

COMICA SYMPOSIUM 2011

# TRANSITIONS 2



## NEW DIRECTIONS IN COMICS STUDIES

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 5TH 2011

From 9:30 until 19:00hrs

School of Arts, Birkbeck, University of London.

Rooms B36/B04, main building, (entrance via Torrington Square), Malet Street, London WC1E 7HX.

Registration and keynote address in room B36.

Transitions 2 is a one-day symposium devoted to promoting new research into comics in all their forms. Rather than restricting itself to a specific theme, the symposium will highlight research from postgraduate students and early career lecturers bringing together different perspectives and methodologies, whether cultural, historical, or formal, thereby mapping new trends and providing a space for dialogue and further collaboration to emerge.

Keynote address: Professor Kent Worcester (Professor of Political Science, Marymount Manhattan College, and editor of *A Comics Studies Reader*) - 'The Making of *A Comics Studies Reader*'

Respondents: Dr. Roger Sabin (University of the Arts, London), Dr. Julia Round (Bournemouth)

Chairs: Dr. Joe Brooker (Birkbeck); Zara Dinnen (Birkbeck); Dr. Jason Dittmer (UCL); Paul Gravett (Comica director); Dr. Matt Green (Nottingham); Nicola Streeten (Lincoln).

The day concludes with a wine reception.

ATTENDANCE IS FREE.

For further information contact Tony at [transitions.symposium@gmail.com](mailto:transitions.symposium@gmail.com).

Transitions 2 is part of Comica 2011, the London International Comics Festival and is organised in association with Birkbeck, University of London, Studies in Comics, European Comic Art, the Contemporary Fiction Seminar and The Comics Grid.

[www.bbk.ac.uk/arts/news/comica-symposium-2011](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/arts/news/comica-symposium-2011) and [www.comicafestival.com](http://www.comicafestival.com)



COMIC STRIP ILLUSTRATION: BILL BRAGG. DESIGN: PETER STANBURY.

**Comica Symposium 2011**  
***Transitions 2: New Directions in Comics Studies***  
**November 5 2011**

Rooms B36 and B04 Main Birkbeck Building  
Malet Street/Torrington Square (access via Torrington Square)  
Birkbeck, University of London, London WC1E 7HX

A one-day symposium promoting new research in the study of  
comics/comix/manga/bande dessinée and other forms of sequential art

Keynote address – Professor Kent Worcester (Marymount Manhattan College)  
Respondents – Dr. Roger Sabin, Dr. Julia Round

Comics studies occupy a unique multi-disciplinary middle-space, one that encourages cross-disciplinary pollination. ***Transitions 2*** is a one-day symposium devoted to promoting new research into comics in all their forms. Rather than restricting itself to a specific theme, the symposium will highlight research from postgraduate students and early career lecturers bringing together different perspectives and methodologies, whether cultural, historical, or formal, thereby mapping new trends and providing a space for dialogue and further collaboration to emerge.

The first ***Transitions*** symposium was the successful opening event of Comica 2010. ***Transitions 2*** is part of Comica 2011, the London International Comics Festival and is organised in association with Birkbeck, University of London, *Studies in Comics*, *European Comic Art*, the Contemporary Fiction Seminar and The Comics Grid.

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**9 – 930 AM Assemble/Register: Room B36 Main Birkbeck Building  
Malet Street/Torrington Square (access via Torrington Square)**

**930 – 945 AM Introductions (B36)**

**945 – 1015 Keynote address: Professor Kent Worcester (Marymount Manhattan College) – “The Making of *A Comics Studies Reader*” (B36)**

### **Parallel Sessions**

**Respondent: Dr. Roger Sabin  
(University of the Arts)  
1030 Panel (B36)**

#### **Archives & Publishing**

Chair: Dr. Paul Williams (Exeter)

1 - Sina Shamsavari (Goldsmiths/artist)

Gay Ghetto Comics: Constructing a  
Dominant Gay Habitus

2 – Casey Brienza (Cambridge)

Manga Revolution or Logical Evolution?

Field Theory on the Rise & Demise of  
Tokyopop's U.S. Publishing Programme

3 – Lina Ghaibeh (American University,  
Beirut)

Propaganda in Comics in the Arab World:  
From Nationalism to Religious  
Radicalism

**Respondent: Dr. Julia Round  
(Bournemouth)  
1030 Panel (B04)**

#### **Adaptation & Appropriation**

Chair: Paul Gravett

1 - Armelle Blin-Rolland (Bath)

Fidelity vs. Appropriation in Comic  
Adaptation: Jacques Carelman's &  
Clément Oubrierie's Adaptations of  
Queneau's *Zazie dans le metro*

2 – Nicolas Pillai (Warwick)

The Laughing Fish and the Killing Book:  
from Comic Book to Cartoon & Back  
Again

3 – Aswathy Padmasenan (University of  
Delhi/Consultant Editor, Campfire  
Publications)

Adaption/Adoption of *Hamlet*: a Graphic  
Retelling of the Classic

### **1145 Coffee (own arrangements)**

**1215 Panel (B36)**

#### **Histories & Reading**

Chair: Daniel Marrone (London  
Consortium)

1 – Nina Mickwitz (UEA)

After the Deluge – Everyday Tactics &  
Representational Strategies in a Time of  
Crisis

2 – Scott Jeffrey (Stirling)

The Silver Age Superhero as Psychedelic  
Shaman

3 – Michael Goodrum (Essex)

“Oh, c'mon, those stories can't actually  
count in continuity!": Squirrel Girl and the  
Problem of Female Power

**1215 Panel (B04)**

#### **Transmedia & Remediation**

Chair: Zara Dinnen (Birkbeck)

1 - Daniel Merlin Goodbrey  
(Hertfordshire/artist)

Game Comics: Read or Play?

2 – Craig Smith (Queen's U. Belfast)  
Motion Comics & Various Forms of  
Adaptation & Appropriation from the  
Comic Book Medium

3 – Laura-Jane Maher (Monash)

*Neverender*: Comic Books & Rock 'n' Roll

**1330 Lunch (own arrangements)**  
**(Everyone to reconvene in B36 at 1430)**

**1430 Panel (B36)**

**Narrative & Narration**

Chair: Dr. Matt Green (Nottingham)

1 – Simon Grennan (Wimbledon College of Art)

Demonstrating *discours*: Two Comic Strip Projects  
in Self-Constraint

2 – Hannah Miodrag (Leicester)

Redefining Comics-as-Literature

3 – Xavier Marcó del Pont (Royal Holloway)

On the Invisible Conspicuousness of Speech Balloons

**1545 Coffee (own arrangements)**

**1600 Panel (B36)**

**Bodies & Absence**

Chair: Nicola Streeten (Lincoln/artist)

1 – Ed Clough (UEA)

Presenting Absence: Narrative Disability, Dismemberment  
& Prosthesis in Jeff Lemire's *Essex County* & Chris  
Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth*

2 – Rick Hudson (Bath Spa)

Super Men? Re-re-configuring Masculinity in Superhero  
Comic Book Narratives

3 – Karrie Fransman (Artist)

The Body as a Canvas in Comics: An Artist  
Explores the Influence of Corporal Studies  
in the Creation of *The House that Groaned*

**1715 Response/Plenary Session (B36)**

Paul Gravett, Julia Round, Roger Sabin, Kent Worcester

**18 – 1900 Wine/snacks (B04)**

## **ABSTRACTS**

### **Fidelity vs. appropriation in comic book adaptation: Jacques Carelman's and Clément Oubrierie's adaptations of Queneau's *Zazie dans le métro***

What happens to literary voices when they are transposed into the medium of comic book? This is the central question of this paper, which takes as its primary focus Jacques Carelman's 1966 and Clément Oubrierie's 2008 comic book adaptations of Raymond Queneau's 1959 novel *Zazie dans le métro*. Carelman's comic book is strongly inscribed in the fidelity discourse, while Oubrierie advocates a process of complete appropriation of the source text by the adapter.

