Introduction

*MAD*ness, *Mishugas*, Manhattan: *Mad* as That Other New York(er) Humor

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> *mishugas*, *meshugas* (Yiddish, n.), mih_shoo_gaas' / meh_shoo_gaas' / meh_shi_gaas' / (varies regionally), craziness, madness, nonsense
>
> *prost* (Yiddish, adj.), plain, lowly, humble; vulgar

IN 1952, LESS than thirty years after the *New Yorker* reshaped American humor through sophisticated cartoons, humorous reporting, and comic fiction in a magazine famously "not edited for the Old Lady in Dubuque," another local publication took an opposite approach—with possibly greater impact. Scholars have not bestowed on *Mad* the loving attention given the *New Yorker*, nor named a school of humor after it, but both can lay claim to the title "America's Most Important Humor Magazine."[1] *Mad* founders Harvey Kurtzman and William Gaines did not write a manifesto akin to Harold Ross's famous prospectus, but they didn't need to. In place of Rea Irvin's monocled dandy examining a butterfly on the *New Yorker*'s debut cover of February 21, 1925, an arch caricature of the nineteenth-century urbanity that Ross aspired to update, *Mad*'s first cover (dated October-November 1952, but on newsstands in August) reversed social norms to mock horror comics. As a crudely drawn mom and dad flattened themselves against the wall of a dungeon, their hair literally raised in fear of "That slithering blob coming toward us!," their toddler, belly button blazing, boldly produced the comic anticlimax: "It's Melvin!" The clear message: *Mad* was a species of funnies aimed at comics fans more allied with the kid than the parents. This target audience reflected Gaines's comics-business model of newsprint pages and newsstand sales at one dime per shot, not Ross's more traditional reliance on glossy pages and advertising tied to the demographics of

readers who could afford year-long subscriptions. Where the *New Yorker* aimed at taste-making among the uptown yuppies of his day and "humor was allowed to infect everything," as E. B. White put it,[2] *Mad* took pride in a downtown adolescent tastelessness that defined *mishugas*—craziness, madness. (Foolishness gets dismissed as *narishkeit*, triviality.) *Mad* was, we might say, the Yiddish *prost* to the *New Yorker*'s Proust, but together the two magazines gave the U.S. its modern sense of humor. *Mad*'s apparent demise in July 2019, when (after barely a year in its new home) contributors were advised that the magazine would shift mainly to reprint material, showed the limitations of its print-based formula even as the *New Yorker* engaged a twenty-first century media strategy of live events, radio, podcasts, and web content. The postmodern culture that *Mad*'s *mishugas* helped construct had, in essence, killed it.

Mad's brash exuberance diverged from the *New Yorker*'s more cerebral joking because the magazines' editors and contributors reflected different worlds and worldviews. For all their reputation as a madcap bunch, the *New Yorker* staff came from the editorial, if not cultural, elite. Early *New Yorker* contributor networks included not only the Algonquin Wits who have received the most attention—writers Dorothy Parker, Alexander Woollcott, and Robert Benchley—but also alumni groups from Cornell (E. B. White and Frank Sullivan), Ohio State University (Donald Ogden Stewart and James Thurber), the Art Institute of Chicago (Helen Hokinson, Alice Harvey, Garrett Price), and members of the feminist Lucy Stone League (Jane Grant, Janet Flanner, Lois Long), as well as contributors to the *Harvard Lampoon*, *Vanity Fair*, and the U.S. Army's *Stars and Stripes*. A few were native New Yorkers, but most, including Californians Ross and Irvin, had migrated to America's publishing mecca and cultivated a New York frame of mind. Mainly college graduates at a time when few Americans finished high school, these writers and artists exuded the sophistication that self-taught Ross hoped would snare their affluent, educated peers as readers.

By contrast, most of *Mad*'s principals a generation later were local boys from Brooklyn and the Bronx who had little or no college education. Founding editor and chief writer Harvey Kurtzman, artists Will Elder, Al Jaffee, John Severin, and writer-artist Al Feldstein (who succeeded Kurtzman as editor in April 1956) were buddies from New York's High School of Music and Art. Georgian Jack Davis and Minnesotan Wallace

"Wally" Wood came to *Mad* from other comics studios (Wood worked on Will Eisner's *The Spirit*), but the rest of the group already worked for publisher William (Bill) Gaines at Entertaining (formerly Educational, now EC) Comics. So did the crew's sole woman, colorist Marie Severin. The clubbiness of New York not only made artists' and writers' networks easy to tap, but also gave both *Mad* and the *New Yorker* a coherence that came as much from contributors' shared backgrounds as from editorial vision. Yet compared to Ross's group, *Mad* staff and contributors were cultural outsiders several times over.

Ross pressed *New Yorker* artists to deliver what he called "idea drawings," in which a comic conceit implied relations between image and caption and thereby rewarded sophisticated minds. So he worried about the relative inferiority of *New Yorker* writing in the early months, joking to a friend on October 15, 1925, "it has just been described as the best magazine in the world for a person who can not read."[3] In keeping with its elite aspirations, its cartoons mixed race and class bias, including anti-Semitism, as figure 0-1 shows. There, in a cartoon from June 5, 1926, Peter Arno imported the well-known anti-Semitic iconography of hooked nose, Chasidic dress, devious facial expression, and obsequious posture in depicting "one of the neighbors" scandalously invading the upper-class space of the Lower East Side's Neighborhood Playhouse.[4]

Indeed, debutante Ellin Mackay cemented the magazine's upscale identity and WASP bona fides a few weeks after Ross's comment about the magazine's art. In "Why We Go to Cabarets," she explained that her smart set preferred nightclubs to society balls despite the unpleasantness of "dancing shoulder to shoulder with gaudy and fat drummers" because "at least, in the cabaret, we do not have to dance with them"—*them* including "the young man who . . . prays that you won't suspect that he lives far up on the West Side" or "the gentleman who says he comes from the South, who lives just south of New York—in Brooklyn."[5] These descriptions, if not quite code for *Jew*, sorted the elite from the rest, especially from Kurtzman's gang and comics readers. When S. J. Perelman reworked the stereotype of the Schlemiel as the *New Yorker*'s Little Man in the 1930s and Saul Steinberg mocked its view of the world in 1976, they reframed ethnic difference as urbanity and its lack. The college humor magazines that provided models for Ross and training for his staff also influenced Kurtzman, who credited them with his love of parody

and satire.[6] But the original *Mad* staff's identity as outsiders—mainly Jews from the boroughs beyond Manhattan—more globally shaped its countercultural sense of humor.

Here I don't refer to *Mad*'s well-documented use of Yiddish vocabulary (real and made-up) that invoked the comic principle "foreigners are funny."[7] To be sure, *Mad*'s cultural and political critiques positioned its most visible editors and contributors as a set of "alternative New York Jewish intellectuals," as Nathan Abrams put it in 2003.[8] Nor do I cite its joking with American vernaculars and dialects or the international traditions of Jewish humor in its pages.[9] Rather, I want to note that a Jewish identity is by definition counterhegemonic in a Christian society, which reinforces its worldview in Easter school breaks, the annual return of Scrooge, and Friday night lights that have nothing to with Sabbath candles; the western calendar makes Jewish holy days seem random when not invisible. Put otherwise, seeing the world through Jewish eyes, even nonobservant ones, means having skepticism toward majority belief, if not finding it incomprehensibly foolish. Feldstein delicately described the position as "a certain kind of living in society. Trying to survive in that society."[10] The anti-Semitism depicted in Peter Arno's 1926 cartoon was no secret in a U.S. that limited Jewish entry through the 1924 Immigration Act and would decline to fight Hitler until the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor; the controversial Gregory Peck fiction film about east-coast anti-Semitism, *Gentlemen's Agreement*, came out only in 1947—after the Holocaust killed half the world's Jews. In the 1930s New York of *Mad* staffers' youth, Jews had the luxury of being about a quarter of the five boroughs' population, compared to just 3 percent nationwide (2 percent today), and U.S. restrictions hardly compared to those in Nazi Europe, but quotas in American colleges and discrimination in professions channeled Jews to low-status industries such as the comic book. Comics' low status reflected their origins in newspapers and association with illiteracy, but the medium's association with Jews also played a role. Certainly, it figured into the 1954 Kefauver Senate hearings on juvenile delinquency that indirectly gave birth to *Mad*'s conversion from comic book to magazine. American comic book leaders—Superman's creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, Spider-Man's creator Stan Lee (born Stanley Lieber), Captain America's creators Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, *The Spirit* innovator Will Eisner, and inventor of the physical comic book format Max "Charlie" Gaines (born Ginzberg), Bill Gaines's father—were all

One of the neighbors drops in at the Neighborhood Playhouse.

Fig. 0-1: Peter Arno's "One of the Neighbors" (*right*) from the early New Yorker (6/5/26: 19), satirizes the casual anti-Semitism and racism of the WASP New York in which Harvey Kurtzman, Will Elder, and other early *Mad* writers and artists grew up, and against which they rebelled in celebrating the vulgarity of the comics medium and its themes, the broad humor of parody, and Yiddishisms such as *ganefs* (thieves). (Kurtzman and Elder, "Ganefs!," (*below*) *Mad* #1, 10–11/52: 1.) "One of the Neighbors" used courtesy of the Estate of Peter Arno.

Jewish.[11] David Hajdu subtly attributes what he calls "the hysteria over comic books" to "religions and biases rooted in time and place" along with "class and money and taste; . . . presidential politics; . . . a new medium called television," and other factors, but Josh Lambert cuts to the chase: he cites the 90 percent prosecution rate against Jews by the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice in the 1930s as evidence of comics reformers' resort to an "anti-Semitic tradition that understood Jewish speech and writing to be obscene."[12]

Whether or not *Mad*'s publisher Bill Gaines saw it that way when the New York City police came to arrest him on December 29, 1953, or when Senator Estes Kefauver publicly raked him over the coals the following April, the controversy over comics crushed EC. The principals' Jewish background figured at least in part. New York City police raided EC's offices after news spread that Massachusetts had banned sales of the debut issue of *Panic*, *Mad*'s sister publication edited by Al Feldstein, because Will Elder's irreverent illustrations had outraged a member of the Governor's Council. Elder had put a "JUST DIVORCED" sign on the back of Santa's sleigh in his burlesque illustrations of Clement Moore's "The Night Before Christmas."[13] The Jewish editor, publisher, and artist were all stunned by the outcry: "we didn't realize," Gaines explained, "that Santa Claus is a saint."[14] Yet the issue's Mickey Spillane parody "My Gun Is the Jury!," written by Feldstein with art by Jack Davis, eventually caused more trouble with irony-deficient senators and other comics detractors who thought that adventure and horror titles encouraged violence.[15] Gaines testified voluntarily at the Kefauver hearings on juvenile delinquency, but he stood out, David Park has observed, as the sole comic book publisher to defend comics against the "middlebrow notions of taste" that they offended.[16] Against Kefauver's questioning, Gaines argued not only that censoring comics as unsuitable for children would set the U.S. on a slippery slope toward tyranny ("We don't think that the crime news or any news should be banned because it is bad for children. Once you start to censor you must censor everything. You must censor comic books, radio, television, and newspapers. . . . Then you will have turned this country into Spain or Russia"), but also that horror comics, like any other genre, had a distinct aesthetic that should determine standards of good taste.[17] As Maria Reidelbach reports, Gaines tried to rally other publishers to join forces with the ACLU over the next five months in order to push back against public and commercial

censorship efforts, but he finally surrendered in September 1954. That month his counterparts proposed the self-censorship that became the Comics Code, including bans on the words *horror*, *crime*, *terror*, and *weird* that would eliminate most EC titles and jeopardize his whole company.[18] Distributors would not carry titles lacking the Code's seal of approval, so he cut all the titles but *Mad*, *Panic*, and *Incredible Science* and gave Kurtzman, who had recently received an editorial offer from the admiring publisher of *Pageant*, the go-ahead to convert *Mad* to a slick magazine.[19] In this context, *Mad*'s transformation from comic book to magazine in 1955 was a counterhegemonic move twice over: as it evaded interference by political and economic forces, the magazine also expanded *Mad*'s formula of media burlesque to more topics and more influential readers. "For the past two years now, MAD has been dulling the senses of the country's youth," Kurtzman announced in the May 1955 issue, its last as a comic book, with an irony aimed at both friends and foes; "Now we get to work on the adults" (#23: 31).

