

Emily Brown
LIBS 271
Annotated Bibliography

The theme of this annotated bibliography is science fiction graphic novels. The intended audience is adult readers. I started off with four works that I knew I definitely wanted to include. The other six were selected by examining Amazon.com's list of science fiction graphic novels. Most of which were not selection worthy to me.

My criteria was to include at least three manga titles, no well known superheroes, and no children's titles. I noticed a number of authors, such as Warren Ellis, have multiple books that would fit nicely in this theme, so I decided to not include multiple works by the same author for the sake of variety. With that criteria in mind, the selection process was moderately time consuming. A great number of superhero comics are classified as science fiction and adult, which surprised me.

Overall, I think I got a well rounded list of titles from geologically diverse authors, publishers, and sub-genres of science fiction. This is a very popular genre in graphic novels. The reviews for some of the newer titles were a little difficult to find, but even more difficult were finding reviews for titles that were re-releases, such as Tank Girl.

Titles

1.

Doran, C. (2005). *A distant soil, vol. 4: coda*. Berkeley, CA: Image Comics.

Doran's fourth volume of A Distant Soil continue the struggle of half-alien girl and heir to godlike powers, Liana as she struggles to adjust to her new role as the Avatar, the supposed ruler of, but in reality pawn, her father's alien home world. The former Avatar Seren's coup failed, bring danger to himself, and all whom he cares about. The breathtakingly detailed art add to the otherness of this comics alien setting.

Reviews:

“A DISTANT SOIL is the story of Liana, a young girl born the heir to an alien religious dynasty. Possessing the power to destroy worlds with her mind, Liana is under an assassination order from the government of her father's homeworld. A foiled coup attempt results in a power vacuum that leaves this alien world without its treasured weapon. The aliens have no choice but to take Liana as their reluctant new Avatar. Only an angry slave and a small group of resistance fighters can free her and the universe from the dangers of her power. Although he only recently became publisher at Image, Erik Larsen was the first to invite Doran into the Image family back in 1996. "I invited her into Image for good reason," says Larsen. "She's respected tremendously as a creator throughout the field. Her work is highly detailed, very decorative and gorgeous." ”

Weiland, J. (2005, January 5). Fourth “A distant soil” collection coming from Image [Review of the book *A distant soil, vol. 4: coda*, by C. Doran]. Comic Book Resources. Retrieved from <http://www.comicbookresources.com/?page=article&id=4446>

“Collen Doran’s great trick is to take a classic plot from seemingly every sci-fi novel known to man

and make it new, exciting, and not just a little bit funny! Yes, there are the usual trappings of sci-fi — advanced societies gone horribly wrong, reluctant heroes, psionic powers, political intrigue, and battles in space. Embrace the sci-fi space opera (you know you love it) and you'll find yourself sucked in to an epic full of laugh-out-loud humor, love, revenge, and loyalty.”

Robin. (2001, May 1). A distant soil, vol. 1-3 [Review of the series *A distant soil*, by C. Doran]. No Flying No Tights. Retrieved from <http://noflyingnotights.com/?p=1047>

2.

Ellis, W. (1998). *Transmetropolitan: Back on the streets* (D. Robertson, Illus.). New York, NY: DC Comics.

Transmetropolitan's first volume details the return of future city reporter Spider Jerusalem, a man whose swearing, drugged up, violent actions and writing uncover a plot by the Civic Center to ruthlessly and unjustly destroy a group of transients, or people transitioning to an alien body. The writing is fierce, with amusing asides and enjoyable to read. The art is highly detailed, full of colorful, well drawn characters and vivid backgrounds.

Reviews:

“As deliciously perverse as Harlan Ellison, as panoramic as Philip K. Dick, Vertigo's *Transmetropolitan* details the exploits of a wiseass, cyberpunk journalist named Spider Jerusalem as he makes his way through the seething cityscape of an all-too-plausible future.”

