

Wynn, Mark. "Iconic Tonic."
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P O K



FROM WOODCUTS AND THE BOOK OF Kells to the modern logo and the image that sells, the cartoon has survived. It is the graffiti of our minds, so much unlike the mosaic of movies and TV, more true to the eye than the straight-laced lines of frozen speech. The cartoon captures something of the process, something of the way we see.

The jump from the canvas of still sketches to the roll of the celluloid reel has left the cartoon's lure unstunted – it is still our betokened clown, the buffoon of our mediums. Even if its still birth has been abandoned to the one-panel punch of newspaper corners, the three-square dash to the punchline, even now, with its limits, it highlights the form of our minds, if not also the span of our attention.

And for the addicts and fanatics lurk the armies of superheroes and villains, ready for purchase at the corner strip mall, the god-like pantheon that conspires to break us free of normality. A new religion of color and its holy doctrine of paranoia, its rituals of gadgetry and mutation, its violent fantasies and spaceship dreams, drawing in the lost adolescents left behind in the wake of electronic evolution. However locked to the dogma of generic sci-fi, to whatever degree aggression is colored in, splashed on-screen, taken up by first-person shooters, the comic book portrays our instinct for action, the itching wound of civilization not yet scarred or healed over and all the while inking out its proof of an art form.

Its effects underwrite television episodes and chapter breaks of novels, keep a chokehold on the structure of our sitcoms and megamovies: the fast action and constipated dialogue, the disdain for explanation, the flash, the bang bam pop pow. The forefronted action, the close-ups and crane shots. Even Dilbert can poke fun at the dregs of work while running alongside the stock quotes.

And if the modern world takes them down we will still hear the cry of the underground pen. The bleak, acned

face of daily existence, the pains of unpopularity and puberty, the ugly and the angst-ridden beating up on themselves. Diehard individualists, independents who flow in ink-licked simplicity with strange-shaped heads boxed by the demands of our dreams. Girl heroes and angry cerebrotronic wannabees, the crosshatching of hate eight-balled into the corner of a lonely ghost world. They are pastoral and primal, modern wanderings of unpopular pop pulp that leave us now and then with a little crumb to relish. Pure visual energy, drowning in voids of memory, a sadly silent understatement.

Mark Wynn

