The 2011 issue of the long-running comic book series *Love and Rockets* brought to an end the storyline “The Love Bunglers,” a five-part story – since collected into a standalone “graphic novel” by publishers Fantagraphics Books – which began in the previous issue. The conclusion of this story was significant for readers of *Love and Rockets* for several reasons, chief amongst which being that the final pages of the issue saw long-time protagonists Margarita “Maggie” Chascarillo and Esperanza “Hopey” Glass apparently setting down in permanent homes and careers. Hopey, adopted child in tow, having secured a permanent position as a primary school teacher is depicted as living with an unseen female partner just outside the fictional Californian barrio Hoppers 13, the setting for much of Hernandez’s work, while Maggie is shown working as a mechanic in her own garage and living with long-time on-again, off-again love interest Ray Dominguez. With these significant events in the continuity of the series the time seems right to examine the implications of these apparent “endings” – if they can indeed be understood as such – for our understanding of this major, if understudied, American comic book series. Through an examination of these recent issues, an exploration of the comic's drafting and publication history, and a focus on the domestic spaces depicted in Hernandez's work in this article I draw upon new, archival, and draft material to argue that queer home and domestic spaces are, and have always been, central to the building of a new and queer form of *familia* across Hernandez’s work. This is a form of domesticity which protects its inhabitants from the depredations of the outside world while freeing its members from the limitations placed upon them by traditionally-permitted expressions of race, class, and gender, a project which seems to reach fulfilment with the conclusion of these most recent storylines.

*Love and Rockets* first appeared as a home-xeroxed punk zine in 1981. This first issue
featured separate stories, each both written and drawn by either Jaime (1959 - ) or older brother Gilbert Hernandez (1957 - ). Most significantly for this article, this first issue featured the two characters whose adventures would come to define Jaime Hernandez’s contributions to Love and Rockets; the Chicana Maggie Chascarillo and the “Scottish-Chilean” Hopey Glass in the heavily science-fiction-influenced story “Mechan-X.” “Mechan-X” drew of many of the typical features of science fiction comics of the time, including flying scooters, spaceships, dinosaurs, and other features that would quickly and quietly retreat to the background of the comic’s full run. Despite these apparent differences from Love and Rockets proper, this home-made issue did feature many of the key components of Hernandez’s later work. Maggie is shown to be a gifted mechanic, a job she can only work at occasionally, and which does not pay her enough to afford her own place in the Californian barrio “Hoppers 13,” a locale loosely based on Jaime and Gilbert Hernandez’s own hometown of Oxnard. Most significantly for this consideration of Hernandez’s work, the girls’ struggles to find their own permanent place to live and work is highlighted in this first issue, by the fact that at the very beginning of this very first story they wake up on the couch of a friend.¹ This close interest in Maggie and Hopey’s peripatetic home life, and the role that that home life plays in preparing the girls, particularly Maggie, to function in the outside world presages a point which forms much of the main thrust of the argument I present in this article, and to which I will return shortly.

This homemade first issue of Love and Rockets made its way into the hands of Gary Groth (1954 - ), editor-in-chief at the independent publishers Fantagraphics Books. Fantagraphics, up until the first issue of Love and Rockets landed on Groth’s desk, had been known chiefly as the publishers of The Comics Journal, a significant publication in its own right, which sought to deliver serious criticism on comics and graphic literature.

¹ See figure 6 for a reproduction of the opening of this first story.
Fantagraphics, under the guidance of Gary Groth and his co-editor Kim Thompson (1956–2013) was looking to branch out into the publication of comics themselves, in addition to publishing comics criticism, and Groth found the Hernandez brothers’ “literate, witty […] and carefully crafted” comic the perfect fit for his new publishing venture.² Love and Rockets, already complete with its real-time aging characters made its official debut in 1982 with a revised and expanded Issue 1. Love and Rockets has since been published almost continuously by Fantagraphics since 1982, the only break in publication coming between 1996 and 2001 while the brothers pursued solo ventures also published by Fantagraphics. What has been consistent across the years, however, is a preoccupation in Jaime Hernandez’s work with the day-to-day, quotidian events of Maggie and Hopey’s lives, their struggles with employment, with their love lives, with where and amongst whom they live, rather than more conventional, dramatic plots. This preoccupation manifests a conception of community and identity formation that Trevor Strunk in his review of the series rather neatly explains as an understanding that “individual identity is largely determined by its communal context, past and present.”³

