

The PathoGraphics research team at the Freie Universität Berlin, Germany announces this upcoming conference and call for papers:

***Stories of Illness / Disability in Literature and Comics.
Intersections of the Medical, the Personal, and the Cultural
October 27-28, 2017 in Berlin, Germany***

Keynote speaker: Leigh Gilmore (Wellesley College),
Author of *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (2001) and
Tainted Witness: Why we doubt what women say about their lives (2017)

This two-day academic conference examines the ways in which knowledge and experience of illness and disability circulate within the realms of medicine, art, the personal and the cultural. We invite papers that address this question from a variety of different perspectives, including literary scholarship, comics studies, media studies, disability studies, and health humanities/ sociology/ geography.

To launch this conference, there will be an exhibit of comics dealing with medicine, illness/ disability, and caregiving, presented in the permanent pathological collection of the Berlin Museum of Medical History at the Charité established by Rudolf Virchow (<http://www.bmm-charite.de/en/museum/our-museum.html>). Our intent is to juxtapose the museum's anonymous anatomical specimens with situated personal works of comic art.

The exhibition, which will run for three months, opens Thursday, October 26, 2017 with talks by two of the central figures of the graphic medicine movement: **MK Czerwiec**, nurse and author of the comic *Taking Turns. Stories from HIV/AIDS Care Unit 371* (2017), and **Ian Williams**, physician and author of the comic *The Bad Doctor. The Troubled Life and Times of Dr. Iwan James* (2015) (see www.graphicmedicine.org).

For the conference that follows, we invite as yet unpublished papers on comics and/ or literary texts (both fictional and autobiographical) addressing one (or more) of the following questions:

- **Shared Spaces: The Transformative Relations between Literature/ Comics and Medicine/ Science**
How do scientific/ medical professionals use comics and/ or literature to engage the public and impart new research or public health measures? How do narrative and graphic illness stories influence medical and scientific concepts of health and disease? How do these diverse spaces of experience and knowledge interact with each other?
- **Inner Landscapes: The Aesthetics of Representing the Lived Experience of Illness**
What aesthetic strategies do literary works and comics use to reveal the inner perspective of living with illness/ disability/ medical treatment? How do narratives represent emotional situations of invisible suffering, such as psychic disorders, trauma, involuntary memories and flashbacks, but also autoimmune diseases or cancer? Literature has developed aesthetic techniques such as inner monologue, stream of consciousness, and metaphors; do comics employ comparable or different aesthetic strategies?

- **Timelines, Time Spirals, Time Vectors: Communicating Acute Illness, Chronic Disease, and Terminal Illness**
In *On Being Ill*, Virginia Woolf characterizes periods of illness as having a time of their own, “slowing down” life, revealing humans’ finiteness and inspiring unprecedented creativity. How do other literary and graphic illness narratives reflect the perception of time during illness? How is the disruption of acute illness or the caesura brought on by a new diagnosis represented? Do comics and literature employ different means of representing life with a chronic condition?
- **Confessing, Surviving, Normalizing: Constructing the Self in Illness Narratives**
What kind of subject is produced in contemporary illness narratives that rely on the confessional mode? As Michel Foucault has argued, such a mode is double-edged: it presumes a powerful speaking subject who is simultaneously subjected to the very institutions s/he addresses, ranging from healthcare to patient support groups and including the audiences of illness narratives. What kind of identity is enabled or foreclosed by concepts such as “survivorship”? What avatars are created in illness comics – do they differ from protagonists in written texts? Do literature and comics take part in or go beyond a process of normalization that is entailed in the confessional mode and the term ‘compliant patient’?
- **The Politics of Storying Illness: Going beyond the Individual**
Can illness narratives give voice to the experience of entire communities or comment on national healthcare systems (and their potential flaws)? Are there texts and comics that offer alternatives to narratives that focus on a single protagonist – if so, how do they do it? To what extent are illness narratives in literature and comics emancipatory and subversive, and to what extent do they tie into contemporary endeavors in bio-medical self-management, prophylaxis, and prevention?

For each panel, we welcome either theoretical reflections on or close readings of literary texts and/or comics; comparative papers on both artistic media are especially welcome. Accepted participants will receive funding to cover travel and accommodation expenses. Selected papers will be considered for publication in an edited volume on the subject of patho/graphics, i.e. literature and comics on illness/ disability.

Paper proposals should include a title, a 300-word abstract (max.) for a 20-minute presentation, and a short biographical note with institutional affiliation (where appropriate). Abstracts and papers can be in either English or German. Please submit by **May 31, 2017**, to: pathographics@fsgs.fu-berlin.de

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<http://www.fsgs.fu-berlin.de/pathographics> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVu9oHivu4s>

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