



Lya Brasil Calvet

Framing the Opening

Lya Brasil Calvet

Framing the Opening

Abstract: Die Poetik des Comics entfaltet sich in einer sequenziell-simultanen Landschaft, in der potenziell multiple Interpretationspfade angelegt sind. Die Offenheit für Bedeutung bildet – im Sinne Umberto Ecos – das zentrale Prinzip des „offenen Kunstwerks“: einer künstlerischen Botschaft, die sich einer eindeutigen Festlegung entzieht und über eine singuläre Bedeutung hinausweist. Um zu zeigen, wie Comics ihr eigenes Interpretationsfeld erweitern können, präsentiert die vorliegende Studie eine selbstreflexive, offene Comicseite. Die Ergebnisse weisen auf eine spezifische Richtung der Comicproduktion hin und markieren mögliche technische Verfahren, mit denen sich diese interpretative Offenheit gestalterisch realisieren lässt.

Keywords: Comics, Selbstreflexion, offenes Kunstwerk, Metalanguage/Metasprache, Comics als Forschungsinstrument

(Übersetzt mit DeepL.com und bearbeitet von Victoria Hegner)

Considerations around comics traverse their self-reflective language. For Thierry Groensteen (2015), the comics system is based on an *iconic solidarity*, the coexistence of interconnected images. The framing suggests a fragmented story waiting to be rebuilt through the reader's active cooperation. Based on the information provided by the panels, the intervals between them (*gutters*), and the reader's personal experience, the mind establishes connections and decodes meanings. Comics offer a specific type of double reading, both narrative and aesthetic: At the same time we search for a sequence of events, we also contemplate how the images arrange themselves on the surface of a page – be it on paper or on screen. The poetics of comics inhabit, then, a sequential-simultaneous landscape (Sousanis 2017), and are mainly defined by graphic ellipses (Cirne 2000). Artists of the medium often demonstrate awareness of that flexible structure and conduct self-reflective experiments in which the focus is the code that carries the messages. In those metalinguistic procedures arises a capacity to amplify the participation of the reader.

Openness is the motif of the *open work*, a theoretical model proposed by Umberto Eco, who analyses how contemporary artistic messages can transcend an unique meaning and encourage users to go down multiple decodifying paths (Eco 2016). The interpretative freedom feeds into the definition of the *model reader* (Eco 1979), an agent

who actively cooperates with the author in order to complete the ellipses. Besides filling in the blanks, the model reader also analyses and relives the work in their present social, cultural, and historical conditions. When correlating open work and comics studies, Maaheen Ahmed (2016) highlights the use of framing to promote openness and suggests the term *disjointedness*, referring not only to the panel arrangement and transitions, but also to other formal aspects such as visual styles and iconic words. Among studies that organise reflections on the form of comics and ways to manipulate it, the French movement OuBaPo indicates a number of techniques. The group aims for stylistic experimentation on the language of comics through restrictions (*contraintes*), promoting a medium-aware creative process (Carneiro 2025). Due to the often multi-linear nature of oubapian works, which allow many uses and meanings, the movement instrumentalizes self-reflection as a resource for openness in comics.

When facing ethnographic practices, this research offers a possible theoretical-methodological approach and instrument. In self-reflective comics, the notion of authorship is shared with the reader, an understanding that can be applied to investigations on diverse forms of life and cultural perspectives. Considering the confluence between comics, metalanguage, and opening, we define our fundamental question: How can comics, especially through the resource of framing, enhance their own field of interpretation and collaboration? The product of this research is an original comic page¹ infused with the categories and strategies found during the investigation. The result seeks to propose directions to comic production, emphasising some aesthetic procedures that works can follow in order to strengthen active reader engagement.

References

- Crime, Moacy. 2000. *Quadrinhos, sedução e paixão*. Petrópolis: Editora Vozes.
- Ahmed, Maaheen. 2016. *Openness of Comics: Generating Meaning Within Flexible Structures*. Jackson: Univesity Press of Mississippi. <https://doi.org/10.14325/mississippi/9781496805935.001.0001>.
- Carneiro, Maria Clara da Silva Ramos. 2025. *A metalinguagem em quadrinhos: estudo de Contre la bande dessinée de Jochen Gerner*. PhD Diss., Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.
- Eco, Umberto. 2016. *Obra aberta: forma e indeterminação nas poéticas contemporâneas*. São Paulo: Perspectiva.
- Eco, Umberto. 1979. *Lector in fabula*. São Paulo: Perspectiva.
- Groensteen, Thierry. 2015. *O sistema dos quadrinhos*. Rio de Janeiro: Marsupial.
- Sousanis, Nick. 2017. *Desaplanar*. São Paulo: Veneta.

