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Peculiar integrations: Adaptations, experimentations and authorships in The Long Weekend in Alice Springs

Abstract
This paper investigates approaches to authorship in The Long Weekend in Alice Springs *(2013), a graphic adaptation by the Australian artist Joshua Santospirito of a psychoanalytic essay by Craig San Roque (2004). Because the subject of both essay and adapted text is the ability of stories to have lasting effects over time in a space of crisis, this unusual adaptation establishes itself as an unusual site of authorship, whereby multiple authorships create a complicated authority, and stories themselves are shown to be significant. Through its variable positioning of the different roles undertaken by the author, the adaptation struggles with the ongoing challenge of appropriating Indigenous storytelling and suggests a possible way to discuss these stories from the outside. Through analysing paratextual materials and the work itself, this paper shows how nonfiction comics can both convey stories and separate themselves from stories through destabilising notions of creation and authorship.*
Keywords: comics, adaptations, Indigenous storytelling

A note on terminology

We use the term 'comics' in the singular to denote the medium of comics, comparable to the mediums of literature or film, as in 'the comics adaptation'. We use 'nonfiction comics' to denote a work of nonfiction in the medium of comics. We use the term 'graphic novel' to denote a book-length work of comics which may be fiction or nonfiction. When we use the title *The Long Weekend in Alice Springs* we are referring to the graphic novel adapted by Joshua Santospirito (Santospirito 2013). Craig San Roque's original 2004 essay is named 'A long weekend / Alice Springs, Central Australia' throughout this article (San Roque 2004).

Introduction

In one of the many nested stories in *Craig San Roque's The Long Weekend in Alice Springs*, a graphic adaptation of a psychoanalytic essay set in the predominantly Indigenous central Australian city of Alice Springs, the narrator comments on a variety of disorder found in a culture 'on the borderline … of a peculiar disintegration' (Santospirito 2013: np), a culture in which a white narrator observes social crises caused by Australia's history of invasion and its ongoing consequences for Indigenous populations. This paper analyses the peculiar *in*-tegrations in *The Long Weekend in Alice Springs* (2013), adapted by the artist Joshua Santospirito from a 2004 essay authored by Jungian analyst Craig San Roque. Just as the medium of comics combines categories of text and art, and the essay under adaptation tells the story of a city in crisis, this work combines multiple approaches to authorship.

This paper uses *The Long Weekend in Alice Springs* as a case study in approaches to and effects of comics authorships, particularly because the graphic adaptation builds from a work that is already built on stories belonging to others. It investigates the possibilities created by the comics form when its capacity for plural authorship is used to advance an argument. In this case, both the original essay and the comics adaptation argue that historical events affect subjects in space long after the events are over. As white authors telling the stories of Indigenous populations, both San Roque and Santospirito can be considered arbiters of authority over the Indigenous communities, bodies and identities discussed in the text. In a comic told by two people undertaking blended roles of author, protagonist, adapter and narrator, the reader is asked to focus on what is being told but also how this is inflected by who is doing the telling – which suggests an approach to the adaptation of Indigenous stories that is at once problematic and novel. Through analysing *The Long Weekend in Alice Springs*, especially its process of adaptation, this paper shows how nonfiction comics can respond to questions of adaptation, origination, and authority while opening others. Throughout the paper we use methods of textual analysis within the conceptual frameworks of comics scholarship and Indigenous studies.

From 'A long weekend / Alice Springs' to *The Long Weekend in Alice Springs*

The de-centralisation of the author in *The Long Weekend in Alice Springs* is partly to do with the work's dual status as 'original' and adaptation. Indeed, the work's meaning comes from its shared authorship. In comics, terminology of authorship can be contested; we don't know whether to call someone a creator, an illustrator, an author, a comics-maker, a cartoonist, etc. In *The Long Weekend in Alice Springs,* this is further complicated by the fact the work is an adaptation, and that an 'original' of the work exists. Approaches to this process can be diverse; another example in Australian comics is Nicki Greenberg's 2010 *Hamlet* which is 'staged on the page', and includes no reference to a constructed narrator or implied author; in fact, it partakes in the 'objective' point-of-view which James Joyce, following Flaubert, described as taking place while God files his fingernails. This section of the article looks at the process of adaptation and questions who is considered to be the 'author'.

Craig San Roque's essay 'A long weekend / Alice Springs, Central Australia', published in scholarly anthology *The Cultural Complex: Contemporary Jungian Perspectives on Psyche and Society* (2004), covers a three-day weekend in Alice Springs, a remote town in central Australia with a high Indigenous population. The original essay makes clear this is the Queen's birthday long weekend, June 2002 (San Roque 2004: 48), though in the comic the date is elided. Craig San Roque has been working in Indigenous mental health services since 1992, and settled permanently in Alice Springs in 2000. His abiding inquiry throughout both his clinical and creative work is the relationship between foundational cultural stories and present psychic conditions. Sometimes, his inquiry locates an absence, a gap: a present condition that lacks a cultural story. This is what happened when, in 1991, Warlpiri man A Spencer Japaljarri asked San Roque if there were Western stories about alcohol and intoxication that could be adapted into *Tjukurrpa* ('Dreaming') form. From here, in collaboration with Japaljarri, Barry Cook and Elva Abbott Cook Nangala of the Intjartnama outstation, *The Sugarman Project* was born. As stated on the Intjarnama website, the community has been 'devastated by the diseases of colonisation: alcoholism and substance abuse'. Laws from outside the community have been ineffectual in stopping this devastation, and so the community has turned to story:

> Non-Aboriginal people also have 'Dreaming stories' for the origins of their customs and traditions. Most people have forgotton [sic] or never learnt these stories, vestiges of which remain in their languages as isolated sayings, or in customary practices which receive no explanation. One of the central elements of Intjartnama's program is the "Sugarman Story", the story of the origins of alcohol,

> and the lessons and lore regarding its proper use in European cultural tradition. This story, the story of Dionysus, speaks directly to Aboriginal people, in the language of narrative, theatre, drama, song and painting. (Intjartnarma nd)

In 2015, San Roque turned again to European myths in a poetic adaptation and performance of the Demeter and Persephone story, *The Kore Story / Persephone's Dog* (San Roque 2015), a work which in ancient Greece mythologised the cycle of the seasons and the harvest. San Roque's theatre was produced in part under the commission of Centrefarm, 'an economic development entity associated with the Central and Northern Land Councils, which represent the owners of the Aboriginal lands that today make up half of the Northern Territory' (Finnane 2016). While San Roque's remit was to 'enliven thinking and sharpen appreciation of what establishing and sustaining farming on local land would mean for this and future generations,' in the end the work, like the Sugarman Story, also spoke in lessons to Centrefarm staff and other settlers. San Roque said:

> "I was saying to them, do you know just how long it took Europeans to develop their understanding of cultivation? Millennia. Yet Aboriginal people of traditional orientation are being asked to make that leap in a generation." (San Roque qtd in Finnane 2016)

One of San Roque's abiding and profoundly complex ambitions, as demonstrated in both publications' references to the ancient myth of Innana and Dumuzi (also a myth of seasons and fertility, though originating in the Middle East), is to reconnect settlers to an awareness of their long-lost cultural stories, to 'put us imaginatively back in touch with ancient understandings of the earth,' as Kieran Finnane put it after attending a performance of *Persephone's Dog* (2016). This then might give settlers a way of better seeing Arrernte history and hearing Arrernte stories, and invite a way towards a common, or at least shared, cultural ground.

San Roque's 'A long weekend / Alice Springs, Central Australia' aims to 'represent and dramatize the experience of living inside a detonating cultural complex' (San Roque 2004: 46). 'Cultural complex' is a term coined by the editors of the original anthology in the context of Jungian psychoanalytic theory, and on which contributors to the anthology elaborate. According to San Roque,

> This is a case history and a history of events depicting relationships between Aboriginal families and my own. Beginning Friday night in the back yard, we move through streets, hospital, country, history, travelling time zones, mythic locations, thoughts. I return to the yard, alone, late on Monday night. I tell a story to show psychic life as we experience it. (San Roque & Santospirito 2016: 29)

Reading both essay and adaptation, we watch San Roque moving through the events of this long weekend, using them to detect patterns in history and time in search of 'psychic structures' embedded in a site through historical events, which thereafter repeat themselves through present-day behaviours. San Roque notes that, 'observing an evolving, partially unconscious cultural complex is inherently difficult and even harder to represent'; as such, the aim of the essay is to portray this through a 'mood, or a feeling tone which can be thought of as the emotional effect of the cultural complex on the group and individual ego (including the writer's)' (San Roque 2004: 46). The essay is personal, lyrical and meditative, as is the graphic adaptation.

Santospirito came to the work also as a white medical practitioner, though a different kind and at a different time. According to Santospirito, he chose to adapt the work because it addressed questions he was left with after completing his own work as a mental health nurse in central Australia. He saw the essay as a unique processing tool:

> The majority of resources and writings that are available to those working in cross-cultural areas are more focused around cultural awareness and communication difficulties. These things are useful, but the majority of people struggle with the emotional aspects of swimming around in the grey muck of uncertainty. (Scully & Santospirito 2015: 135)

After encountering the essay in 2008 he 'began drawing bits of it' (Santospirito 2013: Introduction) and completed the book-length work over five years (Scully & Santospirito 2015: 135). In the introduction to the adaptation, he writes, 'Somehow drawing all of this strangeness helped me make some sense of it' (Santospirito 2013). Thinking that 'a graphic novel adaptation of an academic essay about Jungian concepts' would be 'impossible to pitch' to international and local mainstream publishers, Santospirito formed San Kessto Publications with Nadine Kessler, effectively self-publishing the comic (in Sadokierski 2014). *The Long Weekend in Alice Springs* was well-received by the Australian comics community; it won the ComicOz Award for Best Australian Original Comic Book in 2013, was shortlisted for the 2014 Ledger Awards, and won the 2014 Northern Territory Read Non-Fiction Book Award.

The uses of narration

The main section of *The Long Weekend in Alice Springs* opens with the text: 'I can see a campfire in our backyard' (Santospirito 2013). This aligns us firmly with San Roque in narrated time, both through the use of present tense first person and by positioning us within his limited sight; we see the shape of a person in outline, both revealed and concealed by the campfire. In other words, while for the bulk of the comic we see a free mix of images 'as seen by' San Roque and 'as seen by' Santospirito, including an avatar of San Roque himself, as well as many images that could only exist as metaphor and myth and depictions of events in historical time, in these opening pages we see approximately through San Roque's eyes. San Roque's focus (and ours) is on other characters. While Santospirito is presenting San Roque's consciousness to us, San Roque is presenting others for us, too.

