

## ***ASTERIOS POLYP* AS POSTMODERN LITERATURE**

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David Mazzucchelli's 2009 graphic novel *Asterios Polyp* has been well received by both fans and critics of the genre. Charles Hatfield, reviewing *Asterios Polyp* for *The Comics Journal*, writes that "the novel becomes a craftily self-reflexive artist's book about art." Self-reference is one of the hallmarks of postmodernist literature—and *Asterios Polyp* has other postmodernist tendencies as well.

This poster compares panels from *Asterios Polyp* with pages from several iconic works of postmodernist literature (such as *Catch-22*, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, *The Mezzanine*, and *House of Leaves*), showing how Mazzucchelli employs techniques more commonly associated with written novels, while adapting these techniques to suit the medium of graphic novels. Some of the techniques on display in *Asterios Polyp* are even more effective in illustration than in writing; others don't translate as well to the graphic format.

Regardless, the obvious fluidity of the boundary between written and graphic techniques suggests that works from both these media ought to be evaluated within their broader genre, postmodernist or otherwise. Also, artists working in both media ought to consider the possibility that borrowed techniques might be surprisingly effective—from written to graphic novels, or from graphic to written novels.