Before we go any further, the first thing to establish is precisely what is meant – or perhaps rather what “counts” – as a domestic or home spaces within my consideration of Hernandez’s work. I have already covered the fact that the girls live transient existences, only recently setting up what seem to be permanent homes for themselves, a development which will form an important part of my discussion toward the end of this article. The result is that most of the “home” and “domestic” spaces I will be referring to across this article are not the girls’ homes, but the sofas and spare bedrooms in the homes of others, most often of the girls’ female family and friends. That the girls are economically obliged to live with family and friends draws, as Jones has discussed, attention to their “double subordination” as queer

² Hignite, 2010: 78. For a longer account of the origins of Love and Rockets see Hignite, 72ff.
³ Strunk, 2007: 249.
female Chicanas living in an economically deprived area is one salient point here. However, that the girls live exclusively with female friends and relatives is, I would argue, far more significant, as it demonstrates much more clearly the existence of Jones’s alternative, or “queer” support familial networks within Hernandez’s work, a network in which women not only support each other physically and economically, but also enable each other to successfully enter the world outside the home on their own terms. In this conception of the function of home and domestic spaces, I follow Jones in evoking Rosa Fregoso's argument that although the family and the home is within the Chicano movement “an indispensable support system capable not only of meeting the needs of its members but also of sheltering them from the violence, exploitation, racism, and abuse perpetrated in the external, public sphere of the Anglo capitalist world,” it is also an ideology which “draws from Anglo-American norms around heterosexuality and consanguinity, especially in its assumptions about very particular roles for women as wives, mothers, economic dependents, nurturers, and cultural transmitters.” The challenge for Hernandez’s protagonists, then, becomes finding home spaces that can both shelter them from the worst exploitation of the outside world, and also enable them to express their own identities as women who love women, or women who love both women and men, a space which I argue Hernandez consistently locates within this queer female support network.

What critical work attention has been paid to Hernandez’s work has focussed, with remarkable consistency, on the panel shown in figure 1. Taken from the 1984 story “Locas,” the large panel shows Hopey receiving a haircut in a men’s barbershop from a barber she seems to know well, the kind of commonplace event typical of Hernandez’s narratives. While Hopey has her hair cut, the girls discuss their living arrangements, and the difficulties they face in securing somewhere to stay. In this scene, as Jessica E Jones and others have pointed

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5 Jones, 2009: 40.
out, Maggie and Hopey have entered the traditionally male space of a barber’s shop, their presence as female bodies “queering” – in Jones’ words – this tradition bastion of masculinity. Jones points out that much of this queering seems already to have taken place. She draws a reader’s attention to the homosexual (male) pornographic magazines visible in the bottom left of the picture, as well as the way in which the barber (whom Hopey later calls by his first name) seems happy to, in Jones’ words “make Hopey look like a boy” by giving her what appears to be the latest in a long line of haircuts. According to Jones, this willingness of the part of the barber to not only allow the girls and the homosexual pornography in his shop, but to give Hopey a haircut which forms a part of her queer gender performance is significant within Hernandez’s depiction of Hoppers itself, as it is “the barber who looks like an exemplar of traditional values” who “queers Hopey’s body, shaving her hair and making her look like a boy. That the barbershop might always already have been queered disrupts a reader’s perception of what a heteronormative space might be.” That Jones’s is a point which is perhaps even better demonstrated by the following page, shown in figure 2, in which Hopey, having left the barber shop and gone into a more public space outside, rearranges her hair, restoring her more usual experience as well as her own agency over that appearance, only reinforces Jones’ point that the spaces within Hoppers which we might expect to be heteronormative or oppressive are more complex than we might at first suspect.

