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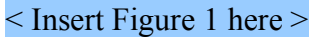
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## Cut-Up and Redrawn: Reading Charles Burns's Swipe Files<sup>1</sup>

Benoît Crucifix

One of Charles Burns's "most prized possessions," as displayed in Todd Hignite's *In the Studio*, is a scrapbook of comic strip clippings put together by his cartoonist-dilettante father.<sup>2</sup> The scrapbook contains a collection of comic strips which he used for reference when drawing: it assembles panels and details clipped out from various newspaper comic strips from the 1940s, such as Milton Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates*, collecting material that could then be copied and imitated (Figure 1).  A collage of comics panels, the scrapbook classifies and arranges them according to topic, size, perspective: it is the model definition of a *swipe file*, a collection of images cut out from other comics that can then be redrawn into the cartoonist's own work. Burns's father's scrapbook is not an odd piece in comics history. Going back to the nineteenth-century, newspaper readers have assembled scrapbooks archiving their favorite comic strips, a tradition of "writing with scissors" in which the pleasures of rereading and sharing favorite strips resulted in the widespread saving and collating of such material.<sup>3</sup> For artists, these self-curated archives of comics could then be reused, repurposed and redrawn.<sup>4</sup> With few specific training or curriculum for drawing comics, many cartoonists often taught themselves by copying their favorite strips.<sup>5</sup> Michael Chabon elegantly describes this phenomenon in his novel *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* when he writes of the main protagonist that "[h]e had made extensive use of his bible of clippings in concocting a counterfeit *Terry and the Pirates* strip called *South China Sea*, drawn in faithful imitation of the great Caniff. [...] He had tried swiping from Hogarth and Lee Falk, from George Herriman, Harold Gray, and

Elzie Segar.”<sup>6</sup> A pervasive practice in the comic book industry not often cited in scholarship, *swiping* is the term used by makers, readers and fans to refer to this practice of “stealing” or “borrowing” fragments from other comics to re-use in one’s own work.

Charles Burns unashamedly commits to the practice, confessing to having swiped images from his father’s scrapbook for his own comics.<sup>7</sup> This confession to swiping, however, is not a dirty secret, only revealed by an insider’s visit to the cartoonist’s studio: Burns has repeatedly embraced swiping and displayed his own “swipe files” in various contexts and formats, from his online Tumblr blog *Johnny 23* to small-press books and zines as *Swipe File*, *Close your Eyes* and *Love Nest*.<sup>8</sup> These small editions collect Burns’s swipes, sometimes alongside their sources, foregrounding how his work is not merely tapping into an abstracted “familiar iconography” of “comic book clichés” but is actually based on diligent acts of retracing and refashioning images selected from a mass of comic books.<sup>9</sup> These swipe files highlight a practice of redrawing that pervades through Burns’s oeuvre, but which remains overlooked by a critical research heavily focused on *Black Hole*.<sup>10</sup> This blind spot is related to the format of the graphic novel and the institutionalization of comics studies around single “plausible” texts, making smaller, dispersed objects less fit for close-reading and teaching.<sup>11</sup> Yet, these small experimental swipe files are not merely peripheral to Burns’s graphic novels. By tracing networks between his own work and a curated collection of older comics, swipe files highlight how redrawing informs Burns’s entire oeuvre. Reading these swipe files alongside Burns’s graphic novel *Last Look*, in which he extensively redraws images from comics as diverse as American romance comic books and *Tintin* albums, this article argues that Burns’s citational practice invites us to consider swiping as a complex economy of mark-making, touching on the consumption, reproduction and circulation of comics images.

Approaching Burns's references to older comics as swiping not only explicates the cartoonist's own fascination for the practice, but complicates questions about how quotation operates in comics on medium-specific terms. That Burns hangs onto redrawing as *swiping* foregrounds the continued relevance of the specific cultural practice that the term delineates. In a context where transmedia storytelling blurs boundaries between media, swiping confronts us with a localized practice of citation situated within the history of American comic books.<sup>12</sup> To a large extent, swiping shares characteristics with digital remix culture – fragmentation, re-use, a problematic relationship to copyright – pointing to an analog, “low” practice of remix embedded within the comics industry.<sup>13</sup> Swiping relies more on craft than on technology, as it involves cut-and-paste both literally and metaphorically. Further, it is inseparable from a material act of redrawing, from the fragmented structure of comics and from ephemeral print culture. What Burns's swipe files suggest is precisely the continued relevance of internal and vernacular citational practices, even when the very practice of swiping seems at odds with the auteur model of the graphic novel. Based on imitation and repetition, flirting with plagiarism, swiping indeed contrasts with the emphasis on personal style and the opposition to industrial models that characterize the alternative comics scene from which Burns stems. Yet, his fascination for swiping reaches back to a medium-specific way of citing that inscribes the graphic novelist's practice into a multilayered memory of comics. Describing Burns's practice as swiping thus not only requires us to make more room for the formal and narrative stakes of redrawing other comics, but also to understand this practice within a larger historical framework.

### **Making Second Hands Visible**

Drawing comics is nearly always a matter of redrawing: sketching and refining, repeating the same panels over and over, drawing after various types of references, imitating

and pastiching other styles. As Benoît Peeters has suggested, cartooning is strongly based on an “iterative principle” that makes redrawing a fundamental feature of the medium “from the sketch to the rough, then from inking in to the colouring, but also from panel to panel, page to page, and often from album to album.”<sup>14</sup> Redrawing, in this sense, is what makes the labor of comics such a slow, painstaking and time-consuming enterprise, one often carried out in constrained social-economic environments.<sup>15</sup> Swiping takes its roots in redrawing practices from the comic book industry and is typically associated with the deadline-driven “hackwork” of cartoonists. Wallace Wood, a comic book artist renowned for cranking out pages at remarkable speed, famously went by the motto: “Never draw anything you can copy, never copy anything you can trace, never trace anything you can cut out and paste up.”<sup>16</sup> Keeping a swipe file at hand allows the cartoonist to draw from a collection of re-usable panels in various contexts, but the swipes can also turn into recognizable quotations.<sup>17</sup> Swiping works as a shorthand and a trick of the trade developed to meet tight deadlines—but it has also become a critical term for makers and fans, who frequently invoke it to express a particular value judgment, to demonstrate an encyclopedic knowledge of the comics they read, to express attachment to particular creators, or to denounce plagiarism and copying.

