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Modern LGBTQ+ Representation in *Transiciones* and *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*

While numerous contemporary literary works explore issues immediately affecting and impacting the LGBTQIA community, two graphic novels—an illustrative medium that allows readers to experience different perspectives through viscerally rendered and immersive materials—work to both inform and entertain the reader on LGBTQ+ issues, including but not limited to self-discovery, representation, and relationship dynamics. *Transiciones*, written by Élodie Durand in France 2021, explores mother Anne Marbot’s struggle to learn, understand, and accept the transition of her son, Alex. *Transiciones* touches on themes of acceptance, transgender journeys, parent/child relationships, and mental health. Originally published in French, *Transiciones* has since been translated into Spanish, Castilian, and English. These translations open the door to readers from numerous countries, and the Spanish translation has highlighted many reviews of the graphic novel, both in online forums and written articles. Similarly, Emil Ferris’s *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*, published in Seattle, Washington 2017, follows Karen Reyes, a young lesbian werewolf who uses her “werewolf” as a metaphor for her sexuality. Both graphic novels have garnered a wide variety of reviews and feedback that specifically highlight the mediums’ use of LGBTQIA+ themes, art, and structural elements. It is, in fact, the continued development of graphic novels as a sophisticated medium over the last decade that has allowed international authors like Durand and American authors like Ferris to openly portray the changing climate of LGBTQIA+ representation to substantial critical and public acclaim.

Despite their numerous differences, including country of publication, both Durand's and Ferris's graphic novels center around themes of LGBTQ self-discovery and family dynamics, and their illustrated components require the reader to focus on and consume additional graphics and details on each page throughout the entire storyline. *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* touches on sexuality, family dynamics, death, and crime, specifically a murder occurring within young Reyes's apartment building. Because the storylines follow Reyes, readers learn quickly of the young girl's sexuality and how she is different not only from her peers but her family as well. *Transiciones* follows the journey of Anne Marbot, a mother who discovers Alex, the chosen name of her transgender son. Throughout *Transiciones* Anne learns about all facets of transgender life. Through this discovery Anne accepts and understands her child and his choices. Tackling transitions, sexuality, family dynamics, gender roles and expectations, and mental health, *Transiciones* attempts to cover a wide range of LGBTQ+ issues within 176 pages.

Documented in a somewhat journal-like style, *Transiciones* is effective precisely because it explores the emotional landscape of Anne, a mother simply trying to understand her child's choices. *Transiciones* has what would be considered a typical art style to graphic novels and comic books: the book is filled with simple black line drawings with bright splashes of color to mark significance within scenes. One color present throughout most of the story is bright pink. Most often this color is associated with Anne Marbot's hair, or the background graphics surrounding her on her journey. Pink can be seen as a sign of love, of passion, of acceptance. It can also be used as an outdated gender marker. The hot pink throughout *Transiciones* calls Anne to attention. She is undoubtedly the main character, her fiery locks trailing through the pages. This is in stark contrast to the typical black and white narrative associated with comics and

graphic novels. The lack of other colors within scenes only calls more attention to Anne's hot pink hair.

The element of uncertainty also manipulates the colors displayed within the pages of *Transiciones*. Scenes that express inner turmoil or memory lack the harsh black lines that the rest of the graphic novel displays. Images seem somewhat out of focus, with a warm peach outline. This could be used to create a hazy effect on the image, whether it be the haze of time for a fading memory or the uncertainty of the inner turmoil that Anne experiences on her journey to acceptance and understanding. This has been noted in articles written about *Tranciones*, as well, with critic Jordi Canyissá writing in *La Vanguardia*:

Anne Marbot – the person is real but her name is not – wrote a diary to understand the transition of her child and her own transformation. From this material, Élodie Durand builds an emotional story far from clichés, drawn with a clear line, which she sometimes mixes with other graphic styles to evoke the past or to convey feelings. (Canyissá)

These scenes of uncertainty and memory are in sharp contrast to the rest of the graphic novel. Perhaps this is a statement or metaphor of the lack of black and white when it comes to issues of sexuality, or simply a visual marker of the past. Regardless, these scenes are filled with emotion, mostly centered on Anne's feelings. They stand out against the blacks, whites, and grays of an otherwise more traditional-style graphic novel.

