

Contents

<u>Programme</u>	2
<u>Abstracts</u>	4
<u>Profiles</u>	11
<u>Contributor Comics</u>	14
<u>Supporting Organisations</u>	17

Message from the Chair of 'Theory and Practice: A Conference on Comics'

In 2009, I sent an email to the comix-scholars mailing list asking whether any of the list members would be interested in approaching the organisers of the Thought Bubble sequential art festival, in my hometown of Leeds, to suggest putting on a one-hour panel at the festival's convention. The intention was to expose Thought Bubble attendees to the academic study of comics and suggest some perspectives from which the medium might be considered. The response to that email was fantastic, and it became clear that there was both the opportunity and enthusiasm to expand on the original idea. Working in concert with Thought Bubble, we slightly modified the one-hour panel 'Seriously Into Comics' to act as a taster session for a one-day conference to take place in parallel with the Thought Bubble convention. That conference was entitled 'Possibilities and Perspectives: A Conference on Comics', and it took place at the Alea Casino on the 21st of November 2009.

Now, a little under a year later, we're back in Leeds again with the second 'Conference on Comics', which is intended to develop and expand the themes that came to the fore last year, through a particular focus upon the intersections between theory and practice. As was the case last year, the organisation of the event has very much been a team effort, and there are many people to thank for their kind words of encouragement, their ideas and their assistance. The lynchpin of the whole endeavour is Lisa Wood of Thought Bubble, who in association with Clark Burscough has provided me with constant support and assistance throughout the planning stages of the conference. It is not an understatement to say that without Lisa this event wouldn't have happened. Thanks also go to Mel Gibson and Roger Sabin for their assistance in developing ideas to direct the conference's thematic cores. Ben Gaskell of Molakoe design has been an essential member of the team since 2009, and his striking design work for both conferences has proven invaluable in establishing the identity of the events. Thanks of course to the wonderful organisational team of 'Women in Comics II': Sarah Lightman, Catriona MacLeod, Rikke Platz Cortsen and Nicola Streeten, who have been endlessly patient with my constant requests for documents and details, and who kindly took responsibility for organising the catering for the whole event. I am also grateful to Jenny Batstone of the University of Chichester's Reprographics service for her generosity and patience in trying to pull this slightly complicated programme booklet together, and to Hugo Frey for his unwavering support for the 'Conference on Comics' events since the idea first came into being.

Finally, a vote of thanks to this year's sponsors. Their generous donations have allowed us to keep ticket prices reasonably low, a key concern for both Sarah and myself as we are both keen to ensure that Comics Forum is accessible for all. The sponsors are: Alexander Street Press, Dr. Mel Gibson, Intellect, Liverpool University Press, Routledge, the University of Chichester and the University of Glasgow.

Best wishes to all!

Ian Hague

Programme

1000-1020: Registration

1020-1030: Opening Remarks

[Ian Hague](#)

1030-1145: Panel 1

Panel 1A: Realities of Comics Storytelling	Panel 1B: Authors and Authorship
Chair: <u>Dan Berry</u>	Chair: <u>Mel Gibson</u>
<u>Howard Hardiman</u> <u>Why Make Comics When Comics Don't Make Money?</u>	<u>Chris Murray</u> <u>Multiversal Memetic Metafiction - Grant Morrison and Theory</u>
<u>Greice Schneider</u> <u>The joy and the burden of the comics artist: the dynamics of boredom and interest in the creative process of graphic narratives</u>	<u>Tony Venezia</u> <u>"So much essential history" – Jonathan Lethem and other Comic Book Guys</u>
<u>Anthony Smith</u> <u>'Decompressed Storytelling' and Institutional Configuration the Contemporary US Mainstream Comic Book Industry</u>	<u>Matt Green</u> <u>Bricolage and Adaptation in Moore and O'Neill's <i>The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen</i></u>

1145-1200: Break

1200-1315: Panel 2

Panel 2A: Subjectivity and Expression	Panel 2B: Messages and Meanings
Chair: <u>Ian Hague</u>	Chair: <u>Roger Sabin</u>
<u>Simon Grennan</u> <u>The Story of the Story: alterity, intentionality and the divided subject in comics theory and practice.</u>	<u>Ralf Kauranen</u> <u>Activist comics – strong practice, weak theory?</u>
<u>Columba Quigley</u> <u>Illness and The Embodied Teller: Comic Books and Visual Portrayal of The Body Suffering</u>	<u>Mel Gibson</u> <u>Public libraries and comics in the UK: sharing texts and worlds</u>
<u>Sally Jane Thompson</u> <u>Locating Theory in the Creative Process</u>	<u>Evan Brown</u> <u>Superheroes and Propaganda During the Second World War</u>

1315-1415: Lunch

1415-1515: Panel 3

Panel 3A: Representation	Panel 3B: Histories and Modalities
Chair: David Huxley	Chair: Julia Round
Joan Ormrod Body Issues in <i>Wonder Woman</i> 90-100 (1994-6): Good Girls, Bad Girls, Macho Men	Roberto Bartual The origins of comics and sequential representation of movement: Töpffer, Reinicke and McCay.
Ian Williams 'Super-crips' and Comic Cuts: a Graphic History of Amputation	Zara Dinnen You can't make origami with a laptop: Print and digital materialities in the world of <i>McSweeney's</i>.

1515-1530: Break

1530-1630: Plenary Session

Chair: [Mel Gibson](#)

Panellists: [Dan Berry](#), [Simon Grennan](#), [Sarah Lightman](#), [Richard Starkings](#), [Nicola Streeten](#)

1630-1645: Closing Remarks

[Ian Hague](#) & [Sarah Lightman](#)

Abstracts

Why Make Comics When Comics Don't Make Money?

