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Millennial Rust

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

John McGowan
Candidate for Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree
and Renée Crown University Honors
May 2014

Honors Capstone Project in Illustration

Capstone Project Advisor: _____
Yvonne Buchanan

Capstone Project Reader: _____
Frank Cammuso

Honors Director: _____
Stephen Kuusisto, Director

Date: April 23, 2014

Abstract

Millennial Rust is a one-artist anthology comic, consisting of the first chapter of a serialized story, *The Turkey Avenger*, a series of autobiographical comic strips, and a collection of developmental material from the two projects.

The Turkey Avenger follows the exploits of the Turkey Avenger, a self-styled superhero with no discernable superpowers who hopes to “do good” in the best way he knows how: fighting crime. Unfortunately for him, the Turkey Avenger has no idea where to begin his quest for justice, stumbles into what appears to be a kidnapping, and is soon drawn into a conspiracy that’s clearly over his head. This comic book contains the first chapter of the story, beginning right in the heart of a vague Western New York city. It ends with the set-up of a four-part story.

The autobiographical comics, *Belted*, are drawn from my senior year journal and chronicle the thoughts, frustrations, and struggles encountered while I attempt to create the Capstone project itself. The two projects are included simultaneously because the autobiographical strips became a way to test and explore the medium of comics in a more informal way, explain some of the process of making the story, and helped me to grow as an artist.

The center of the book, between the two sections, there are two drawings of the Turkey Avenger: the first drawing of the character, from 2006, and the final drawing of the character pre-*Millennial Rust*, from 2013.

All material within *Millennial Rust* was created using a brush and ink to draw the comics by hand, and then digitally putting in color and the lettering for some of the comics.

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Executive Summary

Millennial Rust is one-man comics anthology, which is a complicated way of saying “my baby.” Most comics flooding the American market are comic books, twenty-two to thirty-two page magazine booklets created by teams of professionals, splitting artistic duties into separate jobs, such as the writer, the penciller, the colorist, and the letterer, who makes the classic word balloons and lays out text on a page. Many of these people work under contract or freelance for major publishing companies and create superhero stories on a monthly basis. However, “comics” is also a medium, the combination of words and pictures to create a story, which can manifest as comic strips in newspapers, webcomics, mini comics, zines, single panel cartoons, graphic novels, .gifs, and instruction manuals, just to name a few. People from all over the world create a stylistically diverse array of comics about everything from existential ant colonies to parental gender-reassignment, American/Middle Eastern relations to that face you make when a cute kitten throws up.

The name *Millennial Rust* stems from two phrases, “Millennials” and “Rust Belt.” The first, Millennials, is a name given to my generation by the media, used to describe young people born between 1985 and 2005, now ready to enter the workforce. Google it, and you’ll find web news source articles on why we’re lazy, crazy, screwed, saviors, liberal, conservative, or whatever gets a website page counts. We are the buzzword of business, and there’s a feeling of newness, young

hipness, and upstart ambition in Millennials that shines through the viral videos and interviews about us. And while I do relate to these ideas and people of my generation, I feel a disconnect.

The last word I would describe my beloved hometown of Buffalo, New York, is newness. Its architecture, museums, local foods, rich history, and long period of decline make the Queen City, and many other Rust Belt cities, feel entrenched. This isn't New York, old things aren't crushed and replaced with the new when they break; in the Rust Belt, nothing ever gets thrown out. Therefore, Millennial Rust is the vehicle I'm creating to capture the friction between those two ideas: where I'm from and who I want to be. This first issue is #0, because the run will be more limited and the book shorter than the first, full issue.

The Turkey Avenger follows the exploits of the Turkey Avenger, a self-styled superhero with no discernible superpowers who hopes to “do good” in the best way he knows how: fighting crime. Unfortunately for him, the Turkey Avenger has no idea where to begin his quest for justice, stumbles into what appears to be a kidnapping, and is soon drawn into a conspiracy that's clearly over his head. This comic contains the first chapter of the story, beginning right in the heart of a vague Western New York city. It ends with the set-up of a four-part story about how the suburban superhero and his discontented partner first meet.

