

To the Grant Selection Committee, International Education

Thank you for awarding me \$1,500 towards my research and conference trip. As I mentioned in my application I have been working on graphic narratives or comics and the trip allowed me to broaden my perspective considerably.

In Paris we went to the Institut du Monde Arabe where we viewed exhibits of Arabic ceramics, textiles and calligraphy. In the bookstore I found a graphic novel by Zeina Abirachad from Lebanon as well as a number of works by French artists on issues such as the war in Afghanistan and the plight of Arab immigrants in France. We also had a fabulous Lebanese meal in their in-house restaurant.

In Brussels we went to the Centre Belgique de Bands Desinee (Belgian Comic Strip Centre) which has three floors of exhibition space dedicated to the art of the comic. The permanent exhibition covers issues of production, publication and innovation and was very informative. In addition it had wonderful original pages of hundreds of artists and a feature exhibition on William Linthout, a Dutch artist. The excellent bookstore provided me with a few more European artists as well as a Korean artist named Jung, writing about the experience of a child removed from his homeland for adoption to the west, as he was.

In Edinburgh I gave a paper at the conference on “Sexualities and Time” hosted by the University of Edinburgh in conjunction with St Andrews University. The conference was very interesting with excellent keynote speakers and I came away with lots of notes to follow up. Being in Edinburgh also gave me a chance to have lunch with my DPhil supervisor who had had her 80th birthday the week before.

London provided the opportunity to purchase more graphic works for my collection including texts by Fabio Moon (Brazil), Byun Byung-Jun (Korea) and Lisa Myhre (Norway). One of the highlights of London was the chance to see *Monkey: Journey to the West* an opera in Mandarin by Chen Shi-Zheng. The opera tells the story of the Monkey King’s journey to India to retrieve Buddhist scriptures. As Chen says in the program notes: “when I moved to the United States in 1987, I saw *Star Wars* and heard about stories like *The Lord of the Rings*, and I wished everyone could know of the wildly imaginative Chinese story about the Monkey King and the Journey to the West....the subject of much scholarship, the book is often seen as an allegory that mixes Buddhist and traditional Chinese religious Taoist thought, and a critique of society.” One of the books I am teaching this term is *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang which draws on the story of Journey to the West so it is particularly helpful to have seen the show. It was a spectacular show with great action and beautiful costumes and certainly made the story memorable while, at the same time, highlighting the complexity of the tale.

Since I have been back I have given an English department colloquium on graphic fiction which drew on what I learned and read (all the books I shipped have arrived safely). Next week I am giving a guest lecture in Liberal Studies on an Iranian comic artist and in my own course on graphic narrative we are reading works by Iranian, Chinese-American, Japanese-Canadian, Phillipino-American, French, British and American artists. Comics are a wonderfully international genre with more and more works available in English.

I would like to reiterate my thanks to the committee for their support of this work.

Sincerely
Marni Stanley
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