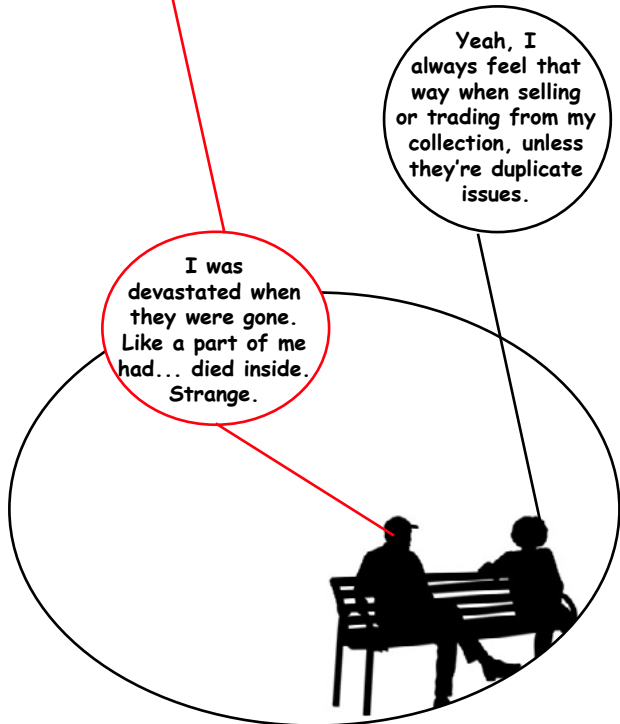
During my childhood in the 1970s, there was no radio nor television and the town's children thrived on comics, movies screened at the local drive-in movie theatre (_ed. four double features a week and my Dad took me to almost every one of them_) and the school library with its mail order children's book club. So, with little pocket money I soon developed a substantial collection of comic books in addition to my beloved ducks.

The Australian comicbook industry was moribund at the time, bar the perennial Lee Falk's _The Phantom_ of course (which I also collected and turned out to be the only comicbook my father also enjoyed reading, as he thought the medium was otherwise juvenile). It thrived solely by re-publishing and re-printing American comics alongside imports.

There were two grocery stores in Coober Pedy, Lucas' and Coro's. Coro's had the best comic selection, their wall rack display talking up a large section just before entry to the goods and grocery. Parents could leave their kids there to browse, obliged only to make at least a token purchase afterwards. Coro's was only a 5 or so minute walk from my home. Whenever I got pocket money, it was my first destination. And I would always look for the Disney ducks, not only Donald, but a whole array of relatives - Uncle Scrooge, his nemeses The Beagle Boys, Gladstone Gander, Magica de Spell, Donald's girl Daisy and, of course, the nephews, Huey, Dewey and Louie. But soon, I began to branch out into other comics, adolescent fantasies and adventure stories.

Reserving expenditure of my meager pocket money on acquiring comics, over 9 months since first deciding to move to Duckburg I amassed a sizable quantity of pulp. At least that was all my first comic book collection - about 50 comics give or take - was worth to my parents.

Both my father and mother were proud to have their chubby progeny reading in native English since early kindergarten but were equally aghast at his preferred choice of reading medium. My father's disdain for comics was well-known to me and, as it turned out, proved of vital importance in my cognitive development as I was driven to argumentative reasoning during frequent attempts to convince him of the logical error of such opinionated out-of-hand dismissal of the entire graphic storytelling medium (excepting _Asterix_ of course). What completely surprised, shocked and devastated me, however, was firstly my mother's hitherto concealed contempt for the comic medium, and, secondly, the extent of calculated deception to which she went to rid her small but impeccably neat, tidy and clean household of the eyesore trash her son obsessively accumulated.

Thus it was, on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day 1979, the self-assured innocence of my relish for comics was forever compromised by an imperative to conceal and curb my enthusiasm. Indeed, to take it into hiding. To make it disappear.

