Hana and Ursula: a Flower and Her Foil

In David Mazzucchelli’s graphic novel *Asterios Polyp*, the titular character, Asterios, has primary interpersonal relationships with two female characters: his ex-wife Hana, and his new boss and landlord’s wife, Ursula Minor, who plays an important role in the novel as Hana’s foil. Though the two women never meet—or even learn of each other’s existence—they both impact the progression of the story and Asterios himself. The contrast between the two helps to more clearly illustrate the meanings behind their color schemes and appearances, their personalities, and their relationships with Asterios.

Compassion or Revolution?

At the height of the Industrial Revolution in nineteenth-century England, Charles Dickens and Karl Marx penned commentaries on the state of society in Europe: Dickens in his novel *Hard Times*, and Marx in his political pamphlet, *The Communist Manifesto* (and to a lesser extent his “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right”).Though hardly sharing beliefs and ideals, their commentaries contain similarities; namely, in their critique of capitalism and capitalist’s treatment of the working class. Yet their prescriptions for change differ radically. Dickens believed that society needed to become more compassionate, and that once people began to be kinder to one another, conditions would improve for everyone, working class and capitalists alike. Marx, on the other hand, glorified the working class, and advocated a revolution to overthrow the bourgeoisie and do away with industrial capitalism entirely. Of the two, Marx’s radical plan was actually the most realistic, while Dickens’ idealistic approach seems based almost entirely on wishful thinking.