



SCHEDULE

Workshop “Pathography and Graphic Medicine: The Genres of PathoGraphics”

October 13-15, 2016

PathoGraphics research project, Friedrich Schlegel Graduate School,
Freie Universität Berlin

This workshop explores the ways that genres figure and operate in illness narratives and comics about medicine, illness, and disability. How are specific genres, such as life-writing, memoir, or confessional, distributed across the different media of literary narrative and comics? How do these two different media incorporate, enact, or revise generic traditions? What aesthetic expectations are coupled with these different genres, and how do they play out (similarly or differently) in illness narratives and works of graphic medicine? What are the resulting social, historical, and biomedical effects of these generic expectations, when we consider the role(s) played by illness narratives or works of graphic medicine in various different contexts?

Thursday, October 13, 2016, 6 pm

FU Berlin, Room L 115, Habelschwerdter Allee 45, 14195 Berlin

G. Thomas Couser, New York

Ethics, Politics, and the Visual Representation of Disability

Public Keynote Lecture

Introduction: Nina Schmidt

I come to this project as someone well versed in written, but not graphic, narratives of illness and disability. Given my point of entry, the key question for me is an obvious one: What difference does the medium make?

---For reader engagement and audience accessibility?

---For diversity of authorship?

---For the ethics and politics of representation?

In my keynote talk I hope to address these issues broadly. In the workshop paper, I will confine myself to the significance of the *visual* medium for the representation of disability.

Refreshments following

20:30 Dinner for participants at Alter Krug Dahlem, Königin-Luise-Straße 52, 14195 Berlin

Friday, October 14, 2016, 10 am – 5 pm
FU Berlin, Room JK 33/121, Habelschwerdter Allee 45, 14195 Berlin

10:00

Susan Squier, Penn State U & **Irmela Krüger-Fürhoff**, Berlin

"Patho", "Graphy", and "Graphics": Introductory Reflections on Illness Narratives in Literature and Comics

10:30 – 11:30

Panel chair: Susan Squier

Christina Maria Koch, Marburg

Drawing the Line: Defining Disease, Diagnosing Illness

Medical definitions and categories, and the ways in which they are assigned, affect patients and their support network deeply. I argue that graphic illness memoirs can shed light on two aspects of medical categorization and diagnosis of which medical practitioners are not always aware: shifting the focus from disease to the question of how health is understood, and exposing the burden of misdiagnosis as well as waiting for and coping with diagnosis. This is exemplified in stories about chronic conditions (such as Julia Wertz' *The Infinite Wait*), about the phenomenon of healthy carriers (such as Ken Dahl's *Monsters* or Lauren Weinstein's *Carriers*), or about misdiagnosis and self-diagnosis (such as John Porcellino's *The Hospital Suite*). I will also briefly situate my argument in the context of my doctoral dissertation, in which I study how medium-specific traits of graphic illness memoirs shape representations of illness experiences and their sociocultural dimensions. My study is structured along several thematic clusters of key features or issues that I see at work in graphic illness memoirs. Summarized broadly, they deal with the complexities of medical categorizations (as addressed here), the joint construction of medical case histories and personal accounts of illness, illness as a social phenomenon, and the individual in medical institutions and professionalism.

Sophia Martineck, Berlin

Providing Patient Information in Comics Form: Cardiac Catheterization

Sophia will give insight into her practical work as a comics artist, having recently collaborated with the Charité Berlin, one of the largest university hospitals in Europe, to produce a comic soon to be used in patient information.

11:30

Coffee break

12:00 – 13:00

Panel chair: Irmela Krüger-Fürhoff

G. Thomas Couser, New York

Ethics, Politics, and the Visual Representation of Disability

In autosomatography (autobiography about illness, disability, or other anomalous bodily conditions) the body, which is taken for granted when performing normally, comes to the fore – thematically and otherwise: the occasion for writing, and thus a central concern, is a somatic

condition, and the “plot” typically turns on somatic changes. And yet, in print narrative, the body is not “there” to be “seen” on the page. It may be described in some detail, and the reader may form a mental image of it, but that image is not literally inscribed by the author. In contrast, graphic narrative promises to fill in a lacuna that is striking even in print autosomatography: the absence of (the image of) the affected body. This aspect of comics has much potential for expressiveness. With disability and illness, the visual depiction of bodies is clearly more fraught. For these reasons, I see pathographic narrative as emerging at a key time. In my workshop paper, I will explore this nexus using a few exemplary texts.

