PERFORMATIVITY, CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION, AND THE GRAPHIC NARRATIVE

Edited by
Leigh Anne Howard and Susanna Hoeness-Krupsaw

Routledge

Performativity, Cultural Construction, and the Graphic Narrative

Performativity, Cultural Construction, and the Graphic Narrative draws on Performance Studies scholarship to understand the social impact of graphic novels and their socio-political function.

Addressing issues of race, gender, ethnicity, race, war, mental illness, and the environment, the volume encompasses the diversity and variety inherent in the graphic narrative medium. Informed by the scholarship of Dwight Conquergood and his model for performance praxis, this collection of chapters makes links between these seemingly disparate areas of study to open new avenues of research for comics and graphic narratives. An international team of authors offers a detailed analysis of new and classical graphic texts from Britain, Iran, India, and Canada as well as the United States.

This book will be of interest to students and scholars in the areas of communication, literature, Comics Studies, Performance Studies, sociology, languages, English, and Gender Studies, and anyone with an interest in deepening their acquaintance with and understanding of the potential of graphic narratives.

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1 Introduction, or transformations and the performance of text and image

Leigh Anne Howard and Susanna Hoeness-Krupsaw

In this volume, we draw on Performance Studies scholarship to offer, as Hillary Chute suggests, a different rubric for understanding the impact of graphic narratives ("Reading" 452). This rubric positions Performance Studies scholarship and its decades of research about literature, interpretation, textual bias, embodiment, transaction, and sociopolitical function as central to understanding more about how graphic narratives work and their potential for social and political change. Both performance and comics—in their role as product and process, their reliance on the verbal and visual, their insistence on audience engagement, and their subversion of a long-established textual bias—exist in what Dwight Conquergood calls a "borderland terrain" ("Ethnography" 80). Informed by Conquergood's model for the way performance functions, this collection of chapters makes links between these seemingly disparate areas of study to open new avenues of research for comics and graphic narratives. Following Conquergood's terminology, we have divided this collection into three parts—*mimesis*, *poiesis*, and *kinesis*—to illustrate the three functions graphic narratives have for social construction and audience engagement.

From cartoons to graphic novels to manga—the variety of comics, in combination with an awareness of their expressive potential, has generated both popular and scholarly interest over the last decade. Comics has experienced a revival and reassessment in the form of book-length, often more sophisticated, and better produced graphic narratives. Their readership has expanded beyond the young, male demographic to interest people of all ages, genders, races, and ethnicities, as attested by Elaine Martin's survey of international developments in graphic narratives. This increased readership in combination with excitement about the genre itself has initiated a wave of publications that focuses on comics and their expressive potential. The first wave addressed how educators might utilize these narratives and their unique properties in the classroom at the middle school, high school, and post-secondary levels (e.g., Burger 2018; Carter 2007; Dong 2012). These publications emphasized or justified comics as a legitimate area of study. Because of its hybrid form and unusual conventions, comics had long been considered a lesser

genre and form, and its value was seriously contested by readers and scholars. For the longest time, the graphic narrative could not be taught in schools or discussed in academic articles without fear of scorn or ridicule, though perhaps ironically they were seen as a gateway to reading and understanding "better" or "real" literature. So, scholars interested in the graphic narrative sought to explain its merit—and potential.

Part of the scholarly justification entailed determining what to call texts that include words and images and how to distinguish between the different ways those texts appear and function on the page. Building on the ground-breaking work of Will Eisner, Scott McCloud embraced the idea that comics is essentially "sequential art" (5) or, in a more comprehensive definition, "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (9). Having laid the groundwork for more detailed and complex analyses, McCloud's definition still offers a solid starting point. The next generation of scholarly ventures is well represented through the work of Hillary Chute who was among the academics who first promoted inquiries into graphic narratives in well-respected journals, such as *Modern Fiction Studies, PMLA,* and *Critical Inquiry.* For Chute, "[c]omics might be defined as a hybrid word-and-image form in which two narrative tracks, one verbal and one visual, register temporality spatially" (452). She distinguishes comics from the graphic novel which she sees as a "book-length work in the medium of comics" (453).

