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Table of Contents

Preface

—**William Kuskin**

Editorial

Introduction

—**Sathyaraj Venkatesan**

Articles

“Traumatics”: Genesis and Journey of
Trauma Narratives in Comics

—**Partha Bhattacharjee & Priyanka Tripathi**

Why Did He Say That Name?—A Critical
Analysis of Zack Snyder’s Cinematic
Adaptations of Batman And Superman

—**Ravishankar S.N.**

Narrating Dreams through the Comic Book
Medium in Neil Gaiman’s *Sandman: Dream Country*

—**Sayan Mukherjee & Snigdha Nagar**

Comics beyond Fun and Thrill: A Critical Reflection
on Gender Dynamics and Public Imagination in
Select Popular Comics-based Movies

—**Daisy Barman**

Convergences of the Global and the Local:
Graphic Narrative and *Patua* Art in *Sita’s Ramayana*

—**Abanti Banerjee**

Prospects of Comics Studies in India

—**Diptarup Ghosh Dastidar**

Superheroes in Indian Comic Books:
Is being a Superhero Equal to being a Hindu?

—**Prerana Saharia**

The Superwoman of India—A Feminist Analysis
of the Devi and the Deviant

—**Supriya Banerjee**

Special Issue on New Literatures Gender Representation,
Sexuality and Portrayals in Popular Culture:
A Study of Female Superheroes in Comic Books

—**Sadiya Nasira Al Faruque**

Is Educational Health Comics Graphic Medicine?

—**Chinmay Murali & Sweetha Saji**

Graphic Exposure: The Politics of Representation and
Production in Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*

—**Beena Thomas**

Malik Sajad's *Munnu*: Graphic Novel as Creative Resistance

—**Manish Solanki**

The Value of Comics Journalism in Our Post Truth World

—**Ajith Cherian**

Studying the Genre of Graphical Biographies:
Maus, *ACK*, *Bhimayana*

—**Deepali Yadav**

Our Esteemed Contributors

Preface

William Kuskin

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The fourteen essays ahead of you interpret the vast spectrum of global comics.

This is no easy task, and it's gotten a lot harder in the last few years.

Not that long ago, if you were over six years old, reading comics in public singled a certain obtuseness. Teaching them, let alone publishing on them, was a questionable act—apoke in the establishment's eye, if not an act of outright resistance.

With the turn of the century, comic book movies became ubiquitous. This changed with the 2008 *Iron Man* and Disney's acquisition of Marvel. Before this, film and cartoon adaptations appeared as versions of an essentially print medium—a set of Spiderman movies with a charismatic actor brought the character to life; a one-off of *Persepolis* embodied the graphic novel; Chris Ware's animated short is just as depressing as his comics! With the brilliant exception of Harley Quinn's magical emergence from *Batman: The Animated Series*, comics belonged to the comic book.

After *Iron Man*, comics began to crawl across platform through franchise systems that organically related different media: book, film, website, Netflix, and so forth. Even if a particular plot didn't overlap across different media, the change in platform incurred a parallel change in narrative expectation. Around 2011 things picked up speed and to stay abreast one needed plug into the entire network. A professional group of readers—bloggers, vloggers, critics, and academics—came to the fore to keep track of the pace of change, and so reading comics was no longer a sign of difference; it became a sign of networked awareness.

A more profound shift in the network developed with this change, one that signaled a greater continuity in how we understand, and are understood by, the digital machinery that engulfs us. Comics have always relied upon a communicative grid to organize words and

pictures. Their mode is to make meaning through proximity and physicality rather than through analogy or linguistic depth. Comics operate through the master trope of metonym, and although they are powerfully figural, they spatialize this figuration rather than metaphorize or allegorize it.

The streaming feed works in much the same way, framing word and image dimensionally on a flat surface. Just so, our moment seems to come to us right off the pages of *Detective Comics*, featuring self-driving cars powered by electricity, instant video communication by phone, and aerial warfare by remote control. Presidents stage themselves as singular heroes on the feed, cutting through both the layers of media mediation and the infinite complexity of global economies with a tweet. The issue isn't that these presidents confuse reality and fiction, it is that in the digital interwebs, both truth and fiction float in an electronic matrix that constitutes a never-ending cross-platform narrative, the velocity of which is ever increasing, cascading story upon story by proximity rather than by analogy.

