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## It's Garfield's World, We Just Live in It: An Exploration of Garfield the Cat as Icon, Money Maker, and Beast

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It's Garfield's World, We Just Live in It:  
An Exploration of Garfield the Cat as Icon, Money Maker, and Beast



Senior Project Submitted to

The Division of Arts of Bard College

by

Iris Engel

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### Introduction: Genesis: God Created Cat

In 1978, *Garfield*, a comic strip about a cat, was introduced to audiences through a print media delivered straight to the doorstep: newspapers. As of 2019, Jim Davis's *Garfield* is the most widely syndicated comic strip in the world, and the highest grossing--worth over 800 million dollars.<sup>1</sup> This number does not include the merchandising, or animated spinoffs. *Garfield* is a representation of what a newspaper comic can become in the modern age; the cantankerous cat has become a worldwide icon. An homage to Davis's Grandfather, James Garfield Davis, Garfield made his mark on readers by being as cynical as possible without being offensive. Relying on the already established American tradition of the comics pages, *Garfield* entered homes and hearts. Newspaper comic strips, once a staple in American households, combine words and pictures to tell stories. To truly understand the weekly sagas, one needs to see the images. Comics are propelled by their images, not their words, making them more of an art form than a literary genre and making Jim Davis more of an artist than a writer. The imagery is vital to grasping the meaning of the comic, or "getting the gag." This is why the idea of reading a comic out loud to someone is so absurd. As Robert Harvey writes in *The Art of the Funnies*, "stories in comics cannot be truly and deliberately considered without taking the pictures into account."<sup>2</sup> The "consideration" of the comics began when the "Sunday Funnies" became big--big business, that is.

The first comics to appear in newspapers and magazines were one-frame illustrations that accompanied political pieces and literary publications, like works by Charles Dickens and

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<sup>1</sup> Alves, G. (2019). "Garfield turns 40: Lazy, grouchy cat is worth \$800 mn, and founder Jim Davis loves it!". Retrieved 29 October 2019, from <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/garfield-turns-40-lazy-grouchy-cat-is-worth-800-mn-and-founder-jim-davis-loves-it/articleshow/64691183.cms>

<sup>2</sup> Harvey, R. (1997). *The Art of the Funnies*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. p. 4.

William Makepeace Thackeray.<sup>3</sup> Charles Keene born in 1823 worked with *Punch Magazine* and became one of the most prolific cartoonists, providing a welcome addition to the word-driven pieces. Many reported to take out a subscription to *Punch* because of the presence of Keene's drawings.<sup>4</sup> It was from these British humorist and satire publications like *Punch* that Joseph Pulitzer--newspaper publisher of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and *New York World*-- decided to make a decision that would change American newspapers forever.

Pulitzer was an innovative newspaper editor who struck an untapped market in the world of print publications. *New York World*, a newspaper from New York City, started in 1860, was run by Pulitzer from 1883 to 1911, and in this time, it became one of the most, if not the most, widely circulated newspapers.<sup>5</sup> *New York World* had a daily circulation, providing news and information directed towards the working man. Pulitzer was extremely hands-on in the rebranding of *New York World* and noticed that the Sunday issue sold more than any other day of the week. After conducting a survey, Pulitzer found that the readers buying the Sunday issues were women and children, rather than the working men who read the weekday newspapers.<sup>6</sup> Pulitzer made the decision to create *Sunday World*, an extravagant issue with double the number of pages, allowing for supplements and materials geared towards women and young children: a comic section, more advertisements, and “puff pieces” about animals and travel. The creation of a special Sunday issue was argued to be blasphemous by many Christian groups, but the readers obviously thought otherwise. In about seven years, the number of newspapers that included a special Sunday edition grew from one hundred to two hundred and fifty.

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<sup>3</sup> Layard, G.S. *Charles Samuel Keene*. London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co., 1892.

<sup>4</sup> Goldman, P. (2014, April 17) *The Artist's Artist: An Introduction to Charles Keene's Work*. [Journal Article] Retrieved from <http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/keene/goldman.html>

<sup>5</sup> Harvey, (1997). p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Harvey, (1997). p. 7.

The comic section in *Sunday World* proved to be the most profitable and most popular. It was normal to see people stealing the comics out of the newspapers at the stand, and Sunday editions discarded on the street with their comic section removed in the 1890s.<sup>7</sup> The popularity of the comic section was evident; the cartoonist Richard Outcault received more fan mail than any other newspaper employees had previously.<sup>8</sup> The value of the comics was further proved when, in 1894, Morrill Goddard who was an employee at the newspaper *Sunday World*, decided to use new color printing technology to get more readers. The paper could only afford to do one part in color due to drying time and expense, so they chose the most lucrative--therefore important due to the capitalistic value system in the United States--to print in color. Goddard did not choose to print the front page, or the headlines, but the ever-growing comic section of the newspaper. This choice led to the introduction of the first iconic comic character: the “Yellow Kid,” nicknamed as such because the smock he wore was colored yellow. Yellow was the quickest drying ink, and Outcault’s *Hogan’s Alley* in which the Yellow Kid appeared, was selling out faster than they could print them.<sup>9</sup>

The comics rose so much in popularity that newspaper sellers would advertise new comics rather than breaking headlines. At this time, some newspaper companies were more worried about gaining readers than the content inside, a practice that still continues. Pulitzer had one main competitor for readership in the late 19th century: a man by the name of William Randolph Hearst. They were so concerned with readership that they fought over usage of the Yellow Kid comics to the extent that this era of spurious journalism is now known as “Yellow Journalism.” This phenomenon demonstrated the selling power that comics had and the “funny”

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<sup>7</sup> Harvey, (1997). p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Harvey, R. (1998) *Children of the Yellow Kid* Frye Art Museum, Seattle. University of Washington Press: Seattle and London. p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> Harvey, (1998). p. 17.

pages, as they were sometimes called, carved out a permanent spot for themselves in daily, as well as weekend, newspapers.

Comics continue to be a huge selling point for newspapers, and even as the format shrinks due to the move away from print media, space is still left for them. When *Garfield* was first seen in syndication, the Chicago Sun decided to drop the strip after thirty days in order to make space for a new comic. Nearly 1,300 readers wrote letters and phoned in to the newspaper, expressing their outrage for the nixing of *Garfield* from the comics page.<sup>10</sup> The newspaper had never received a response this large for virtually any content removal, let alone a comic strip. *Garfield* was immediately reinstated much to the relief of the readers, as well as Jim Davis.<sup>11</sup> Almost instantly becoming a cultural icon, *Garfield* solidified his place in reader's collective consciousness. Garfield's recognizability as a character, or his "Q-Score," is the same as Big Bird from Sesame Street, and is higher than Spiderman's.<sup>12</sup> With an overall 95% recognition score worldwide, it is safe to say that Garfield took the world by storm. The lasagna loving feline's popularity makes him a perfect vehicle to discuss other topics, due to the familiarity that individuals already have with him.

As a member of the recurring cast of characters on the newspaper's funny pages, *Garfield* exists among family drama, superheroes, and quippy one-liners. When the comic first debuted on June 19, 1978, it appeared in between *Blondie* and *Donald Duck*, and next to *Asterix and Obelix* in the *Indiana Star*.<sup>13</sup> For most newspaper comics, the debut strip is indistinguishable from any other later published strip; the audience is dropped into a situation and using context clues they

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<sup>10</sup> Shank, R (Director). (2018). *Power of Art- Jim Davis* [Short Film]. USA: Cardinal Cinema. 12:52.

<sup>11</sup> See Image One.

<sup>12</sup> PAWS Inc. (2019). Welcome to Garfield's Licensing and Sales! Retrieved 4 December 2019, from [http://www.pawsinc.com/sales/q\\_study.html](http://www.pawsinc.com/sales/q_study.html)

<sup>13</sup> See Image Two.

are able to assume the characters relationships and personalities. For example, *Blondie* follows the dating life of a young blonde girl and her subsequent marriage. In the first recorded *Blondie* strip available in the Library of Congress, it shows two suitors fighting over who will get to take Blondie out that night, ending in one of the suitors assaulting the other. The comic strip does not explain the situation nor does the narrative open at the beginning. The storytelling technique used in *Blondie*, dropping the audience in at the turning point, can be explained by the Alfred Hitchcock quote: “what is drama but life with the dull bits cut out.”<sup>14</sup> Jim Davis chose to include the “dull bits” in *Garfield*’s debut strip, introducing the readers to the characters Jon and Garfield with literal introduction. Breaking from the tradition of starting a narrative without the audience, Davis does nothing without the audience’s explicit involvement. The inclusion of the mundane in *Garfield* is both the source of its charm and its tedium.

The *Garfield* debut strip was anticipated by readers, as Davis had different ads running in the newspapers that would later syndicate the strip.<sup>15</sup> For some of Davis’s local Indiana newspapers, they “previewed” the strip nearly two years before, as Davis published the strip under the name *Jon* in 1976. Published in the *Pendleton Times*, *Jon*, a weekly comic strip, was the prototype of Garfield. Nearly identical to the *Garfield* strip published on June 19, 1978, the debut strip for *Jon* begins with an introduction.<sup>16</sup> *Jon* ran for a little over a year before it was reworked to become *Garfield*, when Davis realized that the audience was connecting more with the cat than the man. Only three months after the ending of *Jon*, *Garfield* debuted in forty-one newspapers around the country. The debut strip of *Garfield* has the same sentiment that *Jon* had; it shows a cat and a man directly addressing the audience, in turn shattering the proverbial fourth

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<sup>14</sup> Truffaut, François. *Hitchcock* (1967) With the Collaboration of Helen G. Scott, English Translation by François Truffaut, Quote Page 71, Column 2, Simon and Schuster, New York

<sup>15</sup> See Image Three.

<sup>16</sup> See Image Four.

wall.<sup>17</sup> With the changing of the title from *Jon* to *Garfield*, it is clear that Davis's focus changed as well. Instead of introducing both Jon and Garfield in the same frame like in the *Jon* strip, each character receives its own monologue in the revamped version. In the second frame of the *Jon* debut strip, the body of Garfield is cut off, not showing his backside, while the second panel of the *Garfield* debut strip cuts off Jon's bottom half. This subtle change highlights the importance of both characters, giving each their own time to address the reader.

Placed among some of the biggest names in Sunday comics at the time, *Garfield* blended into the page due to its style and composition, but stood out due to Jim Davis's use of literary tropes and audience interaction. Both the newspaper comic and the character Garfield are products of their environment, and can be used as physical manifestations of the logical continuation of different themes. For millennia, animals have been used in place of human characters in order to communicate morals, and stories. These animal stories manifest themselves in folk tales, *Aesop's Fables*, and oral history myths. Every civilization has an iteration of animal-as-transhuman story teller, and for the modern generation, this is Garfield. *Garfield* acts as the modern incarnation of the folk tale, providing readers with stories of the banal channeled through a feline narrator. Garfield is able to be defined by various themes is possible because of his ability to navigate both the human and non-human worlds, and even crossing into the supernatural realms. *Garfield* as a beast fable will be explored in Chapter One.

Chapter Two will take a more literal approach to using *Garfield* as an agent for uncovering meaning, as it looks at the symptoms of Late Capitalism as defined by Ernest Mandel (1923-1995). *Garfield* is ran like a business by Jim Davis; he works 14-hour work days focused on marketing, advertising, and other in-house matters. He devotes one week a month to write the

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<sup>17</sup> See Image Five.

entire month's worth of comic strips, churning them out with his hired team of artists. There is no divine inspiration in the creation of *Garfield*; the art is made when there is profit to be gained. The amount of money that *Garfield* has made is only possible in a capitalistic society that has replaced human value with capital. As a product of late-stage capitalism, *Garfield* serves as a physical manifestation of a business model that Karl Marx predicted in his work *Das Kapital* with "the laws of motion of the capitalist mode of production." The character of Garfield is a member of the leisure class, embodying traits that are seen as favorable, but in reality, are really just selfish and lazy. A class traitor, Garfield is content to live in his lap of luxury and enjoy endless food and television entertainment without helping other cats rise to his position.

As Davis's wealth from *Garfield* grows, so does the worldwide recognition of the cat. With this, comes imitations, re-imaginings, and explicit copyright infringement from other creators and artists. The third chapter addresses how Jim Davis responds to these copycats, and how others in the childhood entertainment sector conversely react. Davis is a product of his good-humored Midwest upbringing, his business education from Ball State University, and being an artist in the age of mechanical reproduction. His genial and well calculated response to potential copyright shows this amalgamation. In short, Davis loves re-imaginings of *Garfield*. He genuinely appreciates artists infringing on his copyright and transforming the cat, a response that is rarely, if ever heard. Davis must realize that the more the face of his cat is seen, the more it stays in the public sphere of recognition. On the opposite end of the spectrum lies the Walt Disney Company, who also deals in cartoons geared towards children. Rather than Davis's cheerful and open reception to transformations of his copyright, Disney is quick to send cease and desist letters to anyone who might even unintentionally be slightly infringing on their copyright protected material. These two sides of how to handle copyright infringement are

extreme, and exclusively connected to the United States entertainment empire. Davis's human response to fellow artists inspired by his cat humbles the billionaire, and makes Davis seem more approachable, while Disney remains a faceless corporation, generating millions from suing small family businesses. An example of modern copyright law carried out in a revolutionary way, Davis exemplifies being a commercial artist who recognizes that it is more important for one's work to belong to everyone.

Building off of the comic empire that Hearst and Pulitzer created, *Garfield* has become an empire. A cultural icon, the cat serves as an example for a number of traditional themes taken to their extremes. This attempt to treat Garfield as a serious matter for academic study proved fruitful and productive; there is still much left to uncover. Born in a Holiday Inn in Muncie, Indiana when Davis took three days to flush out his ideas, Garfield has brought a lighter side of newspapers globally. Sometimes referred to as "baby's first irony," "Garfield shows a sassy side of domestic life to the world, and works to keep his world sacred.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Garfield*. (2018). Wizard and the Bruiser [Podcast]. Retrieved 4 December 2019, from <https://www.lastpodcastnetwork.com/blog/2018/8/23/garfield>



Image One:

This comic strip was published in the Chicago Sun-Times after *Garfield*'s reinstatement. The Chicago Sun had tried to cut the comic after only a thirty-day trial run to make space for new comics. After the removal of Garfield, the newspaper received more complaint calls and emails than they had ever gotten concerning a comic strip. Shortly after, *Garfield* was returned.

Davis, J. (1978) *Garfield*. [Comic] PAWS Inc. Albany, Indiana.



Image Two:

This is a portion of the original page that *Garfield* appeared on June 19, 1978. Appearing next to some of the comic greats, *Garfield* makes its mark by addressing the reader directly, forming a bond with them.

The Funny Pages. (1978, June 19). [Digital Newspaper Clipping] The Star Press. Muncie, Indiana. Retrieved From:

[https://img.newspapers.com/img/img?institutionId=0&user=5852697&id=252416567&width=4050&height=6474&crop=28\\_780\\_3936\\_1833&brightness=0&contrast=0&invert=0&rotation=0&ts=1565279377&h=dc53724079b99d1fee1f721655bd27f2&a=download&filename=The\\_Star\\_Press\\_Mon\\_Jun\\_19\\_](https://img.newspapers.com/img/img?institutionId=0&user=5852697&id=252416567&width=4050&height=6474&crop=28_780_3936_1833&brightness=0&contrast=0&invert=0&rotation=0&ts=1565279377&h=dc53724079b99d1fee1f721655bd27f2&a=download&filename=The_Star_Press_Mon_Jun_19_)



This advertisement is titled "2 New Comic Strips" in large, bold, capital letters at the top. It contains two columns of text. The left column discusses the start of "Winnie The Pooh!" and "Garfield". The right column discusses the replacement of "Tank McNamara" and "Donald Duck" with "Winnie The Pooh!" and "Garfield". It also includes a small illustration of Garfield sitting and looking towards the right, with the word "GARFIELD" written below it.

Two brand new comic strips begin Monday in *The Advocate*. For one, there's Walt Disney's version of "Winnie The Pooh!" an all-new strip based on A. A. Milne's literary classics. "Winnie The Pooh!" promises a light-hearted reading treat for the entire family. The daily comic strip features such characters as Drippy-breathing, fart-prone encyclopedias like Sir Brian, a knight who's the original canned ham; Tigger, a tiger who'll bow you over; and, of course, Pooh, who if he isn't the smartest stuffed bear in the world, he's certainly the most lovable. The second part of *The Advocate*'s twin boost for its comic page is "Garfield," a refreshing new strip about a laughable cat. They say cat lovers love him, and cat haters love him. Cartoonist Jim Davis, who created the funny feline, describes Garfield as a "fat,

cynical, selfish and endearing cat who prefers a good dish of lasagna to a live rodent." Davis, of Muncie, Ind., hastens to explain that while a cat is his central character, the comic strip has other characters, too, who will be introduced gradually, including Jon, Garfield's owner; Lyman, Jon's roommate; Odie, Lyman's dog; Irma, a waitress at the restaurant Jon visits; and Liz, Jon's ideal woman.

"Winnie The Pooh!" and "Garfield" join our comic page Monday, replacing "Tank McNamara" and "Donald Duck." But *Tank McNamara* fans need not be upset because the sports-oriented *Tank* will be moving to *The Advocate* sports pages on a daily basis. So, look for the bright, new "Winnie The Pooh!" and "Garfield" starting Monday on the comic page, and keep up with "Tank McNamara" on the sports pages.

Image Three:

These two advertisements were purchased in the paper before *Garfield*'s initial publish date in the specific papers. This is not the ordinary route of advertising a new comic to the newspaper; Davis had to design and submit these for publishing. Promoting the new comic strip, these advertisements alerted readers to look for "a different kind of cat" on the funny pages.

"The Indianapolis News brought Garfield to readers in 1979." (1979).  
[Newspaper Clipping] *Indy Star*. Indianapolis, Indiana. From the *IndyStar* Archives

. "Two New Comics." (1978, June 18.) [Digital Newspaper Clipping] *Victoria Advocate* (Victoria, Texas) Sun Page 59. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.newspapers.com/clippings/download/?id=34685424>



Image Four:

Originally titled *Jon*, Jim Davis ran the strip briefly on a local level, later changing the title to *Garfield* after field research. The strips published under the name *Jon* were used in their entirety for *Garfield*. The appearance of both Jon and Garfield were reworked for *Garfield* after it became apparent that people related more to Garfield than they did Jon.

Davis, J. *Jon* (1976, January 8) [Comic] Retrieved from:  
[https://garfield.fandom.com/wiki/Jon\\_\(Comic\\_Strip\)](https://garfield.fandom.com/wiki/Jon_(Comic_Strip))



Image Five:

This is the first *Garfield* comic strip ever published. Both characters break the fourth wall to introduce themselves to their new readers, inviting them into their world. Davis shifted the strip from focusing on Jon, to Garfield when he realized the potential in a cat main character.

Davis, J. *Garfield* (1978, June 19). [Comic] PAWS Inc. Albany, Indiana.  
Retrieved from: <https://garfield.com/comic/1978/06/19>

## Chapter One

The Beast Fable: Garfield's Nine Lives

The Modern Practice of Anthropomorphized Parables



The anthropomorphizing of animals, and showing animals conducting themselves in relatable behavior, can be traced to nearly every civilization's ancient texts and images. From Egyptian hieroglyphics, to the Indian *Jakata Tales*, anthropomorphized animals are used to illustrate the principles of life. Using animals as a stand-in for humans in stories consciously lets the reader know that the story is fiction, making them more palatable. As Jim Davis, the cartoonist who created *Garfield* the cat, explains it:

People aren't threatened by an animal. They have a lot of latitude. Do a lot of things that humans can't. By virtue of being a cat, Garfield's not black, white, male or female, young, or old or a particular nationality. He's not going to step on anyone's feet if these thoughts are coming from an animal. So that was my first theory.<sup>19</sup>

The Ashanti tribe from Ghana exemplifies the lack of realism in fables by beginning tales of Ananse, an anthropomorphized spider, with the words: “*Yense se, nse se o*”, or “We don't really mean it, we don't really mean it, that what we are going to say is true”.<sup>20</sup> This allows readers to separate themselves from the characters and the world in which the story is taking place. This method is integral in allowing the reader or listener to create a space in which they can approach difficult topics. Comics exist as the modern incarnation of the beast fable; fulfilling the almost intrinsically human need to anthropomorphize things in order to manipulate understanding.

Serving as the placeholder for myths in the modern era, cartoons have become the accepted mode of storytelling and occasionally teaching tools for the younger generations.

In most cases, these anthropomorphized stories are known as fables, with the most well-known being *Aesop's Fables*, stories written by a former Greek slave in the mid-6th century.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Shapiro, W. (1982, December 12). LIVES: The Cat That Rots the Intellect. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1982/12/12/lives-the-cat-that-rots-the-intellect/d6ed28c6-bee3-41ad-81f2-1839b34b87b1/>

<sup>20</sup> Kwesi Yankah (1983). "The Akan Trickster Cycle: Myth or Folktale?". Trinidad University of the West Indies.

<sup>21</sup> Aesop, *Aesop's Fables*. Published 1484.

The tradition of fables as a means to convey a moral or lesson continues today, and widely is seen in content intended for children. Separating the explicit human from the fable implies that there is an implicit truth about the natural world being communicated by animals, who are seen as more connected to nature.<sup>22</sup> Humans place the burden upon animals to teach us how to act as humans, constantly looking at the duality between the two.<sup>23</sup> Animals acting as humans subvert the understood natural order, providing the chance to strictly look at actions, rather than the “person” behind them. Beast fables are easy to concoct and even easier to relate to because everyone has come into contact with animals of some kind, whether domestic, barnyard, or wild. The shared life that humans have, or do not have, with animals affects the stories that are told about them. Animals that are allowed in immediate company, such as dogs and cats, can be inserted and understood in a variety of stories, due to the familiarity with their behavior. Humans accept that cats and dogs have defined personalities, allowing people to have conversations with mute animals.

