

A one-day symposium  
promoting new research  
and multi-disciplinary  
study of comics/  
comix/ manga/ bande  
dessinee and other  
forms of sequential art.

# TRANSITIONS 7

**New directions in comics studies**

**Saturday 19th November 2016 at Birkbeck, University of London**  
**Main Building, Malet Street (entrance on Torrington Square)**

Transitions 7 is part of Comica - The  
London International Comics Festival, and  
organised in association with Birkbeck  
College, Studies in Comics, European  
Comic Art, Journal of Graphic Novels and  
Comics, Comics Grid and The  
Contemporary Fiction Seminar.

**Respondents: Dr. Maggie Gray (Kingston University); Dr. Julia Round  
(Bournemouth University); Professor Roger Sabin (Central Saint Martins)**

This is a free event, but please register by email at  
[transitions.symposium@gmail.com](mailto:transitions.symposium@gmail.com)





**SATURDAY 19<sup>th</sup> of NOVEMBER**  
**Birkbeck College Malet Street Main Building**  
**Basement Level**

9.30 - 10 **registration** in basement foyer

10 - 10.20 **welcome** in B33

10.30 - 11.50: Parallel panels

Panel 1A in B33; chair: [Ernesto Priego](#) - **Publishing Contexts**

Panel 1B in B04; chair: [Harriet Earle](#) - **Comics Histories**

Panel 1C in B29; chair: [John Miers](#) - **Form & Function**

12 - 1.20pm: Parallel panels

Panel 2A in B33; chair: [Nicola Streeten](#) - **Gender Queries**

Panel 2B in B04; chair: [Hallvard Haug](#) - **Spatial Invaders**

Panel 2C in B29; chair: [Paul F. Davies](#) - **Comics and Philosophy**

1.20 - 2.20pm **LUNCH** (own arrangements)

2.20 - 3.20pm: workshops

Workshop A in B33 - **'Brilliant Corners: Approaches to Jazz and Comics'**

Workshop B in B04 - **'Drawing Outside the Lines: Pathography beyond the visible boundaries in mental illness'**

Workshop C in B29 - **'Neither Surrogate Nor Complement: pictorial narratives and the codex'**

3.20 - 3.40: **BREAK** (own arrangements)

3.40 - 5pm: Parallel panels

Panel 3A in B33; chair: [Ian Horton \(tbc\)](#) - **Beyond Capes**

Panel 3B in B04; chair: [Ian Hague](#) - **Representing Violence**

Panel 3C in B29; chair: [Nina Mickwitz](#) - **National Identities**

5pm - 5.15 **BREAK**

5.15 - 5.45 **PLENARY** in B33: Respondents: [Roger Sabin](#), [Julia Round](#), [Maggie Gray](#), [Paul Gravett](#)

5.45 - 6.30 **DRINKS** in B04

### **1A in B33: Publishing Contexts**

Martin Flanagan (University of Salford) - 'From Marvel Age to Heritage: How Marvel Studios drew lessons from Marvel Comics and Classical Hollywood'

Daniel King (University of Derby) - "'As a Cartoonist, One Isn't Used to Being Taken Seriously": What 2014 Tells us About Comics, Publishing, and Awards Culture'

Dominic Davies (University of Oxford) - "'Urban Comix': Collaboration, Production and Resistance in the Global South'

### **1B in B04: Comics Histories**

Michael Connerty (Central St Martins, UAL) - 'Happy Ike, The Pink Kid and the American Presence in early British Comics'

Kristian Hellesund (Independent researcher, Bergen) - 'Remaking Comics: Presentations and publications of early American comic strips in Norway from 1907-1919'

Guy Lawley (Central St Martins, UAL) - 'Reading Between the Dots: the colours of 1960s US comic books (and Roy Lichtenstein's paintings)'

### **1C in B29: Form & Function**

Carolina Martins (University of Coimbra) - 'You Are Here: Movement and Vision in Marc-Antoine Mathieu's *SENS*'

Paul F. Davies (University of Sussex) - 'The Logical Structures of Comics: Parataxis, Hypotaxis and Text Worlds'

Augusto Paim (Bauhaus University, Weimar) - 'Comic versus Journalism: digital comics and other solutions for this conflict'

### **2A in B33: Gender Queries**

Jude Roberts (Keele University) - "'I Will Never Reveal the Truth!": figuring out non-binary gender in contemporary comics'

Alex Liddell (Independent Researcher) - 'Evil Women: A workshop on female supervillains and empowerment'

Amanda Potter (Open University) - 'Wonder Woman: An Amazon for the Twenty-First Century'

### **2B in B04: Spatial Invaders**

Rui Lopes (Universidade Nova de Lisboa) - "'Serving a Horrible President in Disgusting, Filthy Wars Abroad": DC Comics vs Reagan's Cold War'

Roland Seelentag (University of Zurich) - 'A Display of the Ordinary. The Absence of Supervillains in Vietnam War Comic Books'

Robert Aman (University of Glasgow) - 'Romanticism, Colonialism and Anti-Capitalism in the Swedish Comic Series Johan Vilde'

### **2C in B29: Comics & Philosophy**

Thierry Chessum (Independent Researcher) - 'Reading Comics with Deleuze'

Thomas Giddens (St Mary's University) - 'Into the Dreaming: Text, Image, and the Unconscious'

Beatrice Moja (State University of Milan) - 'Cheap Pills of Philosophy: Calvin and Hobbes and contemporary wisdom'

### **WORKSHOPS:**

**B33:** 'Brilliant Corners: Approaches to Jazz and Comics', Ernesto Priego (City University London) and: Nicolas Pillai (Birmingham City University)

**B04:** 'Drawing Outside the Lines: Pathography beyond the visible boundaries in mental illness', Stef Lenk (Freie University Berlin)

**B29:** 'Neither Surrogate Nor Complement: pictorial narratives and the codex', Ann d'Orazio (University of New Mexico)

### **3A in B33: Beyond Capes**

Dan Smith (Chelsea College of Art, UAL) - 'Dressing for Dystopia: Fashion as critical design in 2000AD'

Alex Fitch (University of Sussex) – 'Erasing the Hero - comic book cities without capes'

Simon Born (University of Siegen) - 'Legends of the Dark Knight: Batman as Transmedia Character'

### **3B in B04: Representing Violence**

Harriet Earle (Birkbeck) 'Same Face/Same Story: Representing Sexual Harassment and Assault in Comics Memoir and Testimony'

Chantal Cointot (Nottingham Trent University) - 'Panthers in the Hole: Depicting the Prison Experience in Comics'

Kate Loyola (Independent Researcher, Philippines) - 'Panels Without Borders: Witnessing Trauma as Human Rights Issues in Graphic Novels on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict'

### **3C in B29: National Identities** (2 papers)

Craig Thomson (Birkbeck, UL) - "'Homo Abominum Americana': The cultural tradition of the 'vampire' in Scott Snyder and Rafael Albuquerque's American Vampire'

Laura Nallely Hernández (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) - 'The Mexican of the post-revolutionary stage in the comic-book character *Don Jilemón Metralla y Bomba* (*Mr. Jilemon Shrapnel and Bomb*), by Gabriel Vargas'

## ABSTRACTS:

### 1A PUBLISHING CONTEXTS

#### **Martin Flanagan: From Marvel Age to Heritage: How Marvel Studios drew lessons from Marvel Comics and Classical Hollywood**

Public pronouncements about Marvel Studios' aspirations sometimes seem to qualify or marginalise the role of comics (Alonso, 2015: 4; see also Johnson, 2013: 97-8). However, what is clear is that the identity of the company and its moving image products derive value from a co-ordinated appeal to the heritage of Marvel Comics; if not in the direct form of textuality, then as a like-minded business concerned with responsible guardianship of a beloved catalogue of colourful characters.

Such discourses sometimes take an analogy between the role of President of Production Kevin Feige, and prominent Editors-in-chief (EICs) from the publisher's history (Flanagan, McKenny and Livingstone, 2016: 72). Not only have the likes of Jim Shooter, Roy Thomas and Mark Gruenwald<sup>1</sup> been cited, but first company EIC and public face of Marvel Comics, Stan Lee, was referenced as a touchstone for film executives even at the earliest stage in the development of the entity which became Marvel Studios (MS). This paper shall identify the dimensions of Lee's tenure,<sup>2</sup> under which a 'voice' and style for Marvel Comics emerged within the pragmatism circumscribed by company owner Martin Goodman, that have been seen to apply to the identity-crafting process of MS.

