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**THE COMICS GRID**  
Journal of comics scholarship

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## Review

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## REVIEW

# The Comics Page: Scholarly Books Briefly Noted (2017–2018)

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This article documents a selection of scholarly books received by *The Comics Grid: Journal of Comics Scholarship* during the 2017–2018 editorial year and notes them briefly, collating their metadata and publisher's blurbs, as well as hyperlinks to the respective publisher's web pages for each book. This round-up seeks to promote awareness of these recent publications within comics scholarship, and to encourage their acquisition by academic libraries, academic review and, if appropriate, inclusion in syllabi.

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**Keywords:** Academic Publishing; Bibliography; Comics Scholarship; Film Studies; Media Studies

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During the 2017–2018 editorial year, *The Comics Grid: Journal of Comics Scholarship* received review copies from various scholarly publishers. The journal appreciates receiving these copies, which offer an insight into how fertile the field is. Whenever possible, review copies are assigned to expert reviewers who then submit their reviews to be considered for publication. The Review section in this journal is evidence of the ongoing work we encourage in this area.

However, the slow pace of academic journal publishing and the busy workloads of academic experts (TUC 2008; UCU 2018), along the lack of encouragement from employers, assessment and funding bodies to publish book reviews (Fischer 2016), means many relevant books remain unreviewed in a timely manner in specialised academic journals.

What follows is a selection of 10 books (their titles and metadata, including prices and publishers' blurbs) of interest to those working in the field of comics

scholarship published between 2017 and 2018 which we believe deserve wider scholarly attention and scrutiny.

## **Posthumanism and the Graphic Novel in Latin America**

By Edward King and Joanna Page

UCL Press, 2017

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-press/browse-books/posthumanism-and-the-graphic-novel-in-latin-america>.

