



Gloriana

Kevin Huizenga

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Formally innovative explorations bring poetry to the quotidian

In *Gloriana*, Kevin Huizenga exposes the mechanics that underpin everyday life. His protagonist, Glenn Ganges, has conversations about dish soap and library visits that are both faithful depictions of the mundane interactions we all have and so much more: existential dissections of the units that construct our lives. Huizenga has an understated, quiet approach to story writing that allows his characters (and his readers) the self-awareness to recognize the humor and tragedy of every moment.

Huizenga's much-lauded work is finely detailed, and in its innovative use of form, it explores the boundaries of the comic medium, deconstructing and reconstructing panels to express temporality and lived experience more fully. Presented in this expanded edition, *Gloriana* employs familiar settings and thorough, sometimes scientific explanations to reach thoughtful conclusions.

Gloriana Details

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ISBN : 9781770460614

Author : Kevin Huizenga

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From Reader Review Gloriana for online ebook

Jason Bradshaw says

This is such a fantastic book.

The stories themselves are engaging enough, but mostly - as an amateur cartoonist interested in the formal aspects of comics - I was really into how these stories were told, or how they functioned as comics.

I particularly enjoyed the Sunset and the Moon Rose stories.

'The Sunrise' is a perplexing and intense exploration of a feeling that is portrayed in an overwhelming and claustrophobic way that could really only be achieved in comics. The story builds to this fantastic fold out section that is feels explosive, with a million things coming at you at once, and you're not quite sure where to look or how to read it, yet, it's still told in the language of comics - keeping the narrative devices in place - but simultaneously eroding the narrative into a sort of gesture that emulates the feeling of (as I interpreted it, anyway) a racing mind.

The 'the Moon Rose' story breaks down into this fantastic diagrammatic pictorial explanation of a complex concept of what Glenn is trying to explain to his neighbors. This, I feel, is certainly possible to do in other mediums - and a simple enough device to use in comics - but here it comes off as such a natural extension of the key functionality of comics (the blending of words and images) that it's not at all distracting. It's a natural progression of the story, yet, could also be right out of the pages of a science book. Neat.

Recommended reading if you're a budding cartoonist or interested in the possibilities/potential of the comics medium.

Kim says

Nicole Rudick's review of the work is well written. <http://www.tcj.com/reviews/gloriana/>

Joseph says

This volume was very up and down for me, but I'm going to blame myself, rather than the author. This is especially true of "The Sunset", in which the protagonist describes seeing a sunset from his desk - I can see something that others will probably find interesting is happening, but it doesn't interest *me*.

I loved "The Groceries", though, with its mundane conversation punctuated by imagined futures. Glenn Ganges beating to death competing hypotheses on optical illusions and the moon in "The Moon Rose" was perfect; I was intrigued by the way Huizenga presented ideas while simultaneously getting across the awkwardness of the whole thing. Plus, I too am the kind of person who would freak out his neighbors with science.

Jessie says

This book is small. I don't mean short, because it's a little over 100 pages. It's just small, about 1/4th the size I expected. There isn't a lot on each page, though it does have a couple pages that fold out. I read it in 30 minutes or less.

It's amusing. It's kind of cute, a little profound, but mostly just amusing. It's a quirky little book. I sort of wished there was more to it. I think I would have had more to say, would have felt more strongly for or against it had there simply been more. I also think it costs too much for its size. I'm typically one who will gladly pay for quality over quantity, but this time I feel that the minimal quantity effected the overall quality. It's a little book of big ideas, very real absurdities, just oddities of daily life in the life of Glenn Ganges. It went down well; I simply wanted a bit more bite for my buck.

Still, a sweet little graphic novel. I enjoyed it.

Jennifer says

i can't say that i fully understood this book. sadly, when narrative break downs, often so does my comprehension, but i can appreciate the beauty and whimsy and (i 'spose) tragedy that trip through the drawings of this graphic novel. i did love love the gorgeous little study he does of one's experience reading in the library. and reading this book in the reading room of oakland's main library just made this little surreal story so so real to me. and huizenga totally schooled me about the optical illusion of the moon looking bigger when it is on the horizon than when it is up in the sky. i was flummoxed and amazed. science is cool, yo.

Zh?nliàn Liú says

Title: *Gloriana*

Author: Kevin Huizenga

Illustrator: n/a

Genre: Graphic Novel

Theme(s): Routine, conversation, daily life

Opening line/sentence: Wendy Caramel in "At Work"

Brief Book Summary: This book is about common every day life issues and occurrences. It's simple and is very relate-able through the routines Glenn and his wife go through. The book did not stray away from the norm, and there weren't many exciting events throughout this book.

