

# Comics Forum 2023

## Abstracts and Presenter Bios

Organised alphabetically by surname of first listed speaker

Swetha Antony

**Thunderstruck or Tailormade: A Study of the Remediation of Minnal Murali from a Regional Superhero Film to a Slice of Life Comic**

*Minnal Murali* (2021) directed by Basil Joseph is one of its kind fantasy action/superhero film from the Malayalam film industry in South India. Set in the 1990s the plot surrounds Jaison, a tailor, who gains special powers after being struck by a lightning. Egged on by his nephew, who is well versed in the superhero genre prominent in US, Jaison slowly transforms into a local superhero “Minnal Murali.” This film stands out because of the metanarrative tendencies as well as its utilisation and revitalisation of comics properties in its cinematography and editing especially the way in which it mediates into the popularity of the superhero comic in the 1980s and 1990s. Incidentally in July 2023 it was announced at the San Diego Comic Con that *Minnal Murali* will be made into a comic through a collaboration with tinkle comics, a prominent Indian comic from the house of Amar Chitra Katha. By critically engaging with how the film utilises the flexibility, adaptability and intermediality of the medium of comics this paper analyses the remediations of *Minnal Murali* in the realm of visuality through its various avatars from film to fan art (which is curated on the Instagram handle @minnal muraliofficial) to a comic. This paper will investigate the significance of the Indian comic house Amar Chitra Katha and that of *Minnal Murali* as a film that initiated new technical interventions into Indian cinema and how these two prominent and popular visual cultures reboot and remediate.

**Swetha Antony is a generalist whose fingers are dipped in multiple fields of literature and humanities. She has a PhD in English Literature from The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India. Her doctoral research work on the poetry of Kamala Das is broadly oriented towards postcolonial theory and literatures, with special focus on the language question and the theories of Cosmopolitanism. The poetics of exile as articulated by writers in the spectrum of New Literatures in English continues to fascinate her. Her papers on Kamala Das and post colonial literatures have been published in various edited volumes and journals. She has forayed into the tantalizing area of food studies by co-editing with Elizabeth M. Schmidt the volume *Beyond the Superficial: Making Sense of Food in a Globalized World*, Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press (2016). She has delivered various talks focusing on the paradigms of critical food studies within English Studies in India. The notion of third culture/third space in contemporary literature and popular culture is also an overarching critical context of her work with respect to her engagement with Film Studies, Sports Studies, and Environmental Humanities. Her ongoing research is on the larger impact of Portuguese colonialism and the origin and evolution of the Latin Catholic community in Kerala, which has led to her engagement with the relationship between art, literature and environment. She is currently exploring the concept of *tiNai* to understand the presence of geographical spaces in the literary, cultural and performative traditions of the coastal belt of South India. Her most recent academic collaborations involve her engagement with Medical Humanities through the translation of Sheeba E K’s Malayalam short story “Surgeon” for the anthology *Medical Maladies: Stories of Disease and Cure from Indian Languages*, Niyogi Books (2022) edited and introduced by Haris Qadeer. She is also a research affiliate for the project on ADHD Graphic Medical Narratives with Indiana University, Southeast New Albany, USA. (8 November**

**2022 – 31 October 2023) She works as an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Delhi.**

**Hailey Austin**

**Zinecraft: (fan)zines in the games industry**

Statista projects that the worldwide games market revenue will reach \$396.2 Billion USD in 2023 (Statista 2023). Though seemingly separate mediums, (fan)zines and video games have historical and current links to one another. Zines have been integral in the creation of the culture surrounding the Swedish Creative Industries and can be used currently to learn how to make games, or even as games themselves. This presentation will use Austin's 2023 study (Sweden's Female-Forward Creative Industries) to demonstrate how zines have added to Sweden's creative culture and enabled the popularisation of video games in the country. Then, further connections between zines and games, such as zines for learning programming tools, zines made of games and games created as zines will be investigated. Finally, there will be an analysis of Anna Anthropy's notion that some games themselves should be considered zines (2012). This presentation will demonstrate how zines have historically helped create a creative culture in Sweden and how they continue to be adaptable to popular media forms like video and role-playing games.

**Works Cited**

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**Hailey Austin is a Lecturer in Visual Media and Culture at Abertay University in Dundee, Scotland. She teaches and researches global creative industries, specifically comics, zines, video games and board games in the UK, Sweden and China.**

**Sayra Begum**

**Pilgrimage Through a Diary Comic**

In mid-September, my residency at New Art Exchange (an award-winning and internationally recognised creative space) will come to an end. During this residency, I have been exploring gallery comics – comics designed specifically for the gallery space. In this paper, I would like to share my research from the residency where I have been using gallery comics to capture the many layers within the *Pilgrimage* project; I have been recreating my experiences of different pilgrimages belonging to various faiths or secular. In the gallery comic, as well as communicating what I encountered visually on the pilgrimage, I capture thoughts written in my journal at the time, I communicate ideas recorded from community sessions hosted at NAE and communicate theology from different faiths and philosophers; using the comics language to create a rich space for visitors to explore the big questions.

I will discuss how comic conventions (pacing, panels, gutter, words and images) are used within a three-dimensional space, and how our encounter with them differs compared to web and print. I will draw on examples from my predecessors in gallery comics: Lars Arrhenius, Dave Mckean and Etienne Lécroart. As well as discussing the next steps for my research, I

will discuss when a gallery comic could appear to hold a too tenuous of a link to be labelled as such and instead be better suited to a visual art label.

**Sayra Begum is a comics creator based in Nottingham and teaches at De Montfort and Falmouth University. She released her debut graphic novel, *Mongrel* in 2020 (supported by ACE, published by Knockabout). At the start of 2023, *Mongrel* was published in French under the title *Je suis Métisse* (Delcourt). Begum has contributed to the 10 Years to Save the World comic anthology, the Wild Escape campaign, and the Constrain project. She has also taken part in the Comics Cultural Exchange Residency in Prague and recently worked as an artist in residence at New Art Exchange, which launched her Pilgrimage project.**

**Linda Berube**

**“Alone in My Passivity?”: The Silent Majority of Webcomics Readers Reinventing the Comics Community**

I began my doctoral studies into UK digital comics' creation to consumption processes as an imposter: I was not a comics fan. Moreover, my initial interviews with creators and publishers, all uniformly it would appear comics fans, only re-enforced my imposter status. However, my view of those who read comics has transformed since interviewing and observing webcomics readers, “the silent majority” (Gabilliet, 2010) of comics consumers. Brown (2001) maintains that “seemingly uncommitted readers...often manifest a distinctly involved sense of self, via the comic narrative, that can rival even ...hard-core fans” (p.61) and therefore should be included in the community of fans. This “involved sense of self” very much reflects my discussions with webcomics readers, one of whom describes the search for “a grand narrative I can get lost in”. Therefore, from the perspective of webcomic and other digital comics readers, I suggest a ‘reboot’ of Brown’s statement: instead of a fan community, a comics reader community, inclusive of fans, casual, and regular comics readers, contributing to a richer understanding of who reads comics and how they are read and experienced.

