

THE NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE  
Postgraduate Programme  
of the Division of Literature and Culture

**"Comics and the Graphic Novel:  
The Margin, the Gutter, and the Big Picture"  
1-day Student Conference**

**June 30, 2022,  
The School of Philosophy Library Auditorium**

**PROGRAMME**

**9:00. Welcome Address:** Dr. Christina Dokou

**9:15-10:15—Session I: The Art of Craig Thompson**

- Elena Georgiou, "A Blank(et) of Snow: Traces of Memory in Craig Thomson's *Blankets*"
- Georgia Vergetaki, "The 'GAPS that need to be filled by the individual': Spirituality and Coming-of-age in Craig Thompson's *Blankets*"
- Konstantina Karfi, "(In)Visible Identities in Craig Thompson's *Habibi*"

**10:20-11:35—Session II: Historical 2 Sequential**

- Eirini Bouraki, "Wasted Youth: A Graphic Retelling of a Scandalous Affair in *Deadly Class Vol. 1 Reagan Youth*"
- Sevi Kriara, "The Humanness of Animals and the Animality of Humans: Disrupting Anthropocentrism in *The Pride of Baghdad*"
- Elena Koumarianou, "Capitalist Realism and the Ru(m)inations of Lost Futures in Kristen Radtke's *Imagine Wanting Only This*"

- Spyros Papastamos, "If Not Cruelty, Then What? (Re)configurations of the Palestinian Question in Joe Sacco's *Palestine*"

### **11:40-12:20—Session III: LGBTIQ+GN**

- Dimitris Chantziaras-Martens, "The Transcending Power of the Fairy-Tale in Trung Le Nguyen's *The Magic Fish*"
- Charis Mavroulias, "Drawing (on) Somatic Communism: A Reconstellation of Countersexual Identities in *Gender Queer: A Memoir*"

### **12:30 PLENARY ADDRESS: Antonis Nikolopoulos (Soloup)**

Title: "*Aivali*: Inspiration, Process, and Reception"

### **13:30 BUFFET BREAK**

### **14:30-15:30—Session IV: Visualizing Women's Gothic with Emily Carroll**

- Doria Panae, "Reconfiguring the Monstrous-Feminine in Emily Carroll's *When I Arrived at the Castle*"
- Elpida Lourandou, "The Struggle between Female Emancipation and Submission to Patriarchy in Emily Carroll's *Through the Woods*"
- Panos Orfanos, "Color S-subject-ivity and the Uncanny in Emily Carroll's *Through the Woods*"

### **15:35-16:50—Session V: Graphic/Literature and Convention Conversion**

- Tina Staikou, "*City of Glass*: Comparing Madness in Paul Auster's Novella and Paul Karasik's and David Mazzucchelli's Graphic Adaptation"
- Myrto Tapeinou, "'Time to Shift to Emergency Mode': The Multiple Duration in Daniel Clowes's *Patience*"
- Tanja Kirov, "'Grown-ups don't look like grown-ups on the inside either': Collaging the Adult-Child Binary through Parent-Swapping"
- Panagiotis Karpis, "From the Stage to the Panel: Shakespeare through the eyes of Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman*"

### **16:50. Closing Comments.**

## ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

### PLENARY SPEAKER:

**Antonis Nikolopoulos (Soloup)** is a cartoonist who works for several newspapers and magazines in Greece. He studied Political Science at the Panteion University of Athens and obtained a PhD in Cultural Technology and Communication from the University of the Aegean, where he is currently pursuing his Postdoctoral research project on the depiction of the Greek Revolution from 1800 until the present day (in paintings, engravings, banknotes, stamps, cinema, comics, etc.). The graphic novel *1821 Revolution* is part of this project.