Professional Recommendation/Review #1: "Huizenga is using the full power of the comics medium to cleverly and thoroughly report on the world around him, without letting the reader feel lectured to. For his mastery of evocative restraint and his ability to reimagine his surroundings in a way that reveals a hidden heart, Kevin Huizenga is this column's cartoonist of the year." ?The Comics Journal

Professional Recommendation/Review #2: "One of the most promising of a new generation of cartoonists, Huizenga's stories use a combination of the quotidian and the surreal to explore themes of science, nature, religion and family." ?Time

Response to Two Professional Reviews: I agree with both reviews and respect what they wrote about Huizenga's book. As Time wrote, *Gloriana* was a book encompassing the themes of science, nature, religion, and family. Building off of these themes, Huizenga ties everything into a story of a character just living out

his life.

Evaluation of Literary Elements: The entire book is in black and white, with fine line images on heavy paper. This puts an emphasis on the simplicity of this book. With the story line being about a ordinary guy just going about his life, the illustrations and black and white print on the nice paper definitely emphasize the simplicity of this book.

Consideration of Instructional Application: After reading a graphic novel with the students, I would want them to understand how this is literature. To teach them this, I would ask give them all a sheet of paper and ask them to fold it so that they would have six rectangles. They would then be working on their papers, drawing and writing blurbs in each block to tell a story.

Sam Quixote says

Kevin Huizenga's EXPLOSIVE, RIVETING short comics collected in GLORIANA see his everyman character, Glenn "Y'all ready for this?" Ganges, 1) watch his pregnant wife Wendy unpack groceries, 2) read a book in a library, 3) stare at a blood moon with his neighbours and 4) reminisce about playing high school basketball. Do NOT read this book if you have a heart condition – THE EXCITEMENT MAY BE TOO MUCH TO HANDLE!! Hey! HEY, YOU! AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHH!!!!!!!!!

Huizenga's slice of life comics have always been extremely lo-fi yet very readable and mildly entertaining as well, and Gloriana is no different. Groceries is a clever way of looking at the same scene with two different interpretations. From Glenn's perspective, he's in awe of Wendy who has a baby growing inside her and he's moved by thinking of the years to come, teaching his kid to ride a bike, etc.; Wendy's pissed off because he's just standing there watching her while she unpacks the groceries by herself! Huizenga even throws in an unexpected surreal panel before moving back to the mundane. It's a great strip.

The Library story is another clever experiment, this time trying to capture the full experience of doing something simple while taking in the wider world around you. The fold-out page is a bit much though. It looks like one big mess of scrawls a kid would do after downing one juice box too many (sugar rush)!

The Blood Moon story is soooooo dry and boring! It starts out with Glenn's religious neighbours stood in the street staring at the red moon, believing it's a Biblical sign of the apocalypse. Glenn decides to educate them by teaching them how the illusion is done. This takes the form of several highly-detailed, science-filled pages that were near-unreadable. What a yawner!

The high school basketball story was so completely mundane I wondered if it was a joke on comics memoirs in general. He was on the high school basketball team but didn't really love the sport, and then he stopped playing it and that's it.

Like a lot of Kevin Huizenga's work, Gloriana is a clever use of the medium even if the avant-garde routes it sometimes takes make for some truly tedious comics. Nevertheless, it's an interesting blend of experimental and everyday in a cute small hardcover edition that's worth a look for indie comics fans.

David Schaafsma says

This is early, pretty experimental work from Huizenga, more than ten years ago, mostly in the context of

realistically drawn characters in every day situations, from his Glenn Ganges world. There's one about a young guy freaking out as he looks at his pregnant wife....one about a library... another about a guy explaining to neighbors, who are sure that a blood moon is the end of the world, all the science behind it...we get pages of this science, some of which I did not know, some of it is clearly over the top, funny, over explaining to the True Believers why they are not going to die, why it is just a natural occurrence...one is about his playing basketball at Iliana Christian HS and being good at it and then just losing interest and never playing again. Which is a kind of memoir experiment without a really compelling point, which makes its own funny point about memoirs, I guess. I like Huizenga's work a lot. We're both Dutch and graduates of church-based Calvin College, so maybe that's part of my "getting" some aspects of his work, such as tangling with religion as he tends to do.

Andrew says

There's something aesthetically unique here happening in this charming little graphic novel, but I'm not a big enough fan of graphic novels to understand truly what that something is. The stories seem disconnected, but despite discrepancies in plot continuity, I found myself occasionally more interested in the expressionistic form of *Gloriana* anyway, which I can only assume is what Kevin Huizenga intended. When Glenn Ganges daydreamed about the sun setting, I connected immediately with the chaotic imagery that exploded from his mind. However, since I'm more familiar with narrative, try as I might, I simply couldn't make sense of the blood moon story—a tale that contained a verbose scientific explanation of the lunar eclipse. I can't imagine there's a lot of artistic inspiration in science. If I wanted to understand a lunar eclipse, I would read an astronomy textbook.