236 pages

234 × 156 mm

Open Access PDF ISBN: 978-1-911576-50-1 Free

Enhanced Online Ebook ISBN: 978-1-911576-47-1 Free

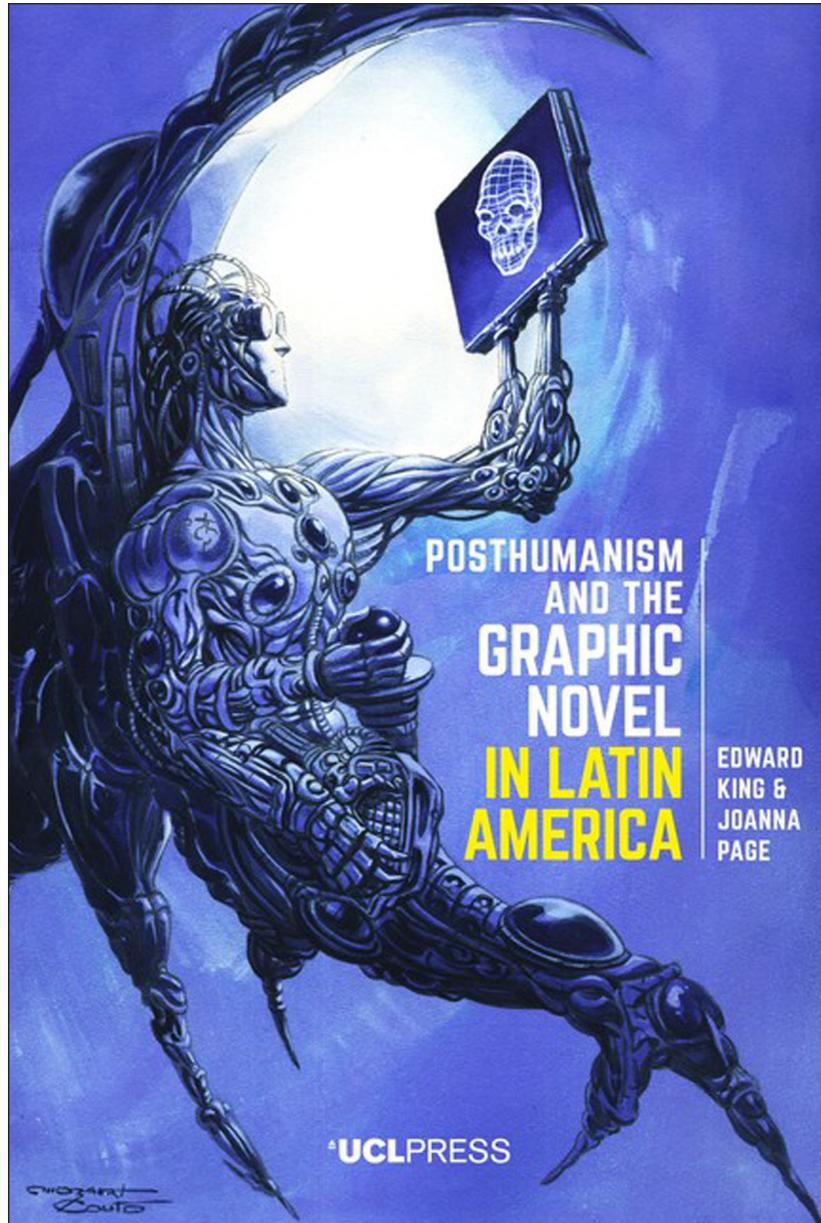
Hardback ISBN: 978-1-911576-45-7 £35.00

Paperback ISBN: 978-1-911576-46-4 £20.00

Epub ISBN: 978-1-911576-49-5 £5.99

### ***Publisher's Blurb***

Latin America is experiencing a boom in graphic novels that are highly innovative in their conceptual play and their reworking of the medium. Inventive artwork and sophisticated scripts have combined to satisfy the demand of a growing readership, both at home and abroad. *Posthumanism and the Graphic Novel in Latin America*, which is the first book-length study of the topic, argues that the graphic novel is emerging in Latin America as a uniquely powerful force to explore the nature of twenty-first century subjectivity. The authors place particular emphasis on the ways humans are bound to their non-human environment, and these ideas are productively drawn out in relation to posthuman thought and experience. The book draws together a range of recent graphic novels from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Uruguay, many of which experiment with questions of transmediality, the representation of urban space, modes of perception and cognition, and a new form of ethics for a posthuman world.



**Figure 1:** Cover of *Posthumanism and the Graphic Novel in Latin America*. UCL Press.

## **Lalo Alcaraz. Political Cartooning in the Latino Community**

By Héctor D. Fernández L'Hoeste

University Press of Mississippi, 2017

224 pages (approx.)

6 × 9 inches

20 b&w illustrations, bibliography, index

Printed casebinding 978-1-4968-1137-0 \$65.00

<http://www.upress.state.ms.us/books/2019>.

### ***Publisher's Blurb***

Amid the controversy surrounding immigration and border control, the work of California cartoonist Lalo Alcaraz (b. 1964) has delivered a resolute Latino viewpoint. Of Mexican descent, Alcaraz fights for Latino rights through his creativity, drawing political commentary as well as underlining how Latinos confront discrimination on a daily basis. Through an analysis of Alcaraz's early editorial cartooning and his strips for *La Cucaracha*, the first nationally syndicated, political Latino daily comic strip, author Héctor D. Fernández L'Hoeste shows the many ways Alcaraz's art attests to the community's struggles.

Alcaraz has proven controversial with his satirical, sharp commentary on immigration and other Latino issues. What makes Alcaraz's work so potent? L'Hoeste marks the artist's insistence on never letting go of what he views as injustice against Latinos, the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States. Indeed, his comics predict a key moment in the future of the United States— that time when a racial plurality will steer the country, rather than a white majority and its monocultural norms.

L'Hoeste's study provides an accessible, comprehensive view into the work of a cartoonist that deserves greater recognition, not just because Alcaraz represents the injustice and inequity prevalent in our society, but because as both a US citizen and a member of the Latino community, his ability to stand in, between, and outside two cultures affords him the clarity and experience necessary to be a powerful voice.



**Figure 2:** Cover of *Lalo Alcaraz. Political Cartooning in the Latino Community*. University Press of Mississippi.

## Comic Book Film Style. Cinema at 24 Panels per Second

By Dru Jeffries

University of Texas Press, 2017

269 pages

6 × 9 inches

\$29.95

116 b&w photos

Hardcover has a printed case, no dust jacket | ISBN: 978-1-4773-1450-0

<https://utpress.utexas.edu/books/jeffries-comic-book-film-style>.

