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**The self-referential of comics: Graphic Narrative and metanarrative
in Eleanor Davis's *Why Art?***

The literary tradition, as a syncretic system of literary texts, is always in motion and is constantly being reorganized as new texts emerge. Comics are one of such new texts. The function of images as an independent narrative medium in the genre of fiction has not been fully explained in *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, and comics may be a quality medium to fill this space. Written by American author Eleanor Davis, *Why Art?* is a quite untraditional full-length graphic novel as it gives up the common narrative style and chooses a more alternative track, and reflects a strong sense of self-referential. Based on the study of this comic work, this paper unfolds with the iconographic tradition starting from W. J. T. Mitchell's concept of "the pictorial turn," and follows the path of narratology to explain the artistic qualities of narratives in which the two media, images and words, coexist, and to explore the meaning of metanarratives in comics (or graphic novels) and its place in genology.