Christmas 1979 saw Australia's Northern Territory capital city Darwin devastated by Cyclone Tracy. Hundreds, if not more, of displaced families - their homes and livelihoods devastated - went south on foot, trailer and caravan further inland to the outback town of Alice Springs, a booming population center favored by tourists for its proximity to landmark Ayers Rock. With available housing and shelter soon exhausted, six+ dozen desperate families continued down the dirt road even deeper south until they came to Coober Pedy, galvanizing my hometown residents into a round of charitable donations to facilitate a new start for the "cyclone victims".
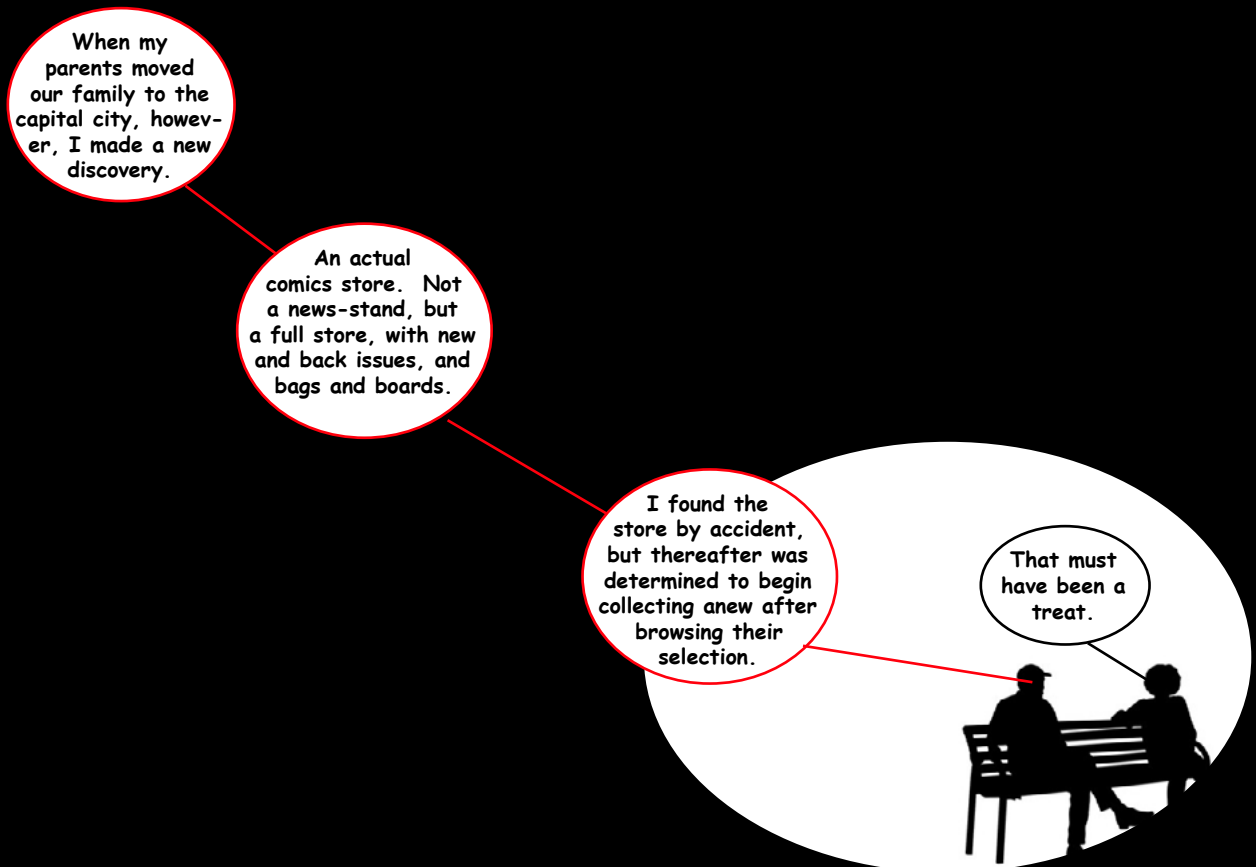
My mother - suddenly humanitarian - told me about the needy families who had fled to our town and needed my help. But how could I help: I was not even 10. Well, I could give their children something of my personal possessions as a Christmas gift. This seemed logical to me, so I happily agreed.

But I had so little: what could I possibly give? Well, I could give them my comic collection, my mother slyly suggested in a patronizing tone. After all, I had read them repeatedly and they were becoming unmanageable, I hesitated - the talking ducks were my friends. How could I give them away to strangers? They would never forgive me. I couldn't do such a thing. I shook my head and refused, reaching to gather the loose pile unto me.

Before I could touch a single one, my mother clasped my wrist and pulled me close to her. And then she obliterated all innocence in a single seeding: my mother told me that I had no choice, that it was my humble duty to God's charitable will.

