Christopher Koch: Drawn to Comics

ELAINE MINOR
University of Sydney

In debates about appreciation and interpretation of literature, Christopher Koch is an outspoken, and often controversial, figure. In his now famed acceptance speech for the 1996 Miles Franklin award for his Vietnam War novel, *Highways to a War*, Koch berated the 'bullies' in the ranks of the literary community for ignoring Beauty in Literature, and for seeing authors as 'blind instruments of social forces'. He deplores what he terms the postmodern approach to critical analysis, and continues in this vein when he writes the foreword to *Education and the Ideal* (2004), questioning why children are 'studying films, comic strips and hopelessly bad contemporary novels with social messages, rather than major works that have stood the test of time' (vii). It is somewhat surprising then, to study Koch's novels and uncover how frequently his work is informed by childhood influences and his love of comic books. The question raised is whether unwittingly Koch, as an author, is indeed an instrument of social forces.

As a young boy, growing up in Tasmania during the 1930s and 40s, Koch was fascinated with comics. From the age of eight he worked at drawing his own comic strips with what he calls a fanatic's persistence. He was determined to produce strip cartoons like 'Felix the Cat', 'The Phantom', 'Ginger Meggs', and 'Wanda the War Girl'. In his essay, 'The Novel as Narrative Poem', Koch recalls, 'my most serious attention was given to comics. I studied them; and can still recite the names of the artists and writers who produced all the major American and Australian strips of the day ... The fact is, I suppose, that I already wanted to tell stories; and by doing so within my set of strip-cartoon frames' (147). Looking back, Koch remembers entertaining his classmates with stories from the comics, until one day, having run out of storylines, he was urged to make one up. 'So I did', says Koch. 'And this is where I crossed the line, I think, and became a story teller.' For Koch, comic strips are a 'primitive form of novel' (Henricksen 37).

Comic strips, as a series of dioramas captured in sequence, offer an opportunity to transcribe the visual appeal of a stream of pictures into a narrative. Derek Bradley, the narrator of Koch's most recent novel *The Memory Room*, demonstrates how visual images, especially book illustrations, evoke memories of childhood emotions: 'Looking at illustrations in his childhood books, [Bradley] had often singled out images of peace, and dwelt on them. In one of these pictures, a gabled house with dormer windows, set on an empty hill … took on a special meaning and attractiveness for him: he returned to it many times, wanting to enter the picture, and to find perfect happiness there, on the quiet hillside' (16). Bradley's musings capture the tenacious hold that visual images from childhood have on memory. Memories often infiltrate the author's writing which display desire for home and safety in a sentimentalised and nostalgic manner, a notion that underpins Koch's work, acting as a driving motivation for his characters.[1] Koch recovers childhood memories in Hobart through Bradley's recollection of comic strips, particularly the industrial sector of the city: 'The air reeked of sulphur. Vast and weird, the Works resembled a citadel on the planet Mungo, in my *Flash Gordon* comics: the kingdom of Ming the Merciless' (52). There is a familiar echo here from Koch's earlier work *The Boys in the Island* (1958), where he conjures a small boy's impression of Hobart's industrial side. Koch frames his scenes in the fashion of a comic strip panel,

through a car window: 'In the black square of the car's windscreen, sudden flocks of lights appeared: the roaring stars of the world. This was the Works, where his father and Uncle Charlie did their men's jobs' (11).