I'm doing the plotting, writing, penciling, inking, lettering, partial coloring, book design, essays, and additional work as lone creator, not a massive collaborative team like many comics in the vein of *The Turkey Avenger*, which slows down the process considerably.

The second portion of the issue contains autobiographical comics, *Belted*, drawn from my senior year sketchpad, which chronicle the frustrations and struggles encountered while I attempt to create the Capstone project. In both narratives, The Turkey Avenger and I are coming to terms with our own failures and learning process found while pursuing our dreams, since this Turkey Avenger comic is my attempt at a longer-form comic. I learn while he learns, and the finished issue #0 of *Millennial Rust* will hopefully reflect self-aware, parallel stories of growth.

Acknowledgements

A special thanks to Catherine Ward, for letting me turn in a turkey superhero for a college-entry portfolio, to Anna Paterno for treating these characters like pop-culture icons, Dan Blaushild for listening to me ink, and to Frank Cammuso, for giving the tools I needed to succeed. To my classmates and professors in Illustration, for their inspiration. Thanks to my family, for more than I can ever list. Thank you to Becca Piduch, who has learned far too much about comics.

And thank you, Yvonne Buchanan, for sharing your dreams with me.

Advice to Future Honors Students

1. Start your finished drawings in at least Fall of senior year.
2. Find more than one advisor you trust.
3. Figure out how to incorporate it into your coursework.
4. Ask for help from everyone.
5. Have a drink, take breaks.

Reflection Essay

Introduction

I created *Millennial Rust* to fulfill my lifelong dream of making comics. Despite being trained as an illustrator, I'd only had one project that featured comics over the course of my undergraduate career and never had made a finished one myself. The halftone colors, heavy black ink, and exploding sound effects of comic books had consumed most of my recreational reading in middle school, and became a fixture in my adolescent life, providing endless enjoyment as escapism and inspiration for my artwork. But I knew I wouldn't be satisfied, deep down, until I'd jumped from comic book reader to creator.

I reluctantly call myself "an artist," preferring to describe my artwork as "drawing pictures." In my head, the title of artist creates an air of separation from society by way of reverence, as if the viewer and participant need to be aware that they are having a distinct experience with the artwork outside of a daily routine. I love commercial art, including images from pop culture, packaging, found objects, posters, stickers, tee shirts, or coloring books. These, among an innumerable amount of other sources, compose the art of daily life, which can be used and enjoyed by anyone without a self-awareness of the interaction. Comics, in the hands of an experienced cartoonist, can be both disposable and masterful when a reader flies through a story without pausing to notice how effectively the artwork conveys it. They perfectly blend art and story, words and pictures, to forge a medium that gives incredible control to both the reader and the creator.

Millennial Rust is a comic book, not a graphic novel, because of content, format, and semantics. The book contains one chapter of a serialized story, two separate images, and a series of comic strips, while a graphic novel is typically one longer-form story, visually communicated as a comic. I printed the book with a saddle-stitch staple and no spine in order to resemble a magazine digest or an American comic book, which lends itself to the more casual reading experience of a magazine than a traditional book. This format allows the reader to think less about the container of the story and naturally focus on the content. Finally, the term “graphic novel” sounds scholarly and has become associated with an object of study and analysis, rather unfettered enjoyment of the material. The shift is not unlike the different expectations for a more literary novel, like *Infinite Jest* by David Foster Wallace, versus a popular fiction novel, like *Salem’s Lot* by Stephen King. But before it was even a comic, the Turkey Avenger started off as a high-school joke.

