

Introduction

La ciutat dels tebeos

Within the global panorama of the comic, Barcelona is deserving of broader recognition as “La ciutat dels tebeos”—Catalan for “the city of comics.”¹ Documenting the development of this vibrant art form, the book you are currently reading blends comics history, cultural studies method, and urban theory with close analyses of work by both well-known and underappreciated creators associated with the capital city of Catalonia. It explores the interrelationship of urbanism and the ninth art (comics) in Spain by appealing to general readers and scholars alike. This book’s nine chapters contain close readings of specific panels, pages, and projects, whether by individual auteur creators or members of two collectives. Over the course of the volume, a wide range of comics representations are considered: a cover image, a single-panel composition, action-adventure tales featuring serialized characters, creative adaptations from prose literature—including a thirty-nine-page comics novella—an urban-themed special issue, design work including an art poster, reprints from a Sunday comics newspaper section, and more. While the greatest attention is given to the 1970s and 1980s, the final chapters of the book edge into the 1990s and beyond.

Barcelona has long been the putative center of the comics industry in Spain. Along with Madrid and Valencia, it has been one of the three capital cities of comics production in the country, dating to a time before the Spanish

Civil War (1936–39) and the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939–1975) that followed.² One can trace the art form's presence in Barcelona back to the period that Antonio Martín has called the birth of the comic in Spain (1873–1900), and even farther, to acknowledge a type of proto-comic—known as the *auca* in Catalan and the *aleluya* in Castilian—that emerged between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.³ During the Franco dictatorship, Barcelona was home to some of the most prestigious comics artists, magazines, and publishing houses: for instance, Francisco Ibáñez, the creator of popular series such as *Mortadelo y Filemón* and *El botones Sacarino*; José Escobar, the mind behind strips like *Zipi y Zape* and *Carpanta*; and Editorial Bruguera, known, among other things, for introducing Spanish readers to the French comic *Asterix*, adventure comics like *Capitán Trueno*, and *Sissi*, released in 1958 and marketed as a girls magazine.⁴ Also notable is the city's connection with the illustrated magazine *Cavall Fort*, which began publishing in the Catalan language for young readers in 1961.

With the waning of the dictatorial regime of Francisco Franco in the 1960s, the death of Franco on November 20, 1975, and the country's gradual transition toward a constitutional monarchy, Barcelona's notoriety as a comics city only increased. After four decades of dictatorship that stifled freedoms of graphic expression and greatly limited the Catalan-language publishing industry, Barcelona in the mid-to-late 1970s was regaining the cosmopolitan cultural reputation it had enjoyed in the early twentieth century. In the postdictatorship, comics creators continued relocating to the city in order to pursue their careers, as some had already done in the early years of the decade—for instance, Javier Mariscal (ch. 8) in 1970, and Miguel Gallardo (ch. 4) in 1973.⁵ Writing of the late 1970s and early 1980s context, Pablo Dopico compares comics activity in Madrid and Barcelona and concludes that “A pesar de la competencia, Barcelona continuaba siendo la capital editorial del cómic español [In spite of the competition, Barcelona continued being the publishing capital of the Spanish comic].”⁶ While it was not until the twenty-first century, in the year 2007 to be exact, that Spain's Ministry of Culture awarded the National Comics Prize, prestigious comics prizes had been awarded continuously since 1988 at the *Salón Internacional del Cómic de Barcelona*. The Barcelona *Salón* itself had been established much earlier, in 1981.⁷ This recurring event and the cultural attention it regularly brought to the ninth art during the early postdictatorship is perhaps sufficient in itself to justify the Catalonian capital's prestige relative to other Iberian comics cities.⁸

An oft-repeated account of Spain's progressive immersion in the circuits of global capitalism outlines its gradual exposure to global socioeconomic

and cultural shifts during the 1950s and 1960s, and its full immersion in those dynamics in the postdictatorship after the death of Franco.⁹ Yet instead of imagining a clean break that separates pre-1975 from post-1975 Spain, it is preferable to accept a more fluid and fitful model of political transition. Many of the comics selected for study underscore certain continuities regarding dictatorial policy and normative social attitudes as they extended into the late 1970s and '80s. While this sort of continuity may seem commonsensical to some, it is nevertheless worth emphasizing. For instance, speculative urban policies promulgated before the regime's end continued in the resulting transition. Women still experienced patriarchy as an obstacle in their everyday lives, and queer subcultures, though perhaps increasingly visible in comics counterculture, still faced marginalization in the society at large. Violence rooted in regressive dictatorial ideology was still perpetrated by adherents to Francoism after the dictator's death. It took some time, too, for Catalan publishing to regain the levels it had enjoyed prior to the Civil War. Note also that the graphic style of American underground comix began to influence creators in Spain not after, but rather many years prior to the dictator's death.