Here, a white Australian man – in fact two – are attempting to tell the story of an Indigenous Australian woman, exercising authorship of the story and potentially denying the agency of the character under discussion. We see an Aboriginal woman, Manka Maru, hunched beside the fire. 'Her black clothing, her black skin, make her almost… invisible,' the narration reports. It goes on to explain she is the widow of a man who has won an award and died of heart failure and alcoholism. She won't discuss her husband, but instead 'ponderously gazes' at Polaroids of him that she keeps in her bag. This description appears in drifting narrative boxes on a white borderless page beside a strikingly outsized portrait of Manka Maru. It's clear that the narrative focus here is on the woman herself, whose eyes and posture demand to be engaged with by the narration, though her arms and legs are crossed, suggesting that she would not want to be engaged with in the world of the story (see Figure 1).

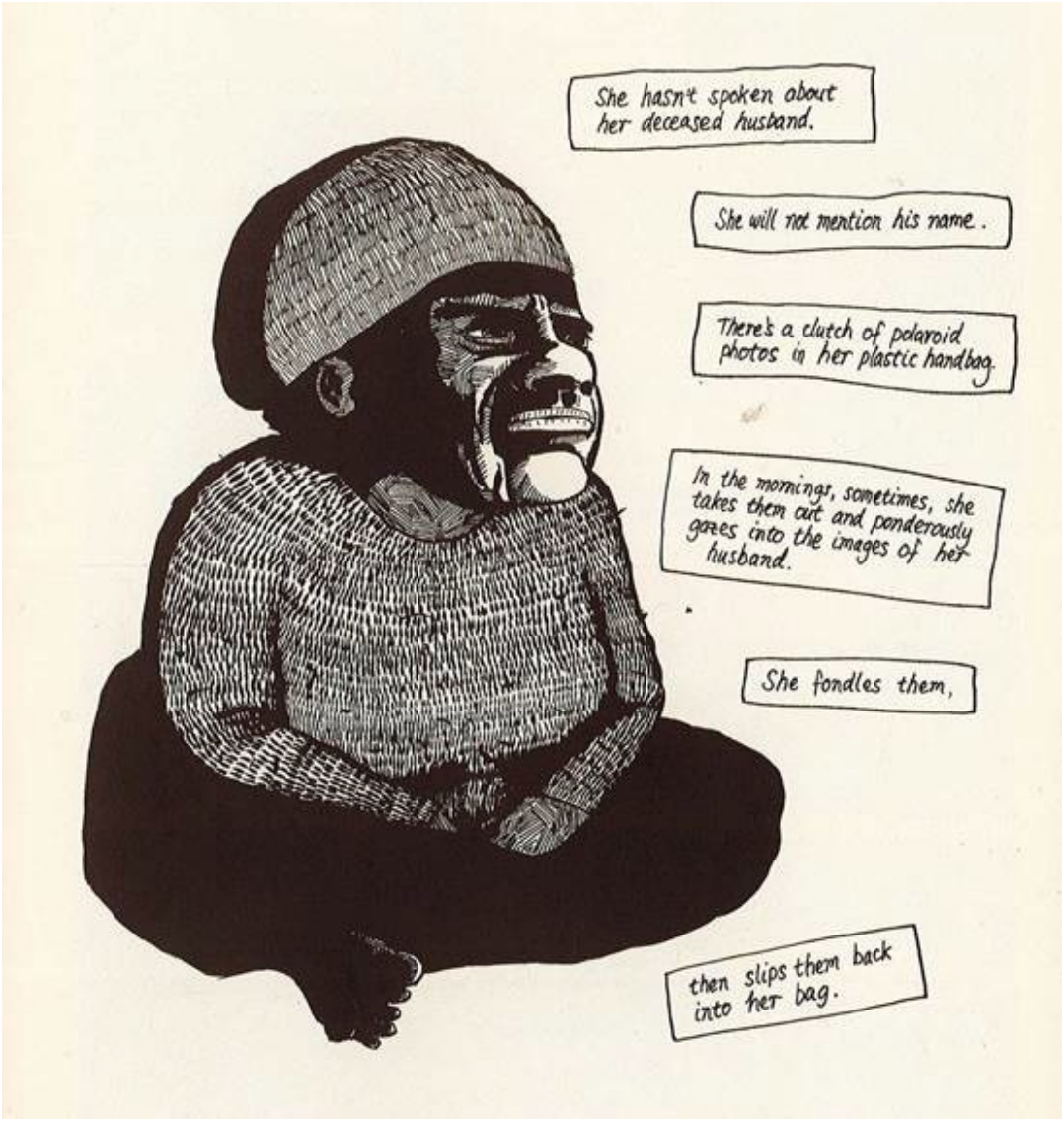

Figure 1. Manka Maru (Santospirito 2013)

The following page is used to introduce the themes of the story and the lyrical mode in which San Roque addresses them: ‘Now the cooking has hold of her attention / lamb chops, tomato sauce / chicken nuggets, hot tea. comfort in a life that has no foreseeable development, / no progress / no economic vitality’ (see Figure 2). These phrases appear in floating narrative boxes, askew in comparison to the straight edges of the panels. Three long panels of identical breadth show the ‘eye’ of the panel moving further and further away from the woman and the fire. In the final panel of this sequence, the image has receded dramatically and is surrounded by a pool of black, the white narrative box in sharp relief, drawing the eye.