A narrative technique regularly employed by Koch is a series of tableaux, often backlit with soft light. When Billy Kwan enters the kampongs of 'Old Jakarta', in *The Year of Living Dangerously*, he walks past huts lit by candles, and sees 'the men's shadows, cast against the palm-mat wall of the hut by the candlelight, they are huge, distinct and fantastic: they lean and sway like children's bogies as Kwan passes' (124). Here the figures in the picture panel, distorted by shadows, are exaggerated in much the same way as comic strip figures are larger than life. The illuminated tableau effect of comic strips continues with Koch's description of Guy Hamilton's first outing into the streets of Jakarta one evening: 'Doorless huts gave glimpses of public privacy, frozen in yellow frames: a table with a candle on it; a small, naked girl playing on a straw mat; a middle-aged woman in a sarong and incongruous brassiere, heating water in a discarded can over a little fire. The rooms were so small they were little more than boxes' (21). Hamilton's voyeurism of individual dioramas early in the novel is repeated later when he finds himself one evening on the outskirts of Bandung watching a *wayang kulit* show. The spectacle 'woke in him now a long-buried memory of his own' (202). As an eight year-old boy in a hospital bed recovering from appendicitis, and frightened by the noises of sick patients in the shared ward, Hamilton had 'hidden behind comic books his elder brother had brought him, erecting them on his chest like screens … and there came back to him now the peculiar affection he had felt for those little figures in the comic books which could make him forget what lay beyond their pages. He had followed Mickey Mouse and Tarzan and the Phantom from frame to frame (as he now followed the darting figures in the lit frame of the *wayang*) with mysterious pleasure' (203).

In other instances, individual snapshots become a linear series of picture panels as the story unfolds. The eye follows the narrative as a moving event scrolling from left to right, transporting the reader into passenger mode, watching the scenery through the windows of a moving vehicle. In *The Memory Room*, two children reenact the covert techniques of secret agents, slipping out at night to spy on neighbours. They begin to prowl, 'looking through lighted windows. What [they] saw were scenes of innocent domesticity: people sitting in their living rooms in armchairs; a woman ironing; a man sitting at a table reading a paper. Bedroom blinds were nearly always drawn; but occasionally [they] would glimpse people undressing, and glance at each other' (64).

Other strip tableaux scenes are revealed in *Highways to a War*. The narrator, Raymond Barton, recalls, as a young boy wandering the perimeters of a farm: 'Left to my own devices, I'd gone walking about the property; and one evening, venturing past the pickers' huts, I'd seen an extraordinary domestic picture. In one of the glassless windows, a family was framed in kerosene lamplight, sitting around their table over a meal: a middle-aged man and woman, the red-haired girl (plainly their daughter, since the woman had similarly red hair), two small boys, and Mike' (36). This voyeuristic device places the reader alongside the narrator and together they share the story as it unfolds, frame by frame, in the captured still pictures of the comic strip, freezing each moment in time. In another early sequence in the novel, two boys spend the summer holidays in the Tasmanian countryside. The boys' bedroom has a large wardrobe filled with British books from the empire period including the stories written by Kipling,

Ryder Haggard, Captain Marryat and R.M. Ballantyne, and in a period without television the boys devour the reading material. Also in the cupboard were weekly coloured supplements from an American newspaper, which featured serialized comic strips: 'It was called *Wags'*, recalls the narrator, and he could, 'still smell the pungent American newsprint' (30). The collection in the wardrobe covered a period of ten years from the mid 1930s to the early 1940s. 'This', writes Koch, 'was still the great age of the comic strip, and all the classics were here: Tarzan, The Phantom, The Captain and the Kids, Dick Tracy, Flash Gordon' (30-31). Along with his fascination for comic strips, Koch was an avid reader of boys' adventure stories. In his book of memoirs and reflections, he remembers how, before the Second World War, he had inherited *Chums Annual* for 1920 from his Uncle Gordon. His uncle warned that 'Some of those stories'll give you the dingbats,' and Koch was 'thrilled in anticipation of being terrified' (Koch, *Crossing* 29). In *Highways to a War*, young Mike Langford is fascinated, to the point of obsession, with a comic strip set on the China Coast called *Terry and the Pirates*. The two boys read it together, 'carried along by the pictures ... [they] were really studying these texts for clues to an alarming and seductive adult cosmos that was waiting in the future' (31). Here Koch gestures towards the genesis of the adventure story he is about the offer in the guise of Mike Langford's life and death in *Highways to a War*. The comic strip adventure stories had seemed real enough for the boys to imagine a future life where Mike would be at the centre of the action. Barton recalls that 'the American boy Terry was clearly Mike's alter ego, and we followed his life, from his boyhood in the South China Sea of the thirties, when Chinese pirates were the villains, to his manhood in World War Two, when Colonel Flip Corkin of the U.S. Air Force became a leading figure, and the villains were our villains: the Japanese. That Mike would one day go to the China Coast to lead the life of Terry ... I always took for granted' (31-32).