When my mother tried the same tactic with my father - that God wanted him to give away the _Phantom_ comics - my father held his ground. He would have none of that. My mother had to be content with fooling me. But even I was not completely fooled: I started to wonder whether the God my mother often told me about was actually real or something she invented to have her way over me. The latter seemed more likely. Indeed, thereafter, I was skeptical of religious belief, and increasingly contemptuous of organized religion, something in latter years I could openly discuss with my father. And one thing further I became conscious of: there was no religion in Duckburg.

After New Year, however, into 1980 and beyond, I renewed my comic book collection, though kept it well hidden and out of my parents' eye-line, God's charitable will wasn't fooling me again. At this time, although I still read the Donald Duck titles on the hunt for the occasional Barks story, I favored another fowl: the irascible Howard. Howard's increasingly misanthropic view of humanity and contempt for its members' hypocrisy was something I could now identify with.

When my parents moved our family to the capital city, however, I made a new discovery.

An actual comics store. Not a news-stand, but a full store, with new and back issues, and bags and boards.

I found the store by accident, but thereafter was determined to begin collecting anew after browsing their selection.

That must have been a treat.

This time when venturing into comics collecting, however, I was informed by the peer group frequenting the store.

Much more down the road of what would be called "speculation": that certain comics - key character issues and key author or artist runs had financial "value" and investor potential. For the first time, I bought comics that I personally did not read.

Not many. But I would look at news-stands and flea markets and used book stores for comics that had value in the collector's market, confined to the store but less known in the wider Australian community at that time.

It was a hobby now. Re-selling or trading the "value" comics I had no personal interest in - Marvel superheroes mostly (with some exceptions) - could fund what I had more interest in collecting.

Most enjoyable was when I found a second new comics store with a greater range and was able to indulge more in personal reading interests, alongside some speculation (as was then the trend).

PREPARE BREATHE YO... LAST, ...

...DUCK!

WAUGH!

Y-YOU CAN'T DO THIS...

I-I'M OWNED BY A CORPORATION!

Right. The speculator boom and crash.

That's when I got heavily into it: specifically key issues and titles though. Mostly Marvel/DC.

The indie scene fascinated me, beginning with _Cerebus_.

Dave Sim had a meta-textual quality to that book.

Cerebus made me re-think the medium through a critical prism.

I was eager to discover what else it was capable of, creatively and aesthetically, and looked to indie works.

DAVE SIM - FOR BEM!

Cerebus had an adult sensibility, even a sexuality.

YOU *CAN'T* LEAVE. YOU'RE *MRS. MOST HOLY*

THE GREAT CEREBUS *NEEDS* YOU!

REALLY? FOR WHAT?