Astrid Böger, Hamburg

Illness as Visual Metaphor in Recent Graphic Memoirs

Considering the increasing number of graphic memoirs on various illnesses both mental and physical that have been appearing in recent years, it is intriguing to look at works such as David Small’s *Stitches* (2009), Sarah Leavitt’s *Tangles: A Story of Alzheimer’s, My Mother, and Me* (2012), and Katie Green’s *Lighter than my Shadow* (2013) as graphic attempts at, first, expressing one’s experiences with illness as well as, perhaps even more importantly, some form of healing. Strikingly, all three works treat in one way or another the fraught relationship between parents and their children, simultaneously the source of both trauma and its transformation into art. In order to understand how this is achieved, it is useful to take into account the narrative conventions of the literary memoir as a genre primarily concerned with claiming authority over one’s life, and moreover to analyze how each work develops its own graphic style expressing the author’s highly subjective experience with illness and thereby making it sharable with others, arguably the most important step toward recovery. In particular, the critical appreciation of visual metaphors in graphic memoirs (cf. El Refaei 2003) allows us to revisit Susan Sontag’s older claim that illness metaphors have a tendency to silence and shame patients. By contrast, visual metaphors in graphic memoirs appear to have a truly transformative quality, allowing authors the creative expression of their traumatizing experiences by giving them a unique and highly aesthetic form.

13:00

Light lunch at Schlegel Graduate School (catering by Ristorante Galileo)

14:30 – 15:00

Panel chair: Stef Lenk

Franziska Gygax, Basel

Autopathographies as Autothanatographies and the Horizon of Language

A great number of autobiographers writing on their terminal illness and imminent death express their concern about the limits of language because they “c[o]me up against the horizon of language”, as Jenny Diski puts it in her autopathography *In Gratitude* (2016). Yet, in almost all autopathographies on terminal illness, their authors thematize dying and death and try to put into words what seems to be unrepresentable. Besides trying to cope with their illness, they not only write about what may be in wait for them, but also express in various and diverse ways what for them death could signify. Michel de Certeau’s famous statement that “[t]here is nothing so ‘other’ as my death, the index of all alterity” (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 193–194) can be related to these dying autobiographers’ attempts at engaging with the “other” at the moment of parting even if it only means being in a dialogue with another that might be the

reader. In my paper I will discuss a number of selected autothanatographies and their specific ways of integrating death into their discourse.

15:00

Coffee break

15:30 – 16:30

Panel chair: Alexandra Hummel

Dennis Schep, Berlin

Sick Bodies in Postwar French Philosophy

In the 20th century, anti-authorialism and the problematization of referentiality have made autobiography into a somewhat paradoxical genre. It is striking, however, that many of the authors who contributed to autobiography's philosophical problematization have themselves written autobiographical texts. In a number of these works, the sick body occupies a privileged position. In my contribution, I will open up this dossier, arguing that literary constructions of the sick body are used to negotiate a number of theoretical issues. My main reference point will be Jean-Luc Nancy's *L'intrus*, a text about the author's heart transplant that uses medical tropes to foreground the identity troubles that have preoccupied philosophy from Nietzsche to Derrida.

Nina Schmidt, Berlin

How to Read Patho/Graphics, or: Ways of Looking

Leading on from the research conducted for my PhD on contemporary German-language illness narratives of illness/ disability, this paper explores ways of looking in and at patho/graphics. It does so in a comparative manner, drawing on primary texts (of both textual and more visual kind) from both the English and the German-speaking cultural realm. Having repeatedly come across a self-conscious thematisation of the gaze and of 'staring' (Rosemarie Garland-Thomson) in the German-language texts I focused on for my thesis, the staring between author and reader in particular is something I would now like to explore further. Especially when doing comparative readings of patho/graphics, I wonder if this lends itself to productive theorising of representations of illness/ disability and the discursive waves they produce.