In his book *Adult Comics*, Roger Sabin notes that the majority of war comics were 'gung-ho, racist, poorly written and above all violent'. They depicted the enemy as 'easily slaughterable', usually by characterising them as 'subhuman, monkey-like sadists'. Sabin continues 'it should be noted that such racism was not new in comics – these titles mimicked the depiction of the Japanese in superhero comics during the Second World War' (152). Looking back on his childhood admiration for adventure stories Koch is able to cast a retrospective, critical eye:

> Of course as we now know, such papers were tainted with the quaint and objectionable prejudices and myths of their era. Hearty xenophobia, as well as mystical devotion to the British Empire, were confidently expected of their boy readers; but I knew little then about the ramifications of such things. My friends and I took it for granted that Chinese were sinister, and called 'Chinamen'; that the only good savages in the 'heart of Africa' were those who devotedly served clean-living young English Bwanas; that Dutchmen (the Boer War having left its mark) were treacherous (Koch, *Crossing* 30-1).

When Koch draws from his childhood memories to imagine his two young characters holidaying in Tasmania, his recovery of *Wags* is factually accurate. Kevin Patrick, the curator of an Australian Comic exhibition at the State Library of Victoria, writes: 'In 1936, Melbourne's *Herald and Weekly Times* newspaper group commissioned an American company, Editors Press Service, to package a new comic book for local

resale. The new magazine was called *Wags*'. Part of the thrill for the *Highways* characters, Langford and Barton, is the knowledge that these comics are aimed at adult readers. Barton remembers that 'American culture wasn't much liked by our elders: it was seen as vulgar and often suggestive, and they preferred that we feed our imaginations on approved books from parental England. So two Northern Hemisphere cultures competed for our interest; and *Wags* drew us, like a forbidden maze' (31).

Disdain for comic books from leading educationalists and others peaked in the 1940s and 50s, and the concerns raised during the 1990s and early 2000s 'culture wars' debate were essentially the same. Traditionalists reacted with concern that 'modern pop culture' would devalue and debase literature. John A. Lent, in his exploration of the anti-comics campaign, notes that: beginning at least in the mid-1930s, some teachers, librarians, and parents expressed their reservations about comics, thinking that they retarded the development of adequate reading skills and set back educational standards. By the 1940s, they and other critics were lambasting the artistic, aesthetic, and literary qualities of comic books, saying that they were ugly and that they lowered aesthetic standards to a subnormal level and kept readers away from literary classics (11). In the 1940s, there was a local comic book industry in Australia, in part assisted by World War Two economic sanctions and import licensing regulations. These local products were swamped in the pre- and post-war years by foreign, and in particular, American comics (Lent 22). Lent's research finds that eighty percent of comics circulating in Australia in the 1940s and 50s originated in the United States and were subsequently criticised by anti-comic campaigners as 'un-Australian in speech and lifestyle' (25). Graeme Osborne, in his essay 'Comics Discourse in Australia', notes that a growing anxiety among significant sections of the community saw 'the vigour, vividness, and vernacular of the American comics' product as threatening Australian values and culture' (159). Koch often refers to himself as a 'child of the Empire' (Koch, *Crossing* 28), but it is evident that his formative years were a period which straddled the movement from British to American cultural influences in Australia, post World War Two.