In Carelman's adaptation, the original text is present in its entirety under the panels and regularly duplicated in, and contracted into speech balloons in the image. I suggest that the image is submitted to the text in order to try to faithfully transpose the cacophony and experimentality of Queneau's novel. My analysis of Carelman's work focuses on the relationship between image and text, and words and image (the textual surroundings, as well as the text in the speech balloons), in terms of gender and power. I propose that his adaptation uses processes of entrapment and containment of voices. By contrast, Oubrierie's comic book shows a certain uniformisation of the cacophony of the original text, and offers a version primarily aimed at a young audience. I analyse how the substitution of cacophony and chaos with uniformisation affects the narrator's and the characters' voices in the interdependent relationship between text and image.

Through the comparison between the two works, which show strikingly different uses of the medium of comic book and of the adaptive process, I explore to what extent the adapters' choices, their historical situation and the use of their chosen medium can shape their transposition of the source text, and whether these factors can potentially empower or weaken the textual voices.

**Armelle Blin-Rolland (University of Bath)**

### **Manga Revolution or Logical Evolution? Field Theory on the Rise and Demise of Tokyopop's U.S. Publishing Programme**

On 15 April 2011, the Los Angeles-based company Tokyopop announced that it was shuttering its publishing operations in the United States, ending a fourteen-year tenure as one of the most important players in the manga publishing business. How should we understand this publisher's considerable influence upon the global flow of Japanese manga in the context of its rise and recent demise? By applying a modified version of Pierre Bourdieu's field theory, I argue that Tokyopop's 'Manga Revolution' was a historically-specific strategy which effected manga's transition from the comics publishing field to the trade book publishing field during the late 1990s and early 2000s.

All of the contemporaneous changes related to manga, comics, and graphic novels in the American publishing industry—including (but not limited to) a) the exponential growth of new manga titles in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; b) the new visibility of manga and graphic novels in chain bookstores; c) the proliferation of female and young readers of comics, along with material targeted to them; d) the expanding library collections of comics; e) the symbolic consecration of comics in growing numbers of mainstream media outlets; and f) the growth of publisher interest in new homegrown material—are therefore best viewed as a predictable consequence of the logic of the U.S. trade book publishing field.

Furthermore, I argue that Tokyopop's decline was ultimately a function of this same field logic, produced first and foremost by failure to anticipate and recognize these sociological processes. I conclude with a discussion of the shape of things to come and suggest that the global impact of Tokyopop's U.S. publishing programme will not soon be undone.

**Casey Brienza (University of Cambridge)**

### **Presenting Absence: Narrative Disability, Dismemberment, and Prosthesis in Jeff Lemire's *Essex County* and Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth***

My paper offers a comparative reading of two of Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan* and Jeff Lemire's *Essex County*, centering particularly on metaphors and instances of injury, disability, and prosthesis. Throughout their work, both Ware and Lemire probe the tension between the natural and the technological to articulate questions of subjectivity, memory, and narrative disjuncture; both also play with questions of presence and absence, and physical and metaphysical, that are at the same time intrinsic to the medium's overtly intermedia form. And given the recent attention to medicine in comics, the growth of disability studies, and the increasing discussion of the prosthetic within cultural studies, the intersection of these various fields seems to me to offer a particularly productive conceptual apparatus through which to read the achievements and tensions of these two texts.

This paper begins by exploring how Ware and Lemire utilize or trouble the way conventional figurations of disability as absence or loss are used to articulate gendered and cultural identities. I discuss bodily injuries and the uses of crutches and wheelchairs, and consider how prostheses enable enactments of presence and replacement. I then move to consider actual and metaphorical sensory disabilities, particularly deafness and blindness, and how Ware and Lemire use them to trouble the structural and visual articulation of memory and time (drawing here on recent scholarship on "prosthetic memory" by Alison Landsberg and Elizabeth Grosz). Finally, I consider the formal/narrative implications of disability and prosthesis (as discussed by David T. Mitchell and Sharon Snyder) to examine how the use of gaps, repetition, dissonances, and image-text asymmetry in both comic texts serve to both disruptively and generatively articulate the complexities of identity, memory, and narrative.

**Ed Clough (University of East Anglia)**

### **The Body as a Canvas in Comics: An Artist Explores the Influence of Corporal Studies in the Creation of *The House That Groaned***

*The individual body can be studied as a canvas on which the anxieties and discourses of the larger, social body are reproduced*  
(R W Connell, 2002)

Since Foucault sociologists have begun to explore the body as more than simply a biological entity. The body is increasingly seen as a canvas on which to study the anxieties of a wider social body. This paper will argue that the body within the graphic novel is even more so a canvas. The caricatures in comics allow bodies to become arenas in which to play with stereotypical and alternative social viewpoints (Pratt, 2009). From Robert Crumb's caricatures reflecting the misogynistic and racist minds of American society to Charles Burn's *Black Hole* (2005) where a society's AIDS anxiety is played out on the bodies of mutant teenagers.

My graphic novel *The House That Groaned* explores some of the key theories in corporal studies through the characters who live in the house. Barbara, the 'made-up make-up girl', plays on Judith Butlers ideas of gender as a performance (*Gender Trouble*, 1990). Mrs Durbach is a grandmother who literally blends into the background- a contrast to Norbert Elias's idea of the Western 'Homo Clausus' who see themselves as separate to the world (*The Civilizing Process*, 1969). Janet and Marion represent the dichotomy of 'indulgence' and 'control' evident in the simultaneous rise of obesity and anorexia in the West, observed by Susan Bordo (*Unbearable Weight Feminism, Western Culture and The Body*, 1993). *The House That Groaned* will be published in January 2012 by Random House's SquarePeg. This paper will argue for an increased awareness of bodies in comics as representative of the issues of a wider society.

**Karrie Fransman (Artist)**

### **Propaganda in Comics in the Arab world: From nationalism to religious radicalism**

With a majority of totalitarian regimes ruling the Arab world propaganda tends to infiltrate every aspect of life including comics. After the independence of Arabic countries from colonialism, ideological political parties overthrew the existing systems and installed totalitarian regimes based on the one party rule. The governments soon nationalized the mass media to influence public opinion, instill their ideals and justify their legitimacy and continuity. With the recognition of comics as a capable and influential educational tool that holds the potential of molding public opinion, state run children's magazines were issued through institutions run by the political party in power. The success of these periodicals was largely due to the involvement and supervision of acclaimed artists and intellectuals supporting these regimes.