Yayanos, M. (2000, December 18). Transmetropolitan's Warren Ellis [Review of the book *Transmetropolitan*, by W. Ellis]. Publishers Weekly, vol. 246, issue 51. Retrieved from <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/print/20001218/22380-transmetropolitan-s-warren-ellis-.html>

“*Transmet* is a sci-fi story of political corruption, sex, murder, conspiracy, and technology. It's *All the President's Men* through the temperament of Hunter S. Thompson, with all the venomous, skewed, original storytelling that Ellis is hailed for. At the forefront of it all is Spider Jerusalem, a take-no-prisoners journalist. Fueled by drugs and anger, Jerusalem believes in only one thing—the Truth. He has no filter when he speaks his mind, spewing out rants that are horrendous, vulgar, and hilarious. He writes a column for the City's newspaper, *The Word*, called “I Hate It Here,” a series of scathing, scorn-fueled, hate-filled editorials that lash out against the flaws of modern culture and the governing establishment. ”

Hicks, M. (n.d.) Transmetropolitan, Vol. 1-10 [Review of the book *Transmetropolitan* by W. Ellis]. Graphic Novel Reporter. Retrieved from <http://graphicnovelreporter.com/content/transmetropolitan-vol-1-10-review>

3.

Graham, B. (2012). *King City*. Berkeley, CA: Image Comics.

(See below for detailed analysis)

Reviews:

“Although the first half of this hilarious, touching romp was published a few years ago, the rest of the story has lingered in a rights limbo until now. Set in a lushly detailed city of the far future, catmaster Joe, assisted by his marvelously mutable drug-fueled cat Earthling J. Catingsworth the Third, faces an assortment of conflicts, from a mysterious and ominous cult to a friend’s desire to rescue an alien woman from a futuristic mob. Joe is in his element against mere eldritch horrors, mysterious femme fatales and the seedy criminal underworld, but finds himself less able to handle the lingering presence of his former lover Anna, now romantically entangled with a troubled but amiable war veteran. In lesser hands, this would be a mere collection of Kirbyesque occult confrontations; although he can rock the cosmic with the best of them and has a grand talent for the absurd, Graham has a keen appreciation for the personal, but his talent shines brightest when cast on the mundane moments in his characters’ lives.”

[Review of *King City* by B. Graham]. (2012, April 16). Publishers Weekly. Retrieved from <http://www.publishersweekly.com/978-1-60706-510-4>

“Graham is giving the world a creative work considerably less foul than car-bound feces with "King City," his surreal series about a city filled with catmasters, brain thievery, alien slave girls and many other bizarre happenings.”

Wigler, J. (2010, May 12). Constructing the new “King City” [Review of *King City* by B. Graham]. Comic Book Resources. Retrieved from <http://www.comicbookresources.com/?page=article&id=26184>

4.

Hewlett, J. & Martin, A. (2009). *Tank girl one (remastered)*. London: Titan Books.

This is a remastered collection of the original Tank Girl comics. Set in a futuristic Australia with talking humanoid kangaroos, Tank Girl is introduced and shown to have several, loosely linear, adventures. Side characters include Jet Girl, Sub Girl, Stevie and Booga the Kangaroo. Much of the humor is derived from the slapstick storytelling, gratuitous violence, the highly detailed art, and numerous pop culture, bathroom and sexual references.

Reviews:

“Tank Girl, along with Jet Girl, Sub Girl, Barney, and TG's kangaroo boyfriend Booga, detonated on the British indie comic scene in 1988 with a manic enthusiasm for shooting things, blowing them up, and having a crate of beer amidst the smoldering wreckage. The humor was swift and rude, the dialogue packed with pop culture references, the action dangerous and unpredictable. Above all, though, Tank Girl was just a lot of wild fun.”

Manning, Shaun. (2009, May 20). Alan Martin on tank girl's return [Review of *Tank girl one (remastered)* by J. Hewlett & A. Martin]. Comic Book Resources. Retrieved from <http://www.comicbookresources.com/?page=article&id=21287>

“Tank Girl becomes a cocktail of blended pop culture passions edged with cynical street-smart dialogue and graffiti-style art, but all presented with boisterous humour. Titan has now gathered all the strips in chronological order. These first two volumes follow those early formative Deadline adventures. Book One features all the early black and white stories. They have an anarchic irreverence to them, being

primarily self-contained tales which grow with confidence as well as expanding the cast. Once we've met our shaven-headed, booted heroine, we're introduced to assortment of characters - Booga, Camp Koala Steve, Sub Girl and Jet Girl, each adding another level of mayhem, all adding to the bangs, booze and body count. The emphasis is on big, bold and brash with Tank Girl at the centre of all the explosive chaos, whether she's taking on bounty hunters or bikers, stealing God's dressing gown or confronting Aboriginal vengeful spirits. She undertakes missions, delivers a colostomy bag to the Australian President (a certain Mr Hogan, no less) as well as liberating all the quality beer from the hands of the mafia. All gloriously bonkers and fuelled with adolescent testosterone and raw energy.”