Of the modern examples of beast fables, many involve either animals that are human in every aspect aside from their head, or animals that act like animals but have human thoughts. The former is recently seen in the Netflix animated series, *BoJack Horseman*. Tackling unsettling themes and controversial topics in Hollywood, *BoJack*'s cast of characters are almost entirely talking animals. *BoJack Horseman* is a bipedal horse with human hands, feet, and actions.<sup>24</sup> When the show was first piloted, producers wondered if the animal characters were necessary, and proposed an all-human version. After the screening, the all-human episode was

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<sup>22</sup> Suzuki, Y. (2017). THE USES OF ANIMALS. In *The Nature of Whiteness: Race, Animals, and Nation in Zimbabwe* (pp. 105-135). Seattle; London: University of Washington Press. Retrieved from [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvct026x.10](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvct026x.10)

<sup>23</sup> Howe, N. “Fabling Beasts: Traces in Memory.” *Social Research*, vol. 62, no. 3, 1995, pp. 641–659. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/40971112](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40971112).

<sup>24</sup> See Image One.

immediately deemed too dark and disturbing, and would require viewer discretion.<sup>25</sup> By changing their species, the writers can choose what level the audience connects to the characters through dialogue and situation.<sup>26</sup>

The choice of the level of audience involvement is also invaluable in the other commonly seen form of modern beast fable: animals that remain animals, but have human thoughts. This type of fable is embodied easily by comic strips, because of its ease of communicating thoughts, as well as their ability to manipulate staging. In the realm of comic strips, a plethora of animal characters exist; some are like BoJack in the sense that they are treated like humans in a human world, and others, like the orange tabby cat Garfield in the eponymous strip *Garfield*, are animals in a human world that have human minds. Garfield is aware that he is an animal in a human world, and experiences life as a cat; he uses a litter box, eats from a pet food bowl, and is taken to the vet. Cats are notoriously known for impish behavior, as any cat owner will attest to. His cat-ness is what authenticates and defends his famously rotten attitude, unlike humans, who are often held accountable for their actions. Animals act on instinct, relieving them of any personal responsibility. In Garfield's universe, his actions, such as stealing a neighbor's steak or mailing unwanted house guests to Abu Dhabi, reflect onto his hapless owner, Jon Arbuckle.<sup>27</sup> This leaves Garfield as the perfect embodiment of the pure Id,<sup>28</sup> or as Sigmund Freud suggests, the desire for

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<sup>25</sup> Sepinwall, A. (2019). Animals vs. Humans and 'BoJack Horseman' creator breaks down the year's best ep of television. Retrieved 29 November 2019, from <https://uproxx.com/sepinwall/bojack-horseman-creator-on-animals-vs-humans-and-that-amazing-underwater-episode>

<sup>26</sup> Gross, T. (2019). Don't Be Fooled by The Talking Horse — 'BoJack' Is A Sadness 'Sneak Attack'. Retrieved 29 November 2019, from <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/02/755411294/dont-be-fooled-by-the-talking-horse-bojack-is-a-sadness-sneak-attack>

<sup>27</sup> See Image Two.

<sup>28</sup> See Image Three.

instant gratification according to the pleasure principle, fulfilling one's wants and needs with no outside consideration.<sup>29</sup>

As Garfield acts as the Id through frequent displays of impulsivity and selfishness, he presents a character that prepares the reader for adult life, showing the chaos caused by mischief. That is why reading *Garfield* comics can be a cathartic experience, allowing the deep and impish emotions to take form in a way that would be inappropriate outside of the cartoon world. Garfield represents what is labeled as the “trickster” in myths, or a character in a story who shows intelligence or secret knowledge and uses it to play tricks or otherwise disobeys normal rules and conventional behavior.<sup>30</sup> Garfield often crosses the boundaries set for him, as seen in the newspaper comic printed originally on Sunday, December 30th, 1979.<sup>31</sup> As Garfield knocks over Jon Arbuckle's fern, he grins, which could indicate that he takes joy in destroying things, or that he knows this will cause some sort of discomfort. Rarely malicious, Garfield's actions are merely inconvenient and annoying rather than truly harmful. After Jon sees his destroyed fern and cries, “I RAISED THAT FERN FROM A FROND!” he visually goes into panic mode, flapping his arms wildly while Garfield coolly stares on. When Jon calms down in the next frame and sees Garfield playing the part of the cute cat smiling with closed eyes. He seems to forget his fern and proceeds to hug the mischievous cat and pronounce, “You're so cute.” Iterating that his actions have no consequences, Garfield remains a trickster, ruling the universe that has been created around him.

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<sup>29</sup> Freud, S. Translated by Stachey, J. (1923) *The Ego and the Id*. London: Vintage.  
Freud, S. Translated by Strachey, J. (1920). *Beyond the pleasure principle*. London: Vintage.

<sup>30</sup> "Trickster - Ascension Glossary," *Ascensionglossary.Com*, n.d.: <https://ascensionglossary.com/index.php/Trickster>.

<sup>31</sup> See Image Four.

A *Garfield* strip that originally appeared on Sunday, December 7th, 1980 depicts another example of Garfield's frequent destruction of ferns to tackle concepts that an *Ananse the Spider* fable from Ghana does as well: incrimination and injury.<sup>32</sup> A famous trickster from African myth and folklore, Ananse interacts with gods and men to provide philosophical answers, as well as creation myths through oral tradition.<sup>33</sup> In a story narrated by Mensa Aborompa, age 20, it tells the answer to a question that God and Ananse ask each other, "Which is more painful, injuries or incrimination?"<sup>34</sup> In the tale, Ananse is physically assaulted by God, and his wounds heal, but when Ananse defecates in the fireplace and tells God's mother that God did it, God's reputation is destroyed. The story ends with God attempting suicide and the answer to the question is given: incrimination is worse than injury.<sup>35</sup> This fable closely mirrors the aforementioned *Garfield* strip, where Garfield attacks a fern in the first three panels, and in the fourth is seen plucking the last leaf from the flower pot. In the fifth panel, Garfield places the fern leaf into his canine housemate Odie's mouth. The sixth and final panel shows Jon scolding Odie for destroying the plant that in actuality Garfield ate. Odie's face is expressively displeased, with his eyelids lowered and his mouth drawn in a scowl. The incrimination of Odie does not show the events after, but it can be assumed that nothing as drastic as an attempted suicide will incur. However, it does address the same dichotomy proposed in the Ananse story: injury or incrimination. The fern is the party who experiences the injury, and as terrible as it would be to be eaten, there is a chance to regrow. Wounds like injury can heal, as they are personal, but incrimination affects others. Odie cannot control the speed to which his reputation will heal after being incriminated, Jon does. No matter how fast Odie wishes to return his reputation to being unmarred by this plant

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<sup>32</sup> See Image Five.

<sup>33</sup> Yankah, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Yankah, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Yankah, p. 8.

incident, it is out of his power. This type of duress is not ultimately harmful or damning, and because of this, Garfield remains as a trickster rather than a villain. His intention is not to cause lasting harm, merely to break up the monotony with a prank.

In the realm of Garfield, cats are unique from other animals. Before the comic strip was turned into a television show, dogs, birds, and mice were rarely shown with thought bubbles, while Garfield and the other cat “regulars” are able to communicate with the audience, if they so choose to do so.<sup>36</sup> After the introduction of *Garfield and Friends* to CBS on September 17, 1988, Jim Davis began writing strips with more non-cat thought bubbles, as silent characters do not make for good television.<sup>37</sup> Even with the addition of more lines for non-cats, Garfield remains unique in his ability to make himself understood among the humans in the strips. Within the world of beast fables, the characters come from different experiences. Some, like BoJack Horseman, are born into a world as complete anthropomorphic animals, while others, like Ananse, have explicit backstories defining their existence in a world where few are like them.

In the tradition of beast fables, Ananse the spider has stories that explain why he has eight legs, has a bald head, or most importantly, why he is able to communicate these implicit truths through stories.<sup>38</sup> Ananse oscillates between having the consciousness of a human and an animal, while remaining animal in form.<sup>39</sup> Ananse exists between several worlds, and as Professor Kwesi Yankah explains, “[he is] always on the move, and commuting between the human, non-human and supernatural worlds, cheating, generating cultural phenomena, committing adultery, fooling, and being fooled.”<sup>40</sup> It has been postulated that Ananse’s ability to

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<sup>36</sup> See Image Six.

<sup>37</sup> See Images Seven.

<sup>38</sup> Yankah, pp. 3-7.

<sup>39</sup> Nketia, J.H. (1955) *Funeral Dirges of the Akan People*. Achimota. p. 37.

<sup>40</sup> Yankah, p. 7.

have both human and animal motivations and attributes is due to the fact that he has a dual identity in order to interact with the supernatural world in the way that he does.<sup>41</sup> By having links to the supernatural, a fable character becomes imparted with complex dimensions. These typically manifest themselves in the ability to uncover universal truths, and elevating from the animal category. By Ananse having tales that show him existing and interacting with God, and other super naturals, he is able to exist somewhere between human and animal in the transhuman category, a term coined by Julian Huxley in an essay in 1957.<sup>42</sup> While initially intended to refer to the human-becoming-robotic, transhuman in this case will be used to refer to humans who no longer exist in the traditional corporeal body of a human. By this definition, Ananse, and Garfield would both qualify as transhuman--each existing outside of the confines of their designated species boundaries.

Garfield, like Ananse, crosses from the human to the animal, to the supernatural realms. Garfield--as depicted by Jim Davis-- is seen in these situations, whether it be on Thanksgiving with his owner's mother treating him like a grandchild,<sup>43</sup> or interacting with his feline companion Arlene.<sup>44</sup> Navigating between both the animal and the non-animal, Garfield is shown somewhere in between. Garfield is initially denied entry to bakery for being a cat, so he steals clothes from a little boy outside of the shop. Now a cat dressed in boy's clothing, he is allowed to enter the shop. Using cartoon logic, and providing Garfield's existence as a transhuman, Garfield is mistaken for a human child after only putting on the clothes of one. After, he tosses a donut to a cat on the street. Breaking the fourth wall, Garfield says to the audience--still dressed

<sup>41</sup> Yankah, p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> Huxley, J. (1957). "Transhumanism." *New Bottles for New Wine*, London: Chatto and Windus. pp. 13-17.

<sup>43</sup> See Image Eight.

<sup>44</sup> See Image Nine.

in the boy's clothes-- "I've been human for 10 minutes now, but I haven't forgotten my roots."<sup>45</sup>

While Garfield has not literally become a human, he has become one in the minds of those who are of consequence: the bakery owner. His ability to dawn clothes and in appearance "become" human is logic that exists in many beast fables, and is only possible because Garfield exists in a grey area between animal and human. He can occupy this space because within the canon of Garfield, there is an explanation of his interactions and connections with the supernatural.

The origin story, as it were, manifests itself in a book titled *Garfield: His Nine Lives*, and the animated movie that stemmed from the book with the same title. The movie and the book contain nine short stories, each outlining a different "life" that Garfield has lived. Only five of the stories from the book carried over into the film: *In the Beginning*, *The Garden*, *Lab Animal*, *Garfield*, and *Space Cat*.<sup>46</sup> Each of the stories provides either a cautionary tale for Garfield and other cats, (e.g. it is presumed that Garfield's life in *The Garden* comes to an end when he explores the idea of curiosity. Curiosity killed the cat), suggests a beginning of Garfield's likes or dislikes (e.g. his brief stint as a testing animal in his *Lab Animal* life is the reason he hates the vet), or solves a foundational question. The latter is most distinctly found in *The Beginning* and *Space Cat*, or rather, Garfield's genesis and his rebirth.

There has never been a second reprinting of the book that was released on October 12, 1984. Perhaps it was too out of place in the realm of Garfield, as it has nearly eight different art styles, including noir pulp, and psychedelia. The graphic novel diverges from the common gags audiences have grown to expect, isolating the common reader that was expecting more of what

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<sup>45</sup> See Image Ten.

<sup>46</sup> The stories included in the book that were not adapted for television were *The Vikings*, *Babes and Bullets*-- which later became its own television special and won an Emmy in 1989-- *The Exterminators*, and *Primal Self*. Four additional stories were written for the show: *Cave Cat*, *King Cat*, *Court Musician*, and, perhaps the most heart wrenching Garfield tale, *Diana's Piano*.

was published in the newspapers. The book remains the most intellectually daring work in the Garfield canon. Jim Davis attests to this in the book's preface:

Garfield was created to entertain. Given that and our feeling that there's a lot more to Garfield than a seven-inch newspaper format will allow, the artists at Paws, Incorporated, and I put the furry fellow on the rack and stretched him to the limits of our imaginations.

It occurred to us there were elements of Garfield's complex personality that may well have been established in his previous lives...a cat's proverbial "nine lives." It was an exciting premise, one which consumed the staff and brought out the best in everyone. Many all-nighters and hundreds of hours of conceptual discussion went into this book.

This is a different book. It is dedicated to the Garfield philosophy of pure entertainment. I am also dedicating this book to the staff whose talents and courage made this bold statement possible: Neil Altrekruse, Gary Barker, Kevin Campbell, Jim Clements, Doc Davis, Larry Fentz, Mike Fentz, Valette Hildebrand, Dave Kühn and Ron Tuthill.<sup>47</sup>

Here, it is seen that Davis and his collaborators are attempting to deliberately create a mythos around Garfield and ground him in the tradition of beast fables by providing him with a legacy beyond the newspaper. At the time that *Garfield: His Nine Lives* was being produced, underground comics like *Heavy Metal*, *2000 A.D.* and animated films like *Watership Down*, Ralph Bakshi's *Wizards*, and *Fritz the Cat* were beginning to dominate popular culture. Their rise to popularity threatened the behemoth that is the Walt Disney Corporation, who is responsible for most of the blockbuster cartoons. Perhaps Davis and his team saw an opening for their benign, somewhat Disney-era marketed cat to appeal not only to children but to a more educated audience.

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<sup>47</sup> Davis, Jim. *Garfield: His Nine Lives*. 1984. Albany, Indiana, Paws, Inc. p. 1.

However, this attempt at grounding Garfield in myth and potentially shifting his audience did not prove to be successful, as the book is no longer in continuous print. One three-star reviewer on Amazon even says “Creepy. It was rather creepy.”<sup>48</sup> This assessment could have to do with the fact that all of the sections diverge from the traditional drawing style seen in the newspaper, and from the common themes. Each section could belong to a different genre and time period, and many of the plots are dark, resulting in the death of that lives’ iteration of Garfield in each--whether shown implicitly or explicitly. For the reader expecting a traditional *Garfield* tale, they might be confused, or even “creeped” out, but for those wanting the knowledge that the writers of Garfield are capable of doing more, this book remains important and relevant.

In the biblical sense of beginning, the book opens with a genesis. On the left side of the page, Garfield speaks as a sort of host, saying “Which came first, the cat or the kitten? Here is the never before published story behind the creation of nature’s most perfect animal.”<sup>49</sup> On the left, is a towering image of Jim Davis on a yellow background.<sup>50</sup> The top of Davis’s head is not shown, and the rest of his body shows no detail. The top of his head ends at what are assumed to be his eyes. The eyes are the only details in his body, aside from the demarcation of where his shirt collar is. Filled with drawn stars, Davis’s body gives the illusion that he is the galaxy. Written on the front of his implied shirt in Olde English font reads “in the Beginning...” taken from the first line of *Genesis*, which, in the King James Version, reads, “In the Beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.”<sup>51</sup> A thought bubble above Davis’s head reads, “I feel like

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<sup>48</sup> icanseecanada. Review of *Garfield: His Nine Lives* by Jim Davis. *Amazon*, October 19, 2015. [https://www.amazon.com/gp/customer-reviews/R2EUSC7HE4Q87G/ref=cm\\_cr\\_dp\\_d\\_rvw\\_ttl?ie=UTF8&ASIN=0345320611](https://www.amazon.com/gp/customer-reviews/R2EUSC7HE4Q87G/ref=cm_cr_dp_d_rvw_ttl?ie=UTF8&ASIN=0345320611)

<sup>49</sup> Davis, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> See Image Eleven.

<sup>51</sup> Genesis 1:1.

creating “Cat” today,” continuing to follow the language used in the Old Testament. The direct allusion to the bible implies that in this instance, Jim Davis is God. In the realm of *Garfield*, if Davis is God, Garfield would be the ultimate creation, as the world is literally named after him.

The first page of this chapter takes place in a lush garden, with ferns airbrushed in an olive green with black overlaid details. It opens with Davis dictating to his writing staff instructions for building “cat.”<sup>52</sup> “Call the staff. Gimme a cat, I want four legs, some fur and some surprises,” says an orange coat clad Davis, to a staff member who replies, “Dogs aren’t going to be happy about this,” intonating that dogs have already been created. The artistic style used in this chapter succeeds in creating a hazy, dreamlike atmosphere, by having airbrushed muted colors underneath black stencils. Fumetti, or word bubbles, are superimposed over the delicate airbrush, cutting through the image. There is no distinct separation of comic panels, with one bleeding into the other. The next directions from Davis, “its eyes should shine in the dark and it should always land on its feet”, are met with replies from his staff saying, “He’s starting to get senile”, and “this sounds like another of those ‘creation of man’ follies”.<sup>53</sup> These directions point to qualities that cats are imparted with, musing that this is a possible example of God and his team imagining life on Earth. As the story continues, it moves to a drawing board that shows a sketch of circa 1988 Garfield.<sup>54</sup> The man drawing Garfield is wearing a galaxy jacket, as Davis was shown with before. Davis asks for cat to have six eyes, but when told that they “only have two eyes left,” he replies, “two eyes... I like that.”<sup>55</sup> As cat gets the last two eyes, this signifies that it is the last creature to be made. The next several panels show the staff creating “cat,” or more specifically Garfield. In this instance, God is creating all cats in Garfield’s image. This

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<sup>52</sup> See Image Twelve.

<sup>53</sup> Davis, p. 4.

<sup>54</sup> See Image Thirteen

<sup>55</sup> Davis, p. 5. See image Fourteen.

explains why, in the context of the beast fable, Garfield is so heavily focused on: he is literally the original cat.

The final product in the story is a giant Garfield head, not yet connected to a body. As the staff members sit around it, they note “how the heavy lids give it an arrogant yet warm expression. Nice work, aesthetics.”<sup>56</sup> Davis announces that “there is one finishing touch...”, and reveals that the cat will be given nine lives. Met with outrage from his staff, we see Davis, or rather, God’s face for the first time. In the last image of chapter one, it is revealed that God himself is a cat, and in response to his staff’s outbursts he replies, “Let’s just say I’m partial to cats, okay?”<sup>57</sup> Garfield’s connection to the supernatural, shown explicitly here, is ample justification for his behavior and ability to cause mischief. Since all cats have the deity connection--because in the built universe that *Garfield* exists in-- God is a cat, their ability to communicate with each other, and affinity for nontraditional catlike behavior is accepted. Suggesting that all cats stemmed from Garfield’s original design supports his qualities that are seen universally in cats, such as enjoying sunbeams, sleeping, and sitting on important documents. If Garfield was created in God’s own image, this also implies that Garfield is a member of the chosen species, furthering his connection to the supernatural. In the Ananse folktales, the spider Ananse is able to function as a teaching vessel as well as a cultural icon because in the stories, he has a direct link to deities and the supernatural. Garfield has this connection as well, as seen in *His Nine Lives*, and it could be the reason that Garfield is able to navigate the human world, as well as becoming a phenomenon.

The graphic novel reveals that God himself is a cat in the first of the nine tails which legitimizes the rest of the stories depicting Garfield's nine lives, as well as sets a tone for the rest

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<sup>56</sup> Davis, p. 8. See Image Fifteen.

<sup>57</sup> Davis, p. 9. See Image Sixteen.

of the stories. If the reader is aware that God is a cat at the beginning, it adds more gravity to the other stories by creating the knowledge that Garfield and other cats are supernatural beings by association. The animated feature, released four years after the graphic novel, saves this crucial piece of information for the last story. Instead of revealing that God is a cat during Genesis, they save the information for the rebirth. The film ends in reincarnation, and the implication of a hero reborn is reminiscent of the life of Jesus Christ. This analogy can be further implicated by the logic that if God is a cat, and Garfield is the first cat created, then Garfield is the immediate son of God. This makes Garfield Christ in this built universe. The last chapter follows the ninth life of a spacesuit clad Garfield on a doomed space mission with only one requirement that he survives. After being attacked, the cat fails his only mission. The graphic novel, which has already shown that God is a cat, resolves the story by having the orange tabby emerging from a video game, and asking two kids in line “uhm, would you guys mind if I played just one more time? I think I just about have it figured out!” Using the video game simulation as a bypass for creating a story with consequential value, the book ends unceremoniously. The only particulars learned from the book’s story is that in the future, Garfield walks on two legs, speaks with human words, and has become the size of a small child. The animated film, which had an alternate ending to the first chapter, also diverges from the graphic novel’s ending to Garfield’s last life proposed in the comic. While the graphic novel defuses a tense situation by saying it was a video game, the animated film shows Garfield dying: the screen goes white with the implication of death. Instead of having the situation turned into an inconsequential tale, Garfield truly is a space cadet, and is legitimately under attack. After his ship is blown up and he is killed, Garfield appears with Odie, his dog companion who was his assistant in space, as black and white line drawings sitting under an interrogation-style spot light. A door opens, and a hazy

figure comes into focus. As they speak, it becomes clear that it is the voice of God, as heard earlier in the animated film. After asking them to state their names, God says that he understands that they had a “rough go” of it in the last life to which Garfield replies that he felt like the last situation was unfair. In a forgiving tone, God replies, “you’re right,” and continues, “you may have your life back. By the way, which life was that?” In a clandestine turn of events, God’s “computers are on the blink,” which normally keep track of which life each cat is on. Garfield replies, “that was my first life, sir.” Tricking God, and cheating death, Garfield is not harming anyone, but is manipulating the situation that he is in and entitling him to nine more lives. God then asks if his canine companion Odie is a cat as well, to which Garfield again responds untruthfully, “yes sir, he is.” With a finger bolt of lightning Davis as God commands, “Then so be it,” striking the two and returning them to color. God pronounces that Garfield and Odie have all nine lives, and sends them away in a haze of light. The film ends with God’s face coming into focus for the first time, and revealing his gleaming green cat eyes. With a final declaration, he states: “we have to stick together, you know.”<sup>58</sup>

Without Garfield’s compiled past in the graphic novel and animated feature *Garfield: His Nine Lives*, the circumstances and context of the cat would have to be gleaned by sparse hints through just the newspaper strip. Nearly every comic strip shows Garfield behaving in a way that is unusual for a traditional cat, and the origin story of tales shown in both the graphic novel and animated film justify this behavior. Garfield’s transhuman qualities are possible because he is made in the direct image of the supernatural. With God being a cat, the lines between the supernatural and the natural worlds become thin for other cats in the context of the comic strips, or modern fables. As Garfield is able to fool a bakery owner by dressing as a child, he is also

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<sup>58</sup> See Image Seventeen.

able to eat foods that would kill a cat in a world where God is not a cat. Davis often cites Garfield's ability to eat extreme amounts of food as "something we all wish we could do"<sup>59</sup>, showing that his supernatural eating skills go beyond the realm of the possible. Garfield is dictated by not only cartoon logic, but by beast fable logic as well. Not only is he seemingly void of aging, but he also acts in mischievous ways that would be impossible for the Earthbound quadrupedal feline. The origin story created by Davis justifies Garfield's demeanor and preferences, and provides him with the ability to navigate different spaces as Ananse does. The beast fable allows anthropomorphized animals to explore these spaces, instead of confining them to what are considered typical animal behaviors within their biological limits. With each tale, realities that characters live in are built, and nuances of personality or world-type are explained. Comics exist as the modern incarnation of the beast fable; fulfilling the almost intrinsically human need to anthropomorphize things in order to manipulate understanding. For this reason, *Garfield* acts as a beast fable with contemporary implications and has the ability to negotiate present truths.