Besides governmental institutions, religious associations also took advantage of the potential of comics as a vehicle for propagating ideals. Both state owned and private associations (primarily Islamic but with a few periodicals and albums directed to a Christian audience) found a way to disseminate their messages and spread their word, some indirectly and in a moderate fashion and others more upfront preaching radical and overtly politicized views. The past two decades have seen a great decline in the quality of state owned comics magazines, reducing the periodicals to mediocrity in form and content and giving rise to other manifestations filling the gap.

Two extreme trends seem to be dominating the market; from the more commercial and secular ones with pedagogic and educational directives to the ones propagating radical political and religious ideals, replacing the previous state propaganda. Understanding the full potential of the medium, the latter are producing engaging comics that rival the commercial more secular ones. Perhaps these two extremes indicate a weakening of the regimes and reveal an already existing political schism in these countries.

**Lina Ghaibeh (American University of Beirut)**

### **Game Comics: Read or Play?**

The medium of comics is undergoing a period of transition as the predominant mode of creation, distribution and consumption shifts from print to digital display. This is a transition that has been underway for more than a decade and recent advances in portable display devices such as smart phones and pad computers have accelerated the pace of this change. Over the course of the last ten years, digital comic pioneers have explored the many new possibilities offered by the inherent interactivity and multimodality of the medium. Now, as the wider comics industry moves to catch up with this frontier, the comics pioneer must look towards new territories to explore and colonise. This talk considers the narrative and play possibilities offered by one such new territory - the emergent medium of Game Comics. Game Comics marry the conventions of the comics medium to those of interactive, narrative-based videogames. In doing so they attempt to combine the juxtaposition-based spatial language of comics with gaming tropes common to the adventure and puzzle genres.

A typical Game Comic might include elements such as branching narrative pathways, animation, dynamic panel movement, procedurally generated content and reactive soundscapes. Despite the tensions inherent in these extensions to the medium, Game Comics still hold at their core McCloud's concept of the comic as a temporal map. In understanding and resolving these tensions, the medium foregrounds the importance of the reader in retaining ultimate control of the progression through a comic's narrative.

**Daniel Merlin Goodbrey (University of Hertfordshire)**

## **“Oh, c’mon, those stories can’t actually count in continuity!”: Squirrel Girl and the problem of female power**

Squirrel Girl is a marginal character in the Marvel universe yet according to ‘Powergrid’, Marvel’s way of showing the qualities of individual characters, Squirrel Girl’s abilities are on a par with Galactus, described as ‘the most feared being in the cosmos’. This paper will explore why Squirrel Girl is condemned to the margins and analyse the narrative strategies deployed as means of containment.

One prominent strategy of containment is a twofold process of disavowal. First, comic-books in which Squirrel Girl appears are dismissed as being outside continuity, a process that means the events depicted have no impact on the rest of the Marvel universe. Second, Squirrel Girl’s battles are not always shown and, as such, the readers could deny that these victories were brought about by Squirrel Girl. When Squirrel Girl was brought into continuity, the means of doing so also contributed to projects of minimising her abilities. In *New Avengers* #7, Squirrel Girl is hired as the nanny for Luke Cage and Jessica Jones’ daughter, a job that, although offering her a key role, establishes her as a secondary character who is rarely seen.

Despite Squirrel Girl’s skills in combat, her powers are usually put to comic effect. This in itself prevents her from being taken seriously, as it were, and potentially suggests that the very idea of a powerful woman is a concept worthy of ridicule. Through a close critical reading of Squirrel Girl’s appearances, this paper will provide initial insights into how powerful women are simultaneously promoted and contained by superhero narratives.

**Michael Goodrum (Essex University)**

## **Demonstrating *discours*: two comic strip projects in self-constraint**

There has been a trend in comics narratology to focus on the analysis of structures or systems of enunciation, or what Émile Benveniste terms *histoire* or ‘what is told’ (1971). Instead, this paper will approach comics narratology as the relationship between *histoire* and *discours*: between ‘what is told’ and ‘telling’. Following Barker (1989), it will consider the enunciator, enunciatee, context and medium to be topics affecting both the form and content of what is expressed, bringing alterity to bear on the semic analysis of structure (Lévinas 1970). To demonstrate the importance of this relationship, it will analyse two comic strips: Seth’s *Clyde Fans Book One* (2004) and Matt Madden’s *Exercises in Style* (2007).

This analysis will scrutinise the ways in which two different types of self-constraint are utilised by Seth and Madden in order to produce their strips. Seth employs a rule in *Clyde Fans*, which can be summarised as ‘nothing un-American, nothing post-1955.’ This rule represents both a social identification of the experience of pre-1955 America with a specific canon of images and technologies, and articulates Seth as a subject submitting to constraint by this perceived canon. Similarly, Madden’s *Exercises in Style* represents a self-aware project that seeks to apply ninety-nine different constraints to a single script. However, unlike Seth, Madden’s self-constraint derives from self-observation, or an attempt to adopt the perceived social position of a ‘generalised other’ in each of his drawings, represented by both drawing style and genre (Mead 1967, Schütz 1972).

Both these works demonstrate ways in which social constraint represents self-constraint in the expressive form of the strips themselves. The paper will argue that this analysis is not possible considering *histoire* alone. These examples demonstrate how the relationship between the physical form of the strips, the semic level, and subjective constraints at the level of *discours* contribute to their meaning. This suggests an alternative approach to comics narratology, from the point of view of the relative consideration of *histoire* and *discours*, rather than approaches that consider *histoire* alone, which have dominated comics narratology in the last two decades.

**Simon Grennan (Wimbledon College of Art, University of the Arts London)**



### **Super Men? Re-re-configuring masculinity in superhero comic book narratives**

The claim that the figure of the superhero in the comic book articulates and reinforces gender representations that are complicit with and perpetuate ideological notions of masculinity and femininity would, ostensibly, appear self-evident. However, if the content of comic books is interrogated and the attitude of readers is considered, this can be seen as being far from the case. Indeed, according to the findings of this study the figure of the superhero functions as a means by which readers explore and articulate their own feelings of alienation, insecurity and vulnerability rather than serving as a wish-fulfilment fantasy figure or an ideological tool which manipulates them into particular roles and accepting orthodox views.

This paper views the comic strip as a narrative that is created and read rather than a by-product of political/sociological forces. Therefore it subjects the comic strip to analysis from a literary perspective which interrogates the functions of the text and the characters. Informed principally by Bakhtinian criticism it foregrounds authorial and reader agency rather than viewing either reader or writer as passive victim or perpetrator of ideological agendas.

The study is further informed by the findings of market research undertaken in the name of a major publisher which integrated the appeal superheroes as characters had for their readers.