In this paper, I will present findings from my empirical research that has been inspired by Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) methods, which build on the ethnographical research of such scholars as Barker (1989), Brown (2001, 2012), Cedeira Serantes (2015, 2019), and Berube et al. (2023). My own research participants have demonstrated that webcomics readers (myself among them) are neither alone in their silence, nor passive in their reading.

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**Linda Berube is an AHRC Collaborative Partnership doctoral researcher investigating UK digital comics creation, production, and consumption processes, supported by the British Library and the Human-Computer Interaction Department (HCID) at City, University of London. She has published on reader interaction with web and webcomics archives as well as other nonprint legal deposit collections of UK national libraries and is the author of Do You Web 2.0? Public Libraries and Social Networking (Elsevier, 2011).**

**Gareth Brookes**

**From Streaming to Stapling – Small Press Re-presentations of Cinema in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as Drawing Theory and as Fan Practice.**

Recent cinema feels dominated by big budget retellings of stories that originated in comics. This paper will approach the reverse phenomenon of the re-presentation of cinema in self-published alternative comics. I will argue that these comics represent an impulse to inscribe a subjective experience onto a shared cultural artifact and that the study of this can inform theorisations of drawing and fandom.

I argue that streaming services have facilitated a more personal, portable and adaptable relationship with the moving image. A film can now be used as a manipulable index of images which the drawing subject can sample and recompose.

I will introduce a variety of theorisations to frame this argument. Through a consideration of Walter Benjamin's work on the relationship between film and the aura (Benjamin, 1999), alongside Gardner's (Gardner, 2011) and Szép's (Szép, 2020) theorisations of the trace of the body in comic's mode of address, I will consider Ally Russell's shot for shot redrawing of *The Attack of the Killer Klowns from Outer Space* and Matt Simmons' *Left Handed Akira*.

I will discuss drawn film as intersubjective construct of a shared cultural artefact through Babak Ganjei's *Roadhouse*, and Douglas Noble's *Horrible Folk*. Through a consideration of redrawn cinematic content I will argue with reference to the work of Grennan (Grennan, 2017) and Crucifix (Crucifix, 2017) that practices of genre-splicing and 'swiping' particular to alternative comics represent established storytelling practices which facilitate these re-presentations.

References

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Szép, E. (2020) *Comics and the Body: Drawing, Reading, and Vulnerability*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press (Studies in comics and cartoons).

**Gareth Brookes is a AHRC Techne funded PhD candidate at UAL researching the relationship between materiality and embodied drawing and reading practices in comics. Brookes is also a practicing comics artist who has published three graphic novels, most recently *The Dancing Plague* (SelfMadeHero 2021).**

**Brian M Clarke**

**Changing Stories: Adapting Classic Novels to the Comic Book Format**

The challenge of producing meaningful adaptations of novels in comic strip format is a developing area of comics research. My research looks at the issues surrounding this new field of study with a particular focus on the 169 adaptations of classic novels and 76 retellings of fairy/folk tales by the Gilberton Company under the brands Classic Comics/Classics Illustrated and Classics Illustrated Junior.

My presentation will briefly consider the critical reaction to providing illustrations for classical works in Victorian and Edwardian illustrated editions which raised contemporary concerns over a perceived reduction of the intellectual effort required in reading such texts if the imagination is too-well guided by illustrations. This prejudiced viewpoint was continued by some when it came to comic book adaptations.

I will then consider how Gilberton's unique approach to distribution, marketing and brand purity meant that it continued to thrive in the 1950s at a time when other comic publishers faced rapid decline in public perception, readership, and profitability.

My discussion of adaptation theory will borrow from film studies when considering adaptation strategies for comic book texts. Adaptation theory highlights the limits imposed on transmedia adaptations through a consideration of the comic medium's commercial pressures, audience reach, distinct industrial demands, censorship taboos and aesthetic norms. This will lead into a short discussion on the idea of fidelity to the source text faced by all writers looking to adapt a period novel.

**Brian M Clarke is a doctoral candidate at the University of Salford researching comics adaptation in general with a particular emphasis on the products and commercial practices of the Gilberton Company (Classics Illustrated).**

**Brian was a professional editor, managing editor and publisher of comic books in the UK with London Edition Magazines and Fleetway Editions/Egmont. He was Joint-Managing Director of the comics packaging and publishing company, Newsstand Services, for ten years in the 1990s.**

**He co-produced his first fanzine in the early 1970s (*Morphious*) and in the 2000s launched and edited *Crikey! – The Magazine of British Comics*. He continues his interest in the small press with his own publications.**

**Geraint D'Arcy**

**"It's over. Chase ended." Adaptation Practices Towards a Comic Redemption of *Slipstream* (1989)**

This is an adaptation practice research exploration investigating the remediation of the film *Slipstream* (1989) into a comic.

The common adaptation pipeline of comic-to-film is clamorous, vast and endlessly problematic. Film-to-comic adaptations are scarce, and those that exist tend to be merely visual "novelisations" or transmedial extensions with depictions of real-world actors reprised

uncannily on paper. This same direction of adaptation, however, provides rich territory for close readings of mise en scène, staging and editing as adaptation processes for comics creation even if the source text is a “dud”.

The 1989 science fiction *Slipstream* was an international box office disaster and a critical flop available now only as a pan-scanned VHS transfer. Pulled in every direction by producer Gary Kurtz (*Star Wars*), writer Tony Kaden, and director Tony Lisberger (*Tron*), the premise is interesting, the cast is incredible, and yet it bankrupt its producers and failed so hard to be coherent that even the editor of *Alien* and *Blade Runner*, Terry Rawlings, couldn't save it.

This paper asks, can the production of a comic book “version” of *Slipstream* explain why the film malfunctioned? It explores the possibility of adding coherence and style to something that has neither to find out what can be learnt about comics, films and adaptation practices. It looks in detail at the challenges and opportunities created by comics adaptation as a set of processes which require deep analyses of source, output and process.

**Geraint D’Arcy is Head of Film, Television and Media and a Lecturer in Media Practice at The University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK. He is author of *Mise en Scène, Acting and Space in Comics* (Palgrave, 2020) and of *Critical Approaches to TV and Film Set Design* (Routledge, 2018). He has worked extensively through practice research creating adaptations of J.G. Ballard, Wassily Kandinsky and the films of Sam Raimi for the stage.**

**Sarah Jessica Darley**

**‘No longer a talisman. It’s a sign of rebellion!’: Resistances and Reinventions of Western Fairy Tales within Aya Shouoto’s *Kiss of the Rose Princess* (Bara Jō no Kisu, 2008-12)**

When read against western fairy tale conceptions, Japanese magical girls inherently subvert the archetypes and tales we place them in conversation with. The *mahō shōjo* (or magical girl) genre, often placed at the intersection of romance and fantasy, overtly engages with the western fairy tale intertextual web. The heroines are often lost princesses, heirs to magical thrones of power, capable of the quintessential magical transformation from ordinary schoolgirl to overpowered superheroine – a transformation reminiscent of *Cinderella*’s fabled ballgown and slippers. However, as fairy tale heroines and princesses are criticised for their archetypal passivity, magical girls are forced into necessary activity, frequently – though often to their dismay – tasked with saving the world from an apocalyptic fate.