Julià Guillamon has reflected at length on Barcelona's countercultural expressions during the 1970s and '80s in his book *La ciutat interrompuda* (2019). There, he offers an instructive assessment of the great sociocultural and -political shifts of the time. The global crisis of 1973 predates Spain's political transition from dictatorship, which is then compounded by the volatility of the globalizing economy heading into the '80s:

El 1976 va començar una recuperació que a Espanya va coincidir amb els primers moments de la transició política, però entre 1979 i 1983 es va produir una segona crisi que va posar en dubte la interpretació evolucionista del creixement i el caràcter progressiu de l'economia. A mitjan anys vuitanta es preparava una mutació econòmica, tecnològica i política de grans conseqüències: mundialització dels intercanvis, explosió de noves tecnologies, emergència de nous països industrials, declivi de les indústries tradicionals. Va aparèixer una societat de la informació: una societat programada, capaç de crear nous models de producció, distribució i consum vàlids per a tota la humanitat.¹⁰

[In 1976, a recovery began that in Spain coincided with the first moments of the political transition, but between 1979 and 1983 there was a second crisis that cast into doubt the evolutionary interpretation of growth and the progressive character of the economy. In the mid-eighties an economic, technological, and political shift of great consequences was

brewing: the globalization of trade, explosion of new technologies, emergence of new industrial countries, decline of traditional industries. An information society appeared: a programmed society, capable of creating new models of production, distribution, and consumption valid for all of humanity.]

Guillamon's description of this period offers important insights that parallel those contained in the present study, not least of all because his book is focused on the entanglements of architecture, urbanism, literature, popular music, and even the ninth art. Comics of the 1970s and '80s gave expression to the social, cultural, and political turbulence of the time through their chosen subjects, themes, and graphic styles. As the above citation from Guillamon's book is also meant to convey, comics were themselves being widely produced, distributed, and consumed in new ways. The analyses carried out in later chapters of the present book—of a comic published in Catalan (ch. 6), a volume sponsored by the Barcelona city government (ch. 7), and the incursion of comics into Olympic marketing campaigns (ch. 8), for example—point to a rapidly evolving postdictatorial comics landscape. From a marginal subculture associated mostly with young readers, comics had developed to acquire significant cultural cachet among adults and was now becoming a mass art form.

Barcelona, City of Comics considers two interlinked aspects of urban comics production. First, there are the visual depictions of streets, buildings, and neighborhoods, as well as other unique urban features, that have been frequently rendered on the comics page. This is the city understood as drawn content. The present survey of comics from the 1970s and 1980s yields no shortage of such urban scenes. Due to the importance of iconic representation for comics art, urban and architectural references are unmistakably concrete—comics readers can see the famed Ramblas, which lead down to the Mediterranean Sea (ch. 3); the city's central Modelo prison (ch. 4), which is now closed but earned its reputation as the site of dictatorial violence; the Eixample district, designed in the mid-nineteenth century (ch. 5); not to mention spectacular constructions such as the short-lived German Pavilion created for the city's 1929 World Fair (ch. 7), and the more enduring architectural creations of Antoni Gaudí (ch. 9). These and other concrete sites in comics narrative call to mind—and bring to the eye—the urban histories and social contexts that make the art form a medium of true cultural significance.