Figure 2. Woman and campfire (Santospirito 2013)

The following page, stark in white, reads FRIDAY and shows us a man – 'My name is Craig.' – resting his head in his hand and about to write on a piece of paper, linking the reader to the opening page of the comic. 'An American editor named Tom Singer has asked me to write a chapter on the idea of *cultural complexes*…' the narration tells us, 'an old idea of Jung's: It was a bit controversial at the time. I'd like to finish this by the end of this long weekend.'

The narration quotes Singer to elaborate on cultural complexes:

> they structure emotional experience, tend to be repetitive, autonomous, resist consciousness and collect experience that

> confirms their historical point of view … automatically take on shared body language … express their distress in similar somatic complaints … provide a simplistic certainty about the group's place in the world in the face of otherwise conflicting and ambiguous uncertainties. (Santospirito 2013)

Then, per San Roque: 'I don't know how to think about these things / I do not really know how to represent the action of a "cultural complex" to myself' (Santospirito 2013).

He stops writing and looks off into the distance; and it's here that we see him smoking a cigarette and watching the woman by the fire, who we met in the first section. 'This weekend I sat down to think and it was as though shades came to visit with a purpose', the narration says. This is evocative language, and it introduces San Roque as the experiencing mind through which we will engage with the idea of the cultural complex. Yet it also introduces the idea that experiencing minds are not the only progenitors of events and stories: shades can visit, and with purpose; stories surround and compel our behaviour.

The narration now moves via San Roque towards 'others around the fire', situating a large cast of characters we briefly meet, and whose purpose is to establish the milieu of Alice Springs: a health worker, a petrol sniffer, a mother and sister. 'I try to stay at my table,' San Roque writes,

> the doors opened out onto the scene. I'm trying to develop a theme for this essay that I'm writing … but I feel interrupted by these … incidental … bacchic… Visitations.
>
> Therefore I set myself a boundary. I will write no more than it is possible to describe in this weekend in Alice Springs. I will set down what the place makes me think. There will be a lot happening as people from the bush converge on the town. Stories will unfold. (Santospirito 2013)

From here San Roque elaborates an argument through describing a range of nested stories, which are often linked graphically by Santospirito as a means of suggesting their thematic relationships. In an early story, San Roque is in the courthouse to give evidence in a case about a fight between two cousin-sisters. While the court waits on a verdict he hears a group of lawyers pause and mention that a man named Maga, well-known at court, has died:

> He helplessly committed acts of violence … spontaneous, unregulated … without insight or reflection. He had no ability to integrate his experience. He lived a nomadic life of random assaults and now he has died a random death [of petrol sniffing]... He died on a cold morning, sitting up in the driver's seat of an abandoned vehicle. For many, the death of this man is a relief. (Santospirito 2013)

This story is typical in its mix of anecdote and firsthand experience, and particularly in the range and distance of subjects and participants: the cousin-sisters, the lawyers, the shared knowledge of the court, the deceased man, the hearsay; the 'many' for whom death is relief. Santospirito's artwork both graphically bridges many of those distances and itself serves as another layer of interpretive webbing. On a single page, we see San Roque facing the reader and overhearing; the lawyers pausing; the lawyers overhearing; the lawyers going back to their work; and depictions of Maga committing violences that are drawn crudely and so perhaps meant to stand archetypically (see Figure 3). In other words, the roles of participant and narrator are muddied in the space of the page, which depicts spaces both remembered and imagined. On the following page Maga is gradually transformed into the image of a

dog, as a means of transitioning into a different story, which takes place in a different car.

Figure 3. Magu acts of violence (Santospirito 2013)

In terms of Alice Springs, we are in a culture 'on the borderline … of a peculiar disintegration' (see Figure 4). It is apposite that we are on the borderline of a disintegration, and re-integration, of notions of participation and narration too. The above sequence could serve as a synecdoche for the graphic novel as a whole, demonstrating the text's care and caution to show stories as being filtered through a range of listeners and tellers who bring with them a host of assumptions and biases. Though the depictions of violence sit centrally in this particular narrative, and hold the most visual power in their starkness, the reader is cautioned from viewing these images as 'true' by the nested images of overhearing and retelling surrounding them. While narrating these incidents, San Roque also interprets: 'I am trying to work out if certain culturally defining events that happened in the past also take place in the present … as a psychological inheritance' (Santospirito 2013). As he does so, it becomes clear that Santospirito's artistic choices are a means of exploring the same themes. Maga lifts his head from the petrol he's sniffing to reveal his head transformed into that of a dog. The following anecdote is of a traumatised man who is sitting in a grey Ford with a dead dog wrapped in a blanket on the back seat. They have been sitting there for three days. 'The animal, who is almost human,' writes San Roque, 'begins to illumine us all with a sense of grief' (Santospirito 2013). A few pages later in the book, we read that the 'principal dreaming for the site of Alice Springs' [1] concerns 'a wild dog that comes in from the South through a gap in the mountain range, attacks the incumbent male and ravages the mother and puppies' (Santospirito 2013). Santospirito's repetition of the image of the dog-human across these passages enriches the idea of the cultural complex spanning time and space. The transliteration of stories between real life, gossip, culture, San Roque's essay and Santospirito's comic is closely bound up with the essay's meaning; the purposes of content are matched to the parameters of form.

