

ARTICLE

Trash, Art, and the Comics

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Abstract

Many comics are aesthetically trashy: They are immediately grasped and easily available. Historically, this trashiness is lobbed as an aesthetic defect of many comics, a defect for both their production and their appreciation. To defend these comics, some point to non-aesthetic values, like sociality. I argue that there is aesthetic value to these comics, and that it lies precisely in their trashy characteristics: their immediacy and availability. Many comics have these characteristics because many comics are cartooned. The immediacy of cartooning is precisely what makes so many ordinary comics beautiful in an ordinary way.

Keywords: comics; evaluation; aesthetic value; artistic value; trash; bad art

1. Introduction

Evaluative questions—questions about goodness and badness—are among the most important questions in the philosophy of art. These questions get to the heart of why art matters to us. We care about artworks because they move us so strongly through their value, delighting us when they are excellent and disgusting us when they are awful.¹ Evaluative questions come with a special kind of urgency when it comes to comics. For comics have always been plagued by worries about their legitimacy—not just political or moral concerns about how they shape the moral character of individuals and societies,² but also esthetic concerns. People have doubted that comics are artistically valuable because they are not artistically serious. They are not sophisticated, skillful, or self-aware.

Sometimes these doubts are phrased in terms of literature; comics, it is said, do not count as *literature* in an evaluative sense of “literature.” If a work of comics is literature in this sense, then, as Sam Cowling and Ley Cray say, it is made “for serious study, challenge, or insight.” (Cowling & Cray, 2022, 23).³ Many comics, however, are casual rather than serious; these comics aim “primarily to entertain, rather than to offer aesthetic, cognitive, or interpretive rewards.” Comic strips and superhero comic books trade in the immediate and easily accessible. We might say, then, that these comics are *trash art*: they are made quickly for easy consumption. The assumption is that because these comics are not serious, they are not aesthetically valuable. Dorothy Parker, an avid comics reader, thought as much. “For a bulky segment of a century, I have been an avid follower of comic strips—all comic strips; this is a statement made with approximately the same amount of pride with

¹As Peter Railton emphasizes, this only raises the stakes on aesthetic questions: “Mere aesthetics!—as if discussing and deciding about what we truly admire or detest were not a central, shaping force in human life. Our views about what is excellent and what is poor, admirable or despicable, exert a dominion over our daily thought and conduct no less extensive than our views about what is right and what is wrong.” (Railton, 1998, 100)

²See, for example, Costello (2009) and Hajdu (2008).

³Cowling and Cray draw on Stecker’s (1996) account of literature.

which one would say, ‘I’ve been shooting cocaine into my arm for the past 25 years.’” (Parker 1943/2004, 35).

Of course, some comics are serious. Some comics *do* have the sophistication, skill, and self-awareness that characterize literature, or good art. The art critic Clement Greenberg had high praise for William Steig, a midcentury *New Yorker* comics artist, writing that Steig’s comics “push and strain against the social and psychological limitations of the cartoon form and strive to become self-sufficient, time-transcending art” (Greenberg, 1945). More recently, Hillary Chute (2017) has argued for the aesthetic richness of comics by pointing to the difficulty of appreciation in many contemporary comics; as one critic summarizes it, she highlights the “work that [comics] demand from their readers” (Miller, 2018). And much academic discussion of graphic novel takes a similar approach; in the graphic novel, it is said, comics are emancipated as an art: profound, deep, and sophisticated (Tabachnick, 2017). These serious comics surely count as literature in this evaluative sense. However, most popular and ordinary comics do not—for example, many superhero comics, daily and weekly comic strips in newspapers, and children’s comics. Even highly praised comics like *Krazy Kat* and *Peanuts* were created quickly to be read quickly.⁴