Smith, P. W. (2009, May 4). Tank girl volumes one and two review [Review of *Tank girl one (remastered)* by J. Hewlett & A. Martin]. Den of Geek! Retrieved from http://www.denofgeek.com/comics/245466/tank_girl_volumes_one_and_two_review.html

5.

Masamune, S. (2004). *Ghost in the shell*. Milwaukie, OR: Dark Horse Comics.

Masamune's book, *Ghost in the shell*, follows a female cyborg named Motoko Kusanagi in her work as a Major in Section 9, a top secret section of the Japanese military. The setting is a world where neurochips have created a large field of robotics and AI that has transformed society. Many of the issues in the book are one shots, but there are subtle clues that not everything is copacetic between Section 9 and the other branches of the military. After a brief interaction with an AI called the Puppetmaster that identified it's self as a life form but then is killed soon after, Major Kusanagi is shown to be acting off. As a cyborg with only her brain and spinal cord remaining, Major Kusanagi has existential moments of doubting herself to be a real human being. The interesting conclusion is well built and the entire story's pacing is very good. The writing often has excerpts of scientific terminology that the characters use. The art is breathtaking, even in black and white, with dynamic action, distinct character designs and wonderful backgrounds.

Reviews:

“First published in English in 1995, this classic cyberpunk manga is the story of a future society dependent on cyborgs (humans with machine parts). It's 2029, and Japan has gathered a troop of military cyborgs in Section Nine, a secret paramilitary security squad. The S-9 squad leader is the tall and sexy female cyborg Major Kusanagi, and the men under her command include the gruff Batou and the uncertain (and mostly human) rookie Togusa. Bafflingly metaphysical and utterly gripping, the book is an episodic chronicle of S-9's missions that illustrates the fluid nature of crime, espionage and geopolitical skullduggery in a world where human personality, vast data networks and cybernetic technology have essentially fused into a single social matrix. The team tracks criminals, spies and terrorists who hack networks or illegally copy the ghosts (or souls) of enslaved humans into black market cyborgs. Their ultimate case is the Puppeteer, a deadly cyberterrorist who turns out to be a ghostless, "self-aware" artificial intelligence spontaneously created out of the vast sea of networked information. Masamune's b&w drawings are dynamic and beautifully gestural; he vividly renders the awesome urban landscape of a futuristic, supertechnological Japan. This new edition restores material (including graphic sex scenes) deleted from the earlier U.S. Edition. ”

[Review of the book *Ghost in the shell*, by S. Masamune]. (2004, December 6). Publishers Weekly. Retrieved from <http://www.publishersweekly.com/978-1-59307-228-5>

“As Kusanagi leads her small squad of government commandoes against terrorists, hackers, and corporate criminals, the dynamic page layouts and effortlessly fluid storytelling draw us into the firefights and chase sequences like few other works in the medium. However, on a scale that may be unparalleled in graphic fiction, there’s also a tremendous density of ideas. Sometimes, as if realizing the challenge of delivering on both tracks, Masamune includes footnote-like clarifications in the gutters so as not to slow things down with expository dialogue or caption boxes.”

Gutierrez, P. (n.d.) *The Ghost in the Shell, Vol. 1* [Review of the book *Ghost in the Shell*, by S. Masamune]. *Graphic Novel Reporter*. Retrieved from <http://graphicnovelreporter.com/content/ghost-shell-vol-1-review>

6.

Miyazaki, H. (2004). *Nausicaa of the valley of the wind, Vol. 1*. San Francisco, CA: VIZ Media, LLC.

Miyazaki's first volume of *Nausicaa of the valley of the wind* introduces the main protagonist Nausicaa and the post apocalyptic world she lives in. She is the only child of the chief of the valley of the wind, a valley protected from poisonous spores by the constant ocean wind. Nearby, the poisonous forest called the Sea of Corruption contains many types of large mutant insects and plants, which Nausicaa is able to telepathically communicate with. Soon, war comes to the valley bring intrigue and dangerous forces. The art is in black and white, but highly detailed and easy to look at and see what is going on. The environments and airships are wonderfully designed and drawn.