The 1950s discussion about comics, a debate which was simultaneously taking place in England and America, was fuelled by the publication of an influential book, *Seduction of the Innocent*, by social psychiatrist Fredric Wertham.[2] This was, in part, a response not only to the detrimental influence that comic books may have on young minds, but also to what some perceived to be the troubling advent of television competing with literature. The controversy arising from Wertham's thesis provided an opportunity for the Communist Party in Australia to voice concerns about American cultural imperialism and the dangers of mass culture (McAllister 6). At the same time the debate prompted the Catholic Church to publish their concern on morality issues as depicted in comics (Osbourne 167). The Communist Party and the Catholic Church would seem to be an unlikely partnership united in their opposition to the subversive nature of comic books. Osborne notes that substantial sections of the Australian general public 'saw mass communication as possessing significant power to influence social and cultural life' (160).

Journals such as *Meanjin*, *Visual Aids Review*, and *Australian Library Journal* published articles engaging with this debate.[3] Although this flurry of concern peaked in the 1950s Osborne notes that 'the comics discourse had been at least a generation in the making. It had evolved through periods of depression, war, and reconstruction and

against a background of changing global and regional power relations, all of which had presented Australians with testing economic, political, social and cultural choices' (167-168). Interestingly enough, Osborne notes that much discussion had focused on the influential sway that television had over children: 'on the suspicion that it would become a tool for the extension of commercial values at the expense of other values systems such as those associated with religion, on the likelihood that it would permit the extension of further foreign, particularly American, influence, and on the fear that it would undermine efforts to produce a well-educated population whose allegiance was to Australian rather than foreign cultural and behavioural patterns' (171). There are familiar echoes here of Koch's public concerns about how literature, today, is undervalued in a culture saturated with competing influences of 'films, comic strips and hopelessly bad contemporary novels with social messages'.

Tangentially, but of interest especially considering the authoritative nature of the morals that Koch embodies in his novels, the early public debates resulted in a 'Comics Magazine Association of America Comics Code' in 1948, which was subsequently updated in 1954, 1971 and 1989. One particular guideline, introduced in the first Code of 1948 and retained, and therefore ratified and endorsed in subsequent updated Codes, is the requirement that: 'Policemen, judges, Government officials, and respected institutions should not be portrayed as stupid or ineffective, or represented in such a way as to weaken respect for established authority' (Lent, 'Appendix A' 269-279). Evidently, established authority and the hegemonic powers already in place, were, without doubt, protected by the Code. Interestingly, hostile reactions to war comics were subdued. During the Second World War, American comic superheroes became patriotic superheroes fighting for their countries and, as Sabin notes, 'these comics were unashamed morale-boosters' (Sabin 146). By entering into 'the real world' comics became increasingly popular with adult readers.[4] Comics were sent out to the American armed forces as they were 'considered lightweight entertainment for men with other things on their mind' (Sabin 147). As Roger Sabin notes, 'generally there was no backlash because the [war] comics toed the establishment line: to put it simply, as they were only killing the enemy, nobody really took much notice' (153).

The very fabric of the control and power mechanism was not to be challenged nor subverted; in effect the Code demanded respect for the status quo. Osborne concludes his analysis of comics discourse in the Cold War era with the observation that 'the comic was one of a number of new mass communication technologies, unsettling in themselves, which came to be seen as a testing ground for the capacity of an older, pre-war generation, to maintain or reassert its primacy in social, cultural, and political practices and policies' (174). Significantly Koch, once a young boy influenced by comics, has made the generational shift to the other side of the fence and protects his work from those who would connect it with popular culture instead of literary qualities associated with a traditional canon.