In the postdictatorship, Barcelona's artists connected various sites and sights of the city with less-tangible urban concerns in the ninth art as a way of

exploding the Francoist myth that Spain was a unified and homogeneous culture. They denounced urbanistic speculation (ch. 1), advanced European feminism (ch. 2), and honored the vibrant subcultures of the city streets (ch. 3). Their characters marched the streets in protest (ch. 2), spoke in a local vernacular (ch. 4), sped across the landscape on drug-fueled escapades (ch. 4), and tilted at crass consumerism (ch. 5). Barcelona was a city on the move, and its comics followed suit. Comics creators drew on connections with the American underground (ch. 3), and were inspired by prose literature—a canonical text of early modern Spanish literature (ch. 5) and an English science fiction story (ch. 6), to give two examples. The modes of expression used by comics artists were as varied as their subject matter: salvos of protest (ch. 1) and narratives of action and adventure (ch. 5) unfolded alongside the contemplative and the poetic (ch. 2), the oneiric (ch. 6), and more mundane depictions of the routines of everyday urban life.

Simultaneously, beyond the page border one must acknowledge a second, more broadly social, aspect of Barcelona's comics.¹¹ Illustrations, political cartoons, and comics were an integral part of the late-nineteenth-century graphic press, which catered to adult readership; nonetheless, in the early twentieth century, comics were increasingly created for and marketed toward child readers. The destruction of the Civil War and the forms of censorship enacted under the Francoist dictatorship proved devastating for publishing in general, comics included. It was not until the 1960s that a scholarly consensus began to emerge about the value of the ninth art. Studies authored by Luis Gasca, Antonio Lara, and Román Gubern defiantly challenged the idea that comics were merely of interest to children.¹² The publication of Terenci Moix's book *Los 'còmics', arte para el consumo y formas 'pop'*—originally published in Barcelona in 1968 and then released again in 2007 with the title *Historia social del cómic*—also marked a milestone in the art form's legitimation. In short, comics were finally being taken seriously.

Debuting in 1968, new comics magazines such as *Cuto* (Luis Gasca) and *Bang!* (Antonio Martín and Antonio Lara) promised to inspire deeper reflection and further critical thinking about the medium.¹³ While these and other such experiments might have been somewhat ephemeral, their impact was decisive. By the early 1970s, comics were an identifiable underground subculture. In quick succession, a number of underground fanzines and more or less polished magazines were finding their way to adult readers, whether through kiosk sales or off-market circulation, that is, passed from one reader to another. Interest from a whole generation of comics artists and readers supported a slew of new magazines that with time came to enjoy a cultlike

status in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Antonio Altarriba writes that, in those years, “Llevar bajo el brazo *El Víbora*, *Cairo*, *Madriz*, *El Jueves* o *1984* equivale a mostrar una insignia, casi a anunciar una forma de ser [Carrying *El Víbora*, *Cairo*, *Madriz*, *El Jueves*, or *1984* under one’s arm was equivalent to flashing a badge, almost announcing a form of being].”¹⁴ New publishing houses continued to emerge, for example: the bar, library, and publishing house known as LaSal, founded by Mari Chordà in 1976 (see ch. 2); Norma, founded by Rafael Martínez in 1977; and Complot, by Joan Navarro in 1984.

By the late 1980s, there was evidence of increased awareness that Barcelona’s reputation as a center of comics culture was a relatively unique characteristic and perhaps even an urban branding opportunity.¹⁵ In 1986, Barcelona had been named as the site for the 1992 Olympic Games (see chs. 1, 7, and 8), and its international reputation—as a hub of Catalan language and culture, as a magnet for global tourism, and as a point of convergence for design specialists—was reaching new heights. Offering a window into the increasing connections between municipal government and urban cultures is the 1987 publication of the Catalan-language volume *10 visions de Barcelona en historieta*. Sponsored by the Ajuntament de Barcelona and the Caixa de Barcelona specifically, and edited by Victoria Bermejo (ch. 7), the slim volume contained contributions by a number of high-profile comics artists.¹⁶ The prologue to *10 visions* was written by a member of the Diputació de Barcelona who served from 1983–1991, Maria Aurèlia Capmany, who began with a clear statement of pride and purpose: “Ja és prou sabut de tothom que la nostra ciutat aporta a l’art de dibuixar historietes un gran contingent d’artistes reconeguts arreu [It is well known that our city brings to the art of drawing comics a large contingent of renowned artists].” Near the close of the twentieth century, similar sentiments were invoked in the publication of *El còmic a Barcelona: 12 dibuixants per al segle XXI* (1998), a volume that sought to renew interest the Catalanian capital’s time-honored and well-earned position as an urban comics center. It contained two unequivocal statements: noted comics editor Joan Navarro affirmed that Barcelona was “la ciutat dels tebeos [the city of comics],” and the city’s mayor Joan Clos also weighed in, asserting that it was “la capital indiscutible de la indústria del còmic al nostre país [the indisputable capital of the comics industry in our country].”¹⁷ However promotional the language of these comments might seem to be, they cannot be dismissed as mere strategic boosterism. That is, there is indeed ample evidence to back up these claims of Barcelona’s strong reputation as a comics city. This reputation is not merely a matter of comics history; it is also part of the twenty-first-century comics landscape. As Jordi

