Cultural Analytics: webcomics and video games
(guest material during Lev Manovich keynote address)

Jeremy Douglass
Postdoctoral Researcher
Software Studies Initiative
University of California San Diego
cultural analytics
example approaches to visual datasets
focus today on two areas
web comics
data mining
images published over a long time-series
patterns in templating and reuse:
A *Softer World* &
*Dinosaur Comics*
A Softer World

I took the wrong delivery van for a joy ride.

They hunted me down. They took me from my home.

They fed me ice cream cake until I passed out.
low-level repetition as internal structure

They hunted me down. They took me from my home.

I took the wrong delivery van for a joy ride.

They fed me ice cream cake until I passed out.

comic generated from one photo asset, placed 3 times
They hunted me down. They took me from my home.
I took the wrong delivery van for a joy ride.
They fed me ice cream cake until I passed out.
Operator, put God on.
Yes, I'll hold.
mama says mama says
God?
You're next.
Is there enough air?
Is help even coming?
Is it too soon to suggest spin the bottle?
cultural objects as their templates

mean image generated from
100 days of A Softer World
Dinosaur Comics

I feel today that my actions will be charged with symbolism.

As a male, I take on the position of the Everyman – with the latter syllable perhaps the most important from our post-Feminist perspective. The house clearly represents repressed femininity, at once recalling the blissful days of the past, while reminding us of their fundamental injustices. My action in destroying the house remains a puzzling enigma.

The emphasis on male oppression is continued as I stand poised to crush this woman beneath my man-foot.

I've always seen you more as representing the essential struggle between man and his darker half.

...but the desires of my darker nature manifest themselves as misogyny!

Oh, that is a part of it, to be sure.

Surely that must enter into your analysis!
asset-based vs template based art
patterns in texture over time: *Diesel Sweeties & 8-bit Theatre*
Diesel Sweeties

1. WHY ARE YOU SO MAD? WHAT DID I DO?!

2. SWEETIE, WILL YOU AT LEAST TELL ME?

3. IRRATIONAL FLESH-LING! WHY MUST I LOVE YOU?
WHY ARE YOU SO MAD? WHAT DID I DO?!

SWEETIE, WILL YOU AT LEAST TELL ME?

IRRATIONAL FLESH-LING! WHY MUST I LOVE YOU?
SWEETIE, WILL YOU AT LEAST TELL ME?

YOU USUALLY CONTACTS?
NAH. THESE JUST LOOK COOL.

IRRATIONAL FLESH-LING! WHY MUST I LOVE YOU?

WE HIPSTERS OWE RA GLASS A DEBT WE CAN NEVER REPAY.

pixel purism: 9 years of Diesel Sweeties
8-bit Theatre
hybrid techniques: pixel, clip, filter art
texture evolution: 8 years of 8-bit Theatre
inside the web comics form: data mining
“juxtaposed images”
Freakangels

(Warren Ellis, 2008)
AAAAAA DEAD BODY!

--THERE'S A DEAD BODY, AND--
Freakangels, six pages
Freakangels, pages by panel count

3   4   3   4   2   4
Freakangels, panel sequence
23 YEARS AGO, TWELVE STRANGE CHILDREN WERE BORN IN ENGLAND AT EXACTLY THE SAME MOMENT.
6 YEARS AGO, THE WORLD ENDED.
THIS IS THE STORY OF WHAT HAPPENED NEXT.

Freakangels, panel reading order
Freakangels, panel reading order
Freakangels, panel types

2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1

Freakangels, panel types
Freakangels, brightness by page

193, 148, 212, 220, 167, 180
Freakangels, saturation by panel

30, 32, 35, 60, 48, 42, 63, 26, 24, 31, 21, 17
Freakangels

pages classified by page type in OS X Finder
Freakangels, panels per page

- 1-Panel
- 2-Panel
- 3-Panel
- 4-Panel
video gameplay
Key input over the duration of a gameplay session. Each row corresponds to a key, each column to a moment in time. -- Jeremy Douglas, Oct 19 2008
Mode Detection by ROI in Fatal Frame 2
Jeremy Douglass
Postdoctoral Researcher
Software Studies Initiative
University of California San Diego