Captured in portrait-mode and juked through two or three filters, everyone in these stories looks like a twenty-first century superhero. How do twenty-first century superheroes behave? Are they like Robert Downey Jr.'s Tony Stark, who has everything but becomes testy at the smallest objection—Adam Smith's capitalist individual, equipped with the thickest of armors and the thinnest of egos? Or are they like Kari-the-Boatman, who crawls through Christina's World in Trinity's PVC suit. "Are you a superhero?" whispers Kari's Late-Night Pick-Up. Musing in the same word-balloon, "Do I get to keep you?," she creates Kari as an action figure, human-being-as-toy, superhero-as-plaything.

Kari's date is right. The overlap between people and things is compete. Invisibly Bluetoothed to the server farm through an infinity of devices, we are both consumers of the information the machine spits out and products the machine digests, so much data to be collected. When Nick Fury pulls out his interstellar beeper and pages Captain Marvel, he's simultaneously summoning up a hero greater than all the rest and closing phase three of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Captain Marvel is a role model and a flagship product. There's no confusion here, simply a bald truth: the network makes no distinction between individuals and information systems, between subjectivity and objectivity, between self and feed.

That comics lead us back to the inescapable logic of information capitalism should come as no surprise. Comics have always belonged to the market. The market gave the Golden Age of comics permission for its spectacular excesses of crime, fantasy, and violence. It fed the Silver Age's antiauthoritarian heroes, supported UndergroundComix's libertinism, built the Graphic Novel from a marketing gimmick to a legitimate genre, hybridized comics across the globe, and shifted the Marvel Cinematic Universe and DC Extended Universe into hyperdrive. As mass-market commodity and as bourgeois vehicle for self-discovery, comics are the artwork of the capitalism. They are forged as overtly interested in capital, in a way that nineteenth-century artforms presented themselves as overtly disinterested in capital, whether they were or not. Comics are, in a deep sense, born from the buying and selling of the imagination.

Without the comfortable distinctions between market and artwork, reading comics becomes a tricky business. Much academic writing on comics is either evangelical or summarial because this distance is so collapsed. That is, as the network compresses subject and object into one continuously networked cross-platform swirl of information, one homogenous stream of marketing and friendship, we lose the space for heterodoxy and for dissent.

To my mind, this makes the following eleven essays all the more important. These essays read beyond the medium of words and pictures to map the flow of power in the processes of socialization, gendering the body, trauma, and nationalism. They speak from a global perspective, rather than one dominated by the New York, Portland, and Los Angeles epicenters. In doing so, they open up a space for self-reflection, the imaginative production of meaning outside the feed. Reading deeply, the essays reterritorialize the human imagination from machine intelligence.

Captain Marvel isn't coming from without but from within. These essays summon her.

Stay tuned.

Editorial

The March 2019 Special issue of GNOSIS had a very warm response from the readers in India and abroad that articles have been flowing in quick succession to fill the folder for this issue even before the deadline of 10th February 2019. The thumping reception of the journal shows the depth of multicultural issues in literature to which critics and readers are attracted.

As a journal committed to quality research and writing, we are aware of the need to delink quality from publication cost. Hence, our decision to charge no publication fee from the scholars whose papers will be published in the issues of GNOSIS. At the same time since GNOSIS is a self-financed venture, co-operation and support in the form of subscriptions are solicited from the readers and admirers of English Literature and Language from all over the world.

This special issue of GNOSIS focuses on “Graphic Narratives and Comics Cultures” whereby the contributors through their research papers have dealt with a variety of topics ranging from gender dynamics, traumatics, graphic resistance, narration of dreams, glocal representations of Patua art, feminism, comics journalism, graphical biographies, to the prospects of comics studies in India to name a few.

There are fourteen research/critical articles in this special issue. Before concluding, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my reverend Guest editor of this special issue Dr. Satyaraj Venketasan for his selfless and tiresome efforts in assessing the articles very sincerely. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to Professor William Kuskin for his valuable association with GNOSIS and extending support in the form of inking the preface of this special issue.

I am also grateful to the revered contributors who have made this special issue of the Journal a beautiful reality. Wishing all the readers a mental feast.

Happy Reading!