As a result of the work of Eisner, McCloud, and Chute, among other scholars, we have seen the emergence of an exciting scholarly approach which examines comics through numerous critical lenses or with a range of theoretical orientations. For example, the field of narratology has entered the quickly growing arena of Comics Studies with an issue of *SubStanc*e edited by Jared Gardner and David Herman and an edited collection by Daniel Stein and Jan-Noël Thon. In their 2011 introduction to a special issue of *SubStance*, Jared Gardner and David Herman, deploring the absence of detailed applications of narrative theory to the comics genre, introduce a variety of narrative approaches to diverse comics and graphic narratives. In addition, as Bart Beaty has suggested, comics scholars have applied the terminology of film, cinema, and other technologies to their discussions of comics and graphic narratives or explore transmedia narrative strategies. Writing in *Cinema Journal*, Bart Beaty reflects on current developments in Comics Studies through comparisons with Film Studies fifty years earlier. Like Film Studies, he believes that Comics Studies will have to develop its own terminology and "move beyond the narrowly thematic readings of key works and begin to offer critical insights into comics as a social and aesthetic system that has broader transmedia and intermedia implications" (108).

Matthew Smith and Randy Duncan in 2011 have paved a path for moving the study of comics forward. With their 2011 publication, they

call for a new form of Comics Studies (4) that they hope can operate outside of established fields to embrace new technologies and new media. Each chapter in Smith and Duncan's book illustrates a particular approach to the study of comics through a variety of critical lenses, such as feminism, Marxism, and reader response. Each chapter also includes a sample critical reading. Unfortunately, their excellent book, while addressing Comics Journalism and ethnography, does not include Performance Studies or cinema.

We hope our volume can contribute to this critical conversation. By focusing their critical lenses, the authors in this anthology initiate robust, critical conversations about how comics forms work and how they might contribute to our social, cultural, and political understanding. Though some of the comics discussed in the anthology are written expressly as a graphic narrative, many have been adapted from source works of fiction and non-fiction from multiple genres—the novel, film, animation, memoir, and news headlines, as well as other graphic narratives and comics styles. This ability to move between genres and across media illustrates what we might call a "transmedia performativity" in that they can easily cross now defunct boundaries, transform ideas, and challenge reader perceptions.

Because of the disciplinary "silos" academics so frequently inhabit, one of our greatest challenges has been gaging the levels of knowledge our reader may have about both comics and performance so that we neither overestimate the reader's familiarity with those areas, nor patronize the readers who have a more sophisticated grasp on the scholarship in comics and performance. Our intended reading audience resembles our friends who, like us, enjoy reading comics and graphic narratives, perhaps have even taught them and want to find out what others think about them or want to expand their knowledge of graphic narratives beyond superhero stories. We also anticipate an academic audience with more familiarity with comics than with Performance Studies, and so, in this introduction, we review some basic ideas central to Performance Studies and to the connection we are making in the volume about a performance-centered approach to the graphic narrative.

Performance, performativity, and the graphic narrative

Few scholars have shown an interest in connecting Performance Studies with comics scholarship. Some of this reticence may be attributed to Scott McCloud's claim that comics is not like a performance (McCloud 69). Two notable exceptions include Jonathan Gray's article, "Comics and Performance/Experiments and Inquiry," which reminds us performance is more than entertainment but is a potential mode of inquiry for "phenomena not usually considered performance" (n.p.). The other exception is Lisa Annalisa di Liddo's book, *Alan Moore: Comics as*

Performance, Fiction as Scalpel, which takes an interest in Alan Moore's work because, in addition to doing comics, Moore is also a performing artist (22). Unfortunately, she addresses performance only in the conclusion of her book when she mentions Moore's theatricality and his dedication to an "intrinsically performative medium like comics, where the illusion of mimesis is incessantly broken by the blatant antirealism of the lines that intertwine on the page" (164). In both cases, these scholars reference a connection between Performance Studies and comics that warrants more exploration given the similarities between these two dynamic, multimodal forms.