While the art style might be journal-like, *Transiciones* itself contains data and facts surrounding mental health, transitions, and more. This helps the reader understand exactly what Anne is learning throughout the process, while simultaneously educating the reader. In this way, *Transiciones* is set apart from other recently published graphic novels. Canyissá states:

Transiciones is completed with abundant bibliographical references that bring it closer to the field of essay -the influence of the so-called comic-reportage, very important in France, is noticeable here-, and offers complementary information, so that this learning period of the mother is shared with the reader, who will have the opportunity to expand their knowledge beyond this book. (Canyissá)

This quote from *La Vanguardia* expresses one such thought about the style of *Tranciones*. Here, the graphic novel is said to closely relate to the essay. The blurring of boundaries between genre and form allow writers the freedom and opportunity to express themselves and their thoughts through whichever means they can. This allows crossovers to occur such as a LGBTQ family graphic novel/essay or a LGBTQ murder mystery/journal. As mentioned above, this blurring of lines allows the author to present readers with “complementary information” both to entertain and to inform about important issues that are still in question all over the world.

Because of its recent release, there is not as much data on public reception of *Transiciones* as there is for *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*. As such, the reviews displayed below for *Tranciones* are that of four and five star ratings, largely due to the lack of other ratings posted on the *Goodreads* site on the access date of March 28, 2023. The reviews for *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* range the full scale of one to five star reviews posted on the *Goodreads* site on the access date of March 28, 2023. Both positive and negative reviews are displayed when available, in order to display a realistic response to both graphic novels.

Within the *Goodreads* website there are 272 ratings for *Transiciones*. The average of these ratings is 4.16 stars. This breaks down into 107 five star ratings, 109 four star ratings, 50 three star ratings, 5 two star ratings, and one one star rating. Out of these 262 ratings, 49 reviews were left, with a variety of responses, from one star to five stars. (*Goodreads*, Ratings) Below are

four review analyses, two from four star rated reviews, and two from five star rated reviews. All reviews surrounding *Transiciones* were originally in Spanish, and have been translated into English for the purposes of this paper.

The first review comes from Maite Maital, posted February 12, 2023. “The mother 's path to comprehension and acceptance. I really like the exercise of sincerity; you have to be very brave to accept that we are not as open minded as we thought when it comes to us directly, and even braver to try to modify that” (Maital). This review does not mention transgender themes by name, but does touch on acceptance, open-mindedness, and bravery. This review also focuses on Anne, the mother, and her bravery on the journey to acceptance. There is no mention of any physical or artistic aspect of the book. Overall the review is positive, with a four star rating.

The second review conducted by Pau was posted July 4, 2022 They write:

I don't know how to write this review well. / I have found it harder than I thought it was going to be. I expected more of a story in the form of a comic book and I have found not only a story, but practically an essay about the trans collective. / Living from Anne's point of view, the transition of her son Alex has been hard. Seeing that rejection of trans people can come from their own family is hard to believe, but that it exists and happens continuously. Luckily (here comes a spoiler) everything ends well with the family. / A reading that serves as a teacher of terms and gender theory. (Pau)

This review mentions the essay-like quality of this graphic novel. This could be because of its large use of facts surrounding transgender people, its professional language, or its hand drawn diagrams such as those of genitalia. Graphic novels, like any other literary form, can blur the lines between genre and form to create new hybrid works that appeal to a wide range of audiences. Durand accomplishes this through her mixture of scientific elements and storyline.

Pau also mentions the amount of information that Durand provides through “terms and gender theory.” These terms educate the reader. Overall Pau’s review has a positive tone, with four out of five stars.