Dr. Saikat Banerjee
Editor-in-Chief

Introduction

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Resurgence of Comics

Comics is roaring than never before. Following the visual turn thanks to television, the Internet, films, video games among others and the consequent socio-cultural shifts towards visual media, there is a marked enkindling of comics. As Varnum puts it, “[w]hether on television, in the movies, in the pages of newspapers and magazines, on computer screens, in advertising, or in the comics, images clamor for public attention” (ix). Even though comics were popular among masses as a source of low-priced entertainment for decades, it gained widespread recognition and cultural legitimacy only in the 1980s with the publication of Frank Miller’s *The Dark Knight Returns*, Art Spiegelman’s Pulitzer Prizewinning *Maus*, and Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons’ *Watchmen*. Popularly known as comics trifecta, to borrow a phrase from William Kuskin, these works facilitated the rise of comics as a sober and influential medium.

The extensive use of comic themes for movies further pushed comics from the peripheries of pop culture to the mainstream. In particular, with the film industry considering superhero comics as a source of big-budget mass entertainment and as an inevitable part of the modern day media ecology, the comics grew in importance than ever before. Starting with G. A. Smith’s movie adaptation of *Ally Sloper* in (1898), there has been several movies like *Spider-Man* (2002), *Ghost Rider* (2007), *The Dark Knight* (2008), *Green Lantern: First Flight* (2009), *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012), *The Avengers* (2012), *Deadpool* (2016). In fact, the most thrilling films that are ever made in Hollywood such as *The Mask* (1994), *Ghost World* (2001), *Road to Perdition* (2002), *300* (2002), *Sin City* (2004), *V for Vendetta* (2006) are major adaptations of comics.

Sooner it also became a preferred artistic medium for life writing. David B’s *Epileptic* (1996), Craig Thompson’s *Blankets* (2003), Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home* (2006), Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis* (2008) are some noteworthy examples of graphic auto/biographical narratives.

circulation, materiality of the Internet, conditions of production among others.

Comics are here to stay. As a versatile and protean medium, it has the power to transcend boundaries as it creates organic communities and fandoms around the world.

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“Traumics”: Genesis and Journey of Trauma Narratives in Comics

Partha Bhattacharjee & Priyanka Tripathi

**Submitted: 15 January 2019, Revised: 20 January 2019,
Accepted: 20 February 2019**

Abstract: Under the rubric of Trauma Studies, dimensions of abuse, disability, identity-crisis etc. have been trending for they address the very subjectivity of the narrator. In the genre of Comics, their exploration led to the ontology of the portmanteau word “Traumics,” clearly explaining a combination of ‘trauma’ and ‘comics’. However, many autobiographical comics also address the narrators’ traumatic experiences in the panels. In this regard, Hillary Chute (2010) suggests comics offers (‘singular’ as suggested by McCloud 9) new ways of talking about trauma. The narrators break down the shatters to come with a wide range of expressions of trauma in the panels. Autobiographical comics occupies the role of presentation at the juncture of witnessing, reminiscing and visual representation. In order to set the traumatic narrative into a convincing frame, autobiographical illustrators often combine the fact and fiction (Lynda Barry coins “autobiofictionalography”). Ranging from traumatic zones like— childhood sexual abuse (Phoebe Gloeckner, Lynda Barry), wounds from traumatic historical events (Spiegelman, Satrapi), death of the infant (Leela Corman, Tom Hart), this paper seeks to ruminate on the genesis and journey of “Traumics,” and rereads the stories of pain, angst and suffering inked between the panels and gutters, and circulated in restrained and regular *arthrology*.

Keywords: Trauma; Subjectivity; Comics; Illustrations; Autobiography.

Introduction

“We don’t just *observe* the cartoon, we *become* it!” (McCloud, *Understanding Comics* 36)

In the medium of comics, a graphic narrative showcases an appropriate expertise of the illustrators who write with an ardent intention of extracting the readers’ conspicuous interest in participating

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Why Did He Say That Name?—A Critical Analysis of Zack Snyder's Cinematic Adaptations of Batman and Superman

Ravishankar S.N.

Submitted: 25 January 2019, Revised: 10 February 2019, Accepted: 21 February 2019