The point that Jones does not fully explore, here, however, and which forms the point of departure for my own analysis of this sequence of panels is that this is one of the few points in the comic’s original run in which the girls explicitly discuss getting their own place,

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6 Jones, 2009: 53. Here, and throughout much of this essay, I follow Jones in using “queer as a verb that means to productively spoil or disrupt dominant notions of gender relations and sexuality, or as an adjective that means nonnormative.” A usage which, as Jones points out, “is in line with that of David Eng, Judith Halberstam, and Jose Munoz.”

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.
that is, their own place together, as a couple – suggesting a permanent aspect to their relationship which is not common to the rest of comic.

It should also be pointed out that not all spaces within Hoppers 13 are quite so welcoming to the girls and their “unconventional” expressions of gender. Jones pays particular attention to the approving glances Maggie receives from the neighbourhood patriarchs when – due to having outgrown her last pair of jeans – she appears in on the streets of Hoppers wearing a skirt, a mode of dress which, for the men she meets at least, masks the significance of the fact that she is accompanied by Hopey, with whom she had spent the night. 9 This “conventional” mode of dress stands in contrast to Maggie’s usual outfits, and allows her to “pass” as heterosexual before the heteronormative gaze of the men sitting on the streets of Hoppers 13. Maggie’s “passing” stands in direct contrast to the men’s more damning comments about Hopey’s “punk” outfit of ragged jeans and band t-shirt, which the men claim will make it more difficult for Hopey to find a husband, to find her place in a conventional family unit, a conventional domestic arrangement.

The search for, and difficulties with, accommodation is one of the cyclical problems Maggie and Hopey face during Love and Rocket’s run. Hernandez’s characters age in real-time, and so as time has gone on, the issues relating to the girls’ living arrangement have become more and more acute as they seek private space to both inhabit, and in which to express their sexuality away from the – potentially, though often not – disapproving eyes and ears of others. The panels featured in figure 3, taken from the 1986 story “Locas 11:15” demonstrate many of these issues. In what is the build up to one of Hernandez’s characteristically brief and inconclusive sex scenes the girls discuss where they are to live after yet another domestic arrangement (this time with Hopey’s ex-girlfriend Terry Downe)

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9 See Jones, 2009: 47ff.
comes to an end.\textsuperscript{10} Ester Saxey directs our attention to similar panels, drawing particular notice to Maggie’s reluctance to live with her aunt (in this case, the former professional wrestling world champion Viki Glori, another woman living outside the traditional bounds of female roles).\textsuperscript{11} Saxey cites this combination of an impermanent same-sex sexual relationship, a reluctance to return home, and Maggie’s ultimate return to living with her family as a frustration or inversion of the limitations of the “coming out story” genre, which would typically take this sex scene as a moment for the queer protagonist to escape the confines of the family home in order to express their sexuality in new and independent homespaces.\textsuperscript{12} What we are offered instead is an inconclusive same-sex sexual encounter which takes place in an impermanent homespace, after which the girls separate and are once again obliged to live separately in the homes of friends and family members, but which nevertheless allows the girls a moment of independence, a chance to discuss the issues they are facing, and to prepare to re-enter the world outside their temporary, queer and same-sex homespace. For all its temporariness, therefore, this homespace and this same-sex sexual encounter fulfil all of the functions of the more permanent, conventional ones evoked in Fregoso’s characterisation of the Chicano \textit{familia}.

When the girls do find a functioning (if temporary and compromised) home-space, as in the panels depicted in figure 4, which are taken from the 1985 story “Locas at the Beach,” the uses to which Hernandez puts these spaces are both striking, and consistent. In these panels the girls engage in what is a fairly standard bedroom discussion. Maggie and Hopey discuss their workday, with Maggie venting her frustrations at another encounter with the sexism prevalent in her working conditions. Hopey begins to give her advice before the

\textsuperscript{10} In line with Saxey’s comments about the nature of Maggie and Hopey’s relationship, in this examination I mean that Hernandez’s sex scene is inconclusive in the sense that there is no apparent resolution following the sex, the girls do not resolve anything after their sexual encounter, it is not a milestone in their relationship, and nor does it alter anything about the nature of their relationship, or its trajectory.

\textsuperscript{11} See Saxey, 2006: 13

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, 14.
homeowner (once again Maggie’s cousin, Izzy Ortiz) shouts at the girls to be quiet.

