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RESEARCH

A Historical Approach to Webcomics: Digital Authorship in the Early 2000s

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Available on the web and often excerpted by the visually-oriented algorithms of social media feeds, webcomics arguably have the broadest reach of any form of comics, yet they remain under-theorized. Given the close association with the development of the mode (digital technology) and the medium (webcomics) that Campbell (2006) points out in his history of the form, webcomics ought to be studied alongside other digital media, approached not just as comics, but as a series of websites and webpages where comics appear amidst such elements as ads, banners, links, and comments, all of which shift over time. By discussing not just the comics, but also the contextual elements of the webpages and websites of reciprocal guest comics from Jeph Jacques's *Questionable Content* (QC) and Sam Logan's *Sam and Fuzzy*, this article applies a historically-focused approach to webcomics as digital media to demonstrate how the attention economy, where 'eyeballs' are a form of currency, recasts relationships between authors so they are characterized by cooperative competition via webcomics collectives. Webcomics, as serial texts published by the same author over long periods of time, can teach us much about how developments in digital technology have shaped digital media over time.

Available on the web and often excerpted by the visually-oriented algorithms of social media feeds, webcomics arguably have the broadest reach of any form of comics, yet they remain under-theorized. This lack of scholarly attention to the form may exist in large part thanks to the diversity enabled by the lack of gatekeeping on the web, as well as the vast changes in webcomic creation, posting, and marketing that have developed as the form has evolved alongside digital technology. Given the close association with the development of the mode (digital technology) and the medium (webcomics) that Campbell (2006) points out in his history of the form,

webcomics ought to be studied alongside other digital media, approached not just as comics, but as a series of websites and webpages where comics appear amidst ads, banners, links, comments, and other elements, such as author social media accounts or the blog-like newsposts that some authors write to accompany a posted comic. The frequent shifting of these contextual elements should also encourage scholars to consider webcomics within particular historical frames. As odd as it might seem to historicize within a twenty-year span, the swift development of digital technology necessitates this contextualization if research is to remain relevant over time.

Scholarship has mainly focused on the opportunities the digital space provides for comics. Scott McCloud's (2000) notion of the 'infinite canvas,' meaning the ability of digital comics to innovate beyond current page-based formats, remains the touchstone for such scholarship. Perhaps because of this influence, there has been much attention to alt-text, which is text that appears when a user scrolls over the comic (Kashtan 2018; Bramlett 2018). While analyses of alt-text and the notion of the infinite canvas do take into account the digital nature of such comics, when I suggest we consider comics as digital media, I mean we need to widen our scope beyond the comics themselves to pay attention to their digital contexts and how those digital contexts shape the comics. This attention to context will also necessarily involve paying attention to digital history because webcomics are often published in series over time, and thus their appearance and form shift with the digital landscape. In arguing for a historical approach to these digital media, I build on Julien Baudry's (2018) work on the evolving aesthetics of French webcomics to propose a new methodology that considers webcomics, and the sites and pages in which they appear, as information rich media grounded in a particular time.

This article applies this historically-focused approach to comics as digital media in order to reveal a new perspective on how the attention economy of the internet reframes traditional notions of authorship. In this case, my historical approach reveals a form of cooperative competition amongst authors trying to succeed in the attention economy of the internet in the early 2000s. I accomplish this goal by discussing not just the comics, but the other elements of the webpages and websites of Jeph Jacques's *Questionable Content* (*QC*) and Sam Logan's *Sam and Fuzzy* from