Riera Pujal underscored in 2011, the Catalan capital “és el cap i casal de l'edició de còmic a l'estat amb xifres als últims anys que superen de llarg el 90% del total tan en número d'exemplars com de facturació [leads the country in the publication of comics, with figures in recent years far exceeding 90 percent of the total in terms of both the number of copies and earnings].”¹⁸

In the twenty-first century, comics scholarship has shown no shortage of interest in investigating the development of the ninth art in Spain, and Barcelona has proven an indispensable reference. The relatively late arrival of the serious mode of comics criticism alluded to above has meant that even contemporary scholarship exploring the ninth art faces a difficult task. That is to say, while today it might be an easy task to identify book-length scholarship on comics in Spain, these texts frequently must throw themselves headlong into the unenviable task of having to account for the vast breadth of comics produced in the country. Francisca Lladó Pol's *Los cómics de la transición (el boom del cómic adulto 1975–84)* (2001), Viviane Alary's *Historietas, cómics y tebeos españoles* (2002), Ana Merino's *El cómic hispánico* (2002), Pablo Dopico's *El cómic underground español, 1970–1980* (2005), and Pedro Pérez del Solar's *Imágenes del desencanto: nueva historieta española 1980–1986* (2013) contain masterful accounts of the comics landscape in Spain, as well as insightful discussions of specific artists, images, and panels, with an equally important emphasis on the broad view of the historian. Santiago García's *La novela gráfica* (2010, just like its English translation *On the Graphic Novel*, 2015) takes the time to explore the art form's development in transnational perspective, with particular attention paid to examples from Anglophone comics. Readers looking for information on a full panorama of artists from Spain will certainly find the aforementioned books by Lladó Pol, Alary, Merino, Dopico, and Pérez del Solar to be of great use. Recent publications such as *Consequential Art* (2019), edited by Samuel Amago and Matthew Marr, my own *The Art of Pere Joan* (2019), and *Spanish Graphic Narrative* (2020), edited by Collin McKinney and David F. Richter, delve farther into the creations of specific auteurs.

Barcelona, City of Comics does not set out to construct a sweeping historical panorama. Its chapters thus necessarily leave out many Barcelona-based comics artists who deserve further recognition: Bernet, Boldú, Brocal, Cifré, F. de Felipe, Kim, and Pellejero, for example.¹⁹ Moreover, two of the most esteemed comics artists connected with the City of Comics, for example—Nazario and Max, each known by a single name as is sometimes done in the comics world—have already attracted high levels of scholarly attention.²⁰ Accordingly, here they are only mentioned in passing in discussion of the

Rollo (ch. 3, other founders are the subject of ch. 5 and ch. 8). A few chapters are dedicated to widely recognized artists whose comics work has not yet been sufficiently investigated—Miguel Gallardo and Juan Mediavilla (ch. 4), Pere Joan (ch. 6), and Mariscal (ch. 8), for example. Others delve into artists whose work was foundational in postdictatorial Barcelona comics but who have not yet been the lead topic of Anglophone criticism—Montse Clavé (ch. 2), Martí (ch. 3), Pepichek (ch. 3), and Antonio Pamies (ch. 5), for instance. Profiles on Victoria Bermejo (ch. 7), who exerted a modernizing force and dedicated herself to increasing the recognition afforded comics in Barcelona, and Juan Linares (ch. 7), who soon gravitated toward architecture, illustration, and graphic design, reveal the interconnectedness of the ninth art with other visual arts and creative industries. Still other chapters look at numerous artists at once—e.g., a pathbreaking collective composed of numerous artists, *Butifarra!* (ch. 1), and the persistent visual references to Gaudí in the postdictatorial comic (ch. 9).