Mad's M.O. was simple in both formats: take a comic conceit and push it over the top. Early art, in particular, reveled in excess comic detail. Elder's contempt for the comics controversy in the splash page of "Starchie," written by Kurtzman (see fig. 0-2), shows his love of what he called "chicken fat" for the definitive flavor it gave his drawings. The many details in the page—including the artist's mock-degree in B.S., the incongruous presence of Little Orphan Annie, and the messages on the girls' books and the office—exemplify what delighted Kurtzman as the "irrepressible background nonsense" that "would carry my stuff forward and enrich it by a multiple of ten."[20]

But other artists also indulged in this graphic equivalent of slapstick, which gave *Mad* its madcap flair and explains why the less detailed computer-assisted art of recent years seems flat by comparison. As longtime editor Nick Meglin summed up the editorial vision a bit too modestly in 2016, "*Mad* was not a magazine of creation; we were a magazine of reflection. We would hold up a fun-house mirror to the society so the image was distorted and exaggerated."[21] Indeed, *Mad*'s creativity involved exploiting some original incongruity or contradiction in order to turn imitation into burlesque. The formula that Kurtzman conceived survived in part because, like the *New Yorker*, *Mad* has enjoyed tremendous editorial stability across its sixty-seven years: Harvey Kurtzman (1952–56) was followed by Al Feldstein (1956–84), Nick Meglin and John Ficarra as

Fig. 0-2: The Comics Code that would push Gaines to drop most of EC's titles and convert *Mad* to a magazine format had not been finalized when Will Elder designed this splash page bursting with comic detail for Harvey Kurtzman's parody of *Archie* in *Mad* #12, "Starchie" (6/54): 1, but Elder's seal of disapproval (based on the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval, a warranty program dating to 1909, [*above*]) addressed the environment for comics dramatized in the U.S. Senate's hearings at which Gaines testified that spring. The many details in the page (*below*)—including the artist's mock-degree in B.S., the incongruous presence of Little Orphan Annie, and the messages on the girls' books and the office—exemplify what delighted Kurtzman. MAD used with permission.

a team (1985–2004), and then Ficarra solo (2004–18) until the offices moved to Burbank, California, and Bill Morrison took over (2018–19). But both magazines' ability to sustain their signature appearance and mood reflects the loyalty of excellent artists and writers. While blessed with such comic virtuosi as writers Frank Jacobs, Larry Siegel, Dick DeBartolo, and Stan Hart, *Mad* has particularly benefited from the decades-long associations of artists Jack Davis, Mort Drucker, Dave Berg, Al Jaffee, Don Martin, Sergio Aragonés, Peter Kuper, and Tom Richmond, who gave *Mad* its hallmark look. (For capsule career sketches of *Mad* contributors, see Appendix A; for key moments in *Mad*'s history, see the timeline in Appendix B.)

Harvey Kurtzman had the shortest tenure but the most important one, defining *Mad* as a humor periodical featuring high-quality graphic narration of sophisticated yet youthfully spirited parodies in the color comic books numbered #1–23 (10-11/52–5/55) and the five black-and-white glossy magazines (#24–28, 7/55–7/56) that enriched the mix with other verbal and graphic genres, such as print and television ads and illustrated how-to guides. The *Mad* comic began with parodies of comic book genres, notably adventure, superhero, and youth comics. The formula quickly expanded to other genres, however, and by the sixth issue had embraced that sentimental staple of high school poetry lessons, Ernest Lawrence Thayer's "Casey at the Bat"—a feature that may have inspired the Clement Moore parody in *Panic* later that year. (Feldstein moved over from *Panic* to edit *Mad* during Kurtzman's spring 1953 illness.) Thayer's verses ran faithfully in a hand-lettered imitation of a textbook font like Garamond rather than the sans serif capitals of comic books, but Jack Davis's art undercut such seriousness with comically exaggerated action, loose-jointed characters, distorted facial expressions, and various incongruities accompanying every line or rhyme. When Casey passes on his second pitch, the drawing shows him holding a golf club instead of a bat; when the ballad intones, "The sneer is gone from Casey's lip, his teeth are clenched in hate," Casey hands a set of false teeth to a bat boy (#6, 8–9/53; 1–6; 6). The parody celebrates the potential for high burlesque—that is, serious treatment of a lowly topic—inherent in Thayer's melodrama of Mudville: Davis's art clashes comically with the ballad's narrative tension and the elevated diction required by its iambic heptameter rhymes (e.g., "spheroid" for *ball*), just as Thayer's plot ironically caps Casey's career with his anti-climactic strikeout.

Most *Mad* parodies reveled in low burlesque—that is, travesty, mocking high stakes through vulgar comparisons—a choice especially suited to political satire. In "What's My Shine!" (#17, 11/54: 7-1 [issue printed backwards]), an early foray into the kind of multi-target satire that became *Mad*'s hallmark as a magazine, Kurtzman and Davis reduced the high-profile Kefauver and Army-McCarthy Senate hearings to a madcap TV game show, like the then-popular career-guessing game *What's My Line?* (CBS, 1950–67). The satire savages Joseph McCarthy and Roy Cohn (always portrayed seated together with the unnamed but clearly recognizable Cohn whispering in the senator's ear) for falsifying evidence and badgering witnesses to banish them, as implied by the satiric name *McCartaway*. When Even Steven (stand-in for Army Secretary Robert T. Stevens) refutes photographic evidence that he "is in reality, a Redskin!" by having a physician dressed in full medical gear testify that he "doctored" it (20), the incident barely revises events of April 1954, as described in the *New York Times*. Known as "a news junkie,"[22] Kurtzman likewise has Senator McCartaway try to settle the difference between the original and falsified photos by "wrassling!"—a challenge that echoes the *New York Times* report that "Cohn, in wrangle, admits it [the photo] was cut"—before the "friendly quiz game for the whole friendly family" ends in a fracas not too different from the chaos that ensued in the Senate when the committee chair called himself to testify.[23] The satire's targets went beyond McCarthy's red-hunting, however, because the live TV coverage of those hearings began on April 22, 1954, the day after nationally televised hearings on juvenile delinquency by the Senate's Kefauver committee had humiliated EC publisher Bill Gaines for claiming that horror comics had an aesthetic governing the genre's standards of taste.[24] The back-to-back spectacles must have seemed to Kurtzman to be just one more TV game show, like CBS's pioneering *What's My Line?*, with hapless witnesses sacrificed for public entertainment. Certainly a report in the April 26 *New York Times* on NBC's decision to drop its live Army-McCarthy coverage encouraged such a view: "Apparently a Senate investigating subcommittee, together with 'Dragnet' and 'I Love Lucy,' is now subject to television's inviolate law of the popularity rating."[25] Kurtzman's satire shows his awareness of the stakes.

As an early television parody, "What's My Shine!" also takes comic aim at other targets, especially broadcasting conventions and publishing practices. Issue #17 was printed backwards and upside down to give

readers a new "viewpoint" (cover), a bit of pure silliness as well as a dig at the attack on comics that was heating up during the issue's production that spring and summer. A black-and-white photo identified as "a scene from a television show that began in April" (24) set the stage for the parody's greyscale palette (although the issue's other contents ran in color) in a visual joke that mimicked the aesthetic of the televised hearings. Most important, in a harbinger of parodies to come, "What's My Shine!" lavished special comic energy on TV's symbiosis of programming and commercials. The spoof sponsor POW Coffee appears three times in the splash panel opening the parody and in all but one of fourteen panels on the facing page, a lampoon of broadcast advertising practices in which sponsors owned an entire broadcast slot and often branded the program. The commercial break appears at the most narratively dramatic and judicially unfair point, just when McCartaway presents damning photographic evidence against Steven. News watchers surely noted that a similar cliff-hanger occurred in the Senate hearings, but the burlesque of contemporary ads for Maxwell House Instant Coffee turns the satire away from politics toward media as the announcer extols how "POW is *not a* drip, *not a grind*, not a smash, not a goo . . . [but] honest-to-goodness hollow *flavor buds*, all hollow inside and everything" (20, ital. for echoes of the original ad). Kurtzman and Davis added particularly cynical touches in outfitting the announcer and senators in the same huckster-plaid and naming the sponsor to echo the climactic melee. But in tweaking CBS, whose logo closes the satire, and Maxwell House, whose Hoboken factory had scented New York's air since 1939 while gracing New York harbor with its neon sign of drops falling from a cup,[26] the satire also had local meaning beyond advertising's role as ubiquitous, repetitive television content inherited from radio days.

Both the parody and travesty—the mock-melodrama inflating baseball in "Casey" and the low burlesque trivializing politics in "What's My Shine!"—embed anti-establishment commentary in their very form. *Mad*'s basic commitment to imitation with a comic difference gave it endless opportunities to critique the individuals, themes, and contexts invoked in both types of burlesque. *Mad*'s commitment to parody thus gave the *New Yorker* "idea drawing" new significance and scope. The *New Yorker*'s idea drawings privileged originality through such comic conceits as ironic relations between image and text, whereas *Mad* valorized comic imitation. Opposing identities and editorial policies followed. In

its quest for archness, the *New Yorker* would reject one piece as "a little much of the formula type of humor to be quite successful" and another as "not somehow amusing enough to go" despite an earlier request to "keep the humor from flying quite so wild."[27] Not that it couldn't take a gag and work it repeatedly into an inside joke, as in the twenty-eight cartoons of Otto Soglow's 1928–29 manhole series.[28] Yet its original editorial policy proscribing humor about writers, artists, and admen—highly visible local types ripe for ribbing—created an opening that *Mad* would fill.