The correlation of magical girls and fairy tale princesses is often woven into the fabric of their narratives, retelling and realigning western tales within the conventions of the *mahō shōjo* genre to compelling and subversive effects. Aya Shouoto’s *Kiss of The Rose Princess* (2008-12) is no exception. Primarily an adaptation of the *Sleeping Beauty* narrative – a fairy tale with no Japanese equivalent – *Rose Princess* positions the western fairy tale tradition as a direct pretext. Throughout, Anise (the titular ‘Rose Princess’ and essential *shōjo* protagonist) self-consciously engages, interacts with, and critiques the fairy tale plots and conventions that shape her life as a magical girl. She is simultaneously subject to predestined and well-worn motifs, and capable of recognising the similarities between her own experiences and the tales, equipping her with the knowledge necessary to subvert *Rose Princess*’ source texts and charter new fairy tale ground.

**Sarah Jessica Darley is a PhD candidate at the University of East Anglia, currently completing her thesis: ‘Like the Wild Beasts, She Lives Without a Future’: The Afterlives of Angela Carter in Contemporary Fairy Tale Literature. Her first publication - ‘The Magical Girl Mirror: Reflections and Transcultural Transformations of Euro-American Fairy Tales in the Mahō Shōjo Genre’ - can be found within *Cross-Cultural Influences Between Japanese and American Pop Cultures: POWERS OF POP* (Cambridge**

Scholars Publishing, 2023), surveying the complex cultural dialogue between Euro-American fairy tales and the mahō shōjo genre of Japanese media. Sarah's research focuses upon the fairy tale, children's literature, visual media, reception theory, and gender studies.

**Brian Fagence**

### **Adaptation, Comics and Comics Scriptwriting**

Adaptation suggests and as an approach to creative content development actively frames adjustment, addition, abstraction, modification, transposition and relocation (Hand 2010, Hutcheon, 2013, Minier 2014, Sanders 2016). For the creative content maker adaptation is considered as a process whereby source-text content is changed, modified or mutated through making the content suitable for a new context or environment (time, place, genre and or medium). Tyler Weaver states 'Adaptation is the act of translating a story from one medium to another. To do so, you must be cognizant of the needs and storytelling techniques of each medium.' (2013, p. 83).

As Weaver suggests, it is important to consider when translating creative content from one medium to another its distinct properties, having an understating of how and why these properties work and manifest in these ways. This media-to-media translation considers the end result of the process of adapting creative content looking at their similarities and difference and how best to utilise them.

This talk will explore the processes of comics adaptation, through the translation and transformation of creative content across media forms though will focus particularly on practices of adaptation during a comics' development. It will initially examine animation and comics in order to explore their similar and distinctive media properties. The talk will then engage with the pre-production stages of comics scriptwriting through an analysis of Adventure Time from comics script to page, as well as my own comics scriptwriting practice to explore through these creative processes what this may reveal of comics and adaptation.

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Weaver, T. (2013) *Comics for Film, Games, and Animation: Using Comics to Construct your Transmedia Storyworld*. Abingdon, Oxon: Focal Press.

**Dr Brian Fagence is a lecturer in Critical Studies and Scriptwriting at the University of South Wales. He has been lecturing since 1998 with a particular focus on animation, comics and computer games and has published articles in the Journal of Writing in Creative Practice, Studies in Comics and the International Journal of Creative Media Research.**

**His research interests include transmedia, storytelling, communication and multimodality.**

**Thomas Gebhart**

**From digital to print: community engagement and reading experience in *Planet Divoc-91* and its paratexts.**

What happens when a digital comic has a new context as a print comic? Using the digital comic *Planet Divoc-91* as a case study, this paper will examine the role that paratextual elements have in generating community engagement, whilst also contributing to reading experience. This paper will explore the implications of this for *Planet Divoc-91*, a digital comic produced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. *Planet DIVOC-91* looked to highlight issues related to the pandemic from the perspective of young adults by representing and giving them a voice through the comic and related paratextual elements. To achieve this, the digital version of the comic was interspersed with extra features, links to videos, music mixes and allowed reader-generated comments. The comic had an accompanying website that included interviews, articles and illustrations by a team of young adults from India, South Africa, and the UK. The comic had a very clear mission to represent, give voice and generate community to a group often ignored in discussions around healthcare and scientific communication.

As the print version of the comic cannot feature these paratextual and reader-generated elements, this paper will examine what changes or goes missing when a digital comic such as this has a new context as a print comic. By doing so, the paper will demonstrate the effect that paratextual elements can have on reading experience and community engagement in the context of digital comics.

**Thomas Gebhart is an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership PhD student based at the British Library and Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. His research examines the potential for digital comics to contribute to the aims and objectives of critical librarianship, by taking advantage of the digital environment to foreground marginal voices and create more inclusive and diverse archives and collections. In doing so, his research will address the opportunities and challenges these comics present for Non-Print Legal Deposit collection and preservation policy in the UK.**

**Daniel Merlin Goodbrey & David Tree**

**Three-Dimensional Panel Arrangements in Augmented, Virtual and Mixed Reality Comics**

Digital comics are commonly read on the screens of smartphones, tablets and personal computers. The popularity and widespread adoption of these devices has driven the development of apps, games and experiences utilising augmented (AR), virtual (VR) and mixed reality (MR) technology. Alongside this rise in popularity, the digital mediation and hybridisation of the form of comics has allowed for the creation of comic formats designed to be read and navigated in three dimensions via these technologies.

This paper provides a practice-lead examination of the use of three-dimensional panel arrangements within digitally mediated comics. Case studies are provided from a range of publicly released and prototype digital comics that make use of aspects of AR, VR and MR in their delivery. Analysis of these examples is based in part on theories and practices established around the creation of architecturally mediated comics. Alongside comics theory, the analysis also draws on the study of narrative space within videogames and new media.

The paper goes on to present some initial steps towards the creation of an artist-focused toolkit for the creation of three-dimensional VR and MR comics. It considers the use of tropes appropriated from digital media and explores the tension between fixed sequence and freeform progression inherent in explorations of three-dimensional space. Narrative effects



created by the relative position in three-dimensional space between reader and panel sequence are also examined. Finally, the paper considers how spatial depth impacts on the reader's experience of panel sequences and the layout and navigational challenges this raises.