Freshman year of high school, I began to doodle various holiday characters, such as Santa Claus for Christmas, the Easter Bunny for Easter, but stumbled over the smaller celebrations. Recognizing a cultural hole to be filled, I sketched out a flying man in a bird-themed costume, called the Winged Avenger, who would spend his nights as a powerless vigilante that unsuccessfully attempted to save hundreds of thousands of turkeys from the slaughterhouse before each Thanksgiving Eve. Although I miss the joke, the character transcended it because of the hopeless nature of his quest, and I would revisit him year after year in my notebooks, eventually becoming my artistic concentration at

the end of high school. My college-entry portfolio needed a hook, something I could devote time and energy into yet still be passionate about, and that became the vehicle for the Turkey Avenger. At this point, the idea of a suburban superhero began to take form, one who could never solve suburban problems of recreational drug use, rising divorce rates, and unease about public transportation.

I chose the Turkey Avenger comic as my undergraduate thesis project four years later to force myself into creating work within an academic structure that I had been unable to do independently. For years, I tried to make comics but held myself back due to insecurity and inexperience, never wanting to devote the amount of time necessary to make a comic book alone. I even wrote a Turkey Avenger story that never got past the plotting stage, which set up the character with an older partner, a desire to be an urban superhero, but the inability to overcome his suburban roots. But these early stories and drawings captured the attention of my college freshman advisor, Yvonne Buchanan, who would support my urge to make comics and eventually became my Capstone Advisor. With her guidance, the emphasis on ironic superheroics turned down, replaced with a character-driven narrative that used superheroes as symbolism for extroverted personalities and reaction instead of action defining character traits.

The Story

By the time senior year began, *Millennial Rust* began to take shape as a multi-chapter story that enabled me to learn the process of comic book production outside of a course, while still working towards one larger narrative. I knew that

the Turkey Avenger would be the main character of the comic, and that the story would revolve around a transitional point in his life, later defined as the first public appearance of the character in his world.

Both classic superhero stories from the Bronze Age of comics and alternative comics by contemporary cartoonists inspired me to make comics, most of whom I'd discovered slowly over the past ten years. Out of the old school classics, nobody drew superhuman action like Jack Kirby. Creator of the majority of the Marvel Comics superheroes of the 1960s, Kirby revolutionized the medium itself with endless imagination and the pinnacle of melodrama while still emphasizing their human elements and flaws. His bombastic style contained movement in every panel, his mid-career work functions as a bible for relentless invention, and his compositions influence me directly when trying to weed out stagnant panels on a page.

As for the cartoonists, contemporary artist/writers that influence me include Paul Pope, Adrian Tomine, Daniel Clowes, and Kyle Baker. Many of these artists rely on strong figurative work, heavy black ink work, and expressive brush strokes, and their stories tend to favor mood and character over plot and genre elements. Probably my greatest artistic influence, Paul Pope captures a rock n roll cool in his visually messy yet controlled work, often inspired by music, noir, superhero, and science fiction themes. When I was younger, my drawings were frequently illegible, with large portions of unreadable information that I feared would hold me back from creating art professionally. Upon discovering Pope's work, I learned to embrace the looseness in my natural and energetic line

work and knew that, with practice and training, I could someday rein in the less coherent elements of my images.

The two projects composing *Millennial Rust* tell a simultaneous narrative of self-discovery. The autobiographical comics are drawn from my senior year journal and chronicle the frustrations and struggles encountered while I attempted to create the book itself. In many ways, the character of the Turkey Avenger and I are confronting our own failures and learning process found while pursuing our dreams. Since this Turkey Avenger comic is my first attempt at a longer-form comic, I learn while he learns, and the finished product will hopefully reflect self-aware, parallel stories of growth, in artistic technique and intent.

The Turkey Avenger, the story, follows the exploits of the Turkey Avenger, a self-styled superhero with no discernible superpowers who hopes to “do good” in the best way he knows how: fighting crime. Unfortunately for him, the Turkey Avenger has no idea where to begin his quest for justice, stumbles into what appears to be a kidnapping, and is soon drawn into a conspiracy that’s clearly over his head. Issue Zero of *Millennial Rust* contains the first chapter of the story, beginning in the heart of a Western New York city, some distance from our hero’s home. It ends with the set-up of a four-part story about how the suburban superhero and his partner, Duane, first meet while the Turkey Avenger first becomes famous.