Another New York-based humor magazine briefly stepped in to do so first, however. During its first run from 1931 to 1939, *Ballyhoo* gave pride of place to media burlesques, especially parodies of advertising, perhaps modeling such humor for Kurtzman and his colleagues before it folded permanently in 1954.[29] The debut issue of *Ballyhoo* mocked *Vanity Fair* and the *Congressional Record* ("because—why keep a record of unimportant events?"); the second took on *Time* ("'Time'ly News") and the *New Yorker* ("Such Goings on About Town!").[30] Full page mock ads joined parodies of editorial content. Some mock ads took on ad culture broadly while poking fun at politics: "A ROOSEVELT requires no attention . . . not even oiling. It is hermetically sealed against all opinions, thus insuring a smooth-running president. KEEP REGULAR WITH ROOSEVELT."[31] But others burlesqued marketing programs with the specificity and irreverence that would become familiar in *Mad*, as in the ad for "Hart, Schafner & the Four Marx Brothers" with the headline "What the 'well-dressed men' at Harvard are wearing" next to a rear view of a naked man in a body-builder's pose (see fig. 0-3).[32] Most tantalizing of *Ballyhoo*'s possible influence on Kurtzman is an unsigned page presumably by editor Norman Anthony, "Why Not Make the Newspapers ALL Comics?," which not only parodied every news genre from crime to sports coverage, but also previewed the conception of the original *Mad* comic book.[33] Rumor has it that *Mad*'s editors responded to a question from the British Society of Strip Illustrators about the influence of *Ballyhoo* by insisting, "We know nuthin', and what's more we ain't sayin'." But the similarities hardly seem coincidental. Considering *Ballyhoo*'s tremendous popularity—its circulation approached 2 million copies by its sixth number, dated January 1932, at the depth of the Great Depression—one must discount Kurtzman's report that college humor magazines provided his sole models for the "outrageous . . . approach to humor" that he sought for *Mad*.[34]

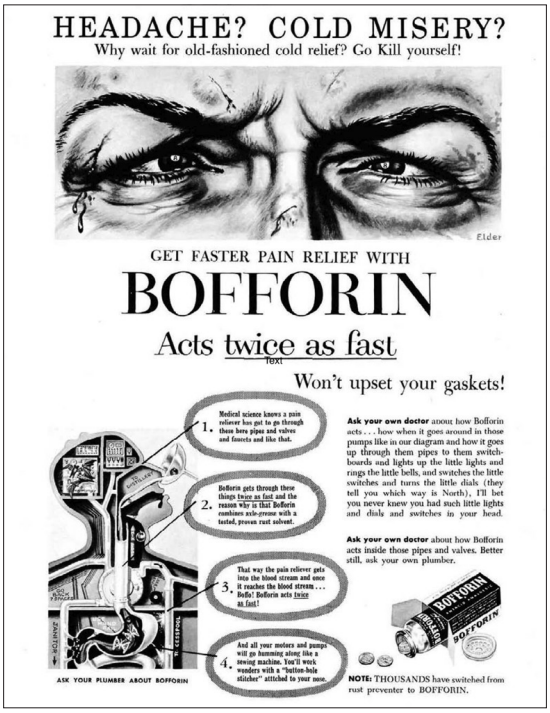

Fig. 0-3: The new *Mad* magazine parodied a well-known product name, logo, and marketing slogan and in much the same way that *Ballyhoo* had pioneered during Kurtzman's teen years. *Ballyhoo* suspended publication in 1939, but its brief revival for five quarterly issues in 1953–54 may have reminded him of its heyday as the new *Mad* took shape.

0-3 (*Above Right*): *Mad* #24 (7/55): inside cover. MAD used with permission.

0-3 (*Below Right*): *Ballyhoo* 2, no. 1 (1/32): inside cover.

Ballyhoo disappeared from 1939–1953, but its brief revival in five issues between 1953 and 1954, as *Mad* grew from six to ten annual issues, may have reminded Kurtzman of its more insouciant years as he developed the *Mad* comic and, in 1955, began to think about editing a magazine.

In both its comics and magazine formats, *Mad* pursued wildness as it spoofed local industries and their public faces from Madison Avenue and Midtown to the outer boroughs and suburbs. In lampooning television, in particular, *Mad* took on what was then, like advertising, a New York industry with national cultural impact—especially as the new medium's penetration of U.S. households went from 34 to 90 percent during *Mad*'s first decade.[35] Expanding *Mad*'s scope from comic book to magazine, however, led to developing departments that could vary the contents while maintaining continuity from issue to issue along with the overall commitment to burlesque because the magazine formula requires new iterations of defining features. Yet the innovations that Kurtzman introduced in #24, the debut magazine issue, reached their comic fulfillment under Al Feldstein, who assumed the editorship in April 1956. Gaines had refused to give Kurtzman more than 10 percent of EC stock, so Kurtzman left to develop a new magazine, later named *Trump*, for Hugh Hefner.[36] Kurtzman's last issue was #28 (7/56); the next 228 belonged to Feldstein.

Feldstein reigned from #29 (9/56) to #225 (6/85), though he officially retired at the end of 1984. Like Kurtzman, Feldstein had proven himself to Gaines as a long-time comics editor and writer for EC and had demonstrated his humor bona fides at least since 1953. Feldstein stepped in when hepatitis sidelined Kurtzman during production of #5 (6–7/53)[37] and later that year developed *Panic*, an in-house imitation of *Mad* aimed to divert revenue from other competitors. Feldstein's earliest and most enduring contribution to *Mad*'s vision involved turning the gap-toothed kid into a fully imagined mascot. Flanked incongruously by Napoleon and Freud, the kid had flaunted his trademark smirk from atop the elaborate frame that Kurtzman drew to give continuity to the new magazine's covers; the banner that should have held the boy's name, to match those identifying other figures and themes, declared instead, "What? Me Worry?" (#24, 7/55: cover). By 1955, *Playboy* had its bunny and *Esquire* its Mr. Esky, following the precedents of the *New Yorker*'s Eustace Tilley and *Ballyhoo*'s Elmer Zilch (and *Punch*'s Punchinello before them). In that spirit, Feldstein commissioned Norman Mingo to paint a formal

oil portrait that introduced Alfred E. Neuman as the magazine's candidate for President in 1956 (#30, 12/56: cover). The kid's name came from Feldstein, who had used it as a pseudonym when publishing multiple items in a single issue,[38] with the spelling changed from the more obvious *Newman*, Nick Meglin joked, "to separate him from his inspiration, the Hollywood film composer Alfred Newman."[39] The byline appeared playfully *sans* illustration in three items from his first number as editor: "Dining Etiquette Quiz," with art by Basil Wolverton, and the two-part "Alfred E. Neuman Answers Your Questions," with art by newcomer Don Martin (#29, 9/56: 16, 23, 45). Defining Alfred as *Mad*'s muse not only also personified it as counter-cultural in the Eisenhower era of WASP conformity, but also asserted Feldstein's hand in reshaping Kurtzman's magazine.

Like the *New Yorker*'s Ross, who died the year that *Mad* debuted, Feldstein saw talented contributors as the key to success. To do so, he earned the loyalty of excellent writers and artists not only by paying them, as Ross did, on acceptance rather than on publication of their work, but also (unlike Ross) by giving them new assignments with every sale. "I didn't want these guys working for anybody else," Feldstein confessed in 2000, adding that his payment practice also raised submissions' quality by encouraging friendly competition among contributors for the best assignments.[40] Further benefit came from sustaining *Mad*'s distinctive look and feel through the regular reappearance of artists and writers whose work appeared mainly in its pages. But Feldstein did not mind touting the aura of upscale publications that also valued his contributors; at the start of "Dining Etiquette Quiz," for instance, he introduced artist Basil Wolverton—whose grotesquely detailed "Beautiful Girl of the Month" had graced the cover of #11 (3/54) and famously inspired Art Spiegelman's love of comics[41]—with the boast, "To teach you correct table manners, we have called upon an ex-clod (he's no longer a clod since Life magazine accepted his work)" (#29, 9/56: 16).

Fresh talent and new ideas were urgently needed when Feldstein took over in the spring of 1956. Kurtzman had taken Elder, Davis, and Wood with him on exclusive contracts, and pressure from the Comics Code left *Mad* as EC's sole title. Within a year, however, Feldstein secured contributions from well-known comedians (or their ghostwriters), beginning with a Bob [Elliott] and Ray [Goulding] spoof of TV's science instructor from *Watch Mr. Wizard* (NBC, 1951-1965) in "Mr. Science" (#34, 8/57: 12–14),

illustrated by Mort Drucker, another new artist whose work became a regular feature. Feldstein remained proud long after he retired of having encouraged Drucker to try caricature.[42] Writing by vaudeville and television veterans Sid Caesar, Ernie Kovacs, and others followed through the end of the decade.[43] At that point, issue #51 (12/59), Feldstein began listing contributors on the masthead as "The Usual Gang of Idiots" as a way to credit a rotating cast of regular artists and writers, giving equal credit to both specialties while minimizing repeat bylines in a single issue.

Across three decades at the helm, Feldstein introduced a host of long-lived features. Song parodies and original comic verse, most notably by Frank Jacobs, who joined the gang in 1957, led to his designation as *Mad*'s poet laureate.[44] In 1961, Feldstein launched the still-popular "Joke and Dagger Department" featuring Antonio Prohías's "Spy vs. Spy" (#60: 9, 14, 24); the next year, with issue #73 (9/62), a grey female spy complicated the rivalry between the black and white spies, neither of them a good guy, in a black-humorous exploration of the Cold War stalemate known as mutually assured destruction. Prohías continued the strip through #269 (3/87), when others filled in until Peter Kuper took up the strip a decade later with #356 (3/97: 12–13), yet Prohías's original vision of the eternal antagonists' moral equivalence and utter futility has remained intact. Soon after "Spy vs. Spy" came Dave Berg's "Lighter Side" feature with spoofs of everyday frustrations, beginning with "The Lighter Side of the Television Set," which reversed the focus from the people on the screen to those in front of it (#66, 10/61: 16–19). Three years later, in April 1964, came Al Jaffee's fold-in, a painting meant for a reader to appreciate first as a full-size color image with a caption that poses a question or challenge and then to fold vertically at two marked points and reveal another image and caption that respond to the first with wit and social insight. Jaffee's first effort featured Hollywood stars Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, but political subjects soon followed with Richard Nixon in #87 (6/64) and the civil-rights themed "The Image of Justice that the Rest of the World Sees," which converted a judge on the bench into a KKK hood (#92, 1/65: 49). New installments of the much-beloved fold-in continued through June of 2019 (n.s. #7).