I MEAN BE*SIDES* THAT.
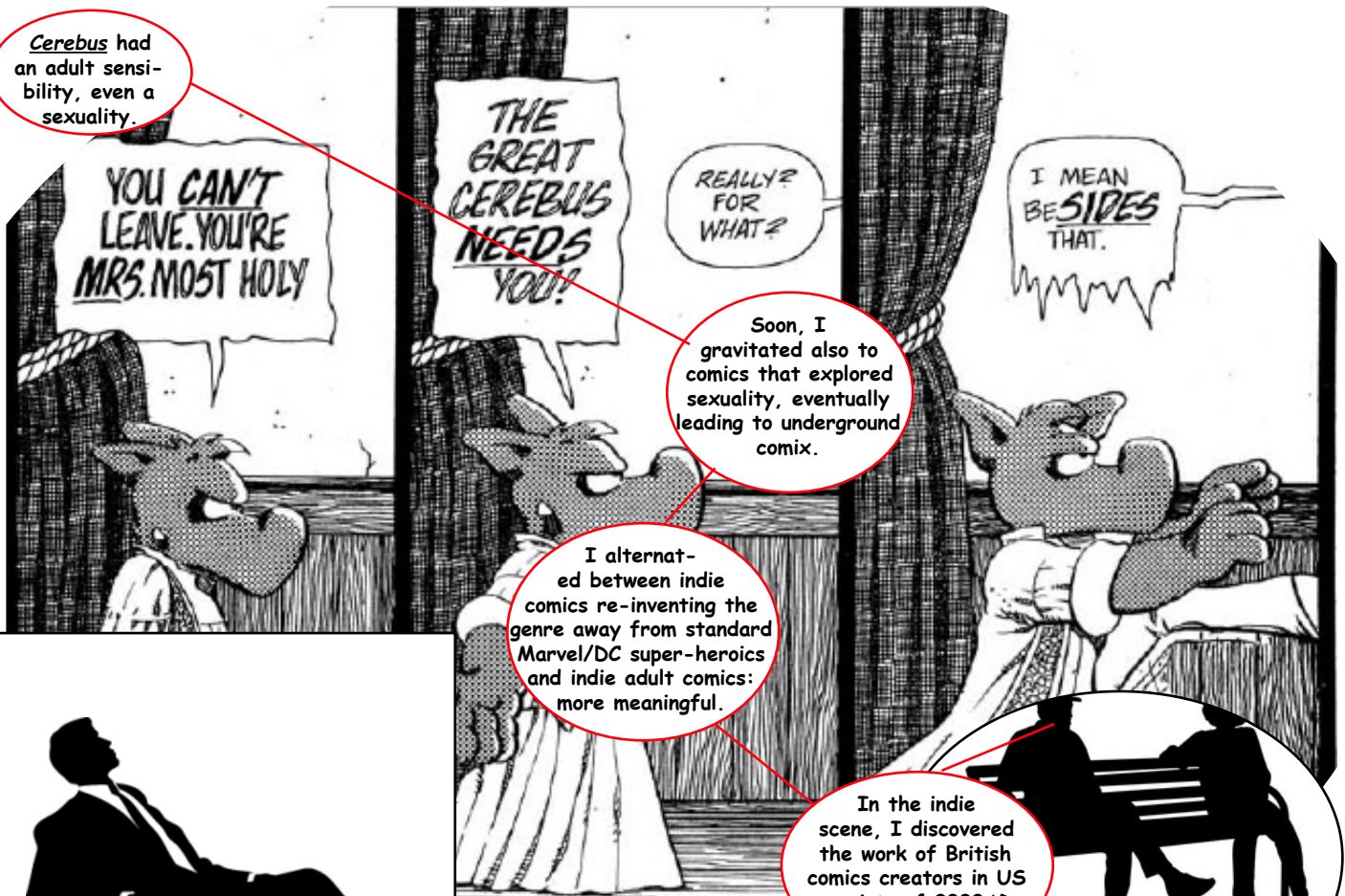
Soon, I gravitated also to comics that explored sexuality, eventually leading to underground comix.

I alternated between indie comics re-inventing the genre away from standard Marvel/DC super-heroics and indie adult comics: more meaningful.

In the indie scene, I discovered the work of British comics creators in US reprints of 2000AD comic characters.

But the combination of sex and horror was the most potent graphic "fix": I'd never seen nor read anything like this material before, not in my country.

Sex, violence, drugs. The amoral nihilism I uncovered was of another order to me. It was addictive, though alien. Taboo.

The deeper I got into it, the more my sense of myself changed, my desires and my potentiality.

The lurid, morbid and even pornographic worlds fascinated me.

I became obsessive. Hoarding the treasures of this trash culture.

Devouring the European graphic novels that circulated in the comic stores, behind the shelves, in non-descript boxes.

Eurosleaze. Apocalypse culture. BDSM. Nothing was obscene, nothing taboo in this wonderful medium of comics. Nothing!

The children of the revolution. The Age of Aquarius in a down-pouring of erotica, sleaze and pornography. Sublime!
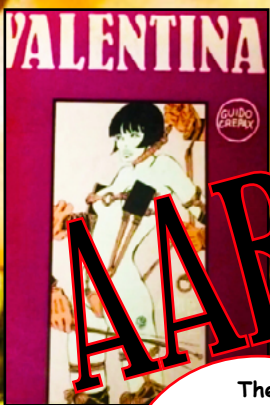
But so much nihilism was despairing. How bleak was humankind. How rotten to the core, how vile a species. How... Damnable!

DC Vertigo tempered my sensibilities momentarily, bringing some restraint to adult graphic storytelling.
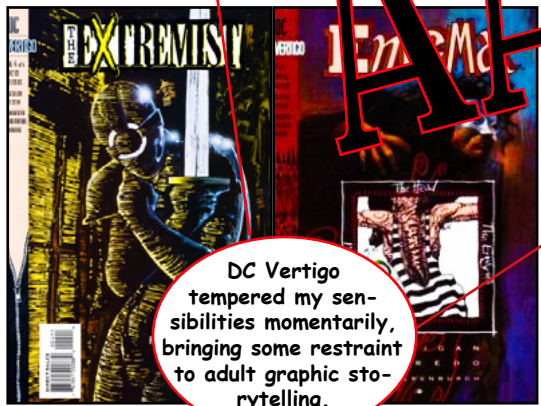
But new visions brought new abominations...