One way to unravel perceptions of disparity about the connection between the graphic narrative and performance requires understanding what we mean by performance and what performance shares with graphic narratives and other comics. For one thing, "performance," like comics, is a contested term, as well as a contested site of knowledge. People use the term "performance" to reference any number of activities: we seek to perform well in the workplace to have positive performance evaluations; we might attend a performance in the form of a concert or other types of staged art; we perform identities of gender, race, culture, age, and ethnicity; we perform in everyday life when we converse; and when we display wit, humor, or satire, we employ conventions of verbal performance. However, of equal importance to the performance scholar is how performance is a process and what those processes uncover. Thus, as Mary Strine explains, "performance" may mean any number of "activities, events, and processes, all of which share the common dimension of 'restored behaviors' or expressive (re)presentation of experience for someone, typically for an audience" (312). While performance scholars explore a range of performance activities as components of their scholarly agenda, several shared understandings about performance are pertinent particularly to our discussion of performance and the graphic narrative. These understandings can be broadly summarized according to performance as product and performance as process. Using this frame, we can also see the relationship between performance and comics, and how this relationship expands our consideration of the way comics can also function as product and process.

Comics and performance as product

A focus on performance as a product—event, activity, staged production—means clarifying what kinds of performance and in what way they function. Though certainly the productions staged by many performance scholars may use the conventions of traditional dramatic productions, performances from a Performance Studies perspective usually look quite different than the plays with which most people are familiar. One difference entails the material performed. Traditional theatre usually means

acting out the roles in dramatic literature (i.e., a staged play). This form's meaning is conveyed when characters show on stage what audience members need to know to follow the plot. Performance Studies, in contrast, take on a wider variety of source materials—non-fiction, ethnographic materials, popular culture, poetry, and prose. With these types of sources, a performance practitioner can extend the modes of conveying meaning. These modes comprise another difference between traditional drama and staged performances from a Performance Studies perspective. Certainly, characters can show audience members what they see, hear, and experience. However, these performances may also engage in "telling," a lyrical mode that permits the personae on stage to communicate directly to audience members, or they may use a combination of showing and telling, or an "epic mode." In these types of performance, one or even more narrators appear on stage alongside the characters to provide additional clues to enhance audience understanding. These modes also present another difference pertinent to our conversation: unlike dramatic productions that establish a fourth wall as a barrier between audience performers, the personae in Performance Studies productions use a presentational performance style that embraces techniques—such as direct address—that acknowledge the presence of audience members and let them share the action. These productions also rely on suggestion through minimal props, costumes, and sets. In contrast to the representational style of drama—using conventions to provide every detail to help audience members sink into the staged scene—performance practitioners stage scenes which rely on the power of suggestion. They establish markers audience members need to complete in order to follow the story or characters and that completion must be made by them to determine an understanding of what they see. Each of these factors establishes a performance event that requires more engagement of an audience than one might expect in a traditional dramatic production.

Function is another point to consider when describing staged performances. Mary Strine, Beverly Whitaker Long, and Mary Frances HopKins assert that performance appeared in multiple locations to accomplish multiple goals. Consequently, they explain, performance has multiple "sites" that can function as sites of "aesthetic enjoyment," as well as a form of "intellectual inquiry," "cultural memory," "political action," and therapeutic practice (Strine, Long and HopKins 186–188). Performances are entities that build social relationships as they serve social functions.

Like staged performances, comics is also a product—a work, text, series of panels, and frames and images—usually that appears in print form, a form that might make performance an unusual approach. Because it emerges in print form and is usually seen as a literary genre, comics may seem fixed or static at first glance; this status as text corresponds to a similar paradigm Conquergood identified for Performance

Studies in that the text creates a domination that distances, detaches, and denies the transactional nature of performance, and, as we argue, the graphic narrative. Comics, like performance events, is subject to a textual bias, one that denies the dynamic interaction a comic has with its readers, or given this performance-based rubric, audience members.