The obvious tension here involves the agenda of Disney, owner of Marvel Entertainment since 2009. Expert in its own content creation, marketing and licensing field well beyond cinema, what does Disney gain by allowing the brand to retain a strong connection to Marvel Comics? The traditional and - broadly, and by comparison to other superhero publishers - 'realistic' story values cued by Marvel Studios' now famous page-turning ident make an interesting counterpart to Disney's 'Magic Kingdom' imagery; in another echo of Marvel Comics' tradition, the logo and the romanticisation of Feige and other executive figures promise a creative 'family' experience. Here, a lead is taken from the aura (certainly exaggerated – Howe, 2012: 93) cultivated by Marvel of a chaotic, freewheeling 'Bullpen' of comic pros, able to maintain Marvel's 'soul' when endangered by upheaval in the corporate structure (Shooter in Raviv, 2004: 35).

Howe contends that Hollywood figures had sized Marvel Comics up as a 'mini-Disney' in waiting as early as the 1980s (2012: 294). The other 'heritage' element in the business ethos combination driving MS evidences an admiration towards Studio System-era methods in Hollywood. Tactics of this phase of film-making influence MS' practices both as a producer and a label abiding within Disney (once an outsider to the Hollywood establishment itself). A group of recent scholars including Connor (2015) have insisted on the image of older, planned and centralised styles of Hollywood production, and self-conscious studio identities, persisting in a contemporary cinema era that is more regularly associated with notions of fragmentation and impermanence. This notion shall assist this paper in considering the lessons that Marvel Studios has taken from worlds of comic publishing and of classical

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<sup>1</sup> An executive editor, not an EIC.

<sup>2</sup> There is no room in this abstract to make the necessary argument that the distinctiveness and values that were lent to Marvel's line in the 1960s/1970s are not attributable to Lee alone, but to collaborators from key figure Jack Kirby to Steve Ditko and others, as well as subsequent EICs like Thomas.

Hollywood, which combine as it positions itself as an outsider producer that nevertheless pays its respects to the traditions of its new media field.

## References

- Alonso, A. (2015), "Untitled Foreword." In *All-New All-Different Marvel Previews #1* Vol. 1, # 1. New York: Marvel Comics
- Connor, J.D. (2015) *The Studios After the Studios: Neoclassical Hollywood, 1970-2010*. Stanford: Stanford University Press
- Flanagan, M., Livingstone, A. and McKenny, M. (2016) *The Marvel Studios Phenomenon: Inside a Transmedia Universe*. New York and London: Bloomsbury
- Howe, S. (2012) *Marvel Comics: The Untold Story*. New York: Harper Perennial
- Johnson, D. (2013), *Media Franchising: Creative License and Collaboration in the Culture Industries*. New York and London: New York University Press
- Raviv, D. (2004), *Comic Wars: Marvel's Battle for Survival*. Sea Cliffe: Heroes Books

**Bio:** Martin Flanagan's doctoral thesis (Sheffield) was concerned with the cinematic relevance of Bakhtinian theories, and was published as *Bakhtin and the Movies: New Ways of Understanding Hollywood Film* in 2009 with Palgrave Macmillan. Most recently, he co-authored the first full-length scholarly study of Marvel Studios, *The Marvel Studios Phenomenon*, with Mike McKenny and Andy Livingstone (Bloomsbury). He developed the notion of the 'blockbuster auteur' in an essay concerning Ang Lee's *Hulk* (2003), published in the *New Review of Film and Television Studies* (2004), and has published on aspects of comic book cinema and adaptation in collections such as *Film and Comic Books* (2007) and *Web-spinning Heroes: Essays on the History and Meaning of Spider-Man* (2012). He has also contributed on comics themes to the journals *Closure* and *Scope*.

## Daniel King: 'As a cartoonist, one isn't used to being taken seriously': What 2014 Tells us About Comics, Publishing, and Awards Culture

In this paper, I draw on Bourdieusian cultural materialism alongside more recent work by James English, Ted Striphas, and Gillian Roberts to argue that the publication and reception of long-form comics published in 2014 are revealing of the growing acceptance of the medium among publishers, reviewers, and critics.

2014 saw the publication of several long-form comics that attracted a large amount of mainstream attention. These works included Roz Chast's *Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant* (Bloomsbury, won the Kirkus Prize and National Critics Circle Autobiography Award), Bryan Lee O'Malley's *Seconds* (Ballantine), and Charles Burns' *Sugar Skull* (Pantheon). These works uniformly attracted highly positive reviews in newspapers and the literary press, and garnered a large number of awards wins and nominations between them. But just as significant are the places where these works were published. Each one was published by a major international publishing house normally associated with producing "literary" fiction. It appears that comics have been accepted by both publishers and by reviewers, an idea that is further confirmed by Chris Ware's *The Last Saturday*, a serial work that was published throughout the year in *The Guardian* newspaper. The sales figures of these comics are also revealing, as all of them spent some time on the *New York Times*

bestsellers list, showing that the increasing symbolic capitalisation of long-form American comics has been matched by an increasing economic capitalisation.

In this paper I deploy comics published in 2014 as case studies for understanding current trends in the symbolic and economic capitalisation of long-form comics in the United States, and use the year itself as a case study of the ongoing critical trajectory of long-form American comics.

**Bio:** Daniel King is currently employed as an Associate Lecturer at the University of Derby. His first book, *Cormac McCarthy's Literary Evolution* will be published by Tennessee University Press in September 2016. His work has previously appeared in *Comparative American Studies*, *Literature and Medicine* and *The International Journal of Comic Art*.

### **Dominic Davies: 'Urban Comix': Collaboration, Production and Resistance in the Global South**

This paper will chart the work of comics collectives emerging in recent years from several cities across Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, who have used the unique capacities of the comics form to diagnose and resist the spatial inequalities, segregated enclaves and uneven infrastructural developments that shape the urban contexts they inhabit. The divisions cutting through these cities are inherited legacies of colonial-era infrastructural developments, but are also increasingly shaped and exacerbated by the assimilation of these urban spaces into a global neoliberal economy. The different kinds of structural violence—lack of access to clean water, electricity, and basic public services—and direct violence—urban crime, state and police oppression—that are symptoms of the recent intensification the spatial inequalities that shape these 'post/colonial' cities has, this paper will argue, been effectively depicted, diagnosed and resisted by these comics collectives. By tracing similarities between the kinds of 'resistance' mobilised by the recent surge in the production of comics and graphic novels in cities as geographically and culturally diverse as Cape Town, Beirut, Nairobi, Cairo and Delhi, it becomes possible, I will argue, to show how these artistic networks—primarily concerned with *representing*, but also, and perhaps more importantly, also *produced by artists that inhabit* these urban environments—might actually realise alternative visions of urban theory and practice. I will show that the visual-narrative medium of comics, with that form's long history of social critique and underground collaboration (hence the preference for the term 'comix'), is particularly adept at representing, as well as critically responding to and reimagining, cities in the Global South. It is not only that the comics form, with its multi-dimensional depth and spatial layout is particularly suited to the representation of urban space—though this it certainly is. It is also that the very processes of the form's production—in both its physical and online formats—are often collaborative and self-consciously sub-cultural and political, and thus the creative process itself leads to the development of alternative networks of communication, cultural exchange and social interaction that undercut, re-appropriate and subvert the violence embedded in the infrastructural layouts of these divided cities.

**Bio:** Dominic Davies is a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at the English Faculty, University of Oxford, where he also completed his DPhil in March 2015. He has written and published a number of articles in journals such as the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* and the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, and has contributed chapters to *Études Littéraires*

*Africaines* (ELA) special issue on *South Africa and Post-Apartheid Literature (1994-2014)* and *South Asian Fiction in English: Contemporary Transformations* (Palgrave, 2016). He is the co-editor of the forthcoming essay collection, *Fighting Words: 15 Books that Shaped the Postcolonial World* (2017) and his first monograph, *Imperial Infrastructure and Spatial Resistance in Colonial Literature (1880-1930)* will be published at the end of 2016. He was the Facilitator of the Leverhulme-funded Network, 'Planned Violence: Post/colonial Urban Infrastructures and Literature' (2014-2016), and his current research project focuses on the way urban space in postcolonial cities is represented in graphic novels and comics.