Howard Hardiman

As a part of the MA Visual Art (Illustration) that I'm undertaking at Camberwell at the moment, I am looking to understand what motivates artists who work in the small press comics scene, when the majority of us do not make a living out of doing so and know that the chances of doing so are slim. In order to do this, I am undertaking two in depth interviews about motivation, methodology and practice with two well-established small-press comics artists - Tom Humberstone and Lizz Lunney and canvassing the wider community of small press comics artists to answer a simple questionnaire which asks them what positive things they feel they gain from making small press comics.

The results will therefore be qualitative rather than statistical and the intention is to identify any commonalities and themes emerging within the narratives that are presented in the questionnaires. My intention is to continue this research beyond the scope of this paper into a longer piece of research exploring the motivations and ideologies underpinning the UK small press comics scene to explore whether or not commonly-held ideas of these creators as outsider artists or as aspiring to be operating in another form hold true.

The joy and the burden of the comics artist: the dynamics of boredom and interest in the creative process of graphic narratives

Greice Schneider

This essay aims to cast light on the ambiguous balance between boredom and interest specific to the process of producing comics. On one hand, there seems to be a consensus that a certain amount of boredom is necessary to detonate, as resistance, any creative process. Many comic artists, when asked during interviews about their motivations to start making comics, indicate some kind of social detachment during childhood and consequently, the need to kill time. On the other hand, the same activity used to escape from boredom can also transform into its source, causing exhaustion, or even depression. This phenomenon seems to be even more accentuated in the comics medium, as an artisanal art based in manual labor and constant repetition. This paper investigates how the specificity of comics plays a role in the dynamics of interest/boredom involved in the creative process of a comics artist. Such approach will be illustrated by the work of a number of artists who used the comics form in order to address this very question, such as Lewis Trondheim (*Desoeuvré*) – who investigates why many comic artists, according to him, age badly, Chris Ware – who constantly mentions and discusses the struggle and minutiae involved in the comics craftsmanship (especially in the two volumes of his sketchbooks) or Daniel Clowes (*Pussey*), who devoted a number of stories to the world of the “comic book professional”.

'Decompressed Storytelling' and Institutional Configuration the Contemporary US Mainstream Comic Book Industry

Anthony Smith

Comics theorists such as Groensteen (07) and theorist-practitioners such as McCloud (93) have largely been concerned with defining how storytelling practice is shaped by the particular semiotic and technological capacities that characterise the comics medium. But this paper suggests that, in addition to issues of medium specificity, comics studies should also consider how narrative design in comics is influenced by cultural factors, specifically the organisation of industries and the economic rationale of publishers. This paper addresses how institutional constraints shape storytelling practice by demonstrating how the niche-targeting strategies of publishers have determined narrative design in the US comic-book

industry. It shows how the publisher Marvel's simultaneous targeting of narratives towards two distinct demographic groups, that is, comic-book store loyalists (who predominantly purchase monthly instalments of a given serial narrative) and mainstream book-store customers (who purchase the graphic novels comprised of such monthly instalments) has led to the prevailing use of a style that has come to be known by fans and practitioners as 'decompressed storytelling.' This style permits writers to spread storylines (that in previous eras of Marvel production would likely to have each been condensed into individual comic books) over multiple issues, thus satisfying an institutional requirement for coherent narratives with page-lengths well suited to the graphic novel format. The decompression style relies upon multiple wide panels (sometimes *sans* text) and splash pages to present story information that previously would have been conveyed economically via captions and internal monologue within a single panel.

Multiversal Memetic Metafiction - Grant Morrison and Theory

Chris Murray

Grant Morrison's comics, such as *Animal Man*, *Flex Mentallo* and *The Invisibles* are very responsive to critical and cultural theory, partly because they are written with an awareness of the ideas proposed by figures such as Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida, and the way in which they "perform" these theories. Morrison's use of theory on one hand explores how "post-modern" ideas are exemplified by the playfulness of the comics medium, but at the same time his use of theory is also ironic and subversive, with intertextuality that borders on plagiarism, and parody being used as a basis for outlining some very serious ideas, many of which are filtered through meme theory, semiotics and metafiction. This talk will consider Morrison's use of theory, and how it is encoded into his comics.

"So much essential history" – Jonathan Lethem and other Comic Book Guys

Tony Venezia

In Jonathan Lethem's *The Fortress of Solitude* Brooklyn boys Dylan Ebdus and Mingus Rude affirm a shared fascination with Silver Age Marvel comics, a moment of fanboy bonding in a novel saturated with comics culture. Comics as material objects and narrative devices offer a momentary point of contact for Dylan and Mingus; picked up, pored over, and swapped around with reverential attention, the over-extended continuities of serialised superhero sagas requiring detailed insider knowledge. Lethem is part of a generation of writers across media that Roz Kaveney refers to as 'fanboy creators,' a mainly male group with a tendency to enter into intertextual dialogue with the tropes of popular culture, especially comics. Famously, Lethem himself collaborated on a revival of the obscure surreal Marvel comic *Omega the Unknown*. Using Lethem's novel and his non-fiction writing as a starting point I want to track these material and textual networks of influence, following these fanboy threads into contemporary comics themselves before returning to Lethem in my conclusion. The comics of Daniel Clowes, Chris Ware, and Seth offer multiple instances of collecting in their narratives, allegorised at the levels of content and form. I want to suggest that, taking the approach Franco Moretti called 'distant reading' and drawing on the work of arch-collector Walter Benjamin, it is possible to read inscriptions of subcultures of comics collecting in the texts produced by this generation of comic book guys.