Some philosophers, seeking to vindicate the value of these more ordinary “trashy” comics, argue that these comics have value *despite* their casual nature. Cowling and Cray (2022) helpfully describe several such strategies. Ordinary comics, it might be said, have value because they present us with valuable formulae or schemes for understanding (Roberts, 1990); they engage us cognitively (Carroll, 1994); they build interesting fictional worlds (Harold, 2010); and they can build communities (Cohen, 1993). Recently, some have argued that cheap art can be effective in political activism (Muller, 2023), and have further developed Cohen’s argument for the potential of “bad” art in forming and sustaining communities (Strohl, 2021). These approaches help to show that a significant subset of comics, including comic strips and superhero comic books, have value. But the values here are not aesthetic or artistic: they are cognitive, social, and political. And the values here are not unique to trashy comics, either; all kinds of art can have these values.

I share the sense that trashy comics are in fact aesthetically valuable. But my goal here is to explain in what sense there might be *aesthetic* or *artistic* value to these comics, and how it might be found precisely in their “trashy” aspects: their immediacy and simplicity. Comics do not need to be serious or rarified to be aesthetically valuable; nor do we have to look to their effects to find their value.

My argument is inspired by the film critic Pauline Kael. In her 1969 essay, “Trash, Art, and the Movies,” Kael argued that the immediacy and accessibility of American film was not a defect; it was what made much American film as good as it was. Kael excoriates American “cinema”: arty films like Stanley Kubrick’s *2001*. These “cinematic” films, said Kael, are aesthetically empty and full of themselves. Instead, she praised “trashy” movies like Norman Jewison’s *Thomas Crowne Affair*. Kael claimed that these movies form a core element of American films, an element that had been too long neglected by American critics and filmmakers. American film is a “tawdry and corrupt art form,” and it ought to be praised as such.

This applies to comics, too. Or so I will argue. I will begin by characterizing trash art. I will then explain why one common feature of the comics, cartooning, has the characteristics of trash art. I will then argue that these trashy aspects are precisely what makes many comics beautiful, drawing on what people like Beerbohm and Baudelaire have said about the art of caricature. Immediacy and casualness allow for an important kind of artistic freedom. If I am right, we have tools for saying more about what makes trash art like comics good even if it is not supposed to be. We also have more resources to understand what good art might look like in modernity, where we are bombarded with easily created and reproduced images and sounds.

⁴As Cowling and Cray point out, Scott McCloud claims that early comics creators thought of comics as decidedly not “*uppity*,” and did not think of themselves as artists.

2. The Basics of Trash Art

In Kael's essay, we find two key aspects of trash art. The first of these is that trash has *immediate appeal*. Trashy films are instantly grasped and easily enjoyed. This has to do with reception in some sense, but it is reception to a certain kind of thing on the screen. The content and style of American films is made for immediate grasp and enjoyment; these films have foregrounded fun and entertainment, slapping together blood, schlock, action, and sex. Because of their immediacy, Kael says that these movies are *illicit*; they are not part of "official culture." This does not mean that trash films are countercultural or revolutionary. It just means that they do not receive high critical praise. Trash works are not showing up on any top 10 lists in *The New Yorker*.

However, trash is not just characterized by what happens on the screen. Whatever is on the screen is there because it has been shaped by a system of production and distribution. And that system of production and distribution is part of a work's trashiness. This is a second aspect of trash art: it is *easily available*. Trash is democratic, not just in the sense that the bar for appreciative entry is low—everyone can understand a trash movie—but in the sense that it is physically accessible: trash movies play in many movie theaters, for a low cost. The immediacy of trash film is (or perhaps was) undergirded by a system of production and distribution: these movies are made to be distributed everywhere. The system shaped how these movies were made and what was on them—how they were written and directed and acted.⁵ Trash art is modern, then, because reproductive technology plays an essential role in forming its content.