Chapter One sets up the story as a chase scene in which TA saves a young boy from supposed would-be-muggers, including a discontented leader named

Duane, only to have the boy disappear into a limousine and drive away, leaving the Turkey Avenger to call for help.

Chapter Two is a series of short, one- to several-page comics about the following months, showing his relationships, introducing other characters, and developing the character arcs to play out over the story. The events of Chapter One are caught on tape from a CCTV camera, and within days, TA becomes a viral trend, although more a fifteen-minute local celeb than anything.

Chapter Three covers TA finally connecting what happened to the little boy, the roles of the various players introduced, and what did it all have to do with the city mayor? A conspiracy at play, or just a series of coincidences? It culminates with Duane and the Turkey Avenger discovering they have more in common with each other than they thought.

The fourth and final chapter finds the Turkey Avenger realizing his quest to be a superhero may not go hand in hand with his desire to help people, or at least not in the way he thought.

The original plan for the project was to create the first two chapters of *The Turkey Avenger* and publish it under that title, with the remaining two chapters to be completed as a separate milestone in the following year. The final semester of senior year, I signed up for the course Illustration Concepts: Sequential, a new and irregularly offered class that would alter the path of my entire Capstone. Despite vastly different subject matter in our work, professor and experienced cartoonist Frank Cammuso gave me a fresh critical eye, comic book enthusiasm, and even a professional level brush, the Windsor Newton Series 7 No. 2, with

which a majority of comic professionals ink their work. Most importantly, he taught me how to ask questions to determine the motivations of my characters, which would then in turn effect their actions, and thus the plot of the story.

Late in the game, the focus of the comic shifted from the plot-driven “becoming famous” storyline to the tale of how the two men meet and need each other to achieve their goals. The Turkey Avenger is a young man in his early twenties who lives in a Rust Belt city with his Aunt Carol and his teenage cousin Ally after his own parents move to New England. He’s motivated into costume by a childhood desire to do good, be a man of his word, and become a hero like the ones he remembers from his youth. Despite having no superpowers, he creates his own superhero persona and vigilante operation, going on weekly patrols in search of poorly defined “justice.” The Turkey Avenger represents action, impulse, and determination.

As a balance, Duane represents the idea, a thinking man who drifted far from his dual passions of math and social responsibility into a job he resents. Originally a mathematician from New York City, Duane now begrudgingly works as a bookkeeper and second in command to a shady construction company in Upstate New York, which the Turkey Avenger mistakes for a gang while they’re off the clock. In his spare time, he tries to write poetry and work on the Millennium Prize list of unsolved math problems.

Unfortunately, many of these character details aren’t revealed until the beginning of Chapter Two, as I decided to drop the reader in the middle of a chase scene. This way, I could begin working in a more visually driven area of the story

because I don't totally trust my writing ability and but still wanted an exciting start to the comic. The decision to drop Chapter Two from this issue of the comic anthology prompted the inclusion of the journal comics in the final version of *Millennial Rust*.

When I starting creating them, the journal comics were just that: an exercise in reflection, my attempt at jotting down frustrations I didn't always want to say out loud, or small occurrences that I knew I'd want to remember. Many comic artists also keep comic-based journals, some of which become published work in their own right, like James Kochalka's *American Elf*. A large influence on my *Belted* comics as time went on, *American Elf* is structured with four panels in a square, telling a singular story beat with a captioned first person narration by the author. As time went on, I stopped relying on this solely as a method of working, instead beginning to experiment with a six-panel layout and no narration, although I feel like I did very little experimenting outside of the format. Instead, I wrote and drew *Belted* in my sketchpad with no preliminary drawing, working with the limitations of no planning or correcting the images. Often, the exact dialogue was harder to pin down than the drawings, and could change the meaning of the pictures by the time I was lettering the final panel. The stories collected in *Millennial Rust* are all the comics relevant to the creation of *The Turkey Avenger*, and were drawn right up until the last day before the test print of the comic book.