Swiping thus mobilizes a set of specific concerns about the ways in which graphic style works in comics. As many have argued, following Philippe Marion’s seminal theory of “graphiation,” comics always self-reflexively exhibit the mark of their maker.<sup>18</sup> To Jared Gardner, this is fundamental to comics storytelling: “The physical labor of storytelling is always visible in graphic narrative, whether the visible marks themselves remain, in a way unique to any mechanically reproduced narrative medium.”<sup>19</sup> If graphic narratives are defined by the labor of a “visible hand,” swiping makes visible the labor of a “*second* hand.”<sup>20</sup> The “physical, bodily encounter with an imagined scene of embodied enunciation” that comics compel is doubled by the act of redrawing.<sup>21</sup> When redrawing, the cartoonist embodies, so to

speak, someone else's act of graphiation, re-performing this imagined scene and displacing it into another context. Considering that drawing style is often indexical of a cartoonist's distinct graphic style, the kind of embodiment afforded by swiping will necessarily be read as intertextual. As Charles Hatfield notes, writing on Jack Kirby and his imitators, "any slavish imitation of an artist's style, once recognized as such, takes on a certain ideological value as a perceived rip-off, homage, or parody. Such imitation is, if you think about it, an odd thing: the result of an artist apprenticing his own eye and hand to another artist's peculiar and hard-won style."<sup>22</sup> Whether it is practiced in an overt or shameful manner, whether it gets noticed or not, swiping never lets us forget that "[g]raphic representation is a socialized act involving many codes and constraints."<sup>23</sup> The "second hand" carries values and affects that demonstrate how a graphic work contributes to shaping the broader landscape of comics as a "particular social world."<sup>24</sup> The very notion of swiping, then, is not a stable concept, but designates a specific practice with its own history, meaning different things to different people at different times. Swiping mobilizes a set of concerns that reflect a certain ways of making comics in context.

The most extensive text on swiping to date was undoubtedly penned in the mid-sixties by New York cartoonist Jules Feiffer, whose ground-breaking *The Great Comic Book Heroes* included a full chapter on the subject.<sup>25</sup> The first in a wave of nostalgia books on comics, Feiffer's book reprinted some of the first issues of *Superman*, *Batman* and other superhero titles, accompanied by a memoir disguised as a long preface. Looking back at the emergence of the comic book industry in the early forties, Feiffer highlights the importance of newspaper comic strips for his generation, while emphasizing that the term "swiping" is distinctively used in comic book culture: "Swiping was and is a trade term in comic books for appropriating that which is Alex Raymond's, Milton Caniff's, Hal Foster's or any one of a number of other sources and making it one's own."<sup>26</sup> Citing the most influential adventure

comic strip artists, Feiffer presents comics as part of a culture of sharing, constituted by practices like swiping – which is not merely a synonym for copying but rather spans a whole array of acts that range from clipping and collecting to redrawing and recirculating the swipes:

Swipes, if noticed, were accepted as part of comic book folklore. I have never heard a complaint. Rather, I have heard swipe artists vigorously defended, one compared to another: who did the best Caniff, the closest Raymond? [...] I often preferred the swipe to the original [...] and paid his swipes the final compliment of clipping and swiping them. [...] I not only clipped swipes, I traced and managed to get hold of their sources. [...] I swiped diligently from the swipers, drew sixty-four pages in two days, sometimes one day, stapled the product together, and took it out on the street where kids my age sat behind orange crates selling and trading comic books. Mine went for less because they weren't real.<sup>27</sup>

Feiffer's appreciation of swiping casts redrawing other comics as part of a participatory network of reading, sharing and creating that, as Jared Gardner has shown, characterized the "creative agency" of early comic book readers, who were often encouraged to "pick up a brush and try it themselves."<sup>28</sup> Clipping, copying, stapling: swiping triggers a chain of activities intimately related to engaging with print ephemera. Whether in newsprint or in comic books proper, the comics text was an open invitation to destruction and repurposing, the inclusion of paper dolls and other cut-out elements calling out for scissors and glue. In this sense, comics culture rehearsed the "repertoire of gestures of archivalness and cutting and pasting" typical of nineteenth-century scrapbooks, foreshadowing contemporary remix culture.<sup>29</sup> Writing at a point where organized fandom was at full steam, with soaring prices for vintage comic books, Feiffer nostalgically identifies early traces of this participatory culture in the "graphic poaching" of swipers.<sup>30</sup> The acts of swiping, stapling and recirculating that Feiffer describes are perhaps just as much those of the fanzine makers of the sixties, who often engaged in "reproductions, imitations, copying, redrawing, tracing" – a set of derivative techniques that, as Fredric Wertham notes in *The World of Fanzines*, are discussed and debated as swiping.<sup>31</sup>

Swipes are never quite neutral and often the subject of heated debates and discussions. Originally emanating from fanzine culture, *The Comics Journal* would further fuel this debate as the magazine, published by Fantagraphics, became a critical weapon rallying against the comic book industry and valorizing an auteur ideology. *The Comics Journal* took on the issue of swiping through a regular column called “Swipe File,” which explicitly invited its readers not only to propose swipes but also to pass judgements on swipes that appeared in contemporary cartoonists’ work. As Robert Boyd noted in the column’s introductory installment, “Swipe File” intended to simply lay out next to each other images that could be read as swipes, without necessarily implying plagiarism: “Each installment of Swipe File will feature two images, carefully identified and dated, which bear some similarity to one another. Being included in Swipe File is not necessarily a condemnation; these ‘swipes’ will include homages, parodies, ironic appropriations and bizarre coincidences, as well as outright rip-offs. You, the reader, can decide what kind of swipe you’re looking at.”<sup>32</sup> This shared dialogue with the reader connects the practice of swiping to a communal belonging in the spirit of a (counter)public debate. In particular cases, and before even its dedicated “Swipe File” column, *TCJ* sometimes took on a more explicitly militant position towards swiping as plagiarism, directly condemning certain creators for obvious and repeated swipes. In the eighties, *TCJ* spotlighted two particularly problematic cases of swiping: Rich Buckler’s swipes from Jack Kirby and Keith Giffen’s swipes from Argentinian cartoonist José Muñoz.<sup>33</sup>

The latter is one of the most interesting cases demonstrating the asymmetric power relationships that might come to bear on the economy of swiping. Keith Giffen’s successful DC miniseries *Ambush Bug*, for instance, marked a stylistic change in the artist’s career, with an influx of heavily inked blacks and jagged graphic lines strongly inspired by Muñoz’s distinct graphic style. More than simply an inspiration, though, Muñoz’s work turned out to



provide the American cartoonist with nearly ready-made images: in a 1986 *TCJ* article titled “The Trouble with Keith Giffen,” Mark Burbey laid out a surprising number of evident swipes by Giffen, directly pilfered from Muñoz and Carlos Sampayo’s *Alack Sinner* series.<sup>34</sup> *TCJ* further fed the controversy in its columns and letters pages: the journal railing against Giffen as a plagiarist while some readers stood up for him, both sides recognizing the weight of his debt owed to Muñoz.<sup>35</sup> While Giffen himself denied swiping at all, insisting that “he never traced a panel, or even drew with Muñoz’s work in front of him,” José Muñoz was shocked by the appropriation but could not afford the financial costs of a suit against DC which, at any rate, would have been a battle lost in advance.<sup>36</sup> Instead, together with writer Sampayo, Muñoz would respond to Giffen in an installment of their *Alack Sinner* series titled “Por unos dibujos...”<sup>37</sup> In the form of an embedded dream story, Muñoz and Sampayo reimagined the spat as a brutal confrontation between the disenfranchised South-American cartoonist José Martinez and the rich and successful American comic book artist going by the not-so-subtle name of K.K. Kitten (Figure 2), who engage in a duel – umbrella against fire iron – ending up with the murder of the former. Muñoz parodies the graphic style of American comic books in his action drawings, multiplying speed lines and disproportioning bodies for rhetorical effect. By redrawing this narrative of plagiarism into the larger critique of American imperialism found in *Alack Sinner*, the Argentinian duo aligns swiping-as-stealing with a larger power struggle, emphasizing their own marginalized position while symbolically writing back to the swiper. < Insert Figure 2 here >