## **1B COMICS HISTORIES**

### **Michael Connerty: Happy Ike, The Pink Kid and the American presence in early British comics**

The evolution of the modern comic strip in the UK and the US developed in parallel during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, although there were key differences, for example in terms of style, content and production context. During this period, a substantial amount of reprinted American material appeared in the British publications alongside the work of home grown artists. Publishers did not always seek permission to reprint this material, which they freely amended, changing character names and altering dialogue, R. F. Outcault's Yellow Kid appearing regularly in the pages of the Comic Home Journal during 1897 as The Pink Kid, for example. Later, a number of comic strips from the Hearst newspapers, such as Alphonse and Gaston by Frederick Oppen and The Newlyweds by George McManus, appeared in credited reprints in the comics published by Harmsworth, Pearson and others. Many elements of cartooning and graphic narrative that had proved popular in the US, such as the employment of speech balloons rather than captioned text, were adapted by artists working for the British comics, and ultimately helped to shape the development of British comic strip language during this crucial period in its evolution. Publications such as Comic Cuts and The Funny Wonder also reflect broader cultural influences, for example in the representation of race, and in the absorption of tropes associated with the travelling circus and Wild West Show, and later, popular cinema.

**Bio:** Michael Connerty teaches film and animation history at The National Film School in Dun Laoghaire, Dublin. He is currently pursuing a PhD at Central St. Martins, London, researching the work of Jack B. Yeats in early British comics.

### **Kristian Hellesund: Remaking comics: Presentations and publications of early American comic strips in Norway from 1907-1919**

Unfortunately, there has been very little research around comics in Norway. There are few papers written by scholars and researchers, and students of literature, arts and history usually pick other subjects than comics for their master thesis.

Most of the work around Norwegian comics history has been done by enthusiasts documenting comic books released by various publishers. The first catalogue of comic book releases in Norway, Norsk Tegneserie Index, was released in 1983. Later there have been seven updated editions of this book. Another book cataloguing comics in Norway, Norsk Tegneserie Katalog, was published in 2013.

All these books focus on comic books. That means that there are comics published in newspapers and magazines that are not documented. Some comics have been written



about in newspaper articles and books, while others have not been seen since they were originally published.

As I started working on a book chronicling the history of comics in Norway, I did research in libraries and archives to look at both comic books and comics published in newspapers and magazines. In the period 1907-1919, some American comic strips and Sunday pages were published in Norway. It is often believed in the Norwegian comics community that these comics were translated versions of the works of artists like Richard Outcault, Rudolph Dirks and Frederick Opper. In a few cases this is correct, while in most cases the comics have been redrawn and made into picture stories with text under the drawings.

In my lecture I will present various examples of original American comics and the redrawn versions from Norwegian newspapers, magazines and comic books. I will show the differences in storytelling, translation and the full impact on the finished result. In addition to this, I will show some hypotheses of why this was done by the Norwegian publishers and why I believe early Norwegian comics creators were inspired by these adaptations of American comics and not the original strips and Sunday pages.

**Bio:** Kristian Hellesund (b. 1970) is a deputy headmaster at a Norwegian primary school. He has a weekly column about comics in the Sydvesten newspaper, and has been writing about comics since 2006 for the serienett.no website. He is also one of the organizers of the Stribefeber comics festival in Kristiansand, Norway. At the moment Hellesund is working on a master thesis in paedagogical science and a book on Norwegian comics history. In addition to his teacher's degree, Hellesund has a bachelor degree in history.

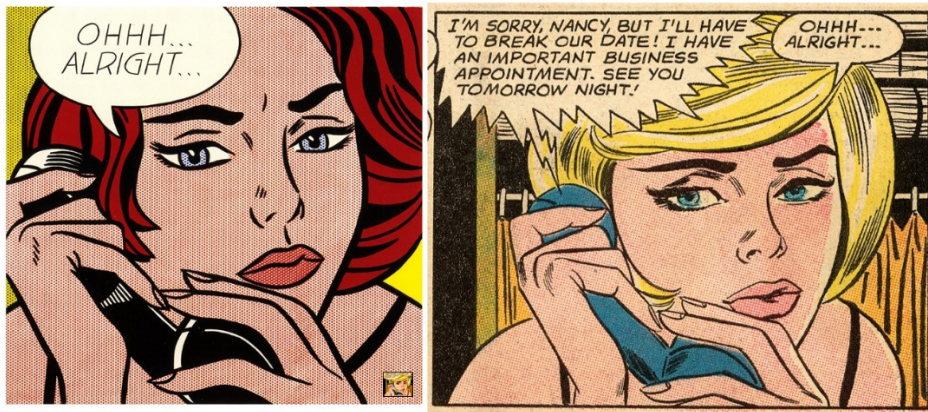
### **Guy Lawley: Reading between the dots: the colours of 1960s US comic books (and Roy Lichtenstein's paintings)**

This paper explores a rarely discussed aspect of 20<sup>th</sup> century American comics: the Ben Day dots used to print colours — vital in establishing their visual identity in their first 100 years. It briefly summarises the history of the true Ben Day dot, from its origins in the 1880s, via the US Sunday newspaper comics of the 1890s – 1930s.

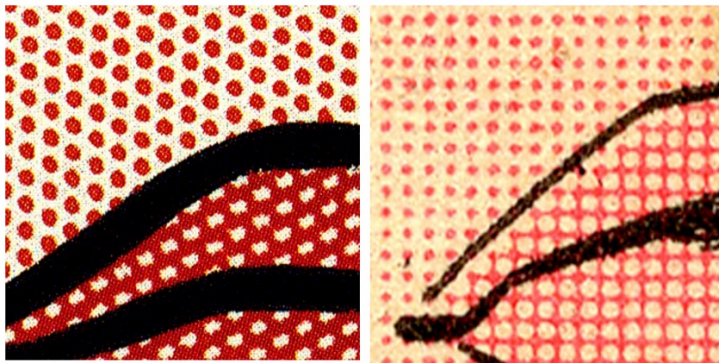
In the comics books themselves, originating in the 1930s, the genuine Ben Day dots were pushed out by faster cheaper methods – first in the 1930s by Craftint, then by a third method in the 1950s.

In the 1960s, comic book dots were sometimes referred to as “Benday dots,” but only because the name was now a “genericised brand” like “Hoover”. By 1965, Roy Lichtenstein had repeatedly told the world he was painting Benday dots. There seems to have been no attempt at the time, and little since, to check if he was literally correct.

This paper will briefly compare actual comic book dots with Roy Lichtenstein's hugely enlarged versions, using examples like this – a Lichtenstein, left, and his source on the right.



It will establish with a few detailed images how his painted dots were not simply direct copies.



The main part of this paper will be a description of the methods used to make the comic book images of the 1960s, both as hand-made creations and as the final printed artefacts. This will use a small number of comic book examples, like the enlarged detail shown above right, and more complex mixed colours.

The comic book aesthetic has had an enduring appeal only partly accounted for by Lichtenstein's appropriation of it. This paper will demonstrate how key elements of that aesthetic originated in the requirements of the comics' production and printing.

**Bio:** Guy Lawley is a first year PhD student at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. His topic involves Roy Lichtenstein's transformation of comic book images between paper and canvas, which in turn has required research into the history of comic strips, comic books and the Ben Day dot. (Preliminary findings from this research, taking in 19th century examples and details of a wide variety of printing techniques, can be seen at: [www.legionofandy.com](http://www.legionofandy.com).) He contributed a chapter on punk and comics to Roger Sabin (Ed) *Punk Rock, So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk* (Routledge, 1999), and his interviews with comics creators Alan Moore and Peter Bagge appeared in the University Press of Mississippi's *Conversations* series of books, in 2011 and 2015. He has written for and edited comics fanzines, including the highly acclaimed *Comics Forum*, and worked as an NHS GP for 25 years.

## 1C FORM & FUNCTION

### **Carolina Martins: You are Here: Movement and Vision in Marc-Antoine Mathieu's *SENS***

In this paper I propose a reflection on how the reader moves and connects with *SENS* (2014), the book, and one of its means of reconfiguration and actualisation, the art

installation. In the development of my argument, I will take into account the interrelationship between that which is real (actual and virtual), as well as notions of spatial experience and perception. These are of particular relevance in the raising of questions regarding the reader's position in relation to the spaces of presentation and reception of the work(s) and their influence on their corporeal consciousness. Taking as a starting point Alva Noe's (2004; 2012) theory that perception is something we (know how to) do and that seeing is acting, I argue that both reader and presentation space live in a state of mutual dependence in order to activate each other's presence. My aim is to analyse the material properties of work(s) and verify how the presence of a reader contributes to an intermittent state between actual and virtual manifested/potent in both book and installation. In addition, I intend to: i) emphasise the materiality of each format, the meaning of which depends on and is produced by the handling of the book itself and the navigation through an effective tridimensional space; ii) to question movement and perception in both book and installation space, and iii) to ponder how object and reader reveal themselves to one another. This reflection comes in the wake of a previous essay in which I approach similar questions in relation to SENS VR (2016), a virtual reality game adaptation of Mathieu's graphic novel.