Soloup has published 17 books with comics and cartoons as well as a monograph based on his doctoral thesis, *The Greek Comics* (2012, Topos) examining the history of comics in Greece. His first graphic novel, *Aivali* (2014, Kedros), received awards for the best comics and best scenario in the 2015 Comicdom Athens and the "Coup de Coeur 2016" prize at the 17th "Rendez-vous du Carnet De Voyage Festival" (Clermont Ferrand/France). It has been translated into French (Steinkis), Turkish (Istos), English (Somerset Hall Press) and Spanish (Ediciones del oriente y del mediterráneo). His second graphic novel *The Collector: Six Short Stories about a Bad Wolf* - a family story exploring the father's alienation from his child after a divorce - was published in 2018 (Ikaros), while a 3D animation is currently being made based on a chapter of the book. Both *Aivali* and *The Collector* have been exhibited at the Benaki Museum/Athens (in 2015 and 2019 respectively). Soloup's latest graphic novel, "*'21-The Greek Revolution*" [*'21— Η Μάχη της Πλατείας*, 2021, Ikaros], won first place in the H.F.R.I action for the 200 years since the Revolution and is now being exhibited in the National Historical Museum in Athens and TeriadeMuseum/ Library Stratis Eleftheriadis in Lesvos.



## PARTICIPANTS:



**Bouraki, Eirini, "Wasted Youth: A Graphic Retelling of a Scandalous Affair in *Deadly Class Vol. 1 Reagan Youth*"**

"A positive mental attitude is essential to surviving out here" is the first piece of inner monologue we read from *Deadly Class's* point-of-view character Marcus Lopez, a homeless Nicaraguan teen in the US, words looming over a San Francisco winter sky set in January 1987. Written by Rick Remender in 2014 with Wes Craig and Lee Loughridge in the pencils and colors, *Deadly Class Vol. 1 Reagan Youth* is set against the backdrop of the '80s counterculture with a deadly twist; protagonist Marcus Lopez is a young disaffected student recruited in a clandestine academy in San Francisco, named King's Dominion, which aims to teach the younger generations of top crime families the deadly arts. Before his enrollment, though, Marcus experienced the dark side of the Reagan '80s. Forced into a boys' home as a result of his parents' death, undergoing abuse, and later forced into homelessness and vagrancy, Marcus becomes the spokesperson for generation X marginality. After his recruitment in the academy and seeking to find a cause worth fighting for, Marcus figuratively constructs the public enemy, his *polemios*, in the person of President Ronald Reagan, to whom he assigns the roots of the whole society's decay. This allows Marcus to become the hero of his narrative. The purpose of this paper is to examine *Deadly Class* not simply as an action thriller, a teen drama, or a period drama, but rather as a dark political parody, and to read the trope of the School of Assassins as a dark twist of the not less dark School of the Americas, a U.S. military academy that actually to this day teaches foreign soldiers the deadly arts. Set against the backdrop of the Iran-Contra Affair, probably the biggest scandal that characterized the Reagan presidency, as well as the California Mental Health controversy and the rampant individualism of the yuppie culture, *Deadly Class* becomes a social and political commentary performed by a disaffected, often annoying, yet easy-to-sympathize Marcus.

**Eirini Bouraki** studied English Language and Literature in Thessaloniki and graduated in 2018. She has taught in Romania, England and Greece. She is currently a Greek and English tutor for adults. She enjoys non-formal education, creative writing and travels.

### **Chantziaras-Martens, Dimitris, "The Transcending Power of the Fairy-Tale in Trung Le Nguyen's *The Magic Fish*"**

In a touching graphic novel about a thirteen-year-old boy of Vietnamese descent struggling to come out to his mother, even though she is a very supportive of him, Trung Le Nguyen utilises three fairy-tales which he embeds into the narrative as a tool, allowing him the overcoming of linguistic, cultural, and generational barriers. Although *The Magic Fish* deals with a variety of issues, such as the anxiety of coming out and the trauma of the aftermath of the Vietnam War, I will argue that, above all, it is a story about accepting our differences, about transcending cultural, linguistic, and generational barriers, and about finding a common language through which a more inclusive discourse may emerge, and through which compassion and empathy can be achieved. The embedded fairy-tales provide this common language, as they are universally relatable--each culture has folk stories (which are often very similar)--and can change when necessary to fit a new context. Fairy-tales, thus, provide an excellent medium for expression capable of evolving, which can accommodate our own, ever-changing, world.