Many comics, especially comic strips, have the same features: immediacy and availability. One large reason for this that they are *cartooned*. Cartooning is simple drawing—or, as the art historian Andrei Molotiu defines it, "the graphic simplification of figurative shapes for purposes of communication, humor, and so on in comic strip and comic book rendering" (Molotiu, 2020, 153). Cartooning is extremely common among many forms of comics; as Molotiu says, "even the most naturalistic comic strip artists have historically been restricted to a relatively small number of lines for depicting the shape of a character's nose and nostrils, say, or for outlining an eye and its eyelid" (154). Now, there is no necessary connection between comics and cartooning. Alex Ross's work in *Kingdom Come* (1996) and *Marvels* (1994), for example, is painted rather than cartooned. But cartooning is prominent in many works of comics. The overwhelming majority of cartoons are quickly drawn and quickly grasped, and made for easy distribution. In other words, cartoons involve immediate production and availability.

There are at least three reasons why cartooning is historically prominent in comic strips, all of which reinforce the prominence of immediacy and availability in cartooning. One factor is the *economics of comic strips and serials*, which appeared on a regular (monthly, weekly, daily) schedule. Comics artists were often held to a tight production schedule, and did not have much time for careful detail. Cartooning fits the bill. Cartooning is also dominant in comics because of the *reproductive technology of comics*. In his (2000) piece "The Seven Deadly Sins of Comics Creators," the comics artist C.C. Beck emphasizes how technology affects a good drawing style. Because of the methods of reproduction, comics should be illustrated sparingly and simply. As Beck says: "Art prepared with too much fine detail, too many gradations of tone and color, and with too much shading and technique will not reproduce properly."⁶ Cartooning worked well for this reproductive technology, in service to mass distribution.⁷

A third factor that explains the prominence of cartooning in comics is *the size of comics*, especially comic strips: They are often small on the printed page. Again, Beck insists that comics

⁵See Carroll (1998) for more discussion about how mass art is affected by distribution.

⁶The materiality of paper is not significant just for the aesthetics of the comic. The twentieth century witnessed an explosion in the amount of printed material and paper. Joseph Elkanah Rosenberg has argued that this explosion of paper influenced what he calls "wastepaper modernism": the fact that the material decay of paper materials is significant for modernist literature. "Wastepaper modernism" is what happens when... literature imagines its own materials breaking down" (Rosenberg, 2021, 7).

⁷For an interesting discussion on the effects of political economy on comic strips, see Gordon (2020).

ought to be simple, because of the size and the narrative movement of comics: “Comic pictures are small... The drawings should be simplified and easily understandable, as the reader will only glance at them out of the corner of his eye while reading the story they illustrate.” (Sin Number 3 is “Overdoing the Job,” where Beck complains about too many “tricks of perspective” or “other eye-catching devices.”)

Beck’s comments above gesture at another fourth reason that is often taken to explain why comics are often cartooned: the integration of pictures with the words, which tell the story. The suggestion is that there is something about the combination of words and pictures that lends itself to immediacy and quickness: people are focused on reading, and tend to only glance at the pictures. The division of labor between words and pictures explains why pictures in comics could often be simple. This idea is articulated in the last century by comics artists like C.C. Beck, Scott McCloud and Chris Ware and Seth—and even earlier, in 1845, by the cartoonist and caricaturist Rudolph Töpffer.⁸

Many comics, then, count as trash art in Kael’s sense. For many comics were made to be read quickly, and by many people, in easily accessible formats. This is endemic to how they were created, and what they were created to be like. And now we are back to our problem. What could be valuable about this trashiness?

3. A brief aside: Acknowledging trash

Before we get to the aesthetic value in trash art, it is worth thinking about the role of trash in aesthetic judgment. Kael’s motivation in defending trash is not simply to fetishize the past, or to etch out a novel contrarianism, or to work out an obsession with historical authenticity. Instead, Kael is convinced that we must reckon with our own experience of film, and that trash films have played an important role in our own experience. In other words, acknowledging trash can be vital for the autonomy of one’s aesthetic judgment.