What this short sequence reveals is that the queer (temporary, compromised, same-sex) domestic space the girls find themselves in fulfils many of the functions classically associated with the home, and certainly those suggested by Fregoso above. It provides a support network for Maggie, a place to vent her true feelings about her work and her life, and, in Hopey’s attempts to give advice, it provides a space in which Maggie is prepared to work, prepared to enter the world outside the home, and prepared to begin to earn money and build a career, offering a way out of the girls’ “double displacement”. That Hopey’s advice deals not only with Maggie’s place as a woman in the workplace, but also offers a site of resistance against what Hopey calls ideas from “the old country” further adds strength to the idea that in presenting this kind of queered homespace, Hernandez is directly articulating an alternative to the established narratives surrounding the permissible roles of women within the strictures of la familia. The interruption to Hopey’s pep talk, however, neatly troubles this notion, revealing the limitations of the girls’ roving existence and temporary domestic arrangements.

The way in which these panels are framed is typical in Hernandez’s depictions of his domestic and bedroom sequences. Jones talks about the way that “[t]hrough formal conventions such as frames and gutters, comics dramatize the production of bodies in space, making them ripe sites to illuminate dominant discourses of race, gender, and sexuality that strive to naturalise and obscure their spatial logic.”13 I argue that the way in which these sequences set in the girls’ temporary homespaces are consistently framed is their most significant feature, and a key component of the way in which Hernandez constructs his queer domestic spaces. In each case, and in contrast to many of Hernandez’s more dynamic, outdoor sequences, these domestic sequences are almost always statically framed, and tightly focussed on his main characters, or even just parts of their bodies, often their faces, or from

13 Jones, 2009: 42.
their shoulders upward, eliding many of the details of the room itself, and certainly of the
house the girls are staying in as a whole.

Scott McCloud reminds us that “[t]he panel acts as a sort of general indicator that time
or space is being divided.”¹⁴ The way that these scenes are framed, with such a tight focus on
the girls themselves, and perhaps the sofa or spare bed they are staying on reinforces the idea
that, for that moment at least, that room, or even that part of a room is its own space,
sectioned off from the rest of the world. The result is that, in spite of the compromised nature
of these sectioned-off spaces of other people’s homes, Hernandez’s framing invites us to
consider these spaces as complete in and of themselves. This means that these spaces literally
become private spaces. There is no room for any other characters in these spaces, and the rest
of the house and room itself is literally, if only temporarily, excluded from both the reader’s
and the girls’ attention. This sectioning-off allows for a feeling of privacy, of intimacy. This
temporary privacy is what allows the spaces to function as domestic places. It is this total
intimacy that allows the girls to discuss their love lives, their working lives, and the issues
that confront them in their day-to-day existence in the world outside of these spaces.

Once again, figure 4 is an excellent example of this type of characterisation of space.
Here, as noted above, the girls discuss the “old country” sexism Maggie encounters in her job
as a mechanic. Hopey offers advice, which ultimately allows Maggie to return to work. The
framing of this sequence is tight, and progressively tighter as the sequence moves on, and the
discussion turns from the difficulties Maggie encounters to Hopey’s advice on how to cope
with these difficulties. In the first panel, the girls are pictured full-length, and some details of
the room, including the sofa-bed the girls will be spending the night on and the table-lamp set
up on a temporary night-stand. As the conversation progresses, the focus moves inward and
the panels themselves get smaller, focussing in first on the girls’ upper bodies, excluding the

rest of the room, then on only the girls’ faces, close together as Maggie outlines her problems to Hopey. This progressive “zooming-in” gives an increasing sense of intimacy, which is matched by the content of the girls’ discussion. As their conversation becomes more personal, so the “gaze” of the camera moves in closer to them. The last panel in figure 4, however, neatly compromises this progression. A voice, belonging to the homeowner Izzy Ortiz, appears from off the panel, interrupting the girls’ privacy, Hopey’s advice, and the progressive focussing-in of the framing as the view pulls back to reveal more details of the room. This sequence is revealing of both the advantages of Hernandez’s support system – thanks to the generosity of Maggie’s cousin, Maggie and Hopey are able to spend the night together, a night in which Maggie is prepared to re-enter the world of work – and its disadvantages – the arrangement is clearly temporary and compromised, a limitation revealed by the intrusion of Izzy’s voice, which shatters both the girls’ sense of privacy and the advice Hopey was attempting to give Maggie.