### ***Publisher's Blurb***

Superhero films and comic book adaptations dominate contemporary Hollywood filmmaking, and it is not just the storylines of these blockbuster spectacles that have been influenced by comics. The comic book medium itself has profoundly influenced how movies look and sound today, as well as how viewers approach them as texts. *Comic Book Film Style* explores how the unique conventions and formal structure of comic books have had a profound impact on film aesthetics, so that the different representational abilities of comics and film are put on simultaneous display in a cinematic work.

With close readings of films including *Batman: The Movie*, *American Splendor*, *Superman*, *Hulk*, *Spider-Man 2*, *V for Vendetta*, *300*, *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World*, *Watchmen*, *The Losers*, and *Creepshow*, Dru Jeffries offers a new and more cogent definition of the comic book film as a stylistic approach rather than a genre, repositioning the study of comic book films from adaptation and genre studies to formal/stylistic analysis. He discusses how comic book films appropriate comics' drawn imagery, vandalize the fourth wall with the use of graphic text, dissect the film frame into discrete panels, and treat time as a flexible construct rather than a fixed flow, among other things. This cinematic remediation of comic books' formal structure and unique visual conventions, Jeffries asserts, fundamentally challenges the classical continuity paradigm and its contemporary variants, placing the comic book film at the forefront of stylistic experimentation in post-classical Hollywood.



**Figure 3:** Cover of *Comic Book Film Style*. University of Texas Press.

## **Comic Shop. The Retail Mavericks Who Gave Us a New Geek Culture**

By Dan Gearino

Foreword by Tom Spurgeon

Swallow Press, Ohio University Press, 2017

<http://www.ohioswallow.com/book/Comic+Shop>

264 pages

5½ × 8½ inches

Hardcover ISBN: 978-0-8040-1190-7 \$26.95

75 illustrations

Electronic ISBN: 978-0-8040-4083-9

### ***Publisher's Blurb***

The early 1970s saw the birth of the modern comic book shop. Its rise was due in large part to a dynamic entrepreneur, Phil Seuling. His direct market model allowed shops to get comics straight from the publishers, bypassing middlemen. Stores could better customize their offerings and independent publishers could now access national distribution. In this way, shops opened up a space for quirky ideas to gain an audience and helped transform small-press series, from Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles to Bone, into media giants.

*Comic Shop* is the first book to trace the history of these cultural icons. Dan Gearino brings us from their origins to the present day, when the rise of digital platforms has the industry at a crossroads even as sales are robust. He spends a year with stores around the country, with a spotlight on The Laughing Ogre in Columbus, Ohio. Along the way he interviews those who shaped comics retailing from the early days, including many pioneering women, top creators, and shop owners who continue to push the industry in new directions. A guide to forty of the most interesting shops around the United States and Canada is a bonus for fans.



**Figure 4:** Cover of *Comic Shop. The Retail Mavericks Who Gave Us a New Geek Culture.* Ohio University Press.

## **Drawing the Line. Comics Studies and INKS, 1994–1997**

Edited by Lucy Shelton Caswell and Jared Gardner  
Ohio State University Press, 2017

