

**International Comparative Literature Association  
Report of the Activities of the Comic Studies and  
Graphic Narrative Research Committee**

**27 June 2017**

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## **Executive Summary:**

The research committee was formed and approved during the 2014-2015 school year. The 2016 meeting hosted by the University of Vienna marked the first formal meeting of the group as a research committee. Activities among the group members included several meetings and publications, detailed below for the 2016-2017 year.

A vibrant series of sessions was presented at the AILC/ICLA meeting.

A committee meeting was held on 22 July at the University of Vienna, during which publications, plans for the 2019 ICLA meeting and a session at the ACLA 2017 meeting in Utrecht was planned.

## **Description of the Committee:**

The research committee in Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative seeks to advance the study of the medium of comics in the field of comparative literature. The committee aims to facilitate opportunities for discussion, to present research in joint sessions at the AILC/ICLA congresses and other major meetings, support the publication of the results in journals and anthologies, and to support young and emerging scholars in the field. All research committee members share a strong commitment to developing methods of analysis and comics' theory as well as trans- and intermedial relations.

## **Current Membership:**

Adnan Mahmutovic, Alison Halsall, Angelo Piepoli, Anna-Sophie Jürgens, Barbara Grüning, David Coughlan, Denise Ask Nunes, Emanuela Zirzotti, Francesco-Alessio Ursini, Guilherme Perreira, Hans-Joachim Backe, Hiroko Katsuyama, Kai Mikkonen, Lea Pao, Leonardo Vidal, Lisa DeTora, Maaheen Ahmed, Nicola Paladin, Noriko Hiraishi, Rikke Platz Cortsen, Roberta Bronzatto, Stefan Buchenberger, Tracy Lassiter, Umberto Rossi

## **Objectives**

The research committee in Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative seeks to advance the study of the medium of comics in the field of comparative literature. The committee aims to facilitate opportunities for discussion, presentation of research in joint sessions at the AILC/ICLA congresses and other major meetings, and by encouraging the publication of the results in journals and anthologies.

## Completed Activities 2016-2017

The collection following "Future in Comics" hosted by Francesco Ursini is underway and will appear in 2017 under the McFarland imprint.

Kai Mikkonen published a book on *Comics and Narratology* (Routledge); he also had an invited presentation in comics studies at Cambridge University in June 2017.

Umberto Rossi and Kai Mikkonen organized a session for ENCLS 2017 to be held in Helsinki. Angelo Piepoli organized a seminar for the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA) to be held in Utrecht. As part of a larger seminar, Lisa DeTora (Hofstra University) organized a panel on graphic novels and medical humanities at the ACLA conference to be held in Utrecht in July 2017.

"Stars and Strips: La Guerra nell'Opera di Will Eisner" was published by Nicola Paladin.

Additional publications:

Ursini, F.-A. (In press). Where is the Future? An Analysis of Places and Location Processes in Comics. In Ursini, F.-A., A. Mahmutovic & F. Bramlett (eds.). *Visions of the Future in Comics: International Perspectives*. McFarland Press.

Ursini, F.-A., A. Mahmutovic & F. Bramlett. (In Press). Prolegomena. In Ursini, F.-A., A. Mahmutovic

Ursini, F.-A. (in press). Punk "Bodies" and the "do it yourself" ethics. In Field, Chris, Keegan Lannon, Michael MacBride, and Christopher Douglas. Jefferson. (eds.), *The Punk Aesthetics in Comics*. McFarland Press, 108-126.

## Ongoing and Future Activities:

1. Facebook group
  - A facebook group was founded some years ago and is actively updated by the membership on an ongoing basis
2. Web site
  - A web site or page on the AILC/ICLA site is planned. K Mikkonen to reach out within ICLA to determine next steps.
3. Future meeting planning
  - A core team (S. Buchenberger, L Pao, and N Hirasihhi) was formed for meeting planning for 2019

#### 4. Publications

- De Gruyter press expressed an interest in publishing new work in comics studies
- L DeTora, A Piepoli and U Rossi currently planning a volume for ICLA proceedings

## **Appendix: Group Session Description for the 2016 AILC/ICLA Meeting in Vienna**

Group Session, Research Committee “Comic Studies and Graphic Narrative”

Comics and graphic narratives engage in a wide array of artistic practices. They have emerged as genres from the long-debated relationship between the verbal and the visual, and have since then continuously challenged understandings of graphic storytelling. Today, scholars widely agree that comics and graphic narratives are more than a mere combination of textual and graphic media, art forms, and means of representation, but it remains an open question as to how they have critically shaped our contemporary categories of media, literature, aesthetics, and culture at large. The proposed group session aims to advance these ongoing questions about the history of the genre, and the cultural and social developments of comics and graphic narratives as significant expressions of historical and cultural realities. With the focus on “unsettled narratives,” the sessions brings together recent topics and approaches such as, but not exclusively, the theme and representation of war and conflict, the role of gender in superhero comics, and the history of satire and journalistic publications; topics that continue to invite us to ask what it means to read, interpret, and analyze graphic novels and comics not only as a part of today’s literary scene but a fundamental question of literary criticism and comparative literature. The session is a continuation of the symposia held at the previous ICLA congresses in Hong Kong, Rio, Seoul, and Paris, and invites papers that contribute to these developments, including historical and comparative approaches (questions about genre, medium, production, and reception), narrative studies (forms of storytelling, sequence, temporality, spatiality, voice), culture, social, and media studies (globalization, comics and other media, gender, ethnicity, politics, pedagogy), as well as analytical and theoretical approaches in linguistics, literature, philosophy, and arts.

