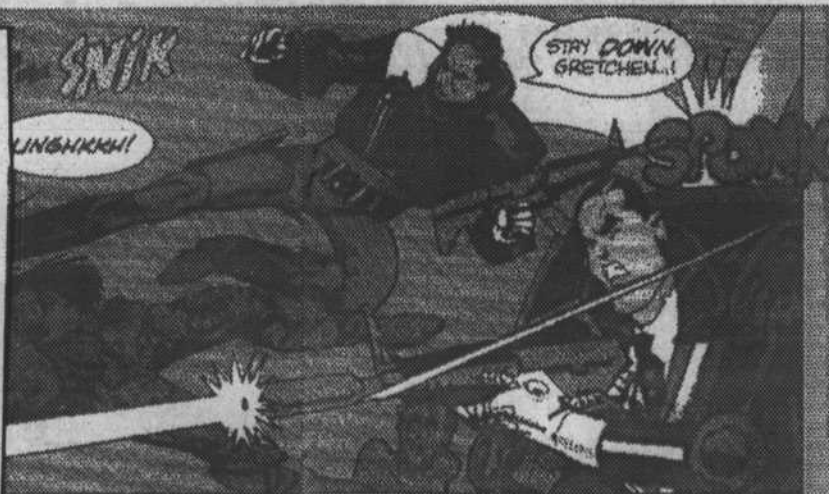


A&E COMIC SECTION

COMIC CASSEROLE



HEEHEEHEE... ee!

HUH? HE JUST STOPPED.

Comic books serve as canvas for social trends

By Paula Lavigne
Senior Reporter

Shakespeare and Superman could land alongside Spawn and Salvador Dali if comic books fell in the same ranks as literary and artistic works of art.

Although University of Nebraska-Lincoln English and art professors said the literary and artistic value of comic books was ambiguous, they said comics did possess certain social values.

Associate art professor Christin Mamiya said comic books would have to be judged as individual works to determine their actual value.

"Some comic books are very well-done and would be considered as art," she said. "But the problem is that people have very traditional notions about the context in which 'art' is viewed.

"Art is something that has more than just a passing visual interest."

She said art had to have a conceptual visual structure.

Some comic books don't fit this definition, she said, because the point of comic books is to be simplified and immediately understandable.

"In general, the quality is substantially different," Mamiya said.

But Mamiya said comic books might have an artistic value in defining popular culture. English professor Maureen Honey said the social value of comic books in relation to popular culture was more evident than their literary value.

"You need to look at them sociologically, rather than as literary documents that have value," Honey said.

"They're designed for other things such as fantasies or fairy tales that fit into society's mythology," she said. "It tells a story that fits into society's needs."

Honey said comic books played an important role for today's youth.

"Comic books do important things for young people," she said.

"You can see what's going on in readers' minds."

She said comic books were an important historical tool in studying social myths and values.

"Look at Wonder Woman, who was created during World War II and fought the Nazis," she said. "She was the heroine for the time."

Honey said Wonder Woman represented the women's labor movement and the diminishing gender barriers in society.

"I look at them as an example of a cultural product that tells us important things about our society," she said.

Honey said this was illustrated in certain comic books starting to feature minorities as superheroes.

As far as literary value is measured, some comic books can have a solid story plot and good literary value, she said, but it is hard to make a comparison.

"It trivializes the term (literary value) to put comic books in the same category as a well-done novel," Honey said. "It's like apples and oranges."

"Comic books can stand on their own terms."

— “
Art is something that has more than just a passing visual interest.
— Mamiya
UNL associate art professor
” —

COMIC REVIEW

Beavis and Butthead No.1 is written by Mike Lackey and drawn by Rick Parker. It sucks.

Kiddie psychologists beware: Bruce Jones is writing the exploits of the wildly popular **Venom**, Marvel Comic's grossest hero ever. Jones introduced vampire lesbians and the all-breast story to mainstream comic books. Now he writes about **Venom**, a murdering schizophrenic who looks like Spider-Man except for his fangs, long tongue and green drool.

Frank Miller's **Sin City — A Dame To Kill For** is the film noiriest. In Miller's True Crime world, every woman is either a prostitute, a society dame or a lesbian; every man is a killer, a fat pervert or a chump. Life is primal, dark and vicious. Miller continues to push the limits of America's urban archetypes into something raw, intense and powerful.

Jim Starlin's new comic book, **Breed**, is fantastic. Continuing the strong commitment to quality that he brought to **Dreadstar** and **Warlock**, Starlin's newest creation begins the story of a human with alien blood. His combination of strong characters, exciting storylines and masterful plotting makes this comic book the only must-have of January. Get it while you can.

Thanos, another Starlin creation, begins his own series this month in Marvel. It asks the question: When the thrill of universal conquest fades, what does a cosmic being of ultimate evil do for fun? Thanos is written by Ron Marz, and drawn by Ron Lim and Jimmy Palmiotti.






In **X-Men No. 30**, Superhero sweethearts Cyclops and Jean Grey finally enter into matrimonial mutant bliss. In previous Marvel issues, their romance hit a rocky period when Phoenix, an alien from beyond, put Jean Grey into suspended animation on the ocean floor and assumed her life and likeness. But now love conquers all and this thrill-free wedding issue contains enough sentimental shlock to satisfy even a hard-core Michael Landon fan.

Finally, for a dose of grisly post-Christmas cheer, try **The Trencher 'X-MAS BITES' 1994 Holiday Blowout**. On a quest from the spiritual world to reclaim accidentally incarnated souls, Trencher kills a mall Santa and a flatulent-driven vampire. Written and drawn by cult-favorite Keith Giffen, Trencher is disgusting, morally vacant and fun. As Trencher says, "Stalk. Shoot. Repeat."

The Daily Nebraskan has a strong commitment to supporting local artists. If you've created a comic book, send us a copy and we'll review it.

—Patrick Hambrecht

Comic rating system

-  **Classic:** *Dark Knight Returns* by Frank Miller
-  **Exceptional:** *Dreadstar* by Jim Starlin
-  **Normal:** *Superman, Action Comics* by Roger Stern
-  **Good:** *The Incredible Hulk* by Peter David
-  **Forgettable:** Not worth a quarter