**Rick Hudson (Bath Spa University)**

### **The Silver Age Superhero as Psychedelic Shaman**

In this paper I present some preliminary work from my thesis on the posthuman body in superhero comics. It begins with a brief overview of the discourse of posthumanism, how it is used in three different but overlapping realms- philosophy/critical theory, techno-scientific practice, and speculative fiction. For instance the 1938 debut of Superman can be read as part of a wider discourse of the posthuman that takes in popularised Nietzschean ideas and the eugenics movement as a figuration of posthuman corporeality that my thesis ironically dubs, 'the perfect body'. This paper however deals with Silver Age comics and the 'psychedelic body'. It first addresses how the nascent counterculture of the early sixties adopted Marvel comics. The increased use of psychedelic drugs by certain sections of this movement helped foster a vision of a psychedelically evolved post-humanity marked by a form of 'cosmic consciousness'. Such groups 'poached' the imagery of superheroes as evolutionary blueprints for this transformation as well as adopting terms like freak and mutant to designate their new posthuman identity. A mutual influence, psychedelic imagery found its way into the comics. Intuitively, in the cases of Ditko and Kirby, but apparently quite deliberately by the time of Engelhart's *Dr. Strange* and Starlin's *Warlock* and *Captain Marvel* in the early seventies. The paper then goes on to consider the superhero as shamanic figure, with particular reference to its influence on the Human Potential Movement that grew out of the counterculture. The paper concludes by discussing how this confluence of mysticism and science, or the modern and pre-modern, can still be found in the superhero comic book, and how the psychedelic posthuman body invites fresh consideration of the lines that separate the body from the mind, reason from irrationality, drugs from technology and the superhero fictions from reality.

**Scott Jeffrey (University of Stirling)**

### **Neverender: Comic Books and Rock 'n' Roll**

In 2008 Coheed and Cambria, a progressive rock band hailing from New York, held their *Neverender* tour. The concerts took place in New York, Chicago, Paris and London. Each concert consisted of four performances held over four days, with each of their albums performed in order over the course of the concert. The albums are one site through which the band tells a speculative fiction called *The Amory Wars*, the other story sites being graphic novels, a codex novel, a series of interstitials and a musical side-project.

A number of other performing artists, such as Neil Young and Tori Amos, have either adapted their music into graphic novels or explored transmedial storytelling through both music and graphic novels. I explore how *The Amory Wars*' corporealises the storytelling process through a two-fold process; the first being the physical experience of hearing music and the second being the temporal experience of reading with music.

**Laura-Jane Maher (Monash University)**

### **Thinking Outside the Bubble: On the Invisible Conspicuousness of Speech Balloons**

In *The Aesthetics of Comics*, David Carrier points to the importance of the introduction of direct speech into a medium previously inhabited by predominantly mute characters: "The speech balloon is a great philosophical discovery... [it] defines comics as neither a purely verbal nor a strictly visual art form, but as something radically new" (2000). In this paper I intend to explore the many aspects of this iconic narrative device, one of the most instantly defining features of the form. I will begin by offering an overview of the genesis and subsequent rise of the speech balloon, illustrating some of the wide number of variations that exist across the medium.

The origins of the speech bubble seem simple enough: to circumvent the obvious shortcoming of pictorial renditions regarding the representation of speech. It is such a masterful artifice that the reader barely sees it, such a brusque, obvious convention that it swiftly becomes seamless even to those approaching the form for the first time: it creates a blind spot around its bluntness. The invisible conspicuousness of the speech bubble not only brings into question the reductive assumption that narratives accompanied by images somehow hinder the reader's powers of imagination, but this invisible conspicuousness is also the example of suspension of disbelief par excellence. It is this very paradox –the fact that the balloon hides in plain sight– that I chiefly wish to interrogate. Ultimately, the speech bubble engenders a new kind of reading, one that causes us to treat language as image, radically changing the relationship between reader and text.

**Xavier Marcó del Pont (Royal Holloway, University of London)**

### **After the Deluge –Everyday Tactics and Representational Strategies in a Time of Crisis**

Josh Neufeld's (2009) *AD New Orleans- After the Deluge*, a multiple narration in comics form about experiences of displacement and survival in the immediate aftermath of hurricane Katrina's devastation of New Orleans in 2005, offers the opportunity for a critical examination of liberal documentary using some key concepts from de Certeau's (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*, as they appear relocated by crisis. The everyday, and 'ordinary people' have been foci of both documentary (Creeber, 2009; Biressi and Nunn, 2005; Barson, 2006) and a tradition within graphic narrative (Schneider, 2010). Michel de Certeau's (1984) theory of the everyday describes the everyday as a field defined by strategies and tactics of survival and resistance. Routine becomes displaced in situations of humanitarian crisis and it may at first glance appear that everyday life is not merely disrupted, but annihilated. This paper proposes that this is not necessarily the case. Rather, that the everyday is refracted by such events; extreme situations do not extinguish, but rather radically alter the circumstances of the everyday. Tactics remain key for subjects navigating through the upheaval of trauma and crisis, while crisis exposes the relations of power brought to bear on people's lives, thus making constitutive strategic factors of everyday life acutely apparent.

Large scale humanitarian crises are often documented and disseminated in mediated forms, in line with the liberal documentary impulse to appeal to a moral response, galvanise public opinion and facilitate political intervention. Images of the displaced and socially disadvantaged are a staple of photo-journalism and the iconic images taken by photographers commissioned by the Farm Security Administration in the US during the 1930s still retain currency as exemplars of this mode of documentary exposition. This paper examines ways in Neufeld's graphic narrative circumvents some of the pitfalls and

paradoxes of liberal documentary exposed in the work and writings of Martha Rosler, Trinh Minh-Ha and Jill Godmilow.

**Nina Mickwitz (University of East Anglia)**

### **Redefining Comics-As-Literature**

Though comics have frequently been labelled a kind of literature, true literary treatments of the medium remain nearly nonexistent, as critics tend to focus on content: on themes, plots and ideas. The fact that comics tell diverse and interesting stories makes them no more 'literary' than film, opera, or indeed soap-opera. Scholars championing the efficacy of visual storytelling make a grave error in claiming that it is storytelling that makes comics literary, thus aligning narrative with the verbal medium. This paper undertakes a genuinely literary approach to comics.

Gerard Genette characterises literariness as a "rupture with the ordinary regime of language." Comics critics are extremely reluctant to examine linguistic content, a certain defensiveness about pervasive attitudes towards comics resulting in an insistence on the universal primacy of images; but while it is correct that images-in-sequence can narrate as well as words, it is not true that images *always* tell the bulk of the story in comics. This paper begins by looking at language, showing via examples firstly how comics *can* be heavily dependent on text, and secondly how that text can be just as properly – that is, *formally* – literary as in verbal narratives.

Aware of the questionable linguistic bias of this approach, the paper will move on to look at the specific ways the comics form deploys its verbal content. It considers how narrative breakdown, spatial arrangement, and integration with pictorial content create literary textual effects that are in fact unique to the medium. In conclusion, it proposes that examination of comics' linguistic content shows at once how they genuinely may be deemed literary texts, and also how the form's own specific devices create literary effects different from – even beyond – those of traditional literature.

