

# Portrait of the Cartoonist as a Dog Owner

Joe Sacco

The literary critic Cyril Connolly, warning writers about the pitfalls of parenthood, wrote:  
"There is no more somber enemy than the pram in the hall".

And let me add... the water bowl in the kitchen.

Yes, the pet! Needy and unproductive, it ranks next to the child as creativity's greatest impediment.

"Waah!"

"Woo woo!"

Here I am, for example, the world-famous cartoonist, walking the dog.

Do I use this time away from my desk to contemplate my next masterpiece?

No, I am calculating, to the minute, the total time I will spend parading this nuisance around the neighborhood over the course of its 15-year life span.

"Half an hour a day... about 180 hours a year... times 15, 2,700 hours... divided by an 8-hour work day... 330 working days... in which time I could have turned out 135 pages! The equivalent of an entire graphic novel never drawn while I pick up dog droppings!"

"I shudder to think now my future biographers will judge you, dog."

"Sniff, sniff"

Perhaps you nurture an idyllic image of the cartoonist at work while a trusty mutt takes its rest on his slippers.

I gave this Norman Rockwell stuff a shot but after daily "eruptions" upon the arrival of the mail carrier, I banished the animal from my drawing studio for life.

"Woo woo!"

Still it lurks outside the door awaiting my next move.

Walking to the kitchen for a snack is a guilt-inducing ordeal as the wretched creature, with the whole day on its hands, whimpers for attention.

"Hmuuh, hmuuh"

"Playing stick."

"Another 10 minutes may be deducted from today's production."

In short, for a serious cartoonist, a dog is not so much a warm, cuddly comfort as a self-inflicted wound.

So how did I get mixed up in this dog business in the first place? Answer: It came with the girlfriend.

"Well, even Helen of Troy had some baggage."

And her cost-benefit ratio?

"She probably saves me an hour a day making meals... so over the course of a long-term relationship of, say, 30 years..."

"Hey! Not bad, honey!"