Although we see very keen connections between comics and performance, McCloud sees comics and performance as very different. He attributes them with separate reading strategies and mental processes. Although he acknowledges that comics panels look like slow-motion movie shots, he insists film or performance requires less interactivity than comics (Chute and Jagoda 3; McCloud 69). With these conclusions, though, McCloud may be falling prey to the false assumption that "performance" means a dramatic production in the "showing" rather than the epic mode valued by performance practitioners and that requires both showing and telling. Moreover, when one looks at key features of the forms, one can see connections between performances and comics: they both embrace multiple source materials; they rely on the verbal and visual—a showing and a telling—to help audiences engage; they rely on the power of suggestion to encourage that audience engagement; and that suggestion is carefully crafted or balanced in terms of what they provide and what they leave for the audience to provide. In short, both require audiences to engage, like Leslie Irene Coger explains, in a "theatre of the mind" (157).

Comics and performance as process

For decades, Performance Studies scholars have offered insight about performance as a way of knowing, particularly as an overarching lens to clarify literature, popular culture, and human behavior. Performance Studies, like comics, suggests that "reading" the words and images on the page is only the start of the audience member's experiences with the narrative and that the "real" work comes not when individuals encounter the written work—words and images—but when they take on the process of analyzing the work, "trying on" the experiences, and decentering texts to include a wider range of interpretive activity. Performers offer a physical display of embodied thinking; and audience members do not just read and look at the images, but they recognize that they must give more to the process by making leaps between what is apparent, what is suggested, and what is left off the pages altogether in order to make sense of the story. To this end, performance is "revelatory," as it "furnishes," "completes," and "executes" (Long and HopKins xiii) and as it necessitates to generate understanding. By situating performance as a mode of inquiry, performance becomes a frame that heightens our awareness of events, people, places, institutions, identity, and

social constructions of cultural categories that mark people and society. Usually, performances aspire to some level of transformation.

Just as comics encourages the reader to engage, Performance Studies involves a process that repositions the audience from a passive reader who may "skim and skip and scavenge" (Bacon 10) to a key collaborator in the creative process, for without those leaps the performance—or the graphic narrative as comics scholars agree—fails to achieve its aims. Louise Rosenblatt explains that written works exist only in the transaction between reader and texts, or when a reader engages a text. And most importantly, given these two factors, such a paradigm asserts that the most important activity is the interpreting process, or what happens in the liminal space between the physical pages of the graphic novel and the minds of audience members as they bring their ideas, emotions, and experiences to the interpretive field. McCloud's insights are somewhat consistent here, in that he sees the creator and audience in a "silent, secret contract" (69). However, unlike McCloud who sees creating "something out of nothing" (205), a Performance Studies perspective suggests the "dance" (208) isn't about creating something from nothing but rather the articulation of something (i.e., the transaction) that is already there waiting to be completed. This transaction echoes one of the longest-held tenets of Performance Studies scholarship: by actively engaging the text, by drawing on sensory experiences to embody that text, and by using those emergent experiences in combination with critical insight, one can more fully understand human and literary experiences. Both performance and comics, then, set up what Strine describes as an intense creator-audience relationship where both are responsible for generating meaning (Strine 313).

However, graphic narratives do not just generate a performance in that space between the pages of the story and the minds of audience members. In addition to creating a site of performance, graphic narratives stand *as* a performance. Like other literary works, graphic narratives stand as an "arrested performance," one that awaits its completion by an interpreter (HopKins and Long 236). As a performance, the graphic narrative permits artists and authors to "create and recreate" performances that are "in relation to the 'real' world" and that have some impact—aesthetic, social, political, ethical—on audiences (Pelias and VanOosting 220–221).