Not only is Garfield's connection to the supernatural responsible for his impish tendencies, they are also to thank for his ability to express emotions in a seemingly complex manor. In a newspaper comic published on November 12, 1981, Garfield and his owner Jon are looking at a sunset together. In this moment, the two are no longer in the categories of "owner" or "pet" but rather two companions enjoying being around one another. This rare tender instance further pushes Garfield into the grey area between animal and human; Davis allows him to express emotions that are beyond what one would expect from a cat. Jon and Garfield look at each other, and Jon expresses that it is nice to be able to share the sunset with Garfield. Jon asks

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<sup>59</sup> Davis, J., & Scott, B. (1988). *Happy Birthday, Garfield!* [Video]. PAWS Incorporated.

if Garfield has something in his eye and in response, Garfield wipes away a tear and say, “Yes, a little speck of sentiment.”<sup>60</sup> The modern comic beast fable works perhaps far less explicitly than those told in Ghana, but they both maneuver with the same techniques of approaching topics of tenderness and pain in a playful manner through their characters. Similar to how director Quentin Tarantino was able to avoid an X rating for the film *Kill Bill* by animating the moment extreme violence, Jim Davis is able to show death in a children’s media format in *Garfield: His Nine Lives*.<sup>61</sup> Through animation and anthropomorphizing, *Garfield* is able to dismantle the consequences that the characters might cause, removing the stakes and allowing humor to be regarded unfettered. As the Christ-like figure, Garfield can exist comfortably in a perpetual grey area: too cat to be a human, too human to be a cat, and too unreal to exist.

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<sup>60</sup> See Image Eighteen.

<sup>61</sup> Not to mention an enormous price tag, the extremely violent origin story of one of the characters would have cost seven figures. Inspired by an Indian film directed by Kamal Haasan from 2001 that was about the life of a serial killer, Tarentino decided to animate some of the more intense violence in order to separate the audience from trauma, rape, and aggravated assault of a minor.



Image One:

Modern fables now take the form of animated series. This is Bojack Horseman from the eponymous show. His character is deplorable and embarrassing, but because he is a horse, it is not as painful to watch him continually ruin the lives of those around him. There are morals in this Netflix animated series, and they are delivered in a more accessible way to humans: through animals. *BoJack* is lauded as one of the most progressive, if depressing, modern shows.

Bob-Waksberg, R. (2014). *Bojack Horseman*. [Illustration] Retrieved from:<https://pixel.nymag.com/imgs/daily/vulture/2015/07/21/21-raphael-bob-waksberg-chatroom-silo.w330.h412.png>



Image Two:

Garfield acts without conscious because his actions have no effect on his life. He is able to cause mischief with his owner Jon receiving all of the consequences. Being a human, Jon is forced to take responsibility for his pet's actions. Impulsive and unbothered, Garfield is the embodiment of the Id, while Jon is the Ego.

Davis, J. (2010, June 25). *Garfield* [Comic] PAWS Inc. Albany, Indiana.  
Retrieved from:<https://garfield.com/comic/2010/06/25>



Image Three:

Garfield's expression of "I can't help it! I'm a slave to my passions!" is an admittance of his Id taking over his Ego and Superego, resulting in impulsive impish behavior that harms those around him. As an animal, there is leniency for selfish behavior, as seen in Jon's response, "...if you didn't do those things you wouldn't be a cat..." which seems to be a foil for the destruction of his personal items.

Davis, J. (1981, January 11). *Garfield*. [Comic] PAWS Inc. Albany, Indiana.



Image Four:

Here, Garfield destroys a plant that Jon had cared for without consideration that it might be an annoying thing to do. His action is forgiven due to his animal-ness, as Jon forgets his anger when he sees how "cute" his mischievous cat is.

Davis, J. (1979, December 30). *Garfield*. [Comic] PAWS Inc. Albany, Indiana.

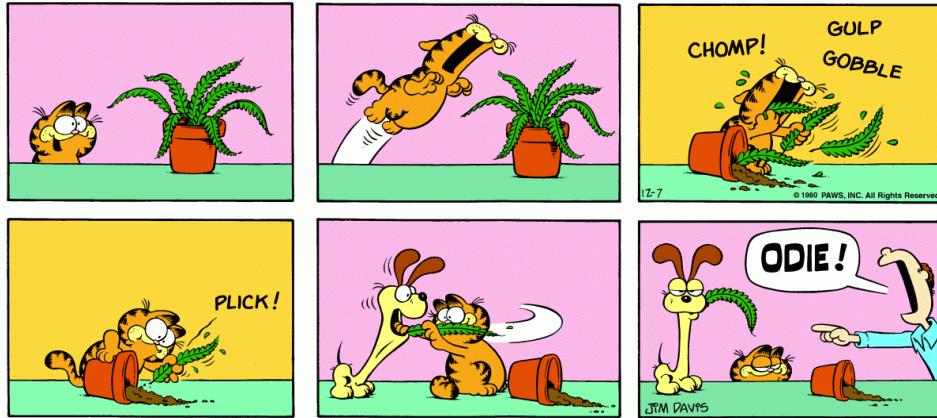


Image Five:

This comic strip shows the incrimination of Odie. Garfield is the one who has committed the action, but by blaming Odie, it is reputation that is tainted. This story is reminiscent of the Ananse folktale that asks the question “Is it better to injured or incriminated?”, to which the story answers, injured. The plant can grow back, but Odie’s reputation is impacted for life.

Davis, J.(1980, December 7). *Garfield*. [Comic] PAWS Inc. Albany, Indiana.

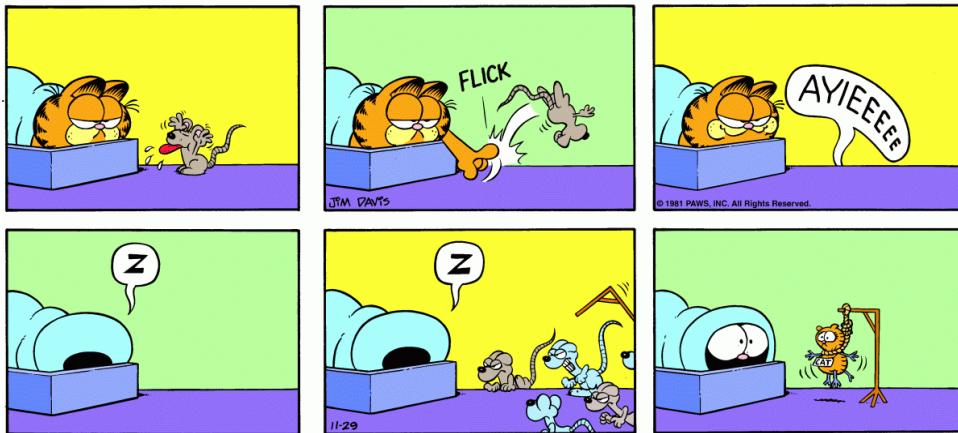


Image Six:

This is an example of a comic strip published before 1988 that shows mice with no thought bubble lines. Rather, the mice communicate with visual means, and with outbursts like “AYIEEEE.” It changes the dynamic of the strip, and reduces the gags to physical ones only.

Davis, J. (1981, November 29). *Garfield*. [Comic] PAWS Inc. Albany, Indiana.



Image Seven:

This strip from 1992 was published after the beginning of the television show *Garfield and Friends*. Perhaps due to the obvious limitations of having a nonverbal character on a television show, the mice have now begun to speak. Their speech changes the dynamic between the characters.

Davis, Jim. (1992, February 20). *Garfield*. [Comic] Albany, Indiana: Paws, Inc.



Image Eight:

Garfield is treated like one of the family by Jon's grandmother. As if he was one of her grandchildren, she takes care of the cat, albeit poorly.

Davis, J. (1982, January 29). *Garfield*. [Comic] PAWS Inc. Albany, Indiana.

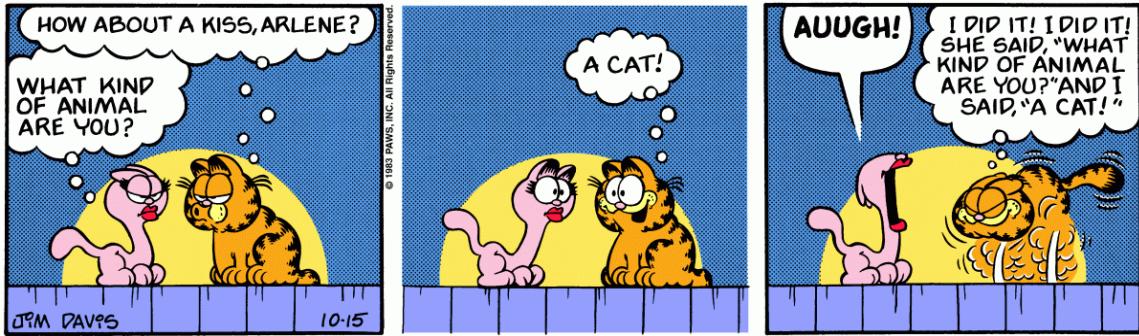


Image Nine:

Arlene using the popular phrase “what kind of animal are you” was intended to imply that Garfield was acting like a brute when he asked for a kiss. In reality, both Arlene and Garfield are cats, making this phrase absurd. In response, Garfield says that he is a cat, because he is. It is almost as if Arlene had forgotten that his phrase applied more than intended.

Davis, J. (1983, October 15) *Garfield*. [Comic] PAWS Inc. Albany, Indiana.



Image Ten:

Garfield’s ability to dawn the clothes of a young boy and then become a boy in the eyes of society is a testament to his existing somewhere between animal and non-animal. His charity, also implies that even though he has moved out of the realm of “cat” he still recognizes that that is where he “came from,” proving that he, at this specific moment, is not being a class traitor.

Davis, J. (1984, December 16). *Garfield*. [Comic] PAWS Inc. Albany, Indiana.

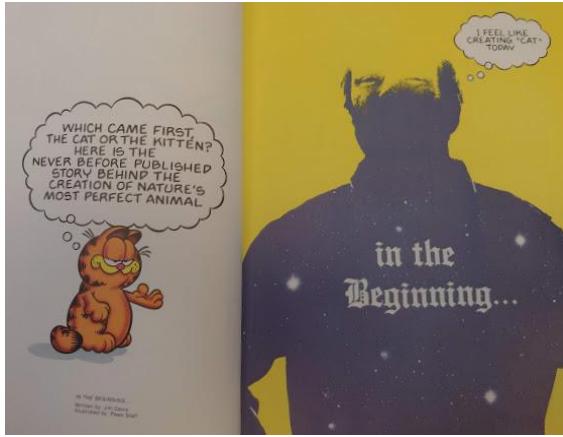


Image Eleven:

The first chapter heading page in the graphic novel *Garfield: His Nine Lives*. On the right is Garfield is acting as the narrator, preparing the reader for the upcoming story. The left shows Davis as an ethereal being.

Davis, J. (1984) *Garfield: His 9 Lives*. [Print] Ballantine Books. pp. 5



Image Twelve:

The first page of Chapter One, showing Davis presenting the idea of “cat” to his staff. The drawing style is vastly different than the comic strip, utilizing airbrush and layers of color.

Davis, J. (1984) *Garfield: His 9 Lives*. [Print] Ballantine Books. pp. 6



Image Thirteen:

This is the evolution of Garfield the cat. His features have changed in order to make him more mobile, and more legible from smaller sizes as newspapers shrink. His eyes have gotten larger, and his feet have become more human. His mouth has become more expressive, and his eyelids heavier. His body has become less round in order to fit more characters in the frame next to him.

*Evolution of Garfield.* (n.d.) [Online Image] Retrieved from:

<https://thegonzochimera.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/garfield.png?w=60>



Image Fourteen:

The second page of the first chapter showing the construction of Garfield. This gag shows God requesting six eyes for 'cat' but being told that they only have two eyes left.

Davis, J. (1984) *Garfield: His 9 Lives*. [Print] Ballantine Books. pp. 7



Image Fifteen:

A section of the first chapter of *Garfield's Nine Lives*. Here the team assess the figure of “cat” that they have created, commenting on the aesthetics, and discussing the logistics. The art style is more muted and hazier than a typical strip, giving the sections a heavenly appearance.

Davis, J. (1984) *Garfield: His 9 Lives*. [Print] Ballantine Books. pp. 7

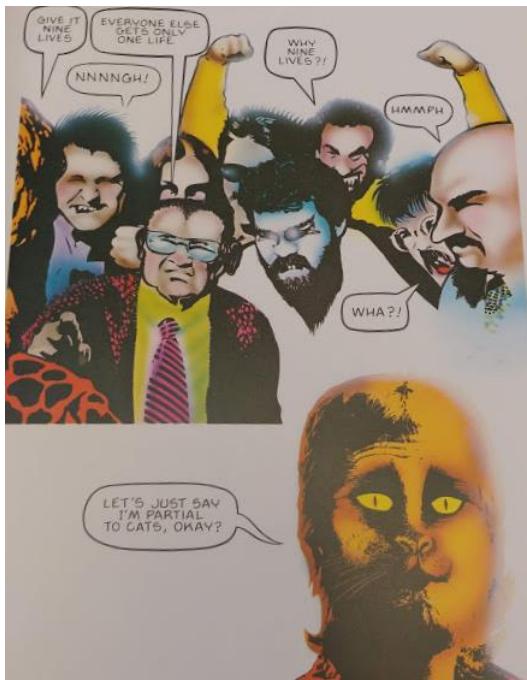


Image Sixteen:

The final page of the first chapter reveals that Jim Davis, or “God” is a cat.

Davis, J. (1984) *Garfield: His 9 Lives*. [Print] Ballantine Books. pp. 5



Image Seventeen:

A film still from *Garfield: His Nine Lives* revealing that God is a cat. This is the last image of the animated feature before the credits.

Roman, P. (Director) *Garfield: His 9 Lives*. (1988). [Film] Film Roman Productions.



Image Eighteen:

This comic strip was published in newspapers the day that *Garfield: His Nine Lives* was released. A far more playful tone, this strip shows Garfield noticing that it is better to be called by one's name than to be called an insult.

Davis, J. (1988, November 22). *Garfield*. PAWS Inc. Albany, Indiana.



Bonus Image:

This strip shows Garfield's disconnect from being a cat, as he cannot even speak the language.

Davis, J. (2008, March 17) *Garfield*. Albany, Indiana. PAWS Inc.

## Chapter Two

Fat Cats and the Leisure Class:  
Garfield's Guide to Thriving in Late Stage Capitalism



Strictly speaking, the humans of the age of affluence are surrounded not so much by other human beings, as they were in all previous ages, but by objects.

Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*

1970

As the paradox that is Capitalist Democracy rushes forward, the effects are heightened by the extreme amount of cash flow pulsing through society. These effects are both blaringly apparent and hidden due to their abundance. One example of these reverberations is the newspaper comic strip *Garfield*. Grossing over 800 million dollars since inception in 1978, Jim Davis's creation has become the most widely syndicated comic strip ever.<sup>62</sup> Invented as a merchandisable experiment, the cartoon cat reached these monstrous proportions from humble beginnings in Indiana due to the seemingly unstoppable force of American Capitalism. The unchecked nature of both capitalism and production are the driving forces behind Davis's yearly salary of over thirty million dollars, starting in 1984, a salary matched by the CEOs of PepsiCo and AT&T.<sup>63</sup> The empire that *Garfield* and its licensing firm, PAWS Incorporated, have created is staggering to say the least, but is ultimately a representation of the economic system in the United States. The unmatched growth is possible due to the nature of the content Davis included in the newspaper comic, as well as Davis's relinquishing of control over *Garfield* to allow for a litany of merchandising and franchising.

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<sup>62</sup> Alves, G. (2019). "Garfield turns 40: Lazy, grouchy cat is worth \$800 mn, and founder Jim Davis loves it!". Retrieved 29 October 2019, from <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/garfield-turns-40-lazy-grouchy-cat-is-worth-800-mn-and-founder-jim-davis-loves-it/articleshow/64691183.cms>

<sup>63</sup> Zoom Company Information. (November 2019). Paws , Incorporated. Retrieved from <https://advanced-lexis-com.ezprox.bard.edu/api/document?collection=company-financial&id=urn:contentItem:5PYD-RNP0-D12Y-W36M-00000-00&context=1516831>.

Highest-Paid CEOs | AFL-CIO. (2018). Retrieved 4 December 2019, from <https://aflcio.org/paywatch/highest-paid-ceos>

The same system that has allowed *Garfield* to reach these dizzying monetary heights is also responsible for the wage slavery, and uneven growth in the class system of the United States. The United States has an impassioned relationship with the personal ownership of property and capital, and fiercely defends the way that both are owned.<sup>64</sup> A country founded on the enslavement of other humans, the United States was not “born into Bourgeoisie”, as some regionalist European scholars postulated, but rather was born on the backs of workers, and enslaved persons.<sup>65</sup> While plantation owners grew their personal wealth, the African people who were creating the products being sold were forced to work against their will and remained in involuntary poverty. The rarely often kept promise of enslaved people being able to buy their freedom is perhaps the beginning of the American hope for class mobility. Each worker in the United States is seemingly promised an opportunity to become independent and rise “out” of his or her class, rather than rise “with” it.<sup>66</sup> Even during times of great recession like the Great Depression, or the housing recession in 2008, there were no rallying cries of class solidarity; instead, the intentions remained to attempt the pursuit of personal gain. Monetary inequality has made it possible for Jim Davis to make millions of dollars, while those who print and distribute newspapers, or produce *Garfield* merchandise do not.

The false promises of upward mobility, and extreme individualism are socio-political effects, just as *Garfield* is a media and cultural effect. Affluence has been the greatest promise of

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<sup>64</sup> Bhaskar, S. *End Private Property, Not Kenny Loggins*. (2016, February 13). Retrieved August 2, 2019, from <https://jacobinmag.com/2016/02/socialism-marxism-private-property-person-lennon-imagine-kenny-loggins>.

*B.3 Why are anarchists against private property? / Anarchist Writers*. (2008). Retrieved August 2, 2019, from <https://anarchism.pageabode.com/afaq/secB3.html>.

<sup>65</sup> Werner Sombart, a social commentator, and later Nazi sympathizer, wrote in his 1906 piece *Why is there no Socialism in the United States?* a number of inaccurate claims about the class system in the United States, that are somewhat popular among Alt-Right bloggers and capitalist sympathizers.

<sup>66</sup> Lekachman, R. (1986). *Capitalism for beginners* (pp. 10-11). London: Writers & Readers.

American Capitalism and in some cases, like Jim Davis's, it delivered. This is the driving force behind the average worker in the United States wanting to become a business person and reject the reform of the capitalist system. The atmosphere promoting unwavering individualism and personal mobility makes a collective working-class attitude nearly impossible. The long-term effects of unchecked capitalism manifested themselves in obvious ways like using lead in gasoline, a cheaper way to make gasoline that still performed, and the creation of billionaires, the first emerging in 1916.<sup>67</sup> As Ernst Mandel surmises in his book *Late Capitalism*, there is no intervention, whether that be private or public, that can neutralize or cancel the “motion of capitalism.”<sup>68</sup> The laws of motion, or development trends, as postulated by Karl Marx, are an extremely coherent foreshadowing of how capitalism would function, develop and transform the world. The laws of motion of the capitalist mode of production, as summarized by Mandel, that are most relevant to *Garfield*'s ascension are the compulsion of the capitalist to accumulate, the centralization of capital, and the expansion of the “organic composition of capital.”<sup>69</sup> For

<sup>67</sup> Leaded gasoline, a cheaper way to make gasoline, had extremely grizzly after effects. Towns that provided mostly leaded gas showed an increase in domestic abuse cases, crime, and number of serial killers, and after its removal, a steady decrease in crime and violent activities. Lead causes extreme birth defects and brain damage, harming parts of the brain that regulate aggression control, impulse control, emotional regulation, mental flexibility, and IQ. The Capitalist desire to provide cheaper and more products to the masses resulted in a dramatic increase in crime and murders. Citizens of Flint, Michigan have also been exposed to lead and other toxic agents through their drinking water, which is now delivered to the people through pipes that were deemed as unsafe to use for the manufacturing of cars, due to the harm it caused the metals. GM paid the Flint government to switch the pipes used to deliver previously clean water to the citizens to aging pipes that were ruining production of their vehicles. Products were placed over human life. The damage done to the people of Flint has been measured in a decrease in IQ, an increase in mental and physical deformities, and an increase in crime rates.