Abstract: Since their creation in the late 1930s, both Batman and Superman have transcended their origins from comic book characters to beloved pop culture icons. Such global popularity was a result of several adaptations of the characters in other media, including television, video games, merchandising and movies. DC Comics, the American publisher that owns this stable of characters, has evolved over time into a media giant with its own production studio and online streaming services. Yet its ongoing film franchise, dubbed the DC Extended Universe (DCEU), has received a lukewarm response and harsh criticism for its treatment of the characters and the overall inconsistent tone. Much of the blame has been levelled on director Zack Snyder, who is responsible for directing three of the major DCEU films. Snyder, who had previously handled adaptations of comics like Frank Miller's *300* and Alan Moore's *Watchmen*, is praised for his ability to faithfully bring a comic book panel to life on screen. However, despite a loyal following of fans, Snyder's approach to the material has been met with disdain, especially considering the inevitable competition with the Marvel Cinematic Universe that produces well-received blockbuster movies at a consistent rate. The primary goal of this paper is to provide a detailed analysis of the style and themes used by Zack Snyder in his three DC movies: *Man of Steel* (2013), *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016), and *Justice League* (2017) – with critical studies of the source material, the previous adaptations of the characters, contemporary franchises and trends, and the factors that affected his overall vision for the series. In doing so, this paper aims to present a critical look at the Snyder films' highlights and flaws, and to present a case for how they are weak interpretations of the two primary superheroes.

Keywords: Batman, Superman, Zack Snyder, DC Cinematic Universe, DC Comics, Justice League.

The DC Extended Universe marched on in the form of *Aquaman* (2018) by horror auteur James Wan, who mixed gorgeous visuals, a light-hearted approach and even a little dose of horror to deliver the most successful movie of the series. *Shazam!* (2019) promises to be another cheery, fun look at super-capers, distancing itself from Snyder's grittiness. Patty Jenkins' sequel to *Wonder Woman*—a period film set in 1984—promises to go the same route. Yet when the trailer for DC/Netflix's recent series *Titans* features rampant violence culminating in Robin proclaiming "Fuck Batman!", it is clear that the Snyder touch has not completely left the DC Universe.

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Narrating Dreams through the Comic Book Medium in Neil Gaiman's *Sandman: Dream Country*

Sayan Mukherjee & Snigdha Nagar

Submitted: 28 January 2019, Revised: 12 February 2019, Accepted: 23 February 2019

Abstract: The third volume of Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* series, *Dream Country*, blends dream-like, imaginative universes with the sombre perspective of a storyteller who gives them shape. Our paper argues that, although at first glance the four stories seem disconnected, there are underlying threads linking them. Whether it is the poet who frequently rapes his captured muse, or the Siamese cat who preaches of an alternate reality- in each of the tales, reality is seen as an aberration that dream reshapes (although often imperfectly) into some semblance of order. This reshaping is made possible due to an interplay between text and art that is facilitated by the comic book medium.

Keywords: Comic book, Reality, Dream, Justice, Sandman, Neil Gaiman.

Introduction

To an undiscerning reader, Neil Gaiman's third issue of the Sandman series, *Dream Country*, reads like four small disconnected fragments of much larger stories. This is because each story is interspersed with a plethora of intertextual references, fully developed, rounded characters and an often ambiguous and open-ended story arc. The illustrations, as well as the use of colour, light and darkness, help demonstrate a sense of inconsistency. There are however, a few recurring motifs and themes that tie the four stories together and weave out a colourful narrative tapestry. Much like dreams, each of these stories needs careful reflection and re-examination to emerge as coherent and intelligible tales that resonate with the essence of human experiences.

One persistent motif is the idea that dream, which is sometimes a surrogate for human agency of imagination and creative freedom, shapes and, by extension, alters the known reality. This becomes clear when we note that, in most illustrations it is Morpheus, Sandman or

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Comics beyond Fun and Thrill: A Critical Reflection on Gender Dynamics and Public Imagination in Select Popular Comics-based Movies

Daisy Barman

Submitted: 5 February 2019, Revised: 12 February 2019, Accepted: 28 February 2019

Abstract: As a part of children's growing up, 'Comics' as an electric discourse occupies important place in crafting their mental geographies. These print as well visual narratives contribute in children's imagination as a form of secondary socialization. These visual discourses contour their ways of looking at the world in general along with the binaries of good and evil. Recently, film adaptation of comics has become a blooming industry in the world of visual culture. Although the first popular superhero '*Superman*' dates back to 1938, however, last two decades have shown stratospheric flourishing of films based on popular comics. The two leading franchises of them are Marvel and DC comics. The target audience of these films have travelled beyond children and reached all age groups. However, one very common feature of these superhero movies is that they often give us a narrative of 'men' as 'Heroes' who are the sole saviors of the universe. This paper will deal with select superhero films which have busted public imagination as well as public wallets and have made a remarkable imprint on audiences as well as the market. The paper is an attempt to delineate how do these films offer us a comprehensive picture of gender dynamics? In the 21st century where women have come out on the streets against unequal power relations and historical subjugations of women, where do women stand in 'saving the universe' in these technologically charged fictive narratives? How these films as fictions echo the diktats of patriarchal apparatus? How such hyper-real visual discourse impregnates public imagination with normalized and unjust patriarchal injections such as violence, war, destruction and misogyny? How far and well the tales of women as savior of the world such as '*Wonder woman*' or '*Captain Marvel*' are received by the public in comparison to conventional male superheroes? Over all the paper is proceeding to unfold, question and critique ifand how these

female superheroes in relation to male, the ratio of women in general representation of the cast in the movies are few of the important directions that a sociological imagination can fuel.