334 pages

6 × 9 inches

81 b&w illustrations

Paperback \$27.95 ISBN: 978-0-8142-5400-4

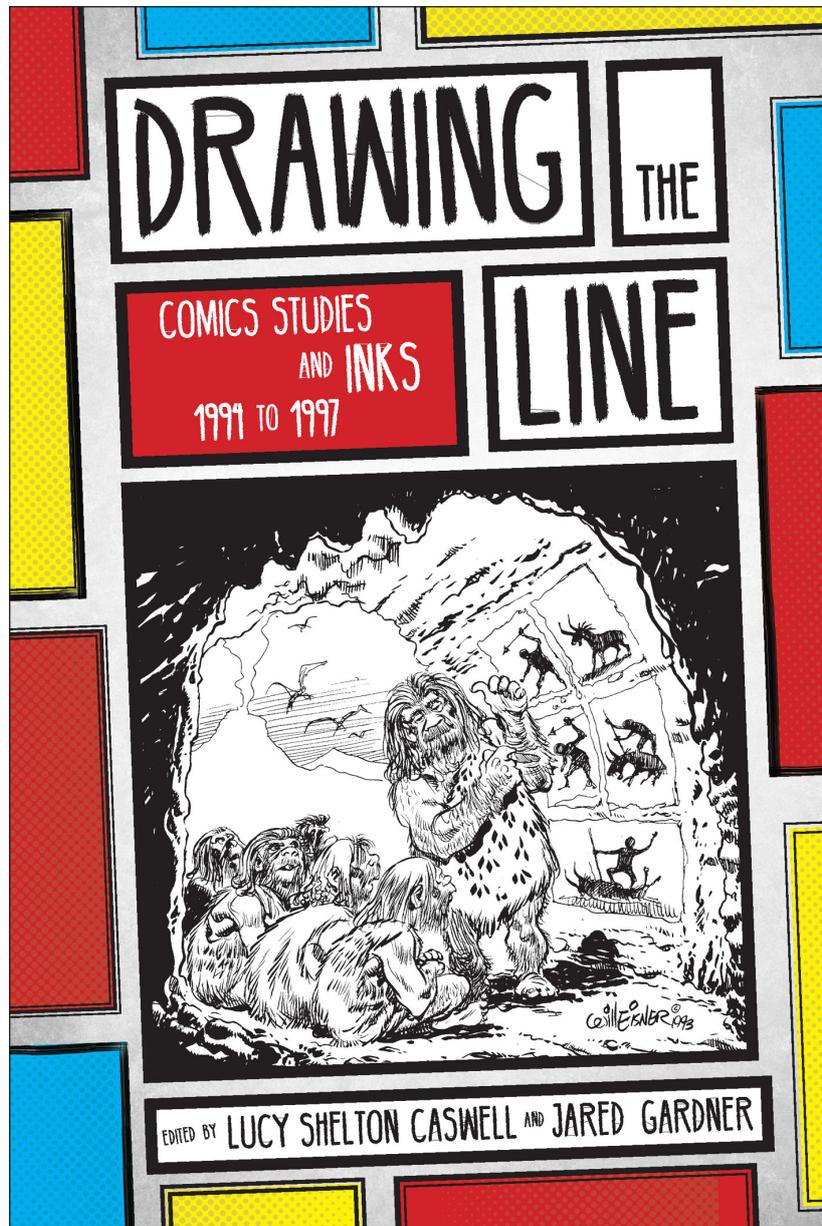
PDF Ebook \$19.95 ISBN: 978-0-8142-7495-8

<https://ohiostatepress.org/books/titles/9780814254004.html>

### ***Publisher's Blurb***

*Drawing the Line: Comics Studies and INKS, 1994–1997* collects some of the most important essays from *INKS: Cartoon and Comic Art Studies*, the first peer-reviewed scholarly journal devoted exclusively to comics studies. The volume, edited by Lucy Shelton Caswell, the journal's founding editor, and Jared Gardner, editor of the new *Inks: The Journal of the Comics Studies Society*, celebrates this foundational moment in the fast-growing field of comics studies and also serves as a call to contemporary scholars to revisit the roads-not-taken mapped out by these scholars and cartoonist critics.

Included in the volume are essays by pioneering comics scholars on newspaper comic strips, Japanese manga, Chinese lianhuanhua, comic books, graphic novels, and editorial cartoons, alongside writings and artwork by celebrated cartoonists such as Will Eisner, Oliver Harrington, Charles Schulz, and Frank Stack. This volume serves as an invaluable resource for anyone interested in the history and study of the comics form, visual culture, or the history of journalism.



**Figure 5:** Cover of *Drawing the Line. Comics Studies and INKS, 1994–1997*. Ohio State University Press.

## **The Expanding Art of Comics. Ten Modern Masterpieces**

By Thierry Groensteen

Translated by Ann Miller

University Press of Mississippi, 2017

240 pages (approx.)

6 × 9 inches

88 b&w illustrations, introduction, index

ISBN: 978-1-4968-0802-8

Printed casebinding \$65.00

<http://www.upress.state.ms.us/books/2081>

### ***Publisher's Blurb***

In *The Expanding Art of Comics*, prominent scholar Thierry Groensteen offers a distinct perspective on important evolutions in comics since the 1960s through close readings of ten seminal works. He covers over half a century of comics production, sampling a single work from the sixties (*Ballad of the Salt Sea* by Hugo Pratt), seventies (*The Airtight Garage of Jerry Cornelius* by Moebius), eighties (*Watchmen* by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons), and nineties (*Epileptic* by David B.). Then this remarkable critic, scholar, and author of *The System of Comics* and *Comics and Narration* delves into recent masterpieces, such as *Building Stories* by Chris Ware.