The arrival of caricaturists such as Drucker spurred the development of *Mad*'s film and TV parodies, as regular satiric features. Much as the early *New Yorker* injected humor into its journalistic departments, including its theater, art, and book reviews (perhaps most famously in Dorothy

Parker's summation in a Constant Reader column about a Winnie-the-Pooh book: "Tonstant Weader Fwowed up"[45]), so *Mad*'s movie and TV parodies combined aesthetic critique and comic viewpoints, often with a local twist. Kurtzman and Elder's 1953 "Ping Pong!," for instance, joked about the scarcity of Brooklyn Dodgers tickets and how not even a giant gorilla can draw a glance from blasé New Yorkers (#6, 8–9/53: 25–31). But local joking intensified in media parodies on Feldstein's watch. In 1963, a Broadway musical whose fictional gangs from the Upper West Side were as familiar to the locals as the U.N. building on First Avenue became the basis of "East Side Story" (#78, 4/63: 4–12), a Cold War satire based on the 1963 Oscar-winning film version of Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*.

New York women received less than affectionate caricatures in featured parodies from the early 1970s, showcasing the predominantly male sense of humor that characterized *Mad* since its start.[46] Dave Berg proved something of an exception, as Ann Ciasullo shows, but in general *Mad* lacked the progressive gender politics of the *New Yorker*, which promoted women writers, artists, and staff from its earliest days.[47] (Males made up 80 percent of *Mad*'s readers as late as 2001, and women contributed in force only with Bill Morrison's editorship in 2018.)[48] When Mort Drucker and Frank Jacobs mocked Barbra Streisand as Bubby (Yiddish for "grandmother") Strident in "On a Clear Day You Can See a Funny Girl Singing 'Hello Dolly' Forever" (#143, 6/71: 4–10), they debunked her celebrity by shrinking three blockbuster film performances to one; the name *Strident* sneered at not only her Brooklyn accent but also the strong female protagonists she played in *Funny Girl* (1963 stage, 1968 film), *Hello, Dolly!* (1964, 1969), and *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever* (1965, 1970). Drucker and Jacobs granted a bit more respect to New Yorkers Gloria Steinem, Betty Friedan, Bella Abzug, and Shirley Chisholm in "My Fair Laddie" (#167, 6/74: 4–11), a send-up of the 1956 Broadway hit and 1964 film *My Fair Lady*, although the creators nonetheless framed the women's movement as an indulgence not worth anyone's time. The spoof reverses the gender dynamics of the original in order to twit "the Women's Liberationists who are battling to reform the Male Chauvinist Pigs" (4). The Steinem-double named Henrietta pledges to create "The Perfect Man" (5) from the chauvinistic babe-magnet wittily named Lance, whose similarity to Burt Reynolds feeds the parody's last visual joke, which invokes the actor's infamous nude centerfold for the April 1972 *Cosmopolitan* (itself

a feminist riff on the *Playboy* feature). Jacobs and Drucker betray their awareness of men's domestic privilege in having Henrietta/Steinem imagine, "Wouldn't it be Motherly!" to sit and read lovingly to her children while Lance does all the feeding, diapering, and disciplining (10)—yet the creators engineer a reversal of feminist goals at the end. Henrietta's success at training Lance backfires. When he reassures Power of Women (POW) members, to the tune of "I Could Have Danced All Night," "You'll wear the pants, all right/ . . . "At home you'll be the Chiefs—/You'll know who'll be the Squaws!" (11), he inspires "liberated chicks" (11) to swarm him—just as the conventional "fawning females" (4) had done at the start when he bragged, "They're all mine to use—That's no oddity!/'Cause I treat each one the same—like a commodity" (4). Nature trumps nurture in this send-up. But its investment in the patriarchal status quo, the implied "*Vive la différence!*," also exposes the social conservatism built into *My Fair Lady*'s class distinctions and explains why Roger Ebert declared, "I learned to be a movie critic by reading *MAD* Magazine."[49] Parodies always transgress the originals they imitate, but need not endorse liberal views. Across more than six decades of media burlesques, *Mad* offered cultural and political as well as aesthetic analysis within the comic mode, yet laughs trumped cultural politics.

The song parodies that secured *Mad* a place in copyright history deserve special attention. Songs doubtless seemed to *Mad* contributors and readers just one more popular culture form to burlesque, but composers concerned about royalty income in the 1960s were not amused. In *Berlin v. EC Publications, Inc.*,[50] the Supreme Court upheld a 1963 appellate decision that endorsed *Mad*'s claim to fair use of copyrighted material in all but two Irving Berlin songs parodied by Larry Siegel and Frank Jacobs in *Sing Along with Mad*, published as a bonus insert for *More Trash from Mad No. 4* (1961). The court held that "songs' titles, meters and occasional phrases taken from the plaintiffs' original lyrics" constituted fair use unless they made substantial use of the originals' themes or language; on that basis, the court granted that *Mad*'s parodies of Berlin's "Always" and "There's No Business Like Show Business" did infringe on Berlin's copyrights, but that others did not. Of a piece with his resistance to the Comics Code and *Mad*'s resistance to cultural authority, Gaines's pushback against the infringement suit reflects *Mad*'s history of editorial and marketing innovation.

By designating parody a fair use, the Supreme Court decision also protected the magazine's editorial identity and main source of content, paving the way for parodic sons of *Mad* in many media. Notable examples include *National Lampoon*, 1970–1998 in print, and *Saturday Night Live*, NBC, 1975–present, and their many spin-offs, from the sitcom parody *The Simpsons* (FOX 1989--) to the parodic news of *The Onion* (1988--) and *The Daily Show* (1996--). Artist Art Spiegelman summed up *Mad*'s ethos as "The entire adult world is lying to you, and we are part of the adult world. Good luck to you," and added, "I think that shaped my entire generation"—a claim endorsed by the comic performers, writers, and producers whose memories of favorite contents became *Inside Mad* (2013).[51] A full account of *Mad*'s legacy would therefore include not only its inspiration to television and film and its impact on alternative comix and graphic narratives, such as *Maus* (which Spiegelman has credited to the influence of Kurtzman and Elder's "Mickey Rodent" in *Mad* #19, 1/55: 1–7),[52] but also the explosion of parody, cynicism, and ironic critique that have fed postmodernism.

The verbal, graphic, and social complexity of *Mad*'s parodies in all genres reflected Feldstein's refusal to talk down to even his youngest readers. "Kids . . . have a fairly sophisticated knowledge," he told an interviewer in 1966. "They can spot a phony a mile off. . . . If we do a parody on [sic] a poem, they can't appreciate the humor unless they know the original. We credit them with knowing the original."[53] This policy, like the stability of the Usual Gang, gave *Mad* the balance between familiar style and novel contents that gratifies a magazine's fans, a recipe for longevity that has likewise sustained the *New Yorker*.

Feldstein proved a brilliant editor. Circulation stood at 750,000 in early 1954, but reached 1,209,918 in 1961, when official circulation counts began, and peaked at 2,132,655 in 1974, though by the time of his departure in 1985, the number had slipped to 744,817.[54] In 1966, Feldstein estimated that *Mad*'s pass-along rate enabled the 1.8 million copies of each issue to reach 10 million readers, but proudly cited the all-time top seller, at 2.8 million copies: the September 1973 number containing writer Dick DeBartolo and artist Mort Drucker's *Poseidon Adventure* (1972) parody, "Poopsidedown Adventure" (#161, 9/73: 4–11).[55] The Feldstein era saw expanded production of reprint books and annuals, a practice that Kurtzman had initiated in 1954 with *The Mad Reader*. Reprints broadened EC's revenue stream, enabling the magazine to

suspend advertising after #32 (4/57). A similar profit motive underlay the explosion in international editions, which under Feldstein's leadership carried American content in translation as well as art and writing from local contributors for audiences in western Europe (e.g., the UK, 1959; the Netherlands, 1964), Scandinavia (Sweden, 1960; Denmark, 1979; Norway and Finland, 1981), Latin America (Brazil, 1974; Mexico 1978), and Australia, 1980. Editorial successors Meglin and Ficarra added editions for South Africa (1985), Taiwan (1990), Italy (1991), Canada (in French, 1991–92) and Poland (2015), though many editions faded quickly, and a bootleg Thai edition remains undated.[56] The international audience for *Mad* also inspired locally produced competitors, such as the London-based *Krazy*, which lasted seventy-nine issues between October 1976 and May 1978 (with some Super Specials thereafter through 1983) aimed at youth in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa as well as the United Kingdom. The worldwide interest that Feldstein stoked lasted late into 2019, when the German-language *Aufbau* magazine, a glossy founded in New York in 1934 but now published in Zurich, featured *Mad* on its cover and in four articles of its October-November issue.[57]

Mad's financial success and international reach made EC an attractive corporate acquisition. Ambiguity and confusion circulate regarding the changes in its ownership between 1961 and 1972 as conglomerates morphed into the firm known as Warner Communications, which remained *Mad*'s owner in 2019, but contemporary news reports support the account here. Gaines sold EC in January 1961 to Premier Industries, which then sold it to National Periodical Publications, owner of DC Comics, on June 9, 1964.[58] National Periodicals merged with Kinney National Service following the July 21, 1967 announcement of their $60 million agreement, and in July 1969 the combined company, still known as Kinney, formally acquired Warner Bros.[59] The conglomerate National Kinney Corp. renamed itself Warner Communications in February 1972 following a December 1971 recommendation from its board.[60] Gaines retained editorial control as publisher under all these owners until he died in 1992, as *Mad* turned fifty.

Perhaps the greatest sign of *Mad*'s affluence in the Feldstein era, however, was its ability to abandon paid advertising for other revenue sources. Once *Mad* became a magazine in July 1955, the mock advertisements that fed its satire of popular culture and boosted circulation in the new format also challenged the environment for advertisers. *Ballyhoo*

had charged advertisers for the parody ads running in its pages,[61] but the comics business ran chiefly on cheap newsprint production and mass sales, although comics carried some ads, most famously for correspondence art schools and body-building lessons. The sole full-page ad in *Mad* #32 (4/57), for Famous Artist Schools, carried an announcement at the top: "REAL ADVERTISEMENT"—a concession that parodies and self-deprecating house ads would have to suffice thereafter. Paid ads returned in #403 (3/2001) to subsidize the color printing that gave contents and ads a more contemporary look. By the early 1980s, however, *Mad*'s business model was so unusual that a journalism professor published an elaborate economic analysis in a major scholarly journal, marveling that *Mad*'s $1.19 million annual profit from newsstand sales and subscriptions of eight regular issues represented just a fraction of its $63 million profits annually from super-special issues and reprint books. Including licenses for games and foreign editions, *Mad* earned 7 percent of Warner Communications' total revenues.[62] Feldstein had a lot to be proud of when Gaines appointed Nick Meglin and John Ficarra co-editors in January 1985, although their names didn't appear on the masthead until June (#255).