Koch's early desire to become a cartoonist fitted well with the Australian tradition of comic strips where, unlike in America, comic books were not packaged by commercial art studios using an 'assembly line' team of writers and artists. Koch prefers to work alone rather than as part of a team.[5] Australian publishers expected their artists to produce the entire comic, including scripts, interior artwork and cover illustrations (Patrick). During World War Two, when restrictions were placed on the importation of American comics and readers were denied exposure to the American costumed

superheroes, Australian writers and artists experimented with various genres. They were 'searching for the elusive character or concept that would "click" with Australian audiences' (Patrick). This search for Australian uniqueness is particularly pertinent when, much later in his fiction writing, Koch creates the character hero of Mike Langford. Langford has an Australian Rules football physique, he values mateship, is laconic, and compassionate: a combination not, at first glance, immediately in keeping with the Rambo-esque characters of some American Vietnam War fiction. But the American influence, although perhaps packaged differently for Australian audiences, was nevertheless a dominant factor which fueled the comics' popularity. In the late 1940s American comics reappeared in Australia with *Superman* making a debut in 1947, breaking Australian sales records for comic books (Patrick). Sometimes Australian publishers altered the contents of their reprinted American comics, to give the impression that they were, in fact, home-grown products. Covers depicting Captain Marvel playing baseball were redrawn to show him playing cricket, while references to dollars and cents were replaced with pounds and shillings.[6] Other publishers transposed their home-grown heroes onto American landscapes. Patrick quotes Monty Wedd, publisher of Australian comic hero *Captain Justice* who reasons: 'There was a flood of American Western comics in Australia ... so if *Captain Justice* was to survive with the brainwashed Australian reader of those days, then Justice would just have to go Western'.

The burgeoning of comics from the 1930s to 1950s diminished over the following decades until the emergence, to popular acclaim, of the graphic novel in the late 1980s. Koch was drafting *Highways to a War* in the late 80s and early 90s before publication in 1995. Indeed, it was the death of fellow Tasmanian, Neil Davis, in 1985 that prompted him to write about a photojournalist covering the Vietnam War. The resurgence of comic book popularity and *Highways to a War* share a common timeframe. At the same time, the Hollywood film industry began its obsession with re-imagining the Vietnam War.[7] In 1986 Marvel Comics published *The Nam*, a popular, fictionalized autobiography by Vietnam combat veteran Doug Murray. Murray's war comic had originally started with grand assertions of realism and accuracy, representing a radical break from Marvel comic book tradition (Matton 151-2). But by 1990, in issue 41, the story took a fantastic turn when adventure heroes Captain America, Thor, and Iron Man invaded Vietnam, forcing Ho Chi Minh to negotiate for peace. It was a rewriting of America's involvement in the conflict. *The Nam* and examples of representations of the Vietnam War in American popular culture in the 1980s draw attention to a revisionist history presenting a preferred and more 'acceptable' past (Matton 156). Interestingly, and not unlike the publicity generated by the publication of *Highways to a War*, the major selling point of *The Nam* was its realism and 'telling it like it was' (Matton 158, 160). However, as Annette Matton points out, the reality included 'handsome, broadchested American GIs employing American superiority, both technological and moral', leaving the readers 'the impression that they [the GIs] are proud to be fighting for the American/good cause' (160-2). It is clear from Matton's examination of the ideological influences of the time that 'the comic was *reflecting* an established (and establishment) viewpoint rather than *criticizing* it' (174). *The Nam* inexplicably, according to Roger Sabin's analysis, attained Code approval (100).[8] Matton's essay argues that 'regardless of the structure and style of the comic [*The Nam*], whether it be a commitment to "realism" or fantastic superhero story lines, the ideological leanings of the comic remained constant' (152).

Matton's point about establishment approval has an interesting symmetry in *Highways to a War*. The conflicting blend of fact and fantasy at the core of the novel responds to the same ideological impulses identified by Matton. Mike Langford, the hero, is in essence the archetypal Australian identity who embodies values, which underpin a quintessential Australian morality. This cultural re-imagining of history, and the American influence in Koch's novel *Highways to a War*, however subtle and repackaged as Australian, offers an opportunity to analyse the cultural values and dominant social pressures at work in not only the American revisionist and fictional writing of the involvement in Vietnam, but also in Koch's projection of Australian involvement in the same period of history. Koch's novel is not about Australia's official involvement in the war, but rather one Australian's choice to cover the conflict. As Susan Geason noted in her review of the novel: 'The Australian Army seems to be missing in action, apart from a throwaway line about its prowess at jungle fighting, and there's no mention of reactions to the war back home: so if you were hoping this was the big book about the war you'll be disappointed' (126). Most notably different is Koch's representation of a hero. In contrast to the supersexualised male bodies of the Rambo-esque characters and their proactive heroics is Mike Langford's supposedly passive observer role, which eventually changes as he becomes actively involved in the conflict and politics of the Vietnam and Cambodian region. He is a reactive player on the international stage, with a set of ideals vindicating his involvement in another country's affairs which are subtly different from the American fictional heroes, who are either busy fighting to impose their values on a foreign population, or intent on rescuing their compatriots from the clutches of the evil other.

