

GUEST EDITOR'S PREFACE

The graphic novel is an elastic genre. The hybridity of the form—the juxtaposition of text and image and temporal and spatial intersections—opens itself up to a layering and merging of generic conventions: fiction, life writing, memoir, autobiography, biography, letters, testimonial writing, historical narratives. Thus, the medium lends itself to complex narration, perspectives, points of view, and modes of perception. Its polyphonic and multi-layered structures perform complex visual-verbal expressions of identity, memory, and the implied tensions produced by absence and presence in the overlapping of past, present, and future. The genre of comics narratives distills an immediacy and urgency that situate both reader and narrator/graphic artist in a dialogic and participatory experience of collective and personal witnessing.

“What is Jewish about Jewish comics and graphic novels?” Ken Koltun-Fromm asks in the opening essay for this collection. The pieces that follow, both the essays and the graphic narratives, respond to this question in provocative and multi-faceted ways. The contributions from scholars and graphic artists in this special issue reflect the range and fluidity of the genre as it responds to issues of memory, identity, and historical and individual consciousness.

—Victoria Arons
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