Martina, posted June 24, 2022, writes “This book talks about questions of gender and is great for understanding the theme. On top of that, art is very cool.” This is another short review. Gender exploration is mentioned, as well as learning about the theme. It appears that Martina has comprehended the message with little trouble and appreciates the clearness in which Durand displays her themes. This review mentions the art style, and in a positive, but short, light. Overall the review is positive, with five out of five stars. The final review for *Transiciones* comes from Esther, posted August 30, 2022, who writes:

It is a very good book, and very necessary. Visually, the editing is very well done too. It tells the story and evolution of how a family is impacted by the transition of one of its members. In addition, it is didactic in terms of terminology, science, and socio-political situation of the movement. It is one of the books that is needed to be conscious of, respectful, and to break down the barriers of something as personal as gender. A 10.
(Esther)

This review is an extremely positive: 5 out of 5 stars. Esther praises the visual editing of the graphic novel, an element that is important to the form. Esther also chooses to mention familial impact surrounding transitions, not only the relationship between mother and child. This is interesting due to the fact that while Anne’s husband and two other children are mentioned, the main focus is on her relationship with Alex. The details of interactions with other family members is small, but important still. These details do not go unnoticed by readers, as indicated in the review above. Much like Pau, Esther notes the use of professional and scientific

terminology used throughout the graphic novel, as well as the social impact of this graphic novel. Ester states that *Tranciones* breaks down the barriers of gender, and it has, touching on physical, psychological, and emotional elements surrounding Alex's transition.

My Favorite Thing is Monsters, written by Emil Ferris, follows a young Karen Reyes. Reyes is a girl living in 1960's Chicago. Written as an old time detective story, Karen investigates the death of a woman in her building, deals with the sickness of her mother, worries about the actions of her flirty brother, and discovers her own sexuality. Through the use of a ballpoint pen, author Emil Ferris brings 1960's Chicago to life, as well as features the werewolf heroine. Interspersed with hand drawn monster magazine covers, this graphic novel displays a wide variety of colors, textures, and characters. *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* runs a total of 416 pages in Volume One, which was published February 14, 2017. The reviews below comment only on volume one of *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*. Volume Two of the graphic novel was recently published in November of 2022.

Much like *Tranciones*, *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* touches on family dynamics, most closely with Karen Reyes and her older brother Deez. Deez represents a free spirit. He sleeps with a lot of women, relates to artists, has numerous tattoos, and generally does what he wants. Karen, on the other hand, cares more about what people think of her. This could be a side effect of the pressure she feels as a werewolf, her metaphor for being a lesbian. *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* also touches on the theme of death, especially those Karen is close to, including Anya, the woman murdered in her apartment building. Karen decides to investigate Anya's death, which was ruled a suicide. Along the way Karen learns hard truths about Anya, Deez, and herself. While *Tranciones* focused mostly on acceptance, *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* is a journey of self discovery for Karen.

Within the *Goodreads* website there are 20,814 ratings for *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* (accessed 30 March 2023). The average of these ratings is 4.23 stars. This breaks down into 10,751 five star ratings, 6,106 four star ratings, 2,459 three star ratings, 899 two star ratings, and 299 one star ratings. Out of these 20,814 ratings, 2,998 reviews were left, with a variety of responses, from one star to five stars (*Goodreads*, My Favorite). Below are five reviews, one representing each star rating left on the *Goodreads* site. Each review is analyzed in the same fashion as those above.

The first review comes from Michael Padilla, rating the graphic novel one star on June 29, 2018. He had an overall negative review of the plot, construction, and themes of the book. They write:

I was led to this book by its overwhelmingly positive reviews and by its proposed premise. A 10yr old girl tries to solve the murder of her upstairs neighbor. The book is supposed to represent her “graphic diary”, infused by her love for classic horror and art. All of this sounds nice but what you actually get here is a complete mess of various sub plots and secondary characters that make this read a chore to get through.