Furthermore, I will closely examine the various visual choices Le Nguyen makes, which assist him to express the oft-overlooked differences between first- and second-generation immigrants. I will focus on the clothing depicted in the fairy-tales, which, stemming each time from the imagination of the given reader, provide clues as to their own experiences and show the generational and cultural gaps between Tiến, his mother, and his great-aunt. I will also discuss Le Nguyen's choice to use the three primary colours to depict his three levels of narration: red for the present, yellow for past events, and blue for the embedded fairy-tale narrations. I will argue that this choice indicates the importance placed on imagination as a primary inner component and an essential part of what shapes our identity, on par with our past and present experiences.

**Dimitris Chantziaras-Martens** received a BA in English Language and Literature (+Teaching Certificate) from the University of Athens (2016-2020), and is currently undertaking MA in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Anglophone Literature and Culture at the University of Athens. He was awarded an Erasmus Plus exchange student scholarship to study at the University of Amsterdam for one semester (2019-2020).



**Georgiou, Eleni, "A Blank(et) of Snow: Traces of Memory in Craig Thomson's *Blankets*"**

Craig Thompson's graphic novel *Blankets*, described as a coming-of-age autobiography, explores the trauma of childhood through flashbacks that place it in conjunction with the author's adolescence. Memory becomes a temporal space of representation, which allows Craig to situate himself in a literary context and expand the format of a visual narrative as both the main character of the graphic novel and its creator. A work that draws attention to the conventions of its own medium, it uses the blanket as a literary trope, both in its metaphorical and literal sense, in order to structure the development of the story based on its symbolic interpretations. The purpose of this essay is to explore the temporality of Craig's presence on a blanket of snow, which becomes permanent through the shadow of his footsteps on the white background of the page, as well as the traces of memory that have been sewn together by his first love to create a visual map of the past in the form of a blanket.

**Eleni Georgiou** received a B.A. in English Language and Literature from the English Department of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She is particularly interested in modernist studies and has participated as a speaker in the international conference "Myth and Art Re-visited", hosted by the University in 2019. She is currently in the process of completing a Master's degree in Anglophone Literature and Culture of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Karfi, Konstantina, "(In)Visible Identities in Craig Thompson's *Habibi*"**

In *Habibi*, Craig Thompson presents an array of identities which are informed by the oriental setting of the narrative. Dodola, although a strong and intelligent character, is presented as fatefully bound by the perceived limitations of her gender, which become evident in the novel not only through her personal journey but also through the references to the Middle-Eastern and religious perception of women. These perceived limitations are tied to the continuous commodification and fetishization of her body, with Dodola being treated as a malleable entity in the eyes and imagination of others. As a result, on the visual level, Dodola's body is depicted in a range of dehumanized manifestations. In contrast, all other bodies are not equally present, as they are either protected from exposure, as in the case

of men's bodies, or predictably underrepresented, as in the case of the intersex, the transgender, and the eunuch bodies. Therefore, in this essay I intend to discuss the role that the patriarchal and folkloric ideals have in shaping the patterns of representation and misrepresentation in Thompson's visual storytelling, as well as their implications for the characters of the novel.

**Konstantina Karfi** graduated from the Department of English Language and Literature of the University of Athens in 2020. She is currently working as an English teacher and occasionally volunteers as a translator for local organizations.

**Karpis, Panagiotis, "From the Stage to the Panel: Shakespeare through the eyes of Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman*"**

This paper examines the connections between two Shakespearean plays, namely *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and issues of Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman* series. Specifically, I will be analyzing issue #75 (*The Tempest*) and issue #19 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), the only comic book story to ever receive the World Fantasy Award for short fiction in 1991. The latter is a playful adaptation of the original and my focus will be Gaiman's merging of the two realms, that of mundane reality as it is presented on the stage and the dream world of the supernatural characters that have been invited to watch the dramatization of their own lives. I aim to prove that through this fusion Gaiman draws a parallel between stage plays and comic books by having the latter transcend the limitations of both written and performed fiction and emerge as the medium that is best suited to fully accommodate a metatextual commentary on classic literature. This extends to issue #75 where the fictional character of William Shakespeare, Gaiman's own storytelling avatar, affords us backstage glimpses into the creative process of his writing and his effort to change the public perception of his work. There is a deliberate mirroring presented by Gaiman between the slow transition of Renaissance plays from being dismissed as childish distractions by the audience of the time to being hailed as high art today and the arduous journey comic books have had to make in order to achieve respectability as something more than just popular entertainment. By having *The Tempest* be the final issue of the series, Gaiman offers up his work as proof of the progress of comic books as a storytelling medium. I will be exploring this evolution by making references to other issues of the series as well.

