

Introduction to “Graphic Engagement: The Politics of Comics and Animation”

Derek Parker Royal

Department of English, University of Nebraska at Kearney
905 West 25th Street, Kearney, NE 68849, USA
E-mail: graphic.engagement@gmail.com

S. C. Gooch

Comparative Literature Program, Purdue University
100 North University Street, West Lafayette, Indiana 47907, USA
E-mail: sgooch@gmail.com

Juan Meneses

Comparative Literature Program, Purdue University
100 North University Street, West Lafayette, Indiana 47907, USA
E-mail: juanmeneses@gmail.com.

When most people think of politics and illustrations, their first thoughts usually run to the kind found in political cartoons and caricatures. These are the comics that populate the editorial pages of most newspapers and feature a satirical view of current events, those generated in the United States by such artists as Tom Toles, Mike Luckovich, Ann Telnaes, and Walt Handelsman. Or, the mention of politics and cartoons will bring to mind comic strips such as Walt Kelly's *Pogo*, Garry Trudeau's *Doonesbury*, and Berkeley Breathed's *Bloom County*. Yet, while these examples of illustrative art certainly engage with social interactions, state affairs, and the permutations of power, they are by far not the only kinds that reveal the political dynamics of our cultures. As the various contributions to this special issue of *Forum for World Literature Studies* demonstrate, the combination of politics and art can take a variety of forms, engaging in narratives that expose the underpinnings of our civilization and lay out the passions that define us as a people.

What follows is a collection of essays that illustrate—literally—the politics of our lives as only the best literature can, yet they do so through media forms that have traditionally stood in the shadows of the classical genres of fiction, poetry, and drama. Indeed, comics and film animation are potent media that can have an effect far different from that of more traditional forms of literature. They are composite texts whose mixtures of image, word, and sound offer a more immediate exchange between author(s) and audience, where the visuals directly confront us and demand a reader response in ways that prose narrative does not. The resulting effects can have profound ideological consequences. Either in the form of a comics memoir, a Disney adaptation, a superhero saga, a manga text, or a single-panel cartoon, graphic narratives shape the way we frame ourselves in terms of gender, race, religion, class, and

nationhood.

The reader will find that our understanding of political, as we apply it to the various essays in this special issue, is broad in scope, relating not only to affairs of state, but the praxis of graphic narrative and the ways it impacts individual identity and community dynamics. The focus of these individual contributions is broad, covering such topics as gender in contemporary Japanese culture, myths of the American West as seen through the eyes of Europe, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, representations of war in Korean popular culture, the crossroads of political oppression and personal memoir, popular conceptions of globalization, and the ethical implications of bio-medical culture. In all, they highlight what is possible within the hybrid narrative arts, the kind of literary impact that occurs at the crossroads of text and image.

责任编辑:杨革新