Each of these books created an opening, achieved a breakthrough, offered a new narrative model, or took up an emerging tendency and perfected it. Groensteen recaptures the impact with which these works, each in its own way, broke with what had gone before. He regards comics as an expanding art, not only because groundbreaking works such as these are increasing in number, but also because it is an art that has only gradually become aware of its considerable potential and is unceasingly opening up new expressive terrain.



**Figure 6:** Cover of *The Expanding Art of Comics. Ten Modern Masterpieces*. University Press of Mississippi.

## **Ethics in the Gutter. Empathy and Historical Fiction in Comics**

By Kate Polak

The Ohio State University Press, 2017

272 pages

6 × 9 inches

17 b&w illustrations

Paperback \$29.95 ISBN: 978-0-8142-5445-5

Hardcover \$134.95 ISBN: 978-0-8142-1353-7

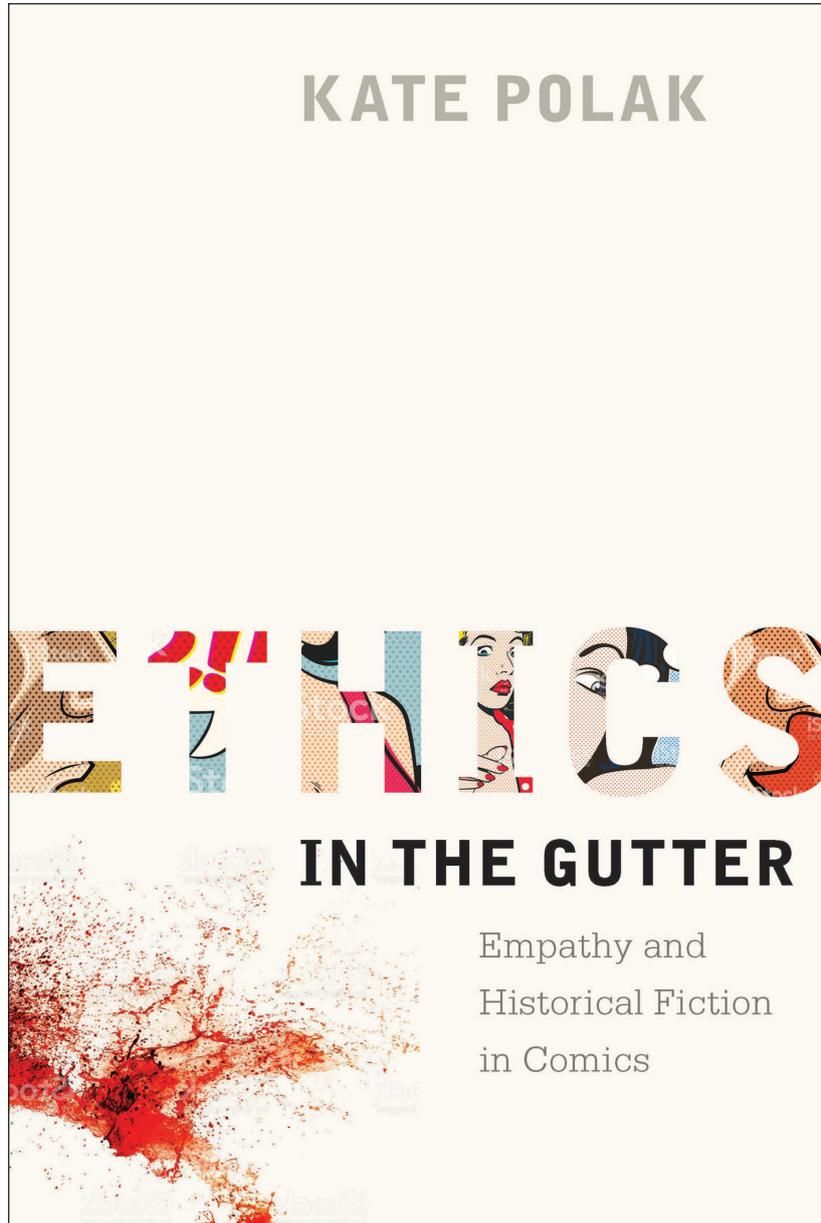
PDF Ebook \$19.95 ISBN: 978-0-8142-7588-7