**Panagiotis Karpis** received his Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature from the University of Athens in 2019 and has since been working as a freelance translator.

**Kiros, Tanja, "Grown-ups don't look like grown-ups on the inside either': Collaging the Adult-Child Binary through Parent-Swapping"**

The role of fairy tales in helping children deal with the existential problem of being dependent on parents while simultaneously wishing to be rid of them (Sigmund Freud, "Family Romances" 1909) will be examined in the children's story by famous comics and fantasy fiction author Neil Gaiman, *The Day I swapped my Dad for Two Goldfish* (1997). The tale, far from being childish, juggles traditional binaries to playfully explore darker psychological issues underlying our cultural and social norms through Gaiman's probing of physical and psychological boundaries and his queering of them. Bruno Bettelheim (*The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, 1976) maintains that the extreme violence and ugly emotions of many fairy tales can help to deflect what could actually be going on in the child's mind. Since children's fears are unrealistic, they are often served by unrealistic wishes and fantasies.

The plot is a twist on a favourite children's tale or song trope, where one has to create an ever-increasing chain of associations forwards and (often) backwards (as in this case, to retrieve the coveted swapping items). I will explore the psychoanalytical connotations of exchanging things and people through Dave McKean's collaging and superimposing artwork technique that suggests the passing back and forth of objects and states of being, illusion and reality. The child's growing awareness of his parents as fallible and the real world as an imperfect place is achieved through the quest for the "holy grail", only to learn the valuable lesson that parents (and all people) are not commodities. The symbolism of this journey in archetypal terms will be studied using the text and images to support the underlying mythical structure of this tale.

**Tanja Kiros** holds a BA in Psychology and English literature, a Postgraduate Diploma in Education, a Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Linguistics. She is a teacher at Hill School.



**Koumarianou, Elena, "Capitalist Realism and the Ru(m)inations of Lost Futures in Kristen Radtke's *Imagine Wanting Only This*"**

Part graphic memoir, part essay, Kristen Radtke's *Imagine Wanting Only This* (2017) is an eloquent account of the author and illustrator's coming-of-age in an American landscape haunted as much by the ghosts of its past as well as by the looming 2008 financial crisis. Delving into the topics of finitude and transience, by way of grieving for a beloved family member lost due to a hereditary heart problem the graphic novelist herself shares, Radtke conflates these personal experiences with a voyeuristic fascination with ruins and their depiction, alongside shallow, if at times misrepresentative, glosses of the histories they disclose. Drawing on the works of—among others—Jean-Luc Nancy, Susan Sontag and Mark Fisher, in this paper I wish to explore how, in *Imagine Wanting Only This*, Radtke's acute awareness of the finitude of the human condition, in this case illuminated through experiences of illness, becomes enmeshed with neoliberal capitalist America's cultivation of a sense of "capitalist realism" (Fisher 2009) in which dejection and lack of agency are the primary modes through which subjects play off their complicity and passivity. In doing so, my aim is to argue that Radtke's graphic memoir ultimately privileges an apathetic perspective towards histories of suffering and loss, creating pre-emptive lost futures in which one cannot but be left to struggle to only imagine wanting something other than the present state of things.

**Elena Koumarianou** is an MA student in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries at the Department of English Language and Literature, NKUA. She recently received a BA in English Language and Literature with distinction from the same department.