For one thing, trash movies can play a special role in cultivating one’s own judgment. Kael believes we train our sensibilities better when the stakes are lower. When we watch great films—films with cultural heft—the stakes are higher, and we feel pressure. We feel as though we *ought* to like them. Under such pressure, Kael thought, it is harder to genuinely locate one’s genuine aesthetic judgment and truly appreciate the work. Trash movies do not have this sort of hype, so we do not feel this kind of pressure; we are better able to judge for ourselves. Trash art, then, has instrumental value. It can serve as training wheels for autonomous aesthetic judgment.

But underlying Kael’s conviction here, I think, lies a deeper concern. Kael’s main complaint is that many American filmmakers, critics, and audiences were too ashamed to acknowledge the trash films that have influenced them; driven by insecurity, they ape a foreign sensibility. The resulting sense for film is hollow, and so are the films themselves. This idea is familiar in Stanley Cavell’s emphasis on aesthetic acknowledgment; in the exercise of aesthetic judgment, one must *come to terms* honestly with one’s own experience of art.

This idea is emphasized by the critic Robert Warshow, a strong influence on Kael and Cavell. In his book *The Immediate Experience*, Warshow addresses the tendency among critics to focus only on art film, a tendency that tends to “slight the fundamental *fact* of the movies... the actual, immediate experience of seeing and responding to the movies as most of us see and respond to them.” (1970: 26) For Warshow, coming to terms with his own experience meant being alive to the “nonsense” in movies.

⁸For discussion, see Molotiu (2020, 159–161). I follow Meskin (2007, 376) in holding that “the art of comics... began in the middle of the nineteenth century and developed largely out of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British humor magazines such as *Punch*.”

I go to the movies for the same reason that the ‘others’ go: because I am attracted to Humphrey Bogart or Shelley Winters or Greta Garbo; because I require the absorbing immediacy of the screen; because in some way I take all that nonsense seriously. (Warshow, 1970, 28).

To reckon with our own experience of film in our age, we must reckon with the way that we have already been excited and influenced by its immediacy and flashiness. We cannot understand film only by attending to the films that are works of genius. And this goes no less for comics. We must attend to ordinary and casual films, and ordinary comics, too, if they have shaped us. And they have shaped many of us.

4. The value of trash

But trashy artworks are not just valuable as safeguards to protect the autonomy of our aesthetic taste. They have a beauty of their own nature. To understand this, let us return to our characterization of trash as immediate and available. It is for precisely for their immediacy and availability that comics have come under attack, as we saw in the outset. In a 1906 article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Ralph Bergengren attacks the aesthetic integrity of comics. In both content and style, he said, comics are quick and easy and cheap:

“it is not humor [in comics], but simply a supply created in answer to a demand, hastily produced by machine methods and hastily accepted by editors too. ... Under these conditions ‘humor’ is naturally conceived as something preeminently quick; and so quickness predominates. Somebody is always hitting somebody else with a club; somebody is always falling downstairs, or out of a balloon, or over a cliff, or into a river, a barrel of paint, a basket of eggs, a convenient cistern, or a tub of hot water.” (Bergengren, 1906).

If we follow Kael’s line of argument, however, this quickness is exactly what can make comics good.⁹

Kael presents us with two ways in which trash art can be good. The first is that trash art has a clear-eyed artistic vision. Kael complains that films like Stanley Kubruk’s *2001* are tedious and self-absorbed; they fetishize technique, drawing attention to their own artiness. Technique ought to be used to *do* something, something besides boosting the creator’s ego. It should be used to tell a story, to catch a mood, to surprise us, to draw us in. Thus, one virtue of trash art, on Kael’s view, is that it can be relentlessly focused on telling an engaging story.¹⁰ It is clear, I think, how this works in the case of comics. Difficult comics, comics that prize their own technique or artiness, often lack a focus on storytelling, on good narrative art.