It is important to acknowledge transnational interest in urban comics by considering the intersection of urban studies and comics studies. Work situated at this intersection responds to an important subset of questions within an increasingly interdisciplinary terrain. Comics scholar Hilary Chute's book *Why Comics?* (2017) devotes an entire chapter to the question "Why Cities?"—writing that comics "are inspired by and reflect the energy, diversity, and populism of cities."²¹ Though centering mostly on the anglophone world, her diagnosis can be easily spark deep explorations of the ninth art's urban significance in other global spaces. Recent volumes such as *Urban Comics* (2019, by Dominic Davies), *Visible Comics, Global Cities* (2019, by Benjamin Fraser), *Comic Book Geographies* (2014, edited by Jason Dittmer), and the foundational *Comics and the City* (2010, edited by Jörn Ahrens and Arno Meteling), all testify to the need to not only to approach comics on their own terms, but moreover to consider the deep resonance between comics and the modern city. Through their geographical breadth and varied theoretical frames in particular, the chapters collected in the volumes put together by Ahrens and Meteling and by Dittmer significantly expand the connections that can be established between comics and urban cultural geography.

The city is not just a backdrop for comics. Instead, as Dominic Davies recognizes in the first pages of his book, readers of urban comics must prioritize the infrastructural qualities of comics form and to connect comics and graphic narrative with urban space.²² This implies a cultural studies methodology that prompts closer examination of the links between comics

and urbanization. My introduction to *Visible Cities, Global Comics* asserts that comics themselves are urban in three interrelated senses that must be acknowledged at once:

subject matter, artistic form, and method of production: First, the city becomes a privileged subject of comics. Second, the panel and gutter structure of comic strips, in particular, reflects the way in which art was impacted by tropes of linearity and rational planning that were themselves synonymous with the urban form. Third, the mass production of comics showcases its links with forms of industrialization that are urban in origin.²³

Simply put, a cultural studies approach to comics must attempt to balance what Raymond Williams called the project (art) and the formation (society).²⁴ In reconciling urban art and urban society, this project thus entails not solely a sociohistorical perspective on comics, but simultaneously an understanding of how specific comics function in aesthetic terms.

Architecture can be a privileged part of this sort of analysis. Urban representations in comics are at times—perhaps frequently, but certainly not solely—architectural in nature. Catherine Labio makes a compelling case for linking the two subjects in her article titled “The Architecture of Comics” (2015), and a host of book-length publications have already been published that delve deeper into these connections. For instance, the Franco-Belgian comics tradition is explored in *Attention travaux!: Architectures de bande dessinée* (1985, by Lionel Guyon, François Mutterer, and Vincent Lunel), *Architecture dans le neuvième art / Architectuur in de negende kunst* (1996, by Pascal Lefèvre and Christophe Canon), *La banlieue de Paris dans la bande dessinée* (2001, by Isabelle Papieau), and *Archi & BD: La ville dessinée* (2010, by Jean-Marc Thévenet and Francis Rambert). Comics produced in other areas of the globe also receive deserved attention in Diane Luther’s *Neo Tokyo 3: Architecture in Manga and Anime* (2008) and Mélanie Van Der Hoorn’s *Bricks and Balloons: Architecture in Comic-Strip Form* (2012). My *Visible Cities, Global Comics* has synthesized architectural and urban concerns in analyzing a range of global comics whose artists are connected in one way or another with Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, England, France, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, the United States, and Uruguay.²⁵