**Bio:** Carolina Martins holds a degree in Art Studies and a post-graduate degree in Literary and Cultural Studies, both from the University of Coimbra. She currently holds a doctoral scholarship from FCT and is currently a doctoral student in the FCT PhD Programme in Advanced Studies in Materialities of Literature at the School of Arts and Humanities at the University of Coimbra. Her research interests include comics, cinema, art installations, interart studies and game studies.

### **Paul F. Davies: The Logical Structures of Comics: Parataxis, Hypotaxis and Text Worlds**

How are comics organised semantically? What is the nature of the relationship between one enclosure and another -- word balloon, caption or panel? In this paper I will explore the *logical* metafunction of comics: the relationships and dependencies between 'panels' and other enclosures in comics discourse. This function takes its place alongside the experiential metafunction of comics in a tripartite Hallidayan description of graphic narrative as a form of meaning-making, wherein comics construe the experience of the creator(s), as well as engaging interpersonally with the reader and constructing a coherent text.

In discussion of this part of the theory, I will comment on the levels of reality that may be represented in comics discourse, the nesting of narratives and discourses, and I will recruit Paul Werth's Text World Theory to assist in describing this. I will briefly consider the idea of a rank structure in comics, and will propose the possibility of 'rankshifting' of panels and enclosures, pointing out how levels of discourse may 'pop' up or 'push' down as the creator promotes each level to prominence or demotes it by nesting it in a hypotactic relationship to other panel-level enclosures.

I will argue that this *hypotaxis*, a nested, dependent relationship between enclosures in graphic narrative, warrants more priority and attention than it has traditionally been given, over against the paratactic structures that have been emphasised in characterising comics as 'sequential art'. I will illustrate with a range of examples.

**Bio:** Paul Fisher Davies is undertaking Ph.D. research in graphic narrative theory in the school of English at University of Sussex. He teaches English Language at Sussex Downs College, Eastbourne. As well as studying comics form, he has written a collection of graphic short stories: see [www.crosbies.co.uk](http://www.crosbies.co.uk).

### **Augusto Machado Paim: Comic versus Journalism: digital comics and other solutions for this conflict**

Comics Journalism is a new gender for making journalism using the language of comics – as well as you can read a newspaper report, or listen to the radio, or even watch TV, so you can get information in comic format, too. It is not like seeing comics as a way to make a subject easier to be understood by the reader, or like seeing journalism as entertainment. It is more like finding new languages to tell a journalistic story, deep and well researched, but also connected with the multiple possibilities of reading of our times. But how can the language of comics be useful for journalism purposes? How can we use it to discuss the taboos of journalism? What does the history of drawings in press tell us on this topic? These are some questions of my ongoing PhD-project. In order to illustrate and to discuss about the contributions of hypertext tools to tell a comic journalism story, I will present the comic *So close, faraway!* (<http://www.cartoonmovement.com/icomix/54>), a comic reportage I developed with the artist Bruno Ortiz for the website Cartoon Movement. It is about a homeless in Porto Alegre, southern Brazil, whose daily routine is told in eleven pages without words. Besides, there are a lot of links, pictures and videos hidden inside the comic, so that the reader can explore the subject as deeper as he/she wants. By taking this work as starting point, I propose a release from the American journalistic model – this one that wants to be objective – through the incorporation of narrative techniques from literature and aesthetic elements from different artistic fields. I argue that a journalistic narrative that provides aesthetic experiences has a transforming power, by generating empathy and encouraging the reader to action, or at least to a broader understanding of othernesses.

**Bio:** Augusto Machado Paim is a Brazilian journalist graduated at the Federal University of Santa Maria. After accomplishing a Master on Creative Writing at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, he moved to Germany, where he is now attending a Doctorate at the Bauhaus University in Weimar. Besides the academical career, he works as a freelance journalist for several magazines in Brazil, as well as a translator of German graphic novels to Portuguese. In Brazil, he organized with Goethe-Institute the 1st and 2nd International Meeting of Comics Journalism and was curator at "Osmose", a project of artistic residences for Brazilian and German comic artists.

## **2A GENDER QUERIES**

### **Jude Roberts: 'I will never reveal the truth!': figuring out non-binary gender in contemporary comics**

This paper will discuss the attempted representation of two characters of non-binary gender in contemporary comics and their reception. Through an analysis of the representation of Vaasuvius in Rich Burlew's *Dungeons and Dragon's* parody webcomic *The Order of the Stick* and Xavin in Marvel's *The Runaways* series, I will consider some of the complexities of representing non-binary gender in comics. I will also explore some of the reception of these characters and the repeated attempts by readers of these comics to 'figure out' the

characters' 'real' gender. Focusing particularly the representation of the body – the drawing of figures – I will argue that the visual-verbal mixture of these comics provides a unique challenge and opportunity for the representation of persons of non-binary gender that troubles received understandings of the 'truth' of gender as located in the body.

**Bio:** Dr Jude Roberts has recently abandoned the tumult of academia for the alternate chaos of FE teaching. She is now a Lecturer in English at Uxbridge College, London and a joyfully casual independent researcher. Her main research interests are gender and sexualities in contemporary popular culture. She has just published an edited collection (with Esther MacCallum-Stewart) on Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Popular Fantasy which includes chapters on comics and manga.

**Alex Liddell: Evil women: A workshop on female supervillains and empowerment**

Much discussion has generated about the absence and lack of acceptance of female superheroes in comics and comics-related media, as well as the stereotypes that the media enforces onto them. However, a relatively neglected area of this discourse is the politics of representation of female supervillains. This is surprising considering how few female supervillains there are compared to superheroines and recent controversies, such as the admission that Marvel shut down the inclusion of a female villain in Iron Man 3 because of fears that it would affect toy sales. While there has been a continued outcry for the lack of attention and financing given to superheroines, the same furore has not been seen for the exclusion of female villains. While some would argue that less representation of evil women is a good thing, I argue that the lack of equivalent female villains is a symptom of the same misogynistic culture that believes women to be weaker than men and therefore less of a threat, which must be addressed if we are to achieve true diversity in comics and media in general. What are the reasons for the lack of examination of supervillainess representation? How are existing female supervillains portrayed and viewed? And how can representing female villains tackle gender inequality in comics and elsewhere? This interactive presentation will examine these questions and act as a platform for information gathering for further research. There will be a particular focus on the specific tropes that female supervillains often endure, as well as how they compare to how their superheroine peers are drawn, and a discussion of possible intersections affecting interpretations of supervillains such as sexuality, transness and race.

**Bio:** Alex Liddell is a philosophy graduate from the University of East Anglia with a life-long fascination for supervillains of all genders. They recently wrote a chapter for Essays on DC's Harley Quinn about bisexual representation and the queen clown of crime (to be published in Spring 2017).

**Amanda Potter: Wonder Woman: An Amazon for the Twenty-First Century**

When she was first conceived in the 1940s by William Moulton Marston Wonder Woman's roots were in Greek mythology. An Amazon princess, she is described as 'lovely as Aphrodite, as wise as Athena, with the speed of Mercury and the strength of Hercules'. Over the years Wonder Woman's Ancient Greek heritage has been played up or down depending on popular tastes. For example in the *Wonder Woman* television series from the 1970's, starring Lynda Carter, her Amazon heritage is only made clear in a couple



of episodes from the first season, based on the early comics. In the following two seasons she becomes a modern superheroine at home in the 1970s United States. Comics of this period also tended to situate Wonder Woman as a modern superheroine, drawing on her representation in the popular series.



In 2016, with her appearance in cinemas in *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*, this heritage has returned to the foreground, in the film directed by Zack Snyder (of 300 fame). The film has been heavily criticised, but the character of Wonder Woman was universally praised. Although the scene-stealing Wonder Woman, played by Gal Gadot, has very little screen time, when she does appear she is linked directly with Ancient Greece. She first appears during Lex Luthor's speech about Prometheus and she is then positioned alongside a (fake) ancient artefact. In comics and graphic novels from 2016 Wonder Woman's Amazonian background is also prominent. In Grant Morrison's graphic novel *Wonder Woman: Earth One*, Wonder Woman's origin story, saving US pilot Steve Trevor on Amazon island, is rewritten, beginning with the story of Hercules and Hippolyta, featuring images based on Greek vase paintings. Greg Rucka's new *Wonder Woman* comics for the DC Universe Rebirth series launched in 2016 features a different re-telling of Wonder Woman's first encounter with Steve Trevor. Previous Wonder Woman comics featuring the superheroine in Ancient Greek contexts, for example *The Hiketeia*, where she meets the Furies, written by Greg Rucka, have also been repackaged in 2016 to meet the demand for Wonder Woman material. In this paper I will discuss how and why there is currently a resurgence of interest in Wonder Woman's Ancient Greek heritage.