Reviews:

“Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind combines heart-thumping battle action with struggling for honor and a strong ecological message. Nausicaä is a passionate defender of the natural world on a ravaged Earth where plant spores and massive insects roam wild and few humans survive in pockets of safety. Intrigue between the ruling family’s brother and sister drag Nausicaä into the politics which may mean the end of humanity unless she can find a way to take control.”

Alison. (2004, July 1). *Nausicaa of the valley of the wind, vol. 1* [Review of the book *Nausicaa of the valley of the wind, vol. 1*, by H. Miyazaki]. *No Flying Tights*. Retrieved from <http://noflyingnotights.com/?p=1065>

“Nausicaä is a remarkable character in a story filled with remarkable characters. She is a pacifist in the truest sense of the word, not only rejecting violence and war as a means of solving problems, but having a calming effect on both the animals and people she encounters. She possesses an uncanny psychic ability to communicate with animals from her faithful fox-squirrel companion, Teto, to the whale-sized armored caterpillars known as the Ohmu. Her powerful charisma gains her the unwavering devotion of friends and the admiration of her enemies. Despite her commitment to peace, she is also an accomplished fighter, which is evident on the rare occasions when her rage overpowers her compassion. Lastly, she is an expert wind rider, sailing through the clouds in her jet-powered glider and performing aerial acrobatics no other pilot would dare to attempt. When her beloved Valley faces invasion by the imperial forces of Torumekia, lead by Princess Kushana (sort of the “shadow” Nausicaä, although not without many redeeming qualities), Nausicaä and Teto embark on a journey to save not only her people, but also the world. The adventures that follow form an eco-feminist fantasy about courage, honor, compassion, the folly of tampering with nature, and the power of love and friendship. Storytelling does not get any better than this.”

De Angelis, R. (n.d.). Nausicaa of the valley of the wind [Review of the series *Nausicaa of the valley of the wind*, by H. Miyazaki]. Comic Book Justice. Retrieved from <http://www.comicbookjustice.com/reviews/nausicaa/>

7.

Moore, A. (2000). *Tom Strong: book one* (C. Sprouse, A. Gordon, D. Gibbons, and J. Ordway, Illus.). La Jolla, CA: America's Best Comics, LLC.

This is a compilation of some of the best of Moore's Tom Strong stories. Tom Strong, a slow aging strong-man/genius, is the resident science hero of Millennium City. He and his wife Dhalua, daughter Tesla, intelligent ape King Solomon and mechanical man Pneuman function as a team defeating villainous foes threatening the city and often the world and routinely saving the day. The writing is amusing, and there are interesting science fiction elements constantly being thrown in. The art is well executed with different art styles for different eras as the characters have flashbacks. The drawing style is bright, colorful and easy to comprehend even in action scenes.

Reviews:

“Tom Strong ... the interplanetary, interdimensional "science-hero." Created by acclaimed comics writer Moore (*The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen ; From Hell*), Tom follows in the tradition of the sci-fi pulp hero, with elements of modern-day realism. As a newer superhero, he has his own mythic origin: raised by scientist parents, he is cultivated as a human experiment on the remote island of Attabar Teru. After his parents are slain, he lives among the island's Ozu people, where he meets his wife, Dhulua. Tom travels with his interracial superhero family, including Dhulua and their daughter, Tesla, a gutsy heroine-in-training. The Strongs also receive help from their assistants, a steam-robot butler and a bespectacled, bow-tied, intelligent gorilla ... Gordon and Sprouse's art ranges from cartoony to noir, and together with the intelligent, imaginative story, makes this work a welcome addition to the superhero genre.”

[Review of the book Tom Strong by A. Moore]. (2003, December 15). Retrieved from <http://www.publishersweekly.com/978-1-56389-880-8>

“The first seven issues (Volume 1) have one overall storyline. While there were digressions into the past with each issue, they informed the present day story that was filled with nice twists and turns. It all culminated in a seventh issue spectacular.. The first book is packed to the brim with high concepts and larger-than-life spectacles, but it's never overwhelming. ...Strong is, we're told right off the bat, 100 years old, but aging slowly thanks to the wonders of a Galoka Root found on the island he was born on. The flashbacks carefully take us to specific time periods, complete with month and year dates. We're told of adventures Strong had in the 50s and 60s and 80s.”