This paper is an abridged and rewritten version of one given at *Occasional Music: a symposium on the work of Jonathan Lethem* (Birkbeck, July 2010).

Bricolage and Adaptation in Moore and O'Neill's *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*

Matt Green

While film adaptations of Moore's comics have become notorious in the mainstream media and in current scholarship, far less attention has been directed toward his own practices of adaptation and appropriation.

Nevertheless, a consideration of Moore's work as the *adapting* rather than the *adapted* text promises to yield insight into an area that not only is crucial to any understanding of Moore's own artistic practice, but also is of key significance to Comics Studies more broadly. Moreover, the examination of adaptive processes in comics remains an area that is under-examined in contemporary adaptation theory and a discussion of Moore's work will therefore facilitate further developments in this burgeoning field.

This paper argues that *The League* presents us with an author in the mode of the bricoleur, bringing together heterogeneous traditions. The process by which elements from a range of texts are integrated into the heterocosm constructed by *The League* is investigated in relation to current adaptation theory. It is argued that Moore's work demonstrates the need to rethink adaptation as an interaction amongst multiple works, a move which challenges dominant models that tend to present adaptation as involving two works only. While on the one hand studying *The League* thus enhances scholarly understanding of adaptation, on the other hand, considering Moore's work as adaptation facilitates further discussion of his authorial practice. Moore himself theorises artistic production in relation to a mapping of "Idea Space", a realm in which all of the imaginative artefacts of humanity exist simultaneously. Theories of adaptation and bricolage can help to conceptualise the way in which his own practice intersects with these reflections on the artistic process and lead to an increased understanding of the relative positions of key notions, such as authorship and originality, in his work.

The Story of the Story: alterity, intentionality and the divided subject in comics theory and practice

Simon Grennan

Utilising examples from the work of Debbie Dreschler (2008), Frank Miller (2005) and Joe Sacco (2001), this paper will outline and examine the ways in which modes of intentionality and alterity can be problematised as a basis for describing the divided subject, as revealed in the production and reception of comics and comics theory. 'The story,' as Patricia Hempel (1989) has neatly observed, 'also has a story,' identifying the relative subjective positions that underpin sensual perception and the consensual (that is, social) conventions of production and reception that constitute communication. To understand the significance of the divided subject in comics theory and practice, the paper will position readings of Dreschler, Miller and Sacco in relation to the theoretical work of cognitive scientists Daniel Dennett (1991) and G. H. Mead (1967) arguing that the emergence of a self-observing subject creates a causal duality of possibility and constraint in works-in-practice and works of theory. To unpack this idea, the paper will introduce Malcom Quinn's (in press) suggestion that the faculty for critical enquiry in practice (for example), is in fact the creation of a 'second practice' – a self-conscious manipulation of the divided subject, alternating between positions of intentionality and alterity as a strategy for both production and comprehension. It will further trace this idea in Paul de Man's (1987) formula for a dialogue between these two communicative positions, claiming that the resistance to theory, the traditional position of the non-theoretician, is also theory. The paper will introduce a series of three original drawing experiments by the author of the paper (2010) in which a single comic page script in English has been drawn first in the style of a commercial comic of the 1950s, then in the style of a commercial comic of the 1960s and finally in the style of a commercial comic of the 1970s. It will propose that these drawings are theoretical in ways usually apportioned to text and, using examples from the illustrated theoretical work of Will Eisner (1985), will argue that the privileging of text as a domain of absolute intentionality in relation to the alterity of practice is a social constraint which obscures the divided subject, misapprehends the social base of communication and diminishes the field of theoretical possibility. Utilising Matt Madden's (2006) visual narrative exposition of the work of Raymond Queneau (1947), the paper will finally argue that apprehension of the divided subject is in fact a rubric for understanding fully and acutely the situation, form, time and content of communicative utterances whatever their form, in theory and in practice.

Illness and The Embodied Teller: Comic Books and Visual Portrayal of The Body Suffering

[Columba Quigley](#)

This paper will explore the portrayal of the suffering body through the visual medium of comic books. It will question whether this portrayal has the potential to create a shareable representation of the illness experience, and how this might be achieved within the unique framework and poetics of the medium.

Background

Despite its universality, the suffering of illness lacks communality. Arthur Frank, the American sociologist, presents ill people as wounded storytellers, the wound as evidence of their story's truth. Although not mute, the ill body becomes inarticulate. The story that needs to be told is not just *about* illness, but needs to be told *through* a wounded, and suffering, body. Illness fragments life, self, and identity. The interrupted life that follows needs a new kind of narrative, told by bodies that are living testimony to the illness experience. The narrative requires the presence of its embodied teller in the text. This paper will explore the potential of comic books, a personalizing medium with self-consciousness at its core, to portray the experience of suffering. The following graphic memoirs will be discussed: *Our Cancer Year* (Harvey Pekar & Joyce Brabner, 1994), *Stitches* (David Small, 2009).

Both memoirs will be examined within the theoretical framework of semiotics. Individual author's and illustrator's style, use of metaphor and silence, will be explored, and the resultant 'meaning space' created by the interaction of the medium, implied reader, and narrative, dissected in the context of the suffering embodied teller.

Locating Theory in the Creative Process

[Sally Jane Thompson](#)

The connection between theoretical enquiry and creating work has been a central theme of inquiry to me for years, having as it were a foot in both camps. At times the two seem distinct, and efforts to mesh the two in practice can sometimes be frustrating. Does attention to theoretical concerns automatically create stronger work? How does theory sit with the organic, intuitive nature of creating?