Technique

I created all of the comics in *Millennial Rust* using an ink and brush technique standard of many comic book professionals, although with looser pencil and preliminary drawings than the average comic book artist. I work this way due to the expressive, quick, and decisive nature of inking. As a kid, I drew with ballpoint pens and later Sharpies over my pencil drawings of various superheroes and action movie heroes, attempting to recreate the line work from my Spider-man and Batman comic books. But the brush can do much more, varying in line weight, texture, speed, and mark making, which allows me to leave more of the decision making process for the final image in the inking stage of drawing. I also draw the original pages over double the print size of the finished artwork, at around 13.5 inches by 20.1 inches, which allows me to make a variety of marks with a longer arm and hand movement, controlling the directional nature of the lines. These odd proportions led to a non-standard comic book size of 6.75 inches by 9.75 inches, which came about when incorrectly measuring the original pages, and forced me to make an intentional decision about the reprint size of the finished book.

Using black India ink and a brush creates images with a binary nature: black or white, positive or negative. This simplicity creates a flatness that removes the image from reality and more into the realm of the reader's mind. The greater the abstraction from reality, the less specific the emotions generated by the creator are, and the more the reader is able to interact with and project onto the image. When I need backgrounds of houses in a panel, I sometimes only draw the

silhouette shape of a classic pentagon house, allowing the reader to create the appropriate house in their head to fill the space, and not allowing the details of the house to detract from the information in the foreground. This way the information can flow more clearly as a visual narrative, as well as provide space for the word balloons and text to occupy unobtrusively. However, these elements are primarily determined at the final drawing stage, as a detail that serves the greater plot.

I wrote a story in the superhero/action genre because I enjoy escapism. The motifs, archetypes, and symbolism attract me, such as good versus evil, extreme morality, costumed characters, and overblown dialogue. I use the assumption that it's natural in the world of the Turkey Avenger for men to run around in costume, even if they take some people by surprise by their appearance at a given moment. Ally, although skeptical of her cousin's superhero lifestyle, doesn't question the costume as someone in our world would. But this suspension of disbelief, and later buying into the reality these characters live in, is pure magic for me. I grow excited about creating different worlds for people to explore, leaving their own troubles behind as they dig deeper into a new place with its own logic, limited by only my rules, ability, and imagination.

The story for the Turkey Avenger began as a general gist of beginning and end with a few key moments, followed by developing characters, figuring out their relationships to one another, splitting the story into chapters, and then page by page plot. At that point, the method of working switched from written language to pictorial writing. I developed a method of plotting pages that I learned from Benjamin Marra, a comic creator and founder of Traditional Comics. I write

out one sentence for the action that occurs on each page, or what needs to be accomplished, and draw out small thumbnails of each panel on a page, working back and forth to create a balance on several levels of reading: the panel, the page, and the book.

I learned that in a comic, the story is god. Although sometimes rendered as lushly as the most gorgeous of illustrations, each panel of a comic serves to both answer a question from the previous panel and ask a new one. The same goes for writing a page, which frequently ends with a cliffhanger, causing the reader to eagerly flip the page for a larger, more rewarding answer or jump in the story that would be lessened by the immediate response of having the two images presented side-by-side. Therefore, if an image in a comic disrupts this continuous flow of reading, the viewer is pulled from the story and back into the acknowledgement of the comic's two-dimensional nature as a series of images. This isn't a negative facet of some comics, merely an element that creators can play with when designing a page, character, or image.