**Daniel Merlin Goodbrey is a principal lecturer in Narrative & Interaction Design at The University of Hertfordshire. Goodbrey has gained international recognition as an innovative comic creator and a leading expert in the field of experimental digital comics. His hypercomic work received the International Clickburg Webcomic Award in 2006 while his work in print was awarded with the Isotope Award for Excellence in Comics in 2005. In 2017 he received a Professional Doctorate for his study of the impact of digital mediation and hybridisation on the form of comics. His work can be found at <http://e-merl.com/>**

**David Tree is a senior lecturer in Animation and Games Technology at the University of Hertfordshire. Tree utilizes scripting and technical expertise to push the boundaries of digital content creation. His research interests span VR content creation, human-computer interaction, 3D scanning and big data. As a PhD Candidate he is currently exploring the visualization of stories found in game books and open worlds, employing a genetically trained neural network (GAFFNet) to delve into the complexities of multi-cursal narratives.**

**Simon Grennan**

**Dicing *bande dessinée*: an idea of comics, systematic redaction and systematic production in Ilan Manouache's *Abrégé de bande dessinée franco-belge (Compendium of Franco-Belgian Comics, 2018)*.**

This paper will consider Manouach's own explanation of the genesis of *Abrégé de bande dessinée franco-belge* (2018) in theorisations of cross-media visual correspondence systems (Bogost 2012), utilising the concept of the ontograph, or "a graphical [...] representation that provides concise and detailed information about the units and the ways they relate with each other in a particular situation" (Manouach 2019: np). Instrumentalising this concept, as a method of production, *Abrégé* tests a general hypothesis derived from Jean-Christoph Menu's 2005 polemical analysis of mainstream commercial bande dessinée.

The paper will interrogate this idea – and Manouach's methods for producing the book – in terms of a range of related concepts: first, the use of social conventions as productive constraints, according to Jan Baetens' proposal that "the study of constrained writing should no longer be restricted to the study of internal constraints in high-cultural texts that are detached from their cultural and historical context" (2010:76). Second, what Crucifix calls "undrawing", or the disruption of "the relationship between drawing and storytelling to refocus attention on the social and political economy of the drawn image" (Crucifix 2019:7). Third, collage, as a method of interrogation or resistance (Brockelman 2011) and, finally, Wilde's theorisation of characters without storyworlds, or kyara (Wilde 2019).

The paper will conclude that *Abrégé de bande dessinée franco-belge* accumulates redacted and arranged fragments, of which readers have memories that appear stylistically and discursively similar. These memories establish an identity for Manouache's sources by identifying storyworlds, rather than stories. Then the storyworld not only includes the causes and consequences of the object of depiction, that is, its past and future, but also the pasts and futures of the ideas that the reader employs to make sense of the image.

**Dr Simon Grennan is an awarded scholar of visual narrative and graphic novelist. He is author of *Thinking Through Drawing* (Bloomsbury 2022), *A Theory of Narrative Drawing* (Palgrave 2017), *Drawing in Drag by Marie Duval* (Book Works 2018) and *Dispossession* (Cape, 2015, one of *The Guardian Books of the Year 2015*). He is co-author and editor of**

**Key Terms in Comics Studies** (Palgrave 2022) and co-author of *Marie Duval, Maverick Victorian cartoonist* (MUP 2020), *Marie Duval* (Myriad 2018) and *The Marie Duval Archive* ([www.marieduval.org](http://www.marieduval.org)). Since 1990, he has been half of international artists team Grennan & Sperandio, producer of over forty comics and books. Dr Grennan is Professor of Art and Design and Associate Dean for Research and Innovation at the University of Chester, UK He is Principal Investigator for the research project *Marie Duval presents Ally Sloper: the female cartoonist and popular theatre in London 1869-85* (2014–16) and Co-investigator of *Remediating Stevenson: Decolonising Robert Louis Stevenson's Pacific Fiction through Graphic Adaptation, Arts Education and Community Engagement* (2022–25), both funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council UK. [www.simongrennan.com](http://www.simongrennan.com)

**Cassia Hayward-Fitch**

**Stay 'Tooned: How the Shift From Comic Strip to Comic Book Affected the Reception of Alison Bechdel's *Dykes to Watch Out For***

It is well documented that Alison Bechdel's *Dykes to Watch Out For* (1983 – 2008) originated as a syndicated comic strip. Despite this, the majority of research on this work focuses only on its later publication as a collection of comic books and fails to consider either *Dykes'* reception by newspaper readers or how the format change affected how the strips were perceived. In this paper, I analyze how this shift from newspaper comic strips to comic books affected *Dykes'* reception.

I show how consuming the strips within the comic book, where readers could read multiple episodes concurrently, and where the strips were removed from their newspaper paratext, affected how the content was interpreted. I argue that reader interaction increased when they read the strip as comic books – a genre with a strong history of fan letter writing. I further show how the types of interaction changed depending on how readers consumed the material: when it was consumed in book form compared to reading a new installment every other week, reader responses changed from participatory storytelling (suggesting new story arcs, etc.) to offering only reactions to the published material. To analyze these trends, I rely on my archival research from the Alison Bechdel Archives in the Sophia Smith Collection held at Smith University, particularly the fan mail Bechdel received in response to her strip.

**Cassia Hayward-Fitch is a Ph.D. student in American Studies at the University of East Anglia. She is the 2023 recipient of the International Comic Arts Forum's Lent Scholarship in Comics Studies. Her thesis, "Drawn this Gay: Queer Community Activism in the Serial Comics of Alison Bechdel and Howard Cruse", uses archival material to show how Alison Bechdel's *Dykes to Watch Out For* and Howard Cruse's *Wendel* acted as communal spaces. This project is a continuation of her MA thesis, for which she was awarded the University College London John Hobbes Memorial Prize.**

**Mark Hibbett**

**Three Generations Of Dennis The Menace: how Gok Wan created a new storyworld superpower**

The UK comics character Dennis The Menace has appeared in *The Beano* every week since 1951. For most of this time he existed in an 'onerik climate' with little reference to previous events or to the passage of time, but this began to change in 2012 when Dennis's dad was given a modern 'makeover' by TV celebrity Gok Wan.

Three years later this change was used to 'retcon' the strip's continuity, with 'Dennis Senior' revealed to be the grown-up Dennis from the 1980s, with his own father a similarly grown-up version of the original character from the 1950s.

This paper will examine the implications of this 'retcon' through an empirical analysis of a selection of texts across the character's history. It will show that the three "different" versions of the character really are distinct from each other, even though this was never made explicit at the time. It will then use the personality traits displayed by each 'generation' of Dennis and the terms used to describe them by other characters to illustrate not only how the character developed, but also how societal attitudes in Britain towards children and childhood changed over time.

Finally it will argue that, although characters have always been able to interact with each other within 'Beantown', this development of an acknowledged continuity, turns it into a modern cohesive storyworld with a depth and history to rival that of Marvel and DC.