...and recurrent thoughts of...

AARGH!

AARGH!

AARGH!

...suicide!

Having enough psychologically, but still interested in the medium of comics, I satiated myself with Vertigo.

For the first year or so of its related title range.

Then I stopped collecting and reading comics altogether.

Storing them bagged and boarded away in boxes.
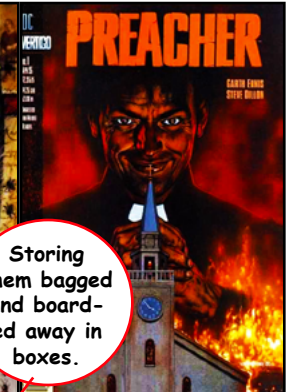
Waiting for a time to sell them.

Man, that's some heavy shit right there.

And cash in as much as I could.

.How much were they worth?
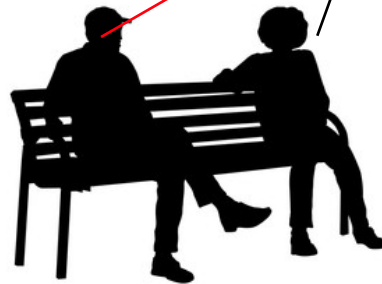
Must've had some value?

???

.How the mighty fell huh. Waugh!

.I know just what you need.

.Let your uncle Howie show you something really special.

TRAPPED IN A WORLD HE NEVER MADE!

JOHNNY

THE HOMICIDAL MANIAC

CHANGING MAN

JOHN CONSTANTINE HELLBLAZER

PREACHER

51

I'M NO CRITIC -- BUT PERSONALLY I THINK HE TRIES TOO HARD -- HITS YA OVER THE HEAD WITH THE MESSAGE.

SO HE'S GOT A SOCIAL CONSCIENCE. YOU COULD USE A LITTLE OF THAT YOURSELF.

TO GET MAD, OR NOT GET MAD — THAT IS THE QUESTION!
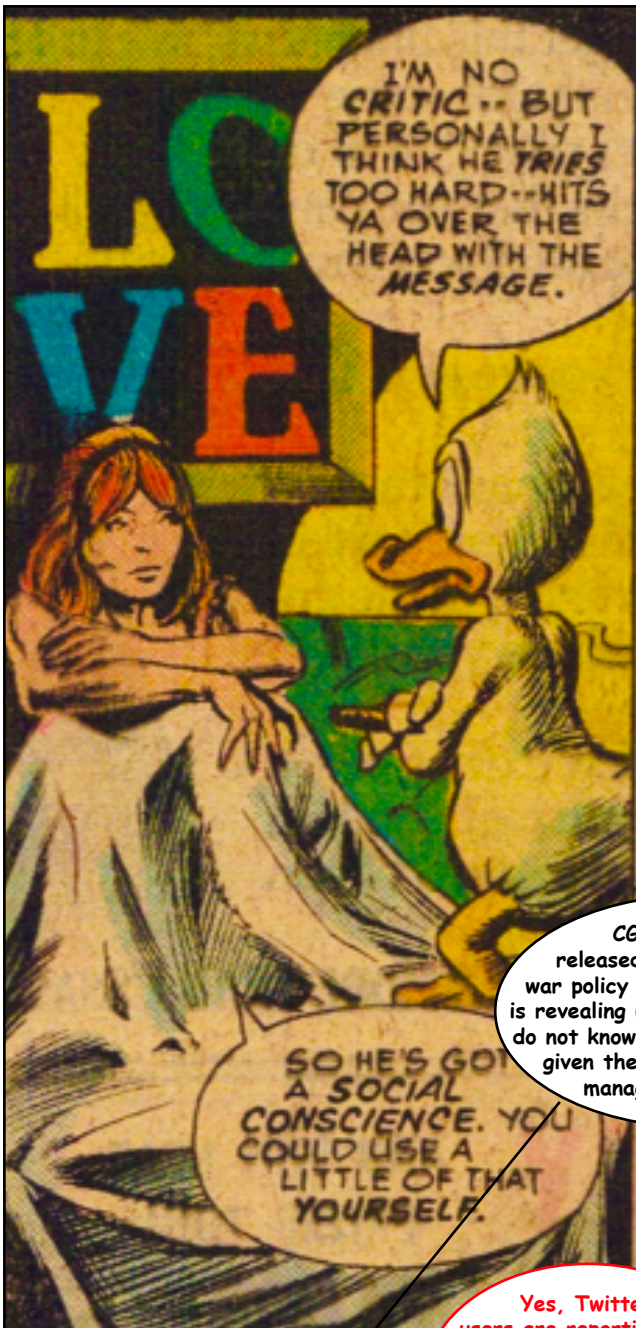
2022/08/14 | 22:12 Five U.S. lawmakers have landed in Taiwan for a two-day trip unannounced less than two weeks after Pelosi's visit escalated potential war with China. The US clearly intends not just to antagonize China, but to destabilize global security to maximize its war profiteering. I am outraged.