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1. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/shero>

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Convergences of the Global and the Local: Graphic Narrative and *Patua* Art in *Sita's Ramayana*

Abanti Banerjee

**Submitted: 1 February 2019, Revised: 10 February 2019, Accepted:
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Abstract: With the onset of globalisation, folk practices as well as the overall idea of media and entertainment have been the subject to alteration. This paper is an attempt to explore the interrelations between folk practices and how they are re-presented in media. It is of utmost necessity to preserve the various folk art forms bordering on obsolescence since its importance is more than an art form and it forms a part of cultural identity of a community. In India too, several initiatives have been taken up for the revival of the folk arts. Recently, folk arts have been adapted in the form of graphic novels in India. *Patachitra* or *patua* art or scroll painting is a community based, performative dying folk art form of rural West Bengal. Being rooted in the tradition, it upholds the cultural identity and values of the Bengali people with its painted scrolls and accompanying songs which capture the mythical tales, significant global phenomena, burning social issues and the quintessentially Bengali way of life. With the gradual loss of *patua* art form in contemporary Bengali community, *patua* artists have felt the need to adapt the traditional art form in contemporary narrative. One of the narratives that has become most suited for this endeavour is that of graphic novel. The graphic novel, a global phenomenon and *patachitra*, a specimen of folk art, together create a new syncretic globalised space for interaction between local and global. The amalgamation of *patua* art and the aesthetics of graphic novel not only helps in recording the art form but also enables it to reach out from a single community to the global readership. Thus it leads to the creation of an innovative graphic narrative design. This paper intends to establish how successfully the tenets of the aesthetics of *patua* art retain its originality after being amalgamated with the aesthetics of graphic novel. In order to illustrate my argument, I have analysed with respect to the graphic novel *Sita's Ramayana* by Samhita Arni and Moyna Chitrakar.

amount of distance and time and also carries readers with it. Action to action transition captures the progression of the action of a particular object from panel to panel. Aspect to aspect transition neglects time and mainly oscillates between various aspects of mood, idea place etc. (70-72).

10. Silent panels contain only pictures and bereft of words.

11. Dugdugi is a kind of musical instrument.

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Prospects of Comics Studies in India

Diptarup Ghosh Dastidar

Submitted: 5 February 2019, Revised: 10 February 2019, Accepted: 28 February 2019

Abstract: Although the prehistory of comics in India can be traced all the way back to the 1850's *Delhi Sketchbook* or the *Indian Punch*, the proper Indian comics scene can be said to have started from the 1960's with the publication of Amar Chitra Katha Comics and thriving publishing houses like Raj Comics and Indrajal Comics. Since then, for the past five decades there has been a steady rise not only in the publication of comics in India, but also in its reception and appreciation. The appropriation of the term 'graphic novel', coined by Will Eisner, into the Indian scenario has uplifted the importance given to the comics form. Post-1980's comics artists in India like Sarnath Banerjee, Vishwajyoti Ghosh, Sarbjit Sen, Orijit Sen, Amruta Patil, Appuppen and many others have started their own endeavors instead of working for publishing houses. This along with numerous graphic anthologies in the recent years like *Gaysi Zine*, *This Side: That Side*, *Longform*, and many others have enlarged the scope and directions of studying comics in India. Having discussed the comics scenario, this paper talks about various ways in which the Indian comics industry is affected by the conceptual notions generated in the western world. It also raises questions about the future of comics as a genre in the Indian context and what its place may be in the upcoming researches of the Humanities departments in India.

Keywords : History of comics, graphic novels, appropriation, humanities, comics scholarship, Indian comics.

Introduction

Comics as a form of art and a medium of artistic expression has evolved considerably over time in the Indian market and media circles, as has also its reception on a public level. This evolution has been caused by a number of variables ranging from cultural and political bias to social and economic living standards as well as aesthetic tastes of

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Superheroes in Indian Comic Books: Is being a Superhero Equal to being a Hindu?