The Meglin-Ficarra team led *Mad* for two decades; after Meglin's 2004 retirement, Ficarra continued solo until he retired in 2017. Ficarra had come on board as associate editor in 1981 after several years of contributing as a writer, but Meglin's association lasted nearly fifty years: he submitted his first idea in 1956 and formally joined the staff in 1960. Ficarra came on board as associate editor in 1981 after several years of contributing as a writer. What the pair lacked in their predecessors' Depression-era *Yiddishkeit*, they more than made up in Italian Brooklynite, which had much the same flavor. "Hmmm. . . . I already have major concerns about your editing!" Meglin snorted in a 2013 email exchange inviting him to participate in this volume after I misspelled *Neuman*. "'Newman?' You mean like in 'Paiul?'[sic] . . . HOO HAH! Gotcha, Brooklyn broad!"[63] *Mad*'s former design director Ryan Flanders probably had in mind this blend of front-stage comic excess and back-stage editorial seriousness in the magazine's obituary for Meglin, appropriately headlined "Heartsick" (n.s. #3, 10/18: 46), in affectionately recalling, "Nick was the first person to call me a 'schmuck.'" Meglin's half-century tenure supported the imaginations—and reinforced the loyalty—of the contributors whose content likewise gave the magazine exceptional coherence over time.

Ideas usually came from writers and artists, rather than the editors, but insiders credited Meglin with *Mad*'s post-Kurtzman sense of humor for both his own comic talents and his ability to cultivate others'. During the Feldstein years, Meglin recruited George Woodbridge, Larry Siegel, Angelo Torres, Dick DeBartolo, and Stan Hart, and fished Ficarra's work from the slush pile, too[64]—some 250 years of collective comic contributions. In his "Heartsick" remembrance, Ficarra characterized his colleague's editing as "a mini master class in comedy writing" (46). Former DC Comics president and *Mad* publisher Paul Levitz went further, eulogizing Meglin for other comics professionals as the magazine's presiding wit: "During the time when MAD was at its peak, and one of the most successful magazines of any kind in America," Levitz recalled, "Nick was the man most putting the funny in."[65]

Song, television, and movie parodies remained strong on Meglin and Ficarra's watch even as cultural sensibilities changed. For example, a contemporary racial critique marked the 1991 parody of *Gone with the Wind* (1939) two years after the Library of Congress added it to the National Film Archive. "Groan with the Wind" by writer Stan Hart and artist Jack Davis (#300, 1/91: 42-47) questions the film's epic stature and mocks its nostalgia for the Lost Cause. The iconoclasm begins with renaming the main characters. Hart scorns Scarlett's marriages for money and status by calling her *Harlott*, debunks Melanie's stoic self-sacrifice by calling her *Melonhead*, scorns Mammy's outmoded stereotype of the devoted slave by calling her *Mummy*, highlights Rhett's nauseating opportunism by calling him *Rhetch*, and questions Ashley Wilkes's manhood by calling him *Ashtray Wilts*—a passive receptacle that's flaccid, to boot. The plot underlines the attack on Wilkes's manhood by having Rhetch leave Harlott for Ashtray at the end, but a more serious challenge to the film's retrograde values appears in Mummy's offense at white exploitation of black labor ("In 1860, they call it 'slavery'! In 1990, they'll call it 'College Basketball'!" [43]) and her contempt for the "long tradition" of white supremacy that Rhetch is "a little sad" to see pass (44). In this racially liberal context, the gay plot device stands out as conservative in its ridicule, even as it nods to the rising LGBT movement that would soon lead to the 1994 military compromise known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Such vigorous contents—the celebratory issue #300 contained *three* film parodies—came up against serious challenges to all print media in an increasingly televisual age. The *New Yorker*'s struggles in the same

period put *Mad*'s troubles in context. In 1983, media critic Ben Bagdikian charged that the *New Yorker* had committed itself to "the wrong kind of reader" under editor William Shawn,[66] who succeeded Ross on his death in 1952, the year of *Mad*'s birth. S. I. Newhouse installed three new editors in quick succession after buying the *New Yorker* in 1985: Robert Gottlieb in 1987, Tina Brown in 1992, and finally David Remnick in 1998. By contrast, *Mad* enjoyed tremendous editorial continuity from 1956 to 2004, but its comic sensibility had already escaped its pages when Meglin and Ficarra took the helm in 1985. Parody moved into American television first on news comedies such as *That Was the Week That Was* (NBC, 1964–1965), then sketch shows such as *Laugh-In* (NBC, 1968–1973) and *Saturday Night Live* (*SNL*; NBC, 1975–present), and eventually on its own *Mad TV* (FOX, 1995–2009). This same period saw cable expand options for television comedy, with HBO offering the first comedy channel in late 1989, less than two years before Viacom launched Comedy Central, where *The Daily Show* premiered in 1996, though Jon Stewart—a *Mad* aficionado himself—arrived only in 1999. The visual turn that *Mad* helped to lead through graphic storytelling in print now reigned on small screens. Irony had also penetrated the mainstream by the 1990s, as post-Vietnam and post-Watergate cynicism fed the anti-government critique and partisanship that became deeply embedded in American culture. Humor in all media fed, and fed on, these developments. Stand-up comedy clubs proliferated across the nation and sitcoms about happy nuclear families in the suburbs gave way to shows about urban singles such as *Seinfeld* (NBC, 1989–1998), famously "a show about nothing," and *Friends* (NBC, 1994–2004). Matt Groening credited *Mad* in 1988 with inspiring his comic strip *Life in Hell* (1977–2012), but his creation of *The Simpsons* as a sitcom parody of the family situation comedy genre clearly applies *Mad*'s formula to television, and its rank as the longest running sitcom in television history points to the relevance of the formula on screen. When the editors sought a refresh in 1997, *Mad*'s long-time contributors such as Don Martin and Sergio Aragonés still drew loyal fans, but audited circulation, already on the wane when Feldstein stepped down in 1984, fell nearly 60%, from 744,817 to 309,665.[67]

Meglin, Ficarra, and Jenette Kahn (then president of DC Comics, *Mad*'s publisher within the larger universe of Warner Communications) admitted only to 400,000—a circulation rate not seen since 1994[68]—in a June 1997 interview with the *New York Times*, part of a series about challenges

in periodicals publishing.[69] The three leaders did, however, concede that an insufficiently diverse contributors' list, media consolidation, and burgeoning comedy scenes in other media had all hurt *Mad*. "We're really a victim of our own success," Ficarra observed with some justification.[70]Yet the trio did not acknowledge problems with the cartoon market, as the *Times* had reported in an earlier article about changes at the *New Yorker*. On the demand side, limited outlets paid mostly low rates, except for *New Yorker* cartoonists under contract, while on the supply side, fewer artists committed to cartoon humor. New opportunities in animation and auteur graphic narratives were another factor. Cases in point: after 1993, students at the School of Visual Arts in Manhattan, then the only college in the U.S. with a cartooning department, stopped enrolling in the humor courses that could foster careers in that mode; by 1997, Robert Mankoff, then the *New Yorker*'s new cartoon editor, confessed that the smaller pool and lesser skills of current cartoonists required "changing the standards" in order to "increase the population pool that can play the game."[71] Meanwhile, new opportunities in animation and graphic narratives beckoned.

Mad's reduced circulation, and concomitant loss of visibility, also figured in its declining fortunes. The *Times*'s reporter found *Mad* "a trifle dated" and its brand identity ambiguous for younger readers: "To many people," Constance Hays remarked, "the title is more likely to conjure up the grimmer specter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving than the grinning portrait of Alfred E. Neuman."[72] In fact, its star had so dimmed by 1997 that the chair of the Illustration and Cartooning Department at the School of Visual Arts didn't even mention *Mad* in naming potential print outlets for aspiring cartoonists.[73] Young artists inspired by Art Spiegelman's special 1992 Pulitzer Prize for *Maus* (1986–91) likewise seemed oblivious that he came to appreciate the narrative possibilities of comics because, as he said, he had "studied *Mad* the way some kids studied Talmud."[74] Acknowledging the lesser cultural capital of print, Meglin and Ficarra sought to update and burnish the brand for a new generation through newer media. The success of *Mad TV*, which ran on Fox from 1995 to 2009 and on CW in 2016, suggests that both audiences and talent preferred *Mad*'s comic formulas on television. The show competed successfully with *SNL* for nearly fifteen years and, unlike the print magazine, cultivated such young, diverse contributors as Debra Wilson, Nicole Sullivan, Bobby Lee, Keegan Michael Key, and Jordan

Peele. The complete digital magazine archives released on CD in 1998 and DVD in 2004 likewise aimed to keep *Mad*'s brand in the public eye and modernize it for the electronic age.

Fresh print talent did nonetheless arrive from Meglin and Ficarra's efforts, most notably in Peter Kuper, hired to take over "Spy Vs. Spy" in 1997. For a decade, the "Joke and Dagger Department" had bounced among artists Dave Berg, Bob Clarke, and Dave Manak (with Don "Duck" Edwing doing much of the writing) after ill health caused Antonio Prohías to step down following #269 (3/87: 44). The editors had trouble finding someone who could update the look of the feature while maintaining its core vision of comic futility until Ficarra reached out to Kuper, whose technique honored the spies' well-established identities while subtly asserting his own style.[75] Kuper's "Spy vs. Spy" remained a key feature in U.S. and international editions from 1997 through 2019 and into 2020.

Other efforts of the 1997 refresh failed. "Chilling Thoughts," by the veteran contributors Desmond Devlin (*Mad* writer since 1985) and Rick Tulka (artist since #282, 10/88), provided short-lived takes on the current scene, such as the mock-statistic that "90% of all telephone calls now being placed within the Continental United States are made by either MCI, AT&T or Sprint, trying to get us to switch to them" (#345, 5/96: 16). A reprise of the 1955 cover border design that introduced the yet-unnamed Alfred to readers—this time in yellow, with scribbles of the White House, Beavis, Dilbert, the Oscars, and frenetic scenes—lasted only fifteen issues, from April 1997 (#356) to June 1998 (#370), when it ran as fragmentary and torn. Perhaps the most telling false start was "Melvin & Jenkins' Guide to . . . ," a parody of the "Goofus and Gallant" etiquette feature from *Highlights for Children* featuring two black dudes for the dos and don'ts in an apparent effort at representing diverse Americans—though written and drawn by two white guys, Desmond Devlin and Kevin Pope, respectively. The feature ran in half the issues for the three years between its July 1997 debut with "Melvin & Jenkins' Guide to Personal Fitness" (#356, 39-41) and the September 2000 "Melvin & Jenkins' Guide to Hospitals" (#397, 18–19), then irregularly for the next decade, through October 2010 (#505). The reintroduction of color in February 2001 (#402) made the focus on these two stereotypically drawn African American characters particularly cringe worthy.