CGTN's response released today outlining US war policy as a Capitalist venture is revealing (CGTN, 2022), though I do not know how effective it will be given the US' "disinformation" management campaign.

Yes, Twitter users are reporting that articles accessed months before are either no longer available or have been modified to suit the emerging US narrative.

I noticed that too, an AP article I consulted describing Uygur terrorists in Syria, with photographic evidence, was no longer available when I last checked shortly after Michelle Bachelet's visit to XUAR.

Researching the truth about XUAR is going to become more difficult in the coming months, especially following the 20th National CPC Congress in October.

Yes. My financial situation concerns me now more though should I have to return to Australia at any point surrounding these events and any Australian involvement in any emerging Taiwan conflict.

Significantly, Tervahartalia (2020) earlier identified a specific temporal dilemma regarding drawn autoethnography: "In addition, the sense of time and perceptions of time in autoethnographic drawing is hard to transmit through words, which are neatly marching in order, line after line, forming chapters, then turning into publications that dominate text over visuals... Perceiving time in an autoethnographic drawing is engaging with the world in associative and flexible iterations". Just how this transfers to the sequential form of comicbooks utilizing less original drawing but found objects / existing images and original fieldwork photography as a visual rendering of thick description is thus a potential new direction in autoethnography. It is in the sequenced, structured juxtaposition of such mixed media content, as meta-textually deconstruction of Self/Other dialectics in personal narrativization, thus that what Beattie (2022) delineated as 'symbiotic temporality' can theoretically represent the specifically transformative praxis of autoethnographic participant-observation: rendering the interpretivist phenomenology of meta-cognition. That of, perhaps, a journey through what Maslow first essayed as a hierarchy of needs culminating in "self-actualization".

Speech bubbles (left column):

Use of mixed visual media in autoethnography besides drawing has been contained within individualized efforts - photo-montage, collage, film/video - each form separated rather than integrated.

However, with the advent of transmedia autoethnography to follow Walley (2015)'s work on "transmedia as experimental ethnography", new possibilities in rendering such mixed media (or multimedia) offer enormous transformative potential for the discipline.
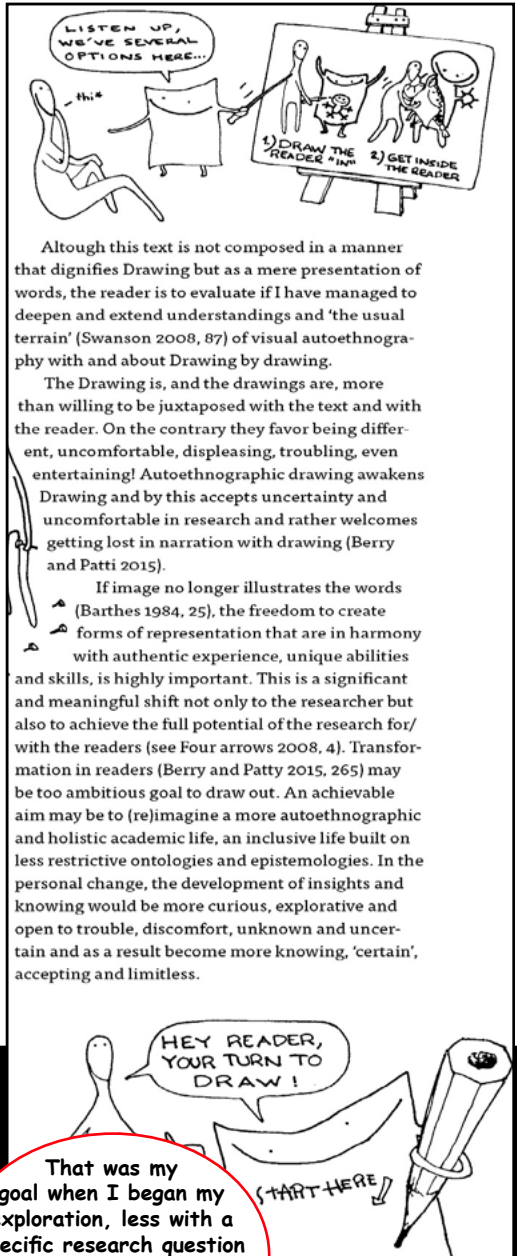
But after Walley (2015)'s incipient transmedia ethnography, there has not specifically emerged a transmedia _auto_ethnography beyond the combination of autobiographic comics and autoethnographic exegesis thereof.