The use of domestic arrangements provided by women to prepare other women to function in the public world of work is a consistent theme in Hernandez’s work. The sequence in figure 5 is taken from the short story “Return of the Butt Sisters” from 1994. In this flashback, Maggie relates to her younger cousin (who is considering taking work as a stripper) the story of how she herself almost ended up working at “Bumpers,” the then-destroyed strip club which framed many of the early “Locas” stories. That the place was apparently destroyed after rumours that queer employees were going to “murder Mr Bumpers and turn the place into a full-on dyke operation” is a point which Jones also covers, but one which is revealing about male concerns surrounding women who do not conform to their given roles and forms of self-expression, and especially those who attempt to reclaim or redefine spaces which have historically been masculine and heteronormative.

Here again we see Maggie requiring Hopey’s help to return to the world of work. In
the lead-up to the exchange between the girls in yet another borrowed spare bedroom Maggie had, following a period of unemployment after she quit her job as a mechanic, been considering taking up a friend’s offer to be a stripper at Bumpers. In preparation, Maggie had attempted to dye her (normally dark) hair blonde, the apparently unfortunate results of which had soured her on the entire idea. It is only after Hopey agrees to cut her hair, restoring her usual outward appearance that Maggie agrees to return (successfully) to her old job as a mechanic.

As it was published, the scene if figure 5 serves primarily to frame the fate of “Bumpers,” Maggie’s brief flirtation with working there, and the story she tells her younger cousin. The panels contained in figure 6, however, is drawn from the very earliest issue of Love and Rockets, the self-published punk “zine” that Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez produced on Xerox copy machines in 1981. Excised from the version of Love and Rockets Number 1 published by Fantagraphics in 1982, the sequence showcases many of the features of early Love and Rockets stories – the relationship between Maggie and Hopey, Maggie’s work as a “Pro-solar” mechanic, and the intrusive science-fiction elements of the early stories. In addition to showcasing the development of Hernandez’s artistic style (the final version features much cleaner and fewer lines, a development uniform to both brothers’ work), this early version demonstrates Hernandez’ consistency of vision regarding the function of queer and alternative homespaces.

In both the published and unpublished versions of this sequence, the (temporary, queer) domestic arrangement between Maggie and Hopey forms a crucial component of the girls’ ability to function in the world outside the home. That Hernandez not only retained the scene, but also reworked it for insertion into the narrative years later demonstrates very clearly the importance he sets by the influence and centrality of the girls’ home-life and its effect on their ability to enter the world outside of that home setting. Once again here we see
framing consistent with Hernandez’s depictions of other home spaces. In the published version of the scene the girls are first framed in a way which sets up the room, and the sofa on which they are going to spend the night, though in this case, Hopey is already asleep, and Maggie has come in late, and drunk. Once again, the crucial conversation, the one in which Maggie asks for Hopey’s help to return to work is contained within a frame in extreme close-up on the girls’ faces, excluding almost all the rest of the room. The more kinetic and wider-shot frame in which Hopey agrees to help Maggie is not only seemingly a direct call-back to the draft original, but it is wide-shot and kinetic whilst still focussing primarily on the girls, excluding the rest of the room and, in contrast to the previous arrangements discussed above, free from any intrusion from the home owner despite Hopey’s apparent shouting.

Additionally, it is this sequence, and the memory of Hopey advice that enables Maggie to give similar advice to her younger cousin in a frame very tightly focussed on just Maggie’s face as she tells the story, advice which is only interrupted by the arrival of “Danika’s train,” a train on which another of Maggie’s friends is arriving.