Figure 4. A peculiar disintegration (Santospirito 2013)

To observe and narrate crisis – and here 'crisis' is taken from its etymological root as the point of change, the turning-point of a disease, the moment of decision, selection or discrimination – compels a crisis in the text. Both San Roque's essay and Santospirito's graphic adaptation are mantled by a series of beginnings and endings that draw attention to the respective author's decisions, selections and acts of narration. As such, both engage in metanarrative, and this metanarrative seems highly appropriate, even inevitable, when dealing with matters of social and postcolonial crisis. Paul Atkinson argues in his essay *The graphic novel as metafiction* on the graphic adaptation of Paul Auster's *City of Glass*, that 'the structure of the graphic novel is such that the verbal narrative is always incorporated into the spatial field, which … is accorded ontological priority' (Atkinson 2010: 107). Atkinson examines the 'upper limit' of the voice in literature, the implied authorial voice, as defining the border between the inside and outside of the text. 'In the graphic novel, however,' Atkinson writes, 'another container always frames the voice: that of the panel and page, which are visible borders limiting both image and text' (Atkinson 2010: 117).

Atkinson's argument is that comics, *in its very form*, draws attention to acts of selection – points of crisis. In June 2018 Santospirito published a follow-up minicomic called *The Tension*, relating his anxiety around *The Long Weekend in Alice Springs*'s success and its repercussions: 'More visibility = Greater risk of backlash' one panel reads (Santospirito 2018: np). Most pages contain a mixture of panelling and 'free-floating' images and words. One of the latter is titled 'How to get tied in knots' and depicts a small image of Santospirito surrounded by floating words like 'Impostor syndrome', 'yet another white man', 'Knowledge that good intentions are not good enough', and 'Does this book somehow do further harm to Indigenous peoples?' The 2018 comic book serves as another ending, another instance of metanarrative, of the author drawing attention to the text's own acts of crisis.

Constructing the narrator

How is the idea of an author de-centred and shared, and their authority called into question, while at the same time creating a story that can be read? How does the reader come to understand that the work has nonfiction origins – as a work whose material has been experienced and recorded by the bodies of true people – while also coming to view both Santospirito and San Roque as less important than the stories being told? In other words, what efforts, however partial, are made to remove,

balance, or at least call into question the privilege of author and the privilege of subject? The creator of the comic is Joshua Santospirito; he details steps he took to 'weave together the different vignettes and conceptual sequences' expressed in San Roque's essay, including development of 'a strong visual language' that changes the emphasis of many of the sections (Scully & Santospirito 2015: 138). According to Santospirito,

> I made strong decisions from the beginning that the graphic novel would have to be written to serve the narrative more than each of the ideas, and any of the more conceptual sections that did not serve this new purpose got the chop! Most of the ideas that were removed were metaphor-heavy; often there was no way to integrate them in the new form. In some ways, I was able to encode them in the imagery or the page layouts without the words being written. (Scully & Santospirito 2015: 137)

Throughout the process of adaptation, the relationship between San Roque and Santospirito was informal, variable, and close. For example, the version of the essay Santospirito initially worked from was drawn directly from San Roque's laptop; it was only when Santospirito ordered the published version that he realised certain gaps existed between draft and finished form (Scully & Santospirito 2015: 137-138). Santospirito was able to show San Roque preliminary drawings in person: 'I don't know if he completely understood where it was going, not being a comic reader, let alone a comic-maker. But then a comic-adaptation of an essay is a difficult thing to explain to people in a half-completed form' (Santospirito qtd in Sadokierski 2014). As the book developed, he sent San Roque 'the occasional email, or when I went to Alice Springs for work I showed him where it was up to' (in Sadokierski 2014). According to Santospirito, San Roque's 'interest' grew as the book grew in size, 'probably because he could see where it was going'. When Santospirito sent San Roque a 'stitched photocopy booklet of the first 60 pages or so', San Roque took this to conferences and discussed it with his colleagues. For Santospirito though, '[t]he project was not a collaboration in a true sense' until the work was completed and he asked San Roque to contribute a new essay (*A Book of Sand*) for inclusion in the back of the book: here, he 'inadvertently became an editor' (in Sadokierski 2014).

However, although the finished comic is not a collaboration, it is positioned as the result of nuanced, plural authorships, in ways that go beyond the courtesies of attribution. The positioning balances different impressions of Santospirito and San Roque, sets them in different stances against and among the stories being told. Essays, interviews, promotional materials, and copyright indicia each play a role in creating a separate impression of the authorship of the text; key terminology is used interchangeably; San Roque and Santospirito refer to each other and the text in ways that suggest varying impressions of its relationship to an author, or multiple authors. In small ways it confuses the relationship between paratextual materials and primary text. This is first signalled on the cover, whereupon the comic is formally titled *Craig San Roque's The Long Weekend in Alice Springs.* Following this, the credit appears as 'Adapted and drawn by Joshua Santospirito'.