I'd love to do something a little more anecdotal than you might usually consider, although of course backed up with citations and a research approach. I will examine and compare both a comic I created quickly and intuitively (as work often is with deadlines!) and a work I created with theoretical consideration. While this falls necessarily within my own approach to creating, this may help open up some insights in the relationship between creating and examining. As well as creating work in both modes mentioned (to examine), the presentation will include drawn images to assist in examining ideas, creating a presentation that is visual and engaging - complementing other panels with a practical perspective.

Activist comics – strong practice, weak theory?

[Ralf Kauranen](#)

Parallel to, and overlapping, the uses of comics as entertainment and art, comics have been employed in purposes of education, propaganda and enlightenment. A recent endeavor in the latter field is the promulgation of comics as a communications tool in development work by the World Comics organizations. These have assumed the term "grassroots comics" to describe comics produced and distributed locally, e.g. as wall posters, by activists with the aim of communicating on issues considered important, such as gender equality and HIV prevention. Activist comics could be described as practice oriented: comics are used to communicate ideas, for their subsequent impact on an individual and social level. The role of theory is in that sense subordinate to the practical.

World Comics Finland and World Comics India are two NGOs spreading grassroots comics as a communication tool. The promotional work is performed through workshops as well as pamphlets and extensive Internet sites in order to educate activists in the production of comics. Comics are presented as, as the World Comics Finland homepage states, “a flexible, attention-grabbing and inexpensive medium and a powerful tool in communication” that can be produced by anybody. The practice and activities of the World Comics organizations are clearly underpinned by ideas of what comics are and how they communicate. This presentation asks how comics as a medium is understood and represented in materials produced by the two organizations, or, in other words, what is the theory supporting the practice of activist comics.

Public libraries and comics in the UK: sharing texts and worlds

Mel Gibson

Public librarians in Britain have traditionally seen themselves as 'word people', not 'image people' (although there are exceptions). As a consequence, from the 1950s and onwards, librarianship in Britain, as a profession, has had a love/hate relationship with sequential art. This paper looks at these professionals' perspectives of the medium, charting a history of texts, readers and views of literacy. This paper will extend the work begun by Barker, M. (1984) *A Haunt of Fears: The Strange History of the British Horror Comics Campaign*. London: Pluto Press in looking at the impact that professional perspectives have had upon the understanding of the medium in Britain.

Superheroes and Propaganda During the Second World War

Evan Brown

My paper focuses on comic book propaganda during the Second World War. I compared and contrasted two very different heroes, Superman and Captain America, and found several common themes.

Each hero tried to instill a sense of empowerment into readers by encouraging them to take part in the war effort. This was accomplished by promoting war bonds and stamps. Covers from this period depict the purchase of these items as having a tangible impact on an Allied victory.

The covers also display nationalistic revenge fantasies. While Superman did not participate in battles during his actual stories, the covers still show him as an active participant. Captain America's stories and covers showed him battling the Axis Powers directly (his first issue presented a famously unsubtle image of Captain America punching Adolf Hitler in the face). Nationalistic revenge fantasies were particularly vicious towards the Japanese. “Yellow Peril” archetypes from the turn of the 20th century were revived in order to “other” the Japanese. The Japanese were depicted as fanged, pointy-eared subhumans, with impossibly yellow skin. This is obviously attributable to the racism of the time period.

Though the complete paper delved into some other topics, I would like to focus my talk on the propagandistic function of comics during the Second World War. Two important functions were empowerment and the creation of escapist revenge fantasies. These give readers an enemy to hate and necessary actions to stop the adversaries. I will have a powerpoint presentation with relevant images for my talk.

Body Issues in *Wonder Woman* 90-100 (1994-6): Good Girls, Bad Girls, Macho Men

Joan Ormrod

This paper examines *Wonder Woman* of the mid 1990s, an era that saw the emergence of violent, silicone-breasted, waspy-waist bad girls. In such a market *Wonder Woman*'s sales dropped and, in response, DC

employed fan favourites, William Messer Loeb and Mike Deodato Junior to update Wonder Woman from a worthy good girl into a kick-ass bad girl.

Messer Loeb's story arc depicted Diana losing her Wonder Woman role to her psychic twin, bad girl, Artemis. Diana and Artemis's bodies were depicted in typical bad girl style with muscular bodies wearing scanty, fetishized clothing and striking soft core porn poses. This might suggest an analysis using gaze theory but this reiterates debates of the objectification of women through their 'to-be-looked-at-ness'. Also it does not account for the hybrid production of comics and possible dislocation of meaning between word and image.

Drawing on Heineken's feminist study of warrior women on television and Turner's notion of 'the somatic society', an alternative theoretical model locates Wonder Woman within body culture of the mid 1990s. A discursive analysis of body issues in this storyline shows how submission and control at the heart of Moulton Marston's original conception of Wonder Woman are reinterpreted within consumerism. Such discourses depict disquiet over the body's plasticity and its potential to transcend its boundaries. The superhuman body acts as a metaphor for the body within wider culture and, in the context of representations of violent women in this era, women's changing place in society in the 1990s.

This paper is of interest to researchers of superhero and other genre comics – for instance romance, autobiography as it offers the opportunity to decode the construction of the body within comics and cultural contexts.

Heineken, D. (2003) *Warrior Women of Television: A Feminist Cultural Analysis Of The New Female Body In Popular Media*. Peter Lang Publishing.

Turner, B. (1996) *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory*. Sage Publications.