Barcelona’s status as a paradigmatic global city, in particular, means that those investigating its urban comics culture further are able to draw on wealth of scholarly books already published in the social sciences and humanities. Given the city’s history of perennial cultural reimagination, it is

no surprise that its progressive urbanization has enjoyed continual critical attention in the past two decades. Among the most relevant and notable works in this area are surely *La ciudad mentirosa: fraude y miseria del 'modelo Barcelona'* (2007, by Manuel Delgado), *La metaciudad: Barcelona. Transformación de una metrópolis* (2008, by Mónica Degen and Marisol García), *Barcelona's Vocation of Modernity: Rise and Decline of an Urban Image* (2008, by Joan Ramon Resina), *Thinking Barcelona: Ideologies of a Global City* (2012, by Edgar Illas), *The Barcelona Reader* (2017, edited by Enric Bou and Jaume Subirana), and *The Global Cultural Capital: Addressing the Citizen and Producing the City in Barcelona* (2017, by Mari Paz Balibrea). As many of these books note, the city's role as host of the 1992 Olympic Games is a key point of reference for understanding the cultural shifts that are inseparable from Barcelona's progressive urbanization (ch. 8). Yet that mega-event is not the only such reference: there is also the legacy of its nineteenth-century planning by Ildefons Cerdà (ch. 5) to consider, as well as the International Expositions held there in both 1888 and 1929 (ch. 7, ch. 9).

In line with an urban cultural studies method,²⁶ the present book carries out a series of close readings of the artistic qualities of individual comics—attentive to both the presence of architecture on the comics page and the architecture of the comics page itself. This involves attending not merely to iconic depictions and notions of plot and theme but most importantly to the mechanics of page layout, panel size and shape, panel transitions, gutters, word balloons, and so on. On occasion these analyses connect with the work of comics theorists such as Thierry Groensteen, Scott McCloud, Andrei Molotiu, and Barbara Postema. In truth, however, no knowledge of comics theory is required of the reader. The point of structuring the book's chapters around these analyses is to spend more time with the visual art as it appears on the page than would be possible in a more directly historical or theoretical monograph. The attention paid to page-level aesthetics acquires meaning only within the social framework of the postdictatorial city. It also provides brief references to the hallmark insights of urban theorists. Where appropriate, these chapters also allude to the state of the comics industry. These theoretical and historical references are usually cast in terms broad enough that they do not overly distract from the close analyses of images and the biographical profiles of selected artists. The goal has been to achieve a certain balance between discussion of page aesthetics and discussion of the more broadly cultural and social significance of comics.

The order of the nine chapters that follow is chronological, though not strictly so. Gathering them into three groups of three provides an approximate

timeline for tracing major themes and moments in the development of the postdictatorial comic. That said, all of the chapters—with the exception of the last one—overwhelmingly center on what Antonio Altarriba calls the second cycle of comics in postwar Spain.²⁷ Altarriba identifies three overlapping periods of note: the first lasted from the end of the Civil War and continued strong through the 1950s, waning as the '70s approached. During this cycle, comics were shaped by an industrial mode of production. Authorship was largely anonymized, and readers were primarily children. The second cycle, which began in the 1960s and declined in the '90s, was overwhelmingly magazine-driven and catered to a mixed readership of both children and adults. The third cycle began in the 1990s and was characterized by the medium's comparative loss of countercultural cachet. Focusing on the second cycle of postwar comics in Spain gives readers a sense of how authorship began to emerge as a value during the postdictatorship. This cycle valued the *auteur* comic. It imbued creators with more or less total creative control over their output, which further encouraged a push toward violent, sexual, or political themes that were more consistent with the idea of the “comic for adults.” Because these auteurs were free to publish their work in multiple places, readers of this book also gain a sense of the diverse publishing landscapes as they existed at the time. Later chapters in the book bring attention to the diverging perspectives on comics held by, on one hand, adherents of the countercultural style that waned during the 1990s and, on the other, those who celebrated new opportunities for comics artists able to pivot toward the wider art world.

The three chapters in Part I, “The Right to the City,” center on comics published from 1976 to 1979. Consistent with an urban cultural studies approach, this first section foregrounds the interrelationship and even the mutual urban influence of what Raymond Williams called the project and the formation, or in other terms, art and society.²⁸ Uniting comics art and urban social movements in Barcelona, each chapter points to a common theme that Henri Lefebvre, so-called godfather of 1968, as well as Barcelona-based Lefebvrian urban theorist Manuel Delgado, have called the “right to the city.” Chapter 1, “The Housing Question: Anti-urbanistic Salvos from *Butifarra!*,” delves into the history of a pathbreaking comics collective originally formed in 1975 and analyzes a special album titled *El urbanismo feroz*. Chapter 2, “A Space of Her Own: Montse Clavé’s Feminist Urban Revolution,” turns to an artist who began as a member of the *Butifarra!* team and went on to be widely acknowledged as a pioneer in postdictatorial feminist comics. Chapter 3, “*A la calle*: Martí, Pepichek, and the Underground Style of El Rollo,” explores

the presence and political importance of street scenes in postdictatorial comics magazines created by a group of auteurs publishing under the name Los Tebeos del Rrollo.