**Hannah Miodrag (University of Leicester)**

### **Adoption/Adaptation of *Hamlet*: a Graphic Retelling of the Classic**

The viscosity of comics by superseding the act of reading them, intermediates the act of interpreting the text as/ through graphology. The act of adaptation of literary texts into graphic novels makes it inevitable for any literary text to be 'essentially' a serialized 'spectacle' or visual narrative: an act of storytelling dissecting the plot and action into pages and panels, depicted through images, sound effects, captions and speech bubbles. As long as the adaptation is understood as a means of conveying graphological texts in a primarily visual syntax, this works: Shakespeare becomes a Charles and Mary Lamb story-telling project in images, with the language made very contemporary, literary narrations and soliloquy never converted to visuals and the complications/gaps in the very plot. Thus when the condensed adaptations of literary classics are brought out in the comic series of *Classics Illustrated* or the publications of 'Great Illustrated Classics', 'Graphic Classics' or Saddleback's *Illustrated Classics*, it ends up visualizing 'the story' of the text.

Graphic adaptations cause the original text to undergo tremendous artistic transformation with visualisation, illustration, metamorphozation, defamiliarisation and individual vision by the adapters (the writer and the illustrator) affecting its conception. In the process 'words and pictures don't just mirror one another, but interact in many different ways, and each of the two contributes its own share for the interpretation of the text.' Adaptation theories state that one major problem that adaptors faces while 'revisiting prior works' is the manner in which the book is conceived in the minds of the readers and an attempt to stay truthful to it, which in turn causes a sort of redundancy in the retelling.

Here my area of concern is not the fidelity to/replication of/ loss of 'aura' of the original (which gave them tags such as 'Classics desecrated' or 'classics castrated' by academicians). In this paper I intend to look at the adaptations of Hamlet by 'Manga Shakespeare' and 'No Fear Shakespeare' to study how a medium that uses the format of panels, read in a deliberate sequence to evoke a linear progression of time, adapts such texts devoid of an essential plot or linearity of events. Examining how the devices of rhetoric-narrative, description, exposition and argumentation are converted from the verbal medium to 'pictofiction.' Time, space and action in a book are mostly deducted from the information that is provided with, but in graphic adaptations, the verbal and the visual are merged together in the same sign which becomes symbolic and iconic of the same. At many instances one can see that the process is not merely an adaptation, but an adoption of the narrative into the graphic medium, using 'repetitive symbols and recognizable images.' I will also be drawing from my experience as an Editor with Campfire Graphic Novels as my current project is the adaptation of *Hamlet*.

**Aswathy Padmasenan (Campfire Publications, New Delhi)**

### **The Laughing Fish and The Killing Book: from comic book to cartoon, and back again**

My paper examines the intermedial relationship between Warner Bros' *Batman: The Animated Series* and its comic book tie-in, DC's *The Batman Adventures*. By comparing a 22-minute animation with its 22-page counterpart, I define their encounter as a lively ontological dialogue. It is not my intention to diminish the effectiveness of these works as children's entertainments; however, I do wish to emphasize the complexity of their interaction, and their larger engagement with the world of Batman, and animation as a whole.

*The Laughing Fish* (1993, director: Bruce Timm, writer: Paul Dini) adapts two celebrated Batman comics, 'The Joker's Five-Way Revenge' (1973) and 'The Laughing Fish' (1978). In so doing, the episode places itself in continuity with the '70s renewal of Batman's Gothic aspects. While this bestows fan credibility upon *Batman: TAS*, it also invites us to consider the "translation creativity" (Gough, 2007) at work in transposing this source material onto the Saturday morning cartoon format. My discussion of *The Laughing Fish* considers tone, style and censorship, concluding with a reflection on the (very self-conscious) use of the television as a prop.

The challenge of capturing an animation style on the page leads me to 'The Killing Book' (1994, writer: Kelley Puckett, pencils: Mike Parobeck). By comparing frame grabs against Mike Parobeck's comic panels, I offer a stylistic analysis that considers the fluidity of drawn lines, relative temporalities across panels and frames, and the 'silence' of the comic book. The meta-textuality of 'The Killing Book' (in which the Joker kidnaps a comic-book artist to detail his crimes) positions itself within a tradition that acknowledges the Fleischer Bros., Frederic Wertham, Will Eisner and Alan Moore.

I conclude by considering the ongoing life of the 'DC Animated Universe' as a franchise.

**Nicolas Pillai (University of Warwick)**

### **Gay Ghetto Comics: Constructing a Dominant Gay Habitus**

Comics set in the 'gay community' or 'ghetto' began to be published in gay and lesbian magazines in the 1960s, and with the emergence of established and commercialized urban communities throughout the 1970s and 80s, the 'gay ghetto' type of comic strip began to appear more often in local and national publications throughout the United States (and to a lesser extent in the UK.) The 'Gay ghetto' comics are often set in a recognizably 'gay' location such as the Castro, San Francisco. The action tends to take place in and around 'gay community' institutions such as gay bars, bookshops and clubs.

This talk will discuss the ways in which the gay ghetto comics work to construct a visible and 'typical' gayness and a dominant gay habitus, through references to fashions, music,

locations, etc. This typification however also serves to reify certain culturally and historically specific gay scenes and identities as exemplary of 'what the gay community is *really* like,' presenting an image of the gay community as relatively unified and stable and erasing internal difference and alterity. In contrast, the queer independent comics that emerged in the 1990s critique this notion of a unified gay community in various ways. In some of these comics the action takes place away from any recognizable 'gay community'; in others the gay community is critiqued through parody and caricature in a decidedly unsympathetic way; in yet others a non-mainstream gay habitus and social scene is constructed through references to 'alternative' music, fashion and sensibilities.

**Sina Shamsavari (Goldsmiths, University of London)**

### **Motion Comics and the Various forms of Adaptation and Appropriation from the Comic Book Medium**

Motion comics have arguably become part of a concerted effort to broaden the appeal of the comic book medium to new audiences who are actively engaged with new forms of digital media, hardware and mobile technology. Well known motion comic adaptations have included *Watchmen* (Moore and Gibbons, 1986) as well as lesser known works such as the comic book of the popular *Metal Gear Solid* videogame franchise. The emerging field of motion comics is replete with a myriad of approaches and ideologies that determine the manner in which each motion comic adaptation is created. This conference paper will argue that the various adaptation processes of comic book to motion comic practice, warrant greater study in order to fully understand the subtleties of this hybrid medium.

This conference paper will provide a summary of adaptation discourse through a brief literature review of adaptation studies with a particular emphasis on the role of intertextuality and the issue of authenticity. This will be accompanied by a study of adaptation practices from the comic book source and the emerging digital post-production approaches of animators and creative practitioners in the motion comic field. Furthermore, a look at more experimental forms of comic book to motion comic adaptation practices will reveal alternative forms of motion comic production that are mostly ignored by many of the larger comic book publishers. Finally, I will argue that the evolution of the motion comic is an ongoing process, and that future developments by commercial and independent animators will continue to push the boundaries of this new hybrid medium.

**Craig Smith (Queen's University, Belfast)**

### **BIOGRAPHIES**

#### **SPEAKERS**

**Armelle Blin-Rolland** has just submitted her PhD in French Studies at Bangor University on 'voice' in Céline's *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, Queneau's *Zazie dans le métro* and their adaptations into comic book, illustrated novel, film, recorded reading and stage performance. She is a Teaching Fellow at the University of Bath. Publications: 'Voice in Adaptation: Tardi's Illustration of Céline's *Voyage au bout de la nuit*', in *Adaptation: Studies in French and Francophone Culture*, ed. by Neil Archer and Andreea Weisl-Schaw (Peter Lang, forthcoming 2011); 'Narrative Techniques in Tardi's *La Der des ders* and *Voyage au bout de la nuit*', *European Comic Art*, 3.1 (2010), 23-36.

