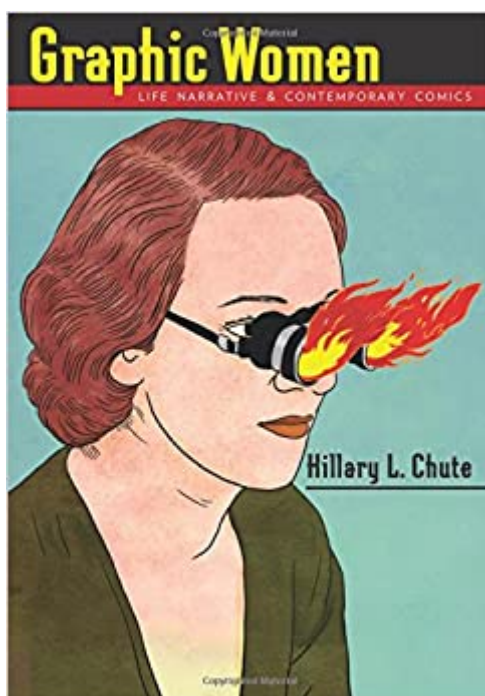


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# Graphic Women: Life Narrative And Contemporary Comics (Gender And Culture Series)



## Synopsis

Some of the most acclaimed books of the twenty-first century are autobiographical comics by women. Aline Kominsky-Crumb is a pioneer of the autobiographical form, showing women's everyday lives, especially through the lens of the body. Phoebe Gloeckner places teenage sexuality at the center of her work, while Lynda Barry uses collage and the empty spaces between frames to capture the process of memory. Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* experiments with visual witness to frame her personal and historical narrative, and Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* meticulously incorporates family documents by hand to re-present the author's past. These five cartoonists move the art of autobiography and graphic storytelling in new directions, particularly through the depiction of sex, gender, and lived experience. Hillary L. Chute explores their verbal and visual techniques, which have transformed autobiographical narrative and contemporary comics. Through the interplay of words and images, and the counterpoint of presence and absence, they express difficult, even traumatic stories while engaging with the workings of memory. Intertwining aesthetics and politics, these women both rewrite and redesign the parameters of acceptable discourse.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Scholarly and fascinating. (Colette Bancroft St. Petersburg Times) The graphic novel industry isn't a boys club. (Time Out Chicago) *Graphic Women* is a text that will appeal to anyone with an interest in contemporary women's literature and trauma studies, as well as those with a budding or established interest in the rich world of comics studies. (Tahneer Oksman *Contemporary Women's Writing*) An

absorbing book written with dedication, impressive documentation, and a very sharp eye for detail. (Mihaela Precup Biography)...an essential book for those who are interested in autobiography, visual studies and comics in general as it initiates a beginning in the study of women's graphic memoirs. (Olga Michael Scandinavian Journal of Comic Art)

Hillary L. Chute is Neubauer Family Assistant Professor in the English Department at the University of Chicago. Previously a Junior Fellow in literature in the Society of Fellows at Harvard University, her work has appeared in PMLA, Modern Fiction Studies, Twentieth-Century Literature, and Women's Studies Quarterly, among others. She is associate editor of Art Spiegelman's *MetaMaus* and has written about comics and culture for venues including the *Village Voice* and the *Believer*.

Mostly insightful and well-founded, but I was disappointed to see such a limited selection of texts—yes, graphic memoir is fantastic, particularly in terms of providing a venue for female narrative on experience, but many of her points apply at least as well to graphic fiction, but she doesn't really address that aspect.

She knows her stuff and writes clearly and engagingly. It is firmly based on academic research but very much about the experience of reading graphic narratives. It will no doubt become a classic.

*Graphic Women* is ingeniously curatorial, focusing on the art of five autobiographical cartoonists: Aline Kominsky-Crumb, Phoebe Gloekner, Lynda Barry, Marjane Satrapi, and Allison Bechdel. These artists' works all focus on experiences of violent, often sexual and usually gender-based trauma. Through their comics, Chute investigates the relationships between contemporary cross-genre aesthetics, memory, trauma, and the pleasures and dangers of being a woman artist. Their stories all reenact violent memories, but the characters are by no means reduced to messy-confessional meat puppets animated by hulking wound-puppeteers. In fact, the very fact that the book exists shows that the protagonist lived to tell the tale - and to render it with her own hands. The fact of author embodiment is always implicit in autobiographical graphic narratives, and all aspects of the visual style of these comics remind the reader that the work is crafted by the hand of the story's visually present protagonist. The work has been drawn for an audience, not for the artist herself. The artist may, in fact, depict herself speaking directly to the reader. This trick, combined with the fact that readers determine pacing and closure (because of the gutter and the closure required from text/image juxtaposition), is possible only in comics. Chute describes comics artists' formal and

thematic interactions as theoretically sophisticated, experimental, and accessible; an exhilarating achievement: "[C]omics is a powerful form precisely because it is also invested in accessibility, in print. Comics works can deliberately disrupt the surface texture of their own pages--often invoking aesthetic practices of the historical avant-garde--yet they model a post-avant-garde praxis in the very fact of their popular availability, in the "mass appeal" of the medium . . . It is because comics is both a sophisticated and experimental form, and because it has a popular history, that the current work in the field feels so hopeful and invigorating. (11)"The fact that Chute mentions "accessibility" and "experimental form," in the same breath and not as mutually exclusive concepts is a huge reason *Graphic Women* is such an innovative, important contribution to the growing field of comics studies.

If you ask the average person about women in comics or graphic novels, most will probably respond with a comment about their favorite Marvel or DC female superhero or the girlfriend of one. If you ask about women **CREATING** comics or graphic novels, some might be able to point out their favorite artists but sadly most might draw a blank at naming even the author of one of the local weekly comic strips in their local paper. Luckily with female created comics such as *Persepolis* & others becoming more prevalent, hopefully more readers will start to take notice of women as both serious & talented artists. Chute attempts (and succeeds) to draw attention to not only this, but to also showcase several extremely talented women in the field. Chute's words are interspersed with pictures from various comics that help illustrate her points. The end result is a more powerful reading experience for anyone who is looking to broaden their reading horizons. This book would make for an excellent add on book for any art class, especially now that more colleges are offering classes based around comics as an art & history form. (I dare someone to say that you can't see history in the comics!) There will still be some readers who might be a little disappointed that this book takes more of an informative & educational standpoint, but they should stick with it- maybe it would help them develop a deeper appreciation for what they read! This isn't a light read, so people looking for something that's just "fun" might be in for a shock when they pick this up to read. (ARC provided by NetGalley)

The book that the Academy needed to start taking comic seriously. It sets the bar higher for future critics and lovers of comics.

Incredible product. Very sturdy. Arrived on time. I enjoy using it. send it to my grandmother, will

purchase again. great and good experience. delivery on time receive it next day .

GRAPHIC WOMEN: LIFE NARRATIVE & CONTEMPORARY COMICS covers the lives and achievements of five key women who produced comics and graphic novels to record history. From interesting connections between comics and memory to comics exploring female relationships with men, this pairs black and white examples with literary and artistic analysis and is a pick for college level graphic novel history holdings.

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