Where swiping often serves as homage to and the expression of a shared culture, the Giffen/Muñoz controversy highlights the extent to which market and legal forces can regulate the economy of redrawing. Muñoz and Sampayo point out the asymmetrical relationship between the swiped and the swipers that leaves few resources for culturally marginalized artists. Swiping is not a level-playing field and, for better or worse, copyright restrictions and

economic forces can establish what gets recognized as plagiarism or homage. A “signature style” is also an institutional concept that cultural industries trademark: redrawing is a key part of the mainstream comic book artist’s formation as they often need to conform to a “house style,” which conversely implies that the ‘graphic poaching’ of that publisher’s territory is strictly prohibited.<sup>38</sup> Against this relative dissociation of graphic style and individual artist that commands the mainstream comic book industry, it becomes crucial for the graphic novelist to rely on drawing as a way to mark individuality and distinguish oneself in a crowded field. As Jan Baetens and Hugo Frey put it, “It is part of the graphic novelist self-construction as a serious author to oppose the industrial principles underlying the production of comics. [...] Drawing style becomes an absolutely central notion in the structure of the graphic novel. It is supposed to be one of the signatures or trademarks of the author, and one can easily observe that personality and individuality really matter in the field.”<sup>39</sup> While this intimate connection between graphic style and authorship is quintessential to the graphic novel, it does not mean that graphic novelists simply do away with swiping altogether.

On the contrary, following Baetens and Frey again, “graphic novels are especially capable of making meta-commentary and reflexive references to existing titles, creators, and even whole genres.”<sup>40</sup> Graphic novelists often express their indebtedness to the history of comics and rely on or tease out their readers’s knowledge of that past in their graphic strategies. Few, however, explicitly ground these appropriative practices within comics traditions and the reference to comics history sometimes reinforces a sense of distinction from that very history. Swiping, in this sense, is so associated with comic book culture that it often is a practice that the graphic novelist will consciously oppose as part of an authorial strategy: consider Daniel Clowes’s biting parody of the mainstream comics industry, *Pussey!*, in which the title character repeatedly swipes from other cartoonists as a way to meet

deadlines.<sup>41</sup> By contrast, the way Burns frames his own acts of swiping provides a key insight in the memory dynamics that animate graphiation in contemporary comics.

### **Swiping from the Swipers**

The creative genealogy that Burns constructs through his own practice of swiping centers the act of redrawing as key to his work. In his introduction to *The Best American Comics 2009*, which he was invited to edit, Burns aligns his editorial choices on a search for “‘what’s good’ in the world of comics.”<sup>42</sup> “What’s good,” to Burns, is always intertwined with imitation and copying, a theme that runs throughout the introduction. Burns notes: “‘Flash Gordon’ by Alex Raymond is pretty good, but ‘Flesh Garden’ by Harvey Kurtzman and Wally Wood is better,” alluding to the *Mad* parody of the classic superhero comic, of which he found three redrawn panels in his father’s swipe file. To Burns, this was an “early epiphany”: “Even though I recognized the fact that it looked like a slightly distorted version of Wally Wood’s artwork, it was amazingly precise—especially the lettering. It was at that moment I realized comic books were actually drawn by human hands.”<sup>43</sup> In a medium simultaneously marked by the hand-made mark and mechanical reproduction, the swipe does not take away the indexical function of the drawing but makes it all the more salient.

Tracing a genealogy of swiping from Alex Raymond to his father, Burns places his practice in the sign of the copy. Years later, Burns would himself swipe the same three panels from “Flesh Garden” in his self-published giveaway zine *Free Shit* #15, suggesting that copying is not simply a kid’s thing or a developmental stage.<sup>44</sup> Growing from this fascination with “what’s good” as a process of copying, Burns’s embrace of swiping appears most clear in the various swipe files that he has constructed and shared on the web or published as zines and small-press books. This act of collecting, reframing and redrawing swiped comics panels

explores a residual conception of swiping that conflicts with the *auteur* model associated with the graphic novel.

Pointing out the handwritten/mechanical nature of cartooning and counter-acting the idea of a teleological development, Charles Burns's discussion of redrawing follows Christopher Pizzino's important reading of his style as "autoclasm" in *Arresting Development*. Pizzino describes autoclasm as "a formal tendency specific to conditions where the act of making comics is not considered legitimate," that makes the medium's disenfranchised status visible through a self-destructive dynamic: autoclasm is indeed "present when an image effects a kind of self-breaking, as if it is designed to work against itself."<sup>45</sup> It is precisely this self-cancelling dynamic that makes Burns's graphic style autoclastic, as it is marked both by aesthetics familiar to comic books – repeating and reproducing familiar tropes from pre-Code genre comics, for instance – combined with a highly idiosyncratic approach to inking: strong black-and-white contrasts rendered by thick to thin brush strokes. In this way, as Pizzino argues, "Burns's images evoke artisanal and mechanical production in a way that seems at once to emphasize and to obviate the distinction between them," playing the two economies of the image against each other: the mechanically reproduced narrative line of traditional cartooning and the expressive mark of the fine arts.<sup>46</sup>

Burns's swipes articulate both these dimensions, bringing these two economies together in the very act of redrawing: by making another cartoonist's lines his own, Burns literally draws attention to the expressive, mark-making function of reproduction by means of drawing. This dual facet, however, is not necessarily self-cancelling. In autoclastic fashion, I believe that Burns's practice of swiping corroborates Pizzino's reading while also suggesting that his images simultaneously operate in different narrative economies of power and desire. The production and circulation of Burns's swipe files within a transnational context of small

press experimental comics, often through European publishers, entails a more relaxed relationship to cultural status. The question of legitimacy is much less pressing, especially as the small press scene upholds a subcultural ethos that does not make cultural recognition its central concern, but also because comics reading in France is now increasingly inscribed in a “post-legitimate” context.<sup>47</sup>