**Casey Brienza** is a PhD candidate in Sociology at the University of Cambridge and member of Trinity College, Cambridge. She received her AB from Mount Holyoke College in 2003 and her MA from New York University's Department of Media, Culture, and Communication in 2009. Her doctoral thesis, fully funded by an External Research Studentship from her College, is being written under the supervision of John B. Thompson on manga publishing and the transnational production of print culture. Casey also has refereed articles in print or forthcoming in *The Journal of Popular*

*Culture, LOGOS, Publishing Research Quarterly, Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics, and The International Journal of the Book.*

**Ed Clough** is a postgraduate student at the University of East Anglia, researching a thesis on the conceptual function of fictional architecture, objects, and structure in the novels of William Faulkner. Other research interests in addition to comics and graphic novels include utopianism, waste and trash, depictions of violence and disability, performance and P.T. Barnum.

**Karrie Fransman's** autobiographical comic strips have been published in *The Guardian*. Her comic serial *The Night I Lost My Love* ran in *The Times* and was praised by director Nicolas Roeg on BBC Radio 4. Her graphic novel, *The House That Groaned* will be published in January 2012 by Random House's Square Peg. She has talked about her work at the Institute of Contemporary Arts and for The British Council in Brussels. Her comic have been exhibited at The Cartoon Museum, London Print Studio, Marine Studios and will be toured to Belgium in December for Strip Turnhout where she is due to lecture at Sint-Lucas University on experimental comics. She is currently running an 18- month comic youth project for graduates at London Print Studio and another educational comic project with House of Illustration. <http://www.karriefransman.com/>

**Lina Ghaibeh** is a half Syrian half Danish animation and comics artist, living in Lebanon. After having worked as Senior Animator for a local and pan Arab TV for 15 years, she is currently teaching animation and motion graphics full time at the American University of Beirut (past 6 years). Her research focus is on comics in the Arab world, particularly investigating the manifestations of comics in the Arab world as part of contemporary and popular Arab cultural production. Her most recent article was on the history of Lebanese comics, published at Lucca comics and games festival. She has participated in several international film festivals, including Oberhausen Film festival, Hamburg short film festival, Annecy , Ottawa, Seoul, San Francisco, Copenhagen, Casablanca, Ismailia and Beirut, as well as Angoulême comics festival in France. Her films focus on human, women and children's rights and issues, in addition to exploring issues of Identity. [lq00@aub.edu.lb](mailto:lq00@aub.edu.lb)

**Michael Goodrum** obtained his PhD from the University of Essex in 2011, where he has taught in the Department of History since 2007. His doctoral research focused on the relationship between historical trauma and superhero narratives in US history but he has also published on wider questions of heroism. Future research will look to develop interests in the representation of both gender and heroism.

**Dr. Simon Grennan** has been practicing internationally as an artist since 1990. As part of collaborative artists team Grennan & Sperandio, he is well known as a pioneer of interventionist, New Genre and post-relational practice, through publishing, television and social action projects. His academic research has a focus on visual narratology. Simon has also been Director of Viewpoint Photography Gallery, Salford and Director of Public Art Forum (now IXIA). Grennan & Sperandio are at <http://kartoonkings.com/> .

**Daniel Merlin Goodbrey** is a lecturer in Interaction Design at The University of Hertfordshire in England. A prolific and innovative comic creator, Goodbrey has gained international recognition as a leading expert in the field of experimental digital comics. His hypercomic work received the International Clickburg Webcomic Award in Holland in 2006 while his work in print was awarded with the Isotope Award for Excellence In Comics in San Francisco in 2005. An archive of his work can be found at <http://e-merl.com/consulting>.

**Rick Hudson** is an English Literature academic specialising in the study of fantasy / sf and horror narratives, and also a professional writer working in these genres. In addition to being

the author of three novels and numerous short stories he has also written for comic strips and computer games.

**Scott Jeffery** is PhD student and teaching assistant with the School of Applied Social Sciences at Stirling University. He is currently in the final year of completing his thesis entitled, "Human, Subhuman, Superhuman: An Exploration of the Development and Reception of the Posthuman Body in Superhero Comic Books". The thesis presents a cultural history of the posthuman body, focusing in particular on how superhero comics intersect with posthuman visions found in philosophy, science and mythology, and how readers (both current and historically) may use these representations to make sense of what some describe as our 'posthuman future'.

**LJ Maher** is a PhD student at the School for English Communications and Performance Studies at Monash University in Australia. She completed a combined Bachelor's degree in Law and Performing Arts before redirecting her research toward literary studies. Her thesis interrogates the potential for a Consumer-Creator continuum in transmedial literacy. Her previous research addresses issues of queering in Young Adult literature, women's access to human rights discourse and prostitution, the abject and the sublime in *vergangenheitsbewältigung* literature and archetypal motifs in Australian literary engagements with genocide.

**Xavier Marcó Del Pont** was born in Buenos Aires, Xavier and emigrated to the United Kingdom in 2002 to read English at Royal Holloway, University of London. He subsequently completed an MA in Literatures of Modernity and is currently working on a doctoral project on narrative structure, structural metaphors, and organizational devices in the work of Thomas Pynchon. He also writes narrative prose, both short and long, and occasionally poetry.

**Nina Mickwitz** is a PhD student at the School of Film and Television at University of East Anglia. Her research is formulated around the proposal that graphic narrative texts hitherto categorised broadly under non-fiction (or as in the case of the Harvey Awards; 'biographical, historical or journalistic') offer their reader a position equivalent to that of a documentary audience, and that documentary's multimodality offers a point of comparison productively divergent from literary models.

**Hannah Miodrag:** I am nearing completion of my doctoral thesis, which surveys the field of comics criticism that has developed over the last few decades, specifically addressing the ways literary and linguistic theory have been put to use within it. I have previously delivered papers on word-image hybridity and the defensive strain in Anglophone criticism, and have published in the *International Journal of Comics Art* and (forthcoming) *Studies in Comics*.

