

GRAVEN IMAGES: RELIGION IN COMIC BOOKS & GRAPHIC NOVELS

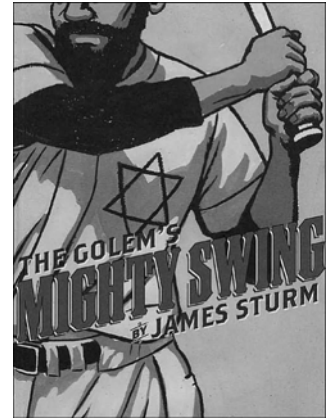
April 11-13, 2008

Presented by the Luce Program in Scripture and Literary Arts
and the New England-Maritimes American Academy of Religion
Boston University Department of Religion

Keynote Speaker:

James Sturm

The Golem's Mighty Swing
and *James Sturm's America: God, Gold, and Golems*



“Graven Images” will explore the roles of religion in comic books and graphic novels. This conference is open to all interpretations of “religious comics”; in fact, we welcome debate as to what that term might mean. From the performance of religion in comics, to religious or mythic traditions among the elements of various works, to the use of comics by religious practitioners themselves, the relationship between comics and religion is dynamic and evolving. Given the increasing seriousness with which the public has come to view comics as an art form as well as Americans’ fraught but passionate relationship with religion, “Graven Images” provides an opportunity for discussion of cutting-edge artistic and social issues.

Examples of religion in comics abound. *Preacher* is the tale of a lapsed Texan clergyman armed with the literal Word of God in order to track down the Creator Himself. *The Golem's Mighty Swing* features a group of Jewish ballplayers in the 1920s who invoke a biblical force amidst competition and prejudice. *Cerebus*, the world’s first and only 6,000-page graphic novel, revolves around the creation of a new religion, its sacred text, the author’s own account of Genesis, and a final accounting with God. *Kingdom Come* presents a “twilight of the superheroes,” set against the backdrops of both Nordic Ragnarok and Christian Revelation and seen through the eyes of a faith-weary minister and a divine Spirit of Vengeance. Although there is no shortage of religious material in comic books and graphic novels, there is a dearth of formal, academic discussion on the topic. “Graven Images” aims to begin a conversation that will rectify this lack.

The focus will be primarily English-language works produced over the last 60 years for the American market, though special exceptions will be made for particularly strong abstracts. We are particularly interested in the following works and topics, though others will be considered:

Age of Bronze, *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary*, *Blankets*, *Buddha*, *Castle Waiting*, *Cairo*, *Contract with God*, *From Hell*, *Finder*, *Hellboy*, *Hey Mister: The Trouble with Jesus*, *Invisibles*, *Jew of New York*, *King David*, *Lucifer*, *Marked!*, *MAUS*, *Megillat Esther*, *Persepolis*, *Promethea*, *Sandman*, *Testament*, and the Virgin Comics line.

- Pagan Missionaries: the works of Moore, Gaiman, and Morrison as mouthpieces for New Religious Movements
- Christian Comic Books and the Evangelicals
- The Market for Religious Comics
- *Daniel: Prophet of Dreams*, *Samson: Judge of Israel*, *The Lone and Level Sands*, *Marked!*, and other depictions of the Hebrew Bible or New Testament
- Using Comics to Teach Religion
- Non-Western Religious Traditions in Western Comic Books
- Ritual Wednesdays at the Comic Shop: Comic Book Culture and its Elements of Faith
- What does a Messiah look like? *Chosen*, *Battle Pope*, and *The New Adventures of Jesus*
- *Binky Brown* and other Irreverent Portraits of Religion: The Role of Humor

500-word abstracts should be sent to the attention of A. David Lewis either through e-mail at ADL@bu.edu or by mail to “Graven Images” Conference, Department of Religion, Boston University, 145 Bay State Road, Boston MA 02215.

ABSTRACTS MUST BE RECEIVED BY JANUARY 31, 2008.