For the most part, however, the return to color production promoted positive developments. With even the staid *New York Times* moving

to color images on its front page in October 1997, five years after the *New Yorker* took the plunge,[76] *Mad*'s use of color modernized the look of the magazine, enabled a broader range of satiric targets, and offset circulation declines by attracting paid ads beginning with issue #403 (3/01). The annual "Mad 20" feature ("The 20 Dumbest People, Events and Things" of the year), an echo if not a descendent of *Esquire*'s annual Dubious Achievement Awards, pioneered the shift to color when it debuted as a four-color insert in #377 (1/99) as part of the 1997 refresh. The opening gambit: artist Mark Stutzman's *Star Wars*-style movie poster for *Monicagate: The Never-Ending Saga*, complete with Kenneth Starr as Darth Vader, Bill Clinton as a Jedi knight, White House intern Monica Lewinsky (infamous blue dress dangling from her hand) as the romantic lead, and a scowling Hillary Clinton (shielding daughter Chelsea's eyes) in the background (18). The feature tied cover and inside contents to contemporary politics and the cultural scene; in this case, the cover worked a montage of featured faces including Lewinski, Microsoft's Bill Gates, and baseball record holder Mark McGwire into the required portrait of Alfred. The debut of the "Mad 20" thus reasserted the hallmark of the classic *Mad*: a commitment to excellent comic art satirizing contemporary politics and the cultural scene. Other experiments soon showed how color could broaden opportunities to blend politics and parody. For instance, two months before the full return to color, Devlin and Jack Syracuse marked the end of the Clinton presidency with "Goodnight Room," a parody of Margaret Wise Brown's classic picture book *Goodnight Moon* (1947) that repurposed its naïve drawings in bright primary colors for ironic political commentary on the administration's scandals. As Clinton prepares to leave the Oval Office, the narrator intones, "Goodnight Socks, goodnight loot / Goodnight House of ill repute" (#400, 12/2000: 43-47; 46–47), turning Brown's gentle farewell to a day's activity into a veiled "good riddance." In the twenty years since the "Mad 20" debuted, the return to color has inspired a wealth of inventive satire.

Ficarra continued efforts to boost readership after Meglin retired in 2004, when circulation fell to 211,473.[77] The "Fundalini Pages" of gag cartoons that debuted in February 2004 targeted younger readers and new contributors with a miscellany of content shorter than the full page that had long been *Mad*'s minimum unit of humor. In a 2012 interview for the business magazine *Fast Company*, Ficarra called the department "short

attention-span theater" appropriate for a contemporary culture marked everywhere by fragmentation (another hallmark of postmodernism), though he also observed, while acknowledging the growing body of television series satirizing the current scene, "Life is getting harder to parody."[78] Efforts to adapt *Mad*'s signature formula to this new cultural environment continued throughout Ficarra's tenure.

The 2015 parody of the Netflix political mockumentary *House of Cards* (2013–2018) straddled old and new accordingly. David Shayne and Tom Richmond's "House of Cons" lampoons the protagonists through their names and caricatures in typical *Mad* fashion: the ruthless Frank Underwood who seduces, lies, and kills his way from Congress to the presidency becomes Rank Underhand, while his wife Claire, with "the conniving instincts of Lady Macbeth, the political savvy of Hillary Clinton, and the haircut of Miley Cyrus," becomes Scaire (#532, 4/15: 12–17; 12). But the title art has good reason to include the *Mad*-inflected distress symbol of an upside-down American flag with Alfred's face in lieu of its field of stars, because the parody mocks the failure of contemporary America's two-party politics along with the show's postmodern pseudo-documentary style, self-reflexive direct address, self-parodic cynicism, and outrageous political fantasies tied to reality by celebrity cameos. When CNN's Ashleigh Banfield (playing herself in the parody as on the TV show) supports a complaint about Rank as "a completely unbelievable character" by citing his "murder in broad daylight, . . . arch dialogue, . . . constantly break[ing] the fourth wall," *Mad*'s caricature of MSNBC's Rachel Maddow points out the obvious but unacknowledged political impossibility at the heart of the show: "he got elected in South Carolina as a Democrat!" (13). The narrative goes on to spoof such plot developments and narrative tics as the sexual threesome with Underhand's secret service agent and the Underhands' penchant for smoking cigarettes at their bedroom window—"We really must stop sharing a cigarette every time we plan something devious," Rank remarks, though not for the health or ethical reasons one might expect: "When we moved in, these drapes were WHITE!" (16). Along the way come jokes about the irrelevance of newspapers and Rank's superiority to Dick Cheney as "the most nefarious, manipulative Vice President in American history" (17). But the best punchline comes in the last panel, when President Barack Obama interrupts Rank's victory dance over finally pushing the fictional president out of office in order to ask two favors: "can I bum a smoke?"

and "Teach me, Rank!" (17). Only in a completely absurd world should decency wreak impotence and failure, and only parody can capture it.

Ficarra's 2012 interview itself grew out of another strategy for marketing to a younger generation: publishing books that combined classic and recent material endorsed by comedians from contemporary television and films. *Totally Mad: 60 Years of Humor, Satire, Stupidity and Stupidity* (2012) featured an appreciative introduction by Stephen Colbert and Eric Drysdale.[79] The next year, commentary by Judd Apatow, Roseanne Barr, Penn Jillette, George Lopez, and Paul Feig prefaced reprints of their supposedly favorite contents in *Inside Mad* (2013). Such testimonials doubtless sold books, although fans reported disappointment over the volumes in reviews for amazon.com. But audited circulation continued to drop over the next decade, falling from 212,696 in 2005 to 122,908 in 2015, though it ticked up to 139,725 in 2017,[80] Ficarra's last year as editor. The rise probably reflected the intensified interest in political satire spurred by the 2016 presidential campaign. Four of *Mad*'s six 2016 issues depicted or referenced Donald Trump (the post-election issue, #542 [12/16], showed Alfred as Uncle Sam in a straightjacket on the cover), the same satiric wave that also restored previously waning fortunes of *Saturday Night Live* and *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* (CBS, 2015–present).

Humor scholars have traced this new golden age of satire to at least 2004, when the Pew Internet and American Life Project reported that 21 percent of young people got their news from satiric programs such as *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, a rate just below the 23 percent who regularly read a daily newspaper.[81] *Mad* has remained an equal opportunity offender across its history, despite its liberal political tilt, but New Yorkers among the Usual Gang had found Trump a tempting local target for ridicule since 1986. That year a mock ad for the imaginary Integrity Record Club offered a cassette of Trump's "Eve of Construction" along with a punningly titled "The White Album" featuring segregationist Republican senator Jesse Helms as two of the many titles available for a penny to gullible new members who agree to buy "13 more bad-selling records or tapes at regular club prices which are currently $19.98 to $99.98—plus shipping and mishandling" (Kadau [w], Raiola [w], and Schild [photog.], #262, 4/86: back cover). Five years later, as Trump's $1.1 billion Taj Mahal casino project entered bankruptcy barely a year after its April 1990 opening,[82] Frank Jacobs and Sam Viviano caricatured

Trump as the corrupt Wizard of Odds in a parody of the classic musical film *The Wizard of Oz* (#300, 1/91: 31–36). Not surprising in this context, Trump's emergence as a presidential candidate in 2015 spurred an ongoing series of single-page and extended features across the campaign and into his presidency. The parodies of classic paintings collected as the "MADtropolitan Museum of Art: The Trump Collection" (#547, 10/17: 27-36) constitute perhaps the most elaborate example. Featured paintings include Richard Williams's *Trump Crossing the Delaware*, in which the administration's ship of state is heading off a cliff despite strenuous back-paddling by Vice President Mike Pence, Press Secretary Sean Spicer, and Senior Advisor (and son-in-law) Jared Kushner (28–29). *Donald's World*, the last page, parodies Andrew Wyeth's portrait of yearning, *Christina's World* with an overweight Trump in a MAGA hat, golf club in hand, struggling to reach the putting green (36). The political and media stresses that fueled *Mad*'s satiric creativity in its first three decades could still inspire the Gang.

The new *Mad* series inaugurated in June 2018 with Ficarra's retirement aimed to revitalize the brand by moving from New York City, the center of American print culture, to its film and television counterpart in Burbank, California, home to the multi-media brand franchises of corporate parents DC Comics and Warner Communications. Artist Bill Morrison, *Mad*'s new executive editor, led an almost wholly new team, updated to include women and young contributors as well as vice presidents for business strategy, consumer marketing, publicity, digital sales, and content strategy. The new issue #1 (6/18) explicitly bridged past and present. A comics parody section boasted the throwback label "Potrzebie Comics" (19–31), and Ron English's full-color re-rendering of Basil Wolverton's "Beautiful Girl of the Month" (18) rewarded close inspection with a dripping nipple not present in the original, yet only Ian Boothby and Tom Richmond's homage to Will Elder's comic detail in "Starchie Reconstituted," evoked the verve of the older works (38–40). Later issues showed the team hitting its stride. Writer Matt Cohen and artist Marc Palm won national media attention, and a 2018 Eisner Award nomination, for "The Ghastlygun Tinies" in n.s. #4 (12/18: 18–21). In classic *Mad* fashion, the feature embeds a satire of school shooting massacres in a parody of Edward Gorey's *The Gashlycrumb Tinies* (1981), itself a comically gothic lampoon of *The New England Primer*. The success of this feature may have inspired the editors to close the June 2019 issue with a

fold-in by Al Jaffee originally intended for #521 (6/13), but withheld then as too controversial. Answering the question, "What Inevitable Sequel Already Has Many People Sick to Their Stomachs?," the folded image shows the audience leaving a theater in response to "the next mass gun shooting," an allusion to the July 2012 massacre in Aurora, Colorado, that remained all too current in 2019 (n.s. #7: inside back cover).

The California investment brought quick dividends, including a 2018 Eisner nomination for Best Humor Magazine of the year and 2019 Rondo Hatton Award for Gary Pullin's cover for n.s. #4 (12/18), yet Morrison left at the end of January 2019, and DC notified contributors on July 3 that the magazine would cease commissioning new content. As reported by longtime artist Tom Richmond, DC planned to publish new reprint volumes under the *Mad* brand and to fulfill current subscriptions with current backlog and classic content under new covers.[83]

New material shone amid the reprints. Satires by new contributors led the way. "Bernie's 2020 Healthscare Campaign," a half-page by writer Amanda Stelberg and artist Sam Sisco, spoofed the Democratic presidential candidate's rhetorical intensity in n.s. #10 (12/19: 4). "The Great Trump Bestiary," the centerfold of n.s. #9 by David Seidman and Leonardo Rodriguez (10/19: 28–29), reimagined administration figures as grotesque animals such as The Pence, an eagle pitching stones with his talons: "The pious Pence says, "God demands / That women's rights be few. / But God's no sexist; he believes / Gay men should suffer, too" (29). Self-consciousness hovered in the February 2020 (n.s. #11) issue, gathering ten pages of recycled contents into a section titled "Still Dumb After All These Years" with introductions joking about their contemporary relevance (45–54). In the same number, the "Mad 20" for 2019 debuted a fold-in by Johnny Sampson at #17, "What 'Sparked Joy' for Millions of People This Year?" (35), while #20 posed the existential question, "What Should Be Done with MAD?" (4). The answer from writer Dick DeBartolo and artist Mark Fredrickson in "A MAD 'Ending' Target of Speculation": identify the magazine's future by throwing a dart at a dartboard whose options include "Sell it to Lorne Michaels" [creator of *SNL*] and "Say it's now called *The New Yorker*" (n.s. #11: 40). The magazine began hawking new subscriptions; led by art director Suzy Hutchinson, the Gang limped on.