'Super-crips' and Comic Cuts: a Graphic History of Amputation

[Ian Williams](#)

As a popular medium produced in high volume for immediate consumption, it seems likely that comics might represent and illustrate the prevailing cultural attitudes of their time, as well as the worldview of their authors or production houses. Comics are also a useful resource in the facilitation of discussion about social and physical issues and the politics of disability.

In 1975 Renee Jensen wrote 'Amputee Love' (Last Gasp), a ribald comic about the sexual awakening of an 'amp chick', which was illustrated by her husband Rich. Jensen had lost both legs in a car crash and this comic seems to be a defiantly erotic rallying call to women in a similar situation. This paper compares 'Amputee Love' to two other examples of graphic stories about characters with amputations; one published thirty years previously ('Boy Comics #19' from the 1940s) and one thirty years later ('The Long Road Home' from 2005). The paper will ask what these stories reveal the changing attitudes to disability, what messages they appear to give regarding the roles played by and ascribed to people with amputations, and what differences are inherent in a comic made by an author with a disability compared to those made by an author, or authors, without.

The origins of comics and sequential representation of movement: Töpffer, Reinicke and McCay

[Roberto Bartual](#)

Sequential representation of movement is a key issue in the study of comic theory. Long before the first comics appeared in the last decades of the 19th century, there was a well established tradition of graphic narrations that went back to the beginnings of the art of engraving (Kunzle, 1973). However, these old *strips* printed in *Broadsheets* were very different from comics; even if they used narrative text combined

with images and dialogue in balloons, each panel only depicted one scene. Unlike comics, these narrative strips were a sequence of static images or *tableaux vivants*, where the action was never dramatized. In the first half the 19th century, the Swiss artist Rodolphe Töpffer was the first author who fragmented each scene of his graphic narrations in a sequence of panels, in an attempt to represent movement and concatenation of actions (Groensteen and Peeters, 1994). His characters chased each other, fell to the ground and were subject of eccentric actions that gave birth to a new genre; what we, nowadays, call *slapstick*. Emil Reinicke and other German artists influenced by Töpffer, published *slapstick* strips without words in the magazine *Fliegende Blätter* (García, 2010). These strips pushed sequential movement even further than Töpffer: in a strip by Reinicke we can see how the landscape moves from inside a train, anticipating travelling camera movement in cinema. This paper will analyze these, and many other movement representation techniques like those of Winsor McCay (*panning*, or lateral movement, among them), in an attempt to break some myths about the influence of cinema in comics, and at the same time give answer to some important questions related to comic theory: why sequential representation of movement was never attempted before Töpffer, and what role sequential representation of movement played in the change from a narrative mode (strips before Töpffer) to the dramatic mode typical of post-Töpfferian strips and comics.

You can't make origami with a laptop: Print and digital materialities in the world of *McSweeney's*

[Zara Dinnen](#)

The American literary quarterly journal *McSweeney's* has recently launched an app for the iPhone called 'The Small Chair': it delivers bits (or bytes) from their various publishing ventures straight to a subscriber's phone. By contrast, the most recent print edition of *McSweeney's* is a heavy, bound volume featuring 'an unbelievable disappearing-ink cover'. Despite forays into digital media, issues of *McSweeney's* repeatedly assert their primary form as a print object; they are always carefully, cleverly, lavishly designed works. In this paper I will draw out how *McSweeney's* plays with the possibilities of print. *McSweeney's* draws attention to recent sliding notions of materiality, where print – a given tactile materiality – battles with new media in which materiality is generally thought of as an ethereal paradox. I will look at both print and digital versions of *McSweeney's*, as well as the recently published *Art of McSweeney's* (Tate 2010), to consider how their media-specific approach contends with the literary text in the digital age. This paper will engage with various ideas of remediation in print and new media, through a context of critical writing about notions of 'materiality' in both book/print and new media studies. I intend to think specifically about the fate of texts published in *McSweeney's* against the material object that contains them; as well as considering the interactivity of reading processes encouraged by the various object *McSweeney's*.

Profiles

Roberto Bartual: Roberto Bartual (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid) is a translator, writer and scholar. He translated the Spanish version of Alan Moore and José Villarrubia's *The Mirror of Love* (Kraken, 2008). Also a fiction writer, his short stories can be found in diverse anthologies, including *Ficciones* (Edaf, 2005). He is the co-author of the postmodern revisiting of Lorca's classic *La Casa de Bernarda Alba Zombi* (Cátedra, 2009). His articles on the origins of comics and its relationship with sculpture, painting, engraving and cinema can be found in *Revista Digital Universitaria de la Universidad Autónoma de México* and *Studies on Comics*.

Dan Berry: Dan Berry is a Senior Lecturer in Visual Communication at the North Wales School of Art & Design, part of Glyndwr University where he leads the course specialism in Illustration for Graphic Novels. He also works as a freelance illustrator and cartoonist. His work can be seen at thingsbydan.co.uk and oxfordclay.com.

Evan Brown: Evan Brown graduated *magna cum laude* from Transylvania University in 2010 with degrees in history and philosophy. Both degrees have enriched his analysis of the comic medium. His academic work with comic books has focused primarily on comics produced during the Second World War. He has written about the use of comics as social commentary and propaganda. His interest in comics started when he received the trade paperback of Frank Miller's *Dark Knight Returns* for his fifteenth birthday. In the future, he plans on earning a J.D. and possibly a Ph.D. in philosophy.

Zara Dinnen: MPhil/PhD English and Humanities, Birkbeck College. My current research focuses on issues of remediation and 'materiality' in contemporary American print and digital culture. I am particularly interested in the work of American author Jonathan Lethem; the publications of *McSweeney's*; and the American artist Cory Arcangel. This paper is a developed version of an earlier piece, 'Object *McSweeney's*: Fetishising print in the digital age', presented at *On Paper* (University of London, April 2010).