### **Titles and Presenters:**

1. Umberto Rossi (Independent Scholar)  
The Myth of the Great War: Hugo Pratt's W.W.I Graphic Novelettes
2. Nicola Paladin (University of Rome)  
Will Eisner's Spirit's Participation to the Second World War
3. Francesco Ursini (Stockholm University)  
Conflict and Social Control in Shingeki no Kyojin

4. David Coughlan (University of Limerick)  
Grant Morrison's Human Animal Man
5. Adnan Mahmutovic (Stockholm University)  
Maxime Miranda in Minimis Reimagining Swarm Consciousness and Planetary Responsibility through Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind
6. Stefan Buchenberger (Kanagawa University)  
Future Imperfect: Dystopia, Time Travel, Absolute Power and the Incredible Hulk.
7. Tracy Lassiter (Independent Scholar)  
Marvelous! New Depictions of Heroines in the Comics/Graphic Novel Genre
8. Noriko Hiraishi (University of Tsukuba)  
Girls on the Battlefield: from Cross-Dressed to Girly Fighters in Japanese Manga
9. Angelo Piepoli (Independent Scholar)  
Gender gaps in the clouds. Conservation and revolution in the Italian comics
10. Kai Mikkonen (University of Helsinki)  
Picture Story, Strip Design and the Order of Sequence - Narrative organization in late early nineteenth-century British "comic strips"
11. Angelo Piepoli (Independent Scholar)  
Wordless. How visual sequence becomes storytelling
12. Lea Pao (Penn State University)  
From Goya's "Caprichos" to Mahler's "Gedichte": What Comics Teach Us about How to Read a Poem
13. Lisa DeTora (Hofstra University)  
The Quantum Gaze in Twenty-First Century Graphic Novels
14. Barbara Grüning (University of Bologna)  
The public uses of comic books and the construction of collective memory
15. Chris Ceyns-Chikuma and Désirée Lorenz (University of Poitiers)  
Muslim Superheroes in France: reception of Kamala Khan as a case study of an unsettled narrative
16. Alison Halsall (York University, Toronto)  
Unsettling Narratives of Fear Visually: Illustrating and Adapting Neil Gaiman's The Graveyard Book
17. Christian Bachmann (Ch. A. Bachmann Verlag)  
The Unsettled Medium and Its Unsettling Media

## **Appendix: Group Session Description for the 2017 ACLA**

### **Meeting in Utrecht**

**Who's Bad? Representing Heroes, Villains and Anti-Heroes in Comics and Graphic Narratives** - A seminar sponsored by the ICLA Research

Committee on Comic Studies and Graphic Narratives:

**Gea and the Discovery of the Villains.** Angelo Piepoli, Independent Scholar, UK

**Go Nagai's Comic Divine Comedy: Devil-man's Jihad against Satan and God.** Takayuki Yokota-Murakami, Osaka University, Japan

**Heroes as Villains and The Alternate Universe as Genre.** Christoffer Bagger, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

**Kantian ethics an utilitarianism. The noble hero versus the anti-hero on ethics.** Helder Mendes, Centro de História d'Aquém e d'Além-Mar, Lisbon, Portugal

**La Bonrinqueña and 1898: Heroicity and Anti-Heroicity in the Construction of Puerto Rican National Identity.** Maria Fernanda Diaz-Basteris, University of California Davis, USA

**Noir Aesthetics, Dark Ethics: Moral Ambiguity in "Diomedes: a trilogia do acidente" and "The Fade Out".** Andre Cardoso, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

**Postmodern pastiche and The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen.** Roberto Serini, "Sapienza" University of Rome, Italy

**The Complexity of Black Jack: Japanese Medical Dark Hero in the 1970s.** Noriko Hiraishi, University of Tsukuba, Japan

**The Dark Age of Comics: Superman, moral ambiguity and twenty-first century America.** Elizabeth Throesch, Community College of Allegheny County, USA

**The Good, the Gook and the Grunt: the Representation of the Enemy in Vietnam War Comics.** Nicola Paladin, "Sapienza" University of Rome, Italy

**The Toxic Heroine in Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind.** Denise Ask Nunes, Stockholm University, Sweden

**Zanardi by Andrea Pazienza: A Villain Against No Heroes.** Manuel Caprari, Independent Scholar, Italy

## **Appendix: Tentative Titles for ICLA 2016 Proceeding**

1. Umberto Rossi (Independent Scholar)  
The Myth of the Great War: Hugo Pratt's W.W.I Graphic Novelettes
2. Nicola Paladin (University of Rome)  
Will Eisner's Spirit's Participation to the Second World War
3. Francesco Ursini (Stockholm University) "Social Control and Closed Worlds in Comics: *Shingeki no Kyojin* and the arcologies of oppression"



4. Stefan Buchenberger (Kanagawa University)  
Future Imperfect: Dystopia, Time Travel, Absolute Power and the Incredible Hulk.
5. Tracy Lassiter (Independent Scholar)  
Marvelous! New Depictions of Heroines in the Comics/Graphic Novel Genre
6. Noriko Hiraishi (University of Tsukuba)  
Girls on the Battlefield: from Cross-Dressed to Girly Fighters in Japanese Manga
7. Angelo Piepoli (Independent Scholar)  
Gender gaps in the clouds. Conservation and revolution in the Italian comics
8. Lisa DeTora (Hofstra University) The Quantum Gaze in Twenty-First Century Graphic Novels
9. Barbara Grüning (University of Bologna) 'Educating to remember: the public use of comics in Germany and Italy'
10. Alison Halsall (York University, Toronto)  
Unsettling Narratives of Fear Visually: Illustrating and Adapting Neil Gaiman's The Graveyard Book