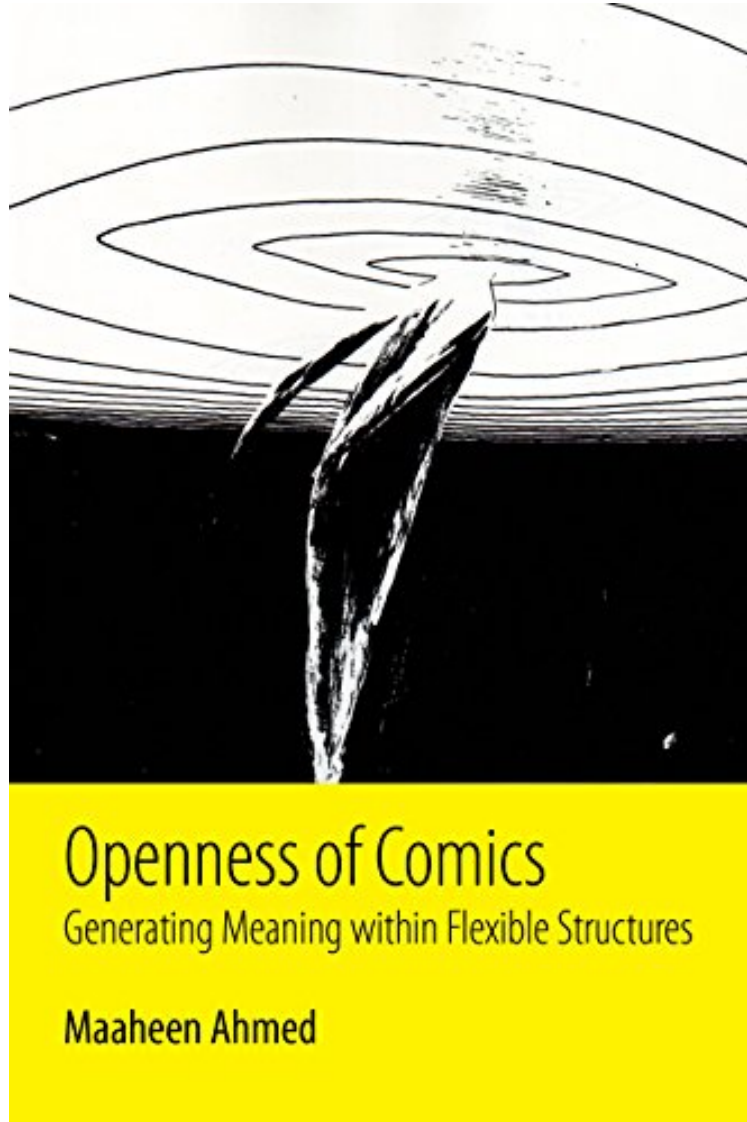


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Openness of Comics: Generating Meaning within Flexible Structures

Maaheen Ahmed

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Maaheen Ahmed : Openness of Comics: Generating Meaning within Flexible Structures before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Openness of Comics: Generating Meaning within Flexible Structures:

Never before have comics seemed so popular or diversified, proliferating across a broad spectrum of genres, experimenting with a variety of techniques, and gaining recognition as a legitimate, rich form of art. Maaheen Ahmed examines this trend by taking up philosopher Umberto Eco's notion of the open work of art, whereby the reader or listener or viewer, as the case may be, is offered several possibilities of interpretation in a cohesive narrative and aesthetic structure. Ahmed delineates the visual, literary, and other medium-specific features used by comics to form open rather than closed works, methods by which comics generate or limit meaning as well as increase and structure the scope of reading into a work. Ahmed analyzes a diverse group of British, American, and European (Franco-Belgian, German, Finnish) comics. She treats examples from the key genre categories of fictionalized memoirs and biographies, adventure and superhero, noir, black comedy and crime, science fiction and fantasy. Her analyses demonstrate the ways in which comics generate openness by concentrating on the gaps essential to the very medium of comics, the range of meaning ensconced within words and images as well as their interaction with each other. The analyzed comics, extending from famous to lesser known works, include Will Eisner's *The Contract with God* Trilogy, Jacques Tardi's *It Was the War of the Trenches*, Hugo Pratt's *The Ballad of the Salty Sea*, Edmond Baudoin's *The Voyage*, Grant Morrison and Dave McKean's *Arkham Asylum*, Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* series, Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's *From Hell*, Moebius's *Arzach*, Yslaire's *Cloud 99* series, and Jarmo Mäkilä's *Taxi Ride to Van Gogh's Ear*.

Maaheen Ahmed's *Openness of Comics* is exactly the sort of book comics studies needs. It is theoretically sophisticated, making an original, convincing use of the concept of openness. This conceptual breakthrough will be of interest to anyone who thinks about comics and will shape future scholarship. Ahmed also discusses a wide array of American and European comics, many of which have not hitherto received the detailed analysis they deserve. Comics scholarship is coming into its own as a field of study, and this book is on the cutting edge of that field. Jeet Heer, coeditor of *Arguing Comics: Literary Masters on a Popular Medium* and *A Comics Studies Reader*, and the notions of ambiguity and reader-generated meaning that it encapsulates, is central to the very way comics work. This book presents the concept coherently, before giving a mouth-watering overview of examples that draw upon comics from a wide range of genres, national traditions and languages, and time periods. We are left feeling that we understand comics as we never did before, or at least if we don't, then we now understand why we don't understand. Laurence Grove, author, editor, or coeditor of eleven books, including *Comics in French: The European Bande Dessinée in Context* and *Comic Invention About the Author*, Maaheen Ahmed, Brussels, Belgium, is currently funded by the FWO (Research Foundation-Flanders) and is a postdoctoral fellow at Ghent University. In addition to contributing to several edited collections, Ahmed has published articles in, among others, *SCAN: Journal of Media Arts Culture*, *Les Cahiers du GRIT*, *European Journal of American Studies*, and *International Journal of Comic Art*.