Similarly, the draft sequence frames the initial conversation in way that brings in some details of the setting, which is once again a borrowed sofa-bed in a friend’s house. The conversations in which Maggie asks for, and receives, help and advice from Hopey, however, are once again tightly and statically framed, focussing on the girls’ faces as Hopey tries to convince Maggie to return to working as a mechanic. In this draft version, the timescale is compressed, with Hopey giving Maggie a haircut in the same moment as giving her advice. Even the time between Maggie’s haircut and her return to work is reduced, as the final panel of the sequence shows Maggie on her way to work, apparently later the same morning. The difference between the framing of the panels in which Maggie is prepared to work, and the one in which she sets off to work, however, are striking. The final panel of figure 6 shows Maggie, having received both advice and a haircut from Hopey, riding off on the kind of
science-fiction themed hover-scooter which Hernandez has consistently and slowly removed from his work as his setting has become more realistic over the years. The framing of this panel, however, stands in dramatic contrast to those immediately preceding it. The frame itself is much larger, yet the central figure of Maggie is smaller relative to the size of the frame, and some details of the background can be discerned, including the dust kicked up by her scooter. There is a much greater sense of movement in this panel, fewer details of the main character and more details of her surroundings, including the scooter on which she is riding. However, Maggie does seem to have taken Hopey’s advice to heart, as she confidently thinks about completing her task “fixing broken equipment on this military base,” a job which had previously intimidated her, but which now she regards as a starting point in her career as a mechanic, saying to herself that despite these frustrations “Alas, we all gotta start at the bottom.” This changed attitude indicates a new-found faith in her ability not only to the job immediately in front of her, but also to forge an ongoing career as a mechanic. Meggie’s new-found confidence in her abilities demonstrates the importance and the function of Hernandez’s homespaces. Having had both a haircut and advice from Hopey, Maggie has been enabled to not only return to work, but to see a way out of the “double displacement” of her position as a working-class Chicana through an unconventional career as a female mechanic, both revelations stemming from time spent in one of Hernandez’s typically compromised and temporary queer homespaces.

This discussion of the origins of individual depictions of Hernandez’s queer, female homespaces brings us to a discussion of the image in figure 7. Drawn from one of Hernandez’s sketchbooks and dating from around 1980, Hernandez has said in several interviews that he considers this image to be the first picture of Maggie and Hopey “in their final form.”15

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15 Hignite, 2010: 69.
A clear departure from his later black and white aesthetic, the image features Maggie and Hopey in what for Hernandez would seem a typical domestic setting, and one which had hopefully become familiar over the course of this article. The girls are pictured in a room, apparently having just woken up together, the walls covered in music posters for the kind of punk bands common throughout Hernandez’s work, and Maggie is preparing to leave, presumably for work. There are some notable differences here, however. The girls seems to be pictured in a bedroom rather than on a sofa in someone’s living room for one, and the arrangement at least appears to be permanent, with a great number of objects apparently belonging to the girls scattered about the room, suggesting that they have been (and plan to be there) for a long time.

Whether or not Hernandez’s claim that even at the time he drew it, he knew that this was an image of Maggie and Hopey in their final form (and his later experimentations with spaceships, dinosaurs, professional wrestlers and superheroes before his final “settling down” on a more realistic style and setting might suggest otherwise), the fact that he would make such a claim suggests the centrality of not only the relationship between Maggie and Hopey, but also the importance of their domestic arrangements to Hernandez’s conception of the series as a whole. What is definitely true is that this panel conforms to – or perhaps rather establishes – a lot of the visual language which would inform Hernandez’s later depictions of the girls’ temporary homespaces. The scene is framed statically, with a tight focus on the figures of the girls, which elides much of the detail of the room in which they are staying. In particular, the figure of Maggie, who seems to be getting ready to leave, brushing her hair and apparently listening to something Hopey is saying, dominates the frame, directing our attention away from the details of the setting and onto the interaction between the girls. This tight focus and static framing anticipates much of what would follow. In the draft panel, Maggie seems to be reluctant to leave, or at least does not look particularly happy about it,
while Hopey remains in bed, apparently saying something to Maggie. This is a dynamic
which is repeated again and again in Hernandez’s work, and particularly the rest of the panels
discussed at length above. In a panel which tightly frames a static shot, Hopey is seemingly
helping Maggie to prepare to leave the domestic space that they share, helping her friend and
occasional sexual partner to re-enter the public world which lies outside of the domestic
space which for the moment occupies both the entirety of the girls’ attention and the entirety
of the panel.