Looking back at *Mad*'s start, the *New Yorker*'s Adam Gopnik credited Kurtzman with creating a new kind of humor by recognizing that

"the conventions of pop culture ran so deep in the imagination of his audience—and already stood at so great a remove from real experience—that you could create a new kind of satire just by inventorying them."[84] On the contrary, I think that Kurtzman's great insight was that media create that pop culture by re-presenting—and thereby warping—lived experience: *Mad*'s parodies exaggerated media distortions as if *they* were reality. His appropriation of familiar media genres for humor and satire through parody recognized the profound cultural changes between the eras in which the *New Yorker* and *Mad* found their respective footing.

Both magazines benefited from new technologies that promoted the visual turn in popular culture. The rise of photography after World War I cost commercial artists much newspaper and advertising work, but thereby fostered both the high-brow cartoons of the early *New Yorker*, which rendered them as elegant half-tones, and the low-brow comics industry that nurtured *Mad*. Comics publisher William Gaines took up Kurtzman's idea for a funny title to augment EC's educational and entertaining comics to avoid losing a talented writer, editor, and artist to the cut-throat competition. Television intensified the visual turn after World War II because it not only displaced the verbal dominance of radio and books, but also created a common mass culture of programming *and* advertising. Parody ads cost *Mad* the revenue while repurposing the content.

More important, however, the difference between the *New Yorker*'s revenue-producing ads and *Mad*'s imaginary ones signals the shift from the industrial culture of the *New Yorker*'s early years to the post-industrial culture of *Mad*'s. In a post-industrial economy, information displaces goods and services as the economic base. Brands stand at the heart of this economy because branding sums up the union of information and commerce: brands *denote* a good or service or image, *differentiate* one from another, and *connote* or symbolize a set of associated ideas to be sold as such.[85] Humor and branding enjoy special synergy, as I detailed in *Twain's Brand*,[86] and *Mad* capitalized both metaphorically and literally on the centrality of branding to post-industrial culture. *Mad*'s start as a vehicle for parodying comics established a comic identity, distinguished it from the competition, and symbolized its iconoclasm in durable ways: it reduced mass culture of all sorts, from poetry and film to radio serials, to the same low-status comic book form, reveling in the transgressions through the hyperbolic verbal and graphic detail that J. Hoberman called

"vulgar modernism."[87] Across sixty-seven years as a magazine parodying other media, *Mad* elevated parody as a mode of thought and fostered irony as a means of expression, defining the postmodern break between representation and meaning as it brought comics into the mainstream.

Mad's value as a brand explains why the magazine remains in print despite dismal circulation. Although its 2018 circulation of 150,195 barely exceeded 10 percent of the 1.34 million that it boasted in 1980, reprint collections and websites demonstrate how deeply committed its fans remain.[88] The precedent established by *Berlin v. EC Comics* has led to a peculiar inversion by which YouTube parodies of copyrighted songs now outnumber originals: parodists retain the rights to their comic lyrics but must pay composers to reuse their melodies.[89] Thus post-industrialism breeds postmodernism: as information displaces goods, so parody displaces (meta)narratives, and facts give way to jokes. Kurtzman intuited these ironies when he compiled the first *Mad Reader* on the post-industrial premise that a humor magazine trades in copyrights and then turned his comic book into a humor magazine.

Indeed, the similar brand strategies of *Mad* and the *New Yorker* provide evidence that humor leads cultural shifts. Today's joke often turns true tomorrow; *Mad*'s vulgar modernism presaged our postmodern moment. Today, both brands survive primarily by activities other than print magazine publication. In 1925, the *New Yorker*'s editorial mix of comic art, writing, and leisure-activity reviews expressed a pioneering plan for what we now call target marketing: Ross hoped that sophisticated comic content shaped by then-new Modernist ironies would deliver educated, affluent, trend-setting twenty- and thirty-somethings to local luxury advertisers. It was not enough. The *New Yorker* began augmenting its revenue stream with reprints in book form in 1927, as it finished its second year, and has not let up since then. In fact, in a wonderfully postmodern reversal, today it recycles editorial content into consumer goods such as umbrellas and calendars as well as books and uses podcasts and ticketed events like the *New Yorker* Festival to cultivate old-fashioned subscriptions designed to sell advertising and generate more recyclable content. Likewise, in 1955 Kurtzman announced the forthcoming *Mad Reader* on a full page in *Mad*'s last issue as a comic book, yet by 2019, the *Mad* reprint collections had outstripped the magazine's capacity to create new content worth recycling.

Plans to kill *Mad* magazine in favor of the brand's afterlife showed that DC could take the magazine but not its spirit out of New York, the center of American publishing. Whereas the early *New Yorker* cultivated highbrow literary and graphic humor for the radio and film era, *Mad* created burlesque graphic narratives that turned television and movies back into text. Journalist Thomas Vinciguerra saw the future in *Mad*'s 2018 move from New York City to Burbank, California, when he mourned, "Adieu, MAD. Pretty much single-handedly, you established the absurd reality in which we all now dwell."[90] For fifty-five of *Mad*'s sixty-seven years, the carnivalesque double vision of Al Jaffee's fold-in had epitomized *Mad*'s comic sensibility. In 2019 Jaffee stood nearly alone as a remnant of those New York roots, now feeding local and national productions from *Saturday Night Live* and *The Onion* to *The Simpsons* and graphic narratives, among other innovations by fans from its heyday. The *New Yorker* could refresh its twentieth-century brand by moving into pathbreaking journalism after World War II,[91] and stay relevant in the twenty-first by creating content for non-print media and live events, but *Mad*, imprisoned in parody's fun-house mirror, served as a harbinger of and then fell victim to the Late Age of Print.

Notes

1. No scholarly book chronicles the history of *Mad*, and Maria Reidelbach's authorized account, *Completely Mad: A History of the Comic Book and Magazine*, covers only the first 40 of the magazine's nearly 70 years. Barely a dozen scholarly articles treated the magazine until John Bird and I published "*Mad" Magazine and Its Legacies*, our special triple issue, 1–216. Early studies include Charles Winick, "Teenagers, Satire, and *Mad*"; John Cawelti, "The Sanity of *MAD*"; Ziva Ben-Porat, "Method in Madness: Notes on the Structure of Parody, Based on MAD TV Satires"; Vincent P. Norris, "*Mad* Economics: An Analysis of an Adless Magazine"; Nathan Abrams, "From Madness to Dysentery: *Mad*'s Other New York Intellectuals"; Kristin L. Matthews, "The ABCs of *Mad* Magazine: Reading, Citizenship, and Cold War America"; Kristin L. Matthews, "A *Mad* Proposition in Postwar America"; Teodora Carabas, "'Tales Calculated to Drive You MAD': The Debunking of Spies, Superheroes, and Cold War Rhetoric in *Mad* Magazine's 'Spy vs. Spy'"; Alexander R. Galloway, "The Unworkable Interface." More recent contributions include Yuri Shakouchi, "The Stereotypes of the Beatniks and Hip Consumerism: A Study of *Mad* Magazine in the Late 1950s and 1960s"; Leah Garrett, "'Shazoom. Vas Ist Das Shazoom?': *Mad* Magazine and Postwar Jewish America"; Cord A. Scott, "Cold War Politics, Cuba, and Spy vs. Spy."

2. See Judith Yaross Lee, *Defining "New Yorker" Humor*, 65, 378 n4.

3. Lee, *Defining "New Yorker" Humor*, 56.

4. Arno was not alone among early *New Yorker* artists in incorporating traditions of racist caricature—not all of whom invoked the anti-racist ironies of "One of the Neighbors"; see Lee, *Defining "New Yorker" Humor*, 175–76, 215–18.

5. Ellin Mackay, "Why We Go to Cabarets: A Post-Debutante Explains," 7-8.

6. Lee, *Defining "New Yorker" Humor*, 32–35; Harvey Kurtzman with Michael Barrier, *From Aargh! to Zap!: Harvey Kurtzman's Visual History of the Comics*, 41.

7. Simon Critchley, *On Humour*, 65.

8. Abrams, "From Madness to Dysentery," 439.

9. Jeremy Dauber, *Jewish Comedy: A Serious History*, 156.

10. Daniel Gluckson and Al Feldstein, "Man Behind the Curtain Department: Al Feldstein Interview," 72.

11. Arie Kaplan, *From Krakow to Krypton: Jews and Comic Books*, foreword by Harvey Pekar, illustrated by J. T. Waldman.

12. David Hajdu, *The Ten-Cent Plague: The Great Comic-Book Scare and How It Changed America*, 7; Josh Lambert, *Unclean Lips: Obscenity, Jews, and American Literature*, 3, 90–97, 6.

13. Clement Clarke Moore and Will Elder, "The Night Before Christmas," *Panic* #1 (2-3/54), reprinted in Elder, *The Million Year Picnic and Other Stories*, 88–94.

14. Quoted in Reidelbach, *Completely Mad*, 24.

15. Hajdu, *The Ten-Cent Plague*, 219–24, 280–82.

16. David Park, "The Kefauver Comic Book Hearings as Show Trial: Decency, Authority and the Dominated Expert," 273.

17. William Gaines, "Testimony of William M. Gaines, Publisher, Entertaining Comics Group, New York, N. Y."

18. Reidelbach, *Completely Mad*, 28–32.

19. *Pageant* had lauded *Mad* in a featured article, "Now Comics Have Gone Mad," 88–93; Bill Schelly describes the appeal of the job offer in *Harvey Kurtzman: The Man Who Created Mad and Revolutionized Humor in America: A Biography*, 309–11.

20. Kurtzman with Barrier, *From Aargh! to Zap!*, 42.

21. Barbara Friedman, "Nick Meglin: A Mad Perspective."

22. Schelly, *Harvey Kurtzman*, 294.

23. W. H. Lawrence, "Army Charges a 'Doctored' Picture Was Submitted by M'Carthy's Side; Cohn, in Wrangle, Admits It Was Cut," 1, 18.