As performances set up a frame within social and political parameters (Bell 35–36), they also form a way to better understand such parameters. These abilities establish performance as a vital and viable way to enact change and to be change; consequently, performance is performative. When Mary Strine discusses the connection between performance and performativity, she begins her explanation by referencing J.L. Austin's *How to Do Things With Words*, where he outlines essential aspects of speech-act theory, including the performative characteristics

of utterances. Some utterances, which he calls *conservatives*, describe things as they are, while *performatives* are endowed with additional impact as they accomplish what is uttered. So, when one promises one is performing a promise (Strine 313–314), or when one apologizes, one is performing an apology (Conquergood, "Beyond the Text" 32). In short, by saying something, Austin claims we bring it into being, though Strine argues that Austin's concept fails to acknowledge that performative potential of all utterances and cites Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler for their broader approach to performativity.

The impact of performativity points out the powerful nature of performance and its capacity for encouraging social change and standing as social change. Conquergood explores the nuances of performance and its relevance for transformation when he discusses performance as *mimesis*, *poiesis*, and *kinesis* (Conquergood "Ethnography"). Conquergood uses these terms to describe performances that imitate life or to reflect the vision an author has of reality. Because that vision is subjective, Conquergood notes the imitation creates a "binary opposition between reality and appearance" that may "sustain an antiperformance prejudice" ("Ethnography" 84) because the imitation is acknowledged as a depiction or a recreation which is fake. For his second category, Conquergood draws on the work of Victor Turner to describe performance as *poiesis*, or construction. Performances in this category take on the role of "making, not faking," and resemble J.L. Austin's performative utterances as both are a kind of invention or creation that calls some action into to being. Thus, these performances do not reflect life or even a different way of life; these performances construct a certain way of living or being in the world. For Conquergood's last category, *kinesis*, performances take on an urgent, revolutionary function in that they serve as a breaking and remaking—an intervention, interrogation, and reinvention—as suggested by Homi K. Bhabha. These performances do not construct a way of being; they resist what already exists and serve as a new way to offer alternative social or political action. As Conquergood writes, "Performance, flourishes in the liminal, contested and recreative space between deconstruction and reconstruction, crisis and redress, the breaking down and building up...." ("Beyond the Text" 32).

Just as performance can be situated as *mimesis*, *poiesis*, and *kinesis*, so too can graphic narratives take on this type of performativity. Authors and illustrators of comics can imitate and report the world they see, construct the world they want, and reconstruct the world they need in order to accomplish social transformation. Graphic novels take on a mimetic function with their ability to create a make-believe story world that renders people and events with enough details to give readers the impression of photographic realism. With this function, graphic narratives use conventions to depict a story or world, one a reader visits in the encounter with the text. In other words, graphic novels can "fake"

reality. Other graphic narratives operate in more sociopolitical ways as they may help audience members create understanding of the familiar or problematic. These stories, as *poiesis*, have the capacity to engage the audience more actively because the involvement required is extending the story to understand how that story constructs a broader view of lived experience. There is yet a third category, however, that breaks with norms and traditions and lets readers see the world from an entirely new angle that can generate political activism. These graphic narratives with their capacity to reinvent stand as Conquergood's *kinesis* because they are both texts that illustrate the change that needs to happen, or because they stand as a step in the actual change; they are an alternative way of seeing and being in the world. The goal of graphic novels as *kinesis* is in the reconstructing that which is evident to something more promising for human experience.

By asserting a performance-based rubric, one celebrates comics' more fluid concepts, which Conquergood also uses to describe performance and how the audience members make sense of their encounter: immediate, involved, and intimate ("Beyond" 25–26). A Performance Studies approach to comics and graphic narratives highlights the openness of both fields of study. Like performance, comics is playful, creative, and frequently ambiguous and open-ended. Like performance, comics thrives on liminality through the openness of the gutter space. All of the comics characters discussed in these pages owe their existence to important social interactions and require reader engagement to come alive on the page.

