

INTRODUCTION

Erin La Cour, Simon Grennan, and Rik Spanjers

Over the last 25 years, the field of comics studies has become firmly established in Anglophone academia. The number of comics-specific book series, journals, and conferences has steadily increased, and the field continues to gain ground in universities through comics courses and degree programmes at the bachelors and masters levels. While this bodes well for the future of the field, comics scholars as of yet do not have a set disciplinary home. Instead, they are housed in a wide range of departments including, but not limited to, media studies, literature, communication, history, and art and design.

This breadth of disciplinary expertise has benefitted comics studies in terms of flexibility, adaptability, and permeability. It has created a field with a particularly broad lexicon of terms, derived from a wide range of academic traditions. While positive on the one hand, on the other, the heterogeneity of approaches and terms used does not always reflect or advance the current condition of the field. Because knowledge transfer from one discipline to another remains uneven and often accessible only by osmosis, specialisations and particular methodologies have arisen that stand in direct contrast to and often disengaged from others.

Key Terms in Comics Studies seeks to open the dialogue on comics scholarship across these diverse fields and approaches so as to engender access to and an analysis of comics-specific theorisations, histories, and methodologies. We decided to call this book *Key Terms in Comics Studies* in our preliminary talks about it during the second international Amsterdam Comics Conference in 2018 in order to underscore precisely what the entry on comics in this book outlines: that in English the word “comics” has expanded to describe the medium, and thereby encompasses multiple genres, styles, origins, practices, and histories.

Focused on Anglophone comics studies, this book compiles 336 terms and critical concepts in current use, including those from other languages that have been adopted by and are currently applied in English. Importantly, the glossary does not claim to be exhaustive. Instead, we envision *Key Terms in Comics Studies* as a start in mapping a continually changing taxonomy and highlighting contemporary points of overlap and discord across disciplines that beg further development.

Besides being a collection of terms, this book has also become a collection of scholars—a fortunate side effect of our search for contributors. When sending out invitations to contribute, we were guided by the specialisations implied by particular key terms and cognisant of the wide range of points of view and types of experience that make the field so vibrant and diverse. Together, the 100 international experts who we invited to co-created this book show a developed tacit knowledge of the different approaches that are current in the field, as well as the concepts that are deployed in it.

We discussed and discussed again the conditions that any possible term must meet to be included in the book. *Key Terms in Comics Studies* includes terms and critical concepts that are used in specific ways in current Anglophone comics studies. Each entry is syncretic rather than exhaustive, balancing overview, accuracy, and brevity. Seeking to provide an outline of meanings and uses, the entries are 200 words or fewer, placed in alphabetical order, substantiated with examples and references, and explicitly cross-referenced to each other via the use of capitalisation.

Part of the joy of making *Key Terms in Comics Studies* has been the rekindling of old friendships, making new contacts, and discovering new insights. We would like to thank all of our contributors for their expertise, creativity, and collaboration.