Even while Burns swipes from the “lowest” genres in comics history, his practice of swiping expresses a different relationship to the marginalized status of comics, eschewing to some extent an autoclastic: on the contrary, the very practice of swiping expresses an attachment to comic book culture and an iconophilic collecting, gathering and redrawing of visually striking images. In this way, Burns’s swipe files resist the *Bildungsroman* discourse – which aligns comics history with a teleological coming-of-age narrative from juvenile comics to mature graphic novels – without necessarily relying on a self-breaking tactic<sup>48</sup>. Tapping into childhood gestures of redrawing and a culture of graphic poaching, Burns exhibits his influences and inspirations in a way that contrasts with the emphasis on originality and personal style in the graphic novel. As a result, his swipe files present a comingling of consumption and reproduction of comics images, highlighting an “intimate process of comics reading” that is not automatically marked by disruption and delinquency.<sup>49</sup>

Quite the contrary, Burns foregrounds swiping as a set of acts – reading, selecting, clipping, collecting, reproducing – that very concretely participate in an economy of desire between comics and their readers. This economy is relatively free from regulatory tendencies, keeping in mind that such an economy always runs the risk of asymmetric power relationships. In constituting his various swipe files, Burns reiterates a “repertoire” of actions that transmit an active memory of comics (collecting, clipping, copying).<sup>50</sup> The way Burns engages with the swipe file format spans a wide degree of reproduction, from the scanning or xeroxing of cut-out comics panels to more creative reworking and collages. His Tumblr blog

*Johnny 23* works as a digital scrapbook featuring drawings, photographs and panels selected and sometimes collaged from various comics.<sup>51</sup> These swipes often alternate with Burns's own quotation of these comics in his own work. Alongside this online swipe file, Burns's various small-press booklets *Close Your Eyes*, *Swipe File* and *Love Nest* invest the 'swipe file' format in more creative ways.<sup>52</sup>

Relying on different swiping strategies, these three booklets display an increasing fascination for the (non)-narrative potential of the swipe: the fragmentation and dislocation of an image from its original context. *Close Your Eyes* presents a swipe file that records Burns's practice of redrawing. It prints each original panel alongside its copy in double page spreads that force the reader to notice the slight differences and additions, foregrounding the act of redrawing as a complex embodied process of copying. The sketchbook styled adopted by a short introduction presents these swipes both as an exercise – practiced while waiting during his daughters's piano lessons – and a nearly physical response to visually striking images. The act of copying itself is uncovered in a confessional tone: "It's true. I *copied* every single drawing in this book. I copied the work of artists I admired – I even copied my *own* work. [...] [e]very once in a while I'll come across an amazing image in some book or magazine I'm reading and get the uncontrollable urge to copy it."<sup>53</sup> Responding to his urge to copy, *Close Your Eyes* is framed as a collection of favorite, weird but fascinating images clipped from other comics, pasted in a sketchbook and redrawn in Burns's signature style.

Copying as much from his contemporaries – Daniel Clowes, Julie Doucet and Gary Panter, to name a few – as from anonymous artists and debased comic books, Burns credits, whenever possible each swiped artist, expressing his swipe as a homage to their work. There is, moreover, an explicit fascination for images that are themselves swiped or drawn from somewhere else. Burns copies a romance comic book artist who "has the Milton Caniff style

down cold,” or adds his own image to “two disturbing images [...] taken from the same romance comics” and “showing that the artist obviously had an extensive ‘swipe file’” (Figure 3).<sup>54</sup> The “second hand” holds an extra attraction: connecting his own collection of swipes with the swipe file of some romance comic book artist, Burns follows Feiffer in “swiping from the swipers,” tracing recurring single images, abstracted from their narrative sequences and repurposed within the context of a small-press anthology, or “weird” images he encountered and their redrawn twins. < Insert Figure 3 here >

Swiping, here, expresses a desire to own or possess an image singled out from its original context in a way that parallels what film scholar Laura Mulvey has called the “possessive spectator,” who fixates on a particular image torn away from the filmic sequence and who, in doing so, “commits an act of violence against the cohesion of a story, the aesthetic integrity that holds it together, and the vision of its creator.”<sup>55</sup> As a still medium, and despite the “iconic solidarity” of its images, comics have arguably always held the potential for this kind of disruptive reading: allowing the reader to “hold” a sequence of images, fixate on a single image and revel in the pleasures of pure graphiation.<sup>56</sup> This desire to possess the image is clearly expressed in the clipping and scrapbooking that often precedes swiping, which can then be seen as a way of taking ownership of the image through the act of redrawing. The panels collected and redrawn by Burns, as presented in *Close Your Eyes*, form a catalogue of images that the cartoonist has recirculated in various contexts, as background details in his illustration or comics work, for instance.

While *Close Your Eyes* is closer to an actual swipe file, documenting Burns’s personal collection of favorite panels, his two subsequent small press books, *Swipe File* and *Love Nest*, compile and assemble swipes in a way that puts the original sources at a greater distance from Burns’s own. This increasingly confuses the reader about the nature of the swiped images,

while reactivating their narrative potential in the form of Burns's multi-panel comics. While repurposing the swiped images, Burns does not, however, seamlessly camouflage them into another narrative. The fragmented gesture of cutting up disrupts the swiped panel from its original sequence, while retaining a visual and narrative unity. As a result, the sequences that Burns assembles from various swipes are extremely discontinuous and minimally narrative: with no conventional plots or clear cause-and-effect linearity, the wordless sequences refocus the reader's attention onto the graphiation.

In *Swipe File*, Burns pays homage to five major cartoonists, which he credits at the end of the booklet: "The 'swipes' in this book are taken from existing images by artists I have a deep admiration for: Johnny Craig, Bruno Premiani, Jack Cole, Jack Kirby and Chester Gould."<sup>57</sup> Each double page spread draws from the work of one artist, meticulously redrawing that artist's images into four-panel strips. The whole work displays a consistent treatment that unifies the separate strips: not only through Burns's redrawing of the original images using his own inking style, but also in the way they stage a visual metamorphosis through recurring motifs of circles, mirror images, burning backgrounds, gazes and monstrous faces. The graphic trace appears here as fundamentally ambivalent, as one recognizes the strange co-mingling of Burns's signature style with that of the admired cartoonists, who all have their recognizable graphic style: Burns redraws many of their idiographic signs, such as the "Kirby krackle," while lightly transforming the panels, adding small graphic details that are indexical for his own style. The panels drawn after Chester Gould's *Dick Tracy*, based on an April 29, 1965 four-panel strip, index many of Gould's graphic idiosyncrasies (Figure 4): the strong black-and-white contrast, the thin cross-hatching, the grotesquely caricatured faces, "compounded of folds and sinister deformities" – even the flames have a Gould flourish.<sup>58</sup> < Insert Figure 4 here > At the same time, the swipes are classically Burns: details such as the finely detailed dirt ground and the broken



trees – recurring visual motifs in Burns’s comics – and his easily identifiable inking and shading techniques which, as Pizzino argues, “arrests the narrative flow” to point the reader’s eye to its function as an expressive mark.<sup>59</sup> This swipe file thus emphasizes the same acts as *Close Your Eyes* – selecting visually striking images and redrawing them – without displaying the originals alongside their copy, blurring the lines between imitation and transformation. The swipes are not meant to be compared to their sources, and yet they do not gain an autonomous status, nor are they inconspicuously integrated into a narrative economy: the appropriative gesture of redrawing remains central to the book as a way of defamiliarizing the style of the swiped artists, while appropriating their work to constitute nearly abstract, collage-like sequences.