Doleac, J. (2017). New evidence that lead exposure increases crime.  
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2017/06/01/new-evidence-that-lead-exposure-increases-crime/>

Drum, K. (2013). Sick Kids Are Just the Beginning of America's Lead Crisis.  
<https://www.motherjones.com/environment/2016/02/lead-exposure-gasoline-crime-increase-children-health/>

<sup>68</sup> Marx, K. (1893) 1967. *Capital*. Vol. 2. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

<sup>69</sup> Mandel, E. (1990). Karl Marx. *Marxian Economics*, [online] pp.1-38. Available at:  
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/mandel/19xx/marx/> [Accessed 23 Oct. 2019].

example, the capital made by *Garfield* in the merchandise sector and the expansion of the newspaper strip is no accident, and perhaps by using the production laws of motion as a framework, this will become apparent. Although this is not explicit to *Garfield*, it is an example of how individuals are able to acquire intense wealth through abusing the means of production.

The first of these laws of motion is related to an assumption that PAWS Incorporated made about the public: that its desire to consume would go beyond its basic needs. The groundworks that made it possible for *Garfield* products to be produced were laid when Jim Davis founded PAWS Inc. in 1981. He did something unprecedented when, instead of waiting to be made an offer, Davis made the conscious decision to license *Garfield* himself. The move to create a parent company to hold all creative licensing was unseen before in the realm of cartoonists.<sup>70</sup> Most licensing is done by hired companies, and they take a percentage of revenue from the products that are sold. Typically, cartoonists even own little to none of the rights over their character's image; instead, these are owned by outside syndication corporations. King Features Syndicate, one of the first newspaper comic syndicate companies, owns the rights to nearly every major comic strip including Popeye, Mickey Mouse, and Blondie.<sup>71</sup> With this, they can sell any products they like and can continue publishing comic strips long after their creator is dead; the syndication company owns the name, characters, and likenesses.<sup>72</sup> These decisions remained "in-house" for *Garfield* because PAWS Inc--with Davis at the helm--was the sole

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<sup>70</sup>"JIM DAVIS, CREATOR OF GARFIELD THE CAT ASSUMES WORLDWIDE OWNERSHIP OF GARFIELD LICENSING AND PROMOTION." (April 6, 1994, Wednesday).*PR Newswire*. Retrieved from <https://advance-lexis-com.ezprox.bard.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:3SJJ-1VN0-007J-71GP-00000-00&context=1516831>.

<sup>71</sup> Comic Strips & Panels | King Features Syndicate. (2019). Retrieved 4 December 2019, from <http://kingfeatures.com/comics/comics-a-z/>

<sup>72</sup> Comic strips written and published after the death of the cartoonist are professionally known as "legacy strips", but colloquially are called "zombie strips". Schwartz, B. (2003). "Hearst, Herriman, and the Death of Nonsense." Printed in Krazy & Ignatz 1929–1930: "A Mice, A Brick, A Lovely Night.

owner of all copyrights and trademarks for the Garfield property.<sup>73</sup> Davis, who bought back all of the shares of PAWS Inc. from a syndicate in 1994, stated in an interview: “the only way to guarantee myself long term security was to do this”.<sup>74</sup> Davis owns more of his own cartoon strip than almost any other cartoonist, a feat that has kept Davis both rich and reputable. Ownership rights are what has enabled the creation of merchandising and the production of goods that the public will buy. Unlike other cartoon characters whose product placement is out of their creator's control, *Garfield* merchandise was tailored to its reader audience, as Davis was the person with the final say.

The image of the orange tabby cat Garfield and his co-characters has been affixed to every imaginable consumable good, with almost all of the profits returning to PAWS Inc. Some of these goods-- one could argue--are practical, such as toothbrushes, paperclips, and alarm clocks, while others are indulgent and unnecessary like figurines, stuffed animals, and posters. These items were created with the assumption that readers of *Garfield* comics would compulsively consume items that were not needed, because they had the image of *Garfield* on them. Being connected by a recognizable image, the goods that have Garfield's face on them become associated with each other. This association leads to the possibility of a collection, perhaps one that reminds the collector of reading the Sunday newspaper with their family, or other pleasant memories associated with the cartoon character. With the passage of time, objects have meaning further imposed onto them, like irony, nostalgia, kitsch, and cash, but at the time

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<sup>73</sup> As of August 2019, Davis sold PAWS Inc. to VIACOM, the media conglomerate. They now own all of the licensing rights except for the comic strip itself, which Davis still owns, and the movies, which belong to the 21st Century Fox, who has since been bought by the Walt Disney Company.

Mullin, B. (2019). “Viacom, Hungry for Hits, Gobbles Up Garfield.” Retrieved 25 October 2019, from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/viacom-hungry-for-hits-gobbles-up-garfield-11565107200>

<sup>74</sup> La Franco, R., & Hayes, J. R. (1994). “The Doggone Cat is Mine.” *Forbes*, 153(12), 120. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=buh&AN=9406077654&site=eds-live&scope=site>

when *Garfield* products were first released, it can be assumed that these meanings were not affecting the collectors. Jean Baudrillard states in his text *The Consumer Society*, “no longer a sequence of mere objects, but a chain of signifiers, in so far as all of these signify one another reciprocally as part of a more complex super-object, drawing the consumer into a series of more complex motivations.”<sup>75</sup> By owning several objects such as a mug and a rug with the *Garfield* brand, the consumer is now communicating their connection to the comic strip and is more inclined to buy items that will continue communicating this. Before objects entered the home, *Garfield* was brought in through daily delivered newspapers. Clipped segments from newspapers were put together into collections, and this seemed like a logical introduction to the inclination to collect other items that were signifiers of *Garfield*. One such collection was personally purchased on eBay.com for three dollars to provide insight into what kinds of *Garfield* comic strips might have been kept. This particular collection included every *Garfield* comic strip that was published between 1978 and 1986. The collector meticulously clipped daily *Garfield* strips and gingerly glued them into a bound scrapbook. Each comic strip was cut out of the newspaper to include the *Garfield* heading, a step that takes extra time.<sup>76</sup> This collection is not unique, as there are numerous of these available online, but for the collector, this would have been a precious object. Taking years of dedication, the collector complied strips that only ran for one day on one particular year, meaning that every strip has a direct link to what this person was doing on that day. For nearly ten years, an individual had a dedication to *Garfield* comics that manifested in the desire to preserve what they might have feared to be lost. Indeed, the collector may have seen themselves as preserving history, for fear that *Garfield* would disappear. There are comic strips

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<sup>75</sup>Baudrillard, J. (1998). *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (p. 27). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

<sup>76</sup> See Image Set One.

from every day that a black and white daily strip was published-- an almost baffling amount of care and patience is expressed through the collection that spans two scrapbooks.

“Branding” comes from a collection of objects, not only one object. The brand of *Garfield* began with the comic strip, which sold a banal lifestyle, and entered people’s homes through delivered-to-the-door media: newspapers. Immediately after the newspaper comic was published in 1978, a litany of products was released. Most *Garfield* collectibles were made in 1978 and 1979, allowing the *Garfield* brand to be seen outside of the home in stores. This marketing technique was first seen during the opening of the first *Star Wars* movie in 1977.<sup>77</sup> *Star Wars* products and merchandise were made before there was a market for them; figurines flooded the marketplace in a way that no other media had done before, creating the brand of *Star Wars* immediately. The effect of consuming the media and then having a constant physical reminder slingshot *Star Wars* and *Garfield* into the collective consciousness in a way that would not have been possible without physical totems. The promotional merchandise released had a dual purpose: to ingrain Garfield’s image into the collective conscious, and to make money. The more products that exist that are produced by PAWS Inc., there is a greater chance of creating a collector’s market.

A collection has meanings that are totally separate from an individual object, and the motivations that draw consumers into buying objects to be part of a collection are different as well. A consumer is more likely to buy an item if it will interact with other objects already owned. Baudrillard gives the example of a washer and a dryer, showing that a consumer is more likely to buy the pair when buying one appliance.<sup>78</sup> Items that interact with each other, either

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<sup>77</sup> Whitbrook, J. (2015). “The Groundbreaking History of Star Wars Toys.” Retrieved 30 October 2019, from <https://io9.gizmodo.com/the-groundbreaking-history-of-star-wars-toys-1706298670>

<sup>78</sup> Baudrillard J. *The Consumer Society*, p, 28.

visually, or functionally, have a combined importance that is more so than an individual object. Like art being curated in a museum, objects either gain, or lose visual information when placed around other objects. PAWS Inc. relies on the resilience of the collector's mentality-- the impulse to purchase items that fit into a category of desire. Garfield's place in the collective consciousness has been cemented by the decision to flood the market with goods and merchandise, creating the possibility to align one's lifestyle with images of the giant orange tabby cat. These products have given Garfield the opportunity to make newspaper comic culture tangible, solidifying his place within the ritual of possession. Consumers spend a great deal of time "personalizing" their possessions, allowing the things they own to serve as an occasion for reflection and discussion.<sup>79</sup> In terms of products with Garfield's face on them, the meaning of the object is transferred to the consumer from the advertising and marketing companies, forcing something like a suitcase to have meaning beyond its practical purpose.<sup>80</sup> Owning objects with Garfield on them allows individuals to take a mass produced item and impart memories and emotions onto it, through recognition of their connection with reading newspaper comics.

Still a favorite among families and newspaper readers, the comic strips may have changed format but they have not changed in popularity. In order to profit from the comic's popularity, a particular marketing strategy was created and implemented--focusing on creating a collectible, embodiment of a culture whose lasting presence is otherwise confined to newspaper clippings and memory. The first instance of a newspaper comic strip character being marketed

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<sup>79</sup> McCracken, Grant. 1986. "Culture and Consumption: A Theoretical Account of the Structure and Movement of the Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods". *Journal of Consumer Research* 13 (1): 79. Oxford University Press (OUP). doi:10.1086/209048.

<sup>80</sup> See Image Two.

was the *Yellow Kid*, the first recurring comic character.<sup>81</sup> His face covered cigarette boxes, wafer tins, soap, and buttons, making everyday items collectible.<sup>82</sup> Using the “yellow kid’s” star power, companies were able to sell products at a higher price because of his involvement.<sup>83</sup> Owning a product with his face on it made the household product suddenly more valuable in both an aesthetic sense and in potential resale value. Since the “yellow kid,” almost every newspaper comic strip character’s face can be found in a variety of places outside of the newspaper print pages. With countless licensed products, and comic characters lending themselves to television and movies, comic strips have evolved into an enormous cash-grab after the concept was proven in the 1890s. The characters are no longer limited to visiting readers houses when the mail is delivered, but can infiltrate a household on cereal boxes, school supplies, and clothing. Characters like Snoopy from Peanuts, and Dennis the Menace have made millions for their creators and investors.<sup>84</sup> The marketing around comics has become an art form in itself, transforming intellectual property into profit.

Commercial artists are not only creative-types, but also business people. Linked to their audience-turned-consumers by the network of selling goods, commercial artists have to think about the marketability of their art, as well as strategies to put their art onto the market. In order to do this practically, the commercial artist, or entrepreneur, brings what is called a “firm” into existence. The firm--in this case PAWS Inc.--is in charge of producing sales, and maximizing

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<sup>81</sup> First introduced in 1895 in the newspaper comic *Hogan's Alley*, created by Richard Outcault, the “yellow kid” was a recurring character, clad in a yellow smock that had various slogans printed on it. *Hogan's Alley* was, in the United States, the first comic strip.

<sup>82</sup> See Image Three.

<sup>83</sup> See Image Four.

<sup>84</sup> Peanuts Worldwide LLC in charge of all specific Peanuts branding has recorded a 36-million-dollar revenue. "PEANUTS Worldwide LLC." *Zoom Company Information*, April 2019, <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=company-financial&id=urn:contentItem:5PYD-R900-DJ0X-R54D-00000-00&context=1516831>. Accessed April 28, 2019.

profit.<sup>85</sup> With the creation of a firm, the entrepreneur--Jim Davis-- does not have to do anything beyond making decisions; all routine work is performed by the firm. The overall job of the firm is to make money, and figure out how best to do this. Within this, one of the most important aspects to consider is how to keep the capital that is made “central,” or in the pockets of those at the top of the firm. In the recent sale of PAWS Inc. to the largest media company in the world, Viacom in August of 2019, the capital made by *Garfield* merchandise became even more centralized, or shifted towards an even smaller number of people who profit from sales.<sup>86</sup> The sale of PAWS Inc. is indicative of the centralization of capital, as none of the profits from the sale will benefit any of the laborers who produced the merchandise, but rather the heads of the firm. PAWS Inc. was purchased for an undisclosed amount, but speculations have been made that it will be significantly more than the 175 million dollars that an eighty percent share of *Peanuts* sold for in 2015.<sup>87</sup> Centralization of capital is, in fewer terms, the process of monopolization. There will be no competition for profits if all media is owned by the same company, making the quality of work that is created unconnected to its worth.

Davis created what has proved to be the perfect marketable character, but only after several attempts. For nearly five years, Davis had tried to market a comic strip about a bug, but was repeatedly turned down. He was passionate about his strip *Gnorm Gnat*, but was told that it would never sell due to the fact that “no one can relate to bugs.”<sup>88</sup> After, Davis printed a strip

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<sup>85</sup> Watson, D., & Holman, M. (1977). *Price Theory and Its Uses* (4th ed., pp. 140-172). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

<sup>86</sup> “Putting Viacom's Purchase of Garfield in Context - Licensing International.” (2019). Retrieved 29 October 2019, from <https://licensinginternational.org/news/putting-viacoms-purchase-of-garfield-in-context/>

<sup>87</sup> Steinberg, B. (2019). “Viacom Acquires Comic-Strip Cat Garfield.” Retrieved 29 October 2019, from <https://variety.com/2019/tv/news/garfield-nickelodeon-licensing-rights-viacom-1203293468/>

<sup>88</sup> Wonning, P. (2016). *A Year of Indiana History - Book 1: 366 Indiana History Stories*. 2nd ed. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, pp.291-293.

called *Jon*, focused on Garfield's owner Jon Arbuckle. The strip ran for about two years before Davis was advised that people would be more inclined to read a comic strip about animals.<sup>89</sup> In 1978, Davis ultimately hit a proverbial, and literal, goldmine with *Garfield*. He refused to align the comic strip with any political parties, world issues, or particular causes. The subject matter that Davis focused on was a key factor in being able to sell products to his wide audience; in order to ensure the marketability of *Garfield*, Davis intentionally made the cat nearly universal.

In an interview in 2014, Davis noted that:

Thematically, [Garfield] deals with things that everyone can identify with. I purposely avoided socio-political comment simply because not everybody can identify with it, in other cultures as well. And if it was so timely, 30 years from now, people wouldn't understand it, either ... It's more important to have a body of work resonate with the reader than it is to have an individual gag [resonate].<sup>90</sup>

The concept of the humor being universal became increasingly important when Garfield's face began appearing all over the world. His personality, as defined by Davis in an interview, consists of being “lazy, overweight and grouchy. How can you not love that?”<sup>91</sup> Perhaps the “that” Davis refers to in the quote: “how could you not love that” is Garfield’s ability to be so affluent that he is able to be unpleasant and uninvolved. Garfield, at his core, is an apolitical cat. He can behave this way because he exists in a class that is untouched by the political climate: the leisure class.

Sociologist Thorstein Veblen defined the leisure class as being “exempt from industrial employment” and “not participating in productive labor.”<sup>92</sup> For the anthropomorphized cat to be exempt from mousing, and any other traditional work that a cat would do, it means that he does

<sup>89</sup> See Chapter One for more details.

<sup>90</sup> Maloney, D. *Jim Davis on Garfield's Influence in the Age of the Internet Cat / WIRED*. (2014, November 4). Retrieved December 1, 2019, from <https://www.wired.com/2014/11/garfield-internet-cats/>.

<sup>91</sup> Alves, G. (2019). Garfield turns 40: Lazy, grouchy cat is worth \$800 mn, and founder Jim Davis loves it! Retrieved 29 October 2019, from <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/garfield-turns-40-lazy-grouchy-cat-is-worth-800-mn-and-founder-jim-davis-loves-it/articleshow/64691183.cms>

<sup>92</sup> Veblen, T. (1899). *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1st ed., pp. 3 & 20). New York City: Random House.

no work--nothing to better the household, or community in which he lives in. Garfield has “the characteristic feature of leisure-class life,” as Veblen refers to it, which is “a conspicuous exemption from all useful employment.”<sup>93</sup>

Shown in Image Five, Garfield is consciously aware that he does not have to do the labor that other cats around him do--referring to them as “cats with bad breath,” taking a dig at those forced to remain in the working class.<sup>94</sup> Garfield’s refusal to admit that he participates in productive labour immediately allows him to place himself above those who do, implying that, “labour would inevitably become dishonourable, as being an evidence indecorous under the ancient tradition handed down from an earlier cultural stage.”<sup>95</sup> Instead of being “subject to a master,” Garfield has become the master, forcing Jon to exist under him.<sup>96</sup> Being or working under someone is a sign of weakness and a “mark of inferiority” for the leisure class, as stated by Veblen, and Garfield refuses to belong to anyone.<sup>97</sup> The cat’s lazy behavior is perhaps the attitude that many working-class readers wished they were able to have, as the capitalist system in the United States works to make labor seem undignified. Garfield’s character appeals to the individual who wishes they were separated from the labor force, those who may be without a choice of when they work or not. A comic strip published by Davis on May 28, 1979 embodies the lifestyle that those who are “wage slaves”, a term that refers to a person whose existence relies on a paycheck, can only dream of.<sup>98</sup> It shows Garfield saying the antithetical to his famous “I Hate Mondays” phrase: “Oh, goody. It’s Monday morning; I love Monday mornings.” Garfield goes on to explain that he loves Monday mornings, “because **I** don’t have to go to

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<sup>93</sup> Veblen, pp. 40.

<sup>94</sup> See Image Five.

<sup>95</sup> Veblen, p. 20.

<sup>96</sup> Veblen, p. 48.

<sup>97</sup> Veblen, p. 20.

<sup>98</sup> See Image Six.

work.” The dream of many hardworking Americans is to one day be able to retire, and do as Garfield does: not have to go to work. The sentiment is individualistic, narcissistic, and unconscionable, allowing Garfield to only be concerned with his own agenda.

The attitude of laziness and individualism that is depicted in the *Garfield* comics is perhaps what the average person in the United States hopes for once the “American Dream” is achieved.<sup>99</sup> Part of the American dream is to live without conflict or chaos, and this is something that *Garfield* shows in spades. The banality of most of the comic strips appeal to the masses because they portray a life without outside stressors, only domestic ones. Epitomized by this comic strip published on August 13, 2012, the world of *Garfield* is untouched by world issues.<sup>100</sup> The strip shows the cantankerous cat asking himself, “I wonder what’s going on in the world,” to which he responds, “you can tell I’m kidding, right?”, a response that is only available if one is truly untouched by world issues. Here, Garfield is expressing an attitude that so many whose lives are altered by what happens in the world wish they could. As an elite member of socio-economic standing, Garfield is able to remain untouched by catastrophe.

Perhaps, the world in which *Garfield* exists is not subject to the passage of time, as the strip seems to stay eternally in the 80s. Garfield’s owner never ages, perhaps indicating that since inception, Garfield’s universe has remained in a time bubble. This would be comforting for those who read Garfield as children, and had since grown up--allowing them to remain children while reading *Garfield*. The concept of being able to be banal is approached by Baudrillard, as he discusses why the mundane is sometimes so appealing:

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<sup>99</sup> Here, the “American Dream” refers to the nationalist idea that hard work will be rewarded with monetary success, and the promise of one day being able to “retire”, or have enough capital to no longer have to work. With this comes freedom of opportunity, as well as an upward social mobility for the family and children.

<sup>100</sup> See Image Seven.

For millions of people .... passivity has to be rendered guiltless. And this is where spectacular dramatization by the mass media comes in (the accident/ catastrophe report as a generalized category of all messages): in order for this contradiction between puritanical and hedonistic morality to be resolved, this tranquillity of the private sphere has to appear as a value preserved only with great difficulty, constantly under threat and beset by the dangers of a catastrophic destiny .... Fatality is thus evoked and signified on all sides, so that banality may revel in it and find favour.<sup>101</sup>

*Garfield* remains a non “accident/ catastrophe report,” as Baudrillard defines them, making the comic strip part of the “tranquility of the private sphere,” and allowing banality to remain unharmed. No wars are ever discussed in the strips, and no political sides are taken, making the realm of *Garfield* exists in a space where the banal is untainted by unrest. For this reason, mugs for both political sides are able to be made--as anyone could relate to the orange cat regardless of political affiliations.<sup>102</sup> Showing a private life that is unbothered by outside influences is what makes *Garfield* such a marketable and profitable brand. Davis is strictly aware of this, and knows that his comic strip must be universal:

It's a conscious effort to include everyone as readers. If you were to mention the football strike, you're going to be excluding everyone else in the world that doesn't watch pro football. Garfield is an international character. Therefore, I don't even use seasons. The only holiday I recognize is Christmas. I don't use rhyming gags, plays on words, colloquialisms, in an effort to make Garfield apply to virtually any society where he may appear. In an effort to keep the gags broad, the humor general and applicable to everyone, I deal mainly with eating and sleeping. That applies to everyone, anywhere.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>Baudrillard, J. (1998). *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (p. 36). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

<sup>102</sup>See Image Eight.

<sup>103</sup>Shapiro, W. (1982, December 12). LIVES: “The Cat That Rots the Intellect”. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1982/12/12/lives-the-cat-that-rots-the-intellect/d6ed28c6-bee3-41ad-81f2-1839b34b87b1/>

The aim of *Garfield* is to be as marketable, and as benign as possible. Davis intentionally leaves out anything that could be isolating, or untranslatable. Intentionally keeping the setting of *Garfield* bare, there are as few words as possible, relying on the images and emotions shown on these images faces. Davis has streamlined the process, noting that “long after they’ve forgotten the art work or the particular punch line, they remember the character.”<sup>104</sup>

Dictated by profit margin, *Garfield* would not be profitable without exploitation of labor. Perhaps the most ubiquitous of Marx’s laws of production is the expansion of “organic composition of capital.”<sup>105</sup> Every business that values profit over the happiness and safety of laborers indulges in supporting organic composition. Marx postulates that there will be an increase in labor that “adds no value to the product,” or labor that will not increase the amount that needs to be charged for the goods.<sup>106</sup> The relationship defined in the terms “organic composition” are constant and variable capital; constant being raw materials, buildings, and machinery, while variable describes the wages needed to pay productive workers. The constant capital is expected, but the variable capital is arguable, capable of decreasing or increasing depending on choices made by the firm. The workers producing goods are then exploited as the firm tries to decrease the amount of variable capital needed to produce items. In order to make capital, the seller of the goods always has to charge the consumer more for products than the wage that was paid to the producer. Known as a “profit margin,” the operator calculates how much they will make by dividing operation and labor costs by the net sales. Every company focused on capital gain in today’s economy is practicing organic composition of capital, exploiting the worker in order to have more affordable production for the larger company. As

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<sup>104</sup> Shapiro, W (1982)

<sup>105</sup> Marx, Karl. *Capital* Vol. 1 Chapter XXV-XXVIII. pp. 671-848.