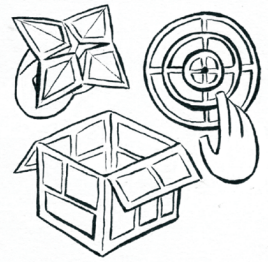
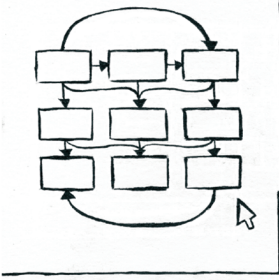
1 The page and research were originally presented in Calvet, Lya Brasil. 2024. „Enquadrando a abertura: autorreflexividade como caminho para múltiplas interpretações nos quadrinhos.“ In: *Quadrinhos, comunicação & entremeios: diálogos possíveis - volume 1*, ed. by Antonio Davi Delfino Ferreira, Lya Brasil Calvet, Ricardo Jorge de Lucena Lucas, Soraya Madeira da Silva, Márcio Moreira dos Santos Filho, Thainá Marques Moreira, and Thiago Henrique Gonçalves Alves, pp. 74–89. Fortaleza: authors' edition.

FRAMING THE OPENING

LYA CALVET

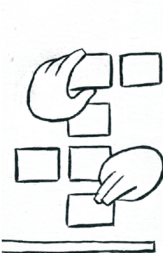
THE WAYS OF THINKING POETIC OPENING THROUGH SELF-REFLECTION CAN APPLY TO ANY MEDIUM, BE IT DIGITAL OR ANALOG.

DISJOINTEDNESS CAN GUIDE AND LIBERATE THE EYE AND MIND MOVEMENTS WITHIN A FLEXIBLE STRUCTURE.



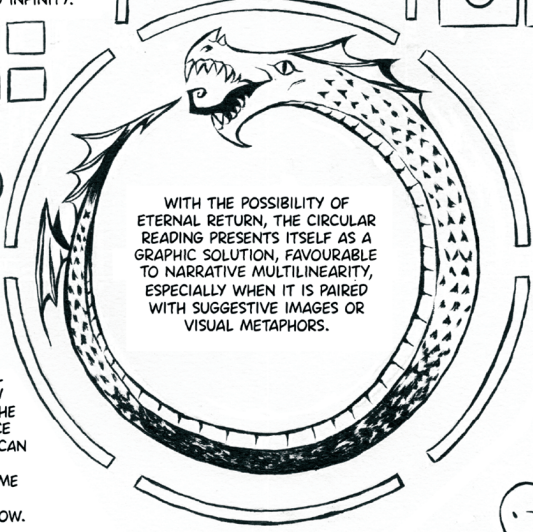
THE DOMINO TECHNIQUE INSPIRES THE PERSISTENCE OF NARRATIVE. WITH A SIMPLE COMPOSITION, IT CAN TEND TO INFINITY.

ON SCREEN OR ON PAPER, THE CREATIVE USE OF FRAMING IS A CONSTANT IN COMICS, AND IT POINTS OUT PATHS FOR EXPERIMENTS.



SOME TECHNIQUES, SUCH AS BLANK SPACES, ALLOW WRITTEN OR DRAWN ENTRIES BY THE READERS: AN AUTORAL MARK IS LEFT.

WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF ETERNAL RETURN, THE CIRCULAR READING PRESENTS ITSELF AS A GRAPHIC SOLUTION, FAVOURABLE TO NARRATIVE MULTILINEARITY, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT IS PAIRED WITH SUGGESTIVE IMAGES OR VISUAL METAPHORS.



FINALLY, IF A PANEL ESTABLISHES A NEW SPACE AND TIME, THE GUTTERS (THE SPACE BETWEEN PANELS) CAN BE PERCEIVED AS A PLACE IN WHICH TIME IS SUSPENDED: AN EVERLASTING NOW.

INHABITING THE IN-BETWEENS, MAYBE WE CAN ALSO GO BEYOND THE FRAMING WHEN THINKING OF COMICS.

