

Political cartoon analysis - donna barstow essay sample

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



Donna Barstow, a political cartoonist who draws for publications such as Psychology Today, and who claims to draw for The New Yorker and other such publications, has a very unique yet impenetrable style. In her cartoons "Arnold as Baby-daddy for Father's Day" and "Nobody is Born a Conservative," a strange amalgam of technique, style and depiction of humor is used to attempt at political discourse. However, it must be ultimately stated that her cartoons are devoid of clear message, crudely drawn, and obtuse to the point of uselessness. These two cartoons, after careful analysis, seem to attempt at analysis and statement but instead stoop to the level of crude, flat jokes about vague political issues, far from the caliber of real New Yorker cartoons but, in many ways, far more fascinating in their obtuse, indecipherable nature.

In "Nobody is Born a Conservative," a pregnant woman stands in front of a doctor at a crudely drawn doctor's office, with the caption reading "It's a boy, Mrs. Seipp, but we won't know for a while whether he's liberal or conservative." The cartoon is entirely in black and white, with crude, Far Side-like drawing style that attempts at real shapes but its perspective is extremely skewed. The doctor himself has no face to speak of, only a hint at a nose and mouth, and the floor of the doctor's office seems to slope toward us in gravity-defying ways. A signature and two watermarks cut into the middle and edge of the cartoon, often obscuring our view. The political message is somewhat unclear, looking at the cartoon in and of itself. The implication seems to be that, over time, the child will grow into a person of one party or another, in a play on the typical expectation of asking whether the child is a boy or a girl. However, with that being the only statement being

said, and it being such an obvious point, it does not really scratch the surface of any political leaning. In this way, it defies definition, in that this political cartoon seems to create the illusion of a statement without managing to say anything at all.

" Arnold as Baby-Daddy for Father's Day" is no different; featuring a strangely grimacing Arnold, drawn with a five-year-old's skill with tie askew, he is the only person in color with a seemingly-tiny California flag next to him. His text reads " Yes. I was a movie star, a groping governor, and now an adulterous father of a ba love child. I hope you will accept me as a true American hero." This single sentence appears to be the joke, as Barstow simply delivers the joke via the caption and not through any skilled drawing on her part. As with before, the joke is impenetrable; we assume that Barstow believes that the media still favors Arnold, while still making the implication that " love child" is a preferred alternative to calling it a " bastard" through crossing out the first attempt at writing that.

Donna Barstow, through her visually unappealing, strange technique and her complete lack of wit in her political cartoons, may potentially be the worst political cartoonist working today. While other cartoonists use crudeness and simplicity of drawing to great effect or purpose, the overall point of Barstow's work seems to be straightforward, surface-level political jabs that perplex all but her. To that end, it is difficult to discern what value this political cartoonist can provide to improving discourse other than to show how it should not be done.

Works Cited

Barstow, Donna. " Nobody is Born a Conservative." Web. 6 May 2011. .

Barstow, Donna. " Arnold as Baby-daddy for Father's Day." Web. 19 June 2011. .