**Mark Hibbett is Research Data Manager at University of the Arts London and a member of the Comics Research Hub. His academic research focuses on transmedia character cohesion.**

Ian Horton

### **Shaken and Stirred: Iconography of the Newspaper Comic Strips Adaptation of the James Bond Novels**

In 1958 the *Daily Express* published the first newspaper comic strip adaptation of Ian Fleming's James Bond novel *Casino Royale*. This was scripted by Andrew Hearn, who had adapted two James Bond novels for serialisation in the newspaper and illustrated by John McLusky. At the conclusion of this first story Hearn was replaced by Henry Gammidge who then work with McLusky to adapt ten more of Fleming's Bond novels. In 1966 this team was replaced by the artist Yaroslav Horak and writer Jim Lawrence who adapted two of Fleming's Bond novels and three short stories before going on to create twenty new James Bond strips for the *Daily Express* before it was discontinued in the newspaper in 1977.

This paper focuses on the narrative structure of these comic strip adaptations by addressing the impact that daily serialisation and the two or three panel structure had on the iconography of the storytelling. Although these adaptations followed the publication order of the books, and generally stuck to the main plots faithfully, there were certain aspects of the original novels that were emphasised and others that were downplayed. The violence and sexism remained unedited but lengthy introductory expositions were significantly reduced, while flashback sequences were often repositioned and reframed as happening in the present rather than the past. The iconography of international travel and what would have been exotic locations, food and drink, though present in the novels, was even more notable when visualised in the strips. The visual imagery often closely followed the descriptions in the novels but as the series progressed a new distinct kind of iconography emerged.

**Ian Horton is Reader in Graphic Communication at University of the Arts London. His present research is focused in three related areas: comic books, graphic design and illustration and he has previously published work on: colonialist stereotypes in European and British comic books; the relationship between art history and comics studies; public relations and comic books. He is a founder member of the Comics Research Hub (CoRH!!) at the University of the Arts London, co-editor of *Contexts of Violence in Comics* (Routledge 2019) and *Representing Acts of Violence in Comics* (Routledge 2019) and is associate editor of the *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*. Most recently he has collaborated on *Seeing Comics through Art History: Alternative Approaches to the Form* (co-edited with Maggie Gray (Kingston University)) Palgrave March 2022 and *Comics Studies and Art History: Past, Present and Potential Futures* (co-authored with Maggie Gray (Kingston University) Palgrave August 2022.**

**Sara Kenney & Hannah Berry**

**The Comics Cultural Impact Collective**

Comics in France are celebrated as the '9th Art' and we all know about Japan's multi billion pound Manga industry. But what about in the UK? We know our artform has the capacity to reach mass and diverse audiences (47% of under 18s and 33% of over 18s). But our number crunching reveals significantly more cultural funding goes to orchestras, opera, ballet and poetry. We aim to change this imbalance. We are *The Comics Cultural Impact Collective* (CCIC) - an independent group of professionals within the British comics community who are raising awareness of the cultural value of comics in the UK. We hope to unite the comics community to improve infrastructure, funding and industry for all. Join Hannah Berry (tbc depending on funding to attend) & Sara Kenney to discuss our research & data analysis, share ideas and help us make a change!

[thecomicsculturalimpactcollective.org](http://thecomicsculturalimpactcollective.org)

**Hannah Berry is an occasionally award-winning graphic novelist, comics creator, scriptwriter and campaigner. She is a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and was UK Comics Laureate 2019-21. She has published three solo graphic novels - BRITTEN & BRÜLIGHLY (official selection, Festival International de la Bande Dessinée d'Angoulême), ADAMTINE, and LIVESTOCK (Best Writer Award winner, Best Graphic Novel nominee, Broken Frontier Awards) and has contributed comics to anthologies and publications from 2000AD to the New England Journal of Medicine. As Laureate she conducted the first national survey of UK comics creators, resulting in the founding of the Society of Authors' Comics Creators Network – of which she is on the steering committee – which aims to advocate for creators and offer professional support.**

[hannahberry.co.uk](http://hannahberry.co.uk)

[instagram.com/streakofpith/](https://www.instagram.com/streakofpith/)

**Sara Kenney has worked as a writer/producer/director for 25+ years in TV and science engagement and since 2015 in comics and games. In 2011 she set up Wowbagger Productions to explore how collective working, art and storytelling can improve science & health outcomes. Sara was awarded a 'Wellcome Trust Engagement Fellowship' to research comics and health (2017-19). Her comic projects include SURGEON X (writer, Image); PLANET DIVOC-91 (project lead, writer, Webtoons); THE AMYG DALA (writer, 24 PANELS anthology, Image). Sara is currently writing comic ACID BOX and writing/ producing, a digital game inspired by the comic SHE COULD FLY (Berger Books). Sara currently works at the Environment Agency as a 'Senior Engagement Advisor' exploring engagement with communities around Flood Risk (to subsidise working in comics)!**

[wowbaggerproductions.co.uk](http://wowbaggerproductions.co.uk)

[linkedin.com/in/sarakenney](https://www.linkedin.com/in/sarakenney)

**Guy Lawley**

**The (re)invention of comics in 1890s New York: transdiegesis, transnationality and a new terminology.**

David Carrier and Thierry Smolderen have noted the longevity and international reach of what Smolderen called 'the 20th century comic strip, a highly recognizable species of picture stories that crystallized around 1900 in the US'. This new form arrived in the Sunday *New York Journal* with the adoption of the word balloon — tentatively in *The Yellow Kid* (1896), definitively in *The Katzenjammer Kids* and *Happy Hooligan* (1899-1900), establishing a new paradigm. St Ogan's *Zig et Puce* (1925) took up the balloon in Europe, directly copying

French reprints of the American *Winnie Winkle*, and prompting its use in Hergé's more successful *Tintin*. Eike Exner's *Comics and the origins of Manga* (2022) established how much Japanese comics of the 1920s also owed to the US strip *Bringing up father* in particular.

The new Sunday comics were undoubtedly a product of the consumer culture of the USA (Gordon), 'born of the bitch goddess Commerce, there to help peddle newspapers' (Spiegelman). Perhaps this is why they have been overshadowed by the earlier achievement of Rodolphe Töpffer, widely acclaimed as the 'father' or 'originator of the modern comic strip' in the 1830s. In this paper I will attempt to historicize and contextualize these apparently competing claims, touching also on Wilhelm Busch and the *histoires sans paroles* of *le Chat Noir*, among others.

I will also consider the pertinent and somewhat neglected origins of the terms 'comics', 'comic strip' and 'bande dessinée'.

**Guy Lawley is pursuing a PhD on printing technology and the 19<sup>th</sup> century origins of comics at Central Saint Martins, with supervisors Roger Sabin and Ian Horton. Past conference papers include "Four Colours on Newsprint: The Printed Comic 1894–1986" and "Roy Lichtenstein vs. the Comic Book: Materiality, Process and Colour." His most recent publication can be found at [points ben day et sunday pages : de l'importance de l'impression de mauvaise qualité | Cité internationale de la bande dessinée et de l'image \(citebd.org\)](#) and originally had the snappier title: 'Ben Day dots and the Sunday comics: the importance of shoddy printing'.**

**Jonathan Macho**

**Explicit and Implicit Stylistic Remediation of Comics into Prose and Poetry – A Comparative Analysis**

Stylistic remediation is the use of one medium's formal characteristics within another (Morton, 2016). In the case of comics, this can mean the incorporation of panels, speech balloons and other characteristic stylistic features into non-comics texts, which in turn offers opportunities to draw upon the social history, genres and other associations of the medium. Successful examples of remediation are a compromise between the two mediums involved, in which stylistic borrowing goes beyond surface-level gimmickry and adds meanings to a text that could otherwise not be expressed as well (Hassler-Forrest, 2017; Summers, 2019). While this is often explicit and intentional, there are also examples of experimental texts with no explicit connection to comics that use some characteristic features of the medium.