Mel Gibson: Dr Mel Gibson works at Northumbria University, UK. She has written about women, girls and comics and about developing and promoting graphic novels and comic collections in libraries, schools, colleges and universities. Her National Teaching Fellowship has enabled her to establish a comics website <http://www.dr-mel-comics.co.uk/> and has helped support the development of both comics collections in libraries and comics scholarship in the UK and beyond.

Matt Green: Dr Matt Green has published widely on the works of William Blake and Lord Byron. His current work investigates the legacy of romanticism in popular culture with a view to further understanding of the relationship between literature and social change. His forthcoming publications include an article and chapter on Alan Moore, as well as two edited collections: *Byron and the Politics of Freedom and Terror* (co-edited with Piya Pal-Lapinski; Palgrave 2011) and *Alan Moore and the Gothic Tradition* (MUP, 2011). He is currently working on a monograph examining Blake's impact on Moore (and vice versa).

Ian Hague: Ian Hague did his BA in English at the University of Hull, and his MA in Cultural Studies at the University of Leeds. He is currently an MPhil/PhD student working on comics and the senses in the History department at the University of Chichester, under the supervision of Dr. Hugo Frey. His research interests include comics theory, the senses and technology.

Simon Grennan: Simon Grennan has been practicing internationally as an artist since 1990. As part of collaborative artists' team Grennan & Sperandio, Simon is well known as an early pioneer of New Genre public art, in comic book form and more recently through television and social action projects. Grennan & Sperandio transform and present the narratives of friends', relatives' and strangers' lives into odd and familiar objects, events and situations, de-mystify artistic processes and bringing a variety of publics into

the world of art. Simon has also been Director of Viewpoint Photography Gallery, Salford and Public Art Forum (now IXIA). He is currently a PhD candidate at University of the Arts London, completing 2011. Grennan & Sperandio are at www.kartoonkings.com.

Howard Hardiman: As a comic book creator, I've made books like *Badger and Badger: Then and Now* within the small press scene. I work in museums and galleries, including providing tours for Tate Modern and managing the access strand of the public events programme at the National Maritime Museum. I'm also a sign language interpreter and I'm about to start studying astrophysics, but my favourite moment was when *Simply Knitting* magazine described me as "Suave".

David Huxley: David Huxley is Senior Lecturer on the BA(Hons) Film and Media Studies course at Manchester Metropolitan University. He has drawn and written a wide range of adult and children's comics, and designed posters for conferences held at the university. He is joint editor of the new Routledge publication 'The Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics' (first issue 2010).

Ralf Kauranen: Ralf Kauranen is a sociologist working at Åbo Akademi University, Finland. In his master's thesis he studied the ways in which comics were legitimated as an art form in Finnish newspaper texts in the mid-1990s. In the doctoral dissertation (2008) he focused on the critical debate on comics in Finland in the 1950s. His post-doctoral research to this date has been about political imagination and radicalism in the early 20th century. Kauranen is also one of the editors of the forthcoming *Scandinavian Journal of Comic Art*.

Sarah Lightman: Sarah Lightman is an artist and curator currently researching a Ph.D. in 'Autobiographical Comics and Graphic Novels' at The University of Glasgow. She has written on autobiographical comics and visual diaries for *Studies in Comics* and *The International Journal of Comic Art*. Sarah co-founded Laydeez do Comics, a monthly autobiographical comics forum with Nicola Streeten. Sarah is curating *Graphic Details: Confessional Comics by Jewish Women*, with Michael Kaminer, which features 18 international artists. *Graphic Details* opened at The Cartoon Art Museum, San Francisco in October 2010 and is touring to Toronto, New York and Michigan. www.sarahlightman.com

Chris Murray: Dr Christopher Murray teaches English and Film Studies at the University of Dundee. He researches comics and organises two annual conferences, the Scottish Word and Image Group conference and the Annual Dundee Comics Day. His book on superheroes and propaganda, is being published by Hampton Press. He is editor of the journal *Studies in Comics* (Intellect Publishing).

Joan Ormrod: Joan Ormrod's main areas of research are in audiences, subcultures and subcultural production. She teaches a range of courses including Youth: Cultures and Subcultures and Fantasy, Myth and Fairytales, in the Department of Media at Manchester Metropolitan University and co-edits Routledge's *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*.

Columba Quigley: Originally qualifying in medicine, I left the specialty to undertake an MA in Literature and Medicine, King's College London, which I completed in 2009. I will commence my PhD research studentship at the London Consortium in October 2010, focusing on visual arts and the portrayal of suffering.

Julia Round: Julia Round (MA, PhD) lectures in the Media School at Bournemouth University, UK, and has previously taught at St Martin's College, London, and Bristol University. She co-edits the academic journal *Studies in Comics* (Intellect Books) and is a member of Bournemouth University's Narrative Research Group and the International Society for the Study of Narrative. She has published and presented work internationally on cross-media adaptation, television and discourse analysis, the application of literary terminology to comics, the 'graphic novel' redefinition, and the presence of gothic and fantastic motifs and themes in this medium. She is currently working on a monograph provisionally entitled *Ghosts in the*

Gutter on the literary gothic in comics and new fantasy cultures (McFarland, 2012). Further details at www.juliaround.com.

Roger Sabin: Roger Sabin is Reader in Popular Culture at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London. He is the author of *Adult Comics: An Introduction* (Routledge) and *Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels* (Phaidon).

