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When is a (comic book) house a (comic book) home?

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When is a (comic book) house a (comic book) home?

I recently made a rather significant move from Omaha, Nebraska to Stockholm, Sweden. I accepted a visiting lecturer position in the English Department at Stockholm University, where I am teaching a variety of linguistics courses and supervising student research projects.

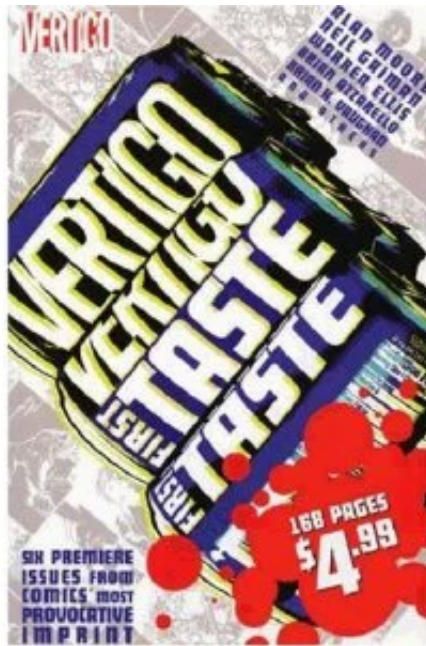
One part of moving is that I had to say goodbye to my home comic book store, Legend Comics in Omaha. I had to shut down my pull file, and I already miss being able to sit in the coffee shop there, browsing comics and getting my caffeine buzz on. Back in May, Legend also hosted my book release party for *Linguistics and the Study of Comics*.

Now that I'm living in Stockholm, I'm on the look-out for comic book stores. There are a few here, and I've already visited one, Comics Heaven in Gamla Stan – Stockholm's "Old Town" neighborhood. This is an old part of town, and it has narrow cobblestone streets and a great deal of European character. The day of my first visit to Comics Heaven was rainy, and several of us had piled inside the store, umbrellas and rain jackets dripping on the floor.

I spent some time browsing through the bins, finding all kinds of comics. Belgian comics. Mainstream US comics. Manga. There were single issues, and there were albums. There were back issues and current issues. I found the complete series (several volumes!) of *Rocky*, the famous comic strip by Martin Kellerman. This shop also sells games and CDs and t-shirts and lots of other kinds of items. Needless to say, I felt right at home there.

Of the comics I bought on my first visit, one stands out for me as both important and useful. It's a collection called *Vertigo First Taste*, originally put out in 2005. As the front cover indicates, readers of this volume sample "six premiere issues from comics' most provocative imprint":

- Y: The Last Man #1
- 100 Bullets #1
- Saga of the Swamp Thing #21
- Transmetropolitan #1
- Books of Magick: Life During Wartime #1
- Death: The High Cost of Living #1



(<https://pencilpanelpage.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/vertigo-first-taste.jpg>)

I have spent quite some time poring over these stories, and finding them all in one convenient bound volume made me happy. [Granted, some comics scholars or collectors wouldn't find this collection valuable or useful. They might compare it to the "Hooked on Classics" series of vinyl LPs from the 1980s...a sort of watered down 'music appreciation' approach.]

I wasn't able to bring a lot with me to Stockholm. Most of my academic linguistics books and most of my comics I left in Omaha, boxed up for the time being. So I was glad to find this gem. I have some Alan Moore, and some Neil Gaiman, and some Warren Ellis.

My question for this blog entry is very much on the personal rather than the academic level. What makes you feel at home in your favorite comic book store? Is it finding a comic that you want or that you miss? Is it the very atmosphere of the shop or the smell of the paper? Is it the camaraderie? When is a comic book house a real comic book home?

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About Frank Bramlett

Until June 2014, I am a visiting lecturer in the English Department at Stockholm University, where I offer seminars in Sociolinguistics; Language and Gender; and Language and Comics; among others. For Fall 2014, I will return to the English Department at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

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