**Aswathy Padmasenan** is currently editor with Campfire Publications in New Delhi, a firm that specializes in graphic novels. Her areas of research interest as theories are authorship, adaptation and reception. The choice of my M.Phil topic at the English and Foreign Languages University, *The Making of a Global Author: The Case of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and J.K.Rowling* evolved through an enthusiasm to combine these areas in scholarly investigations (From Marquez to Rowling, from reviews to film adaptations, it was a broad enough canvas). She is also a published photographer and was selected for the DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst) Grant at the Technical University of Dresden. After coming back to India she joined Campfire and has recently started doctoral studies at the University of New Delhi. [aswathypsenan@gmail.com](mailto:aswathypsenan@gmail.com)



**Nicolas Pillai** is currently completing his doctoral thesis on Hollywood narratives of marriage in the '30s and '40s at the University of Warwick. His research interests include jazz on film, the crime genre and cult television. He has given papers on Tijuana bibles (University of Winchester), the Thin Man series (MPCA/ACA, Detroit) and *Doctor Who's* political address (Northumbria University). He has recently interviewed comics writers Frank Spotnitz and Stefan Petrucha and artists Charlie Adlard and Brian Denham for an essay on licensed *X-Files* comics, to be published in *Science Fiction Film and Television* (Liverpool University Press). He has forthcoming articles in the *International Journal of Comic Art* and *The Comics Grid*. [nicolas.pillai@gmail.com](mailto:nicolas.pillai@gmail.com)

**Sina Shamsavari** is a comics writer/artist and comics researcher. His main area of interest - in practise and research - is representations of queer identities in comics, and he is currently completing a PhD at Goldsmiths College on the history of queer comics. He lectures in Cultural Studies at the London College of Fashion.

**Craig Smith** was a practicing New Media Designer of fifteen years, working for a range of local UK, Irish and International clients. A Masters degree in Film and Visual Studies, attained at Queen's University, Belfast in 2009, informed his decision to continue theory-based research in comic book culture and the moving image at PhD level, under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Martin.

Craig believes that the emerging and contested field of Motion Comics, is one that is currently lacking sustained academic analysis and critique. A PhD thesis on the subject will hopefully open up new areas of debate and understanding within the motion comic field.

#### **CHAIRS etc.**

**Zara Dinnen** is PhD candidate and tutor in the department of English and Humanities, Birkbeck, researching representations of the digital in contemporary American culture. Some of the authors/artists/texts she is exploring include: *McSweeney's*, Jonathan Lethem, Mark Amerika, Cory Arcangel, *The Social Network*, Takeshi Murata, Richard Powers. Zara is co-convenor of the Contemporary Fiction Seminar at the Institute of English Studies, and Reviews Editor at *Dandelion*.

**Daniel Marrone** has a BA in Cultural Studies (2007) from York University in Toronto, and an MA in Communication and Culture (2009) from a joint programme between York and Ryerson University. In his research on nostalgia and the semiotic operations of comics, he investigates the possibility that comics are particularly suited to longing for the past.

**Paul Gravett** is the director of Comica, the annual London International Festival of Comics. He is an experienced journalist, editor, curator and broadcaster. The Man at the Crossroads, he co-edited the seminal *Escape Magazine* in the 1980s with Peter Stanbury, and is co-author of numerous non-fiction books on comics. He recently edited *1001 Comics You Must Read Before You Die* (Cassell).

**Dr. Matthew Green** is Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of Nottingham, with a keen interest in the afterlives of Blake and Byron and in Comics Studies. His recent and forthcoming publications include two edited collections *Byron and the Politics of Freedom and Terror* (Palgrave, 2011; co-edited with Piya Pal-Lapinski), and *Alan Moore and the Gothic Tradition* (Manchester University Press, forthcoming 2012). He is currently completing a monograph entitled *William Blake and Alan Moore: A Study in Cultural Inheritance*.



**Dr. Julia Round** (MA, PhD) is a senior lecturer in the Media School at Bournemouth University, UK, and edits the academic journal *Studies in Comics* (Intellect Books). 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 writing a monograph on the Gothic and graphic novels (McFarland, forthcoming 2013). For further details see [www.juliaround.com](http://www.juliaround.com).

**Dr. Roger Sabin** is Reader in Popular Culture at London's University of the Arts. He is the author of *Adult Comics* (1993) and *Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels* (2001). He has published extensively on comics, fanzines and television.

**Nicola Streeten** has been working as an illustrator for 15 years. Her first graphic novel, *Billy, Me & You*, has just been published in the UK by Myriad Editions. It first appeared in serialised form in *Liquorice Magazine*. She is in the final stage of a Master of Research in Art, Architecture and Design degree at The University of Lincoln, her research area is gender and the graphic novel. Nicola is co-director of *Laydeez do Comics*, a unique graphic novel forum, with a focus on autobiographical works.

[www.streetenillustration.com](http://www.streetenillustration.com)

[www.liquoricemag.com](http://www.liquoricemag.com)

[www.laydeezdocomics.com](http://www.laydeezdocomics.com)

Contact: [nicola@streetenillustration.com](mailto:nicola@streetenillustration.com)

**Tony Venezia** is a PhD student and tutor at Birkbeck, supposedly working on a thesis on history and historiography in the work of Alan Moore due for completion any time between now and next September. He has published reviews and articles in *Peer English*, *Radical Philosophy*, *Studies in Comics* and the *International Journal of Comic Art* and elsewhere and has contributed a chapter to the forthcoming anthology *Alan Moore and the Gothic Tradition* (edited by Matt Green, Manchester University Press). He is a founder and contributor to The Comics Grid, and co-convenor for the Contemporary Fiction Seminar series at the Institute of English Studies.

**Dr. Paul Williams** is Lecturer in Twentieth-Century Literature at the University of Exeter. His books include the co-edited collection *The Rise of the American Comics Artist: Creators and Contexts* (UP Miss, 2010) and the monograph *Race, Ethnicity and Nuclear Weapons: Representations of Nuclear Weapons and Post-Apocalyptic Worlds* (Liverpool UP, 2011). His articles and chapters have explored various cultural responses to the Cold War and the relationship between hip-hop performers and the War on Terror. He is currently completing an introduction to the work of Paul Gilroy for the Routledge Critical Thinkers series.

**Professor Kent Worcester** teaches political theory at Marymount Manhattan College. He is the author or co-editor of six books, including *C.L.R. James: A Political Biography* (1996), *Arguing Comics: Literary Masters on a Popular Medium* (2004, co-edited with Jeet Heer), and *A Comics Studies Reader* (2009, coedited with Jeet Heer). He has been a reviewer and interviewer for The Comics Journal since the mid-1990s. His recent publications include 'New York City, 9/11 and Comics' (*Radical History Review*, fall 2011), and 'Editorial Cartoons and the 2010 Election' (Paul Baines et al., *Explaining Cameron's Coalition - How it Came About: An Analysis of the 2010 British General Election*, 2011).



## **School of Arts**

**Birkbeck, University of London  
43 Gordon Square  
London WC1H 0PD**

**<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/arts/>**

Welcome to the School of Arts, one of the liveliest and most successful university schools in the country. The School is home to Birkbeck's courses in English and Humanities, History of Art and Screen Media, European Cultures and Languages, Media and Cultural Studies, and Iberian and Latin American Studies. Our diverse, innovative and vibrant prospectus ranges from short courses to PhDs.

The School of Arts is located at number 43 Gordon Square in the heart of London's historic Bloomsbury. Gordon Square was developed in the 1820s by Thomas Cubitt, then London's best known builder. It is famous for its association with the Bloomsbury Group, a collective of intellectuals, writers and artists, including Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster, who lived and worked around Bloomsbury in the first half of the 20th century. The economist John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946) lived at 46 Gordon Square, which is marked by a blue plaque. The same house was used by the Bloomsbury Group when the painter Vanessa Bell lived there before Keynes. The writer and biographer Lytton Strachey lived at 51 Gordon Square.

