

741.5

THE TALK

PULITZER PRIZE WINNER DARRIN BELL'S
GRAPHIC MEMOIR OF RACE, RAGE AND REGRET
AND...DC POWER TO THE PEOPLE:
NEW BLACK HEROES MAKE NEW BLACK HISTORY

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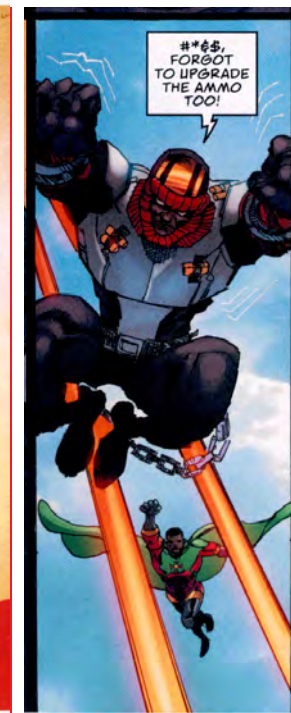
The Comics & Graphic Novel Bulletin of



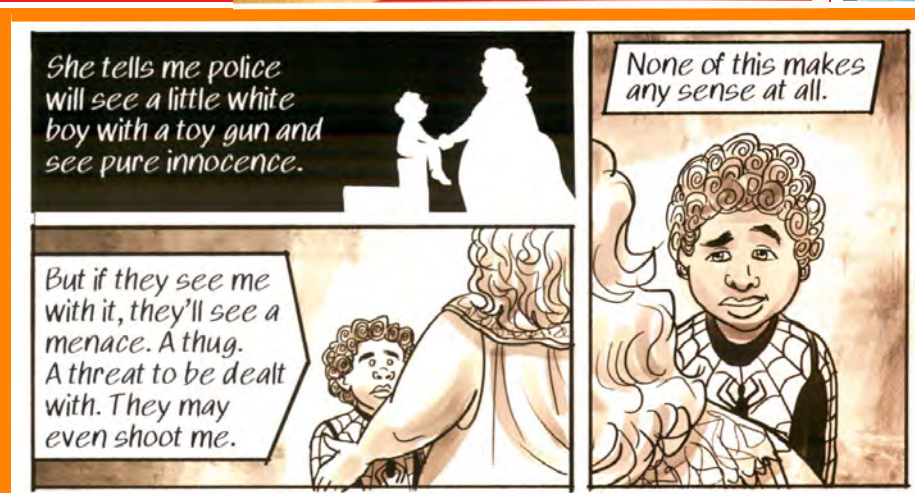
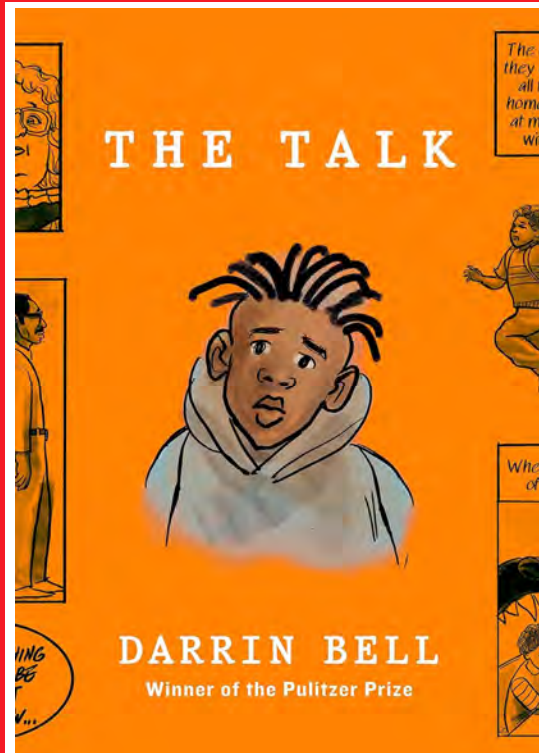
Lexington Public Library
Reading Is Just the Beginning!



