

Comic books, politics and readers: the influence of the 2000AD group of comics creators on the formation of Anglo-American comics culture.

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Little, Ben (2011) *Comic books, politics and readers: the influence of the 2000AD group of comics creators on the formation of Anglo-American comics culture.* PhD thesis,



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ABSTRACT

This thesis accounts for the influence on the mainstream American comic book industry of the cult British science fiction magazine 2000AD in the early 1980s. It introduces new methods for approaching politics in comic books and delivering them to a readership in Britain of the boys magazine Action.

The thesis looks at the way the medium's publishing history has intersected with mass communication; in particular it explores how the reader in comics is positioned in the development. To support this argument two chapters are devoted to textual analysis of two works. Comics consist of sequences of images that require reader interpretation and explore the implications this has for close analysis. These chapters use the work of Alan Moore and Chas Truog's surreal *Animal Man: Deus Ex Machina* as examples and also the work of Scott McCloud and Thierry Groensteen, among others.

The core of the thesis revolves around close analysis of eight texts, grouped into categories that broadly represent the different phases of the development of the American comic book industry. The first chapter looks at Alan Grant and Ian Gibson's *RoboHunter: Play It Again Sam*; Alan Moore's *Swamp Thing*; Alan Moore and David Lloyd's *V for Vendetta*. These readings are then tested against the work of American comics in the form of Chris Claremont and John Byrne's *X-Men: The Dark Phoenix Saga* looking at Alan Moore, Steve Bissette and John Totleben's *Saga of the Swamp Thing* developed on 2000AD to the American market. The thesis then moves on to look at American comics moving forward by looking at an example that was influenced by 2000AD: *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* again using his earlier comic *Ronin*. The thesis is used to show how these comics imagined new political configurations of Thatcher and Ronald Reagan and attempted to do so while engaging with the political case in either the British or American adventure comics mainstream. The thesis as a whole advances comics studies in terms of contributing to the field of communication and by providing a detailed look at this period in the history of the future research in cultural studies to approach different aspects of the

Item Type: Thesis (PhD)

Additional: A thesis submitted to Middlesex University in par

Information: Doctor of Philosophy.

Research Areas: [A.](#) > [School of Media and Performing Arts](#) > [Media](#)

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