Kael points to another virtue of trash artworks, a virtue that is more salient for us. Precisely through its trashiness (and especially through its immediacy), art can have a particular kind of *creative* freedom: spontaneity. When making a high-budget film, Kael claims, directors and actors are under pressure. There is often no freedom to experiment. Because of their quick production, however, trash movies have lower stakes, and therefore can allow for more creative freedom. In a more relaxed situation, Kael says, actors and directors feel free to take more chances. As a result, we get incredible glances and line deliveries. Trash movies may not be great artworks, but they are

⁹Kael is clear that trash movies are not great art. Trash is aesthetically valuable but not aesthetically excellent. Trash can bring us sublime moments, but it will never offer the greatness (according to Kael) of Bergman or Tarkovsky. In fact, Kael holds that trash is not art at all. She is committed to a normative account of art—all art is great art—and trash does not make the cut. I will not take on this view of art, but that does not matter for the substantive point here.

¹⁰The same thought lies behind Kael’s frequent complaints about the preference among politically ‘liberal’ Americans for moralizing films. For Kael, such liberals pretend to hold views to care about others, but in fact, they just care about their own reputation. According to Kael, such an audience is motivated by their self-conception. This motivation means that it is difficult for them to properly receive the art. For then the audience response is rooted in their desire to feel good about themselves, ensuring that they have the “correct” moral attitudes. This is not a focus on good storytelling.

uniquely positioned to give us great moments. Immediacy creates the right conditions for spontaneity.

Such spontaneity is typical of cartooned comics, too. To see this, consider what some critics have said about the art of caricature. (Caricature and comics are different arts. However, much of what is said about caricature applies to comic strips.) The essayist and caricaturist Max Beerbohm says that the beauty of a good caricature lies in its *air of spontaneity*, the sense that it was dashed off in a jiffy. If immediacy is central to our response to caricature, it is also central to its creation: caricature seems to have been created in an instant.¹¹

Such spontaneity, says Beerbohm, is what gives caricature a special capacity for humor. The perfect caricature needs to be simple in a way that flows from spontaneity. If a caricature seems overworked, it is not funny.

The perfect caricature is bold in its execution, simple and ingenious to its beholder as a wild flower. Of course, in every work of art elimination and simplification are essential. In a caricature they are doubly so. For a caricature is a form of wit, and nothing so ruthlessly chokes laughter as the suspicion of labor. (Beerbohm 1928, 129).

Further, Beerbohm says, the spontaneity is beautiful for its own sake. The beauty of good caricature lies in its seeming to come alive in an instant—scratched down, scribbled off. For Beerbohm, the immediacy speaks to the “unconscious” and “flowing” process that happens in an “ideal execution” of a work of caricature.

In his writing on caricature, Charles Baudelaire echoes this same idea. A good caricature has “a fire, an intoxication of pencil or brush, almost amounting to a frenzy. This is the fear of not going fast enough, of letting the specter escape before the synthesis has been extracted and taken possession of.” Discussing the caricaturist Constantin Guys, Baudelaire says, “His humor is, so to speak, involuntary. The artist does not search for an idea; it would be truer to say that he just lets it slip out.” (Baudelaire, 1995, 179).