Prerana Saharia

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Abstract: The most popular superheroes in Indian comic books have been created in such a way that they have a very close connection to Hinduism. Either they are some reincarnated form of Hindu gods and goddesses, they owe their superpowers to these gods or goddesses, are dressed in a certain manner that evokes the Hindu gods or their origin stories are set in mythological settings akin to those in Hinduism. However, the question of representativeness of the universe of Indian comic book superheroes forms an interesting area for sociological inquiry. The sheer lack of a superhero belonging to a religion other than Hinduism raises the question whether this can be understood as an attempt to make patriotism synonymous to being a Hindu. Moreover, the Indian comic book universe saw the rise of such superheroes since the 1980s, which coincides with the various revivalist strategies undertaken by certain groups and organisations who believe in the ideology of India as the 'Hindu Rashtra' or 'Hindu nation'. It is, therefore, difficult to escape the idea, if these comic book characters are also a part of this revivalist strategy. The notion of the 'hero' in this universe of comic books also needs to be examined. Do these comic books equate being a hero to being someone who saves and protects the 'nation' and its people, or is it more than just being a patriot in the narrow sense of the term? This also demands a deeper analysis of the concept of a 'nation' and what the notion of the 'Hindu nation' signifies. This paper delves into the question of representation of superheroes in the universe of Indian comic books that seemingly makes their religious identity and their national identity one and the same thing.

Keywords: comic books, superhero, nation, patriotism, religious identity, Hinduism, misrepresentation.

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The Superwoman of India—A Feminist Analysis of the Devi and the Deviant

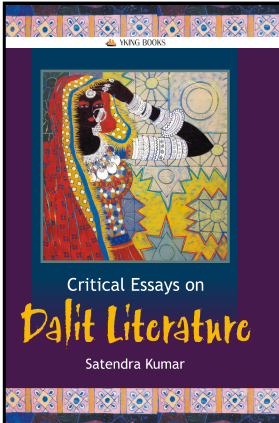
Supriya Banerjee

**Submitted: 9 February 2019, Revised: 10 February 2019, Accepted:
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Abstract: The paper proposes to explore the representation of the Indian superwoman Devi in the graphic novel series *Devi* produced in the year 2006-2008 by Virgin Comics. Located within the framework of recent developments in the social, economic and political areas in India, the Devi embodies the idea of “perfectness” within changing hegemonic assumptions and power centers of India. The framework of the research paper is approached by its foci on difference, deconstruction and decentering as its theoretical framework. The dualistic thinking in the representation of the Devi affirms to binaries that merely reproduces dominant discourses and regulatory power. The new generation of graphic novels internalizes “difference” in order to create a homogenous metanarrative and in doing so ultimately robs women of their individual agency. The plot of the primary texts are mainly located in their two functions. The male heroes in the graphic novels interact with a schematic order which is set in advance. In recasting the Devi from an ordinary woman, the plot centers around either purging or domesticating the Devi by transforming her as the new superwoman. The production of the superwoman is located at a time when India was easing into a commercial world of digitalization. The transformations of the ancient motif of Devi in the graphic novels betray acts that are “light on issues and heavy on vanity” (Baumgardner and Richards, 1997, 164-165). The texts engage with acts like vigilante justice, body shaming, mystification of sexual violence etc. to reproduce a superwoman Devi. The texts are an encounter with the burgeoning media savvy generation which initiates and also produces popular culture, and which has also produced the Devi as the superwoman of India.

Thus by tracking/problematising a single figure from Indian mythology that Indian writers, artists, performers have repeatedly appropriated: Devi, the goddess, the savior, the superwoman one can

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CRITICAL ESSAYS ON DALIT LITERATURE

Edited by
Satendra Kumar

Special Issue on New Literatures Gender Representation, Sexuality and Portrayals in Popular Culture: A Study of Female Superheroes in Comic Books

Sadiya Nasira Al Faruque

Submitted: 9 February 2019, Revised: 10 February 2019, Accepted: 28 February 2019

Abstract: In the domain of creative expression, comics were considered to be unworthy of attention since a long time. It is observed that the female characters in comics are highly misrepresented to the extent that they are often sexually objectified and often engages the 'Male Gaze' for the commercial profits. While sexism is not less rampant in other forms of writing, in the genre of comics, superhero comics can perhaps be labeled as the most sexist genre, especially in the portrayal of female superheroes according to the ideals of men's world. The comic book characters are depicted in contextual and visual extremes, which throw light on the common stereotypes prevalent and reinforced in the society. The consequence of this is that the female characters are reduced to an object to be possessed and in this process they lose their own autonomous power.

