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Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between collective memory, history and popular culture as it pertains to the American superhero comic. It examines some of the reasons behind and ways that American comic book publishers change their superhero character properties over time. This entails looking at the consequences of the ownership of character properties to the industry and the resulting economic impetus to alter their characters to both resonate with contemporary audiences and to keep them accessible to new readers. Despite these changes, those aspects of the superhero comic that are changed by this economic drive rarely disappear. Rather, comic book history continues to play a vital role in comic book fandom. Thus, this thesis examines the development and role of comic book reprints in the industry and comic book fandom. In a similar vein, it explores the role that knowledge of a character's--or a publisher's stable of characters'--diagenetic history plays in contemporary superhero narratives and how such knowledge is disseminated. Both of these studies argue that knowledge and appreciation of past comic books play a vital role in contemporary comic book narratives and fandom. Finally, this thesis examines how discarded elements of past comic books come into play as allusions in later superhero narratives. This thesis questions if such allusions have been used as a means to represent the historical moments that the alluded to elements of past comic books are associated with. Ultimately this thesis argues that such allusive comics are one of the many textual resources that some theorists consider vital to understanding contemporary collective memory

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Will Jacobs and Gerard Jones' *Comic Book Heroes* represents a notable exception but the scarcity of other texts impelled me to rely heavily on their research. Besides its lack of comic history or scholarship, the academy has virtually ignored comic criticism and esthetic theory. Will Eisner's *Comics and Sequential*. Fisher's design was soon imitated by other artists and the form of the comic strip has remained the same ever since. The origin of comic books themselves is harder to trace. The first compilations of comic strips appeared around 1911; reprints of "Mutt and Jeff" were the first books to circulate with any sort of frequency or volume. This magazine, which has been called "the first proper American comic book", appeared on newsstands by 1935 and. 6 McCue, p. 13. 7 Ibid. Schulz, Michael (2005) *Caped commodities and masked memories: the American comic book industry, collective memory, and the superhero*. Masters thesis, Concordia University. Preview. It examines some of the reasons behind and ways that American comic book publishers change their superhero character properties over time. This entails looking at the consequences of the ownership of character properties to the industry and the resulting economic impetus to alter their characters to both resonate with contemporary audiences and to keep them accessible to new readers. Despite these changes, those aspects of the superhero comic that are changed by this economic drive rarely disappear. Rather, comic book history continues to play a vital role in comic book fandom. American superhero comics, especially those that were published during the period between 1960 and 1980, were greatly influenced by the Comics Code Authority in terms of censorship. In brief, the Comics Code Authority was a body that forced comic publishers to remove certain themes from their publications as a result of an investigation by a subcommittee on juvenile delinquency in the United States. The reader of superhero comics can be said to respond to the superhero comic book narrative through a subconscious identification with and need for the hero.