2004–2007. Note that the methodology I demonstrate through this example is two pronged: I both contextualize these comics within their web contexts amongst forums, newsposts, advertisements, and other elements of the authors' websites, and focus my analysis on how these elements provide insight into a particular historical period on the web when search algorithms encouraged cooperative competition. I have chosen the early 2000s for my analysis because historians of webcomics mark that time span as a period of growth. The first Web Cartoonist Choice Awards occurred in 2001, Eisner Awards added a digital category in 2005, and as contentious as Scott McCloud's *Reinventing Comics* has become, historians mark its publication in 2000 as a watershed moment for the medium (Garrity 2011). While my analysis of this time reveals much about digital authorship in the early 2000s, the digital context of these comics, as I point out in the conclusion, has since shifted considerably due to the impacts of social media and crowdfunding. My point in focusing on a narrow time span in two long running comics is to demonstrate how webcomics, because they are created using digital means and are published over a long period of time, often capture the effects the vast and rapid shifts of digital technology have on digital media.

I focus on Jacques's and Logan's comics within this time period because the authors still carry on a 'rivalry' to this day that exemplifies the cooperative competition that characterized digital authorship in the early 2000s. The rivalry began when, in his newspost for July 7, 2004, Logan posted a callout of Jacques:

'I've decided to pick a fight with good buddy and fellow Dayfree Press-er Jeph, of *Questionable Content*. My reasons for doing so are numerous. For one thing, he has more readers than me. But more importantly, he offends me on a *profound and inexcusable level.* Also, he is kind of shifty looking, and I hear he has unpleasant body odor' (Logan 2004a).

That evening, Jacques started a thread on *Sam and Fuzzy*'s forum called 'Sam Logan is a Scoundrel and a Poltroon,' where he insulted Logan with claims such as 'Sam Logan stages brutal hobo fighting tournaments in his basement, or as he calls it, his

'Hobolliseum of Doom' (Jacques 2004a). Other readers joined in, adding their own insults about either Logan or Jacques to the thread. On July 8, Jacques responded in a newspost with

> 'It has come to my attention that Sam Logan has called me out to start a webcomic rivalry! Now that we are HELLA RIVALS I can confide in you, my trusty readers, that Mr. Logan is a fraud, a coward, and a villain most nefarious' (Jacques 2004b).

The main point of the rivalry was to come up with the most ridiculous insult, much in the same vein as the one upsmanship present in yo mama jokes. At first glance, this rivalry, begun with Logan's claim that Jacques has more readers than he does, makes sense given traditional conceptions of romantic authorship, a category designed to promote the individual as part of a capitalist economic system.

But upon closer examination, we see that the relationships between individual authors change when placed in the economy of attention that defines the internet. This rivalry is a joke meant to promote one another rather than a sincere competition. The pages with the insults I just referenced also include links to each other's websites, so that, even amidst their 'rivalry' the two authors are providing access points to each other's work. They promote one another because Logan and Jacques both belong to Dayfree Press, a webcomics collective where all members link to one another in order to increase readership across the board. Logan mentions their common membership in his original callout ('fellow Dayfree Press-er Jeph'), and, even more telling, the Dayfree Press ad on Jacques's site on the day he throws down the gauntlet is for Logan's *Sam and Fuzzy* (**Figure 1**). These links helped each author advance in Google search results, which, in the early 2000s, were based on the number of links to a site. The fact that the rivalry is a joke meant for promotion, rather than a true attempt at competing, captures the kinds of relationships authors in an attention economy have with one another. In the online context, authors still compete for the limited resource of readers' attention (as James G. Webster (2014: 10) reminds us, there are still only 24 hours in a day and audiences must choose what media to consume), but a spirit of cooperation tempers that competition. Jacques

Figure 1: Jacques, J (2004) Smoking Ain't Allowed in School *Questionable Content.* First appeared in July 2004 as shown. Comic available at https://www.questiona-blecontent.net/view.php?comic=151; Ad accessed via the WayBack Machine and no longer available.

and Logan, as individuals, still have to compete for the limited resource of attention, but they do so by bolstering one another's web status via links. During this period, the currency of links in the early Google search algorithm encouraged partnerships that helped individuals compete in an increasingly crowded marketplace. That spirit of cooperation causes us to rethink traditional notions of romantic authorship, particularly as authors position themselves as readers of one another's work.