**Bio:** I am a Research Fellow with the Open University, having been awarded my PhD by the Open University in 2014 for my thesis on viewer reception of Greek myth on television. My research interests include Greek myth and ancient history in film, television, comics and fan fiction, and I have published on *Doctor Who*, *Torchwood*, *Xena: Warrior Princess*, *Charmed*, Starz' *Spartacus* and HBO's *Rome*.

## **2B SPATIAL INVADERS**

### **Rui Lopes: 'Serving a horrible president in disgusting, filthy wars abroad': DC Comics vs Reagan's Cold War**

This paper examines how one of the largest comic book publishers in the United States temporarily became a niche of anti-establishment culture. In the late 1980s, while the rapprochement between the Soviet Union and the United States seemed to anticipate the end of the Cold War, DC Comics launched a record number of series about international espionage (Blackhawk, The Unknown Soldier, Justice Inc., Checkmate) and/or openly political superhero adventures (Suicide Squad, Justice League, Captain Atom, Peacemaker, Firestorm, among others), including the best-selling, critically acclaimed Watchmen and Batman: The Dark Knight. Even when they did not radically depart from traditional genre trappings, by and large these comics expressed a cynical stance towards the foreign policy of the administrations led by President Ronald Reagan. Creators were particularly critical of covert operations abroad, a view presented not only within the stories themselves, but also in the issues' back matter, letter columns, and promotional interviews.

Besides providing an overview of the remarkable amount of DC publications to directly engage with this topic, my paper will discuss how such output reflected the medium's craving for social relevance and broader artistic recognition while attempting to appeal to a more 'mature' audience. Drawing on mainstream and fan press, I will also analyse the series' articulation with public debates at the time (especially over the Iran-Contra scandal) as well as with the politicisation of the comics industry (undergoing struggles over labour rights and censorship). The paper thus seeks to contribute to a wider understanding of both public discourse in the final stage of the Cold War and the political evolution of the comics' field.

**Bio:** Rui Lopes is a postdoctoral researcher at the Instituto de História Contemporânea (Universidade Nova de Lisboa) and visiting researcher at the Department of Cultures and Languages of Birkbeck, University of London. He has a PhD in International History from the London School of Economics and Political Science and has mostly worked on Cold War politics and culture. His current project focuses on the depictions of the Portuguese dictatorship (including its colonial dimension) by international audiovisual fiction.

### **Roland Seelentag: A Display of the Ordinary: The Absence of Supervillains in Vietnam War Comic Books**

Beginning in the so-called Golden Age, comic books have often been closely associated with superheroes as well as their traditional counterparts, the supervillains; their contrasting juxtaposition function as an attempt to establish a balance of forces within a story, generating suspense. Strikingly, such supervillains appear to be absent in a majority of comic books depicting the Vietnam War.

Superheroes as a narrative strategy (and supervillains accordingly) have been discussed to some extent as a means to boil down and simplify otherwise complex instances. This absence of 'supercharacters' is generally omitted in equivalent research about comic books, since most analyses focus rather on what is depicted in them than what is missing.

In order to assess the relevance of supervillains or the respective lack of, numerous American comic book series from the 1970s and -80s have been compared. Series without

supercharacters have been analyzed to filter similarities regarding their narrative structure or read against a series or books featuring said characters.

In these texts, the absence of villains is reflected in their narrative structure: it opens them up. Most of these Vietnam War comic book stories, especially the ones produced at the time of conflict, do not necessarily lead up to a final showdown (or the repeated postponement of it). Instead, they contain an array of characters, story lines and cliffhangers, enabling the story to unfold in a serial manner, thus highlighting and simultaneously benefitting from the distinguishing qualities of the medium 'comic book.'

**Bio:** Roland Seelentag graduated from the University of Zurich in English, Film Studies and Art History in May 2011 and is now a doctoral candidate at the English Department of the University of Zurich. He is currently working on a dissertation on the representation of the Vietnam War in 'low-culture' texts, supervised by Prof. Dr. Martin Heusser. The research for said dissertation deals with fundamental concepts of culture analysis and how they are implemented in these low-culture texts.

### **Robert Aman: Romanticism, Colonialism and Anti-Capitalism in the Swedish Comic Series Johan Vilde**

The award-winning *Johan Vilde* comic series deals with what has been referred to as a concealed part of Swedish history – namely Sweden's involvement in the slave trade during the seventeenth century. The protagonist is a cabin boy on a Swedish merchant ship who is forced to escape after being accused of mutiny. After jumping ship, he floats ashore in Cabo Corso – located in modern-day Ghana – where he is eventually adopted by a local clan and grows up in an African kingdom. From there, he will go on to witness the harshness and brutality of the slave trade with his own eyes. Comprising four albums published between 1977 and 1982, the comic aligns itself with, and is a prime popular cultural example of, what can be classified in broad terms as a wave of international solidarity movements in Sweden. What this essay discusses is how the anti-colonial and anti-capitalist underpinnings of the Johan Vilde series rekindle a much older Romanticist position. This essay will argue that this well-intended ethically dimension of attempting to subvert the imperially established border between civilisation and where the wild things roam also relies on a position produced by colonial discourse.

**Bio:** Robert Aman is Lecturer in Education at the University of Glasgow. Aman primarily conducts research on the relationship between education, the geopolitics of knowledge and various forms of exclusion and marginalisation, drawing on decolonial theories. He is a former Visiting Fellow at the Faculty of English Language and Literature, University of Oxford and, most recently, at the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales, Sciences Po Paris. His book, *Decolonising Intercultural Education: Colonial Differences, the Geopolitics of Knowledge, and Inter-Epistemic Dialogue*, is forthcoming with Routledge.

## **2C COMICS & PHILOSOPHY**

### **Thierry Chessum: Reading comics with Deleuze**

Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari wrote exhaustively about art: cinema, painting, literature, music etc. over time developing a theoretical framework applicable to all forms of artistic expression. Whilst they never engaged with comics or graphic narrative for reasons we can

speculate on, we can determine whether comics meet the function of a work of art through a consideration of the creative processes which Deleuze sees as the determinant of artistic value.

Deleuzian philosophy has and is having an influence in social theory and research methods in the social sciences, notably in geography. It does so by providing a new conceptual language freed from reductionist implications and interpretations. Becoming rather than being, time/space as duration, the forces of affects, abstractions and the diagram are concepts which can be linked to devices used in the creation of comics. This metaphysics of the creative 'event' understood through the forces of 'affect' allows us to seamlessly link art, ethics and politics. Yet Deleuze, with rare exception, does not seem to have made much inroads into comics scholarship. If, as it is often claimed, comics are a postmodern art form 'par excellence' then it is surprising that one of its major philosophers is so little considered beyond the use of the odd concept usually dislodged from its broader framework.

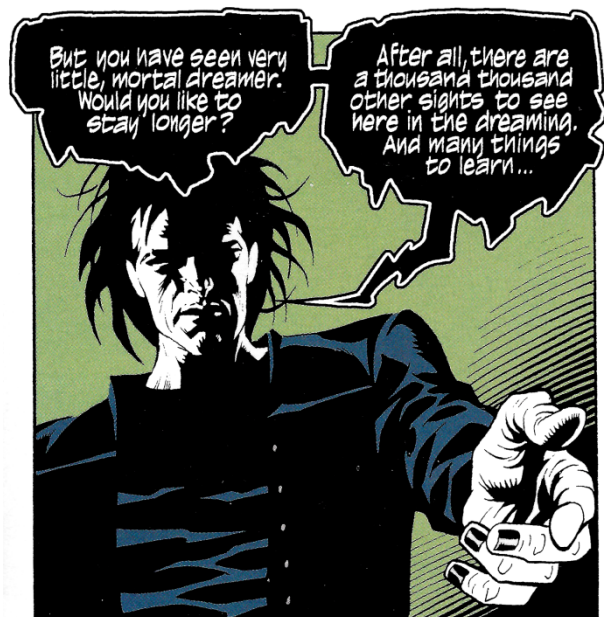
My aim here is to take Deleuze's metaphysical system as a wider framework in order to examine what new insights it can bring to particular problems in comics theory. I examine here just a few: the role of the creator, matters of style and expression, genres and their political function.