*Love Nest* further extends this logic, putting the original sources at yet more distance, as no credits appear in its paratext. It quickly becomes apparent that the book is mainly constituted of swipes from romance and other genre comic books but, given Burns’s fascination for some of the most debased examples of the genre and his recurrent swipes from swipers and anonymous artists, the sources are hard to locate. The swiped (or not swiped) images are assembled into a collection of single panels that offer no explicit plot or narrative. The book stretches out the “abstract piece” that Burns had composed early on for *RAW* magazine with his one-page comic “And I pressed my hand against his face, feeling his thick massive lips, and ...”.<sup>60</sup> *Love Nest* starts out with the exact same words as the aforementioned strip, facing the same image of a woman in bed, engrossed in her reading (Figure 5). < Insert Figure 5 here > This opening panel stages a stereotypical scene of passionate reading, and although no title or other explanatory information appears on the covers, we could easily imagine the woman reading a romance comic book given the size and leaflet quality of the object in her hands. *Love Nest*, then, recirculates familiar tropes and stereotypes typical for Burns’s entire oeuvre: the uncanny repetition performed by the act of swiping extends to the

way Burns nearly exactly reproduces stereotypes as a way of confronting his readers with them. As Pizzino argues, “Burns seeks to dwell on familiar tropes, but not serve their usual ends.”<sup>61</sup> Repurposing the swiped panels leads Burns down a path similar to *Swipe File*, as *Love Nest* does not recreate a consistent, linear narrative from the collected fragments. Rather, while the swiped panels are highly figurative and often suggest a strong narrative effect with moments of tension, fear, anger, surprise, the book unbinds them from their original sequences by stressing fragmentation and discontinuity rather than linear sequentiality. *Love Nest* encourages readers to flip through the text in order to identify recurring elements, although this braided network of panels does not coalesce into a clear narrative: the images ask to be looked at, contemplated, rather than just inserted into a plot, even as the door to narrativize these separate images always remains ajar. *Love Nest* thus brings us back to the aesthetics of the scrapbook, weaving together the various swipe files that Burns has been carefully assembling as part of his creative practice, while also giving a greater autonomy to the swipes. In this way, *Love Nest* epitomizes a dynamic that is also at work in Burns’s long-form, more conventionally narrative graphic novel *Last Look*, which not only swipes from old comics, but also spreads these swipes across a variety of formats situated between the hardcover graphic novel and the small-press zine.

### **Cut-Ups in the Intermedial Zone**

Originally published in three separate volumes, Charles Burns’s *Last Look* presents an fragmented narrative, moving us through the life of Doug, as a young and not-so-young artist in the punk scene, and his complex relationship with Sarah, whom he abandons while she is pregnant with his child after her brutal, abusive ex-boyfriend beats him up.<sup>62</sup> Through constant flashbacks and flash-forwards, alternating with another narrative thread that relates the adventures of Doug’s alter-ego Nitnit in a parallel, weird dream-world, *Last Look*

articulates Doug's troubled memories, desires, fears and failures. The assault itself, if only the trigger for Doug to leave Sarah, is made explicit in the last volume of the series and functions as a node around which the dispersed fragments of narrative articulate themselves. Even collected into a single book, *Last Look* remains a strictly non-linear graphic novel, based on a densely braided network of recurring images.<sup>63</sup> Those repeated pictures are themselves compulsively gathered, collected, circulated and produced by the characters: photographs, polaroids, posters, comics and drawings made by the characters saturate the comics grid, creating frames within frames. In the process, Charles Burns draws heavily on the history of comics, directly borrowing a significant number of panels from sixties American romance comics and from Hergé's *Tintin*. The swipes make up a significant part of the braided network that *Last Look* traces in a highly fragmented, disjointed and seemingly random logic that evokes William S. Burroughs' cut-up technique.

Burns makes multiple references to the fictional universe of some of Burroughs's texts, notably though the "NitNit/Johnny 23" performance that Doug puts on at a punk show, reading aloud some cut-ups over a tape of random sounds. Yet the relationships between comics and literature are not articulated here following the usual logic of adaptation. Rather, on the grounds of what Irina O. Rajewsky has termed an "intermedial reference" or a case of intermediality based on the thematization, evocation or imitation of another medium "through the use of its own media-specific means," Burns cites Burroughs's cut-up in the very form of his own graphic novel.<sup>64</sup> The cut-up itself is already, at its very core, an intermedial concept, given that it was coined by Burroughs in collaboration with visual artist Brion Gysin, and Burroughs himself went on to adopt the technique to filmmaking.<sup>65</sup> Burns's citation of Burroughs could, itself, be seen as an adaptation of the cut-up technique in comics, except that, at the level of production, he does not actually try to reproduce the aleatory and method of cutting up fragments at random. Rather, Burns elaborates on the cut-up as a narrative

effect rather than an artistic method, following what Rajewsky describes as the “as if” character proper to intermedial reference.<sup>66</sup> The result is a graphic novel that *looks* like it was cut-up, except it was not. As Burns has explained, “some of the writing or the structure imitates collage or cut-up. What William Burroughs was doing, was cutting up a page of existing writing and then collaging it. I wasn’t doing that at all, I was doing something that maybe visually imitates that, but was very controlled. There was nothing random about the structure at all.”<sup>67</sup> This quote pinpoints an apparent paradox at the core of Burns’s whole trilogy. Burns is not relying on Burroughs’s method of random composition, but through this very controlled approach to storytelling, strengthened by a rigid page layout, he nonetheless succeeds in evoking and visually imitating the idea of “cutting up” physical materials by constantly alternating between various temporalities, destabilizing sequential panel-to-panel transitions and thus disorienting the reader.<sup>68</sup>

This evocation of the cut-up method is reinforced by the many quotations that Burns disseminates in a seemingly random way throughout the trilogy: they make up the vast network of recurring images and motifs that slowly coalesce into a relatively intelligible narrative of fear, violence, opiates, pollution, sickness, pregnancy, and abortion. But if a centripetal force brings the elements together, there is simultaneously a centripetal tangent to Burns’s approach that is apparent in the fragmented materiality of the project. Not only did Burns publish the books in three separate installments, not the obvious choice in the context of the graphic novel, but he has also published countless extra images and small-press versions that expand on the original trilogy.<sup>69</sup> These dispersed materials include a “Cut-Up” piece realized for Geneva-based small-press publisher B.ü.L.b. comix, a regular “Random Access” comic strip in *The Believer*, as well as numerous spoof covers of the *Nitnit* and romance comic books eventually gathered together in a single volume as *Vortex*, and the faux bootleg version of *X’ed Out* printed by Le Dernier Cri under the title *Johnny 23*.<sup>70</sup>