Keywords: Comics, Female Superheroes, Gender Roles, Sexualized, Male Gaze.

Introduction

Comics are categorized under graphic novels, which were initially considered to be an unimportant medium and unworthy of attention in the domain of creative expression. However, with the publication and commercial successes of graphic novels such as Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, Dave Gibbon's *Watchmen*, Joe Sacco's *Palestine* and also many superhero comics such as *Wonder Woman*, *Batman* series etc., the medium gained popularity and has become a popular medium in creatively raising many sensitive issues which reaches out to millions of audience around the world and which ultimately affects the way people perceive gender, gender roles and women in culture and in real life. While defending this popular medium, Scott McCloud, an American cartoonist and comic theorist, in his book *Understanding Comics*, tries

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Is Educational Health Comics Graphic Medicine?

Chinmay Murali & Sweetha Saji

Submitted: 2 February 2019, Revised: 8 February 2019, Accepted: 28 February 2019

Abstract: The visual turn in the field of health humanities has witnessed a proliferation of comics, among other forms of graphic arts, which engage with a plethora of issues concerning health and illness. Among these, graphic pathographies emphasize on vocalizing subjective illness experiences which are often neglected within the domain of biomedical discourses. Alternatively, educational comics aim at providing patients and caregivers with factual details about a specific disease. This article conceptually distinguishes graphic medicine from educational health comics in terms of their visual aesthetics, production, and reception. Drawing specific examples from select graphic pathographies and health information comics such as Ellen Forney's *Marbles: Mania, Depression, Michelangelo, and Me* (2012), Brian Fies' *Mom's Cancer* (2006), and Kirsti Evans and John Swogger's *Something Different About Dad: How to Live with Your Asperger's Parent* (2010), the article also attempts to demonstrate the stylistic and formal differences between graphic medicine and educational health comics.

Keywords: Health Humanities, Visual aesthetics, Graphic medicine.

Introduction

The recent proliferation of graphic narratives dealing with a phenomenological exploration of the lived realities of illness experiences testify the critical role of graphic medicine, an emerging interdisciplinary field which is the "intersection of the medium of comics and the discourse of healthcare" (Czerwiec et al. 1). As an offshoot of narrative medicine, graphic medicine lends voice to the hitherto silenced sections within the discourse of healthcare and medicine. To quote Ian Williams who is one of the pioneers of the field, "graphic medicine combines the principles of narrative medicine with an exploration of the visual systems of comic art, interrogating the representation of physical and emotional signs and symptoms within the medium" (Czerwiec et al. 1).

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Graphic Exposure: The Politics of Representation and Production in Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*

Beena Thomas

Submitted: 10 February 2019, Revised: 18 February 2019, Accepted: 28 February 2019

Abstract: Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* (2003, 2004) is a graphic novel that gives a visual account of a young girl who grows up in Iran during the Islamic Revolution and her later struggles in Europe. The original work written in French was published by a French publisher in four volumes between 2000 and 2003 and the English translations were published in the United States and United Kingdom, in two volumes in 2003 and 2004 respectively. It was made into an animated film, by the same name and directed by Satrapi and comic artist Vincent Paronnaud, and made its debut at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival, where it won the Jury Prize. It was also nominated for Best Animated Feature at the 2007 Oscar Academy Awards. Satrapi's *Persepolis* may be categorized as a memoir or autobiography, a genre that has found consensus with the diasporic Iranian women to divulge a personal representation of the events of Iranian history and the dynamic gender roles that have had an impact on their lives. It is a phenomenon that reflects how the women victims from this country have embarked to be the voices for change and have thus become a part of the surmounting Arab Feminism. Through her graphic narrative, Satrapi attempts to annihilate the misconceptions that the western world seems to have nurtured about her country and the Iranian women. Among its many concerns, the informal panels explore the conflicts between a gendered modernity and patriarchal structures bound in religion. Satrapi and the western publishers appear to have deliberately capitalized on the form of the graphic novel to reach out to that section of the world which had hitherto marginalized Iran. Similarly, the overwhelming acceptance of the film adaptation of the graphic novel may be attributed to the resurgence of the popularity of animated films among the western young adults and the adults. This paper is an attempt to study the graphic narrative in Satrapi's *Persepolis*, as a strategic discourse to expose the veiled realities of her nation and her attempt to reconfigure

with these ambassadors. He is walking all alone in the darkness of the night, deriving consolation from the surrounding Kashmiri nature. He firmly resolves to “draw, confess [...] write a story [...] to criticise, to express, to expose, to seek revenge” as his course of action while responding to the political tragedy of Kashmir (344-346).