<sup>106</sup> Marx, K. *Capital* Vol. 1 p. 113.

Marx states, “With the increase of capital, the difference between the capital employed and the capital consumed increases.”<sup>107</sup> More precisely, the less money that is spent on labor turns into profits for the larger parent company, and in this case, for PAWS Inc.

Bill Watterson, creator of *Calvin and Hobbes*, is an avid defender of the rights of his comic, but his characters are owned by a syndication firm because he could not afford to keep it in house.<sup>108</sup> Watterson is a victim of forced syndication representation in a way that Davis has not had to be. This is because Davis placed business and art on the same level, while Watterson did not. Davis has played a different game from many cartoonists, as he understood that he was creating a business, rather than a purely artistic endeavor. Watterson noted in an article titled *The Cheapening of the Comics* that:

Sacrificing ownership has serious consequences for the artist. For starters, it allows the syndicate to view the creator as a replaceable part. To most syndicates, the creator of a popular strip is no more valuable than a hired flunky who can mimic the original. Some syndicates can replace a cartoonist at will, and most syndicates can replace a cartoonist as soon as he quits, retires, or dies. This attitude is simply unconscionable, but it's the standard practice of business.<sup>109</sup>

Turning commercial art into profit, the business surrounding comics does not benefit the cartoonist. In fact, the above quote from Watterson touches on the complete loss of protection of intellectual property that cartoonists can experience if they outsource their comic art. The rights to the characters and art no longer belong to the artist, and the direction or marketing of the strip is totally out of their hands. The threat of losing the rights to one’s creative property only exists because of the pressure from capitalism. Artists are only seen as valuable if their work is making

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<sup>107</sup> Marx, K. *Capital Volume 1* p. 666

<sup>108</sup> Christie, A. (1987). Bill Watterson Interview:: Honk Magazine 1987. Retrieved 4 December 2019, from <https://web.archive.org/web/20110607004149/http://ignatz.brinkster.net/chonk.html>

<sup>109</sup> Watterson, B. (1989) *The Cheapening of the Comics*. Witty World Publications.

a profit, and even then, they can still be replaced at the will of the syndicate company. Creators like Davis should not be lauded for their business skills, and instead Bill Watterson should be praised for his devotion to the artist practice. However, the United States system does not honor artistic labor, or even labor at all. Late capitalism has made it so that only those who have a grasp on business as well as their craft can become financially successful. That being said, Watterson by no means lives in poverty, but his profits never seemed to be his biggest motivation.

Watterson famously refused to merchandise his characters, and rejected any proposals to put their images on mugs, hats, or other souvenir goods.<sup>110</sup> While Davis jumped at the opportunity to put Garfield's face on anything imaginable in order to both be seen by the public and to make a profit, Watterson protected his creations as they were his works of art. He rigorously forbade what he called the "cheapening" of his comics, and insisted that the art would be able to sell itself,<sup>111</sup>

[L]icensing is inconsistent with what I'm trying to do with *Calvin and Hobbes*... [it] isn't a gag strip... The humor is situational, and often episodic. It relies on conversation, and the development of personalities and relationships... To explore character, you need lots of time and space. Note pads and coffee mugs just aren't appropriate vehicles for what I'm trying to do here. I'm not interested in removing all the subtlety from my work to condense it for a product... I have no aversion to obscene wealth, but that's not my motivation either. I think to license *Calvin and Hobbes* would ruin the most precious qualities of my strip and, once that happens, you can't buy those qualities back.<sup>112</sup>

Watterson approaches his comic strip as an art form, and an expression of himself. As he states, he has "no aversion to obscene wealth", but in the realm of making money as a cartoonist, the

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<sup>110</sup> Kanaan, G. (2016). On Bill Watterson's Refusal To License Calvin and Hobbes — THE [LEGAL] ARTIST. Retrieved 4 December 2019, from <https://www.thelegalartist.com/blog/on-bill-wattersons-refusal-to-license-calvin-and-hobbes>

<sup>111</sup> Watterson, B. (1989) *The Cheapening of the Comics*. Witty World Publications.

<sup>112</sup> Kanaan, (2016).

only tested route is merchandising. The cartoonist who blazed the merchandising trail first was Jim Davis; he literally created the template for monetizing a newspaper comic strip, and Watterson had no intention of following it. The purity that concerns Watterson is obviously inconsequential to Davis; he is ultimately unconcerned with *Garfield*'s integrity. To Davis, the most detrimental thing that *Garfield* could be is controversial, because controversy does not sell universally.

As a product of late stage capitalism, *Garfield* is the example of an artistic endeavor run by a businessman. Earning well over a billion dollars and touting a Q-Score, or "How familiar is the character, and how appealing is the character among those who are familiar?" of 38, which is equal to Big Bird from *Sesame Street* and higher than Spiderman's, *Garfield* has dominated the world, and did so from an office in Albany, Indiana.<sup>113</sup> *Garfield* as a comic strip personifies the desire of the worker to indulge their Id by creating a world without conflict or politics. A window into a place that rarely changes, and where nothing happens, *Garfield* offers solace to those who are forced to live in chaos. Manufactured to be widely marketable, Davis made these decisions in order to turn his art into a business, putting money before artistic expression. *Garfield* may be a "human in a catsuit" as Davis has suggested, but this cat is more business than fur.<sup>114</sup> The large orange tabby may be the cat's pajamas, but he's more suited to a pin-stripe suit and a fat cat cigar.

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<sup>113</sup>PAWS Inc. (2019). Welcome to Garfield's Licensing and Sales! Retrieved 4 December 2019, from [http://www.pawsinc.com/sales/q\\_study.html](http://www.pawsinc.com/sales/q_study.html)

<sup>114</sup> Davis, J. (2009). *30 Years of Laughs & Lasagna*. New York: Ballantine. pp.4.

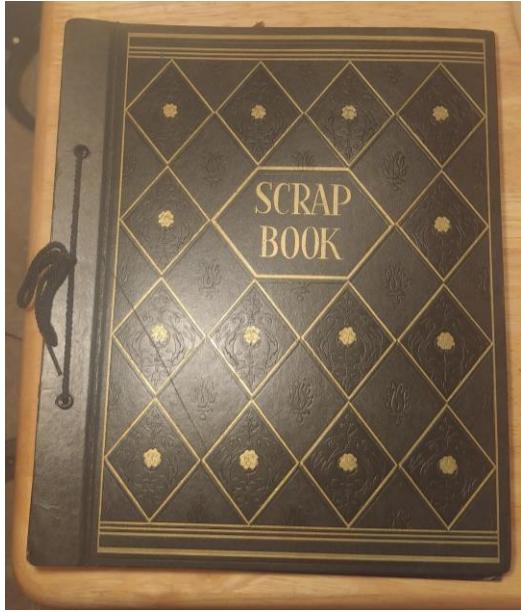


Image Set One:

These two photos were taken of a *Garfield* collection that was purchased off of eBay.com for three dollars for research into what kind of collecting surrounded the cantankerous cat. The order contained two scrapbooks, each full of delicately spliced *Garfield* comics that were rehomed on the pages of the book. A labor of love, these comic strips span nearly ten years with no missed dates. The dedication to the preservation of *Garfield* comic strips is astounding, and obsessive. Perhaps the collection began under the assumption that the comic strips would be worth something, like a newspaper that reported the first moon landing.

Engel, I. (2019) *Photographs of Scrapbooks Bought from eBay.com*. [Photograph].



Image Two:

This suitcase has the practice purpose of being able to act as a transportation vehicle for objects and clothes, but because there is an iconic image printed on it, its value increases. The suitcase is no longer a tool, it is a precious item. The image changes the suitcases interactions with other objects; the item is now able to be grouped with other *Garfield* merchandise, rather than condemned to exist among other suitcases. A suitcase with Garfield's image on it created in 1978, now available for purchase on eBay for \$47.99.

“Rare Vintage Garfield Roller Skating Suitcase Luggage Bag Jim Davis - Blue.”  
*eBay*, 30 Apr. 2019, 2:37:05, [www.ebay.com/item/RARE-Vintage-GARFIELD-Roller-Skating-Suitcase-Luggage-Bag-Jim-Davis-Blue/233175761765?hash=item364a5bc365:g:T74AAOSwW8RbDrfg](https://www.ebay.com/item/RARE-Vintage-GARFIELD-Roller-Skating-Suitcase-Luggage-Bag-Jim-Davis-Blue/233175761765?hash=item364a5bc365:g:T74AAOSwW8RbDrfg).



Image Three:

These are wearing pin-back buttons with the “yellow” kid on them created in 1896, and issued by Admiral Cigarettes. All of these feature illustrations of Robert Outcault’s “yellow kid”. This set’s value is around eight hundred dollars, significantly higher than if the pins were void of the iconic comic image.

Pins, Y. (2019). Yellow Kid Admiral Cigarette Pins • Antique Advertising. From: [antiqueadvertising.com/free-antique-price-guide/antique-tobacco/yellow-kid-admiral-cigarette-pins/](https://antiqueadvertising.com/free-antique-price-guide/antique-tobacco/yellow-kid-admiral-cigarette-pins/) [Accessed May 5, 2019]



Image Four:

This four-inch molded soap figurine was created in 1896. One of the few remaining soap figures in an intact box, the “yellow” kid’s smock reads, “Dis Sope Is Grate See!”. The eyes were once shiny metal pins that have since oxidized. This object sold for \$287.50 in 2010. The price of the object is not coming from the value of soap from 1896, but from the value of owning the iconic image that the soap has been carved into.

Hake's - “The Yellow Kid” Boxed Figural Soap. (2010). Retrieved from <https://www.hakes.com/Auction/ItemDetail/51261/The-Yellow-Kid-Boxed-Figural-SOAP>



Image

Five:

In this comic strip released on Wednesday, June 21st, 1978 shows Garfield not participating in the traditional labor that cats perform. By his referring to the working cats as “those with bad breath”, Garfield is aligning himself with the leisure class, or those that don’t have to work and often look down on those that do. His behavior is perhaps that attitude that many working-class readers wish they could have, as the capitalist system in the United States works to make labor seem undignified.

Davis, J. (1978, June 21) *Garfield*. [Comic] Albany, Indiana, PAWS Inc.

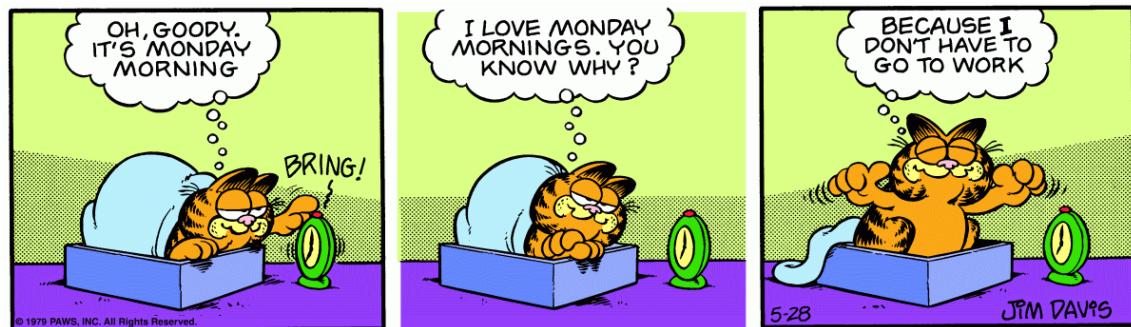


Image Six:

This comic strip published on May 28, 1979 shows Garfield expressing his love for Mondays because he does not have to work. This sentiment is both selfish, and lazy, but is echoed by those who are either affluent enough to not have to work, or have retired from working. Once out of the workforce, people in the United States tend to no longer sympathize with those who are still forced to work in order to afford to survive.

Davis, J. (1979, May 28) *Garfield*. [Comic] Albany, Indiana, PAWS Inc.



Image Seven:

Here Garfield shows his privilege by being able to ignore the issues in the world. This is a place of comfort that is celebrated by the capitalistic system: the ability to buy one's way out of suffering. On this day in 2012, at least ten civilians were killed by Syrian Forces, and an earthquake killed 306 in Iran. Garfield's statement would appeal to an age group who desires the "quiet" life, an expression used by those typically over the age of 60.

Davis, J. (2012, August 13) *Garfield*. [Comic] Albany, Indiana, PAWS Inc.



Image Set Eight:

On the left, the Garfield “Vote Republican Mug” was made in 1978. On the back it reads “A chicken in every pot...A lasagna in every pan”, referencing Herbert Hoover’s claim during the 1928 United States Presidential election, and replacing the phrase “and a car in every garage” with something that relates specifically to Garfield: lasagna. Conversely, on the right, Garfield “Vote Democratic” mug was made in 1978. On the back it reads, “Vote Garfield.” The fact that Garfield’s image can be interchanged with two United States political parties that have sometimes totally opposing views speaks to his banality. His personality can be projected with views from either political party, making him virtually a blank slate for marketing. United States politics is viciously bi-partisan, and for Garfield to be able to apply to both parties is a feat that not many other characters would be able to accomplish.

Characters, A., & Characters, A. (2019). Vintage VOTE REPUBLICAN Rare Garfield 1978 United Feature Syndicates Mug Cup | eBay. Retrieved from [https://www.ebay.com/item/352636658360?ul\\_noapp=true](https://www.ebay.com/item/352636658360?ul_noapp=true)

Collectibles, D., Mugs, C., & Democrat, D. (2019). Vintage VTG Vote Democratic Vote Garfield 1978 Coffee Mug Cup Enesco Democrat | eBay. Retrieved from <https://www.ebay.com/item/Vintage-VTG-Vote-Democratic-Vote-Garfield-1978-Coffee-Mug-Cup-Enesco-Democrat-/32362600026>

## Chapter Three

Commercial Art, Copyrights, and Copy Cats:  
Jim Davis's Gentle Stance on Copyright Law



Commercial art is created to sell something; it's not simply an aesthetic object like "fine art." The world of commercial art has expanded as capitalism progresses, and the "something" that many works of commercial art are selling is themselves-- rather than an outside product. One commercial artist who has turned his art into an individual business is Jim Davis, the creator of *Garfield*. Davis has been described as a "factory" that churns out "consistent" content, rather than a fine artist devoting themselves to their work. Not all cartoonists are commercial artists like Davis, and one of the defining features is how they view money in relation to art. Selling one's work does not intrinsically cheapen it, but by making the purpose of it to be bought rather than communicate a societal truth, it becomes commercial in some instances. Being commodifiable is one of the key factors to becoming a wealthy creator and artist, and within a capitalistic democracy, being wealthy is synonymous with being successful.

The approach to becoming a commodifiable art form often starts with an iconic image that is broadly likable. The image must be recognizable by the buying public in order to build a fan base of individuals who can recall the image and begin to form a relationship with the brand. For some images this could be a color, text, or shapes, but regardless of the specifics, these qualities must translate across different forms. An iconic image, in the words of Erwin Panofsky, is an image that "concern[s] itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form."<sup>115</sup> This means that it is not the way the work of art takes shape that makes it a work of art, but rather the expression of ideas that the creation both embodies and points to. As the iconic image becomes recognizable, it is able to generate an audience that will purchase goods relating to the image which, in turn, makes the image profitable. In the words of Jim Davis, "long after [the reader] has forgotten the art work, or the punch line, they remember the

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<sup>115</sup> Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (University of Chicago Press, 1955): pp. 26-54.

character.”<sup>116</sup> In the United States, creators have the opportunity to protect their intellectual property, and become the only entity that is allowed to reproduce and profit off of the iconic image they have created.<sup>117</sup> This need for protection stems from fear produced by a society that runs on capital, and different copyright holders view the situation uniquely. While some commercial artists, like Walt Disney, take intense measures and utilize the protection of the law to avoid their work being appropriated, others, like Jim Davis, employ copyright law in a separate fashion and allow their intellectual property to be used by the public to an extent, enjoying the ability to see the image they created illuminated by others interpretations.

Copyright laws are perhaps the unsung hero of technological advancement in both the arts and the sciences. The need to protect the rights of the artist and the work became immediately necessary when the printing press was invented, and other modes of reproducing works with ease became available. With mechanical reproduction, it became easier for anyone to claim that a work was theirs, forcing the artist to either fight to prove it was originally theirs, or lose exclusive rights. Providing a time of exclusive use to the creator allows them to profit from their creation and also be able to develop the idea without the need to dispute ownership. While recorded copyright disputes date back to the 6th century regarding psalm ownership,<sup>118</sup> the first official copyright law wasn’t passed until 1710 in England, and even then, it only protected

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<sup>116</sup> Shapiro, W. (1982, December 12). “LIVES: The Cat That Rots the Intellect.” *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1982/12/12/lives-the-cat-that-rots-the-intellect/d6ed28c6-bee3-41ad-81f2-1839b34b87b1/>

<sup>117</sup> For this examination, only copyright inside of the United States will be focused on. It should be assumed that when this essay mentions “copyright,” it will be discussing copyright within the United States of America. This is due to the convoluted nature of copyright laws, and their extreme differences in every country, as holding an “International Copyright” or a “Global Copyright” is a myth.

<sup>118</sup> Corrigan, Ray (2007). “Colmcille and the Battle of the Book: Technology, Law and Access to Knowledge in 6th Century Ireland.” In: *GikII 2 Workshop on the intersections between law, technology and popular culture at University College London, September 19th, 2007*, 19 Sep 2007, London, UK.

books and authors.<sup>119</sup> Copyright has evolved since then, and now protects various works including stage plays, maps, and photographs. As technology progresses, mechanical reproduction happens more regularly, and the cases concerning copyright infringement exceed the thousands.

Copyright protection was offered in the first draft of the United States Constitution in 1776, showing that the founders were concerned with technological security as well as progress. The Copyright Clause, also known as the Progress Clause or the Intellectual Property Clause, received a rare unanimous approval at the time the constitution was drafted.<sup>120</sup> Initially, its intention was to provide copyright protection for twelve years with a twelve-year renewal. After this time, a work would no longer be protected by copyright and instead, become part of the public domain. The clause states that “[the United States Congress shall have power] To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries.”<sup>121</sup> By including the Copyright Clause, all states were forced to follow copyright laws, even though twelve out of the thirteen states had similar laws already in place. When the Constitution was ratified, copyright became a national discussion for congress, rather than one handled by individual states. By promising to protect creators, the intention was to encourage more United States citizens to produce creative works. While the intention was to allow creatives to profit off of their hard work without the fear of it being stolen, copyright has now turned into a business of its own. Perhaps the most important line within the original constitution copyright clause is that which stipulates that the

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<sup>119</sup> *Statute of Anne, 1710 - History of Copyright*. (1999). Retrieved December 1, 2019, from <https://www.copyrighthistory.com/anne.html>.

<sup>120</sup> Donner, I. (1992). “The Copyright Clause of the U. S. Constitution: Why Did the Framers Include It with Unanimous Approval?” *The American Journal of Legal History*, 36(3), 361-378. doi:10.2307/845426

<sup>121</sup> U.S. Const. Art. I, § 8, clause 8.

copyright can only be held for a “limited time,” added to avoid the formation of monopolies.<sup>122</sup>

The intention is that creators are allowed to make money off of their intellectual property, but only to the extent that they do not infringe on other profiting as well.<sup>123</sup>

Copyrights have become almost as valuable as images themselves, allowing the owner to profit from others wanting to use their artwork. For instance, if a high school wanted to perform *Garfield: The Musical with Cattitude*<sup>124</sup>, both Jim Davis and the firm that holds the music licensing (in this case, the Rodgers & Hammerstein Organization) would receive around one hundred and fifty dollars each per performance.<sup>125</sup> This payment is not including the initial fee of three hundred dollars for securing the rights to perform the musical, script rental fees, and licensing for merchandise and videography.<sup>126</sup> Davis receives payment for owning the copyright of the image of Garfield, as well as the other characters, while the Rodgers and Hammerstein Organization own the license to the songs in the performance, and the copyright to the scripts. Neither has to “do” anything in order to receive payment; they merely had to have the foresight to declare ownership over the intellectual property. Paying a licensing or rights fee is one legal

<sup>122</sup> *Using Droit D'auteur to Justify a Trademark-Favored Treatment of Mickey Mouse.* (2016, August 11). Retrieved December 1, 2019, from <https://lawdigitalcommons.bc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1771&context=iclr>

<sup>123</sup> Marshall A. (1949). *Principles of Economics: An Introductory Volume (8th Edition)*. Pp 104-140. Porcupine Pr.

<sup>124</sup> “ADVENTURE THEATRE MTC ANNOUNCES THE WORLD PREMIERE OF GARFIELD: THE MUSICAL WITH CATTITUDE.” (2015, May 27). Retrieved November 19, 2019, from Garfield.com website: <https://garfield.com/news/adventure-theatre-mtc-announces-the-world-premiere-of-garfield-the-musical-with-cattitude>

<sup>125</sup> As an agency, the Rodgers & Hammerstein Organization wear a number of hats including being a music publishing company, rental library for librettos and scripts, and a theatrical licensing branch. This means that once the organization owns the licensing rights to a performance, they have the ability to profit off of theaters wanting to put on their shows. The songs in *Garfield: The Music with Cattitude* were written by individuals, but by selling the licensing rights to a larger firm, Davis and the others involved are able to outsource the labor of the other moving parts involved in profiting off of a musical.