The attention economy of the internet encourages a different kind of relationship between authors than the competitive one seen in the material world of print. As my description of the fake rivalry between Logan and Jacques demonstrates, this economic system recasts relationships between authors so they are characterized by cooperative competition via webcomics collectives. We see these relationships most

clearly in reciprocal guest comics, where authorship becomes a readerly practice as collective members post readings of their fellow authors' work in the same space as the main webcomic. Based on this analysis, I argue that webcomics present a valuable archive of digital media from the early 2000s that shows how relationships in the attention economy of the digital realm differ from those in the economy of material goods. As Jonathan Crary (1999) notes, attention has been a key component of capitalism since at least the nineteenth century: the idea that successful cultural producers catch the attention of consumers drives approaches to marketing in the material world as it does in the digital world. However, as Yves Citton (2017) has suggested, in the digital world, attention becomes 'the new scarcity,' and this shift alters the relationship between consumers and producers (20). Reciprocal guest comics allow us to glimpse how the attention economy shifts the relationship between authorship and readership in the digital context. Webcomics authors mobilize the tendency for the digital space to blur readership and authorship as part of economic strategy, encouraging us to rethink what it means to be an author on the web. Though this relationship shifts in the early 2000s based on the particularities of search algorithms of the time, the cooperative competitive version of authorship I describe here continues today. Approaching webcomics as digital media tied to the original contexts in which they are published helps reveal this reframed version of authorship.

Economics of Readership and Authorship

In most scholarship, writers and readers remain separate, with edited collections devoted to one or the other. Authorship is associated with notions of individual Romantic genius. Foucault (2006: 285) connects authorship to 'a system of ownership and strict copyright rules', and Martha Woodmansee and Peter Jaszi (1994: 5–6) remind us that these copyright rules were connected to the 'possessive individualism' of early capitalism in England. Authors needed to assert control over their texts in order to make money from them, making the function of authorship an economic one. Even more recent conversations about authorship are concerned with authors 'getting credit' (to use an economic metaphor) for their work, asserting moral or legal rights over their productions, whether they be films (Caldwell 2003; Brisbin 2003), television shows (Gillan 2011), or some other form of text broadly defined (Ruggill &

McAllister 2013; Hilmes 2003). All of these discussions are interested in recovering the multiple authors in order to determine who owns the text.

Studies of readers, by contrast, turn away from the author, focusing on how readers put the text to their own uses. As Carl F. Kaestle et. al. highlight, 'there is little evidence of detailed responses by readers in the past, especially among ordinary people' (1991: 50). Therefore, it makes sense that scholars often take ethnographic approaches to recover reading communities, as Janice Radway (1984) does in studying how women use romance novels for gender identity formation, and as Elizabeth McHenry (2002) does in examining how literary societies help nineteenth-century African Americans forge a new, distinctly American identity. While both of these works situate reading as an active practice, they focus on how readers read works against the grain, often positioning readers in opposition to authors. Comics scholarship on readers has employed similar methodologies and come to similar conclusions (Brown 2000; Gibson 2015). In both scholarship on authorship and scholarship on readership, readers and authors retain an antagonistic relationship to one another. For authors, there's the sense that pandering to an audience compromises artistic integrity, while readers are frequently cast as underestimated or misunderstood by authors. Thus, scholarship enacts Barthes's (2006) statement that the author must die in order for the reader to be reborn.