Some promotional materials introduce it as 'a graphic novel adaption of an essay'. They describe Craig San Roque as both 'the author of the original essay' and as a figure that 'acts as narrator and protagonist':

> taking the reader through a series of poetic thoughts, places and time zones. Set over the course of a football long weekend in the central Australian desert town of Alice Springs San Roque grapples with his analysis of history, culture and the pain which unconscious complexes, intentionally and unintentionally, inflict upon other cultures. (Watch This Space Inc 2013).

Further promotional materials introduce Santospirito as both the creator of the work and an *experiencer* of the original essay: 'At the time of reading', while working as a psychiatric nurse in Central Australian Aboriginal communities,

> Josh found [the essay] very useful for reframing all of the seeming chaos around him. In 2007, as a form of cathartic meditation on the world, Josh began to draw parts of the essay into comic form which slowly became a much larger task and a labour of love. (Santospirito 2016)

The text invites the reader to imagine Santospirito 'at the time of reading' and then to imagine his engagement in the time that followed; the result of which is the comic we are about to read. In other words, these paratextual materials go beyond placing the adaptation in dialogue with the adapted work. Instead, they narrativise the act of adaptation, and position Santospirito as both a reader and an author; he is a character in the story of the production of the text. This is not an uncommon tactic in nonfiction comics; for example, in many of Joe Sacco's nonfiction comics, notably *The Fixer* (2003), Sacco tells both another person's story and the story of the telling. The differences are apparent; chief among them is that Santospirito is setting up an extended personal narrative that is also an account of a thought process, a particularly interior experience – an essay. Both essay and adaptation have the quality of a meditation. At the same time, their material is the stories of people who may lack the resources to publish material in scholarly journals or work on extended artistic adaptations. The use of other people's material, the varying roles of Santospirito and San Roque, are built into the meaning of an extended text.

Another chief difference from other texts (comics and otherwise) which stage the narrator in this metafictional, meditative way, is the added layer of specific critical perspectives and contexts at play. San Roque, as a Jungian psychologist and cultural anthropologist writing primarily for an audience of other Western-educated medical practitioners, is, like Sacco, engaging with the material and characters of his story with a specific eye and affect – in Sacco's case, the affect of journalism, in San Roque's case, the affect of psychology. The tension and the anxiety of the book's project come through most starkly, then, when the narrator attempts to stage a distancing from these underlying critical perspectives, as when the drawn San Roque narrates:

> I'm trying to develop a theme for this essay that I'm writing / but I feel interrupted by these / incidental / bacchic / visitations. Suddenly, I realise / I don't have to THINK anymore about the problem that Tom [his editor] troubles me with. I just have to sit here and describe what is happening around the fire / and in my mind's eye. (Santospirito 2013)

The capitalised and underlined word 'think' emphasises it as the key verb of this passage. What actually follows, though, is a work that performs observation, yes, but also performs complex acts of thinking, synthesis, and theorising using the language of psychology and cultural anthropology. San Roque's drawing on art, poetry and collaborative storytelling throughout his career speaks perhaps to the deficiency he identifies here within the 'thinking' methodologies of his training and education.

The early pages of the comic foreground the act of adaptation, blending paratextual and narrative material and positioning Santospirito as both creator and experiencer of the work. The first page of the comic reads, 'I don't know how to think about these things…' and shows a pencil resting on two blank sheets of paper. In narrative terms, this shows San Roque beginning his essay, and positions San Roque as the protagonist of the forthcoming story. It also shows Santospirito beginning his adaptation; it shows the impasse that incited the original essay and the impasse that incited the present work.

Although the above is narrative material, it precedes the copyright page, which has legal purpose that, for instance, interviews and ephemera do not have, and in which notions of ownership must be clearly set out. Here the text is said to be 'originally written' by San Roque and 'first published' in a 2004 anthology; the publisher has been informed and permissions sought; the copyright of the 'art and words' of the introduction is 'owned' by Joshua Santospirito, 2013; the copyright for the 'original essay' is owned by San Roque, 2004; the copyright for 'original artwork and graphic novel adaptation' is owned by Santospirito; the copyright for 'A Book of Sand', an 'original essay' that appears in the back of the book, is owned by San Roque, 2013. Further in this copyright section, the authors speak as 'we': 'We are reasonable people, please respect our rights to be known as the authors and artists of these works.'

In other places, the language of ownership seems deliberately blurred. In an introduction to an extract from the work, San Roque writes that Santospirito 'has taken my original essay and, with cinematic skill, has constructed a graphic account' (San Roque & Santospirito 2016: 29). Although this language refers to a different mode of media production, this language at once acknowledges the visual dimension of the comic, the work ('construction') of adaptation, and the shared quality of the events under discussion, which exist independent of their narration (the comic is an 'account'). In the same introduction, San Roque describes himself as both 'narrator' and 'alter ego [recounting] incidents in local life and death', both a construct that *tells* the story and a participant *in* the story.

