



**Stories of Illness/ Disability in Literature and Comics.  
Intersections of the Medical, the Personal, and the Cultural**

International conference, October 27-29, 2017

PathoGraphics research group  
Friedrich Schlegel Graduate School of Literary Studies  
Freie Universität Berlin  
[www.fsgs.fu-berlin.de/pathographics](http://www.fsgs.fu-berlin.de/pathographics)

This 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. Speakers address this question from a variety of different perspectives, including literary scholarship, comics studies, media studies, disability studies, the health humanities and sociology.

With a Keynote by Leigh Gilmore (Wellesley College): “Risking Aversion: Witnessing Pain in Autobiography and Graphic Memoir”

**Thursday, 26th October 2017**

<b>6pm</b>	<p>Opening of the interventionist comics exhibition “Sick! Kranksein im Comic / Reclaiming Illness through Comics” at the Berlin Museum of Medical History at the Charité, with</p> <p>MK Czerwiec, nurse and comics artist, author of <i>Taking Turns: Stories from HIV/AIDS Care Unit 371</i> (2017) and</p> <p>Ian Williams, physician and comics artist, author of <i>The Bad Doctor</i> (2014)</p>
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**Friday, 27th October 2017**

<b>9.30-10am</b>	<p><b>Registration</b> at conference venue:</p> <p>Lecture Hall Ruin / Hörsaalruine, Campus Charité Mitte, Charitéplatz 1, 10117 Berlin</p>
<b>10-10.15am</b>	<b>Opening Remarks</b>

	by Irmela Krüger-Fürhoff (Freie Universität Berlin, academic lead PathoGraphics) and Susan Merrill Squier (Penn State, Einstein Visiting Fellow PathoGraphics)
<b>10.15am-1pm</b> incl. a short break	<b>Shared Spaces: The Transformative Relations between Literature/ Comics and Medicine/ Science</b> Chair: Susan Merrill Squier  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? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Einat Avrahami (Hebrew University of Jerusalem): “The Reflecting Physician”</li> <li>• Helen Spandler (University of Central Lancashire, Preston): “Madness and Comics: Crafting Psychiatric Contention?”</li> <li>• Martina Schlünder (University of Toronto) &amp; Pit Arens (Berlin): “Et verbum caro factum est (And the Word Became Flesh)”</li> <li>• Sherine Hamdy (University of California, Irvine): “An Anthropologist Embraces Comics: An EthnoGRAPHIC Story About Medical Promise, Friendship, and Revolution in Egypt”</li> <li>• Shelley Wall (University of Toronto): “The Language of Comics in Medical and Bioscientific Communication”</li> </ul>
<b>1-2.30pm</b>	Lunch break (at your own disposal)
<b>2.30-5.15pm</b> incl. a short break	<b>Inner Landscapes: The Aesthetics of Representing the Lived Experience of Illness</b> Chair: Franziska Gyax  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? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rosalía Baena (University of Navarra, Pamplona): “‘Metastatic Life’: Nancy K. Miller’s Visual Online Diary”</li> <li>• Nina Ernst (Lund University): “Framing the Emotions of Trauma and Mental Illness”</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sofia Varino (Stony Brook University, New York City): “Pathogenic Poetics: Visceral Derangement as Aesthetic Strategy in Peggy Munson’s <i>Pathogenesis</i>”</li> <li>• Katalin Orbán (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest): “Landscapes of Illness, Tropes of Travel: Neuro-Journeys and Patient-Odysseys in <i>A Journey Round My Skull</i> and <i>Epileptic</i>”</li> <li>• Alexandra Müller (Justus-Liebig-Universität, Gießen): “Image Distortion: Anorexia in Autobiographical Texts and Comics”</li> </ul>
<b>5.15-6pm</b>	Break – opportunity to browse the academic posters on display and talk to their creators
<b>6pm</b>	<p><b>Keynote by Leigh Gilmore</b> (Wellesley College): “Risking Aversion: Witnessing Pain in Autobiography and Graphic Memoir”</p> <p>with an introduction by Nina Schmidt (Freie Universität Berlin, PathoGraphics)</p> <p>Leigh Gilmore is the author of numerous books and articles on life writing, trauma, law and literature as well as feminist theory. In this keynote lecture, she will draw on her most recent book’s framework about ethics, witnessing, testimony, and doubt and gives us her reading of Alison Bechdel’s <i>Are You My Mother?</i> (2012) as well as other comics and literature, zooming in on the figure of the witness.</p> <p>Reception to follow</p>