For this project, I chose more standard page layouts for both *The Turkey Avenger* and the *Belted* comic strips to learn "the rules" of comics before I choose how much to break them. I wrote and drew Chapter One intending to limit the page formatting techniques to those from the 1960s and earlier, particularly the 9-panel grid. This page layout establishes a grid of thirds across the page, with all panels fitting completely into some combination of thirds. The seventh page of *The Turkey Avenger* illustrates this as a classic 9-panel layout, but many of my pages have some combination of division not unlike the grid. This method allows

for a natural hierarchy of reading, left to right and top to bottom, with the least amount of confusion about where to look for the next panel. By not focusing on finding information on a page, the reader picks up on other story telling elements, such as body language of characters, multiple actions occurring in a panel, and dialogue cues, with less disruption.

Ultimately, coloring a comic comes down to a balance between aesthetic and intent. Certain coloring is typically reserved for specific markets, such as a full color palette underneath black ink lines, which tends to be used for mainstream superhero comics and children's comics. Manga tends to have a black and white on cheap paper style because of a quick turn around and high volume of output, neither of which apply to my work despite how much I love the final look. However, many independently published comics have a limited color palette, normally to keep offset printing costs and time down to a minimum for the typically smaller teams of people creating them.

The decision to digitally color my comic and to what degree became a form follows function decision, with a hard deadline to meet and additional work to complete. When coloring, I attempted to use the closest color I could to a "mental grey." This isn't an industry term, but something I came up with to describe a shade and hue that registers to the reader as a value of an object, not the local color of the object on the page. I chose blue because, even when desaturated, most people still recognize it as a shade of blue, unlike orange, reds, and yellows, which become brown, pink, and sand, respectively. The color blue also recedes

next to the black lines and dialogue on the page, making it a secondary element to the important story-telling information.

Evaluation

To swear or not to swear became the question for several weeks, up in the air until two days before the completion of book. Profanity adds a level of naturalism to the dialogue, but also limits the appropriateness for certain age groups, and may even work against the rest of the story when juxtaposed with the exaggerated images. Travis and Tony, the youngest construction workers/supposed-gang-members, curse out other characters over excitement, frustration, and just while talking to each other as part of their day to day conversations. With fear of being too pretentious, Shakespeare's ancillary characters, such as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern from *Hamlet* and Tubal from *The Merchant of Venice*, inspired me to create personalities for the extra heads needed in the story, not just generic henchmen-type figures. Instead, these common man characters highlight the absurdity of the situation, provide some visual comic relief, and playing the key role in Chapter Three when Duane and the Turkey Avenger meet. In the end, I chose to only keep in "ass," which can be said on most tv and radio stations, because I want to be able to sell the Turkey Avenger to middle grade/high school readers at some point. I'm unsure if I still support that decision, but luckily, I digitally lettered the comic book, so I can re-edit the dialogue in the future. However, the *Belted* strips, as uncensored journals, contain the language I intended to use when the ideas first came to me, unedited.

The middle of the book features a side-by-side comparison of the first Turkey Avenger drawing in my sketchbooks and one of my final drawings before I began plotting the first chapter of *The Turkey Avenger*. The drawings ended up in the book due to a page count requirement, and I added them while at a print shop completing the final book. However, they ended up being the only supplemental drawings in *Millennial Rust*, but center the book and provide context I need in the project, possibly to the reader's detriment. To feel fulfilled with my project, I needed that starting point, the drawing from 2006, visible for the world to see, whether it interrupted the first time reading experience or not. The cleansing feeling of closure came upon placing it into the book, and it serves a bridge between the story and the meta-story of creating the book.

I enjoy the reflection needed to render myself as a little cartoon. After the first *Belted* comic, I began drawing myself exclusively from my head, keeping what I believed myself to look like and often not redrawing the character that appeared on the page at first attempt. The narration slowly switched from conversational to rhythmic, if present. By treating myself as a character, the journal became more enjoyable to read and easier to write. I stopped considering the audience it was written, and began to prioritize the gag and punch line approach of first telling myself a joke, hoping others could enjoy it as well. The comic strips now remind me of the doodles in my childhood notebooks, which I still think of as my "true" style of drawing. I didn't succeed in creating a universally accessible series of comics, but I did create a system and confidence

in journaling my life, and plan to continue *Belted* as a personal way of retaining the fleeting moments I struggle to hold onto.