Greice Schneider: Greice Schneider is currently conducting PhD research on boredom and contemporary graphic novels at the Department of Literature at K.U. Leuven (Belgium). Her main interests lie in the field of visual studies, with particular interest in the relations between image and narrative.

Anthony Smith: Anthony Smith is a PhD candidate at the University of Nottingham's Department of Culture, Film and Media. His thesis considers the ways in which a divergence of institutional configurations has shaped serial narrative designs in the post-Fordist economies of the contemporary US television and comics industries. He has publications concerning the production of television serial narrative forthcoming in *Critical Studies in Television* and in an edited anthology on popular narrative media.

Richard Starkings: Richard Starkings is the creator of Image Comics' sleeper hit series *Elephantmen* and *Hip Flask*, which garnered an Eisner award for artist Ladrönn. Born and raised in England, Starkings worked for five years at Marvel UK's London offices as editor, designer and occasional writer of *Zoids*, *Ghostbusters*, *Transformers* and the *Doctor Who* comic strip -- he was also the first Marvel UK editor to attempt to break the US direct market with the books *Dragon's Claws*, *Deaths Head* and *The Sneeze Brothers*. Although he lettered *Batman: The Killing Joke* with a pen, Richard is perhaps best known for his digital lettering work with his award-winning Comicraft design studio, which he founded in 1992 with John 'JG' Roshell. Starkings & Roshell also co-authored the best-selling books *Comic Book Lettering the Comicraft Way* and *Tim Sale: Black and White*.

Nicola Streeten: Nicola Streeten has worked as a freelance illustrator since 1996 and is presently working on a graphic novel about making sense of life following the death of a child. This is being serialised in *Liquorice Magazine*, a quarterly publication Streeten produces in collaboration with her family. It will be published in book form in Autumn 2011. With artist Sarah Lightman, Streeten co-founded *Laydeez do Comics* in 2009, the first UK women-led graphic novel reading group that meets monthly in London. Streeten is working towards an MRes in Art Architecture and Design at the University of Lincoln.

Sally Jane Thompson: Sally Jane Thompson is a freelance illustrator and comic creator, currently completing an MA in art and design at the University of Derby, in which she is examining form and structure in comics, and the use of comics in museum and gallery interpretation. Academic work includes a recent paper ('Drawing the Self') in *Manga and Philosophy* from Open Court Publishing, and papers presented at Academic Perspectives in Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels (Växjö University, Sweden) and Reading After Empire (University of Stirling). Clients and collaborators include Derby Museum and Art Gallery, RE Today Services, IndieManga, Greenbelt Festival and Derbyshire and Yorkshire Libraries.

Tony Venezia: Tony Venezia is a PhD student at Birkbeck, supposedly working on a thesis on history and historiography in the work of Alan Moore. He has published reviews and articles in the *International Journal of Comic Art* and elsewhere. As well as comics, wider research interests include genre fiction, critical theory, and literary and cultural histories. This paper is an abridged and rewritten version of one given at *Occasional Music: a symposium on the work of Jonathan Lethem* (Birkbeck, July 2010).

Ian Williams: Ian Williams is a visual artist, comics writer and general practitioner who runs the website graphicmedicine.org. He wrote the dissertation for his MA in Medical Humanities on Medical Narrative in Graphic Fiction and has since written about comics for various journals. He makes comics under the nom-de-plume 'Thom Ferrier'.

Contributor Comics



Simon Grennan

BETTER TOGETHER

Sally Jane Thompson



Sally Jane Thompson

"IN THEORY, THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN

A COMIC STRIP FOR
THOUGHT BUBBLE 2010
COMICS FORUM

THEORY AND PRACTICE

BUT IN PRACTICE, THERE IS"

(MANFRED EIGEN)

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Dr. Mel Gibson

Dr Mel Gibson works at Northumbria University, UK. She has written about women, girls and comics and about developing and promoting graphic novels and comic collections in libraries, schools, colleges and universities. Her National Teaching Fellowship has enabled her to establish a comics website <http://www.dr-mel-comics.co.uk/> and has helped support the development of both comics collections in libraries and comics scholarship in the UK and beyond.

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European Comic Art is the first English-language scholarly publication devoted to the study of European-language graphic novels, comic strips, comic books and caricature. Published by Liverpool University Press in association with the American Bande Dessinée Society and the International Bande Dessinée Society, European Comic Art builds on existing scholarship in French-language comic art and is able to draw on the scholarly activities undertaken by both organisations. However, its editorial board and consultative committee bring expertise on a wider European area of comic art production and the journal emphasises coverage of work from across Europe, including Eastern Europe.

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Routledge

Routledge is pleased to announce the Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics, a new peer reviewed journal covering all aspects of the graphic novel, comic strip and comic book, with the emphasis on comics in their cultural, institutional and creative contexts. The journal reflects interdisciplinary research in comics and aims to establish a dialogue between academics, historians, theoreticians and practitioners of comics.

Thought Bubble

The Thought Bubble Festival is the UK's largest annual event which celebrates sequential art in all its forms, including everything from mainstream superhero comics to independent "small-press" artists and writers. Thought Bubble formed in 2007 as a non-profit-making organisation dedicated to promoting comics and graphic novels as an important national and international cultural art-form. Holding events at a variety of

venues across the city (and throughout the year), our aim is to cater to both long-time comic book fans and those who have never picked up a graphic novel before! The fourth Thought Bubble will take place 18th - 21st November 2010 at venues around Leeds with a centre-piece one day convention on Saturday 20th at Saviles Hall – the city's largest venue.