About this volume

For this collection of original chapters, we invited scholars in various disciplines (including Communication Studies and journalism, Film Studies, world languages, and literature) to bridge the fields of Comics Studies, Performance Studies, Cultural Studies, and literary criticism to contribute their innovative and original ideas about the impact of graphic narratives. Their chapters illustrate some of the challenges and opportunities in any cross-disciplinary research, but they also signal possibilities for developing new approaches to graphic narrative theory and their capacity for performativity. Our first attempt at sorting the chapters was aligned with *types* of social construction (i.e., traditional categories such as gender, race, and ethnicity). However, as the chapters progressed and our thoughts about the way these constructions worked were challenged, we shifted our organization to focus on the performative functions or activity graphic narratives have for social construction. To this end, our structure is derived from Dwight Conquergood's work on *mimesis, poiesis,* and *kinesis,* and the relationship of each to social construction or transformation. As Shannon Jackson notes, Conquergood's work saw

performance, as well as its theory and practice, as a way to transform society and bringing to the fore the voices and experiences of underrepresented populations (Jackson 29). We saw the same interest and potential in our collection and in the comics analyzed in each of the chapters, although they vary in the way they work to reflect, construct, or reconstruct social circumstances. We hope this approach opens new lines of thought about the work comics and graphic narratives perform.

Part I–Mimesis: *imitating and illustrating*

The four chapters in this section examine autobiographical and fictional accounts of contemporary phenomena, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among soldiers, panethnicity, racialized spaces, and mental illness. The chapter authors meticulously investigate how their respective graphic narratives perform the difficult task of representing politically charged topics in visually engaging formats. Melissa Caldwell's "'Did You Kill Anyone?': The Pathography of PTSD in *The White Donkey*" examines Maximilian Uriarte's depiction of an Iraq War veteran's difficult return to civilian society through the image of a white donkey that is strategically placed alongside the soldier's traumatic experiences. Caldwell highlights how Uriarte documents military training practices that exacerbate the soldier's condition. Moreover, insufficient medical attention—accompanied in the graphic narrative by medical data and sample psychological tests—further substantiates Uriarte's supposition that the system has failed the soldier.

Grace Martin's work on Marvel's *America*, "I Don't Have Any Ancestors, OK? Let's Just Drop It: Miss America and (Pan)Latinx Representation in Marvel's *America*," focuses on representations of Latinx characters in comics. After a survey of past failures and current successes in representing such characters in comics, Martin focuses both on the Miss America character's ability to appeal to a wide range of diverse Latin readers and on the impossibility of realistically doing so. Marvel's panethnic approach, as Martin asserts, necessarily leads to Miss America's stereotypical embodiment of too many ethnic appeals to arrive at an entirely successful rendition.

In "Space, Conflict, and Memory in *Shaft: A Complicated Man*," Chris Ruiz-Velasco examines how David F. Walker's and Bilquis Evely's adaptation of Ernest Tidyman's novel renders contested spaces and associated power struggles in the graphic medium. Space is shown to be an active agent in the formation of Shaft's identity while also serving as a setting for memory recovery.

This unit concludes with an exploration of how graphic narratives permit readers to empathize with individuals who suffer from mental illnesses through realistic depictions of their struggles and survival. Alissa Burger's "Illustrating Mental Illness and Engaging Empathy

Through Graphic Memoir" discusses three increasingly personal and engaging graphic memoirs. Darryl Cunningham's *Psychiatric Tales: Eleven Graphic Stories About Mental Illness*, like Uriarte's novel discussed in Caldwell's chapter, operates with clinical annotations and medical terminology. Ellen Forney's *Marbles: Mania, Depression, Michelangelo, and Me* is a piece informed by both Forney's personal and professional experiences. Finally, Katie Green's *Lighter Than My Shadow* is shown to deliver intimate insights into her experiences with institutionalization and recovery.

Part II–Poiesis: *making and constructing*

Instead of faithfully rendering real-life experiences, spaces, and events—the works discussed in the four chapters included in Part II look at the way graphic novels construct or are themselves constructed by audience members, and in this way, the graphic narratives exemplify Conquergood's ideas about poiesis. In some cases, the chapters work with social scientific data or transfer the lived experiences of people to the comics platform. Interestingly, nearly all of these chapters also address some aspect of family—from immigrant to superhero families, from the depiction of fictional families in *Pride and Prejudice* and the impact of slavery in family formation—each chapter touches upon how the comics can depict family, or influence our understanding of family life.