Redefining Duane's motivation in the final three months altered the story significantly, and he developed into my favorite character in *The Turkey Avenger* so far. By becoming a former mathematician and New Yorker, Duane now is the self-aware smartest man in the room, who knows exactly how removed he is from his abilities, interests, and past. While the Turkey Avenger sees the Rust Belt city as an overwhelming experience, Duane struggles to find his place in a city feels like he settled for some shorter stick experience. Both characters emote feelings I have felt and feel nothing like, which allows me to present multiple sides of an idea in a story by thinking like either one of the men.

The biggest shortcoming in the project stems from my battle with depression, and its near absence from the comic. Coming off of medication during the summer, I believed depression behind me until it struck deep in the end of winter, beginning of spring. Barely able to write and draw this comic, I just managed to stay afloat while getting stable enough to keep up with my coursework. Unfortunately, I only drew two journal comics during this time, the ballpoint pen drawings with no panel border and the single panel comic. I made little effort to reflect on it after I became healthier, choosing instead to move forward with the planned work, aware that Chapter Two wouldn't get completed. This decision forced me to look into other methods of creating a substantial final product, which led to the dual narrative of making the comics and the Turkey Avenger story itself. Needing a new title for the package, I chose *Millennial Rust*

to capture the disconnect between being a young Millennial attending a major university with the world at my finger tips and the perceived limitations that comes with calling Buffalo, NY, my hometown. This duality felt appropriate for a book with superheroes with masked identities, multiple storylines, and myself, who grew up with my time split between downtown and suburban Buffalo, never comfortable in either.

Although I chose to not write about my depression overtly, those comics skirt around the sinking beginning, then return more purposefully written as I recovered. However, I feel that *The Turkey Avenger* Chapter One stands emotionally hollow on its own because too much of the reveal of characters and their motivation had been reserved for the short, two page sections of Chapter Two. Without these present, it stands a neat piece of action story, possibly confusing, but artistically drafted to my satisfaction. As a visual artist, I'm proud of the comic, but as a writer, I'm disappointed that it only serves as a teaser for a larger story. Still, it is my first piece of written fiction since the end of high school, and I have no intention of rewriting or scrapping the story, simply pushing ahead with the lessons learned to finish the first Turkey Avenger book.

The Future

I'm going to keep the initial print run of *Millennial Rust* Issue Zero under one hundred, and probably under fifty copies in total because of price, content, and marketability. The printed copy of *Millennial Rust* is expensive to produce and could be awkward for consumers because the comics in *Belted* refer to

personal, Syracuse University-specific events, and circumstances experienced primarily by people doing creative projects.

However, I intend to bring this comic to independent comic book publishers and art directors when it's completed and use it to start my career as a cartoonist. While I have no intention of working for DC Comics or Marvel Comics any time soon, I would love smaller cartooning jobs to hone my skills as just a comic artist and not have to write all the comic material I work on. Therefore, this comic will work as my portfolio for the comics industry when I'm ready to jump in; feet first, not head first.

Millennial Rust Issue One will be an anthology work serializing contributions from my illustrator friends from Syracuse University, functioning as a guided tour through our recent artwork or commissioned work around a central theme.

The Turkey Avenger, Chapters 2-4, will be continue to be created over the next year, to be completed by June 2015, to be released as a small book, either self-published or at a small publisher. This project ultimately gave me the skills and confidence to create comics at a professional level and timeframe, which had been holding me back from developing them for years. *Millennial Rust* succeeded because I gained abilities I never had through my coursework, and justified my entire experience with the Honors Program at Syracuse University.