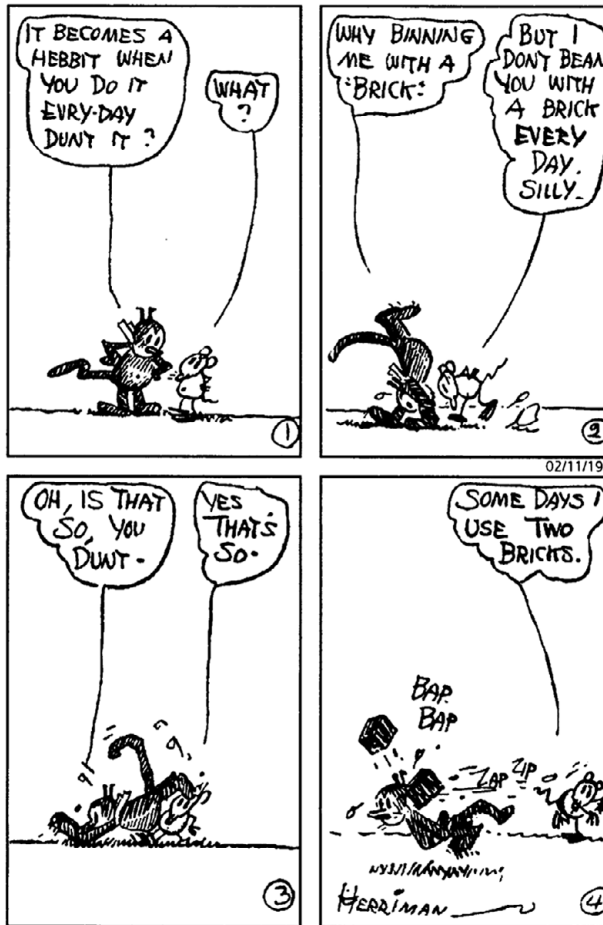
This kind of spontaneity is found in cartooned comics. It is just what Bill Watterson (the creator of *Calvin and Hobbes*) praises in George Herriman’s *Krazy Kat*, when he discusses Herriman’s “scratchy drawings” that “have the honesty and directness of sketches.” Watterson says:

So many of today’s strips are slick and polished, the inevitable result of assistants trying to develop a mechanical style that can be continued indefinitely. The drawings in *Krazy Kat* are whimsical, idiosyncratic, and filled with personality. (Watterson, 1990, 8).

These kinds of comments help us to see why some comics, cartooned comics, might have aesthetic value—might even be beautiful—precisely because these works are not sophisticated. They can have the lightness of a perfect look or a perfect line that is rare in serious art. And it is a lightness and playfulness that is only possible in a simple art form.

Beerbohm continues with the idea that the spontaneity in caricature is what makes it more fitting to represent certain kinds of content. Its immediate and spontaneous style is more appropriate to mundane and ordinary scenes. “Big canvases and oil paints are fit only for ‘seriously serious’ art. For a serious art which makes frivolity its aim, a sheet of plain foolscap, a pen or pencil, and a little water-color are the proper media.” (Beerbohm 1928, 129) Good caricatures do not aim to capture the heights of the most profound or tragic human experiences; instead, they aim to capture ordinary human experiences appropriate to their scale. This idea is echoed, too, in Gilbert Seldes’s famous defense of comics when Seldes says that, in comics, “the most interesting form [except for fantasy] is that which deals satirically with every-day life” (Seldes, 1924, 196).

¹¹Baudelaire says of the caricaturist Daumier: “The central idea immediately leaps out at you. You have only to look to have understood.”



Baudelaire said something similar decades earlier:

“For sketches of manners, for the portrayal of bourgeois life and the fashion scene, the quickest and the cheapest technical means will evidently be the best. The more beauty the artist puts into it, the more valuable will the work be; but there is in the trivial things in life, in the daily changing of external things, a speed of movement that imposes upon the artist an equal speed of execution.” (Baudelaire, 1995, 4).

Good caricaturists, like all good artists, are attentive to the beauty in everyday life; and the beauty of everyday life is best represented in spontaneous and casual art like caricature. Baudelaire calls caricature a modern art for just this reason: it is attentive to the kind of ephemerality that characterizes modern life. Indeed, it reflects this ephemerality in its form.

All of this can be said about cartooned comics, too. Many cartooned comics are fitting to the mundane precisely because of the simplicity of their being cartooned. This representation of the mundane can come in different forms, but it is surely a frequent occurrence in great comic strips: *Peanuts*, *The Far Side*, *Calvin and Hobbes*, to name a few. These comic strips are often beautiful for the ease with which they seem to have been drawn, the almost casual nature of the scenes and the characters. The simplicity, notice, comes not just in the representation but also often in the content. In many good comics, the content focuses on the mundane, and that is befitting to the cartooned

form. (I do not aim to generalize across all comics. If *Doonesbury* is good, with all its inside-baseball politics, it is not good in this way).