The first two chapters in Part II address family, family relations, and the particular challenges families face. Winona Landis examines two Vietnamese American graphic memoirs that redraw familiar geographic places through personal family histories. Landis's chapter "Mapping the Nation and Reimagining Home in Vietnamese American Graphic Narratives" shows how public refugee discourse can be refashioned to bear on private family concerns and in so doing challenges common misconceptions about refugees and immigrants to the United States, their expectations, and their experiences. Family relationships are also at the heart of Sara Austin's "'Real Men Don't Smash Little Girls': Inter-Hero Violence, Families, Masculinity, and Contemporary Superheroes." Austin's research shows that bonding among superheroes derives from ancient dueling practices. The appeal and pressure of the resulting team spirit are so strong that, until recently, female superheroes also had to embrace the same violent tactics to prove themselves. Newer emergent female characters are performing more communal and caregiving functions to bond with members of their group.

Susanna Hoeness-Krupsaw's "Graphic Performances in Octavia Butler's *Kindred*" expands the familial connections observed in graphic narratives to include a time-traveling protagonist who, by recovering her family history, also draws attention to the painful intersections of past and present. The adaptation's graphic narrative style is shown to lead to

strong empathetic reader reactions, according to Hoeness-Krupsaw. Another exploration of a graphic novel adaptation, "Austen's Audience(s) and the Perils of Adaptation" by Leigh Anne Howard, focuses on different audience reactions to graphic novel adaptations. Based on each reader's familiarity with the material, graphic novel adaptations must meet explicit reader expectations to prevent failure, and when the source material is a successful, well-known prose novel much beloved by its fans known as "Janietes," the adaptations require more than skillful attention to plot but also the careful consideration of audience.

Part III–Kinesis: *breaking and remaking*

Whereas graphic novels discussed in Part II relay familiar materials to illustrate how texts and audiences construct ideas about graphic novels and the experiences they portray, the narratives discussed in Part III tend to attack norms and cross boundaries to illustrate the more urgent social function and subversive potential of the graphic narrative aimed at changing audience perception, motivating them to action, and standing as social change. Melanie Lee's "Graphical, Radical Women: Revising Boundaries, Re(Image)ining *Écriture Féminine* in the Novels of Bechdel and Satrapi," for instance, illustrates the powerful textual and graphic devices used by Marjane Satrapi and Alison Bechdel as they depict their respective protagonists' adolescence and coming-of-age stories. Lee is able to highlight particularly well what can happen in the gutter space and how subversive the outcomes can be. Likewise, Partha Bhattacharjee and Priyanka Tripathi's "Bridging the Gutter: Cultural Construction of Gender Sensitivity in Select Indian Graphic Narratives after Nirbhaya" illustrates the way graphic narratives can advocate for social change and indeed be the start for social change. The authors deftly demonstrate how one collection of graphic shorts and one graphic novel series, both published after violent attacks on women in India, specifically set out to change social habits and create greater gender sensitivity among readers. Gender issues also dominate Michelle Wise's chapter titled "There Are No Monsters Like Us": Gothic Horrors, Lesbianism, and the Female Body in Marguerite Bennett and Ariela Kristantina's *InSEXts*." Wise first examines how the gothic genre permitted the breaking of 19th-century gender boundaries, and then she illustrates how Bennett and Kristantina's novel series uses both gothic and Victorian tropes to assert women's authority and to celebrate their creative potential.

The next two chapters also look at the way graphic narratives can offer new ways of looking at cultural scripts. Jamie Ryan's chapter, titled "(De)Forging Canadian Identity in Michael DeForge's *Sticks Angelica, Folk Hero*," examines the connection between nature and Canadian national identity and argues that Michael DeForge uses the graphic novel platform to offer something different. Beginning with an account of five common nature myths in classic Canadian stories, Ryan shows how