This talk will compare examples of these two kinds of remediation: explicit stylistic remediations in the short story 'Klassic Komix #1' by Millhauser (1988) and the poems 'Superman Sounds Depressed' and 'Tom and Jerry visit England' by Shapcott (1992); and implicit remediations in Danielewski's novel *House of Leaves* (2000) and Gomringer's concrete poem 'Silencio' (1953). Millhauser tells his story through 'panels' of descriptive prose, and Shapcott's poems are narrated by comics characters who are aware of their relocation into poetry. Conversely, Danielewski's and Gomringer's texts use page layout, formatting, and multimodality to manipulate time, represent sound, and juxtapose the verbal and visual, behaving like comics in ways that Millhauser's and Shapcott's pieces do not. By comparing their work, their differing methods of successfully stylistically remediating comics can be identified.

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**Jonathan Macho is a third-year Creative Writing PhD student at Cardiff University, where he also completed an MA in the same subject in 2020. His thesis involves representing what he loves about the medium of comics within a prose novel, demonstrating the versatility and vitality of both mediums in the process. He drew on his research for a review of *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* (2023) for the academic blog *Fantasy/Animation*, and presented at this year's ENCAPSulate conference in Cardiff, where he also chaired a panel. He has a substantial number of creative publications to his name in various formats.**

**Dragoş Manea (University of Bucharest)**

**"I've No Desire": Repulsion and the Frame of the Monstrous in Santiago García and David Rubin's *Beowulf* (2017)**

Santiago García and David Rubin's *Beowulf* is a work devoted to violence and viscera, sinew and flesh. The graphic narrative—which by and large does not function as a revisionist adaptation of the Old English poem—offers readers the thrill of encountering the monstrous and ultimately overcoming it. Here the figure of the monster bears little of the tortured humanizing of Sturla Gunnarsson's *Beowulf & Grendel* (2005) or Robert Zemeckis's *Beowulf* (2007). Huge in size, scaly and sinewy, Grendel is a creature devoid of language or morals; he is not a victim turned perpetrator—as in other recent adaptations of the poem—but a monstrous killer. In fact, the most human action he performs in the graphic narrative is an act of sexual assault against a sleeping Beowulf.

As Kathleen Forni notes, this is a scene that is "unique to the popular Beowulf corpus" (2018, 113) and it has certainly animated critical discussion. In his review of the graphic narrative, Jake Murel poses 12 questions, including "[d]oes it function as a veiled critique of homosexuality?" and "[h]ave they added this jarring image of Grendel ejaculating onto Beowulf to arouse attention of my prudish sensibilities, to disrupt the American taboo on sexuality?" (2018). My paper responds to these questions but it also focuses on the blurring of lines between the human and the monstrous—which occurs later, for instance, in a panel depicting the insides of Beowulf's mouth, all exposed flesh and sinew—and considers whether the comic may reveal something more profound about the Norse understanding of the relationship between man and the supernatural (see Price 2019) that goes beyond a contemporary reading of the monstrous as largely "abject" (Sanchez 2020).

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**Dragoş Manea is a lecturer in the American Studies Program at the University of Bucharest, where he teaches courses in contemporary American literature, cultural memory studies, perpetrator studies, and media studies. His main research interests include the adaptation of history, cultural memory, and the relationship between ethics and fiction. Relevant publications include *Religious Narratives in Contemporary Culture: Between Cultural Memory and Transmediality* (edited with Maria Sabina Draga-Alexandru, Brill, 2021) and *Reframing the Perpetrator in Contemporary Comics: On the Importance of the Strange* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).**

**Mihaela Precup**

**Comedy, Conflict, and the Revision of History in Rutu Modan's *Tunnels* (2021)**

In Israeli cartoonist Rutu Modan's *Tunnels* (2021), the fictional plot of an archeological search for the elusive Ark of the Covenant proves to be a useful metaphor of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and their shared history, of which each side has constructed their own version. *Tunnels* uses a fictional frame to reference both well-researched historical events and artifacts, as well as local legends and myths in a layered narrative that unveils the complexities of documenting facts and narrating national and personal stories. By zeroing in on archeology as a practice through which identity and land ownership are legitimized, the largely optimistic plot of *Tunnels* contains possible solutions for a productive amalgamation of conflicting versions of history. Ideally, as Modan herself notes in the "Afterword," this kind of approach would encourage the creation of one "terrible and wonderful and turbulent story full of holes and contradictions." This would not relativize truth-telling or well-documented historical events; instead, Modan finds potential in the loosening of one national or ethnic group's attachment to their own fixed version of history, particularly when that attachment leads to violence.

In this paper, I explore the manner in which Modan's graphic style (which, for this book, has taken an even more pointedly Hergé-esque turn) helps emphasize the comedic and satirical angle of the characters' grandiose (and life-threatening) undertakings. She does this by showing the vacuity of the characters' pride in the nobility of their purpose, particularly through caricature, slapstick scenes, disjointed postures, and background details that undermine the action from the foreground. Such techniques create the premise for a wider reading of the participants in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as ultimately motivated by preposterous and self-serving goals, which they attempt to ennoble by repeating grand narratives legitimized by various forms of documentation of the past.

**Mihaela Precup is Associate Professor in the American Studies Program at the University of Bucharest, where she teaches American visual and popular culture, contemporary American literature, and comics studies. Her work explores the graphic representation of violence, post-traumatic memory, autobiography, and subversive femininity. She has co-edited three special issues of the *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* (on War and Conflict and Sexual Violence; with Rebecca Scherr). She is the author of *The Graphic Lives of Fathers: Memory, Representation, and Fatherhood in Autobiographical Comics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).**

**Darryll Robson**

**The Constantly Evolving Frankenstein: Changing visual representation through multiple comic book adaptations**

The rather complex issue of fidelity within adaptation is often reduced to an uninspired like for like comparison which often finds the adaptation wanting. However, different mediums have different goals and ways of achieving those goals. This can, and does, lead to changes in the narrative from one medium to the next, and alterations to characters, story-lines, settings and every other possible aspect of the text. These changes are often carried over into later adaptations and, complicated further by multiple media versions, create a new visual that is subsequently expected by future audiences.

In order to fully explore how constant adaptations can alter expectations, it is essential to examine a truly trans-media text: one that has been adapted and recycled numerous times across a variety of media. Frankenstein by Mary Shelley offers such an opportunity as it has been used as source material for hundreds of adaptations across all media.

