

**Di Liddo, Annalisa. *Alan Moore: Comics as Performance, Fiction as Scalpel*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2009. 211 pages; bibliography, index.**

If nothing else, Annalisa Di Liddo's *Alan Moore: Comics as Performance, Fiction as Scalpel* is useful for its development of the debate over what constitutes a graphic novel. Her brief history of the debate includes not only the arguments of comic critics, but those of authors Eisner, Spiegelman, and Moore as well. In fact, she devotes several pages of her introduction to revealing the political, corporate, and other complications that make "graphic novel" so problematic, all in the name of demonstrating Alan Moore's transcendence of the genre — that he is, as she argues, "a performing writer" (22).

Fortunately for readers, she has much more to say. Though not a definitive look at the body of Alan Moore's literary work (and graphic novels are literary — financially, politically, and artistically), this text is certainly a very good glimpse at Moore's collaborative efforts, and clearly identifies some essential characteristics of Moore's style. Specifically, Di Liddo demonstrates that the conscious interweaving of literary, historical, and popular culture references allow Moore to use his fiction as a means of dissecting Western ideology — to perform a social and cultural critique.

Though the content is interesting and insightful, there are flaws in the text that can be difficult to overlook, the most glaring of which is that the book reads like a dissertation, which it was. It is from this point of origin — that of a dissertation — that the other stylistic issues seem to emerge. First person perspective permeates much of the work, most glaringly at the beginnings and endings of chapters. The effect of this perspective is that time and space are wasted discussing Di Liddo-as-researcher, rather than focusing on the text. On at least two occasions, the author also reminds readers that her work is not exhaustive, that there are perspectives and texts beyond the scope of her argument. This point is obvious from the focus of the text and the occasional references to works outside the sphere of her analysis.

More problematically, there are times when this text is "more trees and less forest"; that is, the depth of the analysis, and the winding nature of

Di Liddo's arguments, makes it difficult to keep readers oriented on the larger arguments that she is trying to weave together. Indeed, her conclusion seems to lay out her argument more effectively than her introduction, and her chapters lack the kinds of introductory and closing remarks that weave together the larger picture, although they clearly outline the goals of the chapters themselves. In one specific example, Chapter Two opens with arguably superficial coverage of Bakhtinian theory, specifically the subject of chronotope, which she intends to use to highlight the space/time connection in comics. By the end of the chapter, her point about the space/time connection has been proven, though with little actual connection to Bakhtin, and her transition to the subsequent chapter and the larger argument is a short sentence expressing a desire to "confirm and consolidate this analysis" (101).

Fortunately, and begging Bakhtin's pardon, though they must be considered together, the content of this text is overall much stronger than the form. Di Liddo successfully weaves together Moore's texts into a reasonably clear argument about the author's use of intertextuality as a form of performance for cultural and social criticism. Despite some arguable stylistic choices, Annalisa Di Liddo's *Alan Moore: Comics as Performance, Fiction as Scalpel* is an overall pleasing book for scholars and critics of the graphic novel and comics genres.

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**Waksman, Steve. *This Ain't the Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. 398 pages; bibliography, index.**

Waksman's book takes its title, appropriately, from the opening track on Blue Oyster Cult's 1976 album, *Agents of Fortune*, which has since become regarded as a classic of the heavy metal genre. "This Ain't the Summer of Love" is an abrasive but anthemic proclamation of the triumph of heavy rock over Seventies American youth culture at mid-decade and an