

Reimagining the Alamo: Disney, the Comic Code, and the Rise of Underground Comix

While the popularity of comic books for children had grown throughout the 1940's, by 1954 certain factions of American culture were questioning the books' influence and subject matter. The publication of Frederick Wertham's *The Seduction of the Innocent* cemented this anxiety in the minds of parents across the country and in turn brought about the Comic Code Authority, an industry organization overseeing strict rules of decency and morality. Due to the Code, comic books moved away from the crime and violence of earlier stories and towards narratives seen as wholesome family fun. At the same time, Walt Disney was producing the first three episodes of the "Davy Crockett" mini-series for his *Walt Disney's Disneyland* television series. Before Elvis and the Beatles, the popularity of Davy Crockett throughout 1955 brought about a new youth culture for Eisenhower's America. These two developments, the Comic Code and the Crockett Craze, gave rise to a thirty-year series of misinformation presented to American youth. Just as the Code regulated what children were allowed to read, Disney began rewriting history, beaming jingoistic tales of great American heroes into the American living room every Wednesday evening. Within ten years of the Comic Code's institution, however, the very people who were raised on it began poking subtle holes through its seemingly impregnable armor. By 1964, Jack "Jaxon" Johnson was publishing *God Nose*, perhaps the first in a series of 60's era "Underground Comix," and by the end of the decade there were hundreds being published across the country. Unlike the major publishers, they ignored the Code and published what they pleased; this led to their relegation to head shops and strip-clubs meaning few kids had access. Fifteen years later, Jaxon had moved away from the head shops and into local bookstores. His seminal *Los Tejanos*, published in 1981, retells the story of the Alamo, this time from the perspective of Juan Seguín, rather than Davy Crockett as Disney had done. In my paper, I argue that these multiple Alamo narratives provided young readers with a shifting frontier mythos that allowed generations of kids to reinvent history themselves.