First off, there’s a lot here that requires you to suspend your beliefs. Karen’s knowledge of art at such a young age is highly unbelievable. There were times throughout the book where she would stop and mention how certain things would remind of her certain paintings and you can’t help but just bat an eye. And also there’s no way such a young girl can reproduce some of these famous paintings and other pieces in this book if this is indeed her “graphic diary”. The artwork itself in the book is nice, at times very striking and captivating but also at times boring and completely underwhelming.

There's way too much going on in this book as well. We have Murder, The Holocaust, Prostitution, Sex, Child Abuse, Racial tension (during the assassination of MLK), Cancer, The Mob, Nazi's, Pedophiles, Marriage Affairs, Gay and Lesbian issues and sexual identity crisis, depression and the list goes on and on. Add all of that to our young protagonists admiration for horror films, fine art and poetry and you just get this overbearing sense that the author just wanted to make sure she had every single box checked off.

Oh and you're about to get lost sometimes in the panels and speech bubbles. I read countless graphic novels and still was confused at times. I really wanted to get this book over and done with. When I read the last page I closed it and literally let out a "huff" of frustration. Definitely wont be reading the second volume, which you'll have to if you want to find out what happens, which I don't care to. (Padilla)

Michael makes numerous valuable points throughout his review. Firstly, Michael believes that Karen holds too much art knowledge and skills for a girl of her age. While he agrees that the artwork itself is well done, it does not align with the typical talents of a young girl. What gives *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* and graphics novels as a whole their edge is their ability to play with and shift perspective. Readers are allowed to see the story physically through the narrator's eyes, as is the case with Karen in this book. *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* shows 1960's Chicago and 1930's Germany through the eyes of two young girls who do not know their place in the world. From Anya's point of view it is a world of fear, of haze and smoke, and adults who wish to take advantage of a young girl with no other options. From Karen's point of view it is a

world of curiosity, of determination, and of monsters, both good and bad. Graphic novels allow the reader to see how realities can be different for each individual living in them. This is displayed through the entirety of *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*.

Michael also disagrees with the various subplots happening throughout the graphic novel, believing it causes confusion for the reader, and makes the story drag. This includes many of the themes he lists above, as well as Karen's love of all things horror. There are many moving parts within *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*. Perhaps eliminating an element, or breaking the story down into even smaller volumes, would allow the reader to fully digest and understand what Emil Ferris is trying to convey. On the other hand Ferris's layered plot and art style are elements that those who have given overwhelmingly positive reviews appreciated about the book. *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* require readers to slow down and take their time fully digesting the material in front of them. Many of the one star reviews speak to the difficulty and heaviness of the plot, as well as the heaviness of the physical book itself. The seriousness of this graphic novel, as well as the art style, is what seems to set it apart from other graphic novels.

The next review comes from Chelsea, who gave it two stars on February 27, 2023, writing:

Goshhhhh I feel really bad about this star rating because I can recognize that this is an objectively fantastic book, with unique artwork and a good storyline. However, I think I'm just more used to more "mainstream" graphic novels. I appreciate that this book pushes boundaries with its style and artwork, but I found it very overwhelming. I didn't understand what was going on a lot of the time and there were many times where I lost track of the plot. This was very distracting and I usually prefer to just read and if I think about the book, I do that when I put the book down, but in this book, I had to spend a lot

of time deciphering which panel I was supposed to read next or what was going on which led me to not be invested in the story. (Chelsea)

Chelsea's review is a bit more complicated. She acknowledges that she sees value in the graphic novel but, much like Michael, does not enjoy the complexity of both the visual elements and plotline. She mentions that she feels the art is "unique," and the storyline is "good," but that the book is "overwhelming," and there were moments when she did not know which panel was next. There is much complexity within Emil Ferris's creation. Panels are layered and interspersed with monster movie posters, self-replicated famous art, ballpoint pen shading, and notebook paper lines. This is a double edged sword because many high rating reviewers love the style of the book, but it is a complex style of graphic novel. Chelsea acknowledges that *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* does not meet her own personal preferences, and that is the main issue she has with the book.