<https://ohiostatepress.org/books/titles/9780814213537.html>

### ***Publisher's Blurb***

*Ethics in the Gutter: Empathy and Historical Fiction in Comics* explores an often-overlooked genre of graphic narratives: those that fictionalize historical realities. While autographics, particularly those that place the memoirist in the context of larger cultural conversations, have been the objects of sustained study, fictional graphic narratives that—as Linda Hutcheon has put it—both “enshrine and question” history are also an important area of study. By bringing narratology and psychological theory to bear on a range of graphic narratives, Kate Polak seeks to question how the form utilizes point of view and the gutter as ethical tools that shape the reader’s empathetic reactions to the content.

This book’s most important questions surround how we receive and interpret representations of history, considering the ways in which what we think we know about historical atrocities can be at odds with the convoluted circumstances surrounding violence. Beginning with a new look at *Watchmen*, and including examinations of such popular series as *Scalped* and *Hellblazer* as well as *Bayou* and *Deo gratias*, the book questions how graphic narratives create an alternative route by which to understand large-scale violence. *Ethics in the Gutter* explores how graphic narrative representations of violence can teach readers about the possibilities and limitations of empathy and ethics.



**Figure 7:** Cover of *Ethics in the Gutter. Empathy and Historical Fiction in Comics*. The Ohio State University Press.

## **Ben Katchor: Conversations**

Edited by Ian Gordon

University Press of Mississippi

192 pages (approx.)

6 × 9 inches

30 b&w illustrations (approx.), introduction, chronology, index

ISBN: 978-1-4968-1581-1

Printed casebinding \$50.00

<http://www.upress.state.ms.us/books/2078>

### ***Publisher's Blurb***

Author Michael Chabon described Ben Katchor (b. 1951) as “the creator of the last great American comic strip.” Katchor’s comic strip *Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer*, which began in 1988, brought him to the attention of the readers of alternative weekly newspapers along with a coterie of artists who have gone on to public acclaim. In the mid-1990s, NPR ran audio versions of several Julius Knipl stories, narrated by Katchor and starring Jerry Stiller in the title role. An early contributor to RAW, Katchor has contributed to *Forward*, *New Yorker*, *Slate*, and weekly newspapers. He edited and published two issues of *Picture Story*, which featured his own work, with articles and stories by Peter Blegvad, Jerry Moriarty, and Mark Beyer. In addition to being a dramatist, Katchor has been the subject of profiles in the *New Yorker*, a recipient of a MacArthur “Genius Grant” and a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a fellow at both the American Academy in Berlin and the New York Public Library. Katchor’s work is often described as zany or bizarre, and author Douglas Wolk has characterized his work as “one or two notches too far” beyond an absurdist reality. And yet the work resonates with its audience because, as was the case with Knipl’s journey through the wilderness of a decaying city, absurdity was only what was usefully available; absurdity was the reality. *Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer: Stories* presaged the themes of Katchor’s work: a concern with the past, an interest in the intersection of Jewish identity and a secular commercial culture, and the limits and possibilities of urban life.



Figure 8: Cover of *Ben Katchor: Conversations*. University Press of Mississippi.