Despite previous separation of authors and readers, reading and writing on the internet are characterized by a blurring of the lines between these two forces as reading becomes a more interactive process. Axel Bruns (2008) named this blurring of boundaries 'produsage,' which he defines as 'the collaborative and continuous building and extending of existing content in pursuit of further improvement' (21). He connects the emergence of produsage to the shift from an industrial economy where 'only industrial producers…were directly involved in production processes, while audiences were cast in the role of consumers' (17), to a networked economy, where 'the creation of shared content takes place in a networked, participatory environment which breaks down the boundaries between producers and consumers and instead enables all participants to be users as well as producers of information and knowledge—frequently in a hybrid role of produser where usage is necessarily

productive' (21). To relate this description to authorship and reading, whereas in an industrial society, authors and other privileged members of book distribution networks, such as printers and booksellers, were the only ones who could shape texts, in the networked society of texts on the internet, readers, as produsers, can also shape texts. In other words, while it may have made sense to separate scholarship on authorship from scholarship on readership in the industrial age of print, in the networked age of the internet, it makes more sense to examine how interactions between the two forces might shape texts. Yet Bruns's claims about producers and consumers are a bit too idealistic. True, anyone can produce content and usage often involves production, but in order to actually become public, authorship must garner attention. According to Foucault (2006), lots of people may be writers, but only those identified by their names become authors. Thus, authorship remains a privileged position for those able to attract attention. Many webcomics authors in the early 2000s, like many creators of digital media, accomplished that goal through a combination of cross promotion, public reading, and guest authorship, all tactics dependent on digital search algorithms of a particular era, but which continue to shape webcomics and their communities today.

Cooperative Competition

Because of its origins, authorship is always bound up in questions of economics. When the economics of authorship shift from those of one based on material goods to the attention economy of the internet, relationships develop the quality of cooperative competition. I began this article by laying out the rivalry between Logan and Jacques because I wanted to highlight how economies of authorship on the web are still competitive, but are also cooperative. Competition doesn't go away entirely; it shifts so that those trying to reach audiences or sell products aim to capture attention on the internet as a means of attracting currency in the capitalist economy. As Richard Lanham (2006) reminds us, just as money is limited in a capitalist economy, attention is limited in the attention economy of the internet, where ideas take the place of material objects. As internet marketing expert Damian Ryan explains,

'With the internet airwaves now so busy, the threshold for making even the smallest ripples on the web is high. This places huge importance on creativity and the ability to resonate with consumers in a memorable, emotive and engaging way' (2014: 269).

Webcomics authors, like everyone else on the web, must compete for audience attention in order to gain readers, and studying how they do so illuminates the kinds of relationships in the attention economy more broadly.

One of the main ways to gain attention on the internet is through Google search results, which operate based on the PageRank algorithm. In the early days of Google, this algorithm determined the order of search results based on the number of links a page received from other sites. Sites that received a large number of links appeared higher in the search order than sites that received fewer links. While the algorithm has since been complicated because it could easily be exploited, it makes sense that cooperation could help authors gain attention within such a system: if I agree to link to you and you agree to link to me, then we both get links that help us advance in the search results order over people who don't have those partnerships (Technology Quarterly 2004). In this context, webcomics collectives, which provided a sort of 'virtual bookshelf' of webcomics sites via their front pages helped webcomics authors gain attention. They received links from the collective front page, as well as from one another via the rotating ad that appeared on each member's site, making cooperation a way to compete for attention.

The mission statement for Dayfree Press, the collective to which Jacques and Logan belonged, captures how webcomics authorship is characterized by coopera-tive competition. Founded in 2003 by Neil Gustavson, the Dayfree Press mission was to, 'bring a small group of web cartoonists together in order to be a stronger force on the internet' (Gustavson 2003). In the collective, authors cooperate as a 'small group of web cartoonists' that form a 'community of readers and creators' (Gustavson 2003). However, unlike other groups of authors, from coterie writing groups to the

Bloomsbury group, these authors used their community to become more competitive, to 'be a stronger force on the internet' by 'sharing readers' and 'cross-promoting each other' (Gustavson 2003). This cross promotion allowed each member to gain a more advantageous position in the Google search results. Not only would the *Sam and Fuzzy* ad on the *QC* site I mentioned earlier help *Sam and Fuzzy* move higher in Google search results, but it would also draw readers' attention to *Sam and Fuzzy* and provide access through a link to the site, thereby facilitating a carryover of readership from *QC* to *Sam and Fuzzy*. The participation in the collective helped collective members access the limited supply of attention and build bigger audiences.