The next review is rated three stars and comes from Louise on September 20, 2022, who writes,

Pros:

- wonderful illustrations, so so wonderful!
- intriguing and slightly confusing story, but once you're in.... you're in! You've got a death, the Holocaust, trafficking, Black Civil Rights, and a monster (but not really). This is pretty gritty, be warned!
- a main character coming to terms with their identity

Cons:

- the general layout of text and image means more often than not you've read the wrong chunk of text. I found it quite taxing to read

I'd like to read vol2 to see where the plots go, but I didn't enjoy the layout of vol1 so maybe in a few years... (Louise)

This review, like the others, is full of mixed opinions. Much like Chelsea those above, Louise enjoys the art style of the book. She is the first to mention that Karen, the main character, comes to terms with her identity. Louise also appreciates the plot, despite its many layers, but does not enjoy the general layout of the book. The main barrier to readers loving the graphic novel is confusion surrounding the setup of the pages themselves, specifically the order in which to read textboxes. Perhaps simplified versions of graphic novels do better with wider ranges of audiences. While there are many overall positive reviews, people do not seem to enjoy the busyness of each page, and how it makes *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* a more difficult and time consuming read. This is one of the main points of the next reviewer, Lord English SSBM, who writes:

I confess that I struggled with this one. It's sprawling and very ambitious, probably too ambitious for its own good. It's a coming-of-age story about violence, sexuality, Nazi germany, dealing with death, the political tumult of the 60s, identity and horror movies. I admire Ferris' dedication to fleshing out each of these things, but the subjects are a bit too disparate she can't tie them together elegantly, and so she loses the story's forward momentum. It's overwritten and a bit of a mess, and this is not a critique exactly but I would have liked it had Ferris included a bibliography at the end of her book because I would have liked the opportunity to follow the research she did into the time period.

The art is also, critically, drop-dead gorgeous. I loved the shifting art style that always found some way to surprise me, either by deploying a new technique or simply by illustrating something in a way that I never expected. It lends extra weight to the small character moments that I loved.

I don't think "misery porn" is a fair way to characterize this book. It is a dark book, but it's not about how bleak and miserable the world is. It's about the people who live in it despite everything. (Lord)

This four star and generally positive review was written recently on January 18, 2023. The theme of conflicting feelings continues with Lord English. He loves the art within the graphic novel, commenting on the shifts that occur. These can be seen in redrawings of classical art, monster magazine covers, or the gaunt and shady figures of Karen's life. There is deep contrast within the art of *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*, much like the storyline.

Lord English also notes the ambition of many themes, but also points out how there can be disconnection between these subjects that leave readers confused. There are jumps between prostitution in 1930's Germany and detective work by young Reyes in 1960's Chicago. This back and forth shows the contrast of lives between Anya and Karen, two people who come from different generations and upbringings but ended up friends in the same place. While it can give the reader a bit of literary whiplash, the intertwining storylines give *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* depth that many five star reviewers appreciate. One such reviewer is Lisa Maruca, posted on January 22, 2023, who writes:

The artwork in this coming of age story is amazing. The way that Ferris layers the past with the present, reality with imagination, the longed for with gritty reality—in other words, capturing internal and external realities together—is nothing short of a marvel. She also does really cool things with the layout (or mise-en-page, the placements of graphic and typographical elements on the page) that also supplement the narrative and fascinating ways.

My only complaint was the ending, which was ambiguous to the point of confusing. I thought of number of ways I could interpret it but none that the narrative was especially pointing to. In desperation, I googled it, only to find that this was not the end at all! This book is just volume one of two parts, the second of which has been indefinitely postponed. I am quite annoyed, not at the author but the publisher, who did not label this as part one of two anywhere on the cover. I think this is misleading and unfair to readers.