Rodgers & Hammerstein: About Us. (2017). Retrieved November 19, 2019, from Rnh.com website: [https://www.rnh.com/about\\_us.html](https://www.rnh.com/about_us.html)

<sup>126</sup> GOrigin Theatrical | “GARFIELD: The Musical with Cattitude”. (2019). Retrieved November 19, 2019, from Origintheatrical.com.au website: <https://www.origintheatrical.com.au/work/9528>

possibility to be able to use copyrighted material. Another is to attempt to exist in the realm of either “free use” or parody, but this is dangerous territory as these cases are entirely up to the discretion of the court system, or the entity that holds the copyright.<sup>127</sup> There are some major copyright holders that “go after the little guys,” and will sue individuals as well as major corporations for seemingly minor copyright infringements.<sup>128</sup> One of the most infamous conglomerates is the Walt Disney Company. Evidence of Disney sending harsh cease and desist letters to school teachers for teaching students lightsaber skills<sup>129</sup>, underground electronic artists for remixing songs<sup>130</sup>, and community organizers printing clovers that slightly resemble Mickey Mouse on raffle tickets<sup>131</sup> circles the internet and reminds patrons that Disney cares more about profit than anything else.

The fact that Disney has threatened to sue daycare centers that have Disney characters painted on the wall<sup>132</sup> becomes unsurprising when statistics show that the various Copyright Extension Bills that have been passed through congress always coincide with the copyright of Mickey Mouse coming up for expiation.<sup>133</sup> The other option to use once copyright protected

<sup>127</sup> “What Is Fair Use?” (2017, April 11). Retrieved from Stanford Copyright and Fair Use Center website: <https://fairuse.stanford.edu/overview/fair-use/what-is-fair-use/>

<sup>128</sup> Why does Disney “go after the little guys”? | Shiny Happy World. (2014, May 24). Retrieved November 19, 2019, from Shiny Happy World website:

<https://www.shinyhappyworld.com/2014/05/disney-crafting-lawsuits-copyright-infringement.html>

<sup>129</sup> Lee, B. (2019). “The empire strikes back: Disney to sue school that teaches lightsaber skills”. Retrieved 4 December 2019, from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/oct/17/star-wars-disney-lightsaber-school-lawsuit>

<sup>130</sup> Baio, A. (2004). “Disney Suppressing the Kleptones”. Retrieved 4 December 2019, from [https://waxy.org/2004/11/disney\\_suppress/](https://waxy.org/2004/11/disney_suppress/)

<sup>131</sup> Neilsen, C. (2018). *I printed some raffle tickets for a fundraiser in my little town.* Retrieved 4 December 2019, from <https://www.quora.com/Have-you-ever-received-a-cease-and-desist-letter-from-Disney-or-another-corporation-for-using-characters-without-permission-and-what-did-you-do/answer/Charles-Neilsen-2>

<sup>132</sup> Snopes. (1996, December 29). “Did Disney Demand the Removal of Cartoon Murals from Daycare Center Walls?” Retrieved from Snopes.com website: <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/daycare-center-murals/>

<sup>133</sup> See Table One.

characters has been almost eliminated by this, as there seems to be an unlimited time limit on Mickey Mouse's copyright.<sup>134</sup> Disney seems to be protecting the copyright on Mickey Mouse with all of its legal power because of how valuable the copyright on him is: Mickey Mouse makes the Walt Disney Company around 5.8 billion dollars a year, making him the richest fictional character ever.<sup>135</sup> With a universal recognition rate of 97%--higher than Santa Claus--Mickey Mouse is the most valuable symbol in the Disney artillery. Losing control of copyright protection would place the mouse's original designs in the public domain where anyone would use them, as long as they did not infringe on the nineteen or so trademarks also placed on Mickey.<sup>136</sup> The option of waiting for the copyright protection to expire and the works falling into the public domain seems to have almost disappeared as the Walt Disney Company,<sup>137</sup> and other major copyright holders have spent billions of dollars to keep this from happening in order to extend their copyrights.<sup>138</sup> 2019 was the first year since January 1, 1989 that works were released into the public domain in the United States.<sup>139</sup> These works were originally copyright protected in 1923, and include Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Links*, Charlie Chaplin's *The Pilgrim*, and

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<sup>134</sup> Christiansen, L. (2004). "Mickey Mouse Still Belongs to Disney: The Supreme Court Upholds Copyright Extension." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 32(2), 212–213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0092070303262522>

<sup>135</sup> Crockett, Z. (2016). "How Mickey Mouse Evades the Public Domain." Retrieved 4 December 2019, from <https://priceconomics.com/how-mickey-mouse-evades-the-public-domain/>

<sup>136</sup> Crockett, (2016).

<sup>137</sup> Ota, A. (1998, August 10). "Disney In Washington: The Mouse That Roars" - August 10, 1998. Retrieved November 19, 2019, from Cnn.com website:

<http://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1998/08/10/cq/disney.html>

<sup>138</sup> Schrwatz, J. (Spring, 2004). "NOTE: WILL MICKEY BE PROPERTY OF DISNEY FOREVER? DIVERGENT ATTITUDES TOWARD PATENT AND COPYRIGHT EXTENSIONS IN LIGHT OF ELDRED v. ASHCROFT." *University of Illinois Journal of Law, Technology & Policy*, 2004, 105. Retrieved from <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=analytical-materials&id=urn:contentItem:4FS6-W390-010M-5040-00000-00&context=1516831>.

<sup>139</sup> Fleishman, Glenn (8 April 2018). "A Landslide of Classic Art Is About to Enter the Public Domain". *The Atlantic*. Retrieved 9 May 2018.

Robert Frost's *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*.<sup>140</sup> This release in 2019 was desperately important to the shrinking public domain. It is not only artists that suffer, but future generations. Many works that are still protected under their copyright term cannot be digitized for the general public, and museums cannot publish archival documents, photographs or oral histories that are unclaimed because the copyright ownership cannot be determined.<sup>141</sup> The reason that Disney's monopoly on its copyright protected material is detrimental to the creative class is not only the stronghold it has on the characters that Walt Disney created, but also the litany of works that were taken from the public domain and co-opted.<sup>142</sup> In 1940, the Disney Corporation released *Fantasia*, a series of short animated films set to music taken from the public domain in order to avoid paying licensing fees.<sup>143</sup> After the release of the film, some of these previously public domain works *became* copyright protected by the Disney Company because of their use in *Fantasia*.<sup>144</sup> Like Robin Hood on opposite day, Disney stole from the poor to give to the rich. From then on, most of the animated features that Disney would release used stories and themes that were in the public domain. Stories like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, and *Cinderella* are well-known fairy tales that had long been in the public domain, and other works like

<sup>140</sup> Donaldson, K. (2019, August 25). "How Disney (and Others) Helped to Screw Around with American Copyright and the Public Domain." Retrieved November 19, 2019, from Pajiba website: [https://www.pajiba.com/film\\_reviews/how-disney-and-others-helped-to-screw-around-with-american-copyright.php](https://www.pajiba.com/film_reviews/how-disney-and-others-helped-to-screw-around-with-american-copyright.php)

<sup>141</sup> "Why the Public Domain Matters" | Duke University School of Law. (2018, June). Retrieved November 19, 2019, from Duke.edu website: <https://web.law.duke.edu/cspd/publicdomainday/2012/why/>

<sup>142</sup> Khanna, D. "Disney Movies Based on The Public Domain" (2 March 2014) Forbes. Retrieved November 14, 2019 from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/derekkhanna/2014/02/03/50-disney-movies-based-on-the-public-domain/#2ff9dc7f329cn/>.

<sup>143</sup> Masnick, M. (2012, September 11). "Disney Claims House of Mouse Built with Copyright, Ignores Public Domain Foundation." Retrieved November 19, 2019, from Techdirt. website: <http://techdirt.com/articles/20120910/02485220325/disney-claims-house-mouse-built-with-copyright-ignores-public-domain-foundation.shtml>

<sup>144</sup> Masnick, (2012).

*Pinocchio*, and *Alice in Wonderland* had recently become free use.<sup>145</sup> Without having to pay any fees, Disney grossed more than two billion dollars in 1944 on *Snow White* alone.<sup>146</sup> After releasing their own animated movies, Disney copyright protected *their* versions of the fairytales, moving entire passages of the once public domain tales into Disney's personal artillery.<sup>147</sup> Disney owning multiple major works would not be as big of a hit to the creative community, if they were more open to allowing artists to create pieces that brought their copyright protected themes into question.

Some copyright holders, like Jim Davis, often invite the chance to see their work through new eyes, and are excited by what is known in the courts recognize as “transformative” uses of copyrighted material. Since the case of *Campbell v. Acuff Rose Music Inc.* 1994,<sup>148</sup> “transformative” has been the term used by the United States legal system to determine whether or not a work--despite the subjective nature of this--is an infringement on an existing copyright.<sup>149</sup> A new piece of work must transform the original so that it “changes the meaning or message,” or it is seen as an infringement and a lawsuit will incur.<sup>150</sup> This process only begins if the copyright holder brings the case to a court of law; if the owner is unbothered by the usage of

<sup>145</sup> “Free Public Domain - free fairy tales, books, etexts, download.” Project Gutenberg (1999). Retrieved November 19, 2019, from Iwarp.com website: <http://fpd.iwarp.com/>

<sup>146</sup> “Highest-grossing animation at the domestic box office” (inflation adjusted). (2018). Retrieved November 19, 2019, from Guinness World Records website: <http://guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/highest-box-office-film-gross-for-an-animation-inflation-adjusted/>

<sup>147</sup> Masnick, (2012).

<sup>148</sup> *Campbell v. Acuff-Rose Music, Inc.*, 510 U.S. 569, 579 (1994). This court case established what a commercial parody can qualify as free use, setting a precedent for all other cases of the same nature. “The Supreme Court overturned a lower court ruling that Luther Campbell’s group, 2 Live Crew, made an unfair use of Roy Orbison’s song “Pretty Woman” when recording a rap parody version of it”. The influence that this court trial is seen in the emphasis on the “transformative” nature, and the expansion of the definition of what constitutes a “transformative” use in the future of all fair use trials.

Samuelson, P. *Possible Futures of Fair Use*, 90 WASH. L. Rev. pp. 818. *But cf.* *Kienitz v. Sconnie Nation LLC*, 766 F.3d 756, 758 (7th Cir. 2014)

<sup>149</sup> Samuelson, pp. 817, 826.

<sup>150</sup> Snow White® Disney Enterprises, Inc. IP Department - Trademark Group 500 South Buena Vista Street Burbank, CALIFORNIA UNITED STATES 91521. US Registration Number 4354191.

their copyright protected material, no legal action is taken and the creative progress can continue. A coherent example of an instance that could have been considered copyright infringement is the case of *Garfield Minus Garfield*. Launched in February of 2008, the webcomic *Garfield Minus Garfield* manipulates comic strips written by Jim Davis by removing the character Garfield and occasionally changing the language in the strips in subtle ways.<sup>151</sup> Without the chubby tabby taking up space in the comic strip, only his owner Jon Arbuckle is left.<sup>152</sup> Each webcomic is a near-direct reprint of a past comic, only changing the presence of Garfield. The tone of *Garfield Minus Garfield* is decidedly dark, and reveals that, without Garfield, Jon lives a depressing life alone. The webcomics also draw attention to the fact that Garfield cannot talk, and yet, Jon is constantly reacting as if he can. By removing the tabby cat, it exposes Jon's possible instability.<sup>153</sup> Rather than Jim Davis declaring that the Irish artist Dan Walsh is infringing on his copyright, Davis is both tickled and intrigued by the reinterpretation.<sup>154</sup> In an interview with the Washington Post in 2008 Davis admits to frequenting the *Garfield Minus Garfield* website: "The cartoonist calls the work "an inspired thing to do" and wishes to thank Walsh for enabling him to see another side of *Garfield*."<sup>155</sup> This almost unheard-of response to an absolute appropriation of a copyrighted character is both refreshing and important. The interview continues with Davis almost gushing about the beauty of what Walsh has been able to do by removing Garfield, admitting that some of the strips he has manipulated are more effective than the originals. Davis goes on to say that "[bloggers such as Walsh] see the futility in making everything turn out right

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<sup>151</sup> See Image One and Two for side-by-side comparison of an original *Garfield* comic and a *Garfield Minus Garfield* webcomic.

<sup>152</sup> See Image Three.

<sup>153</sup> See Image Four.

<sup>154</sup> Orndorff, A. (2008). "When the Cat's Away, Neurosis Is on Display." Retrieved 1 December 2019, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/03/AR2008040303083.html>

<sup>155</sup> Orndorff, (2008).

every day, but a little darkness "makes the positives even sweeter."<sup>156</sup> Davis recognizes the importance of parodies to his work, and rather than being threatened by it, he embraces it. His response to Walsh's work is intensely important in the fight for works to enter the public domain; in order for new interpretations of work, they have to be allowed to exist in the public sphere.

Other cartoonists like Bill Keane, the creator of *Family Circus*, feel "hurt" by certain parodies and appropriations.<sup>157</sup> The parodies posted by the *Dysfunctional Family Circus*<sup>158</sup> site differ from the parodies seen on *Garfield Minus Garfield* due to their occasionally raunchy adult nature, but otherwise their format is nearly identical. Both Walsh and *DFC* take the original comics and alter the meaning by changing the characters' dialogue, rather than transposing the characters out of their frames. *Dysfunctional Family Circus* is not a singular creator like Walsh, but rather it is a collective of internet users who are able to create their own captions to various *Family Circus* comics that Keane drew and published. Keane was upset that it became "a contest between [users] to come up with the raunchiest and most disgusting captions...It hurts."<sup>159</sup> Outraged by the way that his copyright protected characters were being used, Keane had an attorney from King Features Syndicate send a cease and desist letter to the owner of the website. It was the innocence of the strip that appealed to parodies, calling the comic about a 1950s nuclear Christian family "an obvious target."<sup>160</sup> Users in the 1980s felt that *Family Circus* was the natural comic to attack, and perhaps this is the same reason that internet users in the late

<sup>156</sup> Orondorff, (2008).

<sup>157</sup> Thomsen, S. Associated Press Writer. (September 23, 1999, Thursday, AM cycle)." Family Circus cartoonist fighting Internet parody." The Associated Press State & Local Wire. Retrieved from <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:3XG8-CYJ0-00HV-60T8-00000-00&context=1516831>.

<sup>158</sup> See Image Five.

<sup>159</sup> Thomsen, (1999).

<sup>160</sup> Thomsen, (1999).

2010s have chosen to queer *Garfield*--the desire to mar the mundane and undermine the domestic.

In an attempt to subvert nostalgia, and destroy the bubble in which it exists, artists like Rachel Wurfle--who curates the Instagram page @Wurflehouse--are taking cartoon characters and placing them far outside of their original contexts.<sup>161</sup> Captions like “Daylight savings time can go fuck itself”, and “don’t you dare step to me until you run your crocs through the dishwasher bitch,” are written in bold fonts and paired with images of Garfield, or other popular characters from Disney. The captions have no relevance to Garfield as a character, but by placing them in conversation together, the meaning of the text is imparted with the relationship that the reader has to the character. The tabby’s ornery personality is what allows the outlandish captions to be able to correspond with the images. The humor in these images is in the unorthodox language, transforming the easily understood physical humor used in the original *Garfield* comic strips into a deviant satire. One of Wurfle’s intentions is to appropriate copyright protected images in order to show how absurd the concept of exclusive ownership is. Part of her milieu includes appropriated official *Garfield* apparel with slight changes, altering the overall tone of the piece.<sup>162</sup> Wurfle is not alone in this type of spoiled nostalgia, and some of the examples are more extreme.<sup>163</sup> Taking control of the way that nostalgia is consumed, artists who create images of a crudely drawn Garfield in a bikini holding a pan of lasagna are parodying marketability and disrupting the benign. Davis, unlike the creator of *Family Circus*, has said nothing about these parodies. Whether Davis has seen some of the obscene parodies created by using Garfield or not, it would seem that his reactions would not be as charged as Keane. By using his reaction to

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<sup>161</sup> See Image Six.

<sup>162</sup> See Image Seven.

<sup>163</sup> See Image Eight.

*Garfield Minus Garfield* as an indicator, he might be intrigued by these subversive parodies if only for the fact that they make the original *Garfield* strips seem more “sweeter.”<sup>164</sup> Davis noted in a separate interview that he’s aware that “the political ones are really more about the person writing it than it is [about *Garfield*]...They use a familiar face to say something they wanted to say—you could have done it without using Garfield. But if they’re not mean-spirited or trying to make a big profit off something that’s in poor taste, we embrace it.”<sup>165</sup> A nuanced approach to parodies, Davis recognizes that it is less about the actual character he created, and more about what Garfield represents as a cultural icon. For a multi-billionaire to express that he “embraces” artists creating content using his copyright protected material is almost revolutionary in the face of modern iron-clad attitude towards intellectual property.

Davis’s reaction to *Garfield Minus Garfield*, and other parodies is put into context when one reads the legal terms listed on the official *Garfield* website. Davis’s take on the legality of *Garfield* is exemplified by the mocking tone used for the official website’s terms of use page. The privacy policy and terms of use are listed under the heading “Legal Goodies”, with the brief caveat stating:

Congratulations! You’ve made it to the LEGAL PAGE!! You must be a real risk taker!  
Someone who just CAN’T GET ENOUGH FUN!! Well strap yourself in and prepare to  
GET LEGAL by reading the following terms...<sup>166</sup>

This playful tone continues in the privacy policy, with the first heading called, “Hey, who’s in charge here anyway?”<sup>167</sup> The rest of both of the privacy policy and terms of use read like a

<sup>164</sup>Orndorff, (2008).

<sup>165</sup> Maloney, D. *Jim Davis on Garfield's Influence in the Age of the Internet Cat / WIRED*. (2014, November 4). Retrieved December 1, 2019, from <https://www.wired.com/2014/11/garfield-internet-cats/>.

<sup>166</sup> Davis, J. (2019). *Garfield & Friends*. Retrieved 1 December 2019, from <https://garfield.com/terms-of-use>

<sup>167</sup> Davis, J. (2019).

traditional legal document, but by prefacing it with these friendly and almost familiar introductions, the reader is not at odds with Jim Davis, instead they are placed on the same side as him. The tone of Davis's document is starkly different from other companies' legal terms pages on their public websites. For example, Disney's terms of use clause on their public website is prefaced with "These terms govern your use of the Disney Services. Please read these terms carefully before using any Disney Service." The difference between this preface and *Garfield*'s illustrates the level of severity that each conglomeration sees copyright infringement: Disney approaches it with intense and sterile professionalism, while PAWS Inc. realizes that it is possible to find humor in logistical matters. Disney's terms of use continued with the opening line, written in bold capitalized letters:

**ANY DISPUTE BETWEEN YOU AND US, EXCEPT FOR SMALL CLAIMS, IS SUBJECT TO A CLASS ACTION WAIVER AND MUST BE RESOLVED BY INDIVIDUAL BINDING ARBITRATION. PLEASE READ THIS AGREEMENT IN ITS ENTIRETY, INCLUDING THE ARBITRATION PROVISION BELOW.**

makes *Garfield*'s terms of use seems even softer by comparison. The nearly hostile nature of this opening continues throughout the document, and at no point is playful in any manner. The language in this is the same used in their cease and desist letters that are sent directly to small businesses and addressed to individuals:

... Disney hereby demands that You immediately remove from any website owned or operated by You or on Your behalf, all music tracks containing any part of any song by Queen, and any other property of Disney, and that You provide me with a letter by November 23, 2004, in which You confirm that You have complied with the foregoing and that You agree not to resume such use...<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Baio, (2004).

This specific cease and desist letter was sent to an underground electronic artist who used various Queen songs in remixes. While Disney creates content for children, their approach to the legal side of their business is anything but. The stark language used in this letter leaves no room for communication or even connection on a human level, as the receiver is reduced to a capitalized “You.” Both Disney and Davis created something for a primarily young audience with the intention of making money, and yet their approaches could not be more different. Considering that Disney is a much larger conglomerate, it would seem that they would have the ability to worry less than Davis about individuals infringing on copyright due to the amount of profit being made. Instead, the Walt Disney Corporation has become notorious for sending cease and desist letters and suing small businesses in order to protect their already-well-established brand.<sup>169</sup> PAWS Inc., and the Disney Company both have the intention of making a profit, Disney became an economic strongman, and the cultural equivalent to the United States military: feared and well-armed. While Disney has created a seemingly impenetrable empire that lines the United States Congress’s pockets<sup>170</sup> in order to fiercely protect Walt Disney’s legacy, Davis was content to sell the licensing rights to an outside company during his mid-70s.<sup>171</sup> Ultimately, the difference between the two companies is financial; Disney receives hundreds of billions of dollars each year; Garfield to date has earned around 10 billion in all.<sup>172</sup> While both made extreme amounts of money, becoming a multi-hundred billion dollar corporation does mean that Disney not only needs to play by their own rules, but create their own rules.

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<sup>169</sup> Disney Sues Small Family Business: Whose Side Are You On? (2008.). Retrieved December 1, 2019, from <https://www.disneyorama.com/2008/07/disney-sues-family-business>.

<sup>170</sup> Ota, (1998)

<sup>171</sup> Viacom, Hungry for Hits, Gobbles Up Garfield - WSJ. (2019, August 6). Retrieved December 1, 2019, from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/viacom-hungry-for-hits-gobbles-up-garfield-11565107200>.

<sup>172</sup>

The way that the Walt Disney Company has manipulated the copyright laws in the United States has stunted creative growth. By being able to seemingly endlessly hold claim to intellectual properties, and virtually own their employees and everything they create, Disney has a stranglehold on entertainment. The issue goes far beyond iconic images and Mickey Mouse, as Disney is the sole controller of companies ranging from the website software Photobucket, to ESPN Sports, to the Buena Vista Construction Company, who is responsible for practically all construction occurring in Orlando, Florida.<sup>173</sup> In the move to control nearly every aspect of entertainment, Disney has virtually succeeded, reviled by next to none in the United States.