Cooperation with other collective members allowed authors to attract the attention of readers in the virtual space of the internet and facilitated their participation in the economy of material goods that existed outside the web space.[1] The rivalry I began with, long running though it is (there are references to it each time Logan or Jacques write guest comics for one another), is insincere, characterized by its joking one upsmanship rather than any kind of actual substance (I'll refer you back to the fact that it begins because Logan thinks Jacques is 'shifty eyed'). It is, instead, the parody of a rivalry in a space characterized by cooperative competition, as captured by an autobiographical panel that Jacques (n.d.) posted on *QC* after sitting with Logan at a booth for the comics convention Sakura-con in 2007 (**Figure 2**).

The text references the rivalry, with Jacques claiming that 'Sam and I are mortal enemies,' and the speech bubbles highlight how each author is drawing their character abusing the other author's character. Yet the two authors are sharing a table and sitting amicably next to one another, as was common when in the same collective, since members often networked with one another in order to split the cost of attending conventions where they encouraged their loyal readers to buy the material goods—shirts, prints, books—that earned them their living. The cooperative competition that originates in the internet space, then, also permeates webcomics

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[1] The connection of the attention economy of the internet to the capitalist economy of material goods outside the web space that we see in this panel reminds us of the stakes for capturing attention on the internet, suggesting why competitive forces still exist despite seeming internet freedom. While attention might be desirable, there is still the desire to convert that attention into currency to purchase material goods.
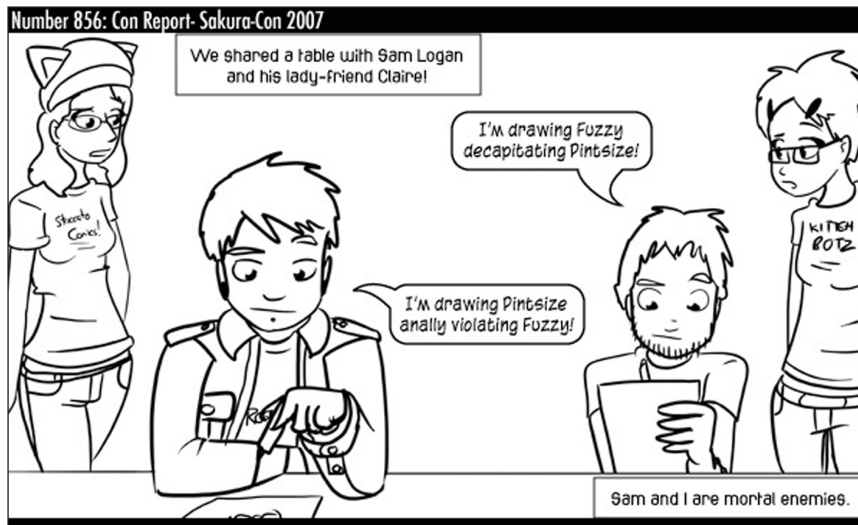
Figure 2: Jacques, J (n.d.) Con Report-Sakura Con 2007. *Questionable Content.* Available at https://www.questionablecontent.net/view.php?comic=856.

author interactions in the space of material goods. As Aaron Kashtan (2018: 104) notes, establishing a large enough audience to justify printing a book, a material object, is a mark of success for most web cartoonists.

In this example, we see how this cooperative competition leads to a destabilization of the competitive focus we expect in romantic versions of material authorship as the authors borrow characters from one another in a version of a comics crossover that positions them as readers of one another's work while also positioning them as authors. Each is authoring his own drawing, but the use of the other author's character situates each author as a reader, too. The relationship between these authors demonstrates how their cooperation helped them compete in an attention economy, and illuminates how the dominance of Google encouraged cooperative economic relationships in the internet space.