The three chapters in Part II, “On the Move,” center on comics from 1976–1984. The analyses in this section build on the significance that public areas of the city held for populations and subcultures who had been marginalized under the dictatorship. The protagonists of these comics seek escape—from institutions, from alienating social relationships, or from the drudgery of the everyday. All are out of place with respect to their contemporary society. Chapter 4, “A Comix Jailbreak: *Fuga en la Modelo* by Miguel Gallardo and Juan Mediavilla,” explores an iconic 1981 jailbreak narrative from the Modelo prison in central Barcelona. Chapter 5, “Out of Place in the Eixample: Tilt-ing at Windmills with Antonio Pamies,” addresses the rapid acceleration of Barcelona’s urban transformations through an urban reboot of *El Quijote* by Miguel de Cervantes. Chapter 6, “Mobile Societies: Space, Place, and Non-place in Pere Joan’s *Passatger en trànsit*,” turns to a foundational early-1980s adaptation of the English short story “Man in Transit,” prompting discussion of the cultural and linguistic changes unfolding in the postdictatorship.

The three chapters in Part III, “Design Aesthetics and Architecture,” center on a slightly later period, 1979–1987. This allows readers to assess the shifts in Barcelona’s comic scene as what Altarriba designated as the second cycle of comics production waned. The comics form is invoked in other chapters as a reaffirmation of the use value of everyday urban life in Barcelona, thus as a form of resistance against the speculative schemes of capitalist builders and technicians. The rising cultural popularity of comics in the 1990s brings the art form into greater dialogue with larger-scale issues, including even a certain triumphant and triumphalist discourse of urban modernity intent on selling place. Chapter 7, “Spectacular Modernity: The Urban Visions of Victoria Bermejo and Juan Linares,” explores the volume *10 visions de Barcelona en historietes* (1987), an important urban comics anthology released one year after the announcement, in 1986, that Barcelona would be the site for the 1992 Olympic Games. Chapter 8, “Branding *Bar Cel Ona*: Mariscal’s Design Aesthetics and the Business of Comics,” investigates the comics legacy of one of the founding members of El Rrollo, responsible for both an iconic *Bar Cel Ona* poster and the creation of the mascot of the Summer Olympic Games, Cobi. Chapter 9, “Architecture, Antoni Gaudí, and the Global Urban Imagination,” highlights the comics representation of Gaudí’s renowned constructions—the Sagrada Família, La Pedrera/Casa Milà, and Casa Batlló,

for example—moving quickly from its appearance in the postdictatorial era through 2017.

There are many stories about comics in Spain still waiting to be told. Rather than attempt to tell them all, this book offers only its piece of a larger puzzle.²⁹ On the heels of twenty-first-century contemporary comics criticism that has explored the art form's connection with cities, space, geography, and urban theory, *Barcelona, City of Comics* elucidates the contributions of selected Iberian comics artists to a specific set of urban themes. As the book's three sections make clear, comics in postdictatorial Barcelona were intimately intertwined with urban social reality. They could be provocative, even radical. Many artists called out social and economic injustices directly, while others did so more indirectly, simply by chronicling the day-to-day realities of life at the urban margins. Employing the language of the ninth art, Barcelona's comics artists collectively forged a visual archive whose drawn pages promise to reveal the urban phenomenon's multiple dimensions. The hope is that reader will have gained a general understanding of certain analytical threads: concerning the evolution of postdictatorial comics culture, the iconic status of architectural sites in Barcelona's urban modernity, the post-1968 emphasis on the use-value of the city, and the way that Barcelona's urban comics evolved in parallel to the city's reputation in the wider global imagination.