De Blicek Jr., A. (2008, November 25). Looking back: “Tom Strong” [Review of the book *Tom Strong: book one* by A. Moore, C. Sprouse, A. Gordon, D. Gibbons, & J. Ordway]. Comic Book Resources. Retrieved from <http://www.comicbookresources.com/?page=article&id=18938>

8.

Otomo, K. (2000). *Akira: Book one*. Milwaukie, OR: Dark Horse Comics.

The first volume of Otomo's *Akira* introduces the post-disaster Tokyo and two schoolmates and members of a biker gang, the leader Kaneda and his friend Tetsuo. They interact with a child with an old man's face who has mental abilities. Tetsuo is injured, and the authorities find out that he too has mental abilities. He soon escapes and becomes leader of a rival biker gang that supplies him with pain-killing drugs in super-human quantities that Tetsuo requires to survive. Kaneda has followed the strange child and links up with members of a rebel force focused on taking down the corrupt government and exposing the mentally gifted children. Tetsuo, mad from pain, nearly fights Kaneda to the death, but instead receives a drug that the strange children take. He takes it, and defying the odds, survives to become the government's test subject number 41. The title character is spoke of in whispers and makes no appearance in this volume but is greatly feared. The fast pace of the story is supported by the detailed and vivid action scenes.

Reviews:

“Set in Tokyo 38 years after its destruction in World War III (which, according to this story, happened in 1992), *Akira* eventually evolves into a philosophical investigation of time. But this first volume is all action, nonstop car chases and gun fights strung together with exaggerated speed lines and lots of gigantic machinery. The complicated plot revolves around two teenagers in a motorbike gang that encounters a strange child with an old man's features. When one of the young bikers begins manifesting violent, supernatural powers that threaten to destroy him, both bikers find themselves enmeshed in a massive conflict between two sinister agencies (which both believe they're fighting to save the world) over some unnamed thing so terrifying it's locked away in a vault and frozen to absolute zero. *Akira* has been praised for "massively decompressed storytelling"—a few seconds of story time can take pages—and Otomo's hyperkinetic black-and-white drawings explode across the page. The translation is sometimes a bit awkward, although it still expresses the story's visceral force.”

[Review of the book *Akira: book one*, by K. Otomo]. (2001, May 7). Publishers Weekly. Retrieved from <http://www.publishersweekly.com/978-1-56971-498-0>

“... this new edition is nothing if not unapologetically big and boldly black-and-white. Which is just what one wants when it comes to best showing off Otomo's achievement. Sure, this tale set in “Neo-Tokyo” 38 years after World War III calls for color on some level: the biker gangs screaming down the streets, the clown-masked street thugs, the multiple large-scale explosions that punctuate the narrative. And certainly the painterly splashes of color, with their rich cobalts and deep blacks, that appear in a handful of prologue pages are beyond striking. As you could probably surmise from the preceding descriptions, *Akira* is violent. Its hero, Kaneda, may be likable in many ways—he's both brave and loyal—but he's also a teen who enjoys brawling and can be a bit of a cad: He's what in olden times would have been termed a juvenile delinquent. What's admirable about Otomo's writing is that he doesn't sugarcoat Kaneda even though he's our POV character, and this lends a degree of maturity and honesty to a text that is otherwise quite pulpy. The other pivotal character is Kaneda's one-time buddy Tetsuo, who in the course of volume develops both psychokinetic abilities and a drug habit that helps alleviate the resulting headaches. Both teens find themselves caught up in the machinations of a government agency (yes, it's mysterious) that will go to any lengths to keep in check a powerful force (again, mysterious) known only as “Akira.” And of course there's a rebel group out to expose the agency's secret, yet tax-payer-funded, programs, a group in which love interest Kei happens to feature prominently.”

Gutierrez, P. (n.d.) *Akira*, Vol. 1 [Review of the book *Akira: book one*, by K. Otomo]. Graphic Novel

Reporter. Retrieved from <http://graphicnovelreporter.com/content/akira-vol-1-review>

9.