**Kriara, Georgia Sevasti, "The Humanness of Animals and the Animality of Humans: Disrupting Anthropocentrism in *The Pride of Baghdad*"**

This paper contemplates anthropocentrism and American exceptionalism in B. Vaughan and N. Henrichon's *The Pride of Baghdad* to discuss how the two practices are ideologically intertwined. The analysis focuses on the US invasion in Iraq in 2003 and its effect on the animal characters, especially the four lions, Safa, Noor, Ali and Zill that— as I aim to prove— function, on the one hand, as symbols for the

Iraqi people, but also showcase the impact of the war on animals as such. Considering that the story is based on a true event, namely the destruction of the Baghdad Zoo during America's invasion, I suggest that the novel manages to depict not only the tragedy of the human population in Iraq but also of the non-human that has been widely disregarded in comparison to the former. The lions in the story express strong emotions, have families they wish to protect, and address both their basic needs -shelter, food, and survival- and their wish to live in freedom and unity. They reminisce about, or look forward to, escaping the zoo and seeing the horizon, each of them expressing their own concerns and contemplating the meaning of freedom. As such, the story urges readers to reflect both on the lives of the Iraqi people and of the animals that have experienced the dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein and its violent overthrow by President George W. Bush's America. The invasion in Iraq, that was ironically self-declared to be the "War on Terror," brought terrible consequences for all living beings: the destruction of the zoo— also suggestive of the attack against innocent Iraqis— and, most importantly, the subsequent murder of the innocent proved the intentions of America to be nothing but atrocious and ignorant self-interest. The paper aims to show that the tragic end of the lions functions as a critique against anthropocentrism and, by extension, against American exceptionalism. Anthropocentrism generates the false assumption that humans are superior to all other species and can, thus, dominate them. This has been the ideological foundation for American exceptionalism that goes so far as not only to maintain the opposition between human and non-human, but to even create another absurd opposition, that of the (American) human against the (Iraqi) subhuman. Ultimately, the persistence of such inter/intraspecies hierarchies can never allow for peace in the world.

**Georgia Sevasti Kriara** graduated from the Department of English Language and Literature in 2020. She has been working as a teacher of English for two years. Her academic interests include the study of literature in its sociohistorical context and the examination of political struggles, such as immigration and social inequality.

**Lourandou, Elpida, "The Struggle between Female Emancipation and Submission to Patriarchy in Emily Carroll's *Through the Woods*"**

In this presentation, consisting of a close reading of Emily Carroll's graphic novel *Through the Woods*, I will focus on the ways in which a strong sense of female

agency and emancipation co-exists with the devastating effects of patriarchy in women's psyche. More specifically, I will focus on one of the three stories of the book that, in my opinion, best represent this dichotomy of emancipation and submission: "Our Neighbor's House". In this particular story, which is a re-telling of Little Red Riding Hood, this struggle between female agency and obedience of the patriarchal rules is made clear through the sisters' decision to disobey their father's orders and stay in the house, which simultaneously points to a subtle rejection of a patriarchal figure as well as the need to wait for said figure to rescue them. The two eldest sisters are later abducted by a mysterious male figure in the wide-brimmed hat which I read as a substitution of one patriarchal figure for another. However, the youngest of the sisters, the narrator of the story, breaks that cycle of abuse; for her, the mysterious figure "is no man" (Carroll 36) and she can actively control her own destiny. The prominence of the color red in the panel, a recurring color in the novel, will be analyzed both as a symbol of femininity and as an allusion to Little Red Riding Hood. The purpose of this presentation is to prove that female emancipation and the need to obey to a male authority exist simultaneously in the graphic novel, and that it is ultimately impossible to provide either an entirely optimistic or an entirely pessimistic reading of each story, since "the wolf only needs enough luck to find you once" (Carroll 205).

**Elpida Lourandou** is from Ithaca, Greece. She graduated from the Department of English Language and Literature in 2020. She has some teaching experience (teaching English to younger learners). She is especially interested in African American literature and culture, and enjoys writing, comedy and music.