In a time where almost every consumable media, whether that be through a streaming service, at a movie theater, or in a comic book, is owned by the same major conglomerate, Davis's reaction to parodies is increasingly important and revolutionary. Now, copyrights seem to be protected as if the company's profitability depended on it. Even still, Davis--who only acts when absolutely necessary--is one of the most profitable newspaper comic artists ever.<sup>174</sup> In an interview, Davis opened up about his relationship to *Garfield*'s various parodies,

Davis rather enjoys some of the parodies of his work, and notes really good appropriations give him great perspective on how fans view his nearly 40 years of comics. "*Garfield Minus Garfield* is, of course, one of my favorites," Davis says. "We actually worked with the young fellow [creator Dan Walsh] who did that; it was such a great concept. It was kind of funny—we called Dan, and the second we identified ourselves, he said, 'I'm so sorry. You want me to cease and desist, right?' We said, 'No, we want to collaborate on a book with you.' Dan wrote the forward for the book that came out in 2008."<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> See Image Nine.

<sup>174</sup> *Garfield Owner Wins Infringement Case*. China Daily, (2004, December 21.) Retrieved December 1, 2019 from <http://www.china.org.cn/english/2004/Dec/115557.htm>

*It's No Joke: Comic Strips Are Big Business - Los Angeles Times*. (1989, December 6.) Retrieved December 1, 2019, from <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1989-12-06-vw-281-story.html>.

<sup>175</sup>Maloney, (2014).

The initial reaction of Walsh to assume that he would be in legal trouble for his creation is a product of the United States copyright protection system. It can be assumed that a countless number of artists have not created the works that they felt inspired to make because of the looming threat of being sued for copyright infringement. Large copyright holders like Disney have benefitted from material in the public domain, and yet they refuse to let others do the same. Safeguarding intellectual property, corporations refuse to acknowledge that their creations belong to the public collective consciousness in order to ensure profitability. This makes the seemingly-benign kind-hearted gesture of Davis reaching out to Walsh to collaborate a radical statement on commercial art.

Garfield's cultural relevance has a kind of staying power that had transitioned into the age of the internet successfully. This must be, in part, due to Davis's approach to intellectual property, and his understanding that Garfield the cat has become a symbol beyond his original confines. A cultural icon, Garfield is constantly referenced or appropriated by various media formats. Several podcasts have been created that read the daily *Garfield* comics aloud,<sup>176</sup> and others exist that analyze the comic strip by strip.<sup>177</sup> The intrigue for many creators comes from what Davis refers to as the “universality” of the comic strip, and the mundanity of the messages. A virtually endless amount of meanings can be placed upon the comic strips not only due to the banality, but also because of the lack of fear of being sued by Davis. Instead of abusing this unique opportunity, fans and creatives are usually respectful of Davis's intellectual property, producing new content that draws on the *Garfield* legacy without directly copying. A subgenre of *Garfield* tribute art dubbed *I'm Sorry Jon* delves into horrific and existentially haunting

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<sup>176</sup> Another Random Garfield Podcast (2018) Retrieved December 1, 2019 from <https://player.fm/series/random-garfield>

<sup>177</sup> Gibson, J. Being Jim Davis podcast. (2019). Retrieved December 1, 2019, from <https://player.fm/series/being-jim-davis>.

themes that Davis only explored twice--once in the book *Garfield: His Nine Lives in Primal Self*, and the daily strips from the week of October 23, 1989<sup>178</sup>. The name *I'm Sorry Jon* was coined from a webcomic published by an artist under the pseudonym Dubblebaby, which shows Jon coming home to Garfield having consumed the entire house, and in turn becoming the house.<sup>179</sup> From this comic, other artists have continued to explore the dark tones touched on by Davis in *Primal Self* and the October 1989 comics. For example, comic artist Will Burke created a series of drawings in which Garfield exists as a giant centipede, and various other Dali-esque insects.<sup>180</sup> These pen drawings flooded the internet, gaining a following to the extent that Canadian pixel-artist Lumpytouch created a video game simulation based on the images.<sup>181</sup> Bizarre and disturbing, each of these artists has been able to expand upon the iconic nature of the character Garfield, and tap into the public's collective consciousness. The importance of acknowledging these artists explorations of *Garfield* is recognizing that none of them received cease and desist letters, and all have been able to show their work on different online sites without being taken down. In this way, Davis is following the founding father's original intentions of not having a monopoly on ideas and concepts. Radicalizing and democratizing the system of copyright infringement and copying in art, Davis sets the precedent for other artists hoping to create a cultural icon to support parodists.

As copyright law continues to change and be changed, the power still remains in the hands of the copyright holder. While copyright infringements should not be glorified, manipulation and transformation of copyright protected material should be. From these transformations is where creative progress and innovation emerges, and can then morph into

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<sup>178</sup> See Images Ten and Eleven.

<sup>179</sup> See Image Twelve.

<sup>180</sup> See Image Thirteen.

<sup>181</sup> See Image Fourteen.

separate works. As the most widely syndicated comic strip in the world, Garfield has to appeal to audiences from Saudi Arabia to Miami, Florida. This means that his material must be universally accessible; in most cases, this means that it is bland. *Garfield* comics create the perfect breeding ground for parody and satire for this reason. Instead of resisting this, Davis embraces it, and sees parody as a fresh look at the *Garfield* universe. Like a smart businessperson, Davis realizes that any amount of exposure that his cantankerous cat receives pushes him further into the public consciousness and farther from obscurity. While Davis's character may be cynical, his view on copyright laws are anything but. As the Walt Disney Company damns fans for being inspired by their often-stolen work, Davis embraces it and in turn strengthens the creative class. Davis epitomizes the modern approach to an art world being flooded with reproductions and parodies as he is not threatened by it. Being reproduced is part of becoming a cultural icon; people need to be able to see your symbol everywhere. The marketing managers of Campbell's soup understood this when approaching Andy Warhol about his silkscreen reproductions of their label, responding both humbly and respectfully:

Dear Mr. Warhol:

I have followed your career for some time. Your work has evoked a great deal of interest here at Campbell Soup Company for obvious reasons.

At one time I had hoped to be able to acquire one of your Campbell Soup label paintings - but I'm afraid you have gotten much too expensive for me.

I did want to tell you, however, that we admired your work and I have since learned that you like Tomato Soup. I am taking the liberty of having a couple of cases of our Tomato Soup delivered to you at this address.

We wish you continued success and good fortune...<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Campbell's Soup. (1964). *Letter from Campbell's Soup to Andy Warhol* [Image]. Retrieved from <http://www.lettersofnote.com/2010/07/i-hear-you-like-tomato-soup.html>

The correspondence is so genial that it was a stroke of genius to whomever decided to lean into this kind of free marketing. Reminiscent of Davis's response to Dan Walsh when learning about *Garfield Minus Garfield*, perhaps some copyright holders recognize when something interesting and new is being done to their copyright protected property. One can only imagine what would have happened to the Pop Art movement if Andy Warhol was forced to destroy his works that infringed on Campbell's Soup copyright. One wonders if perhaps some of the works that the Walt Disney Corporation are "cease-and-desisting" had the same potential. In the age of mechanical reproduction, Davis has the right idea by thinking that copycats are no catastrophe.

## Mickey Mouse's Effect on U.S. Copyright Law

Every time Disney's copyright on Mickey Mouse is about to expire, the law magically changes

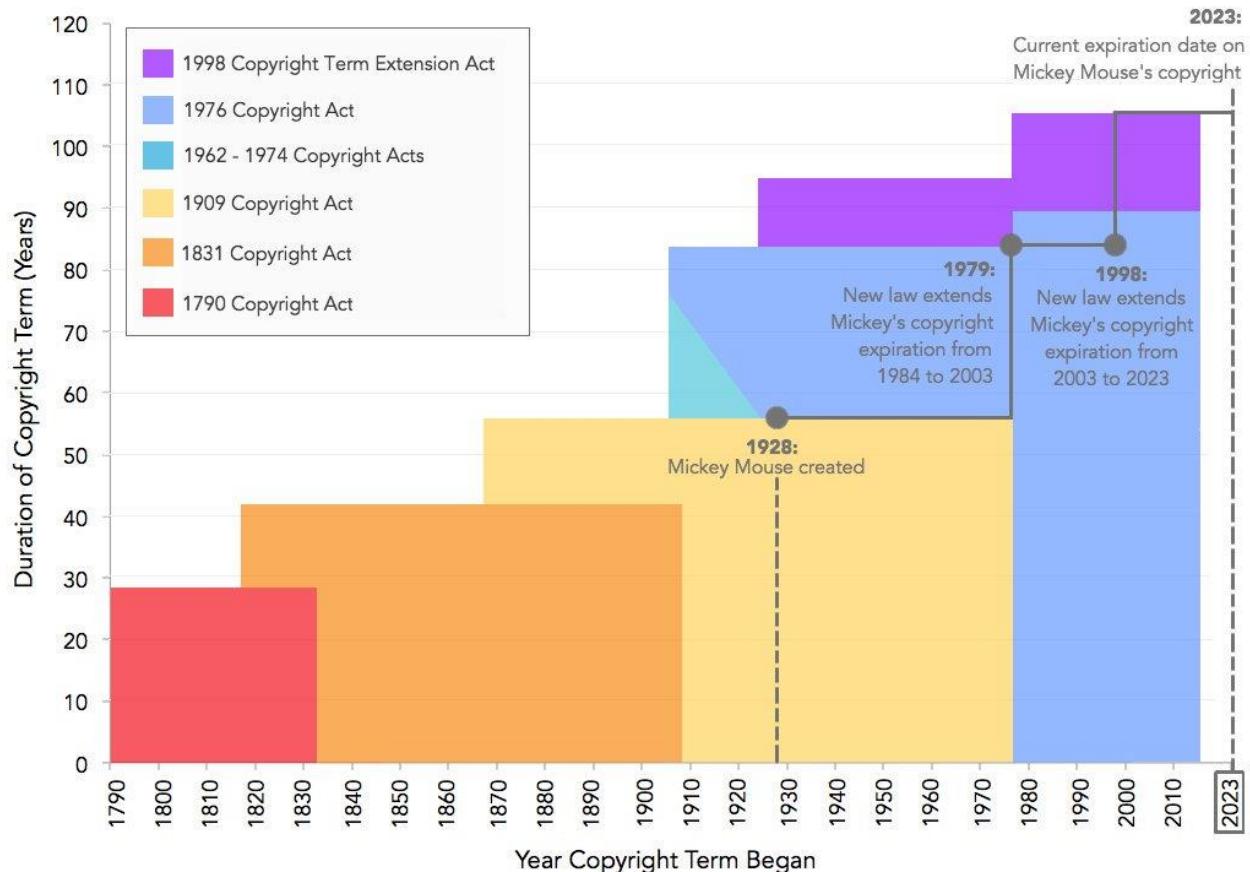
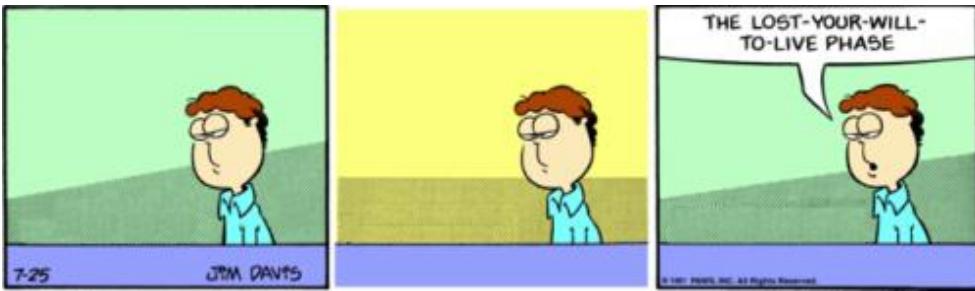
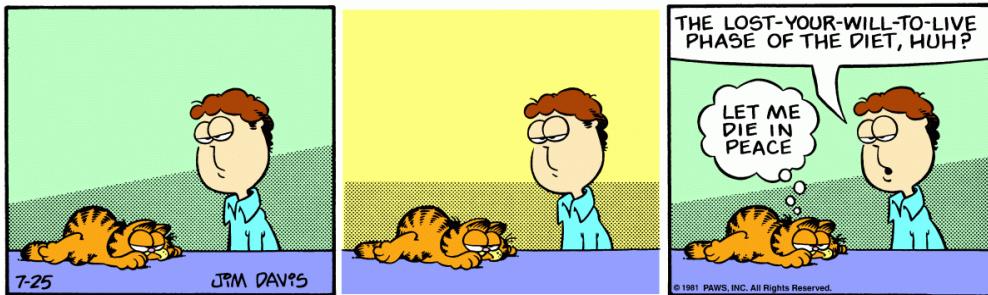


Table One:

The graph shows the correlation between the duration of Mickey Mouse's copyright terms and the Copyright Extension Acts passed. This could be passed off as a coincidence if Michael Eisner, CEO of Disney until 2006, wasn't seen actively around politicians' offices before every election, and if members of congress didn't colloquially refer to the extensions as the "Mickey Mouse Protection Acts". The terms of copyright have been extended to such an extreme, allowing Mickey Mouse to avoid becoming public domain. Although Disney has since obtained a copyright on every variation of Mickey Mouse, it is only the original 1930s mouse that is at "risk".

Bell, T. (2009). *Copyright Duration and the Mickey Mouse Curve*. Retrieved from <https://techliberation.com/2009/08/06/copyright-duration-and-the-mickey-mouse-curve/>



### Image One and Two:

The top three-frame comic is the original strip created and published by Jim Davis on July 25 1981, and the bottom is the webcomic edited by Dan Walsh. Juxtaposed, one can see what has been altered by Walsh. Not only has he removed Garfield's body and speech bubbles, but he has also edited the words inside of Jon's speech bubble. Instead of referring to Garfield's lack of will to live, Jon is now referring to his own. Self-declaration of losing one's will to live has a noticeably demurer tone, especially when not followed by a punchline delivered by Garfield.

Davis, J. (1981, July 25) *Garfield* Albany, Indiana, PAWS Inc. [Ink on Paper] Retrieved from <https://garfield.com/comic/1981/07/25>

Walsh, D. (2019, April 3) *Garfield Minus Garfield* [Image] Retrieved from <https://garfieldminusgarfield.net/post/183920655372/will-to-live>



Image Three:

This is an example of a webcomic posted onto GarfieldminusGarfield.net by Dan Walsh. It can be assumed that Garfield the cat was present in the right side of the frames before he was removed. It is also apparent that in the third frame, Garfield would have said something in response to Jon's musings. By removing Garfield's quip, the strip became darker in tone, leaving the viewer with a bleak sentiment that is not lightened by a punchline.

Walsh, D. (2019, September 26). *Garfield Minus Garfield*. [Image] Retrieved from <https://garfieldminusgarfield.net/day/2019/09/26/>



Image Four:

Without Garfield occupying the space next to Jon Arbuckle, it appears that he is talking to himself in a way that would suggest he is delusional. Living a life alone, Jon in *Garfield Minus Garfield* has decayed into being forced to be his own and only best friend.

Walsh, D. (2019, September 19) *Garfield Minus Garfield*. [Image] Retrieved from <https://garfieldminusgarfield.net/day/2016/09/21/>



**"How about you just shut the fuck up?"**

Image Five:

*Dysfunctional Family Circus* is a series of image macros, or a captioned image that has interchangeable catchphrases or messages, based on the syndicated comic strip *The Family Circus*. Most of the parodies were created in the 1980s and caught attention through a fan-created site in the 1990s. The creator of *Family Circus* was highly offended by the website and ordered a cease and desist. However, since the website was run on an anonymous basis, legal action was difficult to take. The website is still functional, and users are able to submit caption suggestions.

Dysfunctional Family Circus. (1999). [Image] retrieved from <https://dfc.furr.org/>.



Image Six:

The Instagram user @wurfelhouse actively appropriated copyright protected characters-- most actively using Garfield--in creative content. Many of the images created have dark tones, sexually explicit content, or otherwise work to push the characters boundaries further than is possible within its original confines. In this image, Garfield--who is dressed an angel--has a mischievous look on his face and is paired with the caption “Sorry God, Hell has better drugs”, as if to say that the angel Garfield is leaving Heaven in hopes of finding illicit substances. This message would never appear in a strip that Jim Davis would publish or endorse, as it implies that an illegal substance is something to be desired.

Wurfel, R. (2019). *Heaven is full of #cbd and #melatonin*. [Image] Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/BxZ-pSllz2/>.

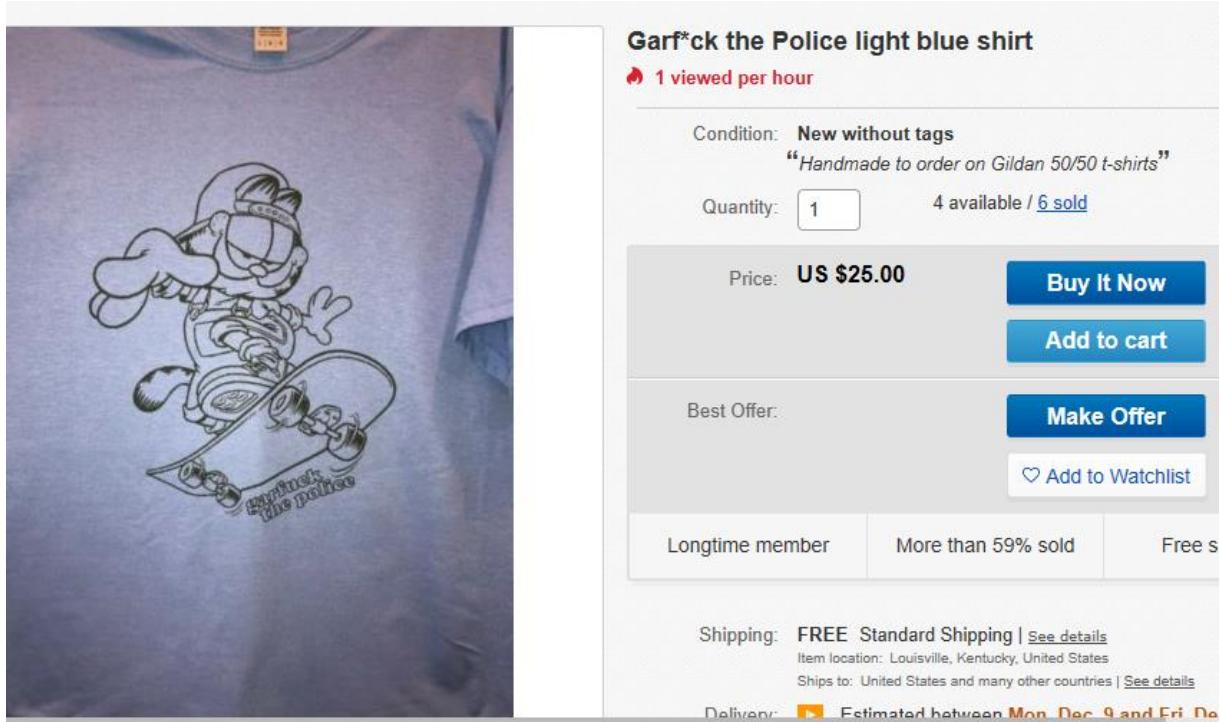


Image Seven:

Wurfel uses templates from retired licensed *Garfield* merchandise to create shirts that both subvert the original tone of the comic strip, and attempt to make a statement about the absurdity of copyright law. This particular garment shows a 90s-era skateboarding Garfield with the phrase “garfuck the police” written underneath it in the patented PAWS Inc. font.

Wurfel, R. (2019). *Garfuck the Police* [Image]. Retrieved from  
<https://www.ebay.com/itm/Garf-ck-the-Police-light-blue-shirt/264530029186?hash=item3d9737ea82:g:ce4AAOSwXAFdyYYA>



Image Eight:

An unknown artist created this image of Garfield in a two-piece outfit holding a pan of lasagna, sexualizing the cartoon cat. The artist has taken the essence of the cynical cat--a pan of lasagna, drooping eyes, and orange and yellow coloring-- and transformed the familiar pudgy body into an unfamiliar form. This type of reactionary image attempts to make the viewer uncomfortable via irreverence in portrayal of an otherwise sexless character.

*Who Ordered Lasagne?* (n.d.) [Image] Retrieved from  
<https://i.pinimg.com/736x/0e/5a/d9/0e5ad9e24a20a10614116dfab3f6f694.jpg>

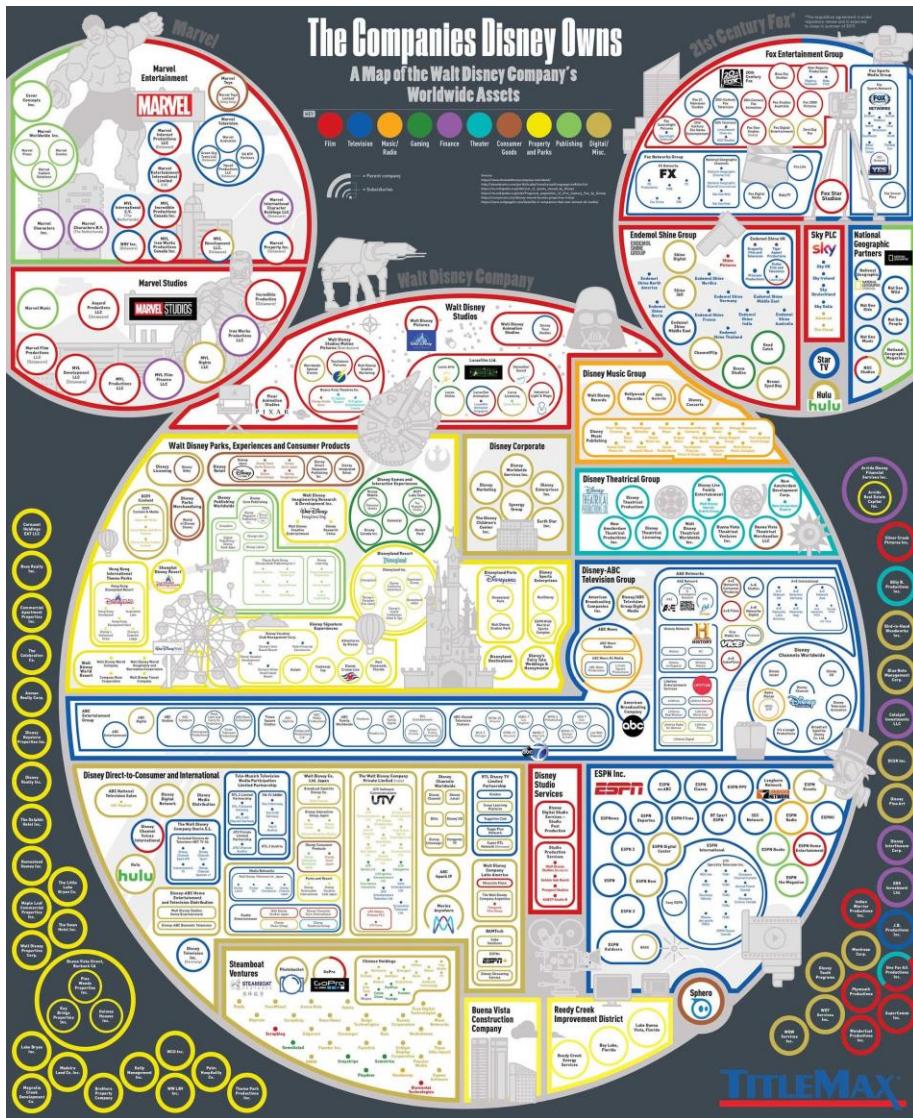


Image Nine:

This infographic is a chart of every company that the Walt Disney Company owns. This image illustrates the staggering monopolization of media that is currently consumed by the United States by Disney. The chart is nearly illegible at this size--in order to be able to read the myriad of companies that Disney controls, please refer to the link below.