DC Power is a nicely designed compilation intended as an introduction to DC's growing number of HOCs ("heroes of color"). It's made up of short pieces that throw a quick but powerful spotlight on each character, many of them very recent additions to the DC roster. Like the DC Universe, it begins back in the Golden Age...or at least soon after the end of World War 2. And that story highlights the central problem with most of these characters: they are mostly highly derivative. Amazing-Man isn't even a wartime creation. He was wished into existence by Roy Thomas to diversify the All-Star Squadron, a retconned version of the Justice Society published during the 1980s. His name taken from an OG GA hero belonging to one of DC's rivals, his powers swiped from Marvel's Absorbing Man, Amazing Man is a good example of how these characters are both a solution to the problem of representation and a continuation of that problem. The story starring the newest Kid Flash (of several) with Aquaman addresses that issue head on, but doesn't it show how muddy the waters already are that I have to point out it's the "black" Aquaman? The coat of a copycat can be shed, as shown by Vixen, who over the years has grown far beyond her original status as a Wolverine rip-off. Here's hoping the obvious love and artistry lavished upon this Celebration can do the same for her new super friends like Nubia and Batwing.



Dedicated to a universe made up entirely of Heroes of Color, the revived Milestone continues its mission with a classic team-up/tussle between its two biggest stars, Icon and Hardware. While researching his caped competitor/comrade, Hardware stumbles across a time machine. He gets some big ideas which cause some big problems. Meanwhile, Icon's sidekick Rocket deals with private school and its unsympathetic headmaster...Vandal Savage!! That's not the only example of DC canon intervening in the Milestone Universe, as you'll see when "bossy black Superman" throws down with "pissed-off black Iron Man!"



Above is the moment that gives this graphic novel by Darrin Bell its name. It's *The Talk* that his mother must have with our biracial hero. The Talk that lays out, in black and white, what makes his life different from other boys. And you know what really breaks my heart about that scene? His Amazing Spider-Man t-shirt. Here is this kid, embracing the same myth of singular heroism as me and probably you and every other American child, a myth that ultimately will never truly embrace him. Bell's always been gifted, but even in the rarefied spaces his talent grants him entry, he is always an outsider, trapped by the color line (as seen left, as a high school journalist conversing with California Governor Pete Wilson). Maybe that's why the cop who nearly shot him over a plastic squirt gun (image right) reminds me so much of Stan Lee. That image, the lycanthropic blend of Dog and Cop, haunts Bell his whole life until he confronts that horror and history with artistry and honesty at lexpublib.org!

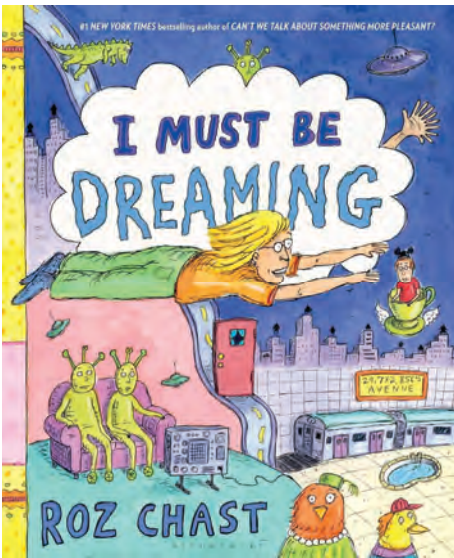


Following such fine bios as *Billie Holiday* and *Chasing the Bird* (both still available @ lexpublib.org), NBM's *Mingus* gives the lowdown on one of the greatest composers of jazz music. Massarutto & Squaz hit the highlights of his life in an imagistic flow of events that shaped Charles Mingus and made him both a rebel and an icon.



Your Editor of 741.5 has won bar bets based on the reality of the series displayed at right. Even most hardcore comics fans don't know that a comic book called *Negro Romance* actually existed. Partly that's due to general ignorance concerning the unjustly maligned genre of love comics. And this was one of the most obscure among many dozens of titles released in 1950 at the height of the Love Glut. *Negro Romance* was a brave attempt by Midwestern publisher Fawcett to speak to a long-ignored market. Not too brave, mind you— as often happened with potentially controversial books, Fawcett left the company logo off the cover. Edited and written by Fawcett romance wrangler Roy Ald, much of the art was by African-American cartoonist A.C. Hollingsworth. The fourth and final issue was all reprints, released by Charlton in 1955.