### Saturday, 28th October 2017

<p><b>9-11.45am</b></p> <p>incl. a short break</p>	<p><b>Timelines, Time Spirals, Time Vectors: Communicating Acute Suffering, Chronic Conditions, and Terminal Illness</b></p> <p>Chair: Krista Quesenberry</p> <p>In <i>On Being Ill</i>, 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?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fran Bigman (University of Kent, Canterbury): “Sick in Spacetime: Representations of Selfhood and Time in <i>Memoirs of Autoimmune Disorders</i>”</li> <li>• Joanne Jacobson (Yeshiva University, New York City): “Illness at the Boundaries of Narrative”</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Franziska Gyax (University of Basel): “Their Time Has Come: Terminal Illness and Life Writing”</li> <li>• Tahneer Oksman (Marymount Manhattan College, New York City): “Intimacies after death in Anders Nilsen’s <i>Don’t Go Where I Can’t Follow</i> and <i>The End</i>”</li> <li>• Maureen Burdock (University of California, Davis): “Schneckenkönigin”</li> </ul>
<b>12-1pm</b>	<p><b>Present Absences: Exploring Fever, Ghosts, Dis/ease in Stories of Illness/ Disability (Part I)</b> Chair: Nina Schmidt</p> <p>This panel turns its attention to the tellability of stories of illness/ disability and the narrative strategies and tropes we encounter in literary and graphic narratives that convey the fundamental uneasiness of ableist societies with these themes. How do authors/ artists represent what is conspicuously absent/ present, because for example shameful, taboo, or collectively suppressed? What means are found for narrating liminal experiences that may not be easily anchored in place or time, such as out-of-body experiences, failures of memory or of the body?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Davina Höll (Universität Mainz): “The Picture of the Microbe as a Ghost: Cholera in George Eliot’s Novel <i>Middlemarch</i> and William Heath’s Cartoon ‘Monster Soup’”</li> <li>• Elizabeth Grubgeld (Oklahoma State University): “Graphic Experimentation and Graphic Fevers: Al Davison’s <i>Spina Bifida</i> Narratives”</li> </ul>
<b>1-2pm</b>	Lunch Break at the conference venue (catered for)
<b>2-3.40pm</b>	<p><b>Present Absences: Exploring Fever, Ghosts, Dis/ease in Stories of Illness/ Disability (Part II)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rieke Jordan (Goethe Universität Frankfurt): “Her Leg: Chris Ware’s Body of Work”</li> <li>• Frederik Byrn Køhlert (University of East Anglia, Norwich): “‘A Grotesque, Incurable Disease’: Whiteness as Illness in Gabby Schulz’s <i>Sick</i>”</li> <li>• Victoria Lupascu (Penn State): “The Politics of the Nameless Fever: Plasma Economy and HIV/AIDS in China”</li> </ul>
<b>3.40-4pm</b>	Break (coffee and cake)

<p><b>4-6.45pm</b></p> <p>incl. a short break</p>	<p><b>Confessing, Surviving, Normalizing: Constructing the Self in Illness Narratives</b></p> <p>Chair: Stef Lenk (Freie Universität Berlin, PathoGraphics)</p> <p>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”?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Krista Quesenberry (Penn State): “Diffuse Diagnosis: Disrupting Narrative Structure and Identity Formation in Medical Memoirs”</li> <li>• Victoria Shropshire (University of Glasgow): “Life is a Drag: Illness Narratives and Identity (Re)construction”</li> <li>• Andrew Godfrey (University of Dundee): “The Masculinisation of Care in Nye Wright’s <i>Things to Do in a Retirement Home Trailer Park When You’re 29 and Unemployed</i>”</li> <li>• Ariela Freedman (Concordia University, Montréal): “The Pain Scale: Representing Pain in Comics and Literary Non-Fiction”</li> <li>• Sue Vice (University of Sheffield): “Dementia as Cultural Metaphor in Holocaust Narratives”</li> </ul>
<p><b>7.30pm</b></p>	<p>For speakers: Conference Dinner (self-pay)</p>

**Sunday, 29th October 2017**

<p><b>9.30am-12pm</b></p> <p>incl. a short break</p>	<p><b>The Politics of Storying Illness: Going beyond the Individual</b></p> <p>Chair: Irmela Krüger-Fürhoff</p> <p>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?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ina C. Seethaler (Coastal Carolina University, Conway): “Like ‘Tigger on crack’: Memoir, Mental Disability, and Intersectionality”</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leah Misemer (Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta): “Subverting Stigma: Community Building in Serial Comics”</li> <li>• David Hadar (Freie Universität Berlin): “‘Old Age is a Massacre’: Sickness in Old Age as a Communal Experience in Contemporary American Novels”</li> <li>• Elizabeth Donaldson (New York Institute of Technology): “PsychoGraphics: Schizophrenia, Comics, Collaboration”</li> </ul>
<b>12-12.30pm</b>	<b>Final Discussion and Closing Remarks</b> by Irmela Krüger-Fürhoff and Susan Merrill Squier

**with posters on display by**

Mónica Lalanda (Zaragoza University), “The Spanish Medical Ethics Code as a Comic Book”

Clem Martini (University of Calgary), “The Graphic Memoir as Invitation to a Common Platform”

Elizabeth Nijdam (University of Michigan/ Freie Universität Berlin), “Seeing Things Differently: Daniela Schreiter’s *Schattenspringer* and Comics on Autism”

JoAnn Purcell (Seneca College/ York University, Canada), “Disability, Daily Drawn – 365 Encounters with Difference”

Feel free to tweet. Our hashtag will be #pathographics