In 'A Book of Sand', the essay commissioned and edited by Santospirito and included in *The Long Weekend in Alice Springs*, San Roque writes:

> I like this world. This mixed up world where old things and new things slid into one another. A world where the severance has been blurred and things slide into each other with a quiet erotic melting. I like the way psychoanalysis allowed me to do that… I like the way Joshua Santospirito's hand drawing allows us to do that – his images and my memory sliding into each other. I like Josh's memory, the practice of reverie and the coasts one comes upon. (San Roque 2013)

In his contributor biography in *The Long Weekend in Alice Springs*, he writes, 'The person in the comic doesn't look much like me, except occasionally. I like what Josh has done' (in Santospirito 2013). For San Roque, then, both the comic and the essay are sites where images and memory can 'slide' into each other, suggesting a blend of experiences in time, stories in narrative media, and representations of their organising consciousnesses. Santospirito, too, characterises the interplay of elements as a means of both blurring authorial boundaries and keeping them separate:

> I hear Craig's voice [when he reads the comic], but of course there is a lot of me in the images. There is probably a word for the overall voice of a comic – which I'm part of. But it is clearly Craig's voice I hear when I read the words on the page.
>
> An interesting thought to me is that I could never have written this work, but also that Craig could never have written the graphic novel – which possibly means that the graphic novel is neither of our voices; it's the voice of "Craig/Josh"; a new and altogether bizarre creature. (Scully & Santospirito 2015: 146)

The overall voice of a comic can be formulated in different ways, eg Marion's term *graphiateur* (Marion 1993) for the 'graphic impulse or graphic enunciation that is manifest in all levels of structure and narration' (Atkinson 2009: 270), and which is not dependent on sole authorship but which is expressed through the hand of an 'implied' author. Style should be considered as a unified idea: 'The voice in comic

books is not directly comparable to speech or writing but should be considered rather as a graphical "grain" or tenor which cannot be reduced to what is shown or said' (Atkinson 2010: 122). This term is descriptive, but viewed in light of the work's materials – Indigenous lives, and particularly their use in the lives and creative and scholarly works of white observers – notions of authorship and collaboration are not quite swallowed into an idea or impression of an implied author; rather, their instability becomes part of the narrative, and part of the reading experience. This 'new and altogether bizarre creature' – what the reader experiences as 'voice' – is a narrative composite that requires not just an understanding of comics and indeed voices, but an understanding of authorships, of the comic's status as an adapted work and perhaps especially of the comic as a nonfiction work: that is, a text that draws some of its meaning from its relationship to the world. The supposed remit is to document San Roque's experience of Alice Springs over a long weekend in 2002, but the text's status as an artefact with reference to the real world also depends on Santospirito's experience of San Roque's work. The comic, then, performs a kind of sharing of authority: its value is both interpretive and documentary, presenting twinned experiences of authors engaging with real life. It suggests that both San Roque and Santospirito are separate from the events being described, thus opening itself to questions about the relationship between storyteller and story: who has authority here? Where is the line between participant and appropriator? Are stories always larger than their teller?

Perhaps comics hold specific advantages for telling stories that require shared points-of-view. It is also possible they might occlude the origins of the stories they tell, or open specific, pernicious opportunities to combine and recombine stories, obscuring sources and obscuring critiques of how they are used. Comics deploy recombinant uses of spaces, source materials, narrators, images, words, and times; these generic affordances can be put to varying effect. For instance, the medium's formal properties seem especially suited to telling a story whose present incorporates its past, because the space of the comics page allows discrete spaces and times to share narrative surface. As the narrator notes,

> The Aboriginal dreaming system works by geographical linkages accompanied by verse, specialised dance and graphics. There is a kind of neural pathway system of treks by travelling women, men, reptiles, mammals and birds who go … overland, underground, and through the sky. Their activities and verse-forms are bound by a logic of landform that is both poetic and pragmatic. (see Figure 5)