Those are the (apparent) origins. So what of the apparent ending? Ester Saxey has
written at length about the way in which Hernandez’s love story between Maggie and Hopey
has never (and may never) be “finished” in a classic sense of the word, due to the ongoing
nature of the comic book form. And this remains true today. Further issues of Love and
Rockets continue to appear, and further developments in the girls’ relationships are one of the
driving forces of these ongoing narratives. Throughout the comic’s run the girls are apart far
more than they are together. They have been friends more than they have sexual partners,
with Maggie in particular conducting several long-term relationships with men, while Hopey
has also (more rarely) been depicted as involved in relationships, mostly with other women,
events which have in no way soured the girls’ relationship.

Saxey’s idea of a relationship (and sexual contact) conducted outside of typical
narrative framework of closure (which was one factor cited in the South African
government’s decision to ban Love and Rockets in the 1990s) has gained strength from the
recent events in the comics’ continuity. In the frames featured in figure 8 you can see that in
one of the most recent issues of the comic, Hopey, having got a seemingly permanent job as a
primary school teacher, has (after an absence of several issues) been depicted as living in
what seems to be her own house with another (presumably female) partner and a child. The
sequence shown in figure 8 appears at the end of a longer sequence in which Maggie, having
babysat for Hopey, returns her friend’s child home at the end of a workday. Despite its apparent differences from what has gone before, the sequence in figure 8 features much of the same visual and narrative language as previous sequences which have depicted Maggie and Hopey’s domestic arrangements. Once again, the panels are closely and generally statically – the interference of Hopey’s child notwithstanding – framed, focussing primarily on the girls, and eliding much of the background detail of Hopey’s house. In particular, the panels which deal with Maggie’s settling up of her debt – Hopey having leant Maggie the money to purchase her garage – are focused on the girls’ faces, as Hopey at first tries to reject Maggie’s offer of a final payment on her loan. In many ways, therefore, this sequence is as familiar as it is new. Maggie has done her part to enable Hopey to work, looking after her child while Hopey worked as a teacher, while Hopey has also done her part to enable Maggie’s career, first loaning her the money to set up her business, then adopting a flexible attitude toward the loan’s repayment. That the panels are set up as they are, with those panels dealing most obviously with the positive effects of this queer support network – a network that now includes two seemingly discrete family units and in which Maggie and in particular Hopey are now the providers rather than the receivers of help and support – are framed both statically and tightly seems a deliberate call-back to the visual language of previous incarnations of Maggie and Hopey’s homespaces, aligning these supportive actions with those earlier helpful acts.

Maggie, meanwhile, has most recently been depicted as living in her own seemingly permanent home. Having gone back to work as a mechanic, Maggie has set up home with Ray Dominguez, a recurring (male) love interest who has appeared many times over the comics’ run. Once again, Hernandez’s visual language of homespaces returns. In the panels shown in figure 9, Maggie and Ray are framed progressively more closely as they discuss more and more intimate details of their relationship, culminating a close-up on the couple’s
faces as they kiss at what is the end of a story, and the end of an issue.

The question that must be asked at this point is what, if any, effect these apparent “endings” might have on our understanding of the relationships and domestic arrangements which have gone before? The first is that, most clearly, Hopey’s domestic arrangement gestures toward the larger theme of same-sex rights in California. Published in 2010 during the “stay” put on gay marriage licences in California by the decisions in *Perry v Schwartzenegger and Hollingsworth* relating to proposition 8, the sequence dealing with Hopey’s home-life and her adopted son subtly and unobtrusively gesture toward these larger political debates without allowing politics to overtake the individual dramas that Hernandez seems most interested in depicting.

