THE VICTORIAN ROOTS OF THE GRAPHIC NOVEL

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INTRODUCTION

Graphic novels have become an increasingly important part of America’s literary culture. Because of their similarity to comic books, graphic novels are sometimes mistaken as juvenile – only geared toward people who either cannot or will not read “real” novels. There is often a strict divide between the “higher” literary world of Dr. Jekyll and Ivanhoe and the “lower” world of graphic novels. It seems that readers of one genre are unlikely to read the other.

The purpose of this project is to build a bridge between both worlds by showing that graphic novels have their roots in the Victorian-era serialized novel. The question this project answers is: Is the graphic novel a logical descendent of the Victorian-era serialized novel?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In their publication, subject matter, and art, what are the parallels between the Victorian serialized novel and the graphic novel, and how is the graphic novel a logical descendent of the Victorian-era serialized novel?

METHODS

This project takes a qualitative research approach. My materials will be both primary and secondary sources. They will include:

- Internet archives of photographed artifacts
  - Trajan’s Column
  - Bayeux Tapestry
  - Victorian literature illustrations
  - Graphic novel illustrations
- Peer-reviewed scholarly articles
- Original sources
  - Victorian-era novels
  - Graphic novels

The research will be broken into three areas:
1) Trajan’s Column and the Bayeux Tapestry: Establishing Precedent for Graphic Narrative
2) The Victorian Serialized Novel: Themes, Structure, and Illustration
3) The Graphic Novel

The research intends to establish a logical historical and thematic link between the Victorian serialized novel and the graphic novel, and publish it in the form of either a research paper or a website.

SIGNIFICANCE

This study will help to ground the graphic novel in the canon of literature, both historically and thematically. It will show that in both art and the writing, graphic novels follow and modify longstanding narrative cues. Additionally, it will show that the themes and structural constraints of the Victorian serialized novel carry over into the graphic novel. Perhaps most importantly, this study may help people realize that “classics” and graphic novels are not mutually exclusive, and introduce readers of both genres to new areas of interest.

SOURCES

5. Victorian and Albert Museum (2016). “Illustrations for Dickens’ Novels.” http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/i/illustrations-for-dickens-novels/

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