## **Drawn to Purpose. American Women Illustrators and Cartoonists**

By Martha H. Kennedy

Foreword by Carla D. Hayden

University Press of Mississippi, 2018

255 pages

8½ × 11 inches

250 color illustrations

ISBN: 978-1-4968-1592-7

Cloth, \$50.00

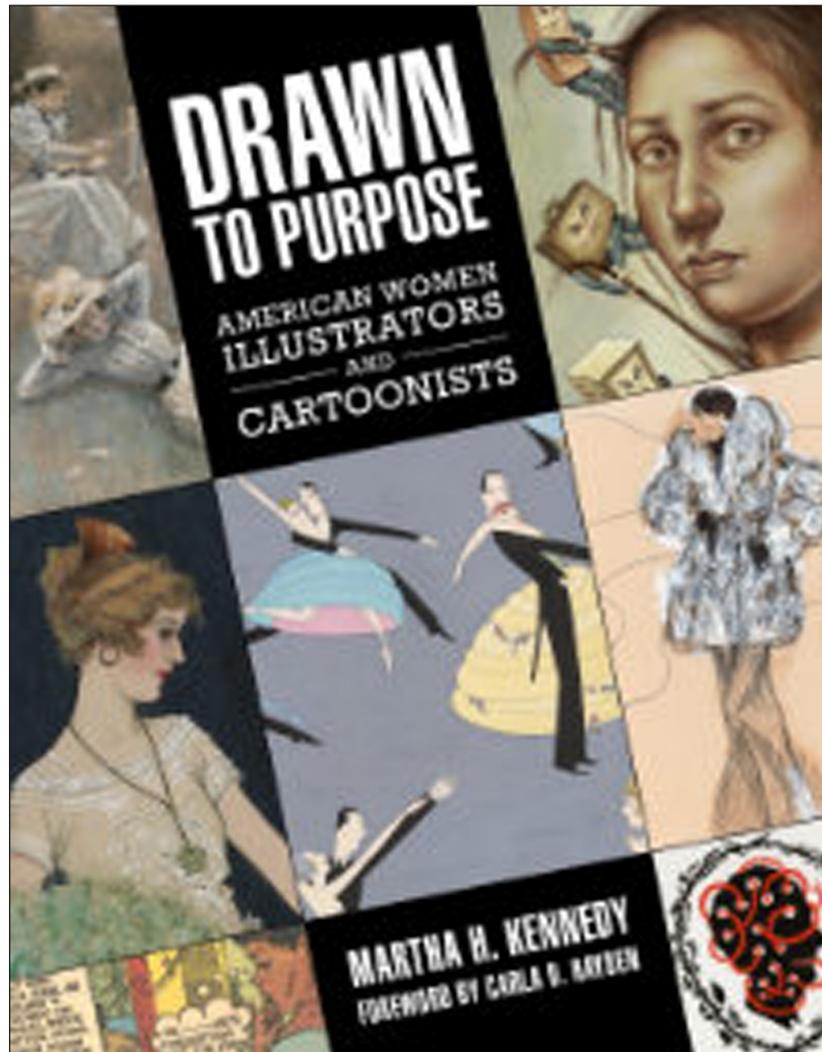
<http://www.upress.state.ms.us/books/2132>

### ***Publisher's Blurb***

Published in partnership with the Library of Congress, *Drawn to Purpose: American Women Illustrators and Cartoonists* presents an overarching survey of women in American illustration, from the late nineteenth into the twenty-first century. Martha H. Kennedy brings special attention to forms that have heretofore received scant notice—cover designs, editorial illustrations, and political cartoons—and reveals the contributions of acclaimed cartoonists and illustrators, along with many whose work has been overlooked.

Featuring over 250 color illustrations, including eye-catching original art from the collections of the Library of Congress, *Drawn to Purpose* provides insight into the personal and professional experiences of eighty women who created these works. Included are artists Roz Chast, Lynda Barry, Lynn Johnston, and Jillian Tamaki. The artists' stories, shaped by their access to artistic training, the impact of marriage and children on careers, and experiences of gender bias in the marketplace, serve as vivid reminders of social change during a period in which the roles and interests of women broadened from the private to the public sphere.

The vast, often neglected, body of artistic achievement by women remains an important part of our visual culture. The lives and work of the women responsible for it merit much further attention than they have received thus far. For readers who care about cartooning and illustration, *Drawn to Purpose* provides valuable insight into this rich heritage.