Nonetheless, if you just accept the ending as an unsolved mystery left to your own imagination, and appreciate this book as it is, you can still enjoy this as a literary graphic tour de force. (Maruca)

As mentioned above, graphic novels are a way for readers to open themselves up to other perceptions of reality, whether that be through the eyes of a parent or a young girl who fancies herself a werewolf detective. Lisa Maruca starts her review with positive thoughts about how Emil Ferris accomplishes this altered reality through her many layers of time, imagination, and real life grit. Lisa uses the phrase, “internal and external realities” which is exactly what graphic novels are able to display. In stark contrast to most other reviews on the *Goodreads* site, Lisa

focuses her review on the literary contents of *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*, instead of the visual elements. While she does briefly mention them in her first paragraph, the review is based on storylines and themes. This is in direct contrast to lower star ratings who love the artwork but do not understand the plot.

Overall, the biggest critiques for *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* is the busy nature of its plotlines and visual elements. This is also its highest praise. Some readers love the art and perspective, others enjoy the mix of timelines and plot elements, but the highest praise comes from appreciating both the literary and visual elements within this graphic novel. *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* certainly caused a stir within the literary community, with new readers and reviews this very year, six years after publication. It is through this stir that Emil Ferris has been able to portray another side to the LGBTQ+ community through a young girl. The sense of alienation and otherness is so present within Karen that she sees herself as other, as a werewolf, which she revels in. Karen enjoys being who she is by the end of the graphic novel. The awareness of others and self discovery is a topic that many readers can relate to and appreciate.

Coming from *Best and Worst Books*, this review raves about *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*, as they write:

A graphic novel so immersive it feels almost four-dimensional, Ferris' audacious, gorgeously dense debut—which garnered raves from pen-and-ink royalty Alison Bechdel and Chris Ware—defies nearly every idea of what drawings can do on a page. Steeped in a headily adult world of death, sexuality, and, yes, monsters, the book zigs from late-'60s Chicago to WWII era Berlin and back again: a fantastically crosshatched world of Nazis and mobsters and neighborhood eccentrics, seen through the precocious eyes of a curious 10-year-old girl. (Greenblatt)

One thing that sets this review apart from others is the immersive quality they feel about Ferris's work. They call *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* four-dimensional, which could only happen through the layers within the book, both visual and literary. They appreciate what Ferris has done with her ballpoint pen and imagination, creating a monster mystery world that pulls the reader into its claws. Most themes are mentioned, although family dynamics are left out. They acknowledge the back and forth nature of *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* as well as the point of view. It is only through Karen's eyes that the reader is able to see the story of Anya, the "eccentrics" of 1960's Chicago, and the connections between them. This next review agrees with *Best and Worst Books*, in terms of the intricacy of *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*, writing:

Drawn in multicoloured Bic pen and markers on lined paper, this extraordinary graphic novel flits with mind warping self assurance between 1960s Chicago, 1930s Germany and the lawless territory of an artist's imagination. Although partially based on the childhood of its author, Emil Ferris, it's a work of fiction of the most adventurous stripe, throwing a gender-skewed Bildungsroman, a murder mystery, a historical fiction, a horror pastiche and narratives of countercultural life into a story that heaves and twists to strange rhythms of its own. The art moves between lavish naturalism, caricature, hasty sketches and stick figures; the pungent text demands to be read vertically, sideways and upside down. It's a racing certainty for the best comic of the year, even if this hefty volume is only part I. (Martin)

Here, Tim Martin describes Emil Ferris's work as "the lawless territory of an artist's imagination." This is exactly the feeling the journalistic elements of Karen's Reyes's diary evokes in many of the readers. She combines sketchy artwork, crazy theories, fears, hopes, and

secrets within the pages to create a world unlike any other, truly through the eyes of a ten-year-old girl who is discovering her place in the world. Martin also labels *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* as a “gender-skewed Bildungsroman,” a coming of age novel. Ferris plays with genre here, but essentially *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* is a story about Karen and her struggles and victories while growing up. This element is what drives the plot of the graphic novel and leads Karen to her discoveries of Anya’s life, her brother’s decisions, and her own sexuality. Martin later in his review also says this, writing:

The intricate cross-hatching of Ferris’s art makes *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* an astonishing sight, but she holds it together with shrewd writing and a charmingly wild way with narrative. The book deals with monsters real and imagined, but its story, as the central “wannabeast” tries to parse the adult world through the lenses of her obsessions, is affecting and often very funny. Finding out who really dunnit will have to wait until part II. Until then, this superb debut offers plenty to be going on with. (Martin)

Much like *Best and Worst Books* above, Tim Martin describes Ferris’ work as cross-hatched. *Best and Worst Books* says, “a fantastically crosshatched world of Nazis and mobsters and neighborhood eccentrics...” in what one can assume is about the plot points and story line of Anya and Karen’s lives, while Tim Martin is referencing a cross-hatching of art, held together by the storyline. Also like *Best and Worst Books*, Martin notes how Karen “tries to parse the adult world through the lenses of her obsessions,” once again showing the importance of Karen’s point of view within the graphic novel. Both authors have noted several similar elements in both characters, point of view, artwork, and compositions of *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* itself.

The final review comes from *library journal.com*, another overwhelmingly positive review that dives into the many shifting and layered elements of Ferris's complicated work. They write:

Combining elements of historical fiction, family drama, a coming-of-age-tale, and a murder mystery into an unforgettable and widely acclaimed debut, author/illustrator Ferris presents the graphic diary of Karen Reyes, an artistically inclined ten-year-old girl living in 1960s Chicago with her mother and troubled older brother. Drawing from Karen's sketchbook journal, Ferris fills each and every page of this weighty first volume of a duology (Vol. 2 releases in October) with stunningly beautiful and virtuosic illustrations, exploring Karen's fears, curiosities, and more through the lens of her fascination with pulp creatures and B-movie monsters. With an incredibly rich, sprawling narrative to match the luscious illustrations, Ferris creates an absorbing and demanding magnum opus that rewards every bit of effort it takes to comprehend the scope of her vision. (Batten)

Like Tim Martin, *Library Journal* calls Karen's journey a coming-of-age-tale, as well as a murder mystery. *Library journal* appreciates the artistic elements of Ferris's work, calling the visuals of *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*, "...stunningly beautiful and virtuosic illustrations, exploring Karen's fears, curiosities, and more through the lens of her fascination with pulp creatures and B-movie monsters." Once again, the mention of Karen's lens is present, as well as her fascination and how it shapes the readers' perception of characters and the world that Karen lives in.

One of the biggest critiques within the *Goodreads* reviews is the complicated and intricate layout of each page within *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*. Within *Library Journal*, this

element is praised, saying, “Ferris creates an absorbing and demanding magnum opus that rewards every bit of effort it takes to comprehend the scope of her vision.” They find Ferris’s creation absorbing, drawing them in instead of pushing them away. They note that while it does take time and effort to fully understand what Ferris is trying to say in her graphic novel, it is worth the reader’s effort and time to understand “her vision.” The *Library Journal* review also has high praise for *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*. “This debut has already netted Ferris comparisons to (and praise from) some of the lions of the graphic novel field, and it’s the rare title that actually lives up to the hype. Readers are sure to welcome, discuss, and meditate on Ferris’s accomplishment, anxiously awaiting what’s next.” Many professionals within the literary and graphic novels field had a positive reaction, and still have a positive reaction to Ferris’s work. This, paired with the overall positive reception from the general public shows the appreciation for Emil Ferris’s *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*, and the message it sends about self-discovery and being comfortable in your own skin, regardless if it’s covered in fur or not.

Overall, both *Tranciones* by Élodie Durand and *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* by Emil Ferris had more positive reviews than negative reviews, especially when it came to critical reviews from literary sources. The *Goodreads* website allowed many readers from 2017 onward to express their views on *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*, and since the last access date, over half of the reviews were five stars. While many of the lower ranking reviews expressed confusion on page layout and plotline, many reviewers still had positive things to say about Emil Ferris’s work. *Transiciones* also had over 75% of reviews in the four and five star range, starting in 2021. Both of these graphic novels have positive reception, while also portraying important LGBTQ+ issues to both the general public and literary critics alike.

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