17:00

Excursion to Kreuzberg, multicultural heart of Berlin

19:30

Dinner at Restaurantschiff Van Loon, Carl-Herz-Ufer 5, 10961 Berlin

Saturday, October 15 2016, 10 am – 1 pm
FU Berlin, Room JK 33/121, Habelschwerdter Allee 45, 14195 Berlin

10:00 – 11:00

Panel chair: Nina Schmidt

Stef Lenk, Berlin

Drawing Outside the Lines: Pathography beyond the Visible Boundaries in Mental Illness

The aim of this practice-based research is to examine the emancipatory possibilities of a pathography of mental illness. Using drawing as a mode of thinking and the literary technique of magic realism in an interdisciplinary context, I will be creating a graphic narrative of anxiety and depression based on personal experience with the illness, followed by a curatorial essay examining the process and outcome of the work, the benefits of using the genre of magic realism (in relation to other graphic illness narratives) and how the creative process can result in regaining biographical authority and autonomy over a situation where the unseen effects of mental illness can be disempowering and debilitating.

Krista Quesenberry, Penn State U

Disability and the ‘Unwomen’ of Graphic Memoirs

Though depictions of the body in graphic pathographies may be largely a function of the author's style and preference, those styles nonetheless range from the realist to the fantastical, from the human to the resolutely non-human. Examples of women's bodies in graphic pathographies include the relatively normative female body (e.g. Marisa Acocella Marchetto's *Cancer Vixen*), the norm-challenging yet still female-coded body (A.K. Summers's *Pregnant Butch*), the distorted and dismembered body (Sarah Leavitt's *Tangles* or Jennifer Hayden's *The Story of My Tits*), the anthropomorphic or non-human body (Kaisa Leka's *I Am Not These Feet* or Karrie Fransman's *The House That Groaned*), and even the extreme of visually and spatially experimental bodies (Jenny Lin's *Skinny Leg*). In women's experiences of illness, disease, and disability, portrayal of the female body may, in fact, exceed the category of “woman” in both literal and figurative representations, leading authors of graphic pathographies to establish unique feminine subjectivities that work against both traditional and essentialist notions of the female body and femininity. I am interested, especially, in the way these non-normate bodies approach the border of monstrosity but are nonetheless read as variations of the human, owing at least in part to the verbal-visual tension of the comics form and the tension of self- and social perception central to life-writing genres. Ultimately, this is a narrow version of the larger conversation about invisible disabilities and social stigma, for which the navigation of identities centered on gender, sexuality, race, and dis/ability (and their intersections) may be insufficient for describing experiences of illness, which produce their own particular ways of living in and surviving against normative notions of the body and self.

11:00
Coffee break

11:30 – 12:00
Reading and discussion of MK Czerwic's paper:

Taking Turns: Stories from HIV/AIDS Care Unit 371

In this presentation, I will discuss my forthcoming graphic memoir, *Taking Turns: Stories from HIV/AIDS Care Unit 371*. It is possibly the first full-length graphic memoir by a nurse, and the first graphic memoir to focus on a specific site of health care delivery. Unit 371 was an inpatient hospital unit that was in operation from 1985 to 2000 and cared exclusively for patients with HIV/AIDS through the full spectrum of their disease with specialized medical, nursing, social service, chaplaincy, and community volunteer staff tailored to the unique needs of this patient population. For this project, I interviewed individuals who worked in each of these roles, in addition to one surviving patient. These interviews have been integrated with my memoir of caregiving during this unique time of crisis, one that led to many changes in the US healthcare system. Beyond HIV/AIDS, this text seeks to utilize the comics medium to interrogate the nature of boundaries between providers and patients, the complexities of grieving, and the actual and potential roles of art in healthcare. The four focus points of the Patho/Graphics Project (historical, aesthetic, political, and epistemic) will serve as guides as I examine the background research that informed the creation of this book and my entry into (and subsequent role in) the Graphic Medicine community.

12:00 – 12:30

Irmela Krüger-Fürhoff, Berlin & Susan Squier, Penn State U

Final Remarks: What's at Stake? Graphic Narratives, Pathography, and Literary Studies

12:30

Light lunch at Schlegel Graduate School (catering by Aux Delices N

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