On the other hand, Huizenga had much more to say with the sunset story simply because Glenn Ganges had a vivid fantasy to recount, resplendent with fanciful creatures, shifting angles, & riveting events. The same is true of the Groceries story & the Basketball story which are, respectively, conceptions of the future & perceptions of memory. These stories are full of creativity & potential, yet Huizenga spent the greatest portion of this compendium effacing the irrational fears & anxieties of Glenn Ganges's doomsday neighbors—and trust, he could have had a much more compelling story there with, say, monsters & apocalyptic scenarios had he pandered to those fears—and instead focused his time on diagrams & flow charts that scientifically explained the atmospheric conditions of a lunar eclipse. Does any casual reader want to read that? To me, science just seemed so limited & unimportant here amid the formal experiment that Huizenga appeared to be conducting in *Gloriana*. I guess the anti-climactic finale of the blood moon story could have been its saving grace ("If Jesus really is coming, then I'm going to be pretty embarrassed."), but I was already aggravated by that point for wasting my time reading about bending light & eyeball refractions. Assuming readers allowed the whole "Jesus" anti-climax, I guess one could say Huizenga's only editorial flaw in *Gloriana* was his pacing, but in any event, the rest of the book was both exhilarating & mesmerizing.

Adam Stone says

I spend a great deal of time writing/talking about the slightly unusual things that happen in my life, whether it's interactions I've had, or just things I've witnessed. I do it because many people tell me they enjoy the stories. But I do worry sometimes that people feel the same way about my stories as I feel about Kevin Huizenga's comics. That they're coherent, and told with a technical prowess, but ultimately they're boring, and quickly forgotten.

This book has a series of stories about putting groceries away. They're also about potential family, the nebulous future, the struggle to make your dull life seem interesting, and trying to awkwardly navigate a conversation with people you like but who have a very ignorant (not necessarily problematic or bigoted, just factually incorrect) understanding of the world. But also they mostly center around putting groceries away and talking on the phone.

It's definitely possible to read his stories and look for the Larger Statements he's making as an artist. I'm just not interested by the stories he uses to make those statements.

Batmark says

<http://morethansuperhumans.blogspot.c...>

This digest-sized (4 1/4" x 5 1/2") book contains five short stories mostly starring Glenn Ganges and his wife, Wendy. In "The Groceries," Glenn and Wendy take turns daydreaming about the impending birth of their baby, and how their lives will change. In "The Sunset," Glenn recounts to someone on the phone how he was at the library earlier that day, and several events (the setting of the sun, a bird flying into the window, and the actions of other library patrons) converged into one moment. In "The Moon Rose" (which takes place immediately after "The Sunset"), Glenn explains to his neighbors how the blood-red moon they're watching in the evening sky is not a true lunar eclipse, but also not a sign of the apocalypse. Finally, "Basketball" tells the story of Illiana Christian High School and its basketball team from the point of view of a boy who used to play on the team.

Kevin Huizenga is a rare creator in that his work is simultaneously accessible to the average reader yet graphically sophisticated is his use of experimental storytelling techniques, as in "The Sunset" where he illustrates the confluence of events mentioned above in a series of increasingly abstract art panels. Similarly, in the "The Moon Rose," the middle of the story becomes an illustrated science lesson as Glenn explains eclipses and optical illusions to his neighbors. This is a great collection of stories.

Page says

This little graphic novel was a quick read, started at the bus stop and finished by the time I arrived at my destination. The content varies wildly from day to day (auto?)biographical content to surreal daydream doodles to scientific explanations of various phenomena.

Drew Lerman says

Comics as a way of exploring the nature of consciousness.

Ian Hrabe says

Hit or miss, but Huizenga excels at the quiet comics that so perfectly capture life itself. One comic chronicles

something as simple as Glenn Ganges taking in groceries with his pregnant wife and feeling the inevitability of their forthcoming child. "My wife has a little baby in there," Ganges says, watching his wife unpack groceries, flashing forward to beautifully quotidian moments of future fatherhood as his wife grumpily unpacks the groceries because he's just standing there making her do all the work. There's a chunk later in the book that describes why the moon looks red/bigger than it actually is that made my eyes gloss over a bit as Huizenga crafts these wordy, cluttered diagrams that would have been fine were they a bit more restrained. But that's nitpicking, overall this is a sweet and soulful little book.

Joshlynn says

overall enjoyment of this book pretty much hinges on two things: your tolerance as a reader for abstract, plotless stories, and the diagrams that occupy most of the blood moon strip. huizenga's cartooning is gorgeous, and he's obviously a very smart and sensitive guy actively working to deconstruct what comics mean and are. the book comes with a chris ware endorsement, and there's a few sequences where the strips disintegrate into psychedelic children's drawings within glenn ganges's head. like many cartoonists of his stripe, kevin seems to disappear up his own ass on occasion, which is fine. he still comes out with some lovely insights and a brief, sweet little book that won't take up much of your time. i'll definitely seek out more of his work. I love that he seems to be a kaiju fan—gamera makes a few walk-on (stomp-on?) appearances herein.