The latter explicitly plays out the cut-up idea by suggesting that the graphic material composing Burns's graphic novels can be rearranged and recirculated in different ways, reinforcing the non-linear structure of the original as a collection of discrete items that can be reassembled. *Johnny 23* indeed reuses the exact same images as *X'ed Out*, but reorganizes them in new sequences, mixed up with new images and changes the text to an imaginary alphabet that, if decoded, is close to the Burroughs-like literary cut-ups that the title character performs under the pseudonym Johnny 23 (Figure 6). < Insert Figure 6 here > The book itself, then, appears as a kind of cut-up version of *X'ed Out*, composed by hands foreign to their original creation. With its abstract sequencing of images, *Johnny 23* is very similar to Burns's infra-narrative experiments with *Swipe File* and *Love Nest*, strengthening a processual approach to comics based on the redrawing and rearranging of existing, past material. The horizontal Leporello format of the book even evokes the Chinese bootleg versions of *Tintin* in the *lianhuanhua* format ubiquitous in China, published as small horizontal chapbooks, and in which the original *Tintin* panels were rearranged and sometimes redrawn to fit in the format. *Johnny 23* thus foregrounds how the logic of the cut-up ties in with practices connected to the narrative economy of swiping.

### **Circulating Swipes**

Spreading its network of recurring images across a body of alternate texts, *Last Look* creates a dense swipe file of sorts that connects its various fragments without arranging them into a linear narrative sequence. Moreover, a large part of the trilogy, and particularly the Nitnit storyline, is composed of panels swiped from Burns's preferred canon of *Tintin* and romance comic books, as many of these swiped panels intersect with Burns's swipe files. With *Last Look*, the swipes here are embedded within a longer narrative form and become objects in the fictional universe: the "crappy romance comics from the sixties" that Sarah

finds at a yard sale, and which appear throughout *The Hive* episode, the *Nitnit* comic books and their share of panels and images redrawn from *Tintin*.<sup>71</sup>

While the swipes take on a greater narrative function than in Burns's small-press experiments, they also resist any smooth narrative integration, nor does their recognition as swipes elicit a code to decipher the images. As Jan Baetens and Hugo Frey argue in their clever reading of Burns's "remake" of *Tintin*, Burns offers a modern "stylization" of Hergé's character based on a reversal of the clear line ideology, which is rooted in "clarity, transparency, health, order," on the level of content and form.<sup>72</sup> The swiped panels contribute to this defamiliarization of the clear line, as Burns "relies on the insertion of small capsules of *Tintin*-like material that proliferate as dangerous cells through the work that hosts them. [...]

The meaning of such a 'quotation' does not stop once its source has been identified: quite the contrary. Even if the source of the quotation escapes the reader's memory or expertise, the very readability of their internal networking forces the reader to permanently put into question what she is reading."<sup>73</sup> The ambivalence of the quotation that Baetens and Frey describe is thus fully in line with Burns's practice of swiping, often honing the ambivalence that comes through redrawing existing images.

The same disquieting treatment applies to Burns's swipes from romance comics, as *Last Look* offers a narrative of romantic relationships that are strikingly different from traditional romance plots as it is marked by failure, self-delusion, trauma and abandonment. This alternative to romance, however, is not simply a debunking in the style of underground comix such as *Young Lust*, but integrates romance comics as key objects within both storylines. In this aspect, Burns's swiping strategy is similar to yet slightly different from his use of *Tintin* panels as "dangerous cells": the swipes are often clearly identified as images from the romance comics that Doug and Sarah are reading and, as Burns is swiping from a

large variety of romance comics, often drawn by anonymous artists, it becomes less important to identify panels as quotations than as reiterations of visual tropes typical for the romance comics genre, such as the kissing scene. Like the “dangerous cells” of *Tintin* swipes, the romance comics material resist interpretation and embody the characters’s inability to connect the bits and pieces together, their failed romance underlining the fragmentation of the book.

A significant part the second chapter thus revolves around the characters Doug and Nitnit’s quest for missing issues of romance comics. Doug comes to share Sarah’s excitement and fascination for “crappy” romance comics they find at a garage sale: the way they read and contemplate them lying in bed, half-laughingly, half-seriously, is similar to their consumption of other types of images that recur throughout the book, as Lucas Samaras’s polaroids or Louise Bourgeois’s sketches. In the parallel storyline, Nitnit reads a very different kind of romance comics, complete with “creepy, violent guys” and multiple abortions, and which indirectly invokes Doug and Sarah’s story, abruptly terminating upon the return of “her old boyfriend who got thrown in jail for beating up a cop” only to jump a couple of issues in which everything has changed as “Danny’s all messed up... [...] His head’s all bandaged up and he’s taking a whole bunch of heavy-duty narcotics.”<sup>74</sup> Those missing issues are also and above all the gaps that the readers of *Last Look* are confronted with, embodying their sense of disorientation and the inability to connect the various fragments.

Midway through the graphic novel, the recursive retelling of its own narrative through romance comic swipes does not elicit a clearer picture. Later on, Doug comes across a stack of romance comics that his girlfriend, Sarah, had been eagerly looking for. As he starts leafing through the comic books, however, their frames begin to mingle, doubling up their

gutters and blanked out speech bubbles, metamorphosing into explicit images only to finally burn away (Figure 7). < Insert Figure 7 here > The narrative voice accompanying this collage of redrawn romance comics states: “As I look I realize the image won’t hold... it has a life of its own. There’s nothing I can do about it. Nothing to hold on to.”<sup>75</sup> This short sequence illustrates the slippery status of the swipes as they are disseminated across Burns’s various works: not only their resistance to a clear interpretive framework in *Last Look*, but also their own life-like agency mobilizing an iconophilic desire that cannot be met by the character.

With invoking the Code-era plague of comic book burnings in America, the image of the burnt-out panels is typically autoclastic and draws attention to the comics medium’s troubled economy of desire. As in his previous work, Burns subtly aligns the violence in the narrative with the cultural memory of the violence done to comics. However, *Last Look* simultaneously draws attention to the circulation and reproduction of comics, both in the panels and through the swiping of existing panels, highlighting the particular gestures that draw productive, affective relationships between comics and their readers. The agency attributed to the image is thus not only the overwhelming, haunting violence of images that Philippe Maupeu identifies in Burns’s graphic novel as “tyrannical revenants,” “ghost images” that leave us in “a state of stupefaction.”<sup>76</sup> On the contrary, Burns’s fascination for swiping expresses a sense of being overwhelmed by the image that does not end with obsessive reproduction. Swiping becomes a key vector of cultural memory, showcasing a deep entanglement with the history of comics. As Ken Parille suggests in an insightful analysis of Burns’s reuse of the famous kissing scene, Burns “encourag[es] us to rethink the visual/narrative power of romance comics and arrive at a new understanding of the medium’s history: he gives us a new origin story for contemporary comics. *The Hive* argues that we should take girl’s comics seriously — a case this strong could never be made in prose.”<sup>77</sup>



Without any need for an extended textual commentary, then, Burns's graphic novel invites us to reconsider comics history through the silent, modest act of swiping.