By examining the comic adaptations over time it is possible to see the evolution of the visual narrative, and how the comics have been shaped and help to shape the evolving narrative and audience expectations. A comparing early adaptations of the text, such as Classic Comics #26 and Dick Briefer, 'Frankenstein', a more mainstream version with Marvel's The Monster of Frankenstein, and more recent interpretations, such as Gris Grimly's Frankenstein, it is possible to illustrate the influences from one adaptation to the next and demonstrate how comics are influenced, and influence, other mediums.

**After leaving school, I studied Visual Art at university with a special interest in Art and Cultural History. Since April 2014 I have written about and reviewed comics for a number of websites. Presently, I write for Monkeysfightingrobots.com where I have a semi-regular column looking at aspects of Comics Studies and I am currently writing a weekly column based on a comic reading challenge (one comic every day of the year). In 2016 and 2017 I ran a Creative Arts and Comic Convention in my hometown of Sheffield. I earned an MA in Comics Studies at the University of East Anglia. During the course I researched a number of topics for essays, including the 'Representation of War in Post 1945 American comics', the use of Dracula in 20th century comics, and the effects of colour in the re-issued *From Hell* comic. My dissertation was entitled *Scenes of Significance: An examination of mise-en-scene and the cultural value of comics*. It included a close study of the adaptations of Frankenstein. I am in the process of uploading previous work to an online portfolio: <https://the-comic-panel.wixsite.com/panelbypanel?fbclid=IwAR2xsKikrnKyFWLAs5a9mQcaif53YYb2BmN8VDNkhAsxEqk11YE-ciKPkA>**

**Rebecca Scherr, University of Oslo**

**Octavia Butler, time and ethics**

Works: *Kindred* (Octavia Butler, Damien Duffy and John Jennings, 2017) and *Parable of the Sower* (Butler, Duffy and Jennings, 2020.)

The novels of science fiction writer Octavia Butler (1947 - 2006) have reemerged in the last few years as major cultural reference points. Butler has been hailed as a "prophet" of our times, and the future-dystopic novel *Parable of the Sower* (1993) reached *The New York Times* bestseller list 27 years after its debut, in 2020, as the novel speaks to the intertwining crises that afflict our world: pandemic, environmental crisis, racial and colonial reckoning, extreme (and racialized) social inequalities. The *Parable* series is not merely a vision of possible dystopian breakdown resulting from these crises, but also as "a blueprint for adjusting to uncertainty." (Slate) As such, Butler's speculative fiction intervenes in times of



crisis, her works suggesting ways of thinking and knowing that can remap how humans engage with the past and the future, with historical trauma and monumental change.

Adaptations of Butler's work now abound: a television mini-series (and more adaptations are in production), an opera, two graphic novels, among other works. This paper looks at the two graphic novel adaptations by Damian Duffy and John Jennings, *Kindred* (2017) and *Parable of the Sower* (2019.) *Kindred* is about time travel backwards, to the days of U.S. slavery; *Parable* is a vision of survival in a dystopian future. I discuss how these graphic adaptations engage with Butler's focus on time and ethics, with a focus on how comics techniques can represent these complex structures of our world.

**Rebecca Scherr is Professor of American literature in the English department at the University of Oslo. She has published a number of scholarly works on the comics of Joe Sacco, Alison Bechdel, Marjane Satrapi, Leela Corman, and Phoebe Gloeckner. Her current research is centered on speculative fictions, world building, and the production of knowledge. She has a new essay (open access) on Duffy and Jennings's graphic novel *Parable of the Sower* and Okorafor's *Shuri* comics:**

**<https://maifeminism.com/comics-feminism-and-the-future-parable-of-the-sower-shuri/>**

### **River Seager**

**Gender Trouble but Make It Moe: Emerging online discourses around transgender and "otokonoko" anime and manga characters.**

Last year, *Seven Seas Entertainment*, an English-language manga publisher, released their translation of Azusa Banjo's series, *I Think I Turned My Childhood Friend into a Girl*. Banjo's manga belongs to a lineage of Japanese media focused on "otokonoko" characters. Traditionally, otokonoko characters have been defined as men who adopt a feminine appearance and attire. However, the distinction between otokonoko and trans-femininity is often ambiguous. This ambiguity is heightened as characters in these works rarely explicitly express their identity, and transness itself is described in Japan with a multitude of terms (for instance: seidōitsusei shōgai, nyu-hahu, and more recently, toransujendā). This presents challenges in translation. *Seven Seas Entertainment* initially used she/her pronouns for Banjo's central otokonoko character, which sparked outcry among fans who argued that the central character wasn't intended to be portrayed as trans. *Seven Seas Entertainment* relented to this backlash, and in subsequent editions, he/him pronouns were adopted. This paper examines this decision-making process, as well the nature of the fan response and its political underpinnings. It also contrasts this event with recent instances where otokonoko characters in Japanese media franchises have "come out" as transgender, such as Bridget from the fighting game series *Guilty Gear*. Through this exploration, a genealogy of otokonoko and trans manga characters will be presented.

Dr River Seager is a film scholar whose PhD focused on the depiction of masculine archetypes in the work of screenwriter Alan Sharp and has published on this topic in books from Palgrave and Bloomsbury respectively. Recently, they have been working on a series of documentaries composed of interviews with trans individuals discussing anime fandom. The first of these documentaries was shown at the Glasgow art exhibition "Phreaking Gender." Their research interests include genre cinema, anime studies, and fandom studies.

### **Frederik Strömberg**

**The Visual Genealogies of Adamson/Silent Sam**

The silent Swedish comic strip *Adamson*, also known as *Silent Sam* in the US, was immensely popular all over the world in the, for the evolving international and national comics cultures, important interwar years and continued to be so long after the death of the

original artist, Oscar Jacobsson in 1945. Started in 1920, the strip became a universal hit in Europe, the Americas and Asia, with the artist being invited to the US in the early 1920s to produce the strip for a national syndicate. This deal fell through, but the syndicate kept up a separate production for the American market until 1954, employing at least three different American comics artists, parallel with Jacobsson syndicating his version in the rest of the world. When Jacobsson passed away, a Danish syndicate took over the rights and hired a Danish artist to continue the strip until 1964, at the same time as numerous illegal versions appeared in newspapers behind the Iron Curtain, where western syndicates could not distribute. I intend to analyze how the strip *Adamson/Silent Sam* was changed visually and narratively all through this, using schema theory from cognitive science and art history to compare how new artists and/or new cultural settings influenced the way the strip works. Especially, I will analyze what this says about the tradition within commercial comics of new artists producing versions of existing comics, assimilating and accommodating visual and narrative traits of earlier artists, and how much of the new artists own styles “shines through”.