**Mavroulias, Charis Anthony, "Drawing (on) Somatic Communism: A Reconstellation of Countersexual Identities in *Gender Queer: A Memoir*"**

Published the same year that the World Health Organization (WHO) crossed transgender identities out of the list of "mental disorders," *Gender Queer: A Memoir* (2019) challenges a heteronormative American society that is appalled by the idea of masturbation, menstruation, and homoerotic images, explicitly drawn and/or written on the page. By writing eir autobiography in form of a comic book—a medium until recently marginal per se—Maia Kobabe materialized and gave voice to a very marginal and unrepresentable experience (even within the LGBTQ+ community): that of being gender non-binary in a world full of gender, sexual and

linguistic binaries, and asexual within a sexualized society, obsessed with (romantic and/or erotic) relationships and procreation. Kobabe, thus, through eir comic-memoir delineates, literally, the internal conflict, the gender dysphoria, that Maia (the main character) is confronted by since eir childhood, towards early adulthood when e is introduced to the world of comics, and surprisingly, to new gender, (a)sexual, and linguistic possibilities. In this essay, I will thus argue that *Gender Queer: A Memoir* constitutes a prolific -and even radical addition to the queer literary archive, by introducing the "countersexual postbody" which through *prosthesis*, technological (binding, packing and the strap-on) and linguistic (The Spivak pronouns "e, em, eir"), exemplifies Paul B. Preciado's "somatic communism," a rebellion of naturally artificial marginal bodies. As a graphic parallel to the *Countersexual Manifesto*, it refuses to (re)annunciate a radical separatist feminist utopia. At the same time, the comic book problematizes gender (men-women) and sexual (sexuality-asexuality, gay-straight) binaries, while deconstructing the divide between male and female, ability and disability, and nature and culture. Whether it offers a solid resolution to the wider essentialism-constructivism debate, it is up to the potential "countersexualist," the reader, to decide.

**Charis Anthony Mavroulias** has recently completed his four-year circle of studies at the department of English Language and Literature of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. He is currently attending the MA Programme "English Studies: Literature and Culture," which is specializing in Representations of Marginality and Exclusion. Through the past years, he got involved with theatre (as an actor) in two drama groups, one of which was the drama club of the department of English Language and Literature. He also developed a strong interest in Anglophone poetry and creative writing, which inspired him to experiment with writing a small collection of poems, exhibiting "the transgender experience." He also worked voluntarily for three years, as an activist for LGBTQI+ rights, with Colour Youth, and participated in online (and off-line) training sessions and seminars related to the assertion of equality and visibility for marginalized communities. Consequently, his academic activity focuses mostly on modern cultural studies, especially, post-structuralist-feminism and queer studies. He, along with his fellow panelists, is the recipient of the British Association of American Studies Targeted Panel grant for 2022-23.

**Orfanos, Panagiotis, "Color Subjectivity and the Uncanny in Emily Carroll's *Through the Woods*"**

Emily Carroll's graphic novel *Through the Woods* (2014) consists of five stories with a strong mysterious and gothic element, interlinked by the presence of the woods where the idea of the supernatural so evident in the stories seems to be emanating from. Following the motif often found in (fairy)tale collections, such as *A Thousand and One Nights* or *The Canterbury Tales*, the stories are embedded within a frame story whose initial narrator becomes a protagonist by the end of the book. The stories, several of which allude to well-known traditional fairy tales, are permeated by the idea of the abject but also of Sigmund Freud's idea of the Uncanny. Nevertheless, despite the strong evocation of these ideas through the textual element, the story starts essentially unfolding from the illustration of the front cover of the book which forms a unified image with the back cover. The strong effect of the pictorial setting is evident both in the illustrations preceding the introduction and especially within the stories, where illustrations seem to be the dominant element of the comic book rather than complementing the text. The typology of colors in Emily Carroll's graphic anthology as well as the way she treats visually human parts and objects, apart from highlighting the multimodal language of comics, serve also to reinforce the idea of unfamiliar familiarity that one has when reading her stories. Stark contrasts in color and deformed images of human beings are juxtaposed with everyday images and overflow the panels which, in turn, mutate unexpectedly. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to show how color and illustrations of humans and objects express the abjection of the supernatural element of *Through the Woods* in order to reinforce the idea of the uncanny open-endedness of Emily Carroll's stories.

**Panagiotis Orfanos** graduated from the Department of English Language and Literature of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in 2009 and has since been working as an English teacher in language schools and in private lessons.