Where many of his peers are engaged in curatorial, canon-building activities that explicitly reframe the past of comics through essays, exhibitions and reprints, Charles Burns has been less explicitly committed to canonizing masters of comics. And yet, his cartooning practice is similarly embedded in a deep knowledge of comics history. Swiping precisely appears as a memory-making gesture, part of a "repertoire" of creative acts that constitute the narrative economy of comics-making. As Diana Taylor notes, the repertoire "enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing – in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge."<sup>78</sup> While mechanically reproduced, drawing in comics functions as a "voiceprint–[...] in a way necessarily effaced by print," bringing the physical labor of comics close to "the human voice of oral storytelling, song, or performance."<sup>79</sup> Swiping is always a partial reproduction, an embodied interpretation of someone else's graphiation: in this way, it is a performative gesture that produces an active memory of the form. While this act can be affected by power asymmetries, swiping can also express a culture of sharing. By describing his practice of redrawing as swiping, Burns taps into a long tradition of copying as an embodied gesture within a repertoire of comics memory. Rehearsing a citational gesture, Burns further transfer that embodied knowledge into an "archival memory" by making his own swipe files visible, tracing networks between old and new comics through the act of redrawing.

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- 2 Todd Hignite, *In the Studio: Visits with Contemporary Cartoonists* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 106.
- 3 Ellen Gruber Garvey, *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). On clippings as a means to compensate the lack of comic strip reprints, see Jared Gardner, "A History of the Narrative Comic Strip," in *From Comic Strips to Graphic Novels: Contributions to the Theory and History of the Graphic Narrative*, eds Daniel Stein and Jan-Noël Thon (New York & Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 241-53.
- <sup>4</sup> The practice is not unique to comics artists naturally; other visual artists have extensively drawn from their scrapbooks and comics clippings, such as Chicago Imagist Ray Yoshida and outsider artist Henry Darger.
- 5 Despite the dearth of dedicated tracks for cartooning or comics in technical or art institutions, cartoonists often followed at least some form of training, from correspondence courses to commercial illustration or fine art programs. See Jean-Paul Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men: A Cultural History of Comic Books*, trans. Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2010), 159-60. Moreover, correspondence courses for aspiring cartoonists regularly incited their readers to constitute 'morgue' or swipe files, and urged them to practice redrawing, see for instance Charles N. Landon, "Collecting a Morgue," *The Landon Course of Cartooning* 1 (Cleveland: Landon School,

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- 1914), and Clare Briggs, *How to Draw Cartoons* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1926), 40.
- 6 Michael Chabon, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (New York: Random House, 2000), 7-8.
- <sup>7</sup> As Burns demonstrated in his public talk at the Columbus College of Art and Design on October 15, 2016 during the Cartoon Crossroads Columbus festival.
- <sup>8</sup> See johnnytwentythree.tumblr.com; Charles Burns, *Close Your Eyes* (Marseille: Le Dernier Cri, 2001); *Swipe File* (Philadelphia: Common Press, 2008); *Love Nest* (Bordeaux: Cornélius, 2016).
- 9 Darcy Sullivan, "Charles Burns: Interview with Darcy Sullivan," *The Comics Journal* 148 (February 1992), 52.
- 10 See for instance Kom Konyosying, "Horror Comics Ecology: Metonymy and Iconicity in Charles Burns's *Black Hole*," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 21.3 (2014): 1-13; John Lowter, "In *Black Hole*," *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 59.1 (2011): 11-25; Nemanja Protic and Neil Finlayson, "Black Holes and Parallax Gaps. The Contemporary Graphic *Noir* of Charles Burns's *Black Hole*," *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 7.1 (2016): 3-19.
- 11 Bart Beaty and Benjamin Woo, *The Greatest Comic Book of All Time: Symbolic Capital and the Field of American Comic Books* (New York: Palgrave, 2016), 5.
- 12 Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage into the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999). On medium-specificity and transmediality, see also Jan Baetens, "Between Adaptation, Intermediality and Cultural Series: the Example of the Photonovel," *Artnodes* 18 (2016): 47-55.

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- 13 Swiping, read as a form of remix, could arguably address some of the blind spots of remix studies, which tend to privilege digital culture and emphasize remix as resistance on the part of users (rather than producers). See Margie Borschke, “The Extended Remix: Rhetoric and History,” *The Routledge Companion to Remix Studies*, eds. Eduardo Navas, Owen Gallagher and xtine burrough (New York: Routledge, 2015).
- 14 Benoît Peeters, “Between Writing and Image: A Scriptwriter’s Way of Working,” *European Comic Art* 3.1 (2010): 113.
- 15 For a more extensive explication of comics making and creative labor, see Casey Brienza and Paddy Johnston, eds., *Cultures of Comics Work* (New York: Palgrave, 2016).
- 16 Wallace Wood quoted in Larry Hama, “Old Ink, New Ink,” *Against the Grain: MAD Artist Wallace Wood*, ed. Bhub Steward (Raleigh: TwoMorrows Publishing, 2003), 195.
- 17 For instance, one panel from Paul Cuvelier and Jean Van Hamme’s *Epoxy* (Paris: Losfeld, 1968), depicting a bare woman lying on her side, was extensively swiped and re-used in the cheap pocket books from the Italian *fumetti* industry, illustrating both the use of this conventional pose as a quick shorthand to fill in a panel and the quotation it has grown into over the years. See Bernard Joubert, *Polyepoxy: la case la plus copiée* (Brussels: Fondation Paul Cuvelier, 2016).
- 18 Philippe Marion, *Traces en cases* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Academia, 1993), 35. See also Jan Baetens, “Revealing Traces: A New Theory of Graphic Enunciation,” *The Language of Comics: Word and Image*, eds. Robin Varnum and Christina T. Gibbons (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2001), 145-55.
- 19 Jared Gardner, “Storylines,” *SubStance* 40.1 (2011): 65.
- 20 Lukas Etter, “Visible Hand? Subjectivity and Its Stylistic Markers in Graphic Narratives,” *Subjectivity Across Media: Interdisciplinary and Transmedial Perspectives*, eds. Maïke