Takahashi, O. (2009). *Neon genesis evangelion: the shinji ikari raising project vol. 1*. Milwaukie, OR: Dark Horse Manga.

Takahashi's first volume of *Neon genesis evangelion: the shinji ikari raising project* introduces three main characters; Shinji is the son of two scientists that work at the Artificial Evolution Research Center; Asuka is another child of the center, and a friend of Shinji since childhood; the mysterious girl, Ayanami, who shows up, moving in with Shinji's family and joining their class. There's a love triangle developing, as well as the lingering mystery associated with the Center. The art is in black and white, with well drawn, individual characters.

Reviews:

“As the story goes, stunning, hot-headed Asuka Langley Soryu has been friends with Shinji Ikari since they were little. And she always sort of assumed they'd stay together – until the day the beautiful, brilliant Rei Ayanami showed up in class! When Shinji starts to get curious about Rei, Asuka needs to figure out if she wants to be just friends with Shinji, or something more. But why are so many people keeping an eye on these relationships – people like homeroom teacher Misato, school nurse Ritsuko, and Shinji's mother – NERV's chief scientist, Yui Ikari? Based on the alternate world glimpsed in the final episode of the famous *Neon Genesis Evangelion* TV series, *The Shinji Ikari Raising Project* explores *Evangelion's* famous characters through love, comedy, and a new set of mysteries!”

Neon genesis evangelion: the shinji ikari raising project vol. 1 [Review of the book *Neon genesis evangelion: the shinji ikari raising project vol. 1* by O. Takahashi]. (2009, August 29). Active Anime. Retrieved from <http://activeanime.com/html/2009/08/29/neon-genesis-evangelion-the-shinji-ikari-raising-project-vol-1/>

“*Evangelion* is one of my favorite books thus far. The artwork and story in this book is beautifully done. Whilst the book does contain cute girls in swimsuits this isn't the main reason too carry on reading. Within most mangas we see the story set within the first 25 or 30 pages however with this the whole book seems to be setting the story for something bigger but still manages to keep you interested.”

Markus. (2010, July 11). *Neon genesis evangelion: the shinji ikari raising project – vol 1* [Review of the book *Neon genesis evangelion: the shinji ikari raising project vol. 1* by O. Takahashi]. Manga Reviews. Retrieved from <http://www.mangareviews.co.uk/?p=25>

10.

Vaughan, B. K. (2008). *Ex machina: the deluxe edition book one* (T. Harris, Illus.). La Jolla, CA: WildStorm Productions.

Mitchell Hundred, the main protagonist and title character of *Ex Machina*, is a former civic engineer in New York City. This view of an alternative Earth has Mr. Hundred accidentally gaining the power of telepathy over machines and using this new found power to become a vigilante hero. The non-linear format shows his beginnings, to his decision to hang up the mask to become the

Mayor of New York. Inter spliced between typical political quagmires, Hundred also has to deal with strange going-on's that relate to his powers. Harris' colorful art is the perfect vehicle for the writing that moves from action packed scenes to relatively domestic interactions.

Reviews:

“"Ex Machina" tells the story of Mitchell Hundred, a civil engineer, who after a strange accident becomes America's first living, breathing superhero: The Great Machine. Eventually tiring of risking his life to maintain the status quo, Hundred retires from masked crime fighting and runs for Mayor of New York, winning by a landslide. And so, as it's said, the real adventure begins.”

Renaud, J. (2010, August 9). Dues ex machina: Meltzer interviews BKV part 1 [Review of the book *Ex machina* by B. K. Vaughn & T. Harris]. Comic Book Resources. Retrieved from <http://www.comicbookresources.com/?page=article&id=27747>

“Brian K. Vaughan shows us why he is one of the top writers in the DC bullpen with a very strong story. The art is excellent as well. One of the things I really enjoyed about this was the use of color in showing a difference between the flashbacks and current continuity. It really gave a sense of being in the memory, living it firsthand.”

Albert, A. (n.d.). Ex machina: the first hundred days – full review [Review of the book *Ex machina* by B. K. Vaughn & T. Harris]. About.com Guide. Retrieved from <http://comicbooks.about.com/od/comicbookreviews/fr/exmachinagn.htm>

Detailed Evaluation of B. Graham's *King City*

Brandon Graham created *King City* while he was living in New York City. He wasn't having much luck having any of his work besides porn getting published. *King City* was originally titled “Cat Master” and came from a joke idea of a man in a suit carrying a cat around in a briefcase like it was a weapon. Tokyopop wanted to publish it, with the new name, but at a longer page count. Graham then moved back to his home town of Seattle to draw. After the first half was done, he got cancer, a testicle removed, got married, and moved to Canada.