Thus, this graphic novel shows the trajectory of Munnu’s growth from an inexperienced child struggling to master the art of drawing into a mature adult Malik Sajad who becomes a political cartoonist and a graphic novelist. It focuses upon the important stages in his life as he is trying to find a suitable artistic vocation for himself. After trying different art-forms, he finds the art of political cartoon and graphic novel as the most appropriate for his task of bearing a witness to political tragedy of Kashmir. He devotes his creative energy to master this art-form through his job as a political cartoonist. Subsequently he gets recognition as a graphic novelist. This novel becomes an example of *künstlerroman* by depicting the process of an artist-protagonist’s development. The overall impact of this graphic novel is twofold: It not only clarifies the nature and reality of the political conflict in Kashmir for outsiders by offering an insider’s view; it brings a degree of understanding of the roots of this conflict to those living inside. The novel points to the method of creative opposition and artistic resistance to political injustices.

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The Value of Comics Journalism in Our Post Truth World

Ajith Cherian

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Abstract: This paper argues that truth has often been divided into regimes, primarily into ‘political truth’ and ‘poetic truth’. Yet, in our post-truth world we have witnessed a systematic dismantling of these “regimes of truth” by absolute power. As a counter to post-truth journalism—the misleading, incidental, sensational, exclusive and ephemeral—I will examine the use of ‘poetic truth’—the convergence of historical, systemic and political in everyday life—in Joe Sacco’s comics journalism, particularly his 2001 book *Palestine*. I will also explore how Sacco’s comics, through the motif of the adventure or ‘blind dates’, envisions truth as more than the sum of its parts which begins in the present.

Keywords: Post truth; poetic-truth; regimes of truth; adventure; comics journalism; Joe Sacco; *Palestine*.

Introduction

In his controversial Nobel Lecture; Art, Truth and Politics, the British playwright Harold Pinter asserts that “There are no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false.” He continues, “I believe that these assertions still make sense and do still apply to the exploration of reality through art. So as a writer I stand by them but as a citizen I cannot. As a citizen I must ask: What is true? What is false?”¹ Although Pinter, sees the quest for truth as a process or maybe even a search for further information, by dividing truth into two, one as the “language of art” and the other of “political theatre”, he divides the indivisible event called life in to poetic subjectivity and a political subjectivity. He affirms that ‘poetic truth’ is “the search for the truth can never stop. It cannot be adjourned, it cannot be postponed. It has to be faced, right there, on the spot.”² For Pinter, the quest begins in the “here” and the “now” oriented towards the (im)possible(or as he calls it “the

Studying the Genre of Graphical Biographies: *Maus*, *ACK*, *Bhimayana*

Deepali Yadav

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Abstract: After being experimented in fictional and non-fictional ways in mainstream literary genre, biographies have now taken a new form that of an illustrated text. In my paper, I intend to study the cultural production of biographical texts both in Indian and international context. I will address the question as to why biographies are being introduced in the illustrated form now? I will also look into the kind of techniques these illustrated texts are using in order to make the text more appealing and convincing to its readers which consequently creates long lasting effect in the mind of readers. I will also highlight the differences between two readings (literary and illustrated biography) and the impact it leaves in the understanding of the subject being narrated.

Keywords: biography, graphic novels, comics, visual, illustration.

Introduction

Will Eisner's publication of illustrated book *A Contract with God* in 1978 popularized the term *Graphic Novel* and established a new identity for the genre which was until then used as a substitute for comics. Graphic novels are different from the comics for their level of seriousness in comparison to comics. With the advent of "underground comics revolution" in 1980s, there was a rise of new kind of comic book narratives. (Chute 456) These comics gave way to the graphic narratives which were serious yet imaginative and packed with socio-political issues in contrast to earlier comics. Today graphic novels are considered to be an eminent source of cultural productions that are of immense critical importance. It is important to note that as the genre developed and gained interest among the readers, graphic narratives of all sorts began to be categorized under one umbrella term that of Graphic novels. In terms of Eddie Campbell:

"The term graphic novel is currently used in at least four different and mutually exclusive ways. First, it is used simply as synonym

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