This year's festival will include art and writing based workshops for young people and adults, talks and masterclasses lead by industry professionals, and a programme of sequential art related film screenings. Our special one-day convention includes an incredible line up of leading artists and writers, and over 200 tables selling comics and merchandise. The day will also feature portfolio viewings and competitions, as well as a huge cosplay parade. This promises to be one of the best events of its kind in the UK, where you'll be able to meet some of your favourite comic book creators and browse the huge selection of memorabilia on sale - brought to you by the biggest and best exhibitors and dealers from across the country.

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The University of Chichester is one of the newest in the UK, having gained university status in 2005, but can trace its higher education origins back to 1839. It is one of the smallest universities in the country with just over 5,000 students - and one of the most distinctive with two campuses in the county of West Sussex - the Cathedral city of Chichester and Bognor Regis, the sunshine capital of the UK.

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The University of Glasgow

'Women in Comics II' has been generously sponsored by the College of Arts, University of Glasgow.

This is the second 'Women in Comics' Conference, and the second time the University of Glasgow has been a major sponsor. This institution's continuing support for 'Women in Comics' highlights the developing research taking place in the College of Arts in gender and comics.

Offering one of Europe's only Honours courses on *bande dessinée* (the French-language drawn strip), taught by one of the UK's foremost authorities on the subject, Laurence Grove, the School also possesses a growing postgraduate research community focusing on sequential art and gender.

The wider University, through the Centre for Emblem Studies, is also internationally established as a hub for text and image scholarship via its work on comics, *bandes dessinées* and emblems. The University

library contains the world's largest discrete collections of emblems and boasts one of the strongest compilations of *bandes dessinée* outside a French-speaking country.

For more information :

Graduate School of The College of The Arts

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Laurence Grove

Senior Lecturer and Director of Programmes in French

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European Comic Art is the first English-language scholarly publication devoted to the study of European-language graphic novels, comic strips, comic books and caricature. Published in association with the American Bande Dessinée Society and the International Bande Dessinée Society, *ECA* builds on existing scholarship in French-language comic art and is able to draw on the scholarly activities undertaken by both organisations. However, our editorial board and consultative committee bring expertise on a wider European area of comic art production and the journal emphasises coverage of work from across Europe, including Eastern Europe.

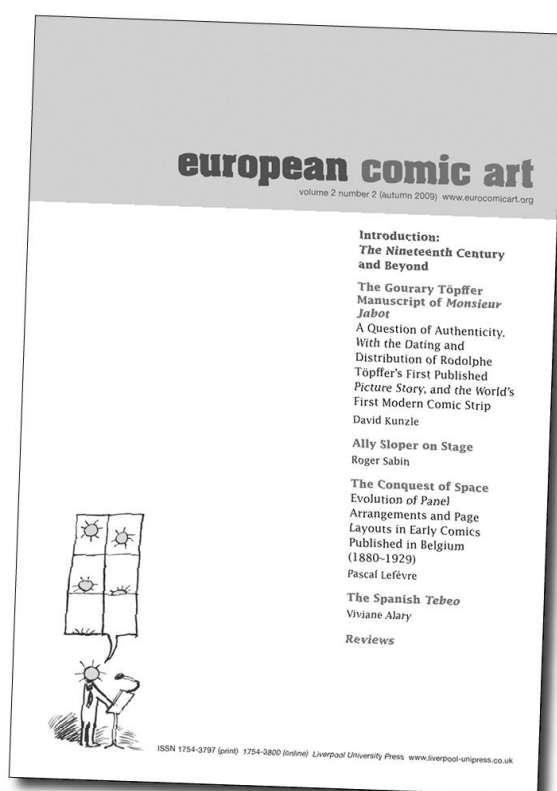
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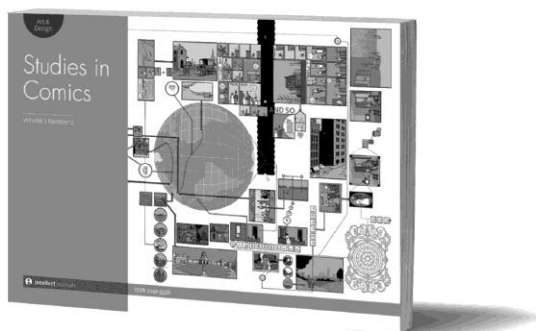
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Studies in Comics

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Aims and Scope

Studies in Comics aims to describe the nature of comics, to identify the medium as a distinct art form, and to address the medium's formal properties. The emerging field of comics studies is a model for interdisciplinary research and this journal welcomes all approaches and methodologies. Its specific goal, however, is to expand the relationship between comics and theory, and to seek to articulate a 'theory of comics'.

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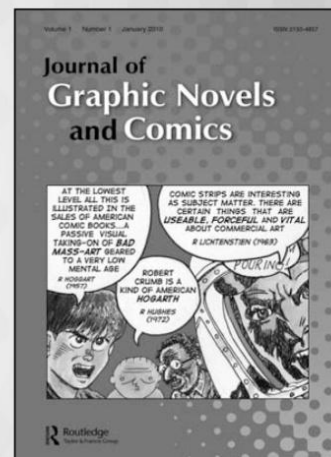
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The *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* is a peer reviewed journal covering all aspects of the graphic novel, comic strip and comic book, with the emphasis on comics in their cultural, institutional and creative contexts. Its scope is international, covering not only English language comics but also worldwide comic culture. The journal reflects interdisciplinary research in comics and aims to establish a dialogue between academics, historians, theoreticians and practitioners of comics. It therefore examines the production and consumption of comics within the contexts of culture: art, cinema, television and new media technologies.

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