Reciprocal Guest Comics

If we consider the currency of links, the practice of reciprocal guest comics makes economic sense. The usual practice for guest strips is to label the guest strip with the guest author's name and then link to the guest author's webcomics site in the newspost that follows the comic. Often, the author who wrote the guest strip will reciprocate the favor for the person who ran the guest strip. Drawn in the style of

the guest author, the guest strip runs in the same web space as the normal author's strips (i.e. If I go to the normal website on the day of a guest strip, I will see the guest strip in the same place I would see a strip drawn by the regular author), and usually provides the guest author's interpretation of the characters in that webcomic. Think of guest comics as akin to fan fiction, but, rather than appearing in a fan only space, the fan fiction appears where the media it interprets would appear, foregrounding the guest cartoonist as both reader (because the strip is an interpretation, a reading) and author (because the strip is marked by the guest cartoonist's style and ideas).

Shortly after the announcement about the rivalry, Logan composed a guest comic for *QC* that Jacques claims 'distills every aspect of QC down into one single comic' (Jacques 2004c). Early in *QC*'s run, the main drama of the strip stems from the tension between Faye and Marten, roommates who have a lot in common. Marten wants to be with Faye, but just when we think they're about to finally get together, something else comes up. The guest strip from Logan highlights these aspects of the narrative by having Faye start to tell Marten something only to be interrupted by a variety of distractions including Marten's robot Pintsize playing golf in the toilet; Steve, a character we haven't seen in a while, emerging gasping from the closet; and government agents searching for the space owl mentioned a few strips before (**Figure 3**).

In the last panel of the strip, we learn that Faye was not, in fact, trying to tell Marten that she loved him as her repeated 'Marten I lo—' would suggest. Instead, we find that she was merely trying to tell him that she lost one of his musical albums (Logan 2004b). The way Logan both exploits reader desires and drops in obscure references demonstrates that he reads *QC* on a regular basis, and his authorship of this strip constitutes his interpretation of the strip. By placing this strip on the *QC* website, Jacques and Logan effectively share authorship in a way characteristic of cooperative competition.

The cooperative competition that destabilizes the boundaries between author and reader continues when Jacques writes a corresponding guest strip for Logan in November of 2004 (Jacques 2004d). Jacques (2004e) tells us in his news post
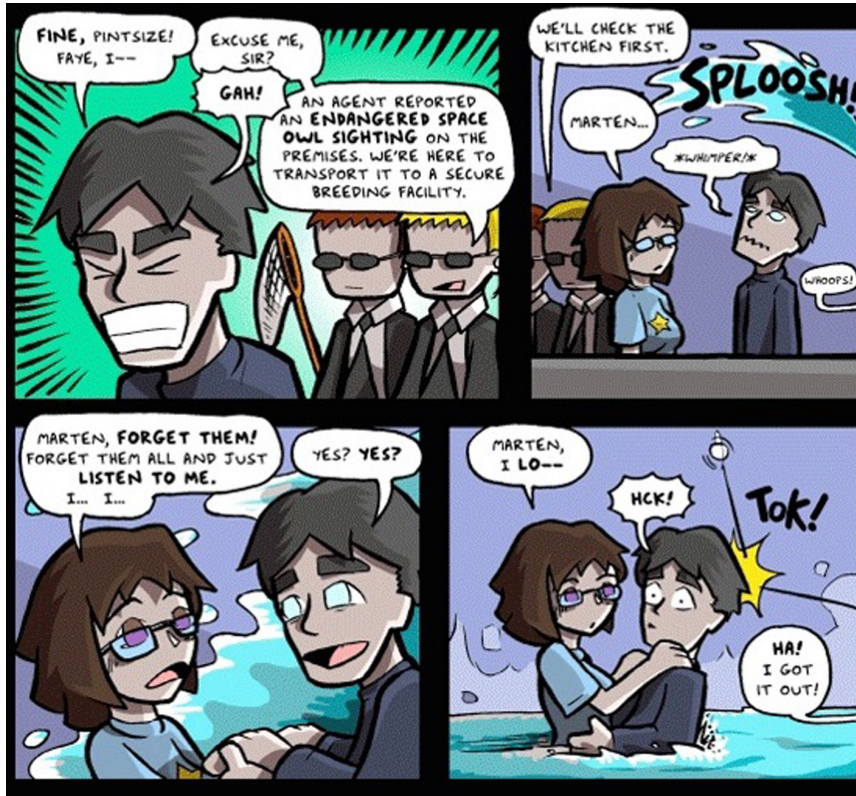
Figure 3: Logan, S (2004) QC Guest Week: Sam Logan. On: Jacques, J, *Question- able Content*. 19 July. Available at https://www.questionablecontent.net/view. php?comic=155.