Koch's representation of an Australian hero in the Vietnam conflict, and the fictionalised versions of an American hero which have emerged have a shared basis of mythic themes: hero, Vietnam, missing, recovery, and repatriation. The resultant figures that materialize, embodying the ideals of a national hero, differ in their glorified attributes, and indeed in their physical attributes: Langford's face has certain female qualities, as opposed to the hyper-masculine bodies in US war movies and comics. The comic strip action adventure story, which Koch uses as a platform in his fiction, and the 1980s cultural mythmaking of Vietnam, connect forms of fiction which reinvent and reinforce national cultural perceptions, bolstering a preferred national identity. Fiction becomes part of the embroidery of fact when history is written and remembered as an adventure story in public memory.

As Joseph Witak points out in an historical survey of comics criticism in the United States, it was only relatively recently that there has been an accumulation of American critical discourse on comics which allows insight into the trajectory of cultural analysis beyond the fandom appreciation of comics on one hand, and the protests that comics are detrimental to literacy on the other (4). Roger Sabin found that over a period in 1986 and 1987, adult comics were discovered by the mainstream press, resulting in a flood of articles proclaiming that comics had suddenly 'grown up'. What followed was an unprecedented boom in production, and 'comics found a wide market among older readers for the first time since the First World War' (87).[9] Incidentally, part of the discourse surrounding the emergence of the graphic novel was similar to the theories about television in 1950s, namely that the culture was heading for a post-literate society and the 'death of the novel' was imminent (Sabin 94). The argument follows a trajectory not unfamiliar to the popular press: it initially 'finds' emerging cultural

expressions and lauds them as 'new', but before long turns against them attacking their role in the potential erosion of culture. Comics again came under attack for the same reasons rehearsed decades earlier: comics *per se* were a 'bad thing', intrinsically lowbrow and possibly even a threat to literacy (Sabin 112). The discourse on comics criticism has grown into a reflection-theory analysis of society. There has been a maturing of criticism which has moved towards linking 'the textural specifities of the comic form to the embeddedness of comics in social, cultural, and economic systems' (Witak 4), to seeing beyond the iconic comic characters whose popularity spawned licensed merchandise (6), and instead form a view that 'the international popularity of comics, so far from challenging the Americaness of comics, actually ratifies the innate strength of American cultural forms, as peoples all over the world adopt the quintessentially American comics as their own' (11).

This viewpoint, whilst it has its merits and is used in part to support the argument running through this essay, nevertheless must be tempered by some qualifications. There are theories of popular culture which, as Witek broadly states, critique mass-produced popular forms such as comics as 'false consciousness', dream-like stories of never-never lands which obscure the real social and economic relations of society and deflect energy away from the possible transformation of those relations (10). Witek is referring to critics' use of Marx's concepts of commodity, commodity fetishism, and commodification, but this critical position is countered by Americanists who argue that 'comics, like other popular cultural products, are the articulation of the hopes, dreams, and opinions of the American people, an instrument of the *vox populi* called into being by the cumulative desires of a democratic society and actuated by a responsive economic system of production' (10).