**Bio:** Thierry has recently completed a PhD on Deleuze, comics and methodologies of psycho-social research.

### **Thomas Giddens: Into the Dreaming: Text, Image, and the Unconscious**

The panel to the right appears in volume 9 of Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman*, a series predicated upon the existence of 'the dreaming' and the Lord Shaper—Morpheus, the master of dreams—who rules it. Morpheus's kingdom is a shared realm that we enter upon sleeping, and therein experience and explore night-time visions: it is where we dream, it is the stuff from which dreams are shaped. To read such a work, we must turn to that other master of dreams, Sigmund Freud. In his *The Interpretation of Dreams* we are given a method of interpretation that goes beyond the surface, that seeks beneath and beyond to latent meanings and traces that, if we follow them,

take us down into the infinite, tumbling associations of the unconscious. More recent critical and cultural theory building on Freud further embeds this capacity for infinite meaning and uncertainty into images, such that encountering an image also involves experiencing a limit and a challenge to rational and conceptual understanding. The comics form pushes this further, highlighting the visual dimensions of text. Written words are always encountered first as images, which must be decoded (or encoded) into the abstract symbols of language. Embedded in all written text, then, in its repressed visual dimensions, is the endless



interpretation that leads beyond the horizon of the unconscious and into the mass of infinite associations and possibilities.

**Keywords:** Freud; interpretation; word-image relationships; *Sandman*

**Bio:** Thomas Giddens (thomas.giddens@stmarys.ac.uk) is Lecturer in Law and founding Co-Director Centre for Law and Culture, St Mary's University. He researches comics, cultural and critical legal studies. He is founder of the Graphic Justice Research Alliance, and edited the collection *Graphic Justice: Intersections of Comics and Law* (Routledge 2015).

### **Beatrice Moja: Cheap Pills of Philosophy: *Calvin and Hobbes* and contemporary wisdom**

*Calvin and Hobbes* is a daily comic strip created by the American cartoonist Bill Watterson, published between 1985 and 1995. The setting is a non-specified US city. The strip stars Calvin, a 6-year-old hyper-imaginative boy, and Hobbes, his stuffed tiger. Hobbes has a dual nature: in Calvin's eyes, Hobbes behaves like a real toy tiger, whereas adult characters perceive it exclusively as an inanimate toy.

In my presentation, I intend to analyse the comic strip *Calvin and Hobbes* by emphasising the unconventional means through which Watterson discusses contemporary issues and famous philosophical theories. In fact, through Calvin's daydreams and his friendship with Hobbes, the comic strip broaches contemporary issues, but it also opens to cultural and philosophical discussions, offered to the readers with simplicity and gentle irony.

The name of the characters highlights the philosophical subtext that underlies the comic strip, intended for a crossover readership. Calvin recalls John Calvin (1509-1564), the philosopher who believed in the predestination of the human souls; accordingly, in the comic strip Calvin takes advantage of the theories of his namesake to justify all his wrongdoings. Hobbes takes its name from the philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), mainly known for his pessimism about the social behaviour of humankind; likewise, Hobbes the tiger shows its contempt for humanity and is rather proud of its animal condition.

Hobbes's dual essence of toy and real animal also offers some interesting ideas about the epistemological horizon that surrounds us and the poor perception we have of the world behind the veil of Maya. Watterson plays with this contrast and in some strips inserts situations in which Hobbes's dual nature manifests itself in a rationally incomprehensible fashion.

"Calvin and Hobbes may have whisked its readers away to faraway planets, the Mesozoic era and a cubist world, but Watterson was always most concerned with having his richly detailed characters parse real issues" (Martell, 2010). Thus, although Watterson retired in 1995, *Calvin and Hobbes* is still thought-provoking and able to stimulate an audience made, at once, of young and adult readers.

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#### **Bio:**

Beatrice Moja is a Ph.D. student at the State University in Milan (Italy). Her project is dedicated to it-narratives and toys in Anglophone Children's Literature and contemporary culture. She has delivered papers on Victorian food and fashion, and it-narratives in children's literature. She has written about the Mrs Beeton's *Book of Household Management* (the theme of her MA thesis), and racism in children's literature. She is also interested in history of English drama, World Literature, and creative writing.

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#### **WORKSHOPS:**

##### **Ernesto Priego and Nicolas Pillai: Brilliant Corners: Approaches to Jazz and Comics**

The popular forms of jazz and comics have shared similar historical and cultural tendencies. As expressions of modernism, they have been subject to the demands of the marketplace and consumed by wide and varied audiences. When we published the Comics Grid call for papers Brilliant Corners: Approaches to Jazz and Comics in 2015, we aimed to find meeting points between the disciplines of jazz studies and comics studies. With the publication of this work, we now propose a workshop in which to receive feedback for our findings and to provoke new methodological approaches.

Questions for discussion will include: the role of materiality and/or performativity in comics and jazz cultures; curatorial/archival practice and the preservation of comics and jazz collections in libraries and archives; the role of collectors and fans in comics and jazz cultures; film and television scholarship which considers associations between jazz and comics; research-as-practice that presents theory or criticism in comics form; questions of representation in comics about jazz; and the use and/or presence of comics in jazz.

We are convinced that the combination of jazz and comics is likely to produce interesting and challenging future scholarship. This research to come could play an important role in

building bridges between different disciplinary approaches and, importantly, between academic research and the public. The session will be observed by artist Rowan Abbott who will produce original work based on the conference discussion.

**Bios:** Dr Ernesto Priego is Lecturer in Library Science at City University London. He is the editor-in-chief of The Comics Grid Journal of Comics Scholarship, an open access journal dedicated to comics studies published by the Open Library of Humanities.

Dr Nicolas Pillai is a Research Fellow at Birmingham City University. He is the author of *Jazz as Visual Language: Film, Television and the Dissonant Image* (I. B. Tauris, 2016) and is currently writing a chapter on jazz and comics for *The Routledge Companion to Jazz Studies* (2017).

### **Stef Lenk: Drawing Outside the Lines: Pathography beyond the visible boundaries in mental illness**

I will present work from my practise-based PhD-in-progress examining the emancipatory possibilities of a pathography of mental illness. Using drawing as a mode of thinking and the literary technique of magic realism in an interdisciplinary context, I am creating a graphic narrative of anxiety based on personal experience with the illness. This is to be followed by a curatorial essay examining the process *and* outcome of the work, the benefits of using magic realism (in relation to other graphic illness narratives) and how the creative process can reinstate biographical authority over a situation where the unseen effects of mental illness can be debilitating.

The springboard for the literary genre choice is the term “magic thinking” used in selected literature about mental illness. Swiss psychoanalyst Charles Odier cites magic thinking as one of the fundamental elements of anxiety (Odier, 49) saying that in therapy *[m]agic [thinking] can be fought only with another magic - with equal weapons. This is a law inherent in the phobic's psychology to account for the inefficiency of rational methods.*” (Odier, 76)

The workshop will comprise:

- The goals of this practise-based project
- Reasons for choosing magical realism as a technique
- A survey of comics on related themes
- A brief outline of events and thumbnail sketches of parts of the work in progress

I hope to incite discussion, criticism and scholarly feedback on:

- Graphic Medicine as a growing trend in comics
- How other comics have dealt with narrating non-visible aspects of inner life
- How magic realism is suited to illustrating trauma
- What editorial concerns need to be addressed for using autobiography in an illness narrative to prevent it from becoming a purely subjective (vanity) project
- Thoughts/criticism on the work-in-progress sketches from a potential reader's perspective

**Bio:** Stef Lenk is interested in the practical application of academic research involving graphic novels and illness narratives. She is a part of the *PathoGraphics* project at the Freie

University in Berlin, a project addressing aesthetics and politics of illness narratives in contemporary comics and literature. She is also a freelance illustrator with an MSc in Medical Art and many years experience in varying roles within the Canadian literary/comics publishing industries. ([www.steflenk.com](http://www.steflenk.com)).