**Fredrik Strömberg is a journalist, author, and researcher. He is chief editor of *Bild & Bubbla*, the world's second oldest magazine about comics, heads the Comic Art School of Malmö, and has founded both *Scandinavian Journal for Comic Art (SJoCA)* and the Nordic Network for Comics Research (NNCORE). Among the books he has written are *Swedish Comics History*, *Black Images in the Comics*, *The Comics Go to Hell* and *Comic Art Propaganda*. Strömberg lives in Sweden and recently finished his thesis, *Comics and the Middle East*, at the Media and Communications department at Malmö University.**

**Josh Sykes**

### **Adapting the antiheroine from page to screen**

The popularity of the comic powerhouses of Marvel and DC has led to a wide range of characters transcending from the comics to the screen. One group of characters receiving plaudits from viewers is the antiheroine. From my own research I have determined that the antiheroine within American comics encapsulates seven categories: Trauma Victim, Carnavalesque Trickster, Vigilante, Anarchist, Transgressor, Psychopath and Outcast. These categories, it should be said, are not shared in equal measure. Antiheroines are fluid characters that can lean into one or more of these categories at various stages throughout a narrative. But are these categories translated to the same antiheroine portrayed in other media? Or are the categories shifted? - where once the antiheroine leaned towards psychopath and anarchist, do they now play the outcast and the vigilante? Equally have they broken convention completely and become something new for the character? These are the questions I seek to answer during my proposed presentation. To do this I will focus on two case studies - Marvel's Black Widow and DC's Harley Quinn. Both characters have been portrayed across multiple mediums including film, television and animation and thus, offer a good opportunity to observe how they are adapted across these mediums and they compare to their comic counterparts.

**My name is Josh Sykes and I'm from Chelmsford, Essex. From 2018-2021 I completed my BA (Hons) English Literature degree at Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln. I then returned to Bishop Grosseteste University from 2021-2022 to complete my MA English Literature degree. After a small hiatus I returned to study in February 2023 where I began my PhD at Sheffield Hallam University. I am researching antiheroines in American comics and exploring what identifies an antiheroine.**

**Barbara Uhlig**

**Reviving the past – Fantagraphics' *The Complete Crepax* project as definitive annotated edition of Guido Crepax's oeuvre**

In 2016, Fantagraphics published the first volume of a highly anticipated project: Crepax's entire oeuvre newly translated into English and published in a lavish coffee table format. The ambitious edition, planned to encompass twelve volumes, not only preserves the essence of Crepax's original work but also breathes new life into his art by offering in-depth analysis and annotations for each published story. It delves into the complex task of adapting and contextualizing the Italian master's comics for contemporary readers. This comprehensive approach proves vital as Crepax's stories often drew from the social and political fabric of his time. However, these subtle references to the historical context have become increasingly obscure over the decades. To bridge the gap between past and present, Fantagraphics' Guido Crepax edition emerges as a monumental effort in preserving, understanding, and celebrating the artist's visionary contributions.

Being involved in this monumental project since 2018, I'll shed light on how this project was conceived, what obstacles publication faced and why exactly it is important to have in-depth analysis for these stories.

**Barbara Uhlig is an art historian who specializes in European comics, with a particular focus on Italian comics' development since the 1960s. Her research interests revolve around the relationship between text and image in comics and the application of color theory in this medium, especially in the works of acclaimed artist Lorenzo Mattotti. Since 2018, she has actively contributed to Fantagraphics' project, *The Complete Crepax*, that is dedicated to preserving and analyzing the work of Guido Crepax.**

**Elizabeth Allyn Woock**

**The Bikini that Wouldn't Die**

A ubiquitous piece of kit, Red Sonja herself could not seem to part with her old chainmail bikini, saying "it's not too practical and it chafes, you'll see, but I couldn't bear to throw it out." (Red Sonja no. 8, 1985: 15). Also quoted in Bishop, *Medievalist Comics and the American Century*.]As the Red Sonja series reboots under Gail Simone's direction, the chainmail bikini returned on the cover and also in cosplay photos. No longer a failure of second wave feminism, the bikini has been resurrected as fanservice not for the male gamer, but for the female fan. While comics studies often considers literary tropes, as in Chris Bishop's analysis of Red Sonja's character in *Medievalist Comics and the American Century* (2016), he notes the codification of her costume in the art of John Buscema (*Conan the Barbarian* series of the 1970s), but he does not follow the transmission of the bikini through its sustained popularity.

To follow the transmission of the undefeatable chainmail bikini, I make use of fan studies to look at the role of cosplayers and the interaction between audience and comics producers to explain how the bikini keeps coming back, despite Bishop's foregone conclusion that the era is past. Considering both the original Sonja and the reboot, this study also examines meta-comics which comment on the chainmail bikini, and other appearances of this female armor in games and comics. These are contextualized within fan created content which interacts with these media, through the form of cosplay and commentary. Specifically, the bikini and its proponents are positioned within the contemporary discussion about third wave and 'post-' feminism to show the tension between this trope pendulating from a feminist or patriarchal icon over time.

**Blending two fields—Medieval Studies and American Literature—Elizabeth Allyn Woock is an assistant professor at Palacký University, in Olomouc, Czech Republic.**

**Her research is primarily concerned with medievalisms in modern day comic books and other popular media.**

**Yiqi Zhang**

**From Disney Comics to Shōjo Manga: Interrogating the Processes of 'Westernisation' and 'Managisation' in 'Euromanga' *W.I.T.C.H.***

This proposed presentation investigates the style of shōjo manga, Japanese comics for adolescent girls, in cross-cultural contexts. It is a formal conceptualisation of *W.I.T.C.H.* (2001-2012), an Italian Disney comics series known for being a 'Euromanga' and using a hybrid style of shōjo manga and Western-style comics. It compares *W.I.T.C.H.* with two other comics series at pictorial, textual, and narratological levels: *Sailor Moon* (1991-1997), a typical shōjo manga highly influential in the West, and an adapted version of version of *W.I.T.C.H.* (2003-2004), translated by Japanese comic artist Lida Haruko into an 'authentic' manga style to adapt to the tastes of a Japanese audience. This presentation draws on Ian Horton and Maggie Gray's model, which applies Heinrich Wölfflin's art-historical methodology to formal analysis of comics, and additionally incorporates theories on the medium specificity of comics from Thierry Groensteen, Phillippe Marion, and Mieke Bal. It argues that although shōjo manga is frequently used as an example of a genre whose style is fundamentally distinct from Western-style comics, this claim can be complicated by cross-cultural remediations. While *W.I.T.C.H.* shares the characteristics of shōjo manga style with *Sailor Moon* in page layout, it enhances this style through its use of narratological features pertaining to Western-style comic traditions. The original and adapted versions of *W.I.T.C.H.* therefore enable a nuanced understanding of the rhetoric of the genre of shōjo manga. They point to the flexibility and inclusivity of shōjo manga style, which is constantly developing through cross-cultural exchanges.

**Yiqi Zhang is a PhD research student at London College of Communication, University of the Arts London. Her research focuses on the creative potential of comics artists from transnational perspectives and examines the contrast, translation, and hybridity of multiple graphic narrative traditions across the globe. She is also a practicing comics artist, exploring the interplay between theory and practice within the practice-led research paradigm through the medium of comics. For more information, please see <https://www.yiqi-zhang.com>.**