Under the broad canopy of Western culture's popular influences, Witak's critical survey is relevant to Australian cultural analysis. His view of the creation of the collective imagination suggests that comics embody and reflect cultural norms, but this is a somewhat reductive analysis of society unless these norms are qualified as the 'dominant' cultural norm within a community. This interpretation suggests that popular comic book stories, and by extension (for this argument) the action adventure story in *Highways to a War*, are a reflection of influential sections of a particular society at a specific time. Langford is established as an ideal man, but one who is within the bounds of credibility. The impetus which drives the narrative is to recover Langford and repatriate him, to bring him back 'home' to Tasmania. As Nicholas Birns recognises: 'Koch's narrative frame would seem to imply that Langford is a man of action, one who actively does things, whereas the more bookish narrator can supply the perspective and meaning afterward that Langford himself cannot' (143). Langford's strong presence in the novel is paradoxically reinforced by his absence in the flesh. He is a memory recreated from the fragments and traces that he has left behind. Symbolically, Langford represents a nostalgic yearning or a desire for what once was, but now is lost.

The Miles Franklin Award judging panel recognized that *Highways to a War* is 'really a novel about loss'. The loss, however, is not just about the death of a hero. The novel is rendered as a nostalgic footprint from a lost childhood, replete with imperial notions of boyhood adventures in exotic locations. It is also an expression of the loss of Koch's notion of an ideal Australian identity. From Koch's viewpoint, as articulated in his Miles Franklin acceptance speech, the erosion of cultural values threatens his

perception of the ideal. Koch, as an author representing the ideals embodied in his character Mike Langford, acts as a conduit, reflecting the force of an anxious element in society. Interestingly, despite his disapproval of debased cultural values, Koch's writing is significantly influenced by his fascination with comic books. While Koch argues that popular culture texts are unsuitable for study, this does not appear to negate their validity as material which informs his own writing. By reinventing the comic strip in his fiction and simultaneously creating a major work of literature, Koch has skilfully managed to fuse together the seemingly contradictory natures of 'high' and 'low' cultures.

NOTES

[1] A feature common to Koch's novels is the transportation of characters to places distinctly away from home, and invariably their return to the familiar.
[2] In 1954 psychiatrist Fredric Wertham published his findings which considered the harmful effects media-induced violence has on children.
[3] Osbourne's research draws from *Meanjin* 6.2 (1947) and 13.1 (1954), *Visual Aids Review* 1. 2 through to 1.4 (1951-3), and *Australian Library Journal* 1.6 (1952).
[4] Sabin cites a US government survey in 1950 that estimated 54 per cent of comic book readers were adults over 20 years of age and that the average reader read about eleven comics a month (147).
[5] Koch prefers not to work as part of a creative team, an experience he did not enjoy when collaborating on the screenplay of Peter Weir's film of *The Year of Living Dangerously*. 'Film making is a team sport,' writes Koch, 'and as we all know, the writer is the one everyone kicks around, and terrible things are done to his screenplay. But teams, although they have a lot of fun, tend only to produce enchanting minor art.' Koch, 'The Novel as Narrative Poem', *Crossing the Gap*, 164.
[6] Although Patrick surmises that 'it's unlikely that readers were ever fooled'.
[7] For example:
The Deer Hunter. Dir. Michael Cimino, 1978.
Full Metal Jacket. Dir. Stanley Kubrick, 1987.
Good Morning, Vietnam. Dir. Barry Levinson, 1987.
Missing in Action. Dir. Joseph Zito, 1984.
Platoon. Dir. Oliver Stone, 1986.
Rambo: First Blood Part II. Dir. George P. Cosmatos, 1985.
Rambo III Dir. Peter McDonald, 1988.
[8] Sabin maintains that *The Nam* and another comic, *Vietnam Journal*, laid the ground for *Desert Storm Journal*, an adult war comic about the Gulf War.
[9] In particular, according to Sabin's research, three titles initiated the 'dawn of the graphic novel': *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* and *Watchmen*, both revisionist superhero stories, and *Maus*, a family's experience of the Nazi holocaust told in anthropomorphic terms. http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/holocaust/spiegelman.html

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