### **Ann d'Orazio: Neither Surrogate nor Complement**

Through present-day digital culture, proliferation of images may be at an all-time high, but the structuring principles of earlier technologies remain largely unchanged in new media. My doctoral dissertation project argues for an understanding of comics as an outgrowth of older, collectively-produced, popular visual narratives in codex form. In other words, I view comics not as an aberrant medium of post-industrial pop culture, but as a recursive iteration of pictorial narratives that coincide with the growth of the codex as a dominant material form. I neither seek to flatten the comics medium nor to find an origin point. Rather, I build a matrix of popular visual narratives from medieval manuscript culture to contemporary comics. I analyze primary works ranging from the biblical stories of the Illustrated Old English Hexateuch and *Biblia Pauperum* to the war imagery of Jacques Callot and Francisco de Goya, and twentieth-century comics such as *Pretty Deadly* and *Saga*.

Though political and material contexts change among the eras and primary works I examine, there exist saliently consistent elements: visual narratives induce viewers to see or read in particular patterns; they are inherently popular, whether through implied if not overt elements within content, form, and usage; they spatialize time and temporalize space in a way that logocentric narratives, photography, and film do not; they draw attention to their own rendered nature (whether drawn, painted, block-printed, or digitally created). In a field that prizes the aberrant over the typical, my work makes an archaeology of the continuous and ubiquitous. I am seeking feedback from other comics scholars and practitioners of the medium on my work.

**Bio:** Ann D'Orazio is a Bilinski Fellow and a doctoral candidate in the Department of English at the University of New Mexico. Her research centers on visual narratives, primarily in medieval manuscript culture and contemporary comics and graphic novels. Ms. D'Orazio focuses upon collective production, the book as material culture, and media archaeology. Her chapter "Little Things Mean a Lot: The Everyday Material of *Palestine*," appeared in *The Comics of Joe Sacco: Journalism in a Visual World* (University Press of Mississippi, 2015).

### **3A BEYOND CAPES**

#### **Dan Smith: Dressing for dystopia: Fashion as critical design in 2000AD**

In science fiction anthology comic *2000AD*, fashion has formed an important part of the fabric of futuristic narratives. Clothing has been important as an element of world-building. Character designs have made use of uniforms and practical wear, defining an overall look for characters, but there has also always been space for more nuanced and changing forms of fashion. This paper will offer some inroads into considering fashion as an element of critical design in science fiction comics. As part of an ongoing consideration of *2000AD* in relation to Dunne and Raby's theories of design as a conceptual form which looks towards troubling futures, the multiple presences of fashion can be thought of as design speculations, which for Dunne and Raby can act as catalysts for collective redefinitions of relationships to reality. Fashion is addressed here not in terms of just fads or crazes, or in

terms of Barthes's understanding of fashion as a structure for endless variation and novelty, although these are important recurring elements, particularly in *Judge Dredd's* Mega-City One. Fashion is considered instead as manifestations of material culture in relation to dressed bodies and constructions of subjectivity, as well as modifications and alterations of bodies for purposes of self-fashioning. Fashion is clothing as artefact, in relation to the body and including the body. It is informed by the world around, but is used by subjects to inform, or rather is used both as a tool for world building, and as part of an overall visual and narrative sensibility. As fashion has moved back and forth between aspects of critical world building and visualised narrative sensibility through *2000AD* since 1977, distinctions between fashion as embodied identity and printed narrative space are hard to maintain.

**Bio:** Dr Dan Smith is a Senior Lecturer in Fine Art Theory at Chelsea College of Arts and is the author of *Traces of Modernity* (2012). His research interests include comics, utopia, science fiction, printed works, art history, outsider art, museology and material culture. Publications include 'The Anorexic as Zombie Witness: Illness and Recovery in Katie Green's *Lighter Than My Shadow*' in *The Walking Med: Zombies and The Medical Image* (Forthcoming 2016); 'Reading Correspondences through the Virtual Feminist Museum', Comicsforum.org, (2015); 'Architecture, Violence and Sensation - A Visitor's Guide to Mega City One', *Intensities Journal of Cult Media*, Issue 5; 'Reading *Folk Archive*: on the Utopian Dimension of the Artists' Book' in *Literatures, Libraries, & Archives* (2013); and 'Image, Technology and Enchantment - Interview with Marina Warner' in *The Machine and the Ghost: Technology and Spiritualism in Nineteenth to Twenty-First Century Art and Culture* (2013). His drawings can be found at [danthatdraws.blogspot.co.uk](http://danthatdraws.blogspot.co.uk).

### **Alex Fitch: Erasing the hero - comic book cities without capes**

In 'Comics and the city: urban space in print, picture and sequence', Ahrens and Meteling note: "In no other media or culture has a character like the superhero been invented, and he is always related to a city, either living in a real city - mostly New York City - or protecting a fictional one" (Continuum, London 2010, p. 10)

With this in mind, few superhero comics are set outside of cities. A superhero needs a city for two reasons, one is their *raison d'être* – to be a hero you have to save victims of crime, and there are far more victims of crime in cities – and the other is allow for an anonymous alter-ego, among a population of millions.

This paper will consider the artistic and narrative effects of removing the superhero from the comic book city. In the *City Strips* zine published by p—o—i.net, an architecture research collective, in which an anonymous author collects scene-setting panels from American superhero comics to create a travelogue of fictional cities devoid of their heroes in such titles as 'Amazing City' (Spider-Man's NYC) and 'Gotham'. These titles show a tour of a comic book city where the dramatic angles suggest a story happening just off panel and make the reader consider both the effect a superhero has on their city and the intriguing potential of their absence.

With reference to the *City Strips* zine and cinematic explorations of the empty city, such as *Los Angeles plays itself* (USA 2003, Dir: Thom Andersen), the paper considers whether these collage experiments tell us something unique about fictionalised cities or are just demonstrations of aesthetics collected purely for artistic effect.

**Bio:** Alex Fitch is the presenter of the UK's only monthly broadcast radio show about comics and sequential art - Panel Borders - on the Arts Council radio station, Resonance FM. He has been published on the subject of comics and film by University Press of Mississippi and University of Chicago Press, and has recently completed his MRes in Arts and Cultural Studies at the University of Brighton.

### **Simon Born: Legends of the Dark Knight: Batman as Transmedia Character**

Since his debut in Detective Comics # 27 (May 1939), Batman became one of the most popular and iconic comic book superheroes of all time, spawning a gigantic media franchise that includes major blockbuster films, several TV shows, video games, direct-to-video animations, comic books, novels and a massive range of licensed merchandise. This amount of simultaneously existing incarnations raises the question of who is the “real” Batman: The original comic book vigilante from the 40s, Adam West’s colourful Camped Crusader from the notorious 60’s TV Show, Christian Bale’s gritty Dark Knight or even Lego Batman?

The answer is of course “yes”, he’s all of them. Batman is the sum of all his alterations, a hypertext that connects conflicting identities, media texts and storyworlds in an interacting matrix. The submitted paper follows the approach of Roberta Pearson and William Uricchio in perceiving Batman as a floating signifier, not defined by any sort of author, medium, time period or primary text, but held together by a small amount of essential character traits (Pearson/Uricchio 1991: 186). Ultimately, the various Batmen are not connected by their stories, but by his reinterpretable iconography which can be reduced to the Bat-logo that functions as his unique brand both inside and outside the narrative (Brooker 2012: 79-83). Character vs. storyworld. Because of his multiplicity, Batman defies the concept of transmedia storytelling described by Henry Jenkins (2006): His texts don’t produce an additive comprehension that forms one coherent storyworld, but rather a myriad of conflicting continuities combined by the character himself. Batman’s fragmented textual existence self-consciously reflects his transfictional structure and calls for a new direction in the research of transmedia phenomena in which the character itself and not his storyworld(s) should take the central stage.

**Bio:** Simon Born studied Media Dramaturgy at the Johannes Gutenberg- University of Mainz in Germany and is working on his Ph.D. thesis about death motifs in contemporary television series at the University of Siegen.

## **3B REPRESENTING VIOLENCE**

### **Harriet Earle: Same Face/Same Story: Representing Sexual Harassment and Assault in Comics Memoir and Testimony**

The issue of sexual harassment and assault have become of increasing importance in the social conversation of the 21st century. The comics form has not remained untouched by this surge in interest and conversation of sexual aggression and violence. Comics as a form is uniquely positioned to represent violent, traumatic and sexually aggressive narratives in such a way as to maximise reader affect and create a narrative that is both educational and captivating, guiding and being guided by the reader.

This paper considers Rosalind Penfold’s 2005 memoir *Dragon Slippers: This Is What an Abusive Relationship Looks Like* and Maria Stoian’s 2016 collection of comics vignettes



Take It as a Compliment. Both Penfold and Stoian uses the comics form as a vehicle for telling 'real stories' that not only illustrate experiences of abuse and harassment but also offer several pages of resources on what we can do if we have been victims of sexual harassment and assault and also what can be done at the individual level to start working to support survivors and prevent future events.