This raises a question. If cartooning is often good because it is fitting to the mundane, how are we to explain the prevalence of superhero comics, the vast majority of which are cartooned? When Baudelaire is praising the caricaturist Guys, he says that the descriptors of Guys could *not* be applied “to a painter of things eternal, or at least things of a more permanent nature, of heroic or religious subjects.” If caricature is unfit for heroic subjects because of its immediacy and fittingness to the ordinary, and if cartooning shares these qualities of caricature, then cartooned comics are unfit for heroic subjects. That seems patently absurd, given the prevalence of these superhero comics. Very briefly, I have two thoughts: First, cartooning is not *only* fitting to the mundane. It is also fitting to propel the story forward. Perhaps this “propeller” aspect is fitting to other aspects (such as action scenes) of superhero films. Second, perhaps there is a kind of ordinariness in superhero comics that is part of their charm, precisely because it contrasts with the heroic themes and characters. Perhaps there is a tension here that is simply a part of superhero comics.

5. The value of trash

My suggestion here is that the aesthetic value of many comics is found precisely in their immediacy—not in their sophistication or relationship to high art, and not in their effects, like the fictional worlds or actual communities that they build. I want to close by asking the question: Can cartooned comics really be *beautiful*? Kael thought that although her beloved trashy movies had great aesthetic moments, they were not art at all. Her goal was to rehabilitate the great moments in these works, not to argue that they were great artworks.

According to Warshow, *Krazy Kat* can reach aesthetic heights as much as any other work. Beauty is a matter of the appropriateness of a work to its purposes. He says: “Where no art is important, ‘Krazy Kat’ is as real and important a work of art as any other—it is only supposed to divert its reader for two minutes at a time.” (50) Beerbohm makes a similar point in a more dramatic way, emphasizing the importance of beauty for caricature: “For caricature, not less than for every other art, beauty is a primal condition.” (Beerbohm 1928, 129) Beerbohm goes on to say that beauty is a matter not of what is presented, but the way in which it is presented—and caricature can be appropriate to certain kinds of subject matter.

“The beauty of a work of art lies not at all in the artist’s vision of his subject, but in his presentment of the vision. If the ladies on the chocolate-boxes were exactly incarnate, their beauty would conquer the world. If Daumier’s senators and deputies were exactly incarnate, life would be intolerable. Yet no discreet patron of art collects chocolate-boxes; and that series by Daumier is one of the loveliest and most precious things in the whole world.” (Beerbohm 1928, 129–130).

It is not just sophisticated and subtle and majestic works of art that can reach the heights of beauty, then. Small works, appropriate to their content, can reach these same heights.

Baudelaire puts the point slightly differently. The impulse of genius, at its root, is a childlike wonder at the world. The works of great caricaturists embody this impulse; they reflect an interest in the fleeting and the mundane. The caricaturist Guys, says Baudelaire, has a childlike ability to take “a lively interest in things, even in the most trivial in appearance.” The impulse of genius can lie behind caricature, and some comics, just as much as it can lie behind anything—not just in spite of the immediacy and reproductive technology, but precisely because of it.¹² The jotted-off caricature

¹²Thanks to Sam Cowling for inspiring the paper, and for his generous and insightful comments and suggestions at every stage of its development. Thanks to the audiences where this paper was presented: PhilComicCon, the Auburn Aesthetics Forum, and the APA Eastern. Thanks to Keren Gorodeisky and Arata Hamawaki for very helpful conversation.

is more appropriate to ordinary scenes and makes those scenes beautiful. Not all cartooned comics reach these aesthetic heights, to be sure. But many of them—perhaps uncontroversially, *Krazy Kat*, but also perhaps comics like *Calvin and Hobbes* and *Peanuts*—have a charm that is made possible only through simplicity.

Trash art is a prevalent form of art in our modern era, an era that is characterized by mechanical reproduction, an era that floods us with images and sounds. I hope I have shown in one way that it has the capacity for beauty. Far too few artworks realize this capacity. But there are glimmers.

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