It is only through a hybrid theorized transmedia autoethnography thus that the gaps identified in existing research on rendering Self-as-Other dialectics can begin to be addressed.

"PLACE MEMORY CHARACTERIZES EXPERIENTIAL LOCALITY AS BEING IN TIME. TRANSIENT."

"PLACES: THEIR PEOPLE, SENSATIONS, EMOTIONS, INTER-PERSONAL BONDS TRIGGER ASSOCIATIONS CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY ANEW."

Right column comic panel text:

LISTEN UP, WE'VE SEVERAL OPTIONS HERE...
- this
1) DRAW THE READER "IN"
2) GET INSIDE THE READER

Although this text is not composed in a manner that dignifies Drawing but as a mere presentation of words, the reader is to evaluate if I have managed to deepen and extend understandings and 'the usual terrain' (Swanson 2008, 87) of visual autoethnography with and about Drawing by drawing.

The Drawing is, and the drawings are, more than willing to be juxtaposed with the text and with the reader. On the contrary they favor being different, uncomfortable, displeasing, troubling, even entertaining! Autoethnographic drawing awakens Drawing and by this accepts uncertainty and uncomfortable in research and rather welcomes getting lost in narration with drawing (Berry and Patti 2015).

If image no longer illustrates the words (Barthes 1984, 25), the freedom to create forms of representation that are in harmony with authentic experience, unique abilities and skills, is highly important. This is a significant and meaningful shift not only to the researcher but also to achieve the full potential of the research for/ with the readers (see Four arrows 2008, 4). Transformation in readers (Berry and Patty 2015, 265) may be too ambitious goal to draw out. An achievable aim may be to (re)imagine a more autoethnographic and holistic academic life, an inclusive life built on less restrictive ontologies and epistemologies. In the personal change, the development of insights and knowing would be more curious, explorative and open to trouble, discomfort, unknown and uncertain and as a result become more knowing, 'certain', accepting and limitless.

HEY READER, YOUR TURN TO DRAW!
START HERE

Speech bubbles (lower right):

That was my goal when I began my exploration, less with a specific research question than a creative impulse to fuse artistic expression with autoethnographic discourse.

To fuse praxis and product, as originally called for by Ellis, Adams & Bochner.

In commencement of a Confucian journey of self-cultivation, as I forge ahead in solitude...

"I AM...

... a stranger here myself.

TO BE CONTINUED

TRANSMEDIA TIE–IN
BEING IN TIME – THE MOVIE

Being in Time originated as an experimental autoethnographic film: an anthology of 8 short episodes exploring foreign EFL teacher identity in China. Each short film included was methodologically based on a montagist approach to the rendering of interpretivist phenomenology. During the editing process, before the film was completed, this comicbook was undertaken as a simultaneously developed transmedia tie-in, again based on what was a conceptual core component of the overall product: the role of cultural artefacts, references and formative experiences in meta-cognitive identity construction wherein locality and temporality determine a socio-politically informed positionality.