24. Peter Kihss, "No Harm in Horror, Comics Issuer Says," 1, 34; Gaines, "Testimony."

25. Jack Gould, "Television in Review: McCarthy-Army Inquiry, Like Veteran Video Favorites, Has Its Own Hooper," 32.

26. Adam Smith, "On the Waterfront: Hoboken's Last Drop."

27. Katharine S. Angell, letter to Stephen Vincent Benet, November 3, 1928, Box 135, New Yorker Records, Rare Books and Manuscripts, New York Public Library.

28. Lee, *Defining "New Yorker" Humor*, 235–36.

29. David E. E. Sloane, *American Humor Magazines and Comic Periodicals*, 25–28. I am grateful to Professor Sloane for sharing his collection of *Ballyhoo* issues with me.

30. "We Nominate for Oblivion [parodies of *Vanity Fair*, *Life*, *Arts Beautiful*, and the *Congressional Record*]," 15; "'Time'ly News" and "Such Goings on About Town!," 11, 2.

31. "LOOK for the DATE on the CANDIDATE."

32. What the 'Well-Dressed Men' at Harvard Are Wearing."

33. [Norman Anthony,] "Why Not Make the Newspapers ALL Comics?," 10.

34. Henry Pringle, "The Anatomy of *Ballyhoo*," 13; Schelly, *Harvey Kurtzman*, 222.

35. Christopher H. Sterling and John M. Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A Concise History of American Broadcasting*, 352; "Number of TV Households in America," https://americancentury.omeka.wlu.edu/items/show/136

36. Schelly, *Harvey Kurtzman*, 334.

37. Schelly, *Harvey Kurtzman*, 262.

38. Al Feldstein, "The Al Feldstein Interview," interview by S. C. Ringgenberg, reprint of "Jolting Words with Al Feldstein in the EC Tradition," 77–99.

39. Nick Meglin, email to Judith Yaross Lee, October 11, 2013, 11:22 a.m.

40. Gluckson and Feldstein, "Man Behind the Curtain Department," 72–73.

41. Art Spiegelman, *Breakdowns: Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@&*!*, 7–8. On p. 7, Spiegelman describes Wolverton's "Beautiful Girl of the Month' Reads *Mad"* as "the spaghetti-and-meatballs version" of "the Mona Lisa and . . . those Picasso women I'll learn to love years later. . . . She was 'post-modernism' *avant la letter*."

42. Feldstein, "The Al Feldstein Interview."

43. See, for example, Sid Caesar and Wallace Wood, "The Professor Lectures on Space," *Mad* #49 (6/59): 24–27. See also Lawrence Rodman, "*Mad*'s Guest Writers," 169–78.

44. Frank Jacobs, *The Mad World of William M. Gaines*, 219.

45. Dorothy Parker [Constant Reader], "Reading and Writing: Far from Well," 98.

46. The humor of Wally Wood's art epitomized—and mocked—the male viewpoint, as Joseph W. Slade argues in chap. 4, "Wally Wood: Picturing Male Adolescent Desire in *Mad*'s Early Parodies," 101–118; first published as "Wally Wood: Picturing Male Adolescent Sexuality in *Mad*'s Early Parodies" in *Studies in American Humor* n.s. 3, no. 30 (Fall 2014): 41-56.

47. Ann M. Ciasullo, "The Lighter—and Weightier—Side of *Mad*; Or, Everything I Needed to Know About Gender and Sexuality I Learned from Dave Berg," chap. 5, 119–140, first published in *Studies in American Humor* n.s. 3, no. 40 (Fall 2014): 77–94; Lee, *Defining "New Yorker" Humor*, 49–51, 324–62.

48. Chris Hedges, "For Mad, a Reason to Worry: Struggling for Relevance in Sarcastic World"; the last issue published in New York under Ficarra, *Mad* #555 (4/18) featured two items by writer Alison Grambs and three by writer-artist Teresa Burns Parkhurst; Morrison's *Mad* n.s. #1 (6/18) included women throughout

the issue and as two of the four editors. Writer Tammy Golden joined the gang with *Mad* n.s. #3 (10/18) and collaborated with artist Tom Richmond on "The Manmaid's Tale," a parody of the television series *The Handmaid's Tale* in *Mad* n.s. #10 (12/19: 15–19).

49. Roger Ebert, introduction to *Mad About the Movies: Director's Cut*, [i].

50. United States Second Circuit, Court of Appeals, Berlin v. EC Publications, Inc., 329 F. 2d 541, March 23, 1964.

51. Marc Tracy, "Mad Magazine, Irreverent Baby Boomer Humor Bible, is All but Dead"; *Inside Mad,* edited by John Ficarra.

52. Art Spiegelman's notable credits to "Mickey Rodent" include his obituary of Kurtzman, "A Furshlugginer Genius!", 77; Leon Dische Becker and Art Spiegelman, "Art Spiegelman: My Life in Cartoons [Interview]," https://www.foldmagazine.com/art-spiegelman. The influence of the Kurtzman-Elder story shows in Spiegelman's 1974 trial of framing his family history as a mouse's tale, reprinted in *Breakdowns*, n.p.

53. Edmund A. Hoey and Al Feldstein, "READ Goes MAD—Interview with Al Feldstein 1966."

54. Mike Slaubaugh, *Mad Magazine Lists* https://users.pfw.edu/slaubau/mad.htm.

55. Hoey and Feldstein, "READ Goes MAD"; Feldstein, "The Al Feldstein Interview."

56. Reidelbach, *Completely Mad*, 204. For details on individual international editions, see Bernd Engel, *MADtrash.Com: The MAD Magazine Internet Database*.

57. See the lavishly illustrated *Aufbau: Das Jüdische Magazin* 85, no. 5, whose cover reprints Norman Mingo's cover "Turn On Tune In Drop Dead" (#118, 4/68). Six German-language articles on *Mad* appear within: Andreas Mink, "Leitartikel: Die Welt von MAD"; Doug Chandler, "Standpunkt: MAD als politische Zeitschrift"; Julian Voloj, "Geschichte: Von MAD zu 'MINO'"; Julian Voloj, "Hintergrund: Wer war Alfred E. Neuman?"; Julian Voloj, "Kreative Stimmen: Die Köpfe hinter den Figuren"; Mario Müller, "Deutsche Ausgabe: Mut zur Zahnlücke." Note that the last page of Voloj's "Hintergrund: Wer war Alfred E. Neuman?" mentions *Seeing "Mad,"* then in process, but mistakenly places Judith Yaross Lee at Ohio State University instead of Ohio University.

58. "E.C. Publications Bought by Premier"; "Alfred E. Neuman Joining Superman."

59. Clare M. Beckert, "'Batman' Being Sold," 42; Leonard Sloane, "Mergers Set in Show Business."; "Warner Bros. Picks New Chief Officer and Head of Board," 41.

60. "Kinney Seeks Name Change," 103.

61. Winick, "Teenagers, Satire, and *Mad*," 185.

62. Norris, "*Mad* Economics," 57–58.

63. Meglin, email to Lee.

64. Reidelbach, *Completely Mad*, 160.

65. Paul Levitz, "'Farewell to a Friend': Paul Levitz on MAD Magazine's Nick Meglin."

66. Ben H. Bagdikian, "The Wrong Kind of Readers: The Fall and Rise of *The New Yorker*," 52–54.

67. Slaubaugh, *Mad Magazine Lists.*

68. Slaubaugh, *Mad Magazine Lists.*

69. Constance L. Hays, "'What? Me Worry?': *MAD*'s Humor is Racier, Its Readers Elusive," D10.

70. Hays, "'What? Me Worry?,'" D10.

71. Constance L. Hays, "Tradition on Trial as Editor Rethinks Cartooning Style at *The New Yorker*," D1, 26.

72. Hays, "'What? Me Worry?,'" D10.

73. Hays, "Tradition on Trial," D26.

74. Spiegelman, *Breakdowns*, [6–7]; Spiegelman and Mitchell, "Public Conversation: What the %$#! Happened to Comics?," 21–24.

75. David Shayne, "Feel Like Reading a Spy Story?" in *Spy vs. Spy 2: The Joke and Dagger Files*, by Peter Kuper with Duck Edwing, Bob Clarke, and Dave Manak and edited by David Shayne, 13-17.

76. Editor Tina Brown announced the *New Yorker*'s introduction of color in an interview with Deirdre Carmody, "Her First Issue at the Ready, Tina Brown Talks About The New Yorker."

77. Slaubaugh, *Mad Magazine Lists*.

78. Susan Karlin, "The Ascent of 'Mad': See 60 Years of Comic Subversion."

79. *Totally Mad: 60 Years of Humor, Satire, Stupidity and Stupidity*, edited by John Ficarra.

80. Slaubaugh, *Mad Magazine Lists*.

81. Pew Internet and American Life Project, *Cable and Internet Loom Large in Fragmented Political News Universe: Perceptions of Partisan Bias Seen as Growing—Especially by Democrat*, 3.

82. Lenny Glynn, "Trump's Taj—Open at Last, with a Scary Appetite"; Richard D. Hylton, "More Details Released in Trump Refinancing."

83. Tom Richmond, "The End of the MADness," in *Richmond Illustration, Inc! Caricature and Cartoon Art Studios*; Michael Cavna, "Mad Magazine, a Pioneer of Modern Satire, Will Soon Cease Publishing New Content."

84. Adam Gopnik, "Postscript: Kurtzman's Mad World," 74.

85. David Arnold, *The Handbook of Brand Management*; Robin Landa, *Designing Brand Experiences*.

86. Judith Yaross Lee, *Twain's Brand: Humor in Contemporary American Culture*, 23–26, 162–63, 178–79.

87. J. Hoberman, "Vulgar Modernism," 71–76.

88. Accounting professor Mike Slaubaugh's *Mad Magazine Lists* maintains statistics on circulation along with contributors' and masthead appearances; Bernd Engel's *Madtrash.com*: *Mad Magazine Internet Database* combines a collectibles

marketplace with indexes of artists for all editions and subjects for U.S. *Mad* covers, https://madtrash.com/; Doug Gilford's *Mad Cover Site* is a trove of publication details except page numbers, https://www.madcoversite.com/index.html; "*Mad* Sales Figures" at John Jackson Miller's *Comichron: A Resource for Comics Research*, https://www.comichron.com/titlespotlights/mad.html, documents reported circulation and other distribution details.

89. David Hajdu, "The Parody Racket: From Ridicule to the Ridiculous," 55.

90. Thomas Vinciguerra, "MAD Magazine Taught Us to Laugh but Now We Laugh At It."

91. *The New Yorker* moved audaciously into serious journalism by publishing John Hersey's *Hiroshima* as the sole article in its August 31, 1946, issue. Rachel Carson's three-part *Silent Spring* (June 16, 23, and 30, 1962) and distinguished reports into the My Lai Massacre of the Vietnam War (Seymour Hersh, January 22 and 29, 1972), the Abu Ghraib atrocities in Iraq (Hersh, May 10, 17, and 24, 2004), and Harvey Weinstein's sexual abuses (Ronan Farrow, October 23, 2017) followed in that tradition.