*Every Company Disney Owns: A Map of Disney's Worldwide Assets.* (2019). Image Retrieved December 1, 2019, from <https://www.titlemax.com/discovery-center/money-finance/companies-disney-owns-worldwide>.



Image Ten:

This image consists of four pages taken from the graphic novel *Garfield: His Nine Lives* published in 1984. These pages are taken from Garfield's seventh life entitled *Primal Self*. Regularly pointed to as the most disturbing series in the *Garfield* canon, *Primal Self* explores the subconscious possibly evil feral-self overtaking the domesticated mild-mannered house cat. It is implied that in this life, Garfield murdered his owner.

Davis, J. (1984) *Garfield: His Nine Lives- Primal Self*. Ballantine Books.



Image Eleven:

Cited as the most disturbing set of newspaper comic strips published by Davis, the “home alone” series proved to critics that Davis could make *Garfield* serious, if he chose. Theories about this collection of strips spawned because it is so out of character for Jim Davis to have written and published comics with such a dark tone. Many fans believe that these strips prove that Garfield is a delusional pet left alone to fend for himself in what, to him, is a post-Apocalyptic universe, or that this strip is proof that Garfield has died and all of the other comics are his life flashing before his eyes.

Davis, J. (1989) *Garfield*. Albany, Indiana. PAWS Inc.



Image Twelve:

This two-page comic titled *Hungry*, or *I'm Sorry Jon*, shows Garfield's obsessive eating taken to the darkest extreme. Paired with a constricted color palette, and a shaky font, the tone of this comic set is extremely unsettlingly and ultimately unnerving, as the reader realizes that Garfield has become the house.

Dubblebaby (n.d.) *I'm Sorry Jon*. [Image] Retrieved from [https://external-preview.redd.it/j2vFimlXuoHZbBVio-BgqEzmgUQ6SZFPHQoWwB\\_hxU.jpg?width=1200&height=628.272251309&auto=webp&s=7da3ca0ac2dc316dd80d27ffa76fd082b005d05e](https://external-preview.redd.it/j2vFimlXuoHZbBVio-BgqEzmgUQ6SZFPHQoWwB_hxU.jpg?width=1200&height=628.272251309&auto=webp&s=7da3ca0ac2dc316dd80d27ffa76fd082b005d05e)

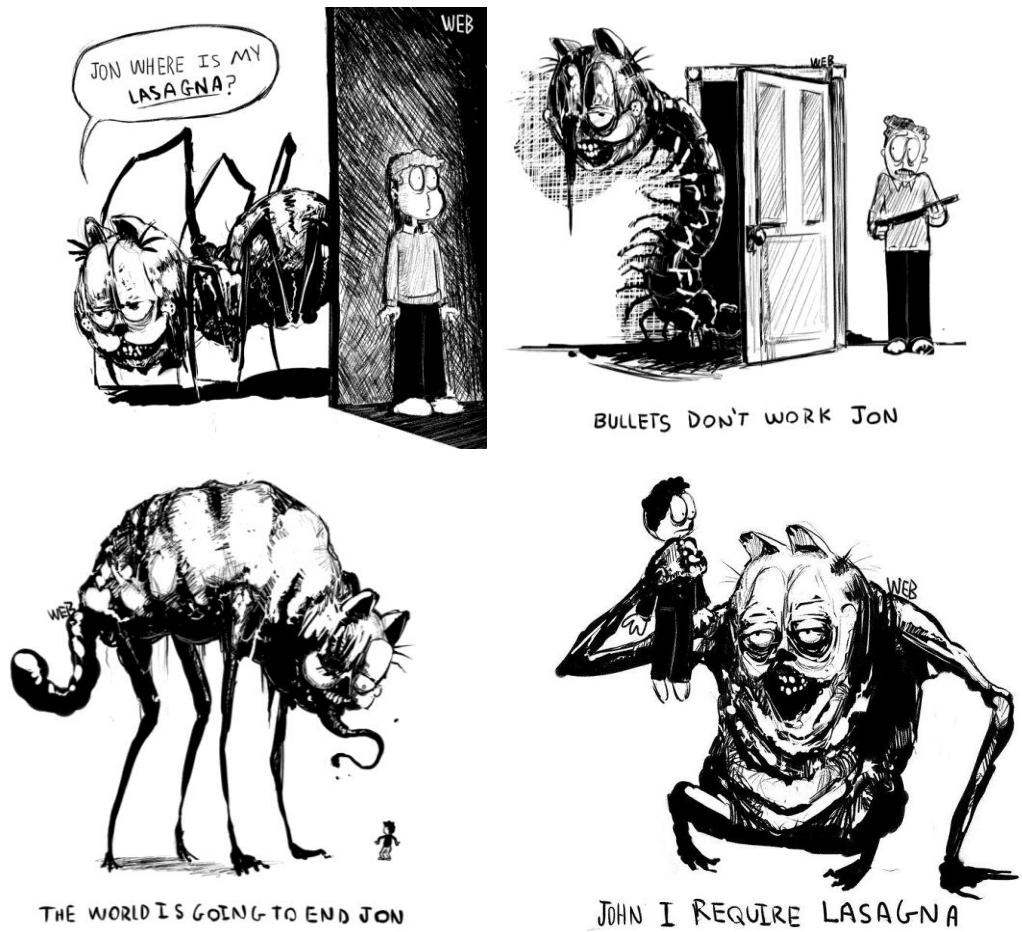


Image Thirteen:

This photoset is made up of four pen and ink drawings by William Burke from his “Corrupted Gallery.” Each shows Garfield as a different deformed monster interacting with his frightened owner. The detailed drawing style contrasts with the simplistic lines of the original strip, changing the overall tone from clean to stressful. The language used in Burke’s pen drawings differentiates from Jim Davis’s as the single sentences are intended to be Garfield speaking. Haunting, these images have been circulating the internet in a viral fashion, crossing platforms and sparking the human desire for the macabre.

Burke, W. (2017.) *The Corrupted Gallery*. [Pen on Paper] Retrieved from <https://williamburkeart.com/the-corrupted-gallery/>

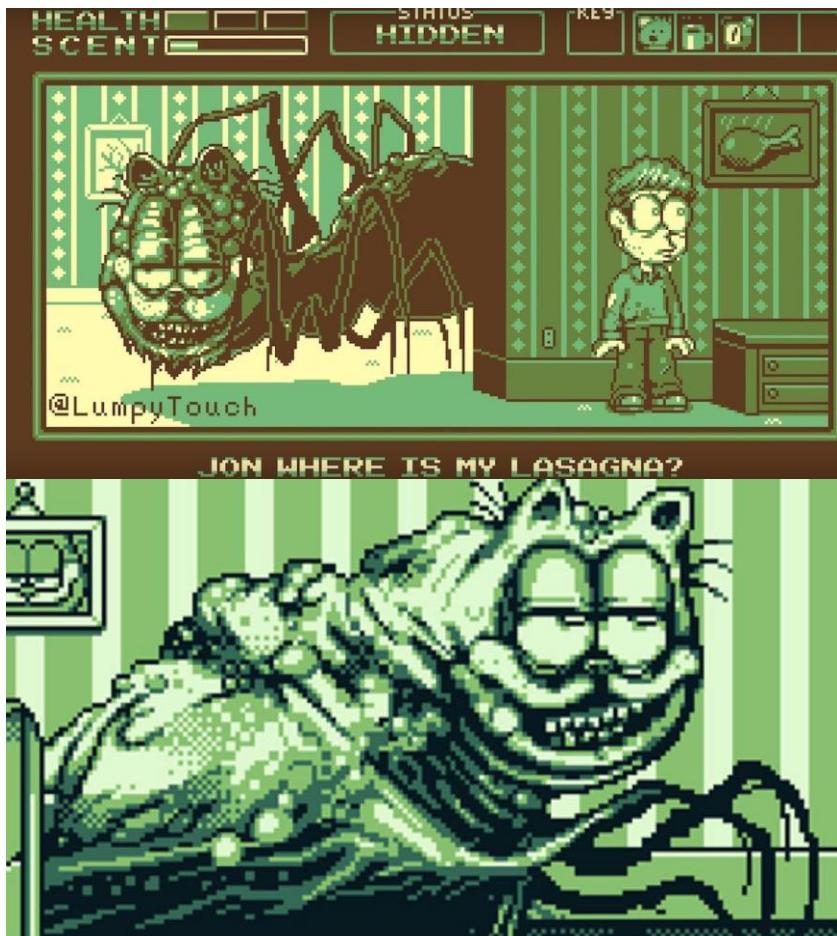


Image Fourteen:

This photoset is made up of two screengrabs of an animation made in the style of a Gameboy by Nintendo game by an artist under the name LumpyTouch. The animator was inspired by William Burke's pen drawings of a monstrous Garfield. This type of secondary appropriation shows what is possible if a copyright holder is open to reinterpretations: multiple levels of artists are able to create new and interesting--if disgusting--art. The animation is set to original music and each 30 second animation corresponds to one of Burke's drawings. LumpyTouch describes his work as "Garfield re-imagined as a Gameboy-styled horror game."

LumpyTouch. *Garfield Gameboy'd* (2018). [Video] Retrieved from:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fwR6mWJWuWQ>

## Epilogue

The shimmering afterlife of material culture and media called “nostalgia” is no longer a fluke. Nostalgia acts as a reactionary vice in the face of modernism--a desperate clinging to the way “it once was.” Under capitalism, businesses saw nostalgia’s “potential for profit”, and gave it “unprecedented currency.”<sup>183</sup> Consumers are given the illusion that they are having individual experiences and forming their own memories, when in fact their seemingly personal interactions are being curated by businesses, marketing agents, and capitalists. In the modern symbolic economy, consumers are given products to choose from to construct their identity, and may feel a connection to other consumers who purchased the same item. By acquiring and displaying objects, one creates a physical connection to that moment in time and places their own memories of a specific time onto that object. In this way, material culture functions as holding places for memories. Commodified nostalgia works to distill collective memories into the essence of a time period, becoming a stereotype of a shared past that people think is unique to them. Being able to “own” a piece of the “past,” no matter how distant, is rooted in the apprehension of culture fading into obscurity. Commodified nostalgia is a way for subside “historical amnesia,” providing objects that could end up in the future’s museums to explain the past. Here is where *Garfield* fits in.

A comic strip about the domestic life, Jim Davis accessed the growing desire for a tangible “home.” The increasing globalization of the market allows for tourists, especially those from the United States capitalist democracy, to feel at “home” while traveling due to the products and objects that act as placeholders for memories and experiences. *Garfield* became a perpetual home in the newspaper. Like a postcard from a loved one, the *Garfield* comic strips

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<sup>183</sup> Chrostowska, S.D. (2010) *Consumed by Nostalgia?* The John Hopkins University Press. p. 52.

offered a window back into a comfortable and familiar domesticity. Davis created something that wouldn't challenge or upset the reader, but instead comforted them with banality and humor. "Home" has now become so transient that people have become conditioned to not create relationships with any one place, constantly moving for jobs, relationships, family members, or themselves. Material objects have become the "roots" connecting someone to their home. The plush dolls or alarm clocks that are adorned with Garfield's face provide a facsimile of home, whether that be through memories of reading the comics as a protected child, or the comic strips themselves.

Davis was careful not to "oversaturate the market" with *Garfield* merchandise, which may seem like an absurdist statement due to all of the goods that exist. This sentiment comes from Davis's concern for manufacturing a collector's market, and imposing scarcity. Similar to McDonald's marketing ploy for only offering the McRib for a limited time, if an object is not endlessly available, consumers will treat it like a precious resource.<sup>184</sup> The face of nostalgia has changed since the second World War, when family heirlooms were lost and social practices became less relevant.<sup>185</sup> Nostalgia has now become the practice of reliving childhood memories through era-specific toys, music, and television, making pilgrimages to theme parks--the perfect market for *Garfield*. Nostalgia has become a personality trait; people are devoted to the things that remind them of what once was; either for a genial love, or a 'camp' irony. The fetishization of what is no longer, and, for many, *Garfield* products represent either an age or an attitude that

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<sup>184</sup> Deval, H., Mantel, S., Kardes, F., & Posavac, S. (2013). "How Naive Theories Drive Opposing Inferences from the Same Information." *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39(6), 1185-1201. doi:10.1086/668086

<sup>185</sup> Cross, G. (2017) *Consumed Nostalgia: Memory in the Age of Fast Capitalism*. Columbia University Press.

seems impossible in the present. Whatever is romanticized in this way can become commodified as there is absolutely a market for emotion.

This is why *Garfield* has yet to fade into obscurity: the population that was marketed *Garfield* as children through the television show, the comic strip, and collectibles is old enough to be nostalgic. As generations who never experienced turning on television for the Sunday morning cartoons to find Garfield there, or maybe never had a newspaper delivered to their house, *Garfield* means nothing to them emotionally. Yet, when they see an older generation collecting and romanticizing the character, they impart value on it as well. Aesthetically, Garfield's clean lines and bold colors match Generation Z's fashion statements.<sup>186</sup> In this way, *Garfield* has managed to remain marketable and profitable.

Garfield's afterlife is dedicated to the marketing genius of Davis, and his responses to re-imaginings of his work. The cat has become a worldwide phenomenon to the extent that a chain of Garfield-themed restaurants has opened in Canada and Dubai,<sup>187</sup> and a Garfield-themed Six Flags is on track to open in China July of 2020.<sup>188</sup> This project began as an attempt to explore why *Garfield* has been able to capture the public's attention in such an encompassing way, and provide an examination into a previously untouched area. There has never been an academic retrospective on *Garfield*, and perhaps part of this is the result of distance--until now, Garfield's role in society was purely commercial, but due to nostalgia and camp, he has been elevated. The cantankerous cat lent himself to examinations of modern iterations of established practices--folk tales, capitalism, and copyright laws--providing a cultural insight into each.

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<sup>186</sup> See Images One and Two.

<sup>187</sup> See Images Three.

<sup>188</sup> See Image Four.



Image One:

London-based clothing brand Lazy Oaf is known for doing collections that appropriate different cartoons, like the Looney Tunes, and Hello Kitty. Bold and simple, their clothes employ clean lines and solid colors, matching kitsch with fashion. The Garfield x Lazy Oaf collection debuted in 2014 with a launch party that featured cat-shaped foods and lasagna.

*Garfield x Lazy Oaf Collection.* (2014) [Digital Image] Retrieved from:  
[https://s3.amazonaws.com/neonscope/articles/2014/garfield\\_lazy\\_oaf\\_10.jpg](https://s3.amazonaws.com/neonscope/articles/2014/garfield_lazy_oaf_10.jpg)



Image Two:

The collection included different articles of clothing featuring Garfield themes, or Garfield himself. The collection shows the aestheticization of Garfield, and the way that his now nostalgia-driven image is used in fashion. The target audience for these articles of clothing costing between thirty and two hundred dollars are youths between 15 and 30.

*Garfield x Lazy Oaf Collection.* (2014) [Digital Image] Retrieved from: <http://i-likeitalot.com/wp-content/gallery/lazy-oaf-x-garfield/garfield-lookbook-15.jpg>



Image Three:

This is the flag ship store for GarfieldEats. The concept behind the restaurant is that it has an innovative app that allows you to place delivery orders, in-store orders, play games to earn coupons, watch *Garfield* shows while you wait and even order *Garfield* merchandise to be delivered with your pizza. They call it an “enter-gaging app”; an app that is both entertaining, and engaging. The thought behind the restaurant is to improve diner experience through technology. Perhaps Davis has stumbled upon his next goldmine by supporting two young Indian entrepreneurs who have been developing this app for nearly three years. A truly late-stage capitalists dream, GarfieldEats takes a chance on the public’s desire to eat where they read. The online menu for Garfield Eats includes Garfield shaped pizzas, lasagna (naturally), salad, spaghetti, “smoothi”, and something called a “Garfaccino.” Whatever a dark chocolate Garfield is, you can have it for dessert! Both the app and the restaurant have great reviews.

GarfieldEats. *Jim Davis on GarfieldEATS Canada App.* (2019). Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/X5Pmh5vrzwM>.

Google. (2019, June). *Storefront of 995 Bloor St W, Toronto ON M6H 1M.* From: <https://www.google.com/maps/place/GarfieldEATS+Toronto>



Image Four:

On target to open in July of 2020 in Zhejiang, China, this Six Flags theme park will be *Garfield* themed. According to a site about the park, Garfield has been chosen as the mascot because Bugs Bunny, and Superman are “obscure in China.” This will be the first ever Six Flags branch in China, and the chairman of one of the investing firms spoke on the matter saying, “Garfield is already a beloved character in China and we look forward to bringing him to life inside Six Flags Zhejiang and Six Flags Chongqing.”

*Garfield*. (n.d.). Six Flags Wiki. Retrieved from:  
<https://sixflags.fandom.com/wiki/Garfield>.

*Garfield to Be Signature Character of Six Flags-Branded Theme Parks in China*. (2017, May 18). BusinessWire. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20170518005768/en/>.

Bonus Garf-facts:



For nearly thirty years, Garfield landline phones have been washing up on a beach in Brittany, France. Their occurrence remained a mystery until 2019, with more than two hundred phones washing up on the beach every year. In March of 2019, A crashed cargo ship was found near the beach's shore, half full of Garfield phones. A glimpse into what consumer society will leave behind, the photos of these future fossils are an insight to capitalism's legacy.

Le Muir, C.S. *Washed Up Garfield Phones*. (2019, March). Retrieved from:  
<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/why-have-garfield-phones-been-washing-ashore-france-30-years-180971835/>

Trivia:

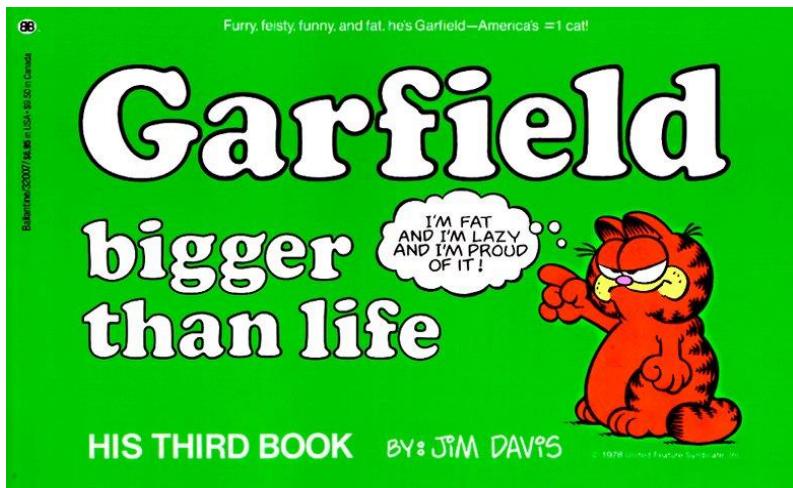
The name Jon Arbuckle came from an old coffee commercial I remember hearing. I'd also used the name as an 'expert source' to add 'credibility' to my speeches. When I created the comic strip, the name just seemed to fit the kind of poor sap who would get stuck with a cranky cat like Garfield."

-Jim Davis



The iconic suction-cup-footed Garfield was a factory mistake. Intended to have Velcro on his feet, the doll was originally going to stick on people's drapes; Davis figured that they could still sell the incorrect footed Garfields and that maybe people would stick them to the windows in their houses. After releasing them to the public, people began sticking them to their car windows, turning the plush doll into a mobile advertisement. It just so happened that the suction-cupped dolls came out during a car-decorating fad in the late 80s. Cars had become the "mobile living rooms" and people wanted to display their personalities on the road. One of the greatest marketing mishaps, the suction cupped dolls became so intensely sought after that after selling out in stores, people reportedly broke into cars in order to steal the Garfields stuck to the windows. Forty car windows were smashed in Los Angeles in 1987, and the only thing that was stolen out of them were the Garfields. The Garfield "stuck-on-you" doll made just over 50 million dollars before the unintended tapped bubble of car decorations burst.

Rossen, J. (2016). *The Great Garfield Window Craze*. Mental Floss. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/87936/great-garfield-car-window-toy-craze>



When Jim Davis decided to make a book of *Garfield* comics, he was discouraged at the fact that the traditional format for turning newspaper strips into books bastardized their original readability. Transposing horizontal newspaper comics into a blocky book made some of the strips become vertical, and in Jim Davis's opinion, "ruining them." Davis instead invented the long and fat book shape, now known as "the Garfield format." This stroke of genius is what propelled *Garfield* to reside on the New York Times best sellers list more than any other comic, ever. The unusual shape of the book made it unable to be shelved traditionally, forcing bookstores to place it on the endcaps of shelves, or purchase specialty-made Garfield-themed shelving. Both of these options are known as prime real estate in bookstores, and Davis's inventive shape permanently secured the fat cat a spot in the limelight, pushing *Garfield* into the public eye rather than leaving him to rot on the shelves.

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