for *QC* where he links to his guest comic on *Sam and Fuzzy* that he wanted to draw out the similarities between *QC* and *Sam and Fuzzy* in his guest strip, such as the drama between Sam and Alexa—akin to the drama between Faye and Marten that Logan references in his guest comic—and the similar impishness of Pintsize and Fuzzy. Like Logan's guest strip, Jacques's guest strip situates him as simultaneously author and reader: while the strip is drawn in Jacques's style, the demonstrated knowledge of Sam, Alexa, and Fuzzy shows that Jacques reads *Sam and Fuzzy*. In the strip, Jacques's characters visit the bookstore where Logan's characters work. While they are visiting, Fuzzy sets all the books by Arthur C. Clarke on fire. When Alexa goes to put out the fire, her clothes get burnt away, and she threatens Sam

and Fuzzy with the fire extinguisher. Faye, Marten, and Pintsize leave during these shenanigans, remarking on how Sam and Alexa would make a good couple (Jacques 2004d).

But Jacques's guest strip adds yet another complication to blur the boundaries between readership and authorship by including his own characters, Faye, Marten, and Pintsize, in the guest strip. Indeed, though the strip appears on Logan's website, the first and last panels feature only *QC* characters as the three walk into and out of the bookstore where Sam and Alexa work (Jacques 2004d). These panels, because they show Jacques drawing his own characters, do more to situate him as an author than they do as a reader. But there are also panels that feature only the three characters from *Sam and Fuzzy*, such as the panel where Fuzzy tells Sam that he has set the works of Arthur C. Clarke on fire or the one where Alexa returns with the fire extinguisher (Jacques 2004d). These panels situate Jacques as more of a reader. The crossover panels that depict both *QC* and *Sam and Fuzzy* characters situate Jacques as author and reader simultaneously, as he brings characters authored by him in contact with interpretations of characters drawn by Logan (**Figure 4** includes one panel for each of these scenarios).

My point in going through this analysis is not necessarily to suss out the fine-grained degrees of authorship and readership present in different situations, but to show the ways in which, in the same comic, an individual can be situated simultaneously as author and reader because the line between the two is less stark than previously claimed. Moreover, it is economically advantageous to situate authorship as a readerly practice, because that positioning encourages the cooperation that helps gain attention through the posted comic that includes the author's name and through the additional links that help gain attention via Google search. Thus, the public nature of reciprocal guest comics helps the authors succeed in the economic system particular to the attention economy of the internet in the 2000s.

Conclusion

The blurring of boundaries between reader and author encouraged by this system of cooperative competition demonstrates how cooperative economic relationships were advantageous on the Internet in the early 2000s, suggesting that, even when

Figure 4: Jacques, J (2004) Guest: Jeph Jacques. On: Logan, S, *Sam and Fuzzy.* 11 November. Available at http://www.samandfuzzy.com/366.

still part of a capitalist system, competition is not the only way to succeed. The fact that these authors remain attached to their own individual projects—this isn't collective authorship—suggests that the individual is still a key component in this system. Yet the cooperation through community building that helps these individual authors promote themselves suggests that competition and cooperation are not quite as opposed as they may seem. We would not be able to see this reframed version of authorship in webcomics without paying attention to them within their digital historical contexts.

