

*Reviews***COMICS****Sheep of Fools:
A Blab! Storybook**

SUE COE AND JUDITH BRODY. Fantagraphics Books, \$14.95 paper (32p)
ISBN 1-56097-660-8

Longtime activist illustrator Coe has produced a striking new work. In a storybook format, Coe details the horrific conditions of the sheep industry. The book begins with a series of annotated songs complete with rhyming couplets: "Song of the Medieval Shepherd," "Song of the Venture Capitalist" and finally "Song of the Modern Shepherd," all describing the processes and economies behind the slaughter of sheep. The middle section is taken up with the gory details of the ocean and land transportation of the herds, including near-Biblical accounts of sinking ships and tens of thousands of drowned sheep. The last stop is the slaughter and serving of the animals. Coe accomplishes this narrative through layered, exacting images that combine a precise attention to detail with an expressionistic sense of mood and composition. All the facts are there, but radically enhanced by Coe's empathetic brushstrokes. The only thing hindering this book is the writing by Coe and coauthor Brody: the rhyming couplets fade in and out throughout, and the prose is somewhat overblown and precious, as if trying to compete with, rather than complement, the art. Nevertheless, few people will feel like chowing down on a lamb kebob after reading this book. (Oct.)