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- Sarah Reinerth and Jan-Noël Thon (New York: Routledge, 2017), 92-110. The “second hand” phrase is borrowed from Antoine Compagnon, *La Seconde main, ou, le Travail de la citation* (Paris: Seuil, 1979).
- <sup>21</sup> Gardner, “Storylines,” 66.
- <sup>22</sup> Charles Hatfield, *Hand of Fire: The Comics Art of Jack Kirby* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2012), 49.
- <sup>23</sup> Baetens, “Revealing Traces,” 152.
- <sup>24</sup> I am referring here to Bart Beaty’s call to “conceptualiz[e] comics as the products of a particular social world, rather than as a set of formal strategies.” See *Comics versus Art* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 43.
- <sup>25</sup> Jules Feiffer, *The Great Comic Book Heroes* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1965), 38-41. Feiffer also recently recalled his early swipes in *Backing Into Forward: A Memoir* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 9-12.
- <sup>26</sup> Feiffer, *The Great Comic Book Heroes*, 38.
- <sup>27</sup> Feiffer, *The Great Comic Book Heroes*, 39-41.
- <sup>28</sup> Jared Gardner, *Projections: Comics and the History of Twenty-First Century Storytelling* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 73.
- <sup>29</sup> Garvey, *Writing with Scissors*, 21.
- <sup>30</sup> The poaching metaphor designates readers’ deviating appropriation of the texts, from Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) to Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (New York/London: Routledge, 1992).
- <sup>31</sup> Fredric Wertham, *The World of Fanzines* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 109.

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- 32 Robert Boyd, "Swipe File," *The Comics Journal* 140 (1991): 28.
- 33 Ted White, "It All Boils Down to the Editor," *The Comics Journal* 83 (1983): 31-36.
- 34 Mark Burbey, "The Trouble with Keith Giffen," *The Comics Journal* 105 (1986): 9-14.
- 35 Thom Powers, "Muñoz vs. Giffen: Plagiarism or Influence?," *The Comics Journal* 118 (1987): 19-20, Dan Parmenter, "To Swipe or Not to Swipe," *The Comics Journal* 109 (1986): 35. Ernie Colon, "Sticking Up for Giffen," *The Comics Journal* 116 (1987): 42-43.
- 36 Powers, "Muñoz vs. Giffen," 20.
- 37 Originally published as José Muñoz and Carlos Sampayo, "Pour quelques dessins....," (*À suivre*) 159 (1991). Reprinted in English in Muñoz and Sampayo, *Alack Sinner: the Age of Disenchantment* (San Diego: IDW, 2017).
- 38 One could think of the *Air Pirates*/Disney polemic: underground cartoonist Dan O'Neill, who had extensively swiped from Disney comics – especially Floyd Gottfredson's comic strip – for satirical purposes. O'Neill was sued by Disney and the court condemned him for copyright infringement, leading to further complications as O'Neill defied the decision by continuing to draw parodies. For a full account of the legal battles, see Bob Levin, *The Pirates and the Mouse: Disney's War Against The Underground* (Seattle : Fantagraphics, 2003).
- 39 Jan Baetens and Hugo Frey, *The Graphic Novel: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 135-36.
- 40 Baetens and Frey, *The Graphic Novel*, 100.
- 41 Daniel Clowes, *Pussey!* (Seattle: Fantagraphics, 1995).
- 42 Charles Burns, "Introduction," *The Best American Comics 2009*, ed. Charles Burns (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009), xii.
- 43 Burns, "Introduction," xiii.

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- 44 As collected in Charles Burns, *Free Shit* (Marseille: Le Dernier Cri, 2016).
- 45 Pizzino, *Arresting Development*, 48-9.
- 46 Pizzino, *Arresting Development*, 141.
- 47 Éric Maigret, “Bande dessinée et postlégimité,” in *La Bande dessinée: une médiaculture*, eds. Éric Maigret and Matteo Stefanelli (Paris: Armand Colin, 2012), 130-48.
- <sup>48</sup> Pizzino, *Arresting Development*, 149-151.
- 49 Pizzino, *Arresting Development*, 48.
- 50 Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 20. For an overview of the relationship between archive and repertoire in the digital age, see also Abigail De Kosnik, *Rogue Archives: Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), 63-71.
- <sup>51</sup> Charles Burns, *Johnny 23: Random Images from the Hinterland*, Tumblr blog, [johnnytventythree.tumblr.com](http://johnnytventythree.tumblr.com).
- 52 Charles Burns, *Swipe File* (Philadelphia: The Common Press, 2008), *Close Your Eyes* (Marseille: Le Dernier Cri, 2001), *Love Nest/Nid d'amour* (Bordeaux: Cornélius, 2016).
- 53 Burns, *Close Your Eyes*, 3.
- 54 Burns, *Close Your Eyes*, 127.
- 55 Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion, 2006), 171.
- 56 Thierry Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, trans. Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2009), 17.
- 57 Burns, *Swipe File*, n. pg.

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- 58 Referring to the description of Chester Gould's graphic style in Coulton Waugh, *The Comics* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1991), 216.
- 59 Pizzino, *Arresting Development*, 142.
- 60 Charles Burns, "And I pressed my hand against his face, feeling his thick massive lips, and....," *RAW* 3 (1981). Burns calls it an "abstract piece" in his interview with Hillary Chute, *Outside the Box: Conversations with Contemporary Cartoonists* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 41.
- 61 Pizzino, *Arresting Development*, 139.
- 62 Charles Burns, *Last Look* (New York: Pantheon, 2016); first published by Pantheon as three separate volumes, *X'ed Out* (2010), *The Hive* (2012) and *Sugar Skull* (2014).
- 63 Referring to Thierry Groensteen's concept of braiding to designate infra-narrative, non-linear networks of interconnected images; see *The System of Comics*, trans. Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2009), 146-48.
- 64 Irina O. Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality," *Intermédialités* 6 (2005): 52-3.
- 65 William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin, *The Third Mind* (New York: Viking Press, 1978), 29-31. For a history of the cut-up, see Edward S. Robinson, *Shift Linguals: Cut-Up Narratives from William S. Burroughs to the Present* (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2011).
- <sup>66</sup> Rajewsky, "Intermediality," 54.
- 67 Xavier Guilbert, "The Inner Worlds of Charles Burns," *du9, l'autre bande dessinée*, January 2016, [www.du9.org/en/entretien/the-inner-worlds-of-charles-burns](http://www.du9.org/en/entretien/the-inner-worlds-of-charles-burns).
- 68 On the way Burns's rigid layout allows him to experiment with narration, see Jan Baetens and Hugo Frey, "'Layouting' for the Plot: Charles Burns and the Clear Line Revisited,"



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- Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 8.2 (2017). For a reading of *Last Look* as montage, see Philippe Maupeu, "Montage et hantise chez Charles Burns (*ToXic*, *La Ruche*, *Calavera*)," *Textimage* (2016), [http://revue-textimage.com/conferencier/06\\_montage\\_demontage\\_remontage/maupeu1.html](http://revue-textimage.com/conferencier/06_montage_demontage_remontage/maupeu1.html).
- 69 This "dispersed serialization" is increasingly present in the contemporary graphic novel, see Benoît Crucifix, "From Loose to Boxed Fragments and Back Again. Seriality and archive in Chris Ware's *Building Stories*," *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* (2017), 3-7.
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