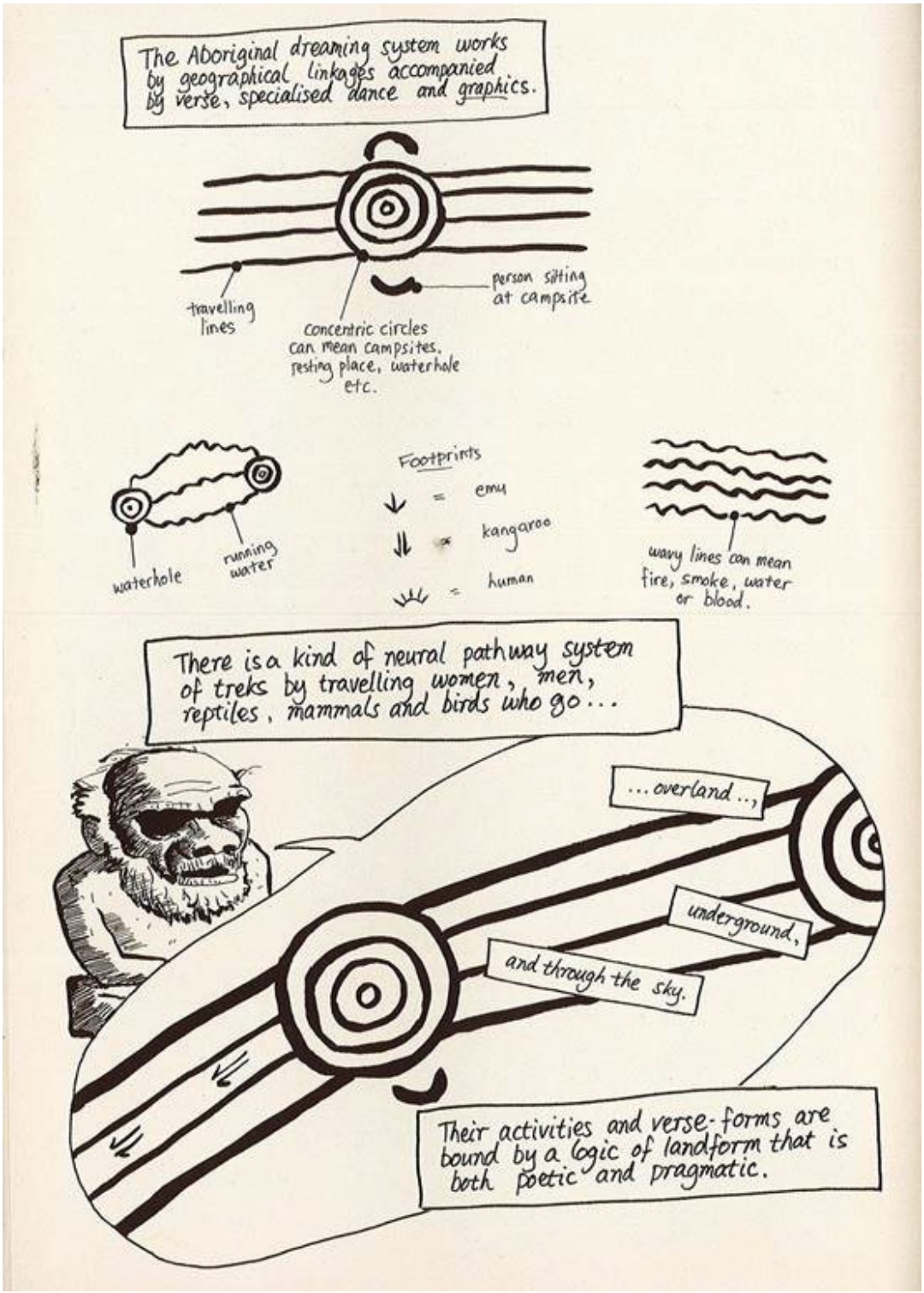

Figure 5. Aboriginal dreaming system (Santospirito 2013)

For San Roque, who spends much of the essay and comic walking and thinking – covering ground – and for Santospirito, who traces and enciphers San Roque's wandering route, space serves both as background, embedding narrative and experience, and influencing experience. For San Roque, sites 'repeat'; they emanate 'psychic influence'; they 'regurgitate … fundamental acts'. Rather than discrete phenomena, events are 'encipherments'. In conveying time and space using the same physical areas, comics cause ideas to exist in succession and simultaneity.

However, the question of succession and simultaneity remains complicated, particularly in the construction of the narrator, a reminder that neither form or content are neutral; nor are their values necessarily fixed as a text continues. When adapting the essay, Santospirito was nervous of his status as 'a white man, adapting another

white man's text about cultural matters', specifically matters concerning the mental and physical health of Indigenous Australians (Sully & Santospirito 2015: 143). This anxiety is built into the work. The authors are repurposing and re-authoring stories under discussion, stories originating in Indigenous Australian communities.

In a work that is in many ways 'about' adaptation – by foregrounding the shared role of the author – it is also a work that foregrounds story, and the fact that stories belong to someone else. Arguably, the act of adapting the essay puts two authors in dialogue with each other; the comic also enters a power dynamic between appropriator and author/originator that stands behind this dialogue.

Rather than suggesting that the question of authority and authorship is resolved, we note that comics as a medium can open possibilities for ideas about the multiplicity of author and narrator. The comics form poses challenges to discrete divisions between authors, protagonists, subjects, and narrators; a single-authored autobiographical comic, for instance, commonly features an avatar of the author (a protagonist) who experiences events, a textual narrator who often exists separate from the panel's present tense, and the sense of an author-narrator, an organising consciousness – an intimate consciousness, because the comic reproduces traces of the hand (see El Refaie 2012). In a work 'about' stories and particularly one suggesting their collective significance, perhaps it is significant that the comic addresses an idea of the author that is provisional and ever-changing.

The use of comics form in the construction of the narrator creates a charged space; the valence of author and narrator vary throughout this space, and complicate further as the paratextual materials cited in this paper are encountered and added to the reading.

Conclusion

The Long Weekend in Alice Springs is a work of nonfiction comics that uses multiple authorships to make an argument about historical narratives. The status of the author is both provisional and significant; as such, it suggests an attempt to convey the complexities of ownership, origination and authority in discussing place, race, and the collective unconscious. It sits at multiple borders of form and genre, including creative work, scholarship, the essay and nonfiction. It uses visual, textual, paratextual and narrative means to establish a hybrid form of narrator-author, and uses this hybrid construct to tell a continuous narrative.

It is not produced by Indigenous creators, yet it is concerned with the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Western settlers. The form of the work and its origins open questions of authority and authorship, and thereby serve its contribution to knowledge, its creative value, and its themes. As the narrator contends on Saturday morning of the long weekend, he's been 'instructed by ghosts to analyse my own culture as though something important has been forgotten'; the subject is the 'overlap between my culture and Aboriginal'. In establishing a state between authors, adapters and adaptations, it makes an argument about the significance of stories. It suggests a form suited to discussing the continued impact of racial violence, a site where 'Trucks from the past are still delivering' (San Roque 2004: 53).

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Notes

[1] The Dreaming, or 'Tjukurrpa', also means to 'see and understand the law' as it is translated from the Arrernte language. Dreaming stories pass on important knowledge, cultural values and belief systems to later generations. return to text

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