Each short episode in the anthology was timed to be experienced under 5 minutes, as it turned out, at exactly 4:20, the final work thus being designated "a *420* film". On this basis was thought a potential avenue to seek sponsorship and make the project commercially self-sustaining to ensure longer-term viability. The prospect of such commercialized sponsorship was,
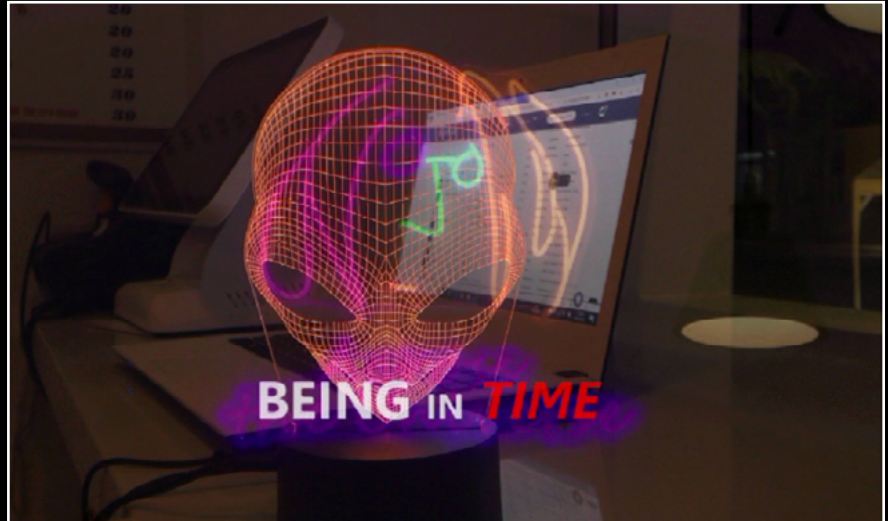
however, abandoned (or at least postponed) and the film's first part completed before embarking on the *Bullpen* notes of the tie-in graphic novel / comic book.

On completion of the 8 episode film - the first part of an intended longitudinal series - it was submitted to peer reviewed online literary/arts journal *The AutoEthnographer* and accepted for online screening (and creator's memo / exegesis publication) forthcoming in 2024/04. However, the pending US première screening is of a slightly modified version. The unedited, original version of the film can be seen (for a limited time) on my personal website A Stranger Here Myself, alongside a blog detailing the film's relation to EFL Inter-Cultural Communication pedagogic practice in contemporary China. It can also be viewed (in the altered version) on the film-maker's YouTube channel.

▶ YouTube

TRANSMEDIA TIE–IN
"*GENOCIDE GAMES*": DECONSTRUCTING "FORCED LABOR IN XINJIANG" DISCOURSE DURING THE 2022 BEIJING WINTER OLYMPICS

Since 2017, "forced labor in Xinjiang" has been strategically deployed alongside two related (emotionally charged) terms - "genocide" and "human rights abuse" - as rhetorical constructs framing Western mainstream media [MSM] discourse on CPC land reform, poverty alleviation and transformation-through-education policies in Xinjiang [XUAR]. Strategic discursive deployment of these rhetorical constructs (within an identity-politic episteme's core concept of "religious freedom") systematically integrated a historically / historiographically revisionist account of XUAR so as to correspondingly frame populist discourse on the CPC leadership under Xi Jinping as "authoritarian". During the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, however, this cumulative discursive framework on "authoritarianism" coalesced Western MSM into an engineered moral panic over what was coined "genocide games" in a deliberate effort to undermine and ultimately dismantle China's position in "global supply chains" by calling for the sanction by the World Bank of IMF financial support for vital BRI infrastructure in XUAR. Underlying a US political platform launched during the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, this initiative used a coordinated international Western MSM publicity campaign based on a strategic historical analogy to WW2 Nazi Germany's 1936 Berlin Olympics to manufacture consent for "**financial decoupling**" from China on the basis of "**human rights**". This paper commences a deconstructive analysis of this contemporary Western MSM "forced labor in Xinjiang" narrative before, during and after the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, delineating 1) its origins, 2) its sequential strategization and politicized dissemination as an economic weapon against China, and 3) its engineered moral panic to rally populist support behind US State Department policy. It does so to explain how the moral panic so engineered became the basis for what is now (following the post-Olympics 2022/02/24 special military operation by Russia in Ukraine) a justification for potential future economic warfare, intentionally platformed to influence CPC decision-making in relation to the forthcoming 2022 20th National Party Congress, itself shortly ahead of the 2022/11 US Senatorial mid-term elections. To do so, this paper deploys illustrations and concept mapping exploring the primary inter-communication networks used by the parties and organizations involved in the formulation, construction and dissemination of this cumulative "**genocide games**" discourse. READ MORE

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