Graham's artistic influences are a blend of manga fight scenes, and underground comix. For Graham, “King City” was the first story that was longer than one hundred pages. In many ways, this was a flexing of writing and art on a longer term setting than he had ever attempted before. While Graham didn't have a clear story outline when he began “King City”, he soon had a story developing anyway, especially in the second half of the book.

I believe that “King City” is a significant work in the history of the medium. I've never seen or heard of a comic quite like this. The art style, especially, is very distinct. The science fiction setting and writing creates a unique graphic novel.

The pacing of Graham's “King City” is slower than many American mainstream comics. I would most compare it to manga, where the movements of the characters really add to the meaning of the narrative. From saying goodbye to a friend, to scrounging for food in the fridge, showing the detail of the selection of cereal, the pouring of the milk adds layers of meaning to the work.

In “King City” there are really three types of panels. First, very simplistic action panels where a step is taken, or hands are held, or a puff of smoke is blown. The second panel showcases the detailed background of the world Graham has created where narration, soliloquies, and dialog often occur. The third type is the large panel where there is very little talking or any other sort of bubbles. This type is showing the reader the world and varies in size from one third of the page up to a two page spread.

The signs in “King City” vary wildly. The setting of the world is a very cosmopolitan setting, so the actual signage in background shots include a mix of English, graffiti, Japanese or Chinese, and some nonsense language mixed in. There are many instances of Graham using an icon of a word instead of just writing the word, for example: \$ instead of dollars, a skull for a poisoned wound.

Graham has created the very detailed world of “King City” using only gray scale. The difference between characters, scenery, objects all are easily and seamlessly conveyed by black, gray on a usually white background. When there is shading, it's because of a dark room, or shadows from a direct light source.

The cinematic elements of “King City” are part of what makes this work so compelling and enjoyable to read. The lighting often includes dramatic shadows, with the sleeping heroine waking up in the middle of the night and the window has cast an interesting shadow over the scene. There are many close-ups where a switch, or a lock, or some sort of small interactive machinery has to be activated. Graham often makes an entire panel showing a zoom up of this one action, the “churp” noise of Joe's finger turning a switch. The angle of scenes often change mid-dialog. The window from straight on, then from a side-view. Zoom outs are also used.

The style of layout of Graham's “King City” adds depth of meaning with it's panel arrangements. For example, Joe has just helped his ex-girlfriend Anna rescue her new boyfriend Max. Max and Anna embrace in the dim lighting of the Cryo Nap chamber and exchange endearments that are only partially visible to the reader. Joe stands to the side, his inner monologue is with a white background with him in shadow, coming to terms with his life. Then the next panel is an extreme close up of Joe and Anna helping the one-legged Max out of the back alley hospital, with just their feet and the cat's tail showing. The lower panel is a zoom-out showing the trio walking out of the alley with the cat walking in front. In my mind, this adds more meaning to the page. The focus on the feet is Joe focusing on the task at hand, and not his own sorrow.

The panels in this particular scene have the reunited Anna and Max in the upper left, taking up nearly the entire page. Only a slice a little over an inch long shows Joe's inner turmoil. The next panel is a page wide but very thin section of the hospital sign seen in the background. Next is also a page wide, but twice as long slice where the feet are shown. The rest of the page, roughly a little less than half, is the zoomed out shot of them leaving the alley. Graham skips the uninteresting bits, them walking over the knocked out guards, going through doorways. The simpleness of this page I feel really demonstrates that the mind set and feeling of the main character, Joe, determines the style of what we're seeing, as the readers.

I received this comic as a birthday present from a friend of mine who works at a comic book store, and writes webcomics. I read it and found the science fiction elements to be very interesting and taking in consideration the topic of this annotated bibliography, I thought this work would be an ideal one to investigate in-depth. The art, writing and panel layout was quite a nice surprise. There are also little

surprises for close readers, like a connect the dots, a crossword, little jokes in the background.