Extensively refurbished at a cost of £1.7million, 43 Gordon Square is the academic and administrative hub of the School of Arts. The building also houses the architecturally acclaimed, state-of-the-art Centre for Research in Film and Visual Media. Opened in 2007, the Centre has been specially designed to be used for teaching, research and conferences, and is equipped with a 70-seat luxury cinema. It is mainly used by students, but is also hired out by the International Cinema Office for previews and conferences. Once a week it opens to the public for London-related films.

Approximately 700 undergraduate students and 460 postgraduate students currently study at the School of Arts, with more than 2,000 students taking short courses. In addition, over 200 students are undertaking research at PhD level. We are located in Gordon Square, in the famous Bloomsbury area of central London. It's a unique part of the capital, offering world-famous museums and galleries in a setting of beautiful, leafy squares.

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020 7580 8155  
[http://www.cartoonmuseum.org.whisky  
.webhoster.co.uk/site/](http://www.cartoonmuseum.org.whisky.webhoster.co.uk/site/)  
Tottenham Court Road tube

### **Forbidden Planet**

179 Shaftesbury Avenue  
London WC2H 8JR  
020 7420 3666  
[forbiddenplanet.com](http://forbiddenplanet.com)  
Tottenham Court Road tube

### **Gosh!**

1 Berwick Street  
London W1F 0DR  
020 7636 1011  
[info@goshlondon.com](mailto:info@goshlondon.com)  
Tottenham Court Road tube

### **Megacity Comics**

18 Inverness Street  
Camden, London NW1 7HJ  
020 7485 9320  
[megacitycomics.co.uk](http://megacitycomics.co.uk)  
Camden Town tube

### **Orbital Comics**

8 Great Newport Street, London  
WC2H 7JA  
020 7240 0591  
[orbitalcomics.com](http://orbitalcomics.com)  
Leicester Square tube

### **Waterstone's**

82 Gower Street  
London WC1E 6EQ  
020 7636 1577

### **Foyles**

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London WC2H 0EB  
020 7437 5660  
Tottenham Court Road tube

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Tottenham Court Road tube

### **Book Warehouse**

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<http://www.lrbshop.co.uk/>  
Holborn/Tottenham Court Road tube

### **Skoobs Secondhand Books**

off Marchmont St, 66 The Brunswick  
Centre WC1N 1AE  
020 7278 8760  
<http://www.skoob.com/>



### **Cafés etc.**

There is a Costa in the foyer of the main Birkbeck building in Torrington Square. Round the corner from Birkbeck and Senate House is Store Street where you can find plenty of cafés, including the popular Store Street Espresso, cheap and cheerful Café Deco, Café Paradiso with comfy leather sofas, and The Building Centre café, where you can see Boris' giant London train set. There is a Co-op supermarket opposite. In the other direction is the ULU student union on Malet Street, opposite Waterstone's. The Lunchbox café and student union shop are located on the ground floor serving basic student fare, while The Gallery and Duck & Dive bars are both on the first floor and also serve food from mid-day. There is also a larger Costa in the basement of Waterstone's. Nearby is the Bloomsbury café on Gordon Street, a self-service outlet on the upper ground floor of UCL's Bloomsbury building. There are numerous places to either sit down and eat or pick up a takeaway around Russell Square. On Woburn Place, on the way to Euston, is Café Toscana which is relatively inexpensive. In Russell Square Park there is the Café in the Gardens which does passable generic continental fare. Next to Russell Square tube is Bar Centrale, which does good coffee. Opposite the tube is a Prêt à Manger and a Tesco express. Round the corner on Judd Street there are numerous reasonably priced eateries. Adjacent is the Brunswick centre in which can be found numerous overpriced eateries.

The best espressos in London can still be found at the Wild and Wood café on New Oxford Street, and the Espresso Room, Great Ormond Street opposite the children's hospital. Both are a short walk from Torrington Square.

### ***Laydeez do Comics ....***



...is a graphic novel reading group or forum with a focus on comic works based on life narrative, the drama of the domestic and the everyday. Launching the first meeting in July 2009 the group has been set up by illustrator Nicola Streeten and artist Sarah Lightman. As well as selecting favourite works to base discussion on, artists, academics and fans will be invited to speak. A platform

for people to test new works and ideas or works in progress will also be included. There is a new wave of comic work that is more domestic than superheroes, and yet little space to discuss these books. Coming to the world of comics from art and illustration backgrounds, Nicola and Sarah became aware of this and felt they can't be alone in their passion for this type of work.

The Sewing Room  
The Rag Factory  
16-18 Heneage Street, London E1 5LJ

<http://www.laydeezdocomics.com/>

**Weird Council: An International Conference on the Writing of China Miéville**  
**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2012**  
**School of Arts, Birkbeck, University of London**



Sponsored by Gylphi: Arts and Humanities Publisher, Birkbeck, University of London and the University of Lincoln. Part of the Gylphi *Contemporary Writers* series

Keynote speakers: Professor Sherryl Vint (Brock University), Professor Roger Luckhurst (Birkbeck, University of London)

Response and Q&A from China Miéville

Papers are invited for the first academic conference dedicated to the work of China Miéville. The winner of multiple awards, Miéville has developed a distinguished body of fictional work since the publication of his first novel, *King Rat*, in 1999. In addition to nine published novels (with his next forthcoming in May 2012) as well as a collection of short stories, Miéville is also a respected literary critic, political activist and legal scholar. His post-Suvinian working through of the "Fantastic" as a generic category encompassing SF, fantasy and the Gothic, as well as avant-garde traditions such as Surrealism, has been influential in cutting across received boundaries of genre.

The organisers welcome papers on any topic related to Miéville's writing from any disciplinary position. Topics might include, but are not limited to:

Miéville and his literary contexts – utopian/dystopian thinking- spaces of alterity- urban/spatial phantasmagorias - Marxist theory and aesthetics- Metaphor vs. Allegory- teratology and hybridity- noir and crime- gender and sexuality - religious cults- posthumanism - Young Adult literature- post-Suvinian SF criticism - political writing and activism- hierarchies of high and low culture- fan subcultures and geek aesthetics- comics and role playing games- affinities with key figures in the British fantastic tradition...

The conference welcomes proposals for individual papers and panels from any discipline and theoretical perspective. Submissions are welcome from both research students and academics. Please send a title and 300 word abstract for a 20 minute paper along with your name, affiliation and 100 word professional biography to [mieville@gylphi.co.uk](mailto:mieville@gylphi.co.uk) by **1<sup>st</sup> March 2012**.

The conference is organised by Dr Caroline Edwards, Lecturer in English, Department of English, University of Lincoln and Tony Venezia, PhD candidate and tutor, School of Arts, Birkbeck, University of London.

Selected papers from the conference proceedings will be published as *China Miéville: Critical Essays*, with a contribution by Miéville, as part of Gylphi's Contemporary Writers: Critical Essays series (Series Editor: Dr Sarah Dillon).

The Miéville conference website will launch in **autumn 2011**: see the Gylphi website for more details: <http://www.gylphi.co.uk/index.php>.

Image China Miéville, *Skulltopus*. Used with kind permission.