The second question relates to Maggie’s domestic arrangements. Does the fact that she has seemingly “ended up” with Ray Dominguez change our understanding of her previous relationships with Hopey? I would argue that Hernandez depiction of this (apparently “conventional”) domestic arrangement cannot but be inflected by that has gone before. Maggie is still a mechanic, a career she was only able to pursue at Hopey’s urging, and with Hopey’s money, a turn of events which not only demonstrates the continuing importance of Hernandez’s queer female support network, but also suggests that the girls may have finally found a way out of their “double displacement,” and that they are able to support themselves, away from traditional male sources of economic support. Furthermore, Maggie is the major breadwinner for the pair (Ray’s memory issues stemming from an attack by a mentally unstable family member in a previous issue), a role not traditionally fulfilled by women, and certainly against the conservative ideals of *la familia*. However, what is most important is that Maggie took the decision to return to work full-time after encountering Ray and deciding to live with him. The function of this home-space remains the same; it enables and inspires Maggie to work as a mechanic, to function successfully in the world outside her
That Hernandez chooses to spend so much time exploring his characters’ home lives may seem strange at first, and certainly atypical given the series’ origin as a kind of science-fiction adventure story detailing Maggie the Mechanic’s adventures repairing spaceships in South America, but it is from these domestic arrangements, issues relating to them, their permanence, and their owners that much of the action of the series stems. Jessica Jones points out that “[t]he cyclical need for accommodation and beer” drives much of the action of Hernandez’s work. What Hernandez’s homespaces allow him to construct amongst his characters is a kind of alternate, queer form of la familia, an alternative and sprawling family unit largely inhabited and certainly dominated both economically and socially by communities of women. The punk-informed queer and alternative homespaces of Hoppers 13 become for Hernandez a (perhaps idealised) vision of a far more permissive familia, one which is still capable of providing Fregoso’s “invaluable support system,” but without ever limiting the roles played by its inhabitants; a space welcoming of all expressions of gender, of sexuality, and of class.

16 Jones, 2009: 40.
Appendix: Images

Figure 1: From “Locas,” 1984. in Hernandez, 2004: 183.

Figure 4: From “Locas at the Beach,” 1985. In Hernandez, 2004: 197.
HOLY. WHEN WE WAKE UP IN THE MORNING, THE FIRST THING YOU TELL ME TO DO IS, "GO TO ENSIGN." I PROMISE THAT IS, AFTER YOU CUT MY HAIR....

SO, I DID IT. I NEVER BECAME A STRIPPER. MONICA ONLY WANTED ME TO DO SOMETHING, SHE COULD CHECK ME OUT HERSELF.

BY THAT TIME, EVERYONE AT BUMPERS WAS LESBIAN OR BL.

THEY WERE ALL FIRED WHEN IT WAS RUMORED THAT THEY WERE GONNA MURDER MR. BUMPERS AND TURN THE PLACE INTO A FULL ON DUMPSTER OPERATION.

(SIGH...) MY LITTLE HOPE...

FROM NOW ON, I'M NOT GOING TO DO THIS ANYMORE. IF YOU WANT TO PLAY YOUR STUPID GAMES, I'M GOING BACK TO BEING A MECHANIC. HOW'S TODAY? OK?

MONICA: OK? IF I CUT YOUR FUCKING HAIR, WILL YOU QUIT PLAYING YOUR STUPID GAMES AND GO BACK TO BEING A MECHANIC?

OH, HERE COMES DANTIA'S TRAIN.

Figure 5: From “Return of the Butt Sisters,” 1994. In Hernandez, 2004: 635.
Figure 6: From *Love and Rockets* #1, 1981. In Hignite, 2010: 74.
Figure 7: From Sketchbook ’80. In Hignite, 2010: 69.
HOPF IT WASN'T TOO PAINFUL. MOMMY/ I WANNA GO INSIDE!

THE ONLY PAIN WAS HAVING TO REFUSE TO BOTH A SECOND DOUGHNUT.

I GUESS I FORGOT TO WARN YOU ABOUT DOUGHNUT SIGNS. IF THERE'S ONE WORD THIS LITTLE TRASH COMPACTOR CAN READ...

MOMMY? MOMMY! STOP LAUGHING!

YOU WANNA COME IN FOR A MINUTE? NO, I GOTTA GET HOME. OH, AND HERE'S THE FINAL THOUSAND. SORRY IT TOOK FOREVER.

MAG, I TOLD YOU YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO. PAY ME BACK...

YES, I DO. SO PLEASE TAKE IT...

SO, THE GARAGE IS GOING GOOD?
Works Cited


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