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Sto se zeshe prisje'amo to um ima viche prilike prepravljati izvorno iskustvo, jer svako je prisje'anje ponovno stvaranje, ne reprodukciji. - David Mazzucchelli, Asterios Polyp Born in the United States September 21, 1960 Let us know. If not, help and invite David to Goodreads. book #9 for pitchers and capes! Also: this is my second review for CCLaP, and my first-in-a-year series review of graphic novels. W00t! This is the first in a series of essays I will be doing for CCLaP called Jugs and Capes, where I look at graphic novels from a girl's perspective. I'm not going to speak from a feminist point of view because I think it's a complicated word that any thinking woman has a complicated relationship with #9. Also: this is my second review for CCLaP, and my first-in-a-year series review of graphic novels. W00t! This is the first in a series of essays I will be doing for CCLaP called Jugs and Capes, where I look at graphic novels from a girl's perspective. I'm not going to say a feminist point of view because I think it's a complicated word that any thinking woman has a complicated relationship with. And since I have no experience in gender studies or feminist theory, I don't feel comfortable talking about what feminists think about this book or about it. I do, however, feel quite comfortable talking about what I think about something, so in this series I'm happy to do just that. Asterios Polyp is a lush, fascinating, complex book. But this is the brilliant kind of complex that you can enjoy on many levels, such as Lolita, say, or Metamorphoses, where, if you like, you can get a lot of fun with the story on the surface without doing a lot of deepening. Or, if you're so inclined, you can clean back layers and explore symbolism and wordplay and great ideas, thus gaining a fuller, more multifaceted understanding of this deeply layered text. We meet Asterios Polyp in the middle of a thunderstorm. He is mauted and exhausted, lying in bed in his luxurious but extremely dirty apartment, watching what we consider pornography (we hear what is being said, but do not see the picture). Then a blinding flash of lightning illuminates the entire page, and we see that the building of Asterios has caught fire. He makes a desperate search of his rooms, capturing several small items - a lighter, a penknife, and a watch - and throws himself into a storm. On two ominous pages, we watch his apartment burn. After this dramatic introduction, we begin to learn Asterios. He is a professor of architecture, but a paper architect, meaning that none of his projects have ever been built. He was always a bit of a hungry genius. He had a twin brother who died in and who will be our narrator throughout the book. He was married to a sculptor and fellow professor named Khan. Asterios stands in the rain for a while, watching his apartment burn, and then he goes to Greyhound station and buys a ticket that is worth everything he has in his wall. He goes until he gets to a small town, where he takes the job of a mechanic, and rents a room from his boss, a big man who lives with his voluptuous wife and their chubby son. Asterios settles into a small town of life, building a treehouse with his boss, discussing spirituality with his boss's wife, going to see a local group in a local bar. Everything he does, with longing, with regret. Asterios is clearly running away from his past, but also trying to figure it out. The story opens and goes, in short vignettes, present interspersed with memories, dreams and meandering philosophical sides. Everything about Asterios Polyp is tight, and slow, and carefully planned and executed. It's just the most beautiful graphic novel I've ever seen. Each vignette has a certain flavor, most of which use only two or three colors at a time - in fact, it's not until the very last chapter of the book that Mazzucchelli uses a full four-color spread - and there's no black in the book at all. Each character's speech is written in a unique font that clearly articulates the person's personality. The story itself is full and rich, the characters are multifaceted and real, and everything is supplemented and supplemented by frequent deviations, both visual and described, by perception, human behavior, physics, philosophy, mythology, spirituality, metaphysics, and so on. The whole story of course unravel the mystery of Hana. Early on, while out of the way, Mazzucchelli presents a random group of people, each drawn in a different style and color, as a visual representation of how unique each person is. The group (we'll find out later) is Khan, rendered in swirling, dark pink, and Asterios, in sharp, angular blue. This turns out to be a running motif, and later, during the first encounter between Asterios and Hana, its blue outlines begin to fill with pink haze, and its pink shadows become outlined in blue until they both have almost the same look. Much later, when they begin to argue, their realistic shapes melt back into these elements, it is once again empty and blue, it returns to unlimited pink, demonstrating that, no matter how close two people can become, they are always, at heart, fundamentally strange to each other. It is, of course, terribly difficult to describe, and is a superb argument for the superiority of the graphical form of the novel in this book. On this subject I will briefly describe another small section, one of the most famous in the novel. It's an eight-page spread, almost without words. Traditional panel structure in favor of three three parallel rows of small boxes. The lines in the middle tell a consistent, simple story in which Hana loses a puff in her ear, and has a slight panic until Asterios removes him with tweezers. Above and below this line are constellations of tiny examples of Hana's bodily life: brushing, pruning, shaving, vomiting, eating, dressing, undressing, masturbating, snoring, drinking, crying, laughing, walking away, smiling. It is one of the most stunning, influencing ways to make the memory of unsung moments of life, Asteros remembering Khan in all her physical glory, beautiful and mauled, joyful and sick, hungry and dirty. It is so humanizing, so plaintive, so shockingly mundane, that it elevates Hana to something like a mythical plane. It's something that can never be done in prose, and for me it's the beating heart of a novel - echoed and supplemented later by a pitch-perfect, harrowing, devastating, wordless dream sequence that turns out to be like a complex dance opera. I read the critique of this book, which takes the opposite view of Nana's montage, accusing Mazzucchelli as shortening her plot device, used only to represent the development of Asterios and the emotional journey. But I think that's an unfair statement. Hana is a fully developed character - as is the entire cast of the book, most of whom tend to be more sympathetic than Asterios himself. Sure, Hana is a little romanticised, but it's a story told through a man who desperately yearn for life - and a woman - he used to. I do not believe that romanticism is inherently reductive, and I do not believe that Hana's character was secondary or subordinate to Asteros. There is so much more to say about this dense, gorgeous, challenging book, but I have run out of space and steam. I couldn't recommend it higher though; This and Fun Home are the most amazing graphic novels - and among the most amazing books of any kind - I've come across. ... More... More

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