**Figure 9:** Cover of *Drawn to Purpose. American Women Illustrators and Cartoonists.* University Press of Mississippi.

## **Marie Duval**

Edited by Simon Grennan, Roger Sabin and Julian Waite

Myriad Editions, 2018

144 pages

210 mm × 270 mm

RRP £19.99

Hardback ISBN: 978-0-9955900-9-0

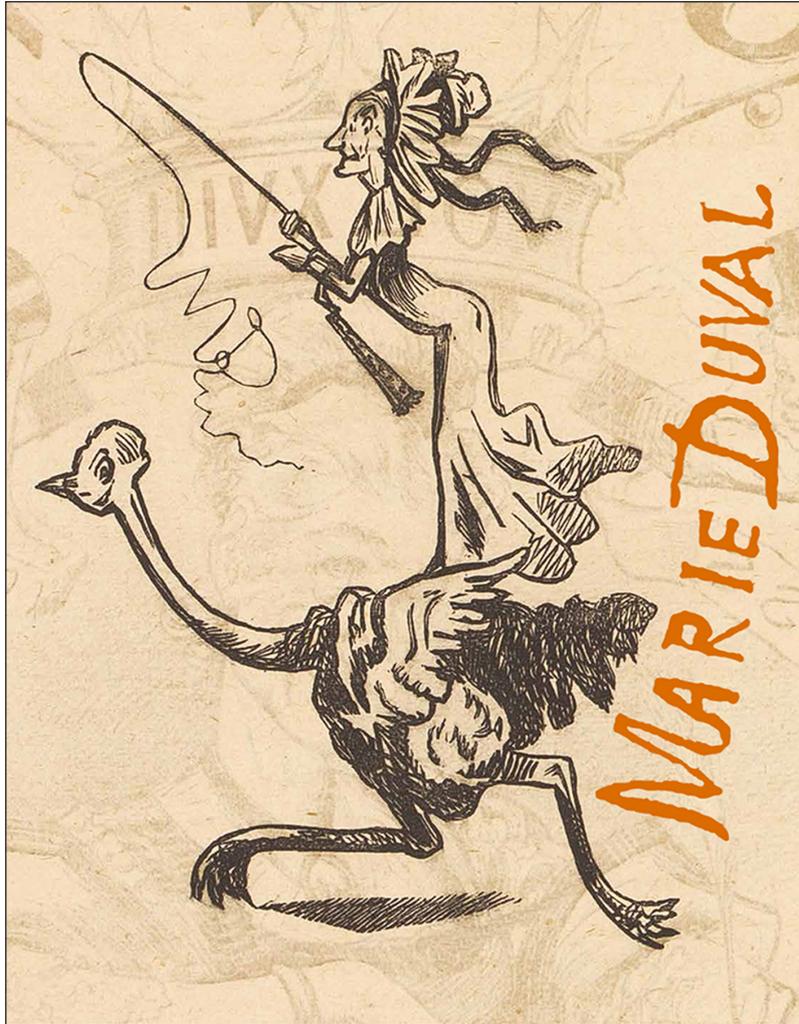
<http://myriadeditions.com/books/marie-duval/>

### ***Publisher's Blurb***

What did it mean to be a woman working in the man's world of cartooning? *Marie Duval* is a celebration of the art and times of Marie Duval – a unique, pioneering, innovative and highly entertaining visual journalist, cartoonist and illustrator whose work appeared in serial magazines and books at a time when the identity of the artist, in Victorian England, was in radical flux. Both a stage actress as well as an artist, Duval was uniquely placed to take advantage of the first appearance of a mass leisure culture by contributing to the weekly magazines that combined current affairs and theatrics with a focus on urban life.

The work of Marie Duval confounds one of our most commonplace ideas of the Victorian era—that women were not supposed to create or even to participate in public life and certainly not meant to be either comic or professional. Her comic strips were not only pioneering in terms of what we have come to call 'comics,' but present a vernacular comedy that frequently undercuts and supercedes the work of her male contemporaries.

The book provides an entertaining visual account of the work of Duval as she struggled and succeeded in creating a new urban visual culture. It looks in turn at key aspects of Victorian mass leisure industry, such as tourism, day-tripping, fashion, the theatre, art and the 'season.' Placing Duval in the visual context of the emerging profession of visual journalism, this illustrated book offers an enticing glimpse of the exciting, strange and world-changing media environment of London in the last part of the nineteenth century.



**Figure 10:** Cover of *Marie Duval*. Myriad Editions.

### Editorial Note

The images for book covers included in this article were obtained via their publishers' web pages. Due to the small file sizes made available, the resolution quality is unfortunately poor. The author is an editor of *The Comics Grid: Journal of Comics Scholarship*. This article was managed by another editor. The publishers' blurbs included above were lightly edited in some cases to standardize style. Anyone interested in submitting full-length reviews of any of the volumes included in this round-up, or of other relevant books within related fields, are encouraged to contact this jour-

nal's editors with an brief expression of interest, detailing how their expertise and interests match the topics and approaches of the book to review, via <https://www.comicsgrid.com/contact/>. Author guidelines should be consulted at <https://www.comicsgrid.com/about/submissions/>.

## Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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