If we look at the homepages of both series at the time of this writing in 2018, the various elements on the page mark both how this period influenced webcomics in subsequent years, and the digital shifts that have shaped webcomics' development in the relatively short span of years since 2007. The collectives that helped artists basically hack PageRank have shaped the field in indelible ways, creating a spirit of cooperation amongst participants that continues to this day. *Sam and Fuzzy* is currently part of the Hiveworks collective, as indicated by an ad on the home page of the site (Logan 2018), and when Logan joined the collective in 2015, he wrote in his newspost about being excited by the possibility of 'a few extra sets of eyeballs' (2015), a statement that references the continued importance of the attention economy. The connection to the material economy through the selling of merchandise is also still a part of working as a web cartoonist, and as more webcomics have seen success in print form, the connection between the digital and material economy has become even stronger. Both Jacques's (2018) and Logan's (2018) homepages include links to merchandise and Logan's homepage includes several images of t-shirts and books based on his comics, all of which harken back to the comic of the two drawing each other's characters while sharing a table at a convention.

Crowdfunding, one of the most major shifts for webcomics, helps cartoonists supplement the money they make from selling material goods. The 2013 emergence of Patreon, a site based on a patronage model where fans pledge an amount each month in exchange for bonus access and content, has had a particularly strong impact and has enabled a large number of webcomics authors to make cartooning a full-time job. Both Logan and Jacques include Patreon links on their homepages as of this writing. Besides a link to his Patreon and his Drip, another crowdfunding source, Jacques's site has no ads, a fact that signals how authors can rely on such crowdfunding sites to fully support themselves.

Crowdfunding owes its success to another major digital shift since 2007: the rise of social media. Links on Jacques's homepage to his Tumblr and the Twitter pages of the characters and links on Logan's homepage to his Twitter and Tumblr pages provide evidence of how the rise of social media has changed webcomics. Authors

are more accessible to their readers than before, and often provide access to works in progress or to process videos based on requests about how they create their comics. While Twitter provides access, Tumblr provides a space to share work in progress, and the links connect the two spaces to one another and to the webcomic. The fact that Jacques's Twitter link is not for his author account, but for accounts he made for his characters shows how social media allows authors to publicly expand on their own story worlds. The world of social media plays a large role in the attention economy, where likes and other forms of engagement quantify reader attention. On platforms like Facebook and Twitter, much as readers contribute money to authors through crowdfunding, readers help authors gain attention through sharing links, which might be seen as an act of public reading, especially when the link is accompanied by a short critique or judgment. Buttons for Twitter and Facebook on Logan's (2018) homepage provide easy access for readers to help his comic spread, suggesting that an author's success in the more complex attention economy of today's digital realm relies on a number of different factors, few of which the author can control. All of these changes have shaped the landscape in which the comics are created and, as a result, the comics themselves.

If this kind of historical approach to webcomics within their contexts demonstrates a reframed notion of digital authorship that is characterized by cooperative competition, consider how else webcomics might reflect how technology shapes digital media. We might, for example, track how a long running webcomic shifted over time during the popularization of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter. How did creators incorporate such new media into their site designs or into their modes of comics distribution? How did these decisions in turn shape the comics themselves? How has the development of mobile technology produced new innovative webcomics forms and changed old ones as they adapt to new platforms? Answers to these questions have the potential to tell us not only about webcomics, but about historical shifts in digital media more broadly. Webcomics, as serial texts published by the same author over time, allow us to track the development of digital media as new technology emerges. They, therefore, deserve our attention.

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