The most compelling visual similarity between the two texts is the way in which the faces of victims and survivors are rendered; they are largely featureless, simply drawn and could represent any number of different people. Why do Penfold and Stoian choose this particular style of art? What does this suggest about the stories being told? And, widening the scope, how are comics contributing to the conversation on sexual aggression & domestic abuse and our continued education on this issue?

**Bio:** Dr Harriet Earle is a lecturer and researcher in American comics, literature, and popular culture. She completed her PhD in American Comics at Keele University in 2014 and her first monograph on the subject of conflict trauma and comics post-Vietnam will be published in 2017 by the University Press of Mississippi. She has published extensively across the field of comics and popular culture studies, with forthcoming publications in *The Journal of Popular Culture* and *Film International*. Dr Earle sits on the editorial board of *Comics Forum*.

### **Chantal Cointot: Panthers in the Hole: Depicting the Prison Experience in Comics**

In this paper, I argue that comics offer an important, under-examined medium for representing and reflecting on incarceration, by focussing on 2014 *Panthers in the Hole*, a biographical account by French comics artist David Cénou and writer Bruno Cénou of the Angola Three's incarceration – a text where the authors lent their voice and art to subjects deprived of their rights. *Panthers in the Hole* interweaves the life narratives of Robert King, Albert Woodfox and Herman Wallace – who were put in solitary confinement in Louisiana State Penitentiary, a.k.a. Angola Prison, after the 1972 killing of a prison guard – with wider considerations on racial segregations and detention conditions in the USA.

The title itself, *Panthers in the Hole*, refers to politicised subjects put in the "hole" – which is slang for solitary confinement – with the implicit assumption that they do not belong there. How does the comic through its use of form not only depict the inmates' everyday life but also replicate the carceral space? Through the study of panel layouts and other formal resources of the medium of comics, my analysis scrutinises the depiction of confinement, punishment and multiple forms of resistance, with a particular emphasis on the visual and textual representations of controls, regulations and how a sense of their arbitrariness is conveyed. I examine the ongoing process by which the inmates are objectified and branded "delinquent". How does *Panthers in the Hole* represent the political awareness and forms of resistance achieved by the inmates within the prison? In turning the account of the Angola Three into the comics form, *Panthers in the Hole* brings in the idea of self-writing and with it, the possibility for the subjects of regaining agency. But as the comics brings the subjects out of the "hole" and into the comics' panels, it not only exposes and points to the framing processes of the prison system but it also turns the reader into a "penal spectator", extending the spectacle and inviting another form of voyeurism. In doing so, the text risks reproducing the very forms of justification for incarceration it seeks to expose and

deconstruct. How do its tensions produce further possibilities for transformation in public consciousness of prison life?

**Bio:** Chantal Cointot is a PhD researcher at Nottingham-Trent University.

### **Kate Loyola: Panels Without Borders: Witnessing Trauma as Human Rights Issues in Graphic Novels on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

Trauma has typically been approached as an issue of psychology and memory. This perspective proves limited, however, in the face of the sweeping sociopolitical crises of recent years. This study investigates how selected graphic novels on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict use witnessing to frame instances of trauma as human rights issues that call for ethical engagement and sociopolitical response. It focuses on the sociopolitical dimensions of trauma, arguing that the use of witness-figures and the act of bearing witness to trauma engenders a human rights-centric consciousness that activates and sustains meaningful responses to traumatic incidents.

The corpus for this study comprises the following graphic novels: Guy Delisle's *Jerusalem: Chronicles from the Holy City*, Ari Folman's *Waltz with Bashir*, Sarah Glidden's *How to Understand Israel in 60 Days or Less*, and Joe Sacco's *Palestine* and *Footnotes in Gaza*. Through various visual and narrative strategies, these graphic novels carry out the four functions of bearing witness identified by Fuyuki Kurasawa: giving voice to rights violations; rendering these violations comprehensible to potential audiences; generating empathy for victims and witnesses of these violations; and memorializing these violations so as to prevent their recurrence. In doing so, these graphic novels do not only frame instances of trauma as human rights issues or cultivate audience engagement and response; they also construct ways of seeing and demonstrate modes of engagement that shape and galvanize potential responses to traumatic rights violations.

**Bio:** Mary Kathleen Loyola recently earned her bachelor's degree in Comparative Literature from the University of the Philippines. She intends to pursue research related to trauma, comics, and human rights in popular culture.

### **3C NATIONAL IDENTITIES**

#### **Craig Thomson: 'Homo Abominum Americana': The cultural tradition of the 'vampire' in Scott Snyder and Rafael Albuquerque's *American Vampire* (2010-)**

The graphic novel is fast becoming a notable arena for writers to re-evaluate popular cultural figures and traditions for contemporary audiences. Scott Snyder and Rafael Albuquerque's *American Vampire*, offers useful insight into the graphic novel's unique position within this field of cultural development. Using a cultural historical approach to theory, this paper will first consider the adaptable figure of the 'vampire', touching on how folklore and popular culture have helped shape contemporary cultural understandings, whilst examining how it has evolved according to the interests of producers and consumers. Such analysis will then be considered in relation to *American Vampire*, where it will be suggested that both Snyder and Albuquerque exhibit both a profound interest in previous 'vampire' canon, whilst also self-consciously subverting such conventions when required. One area of examination will be the series' distinctly American characteristics, with many of the story arcs being tied specifically to American history and culture. By evoking and/or rejecting previous traditions

of the 'vampire,' the series appears as a postmodern 'melting pot' of pop culture influences, while at the same time exploring anxieties related to the archetypal American 'national character'. The graphic novel's capacity as a visual medium will also be considered. Not only does the serialised nature of the form allow for quick changes in time and setting between each narrative arc, it also allows Snyder and Albuquerque to portray a sprawling 'vampire' mythology, based upon a taxonomy of visually different 'vampire' species, each with different powers and attributes that equally borrow and subvert characteristics from previous cultural incarnations. By using American Vampire, I will argue that the graphic novel is able to play its own unique role in contemporary constructions of popular culture, with the capability to both reflect and contribute to previous cultural traditions, whilst using the language and tools that are specific to the form.

**Bio:** Craig Thomson is a postgraduate student from Birkbeck, University of London, whose research interests include graphic novels, horror literature, monster theory and ecocriticism. He is a current member of the Folklore Society (UK) and is a frequent contributor to both the London Horror Society and Talkingcomicbooks.com, where he writes a monthly column on Batman: The Animated Series. Craig is currently writing a thesis on the iconic Japanese monster Godzilla, specifically focusing on the contrasting representations of monstrosity and ecocritical disaster within both the original 1954 film and its 2014 remake.

**Laura Nallely Hernández,: The Mexican of the post-revolutionary stage in the comic-book character *Don Jilemón Metralla y Bomba* (*Mr. Jilemon Shrapnel and Bomb*), by Gabriel Vargas**

This paper analyzes the transformation of Don Jilemón Metralla y Bomba, the main character of the comic book *Los Superlocos* by Gabriel Vargas, from post-revolutionary caudillo to nouveau riche participant of the American Way of Life in the period called Mexican Miracle in the 1940s. Between 1939 and 1949, *Los Superlocos* was a popular series published in *Pepín*, an important comic book. Initially, Jilemón is portrayed as a retired general who parodies the way in which caudillos made a fortune out of the abuses of the post-revolutionary period. This was reflected in the transformation of Jilemón, who began to be portrayed as a cosmopolitan inhabitant of "modern" Mexico City at the end of World War II. Thus, Vargas used this character to satirize both the new upper-class, who lived in California-style homes and visited luxurious cabarets, and the lower-class, who lived in poor neighborhoods, forgotten by the Revolution. In this analysis, the comic book emerges as a reflection of its time. Through Jilemón we can understand the transformation of the dreams, psychology and values of the Mexican people of the forties, and thus, the transformation of the social imaginary.

**Bio:** Laura Nallely Hernández is a Ph.D. student in Art History at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). Her main research interest is on comic studies, particularly the work of Gabriel Vargas. She participated in the III International Congress of Cartoon and Graphic Humor at the University of Buenos Aires (2014) in Argentina and the III Latin American and Caribbean Congress of Social Sciences at FLACSO Ecuador (2015) in Quito. Since 2011 she has been part of the research group "Mexico, Two Centuries of Images and Civic Imaginary" at the Institute of Aesthetic Research at UNAM (IIE UNAM).