"A friend and I both got invited to a party at Leonard Bernstein's apartment," says cartoonist **Roz Chast**. "When we got there, the first thing we saw were three men wearing Groucho Marx glasses." Her friend says sadly, "I wish I had my little blanket," his eyes all big and tear-filled. "If you did, I'd strangle you with it," she matter-of-factly answers. I don't know why that cracks me up, it just does. Just the way dreams either strike one as meaningless or meaningful, interesting or boring. The *New Yorker* magazine mainstay is totally on the oneiric tip in *I Must Be Dreaming* (Bloomsbury). She covers 'em all: recurring dreams, lucid dreams, everyday dreams. Multiple celebrities make an appearance, such as **Fran Lebowitz**, **Wallace Shawn**, **OJ Simpson's** infamous glove and **Glenn Close**, "Queen Mother of Spiders." The latter presages nightmares that are hardly less disturbing than her food dreams. **Chast** also delves into the history and theory of dreams, all told in the squirrely, sketchy style that made a flummoxed *New Yorker* titan **Charles Saxon** ask "Why do you draw the way you do?" *I Must Be Dreaming* is available at all LPL locations. Beaumont, Eastside and Marks-

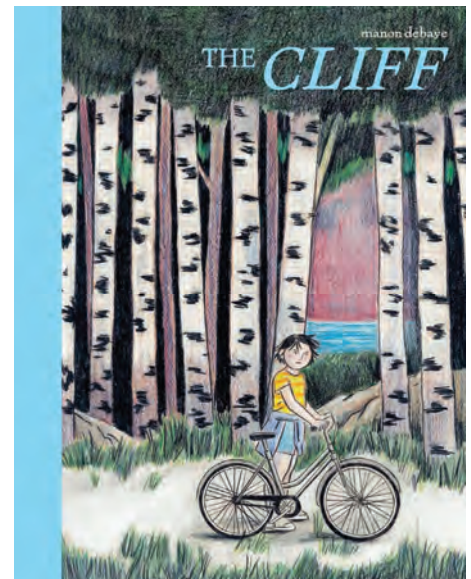


MEANWHILE

bury carry copies of *Triumph and Torment* starring **Dr. Strange**. Oddly enough, Nightmare is one of the few recurring foes of the *Sorcerer Supreme* who doesn't show up in this Epic Collection culled from the cusp of the 1990s. You know, the "Eyepatch Years." Stephen Strange has tricked the world into thinking him dead. Thing is, he's such a good magician, the trick works, and none other than the Dread Dormammu takes over his body! Five issues in, **Roy Thomas** and wife **Dann** snag the script, and that's when things get really wild. Baron Mordo and the Sons of Satannish make a comeback while riling up new girl Mephisto, daughter of Mephisto, who has his own extended rumble with Doctors Strange and Doom lovingly drawn by the young **Mike Mignola** and **Mark Badger** at the back of the book! Speaking of creepy cognoscenti, Tom Sutton supplies the art for a back-up feature, *The Book of Vishanti*, which details the history of magic and helps set the stage for the return of vampires to the Marvel Universe! All this, and the Enchantress, too! Stephen's complicated



relations with women— Mephisto, his ex Clea (now ruler of the Dark Dimension), Amora herself— are on full display here, with lots of cheesecake from **Jackson Guice**. I think I recognize some of the fashion mag layouts he swiped! Those include some shots of writer Morgana Blessing, author of the biography that tells the world all Doc's secrets (hey, she thought he was, y'know, dead!). Portions of said book are included in *Triumph and Torment*, an example of how, as the Nineties waxed, even the Big Two publishers were experimenting with mixed media to tell their stories. Since then, multiple creators have made comics using a mix of text (hand-lettered or typeset), stand-alone illustrations, comics continuity, even photographs. In that way, the medium is the message in *Be That Way*, the newest by **Hope** (*All My Friends*) **Larson**. Seventeen year old Christine wants to shake her life up. She's tired of being the creative wallflower and desires more public presence, like her popular best friend, Landry. But Christine's attempts to be the "shiny girl" may end up obscuring the real Christine. Our heroine works out her issues on the page, developing as a person as she develops as an artist. Set in



1996, *Be That Way* also serves as a somewhat nostalgic look back to how young people acted before the overwhelming dominance of social media. Still, puberty was a Darwinian moshpit even before the internet. Schoolyard rejects Charlie, the "tough chick", and Astrid, the "spooky chick" make a pact to jump off *The Cliff* (Drawn & Quarterly). It's a secret agreement. Publically, Charlie's in with the bullies whose casual yet constant abuse, especially of girls, sets the standards for their peer group. Beautifully drawn in colored pencil and clear-eyed about the cruelty common to adolescence, *The Cliff* is available at all LPL locations. Those often extreme changes that have afflicted our young people in the past twenty-five year are the subject of the DC YA novel, *Superman: The Harvests of Youth*. Set in Clark Kent's idyllic hometown, *Harvests* relocates teen Superman in the 21st Century of collapsing small town economies, megacorp gamesmanship and a divided community where a certain 5th dimensional imp finds willing fodder for chaos on the Web. Look to your TEEN shelves for this loving restatement of Superman's heartland values.