**Panae, Doria, "Reconfiguring the Monstrous-Feminine in Emily Carroll's *When I Arrived at the Castle*"**

In this essay, I argue that Emily Carroll's comic book *When I Arrived at the Castle* is a pictorial depiction of Freud's conceptualization of the interplay between, or



the convergence and clash of, the sex and death drives. In particular, I intend to apply Freud's theory of *The Pleasure Principle* in order to reveal the materialization of the oppositional mental tendencies of Eros and Thanatos that are suggested in the iconographic portrayal of the interaction between the countess and the catwoman. I intend to read their relationship as a vicious circle and a roleplay, which is situated at the mental and empiric confluence of pleasure and unpleasure. Similarly to Freud's analysis of a child's play, Carroll's characters are trapped in a behavioral cycle which produces excitement and thrill while endeavoring to overcome previous traumas and dark desires and, most significantly, the primordial instinct to return to the primal state of being, non-existence. The catwoman's mission to kill the countess, on the one hand, and the countess's desire to play with and taunt the catwoman, as if engaged in a cat-and-mouse game, on the other, form the ideal conditions for the pictorial reconstruction of Freud's notion of the continuous clash of the life and death instincts. Their encounter gradually triggers the activation of the id's operation, which is in turn fully materialized once the two characters confront each other. Carroll's illustrations suggest that the characters' mental constitution continuously wavers between the encompassing of death and sex drive, ultimately portraying their interaction as a process that merges them into a singular entity. Thus, the purpose of this essay is to provide a psychoanalytic reading of the intricate co-existence of the two characters as means of showcasing the oppositional instincts that solidify the essentiality of their interrelation.

**Doria Panaei** is a graduate of the English Language and Literature Department of NKUA. During her undergraduate Erasmus semester, she attended courses from the MA program "European, American and Postcolonial Languages and Literatures" offered by Ca' Foscari, University of Venice.

**Papastamos, Spyridon, "If Not Cruelty, Then What? (Re)configurations of the Palestinian Question in Joe Sacco's *Palestine*"**

Joe Sacco's journalistic graphic memoir *Palestine* (2001) which brings together all previous issues of the same series, discusses the issue of Palestine within a late twentieth-century framework by offering a direct overview of the experiences of Palestinian people, as narrated to Sacco himself. Edward Said, an acclaimed Palestinian-American critic who has written extensively on the Palestinian struggle, published "The Question of Palestine" in 1979. By probing several examples of

Said's work, and Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others*, I will discuss the contribution of Sacco's work in the Palestinian question. With a particular interest to the study of photography, Sontag has asserted that "showing something at its worst, is [...] didactic, it invites an active response" (81). Moreover, Sontag adds that "for photographs to accuse, and possibly to alter conduct, they must shock" (81). Sacco's visuals indeed provide readers with provocative depictions of mental and physical cruelty against struggling Palestinians. However, Sontag cautions that although photographs do not lose their "power to shock" (90), audiences can get used to shock and cruelty (82) and render photographs merely haunting, not able to contribute to the understanding of an issue to the audiences (90). The medium which allows for a thorough understanding of a matter is narrative (Sontag 90). Through an analysis of depictions of cruelty in Sacco's both visuals and texts, I will argue that Sacco's insights and personal interaction with the local Palestinians have led him to a depiction of the Palestinian people as a humane body which-in addition to the depiction of their cruel hardships-ultimately transgresses the boundaries of an apathetic stance the Western audience has kept and paves the way not only for a rethinking of the Palestinian plight, but for actions to end it.

**Spyridon Papastamos**, a graduate of the Department of English Language and Literature at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, travelled to Brighton as an Erasmus+ exchange student. Had to return after a couple of months because of the pandemic, but had the chance to attend talks, visit libraries, hide into tea-friendly bookshops and witness the colourful Brighton sunset. Also had the chance to write three short essays and appreciate the value of research. Currently trying to figure out a way to combine literature and culture studies with the study of music.

**Staikou, Tina, "City of Glass: Comparing Madness in Paul Auster's Novella and Paul Karasik's and David Mazzucchelli's Graphic Adaptation"**

In my presentation I will contrapuntally discuss the narrative, pictorial, and pictographic rendering of loss of self and mental illness in the following two works: Paul Auster's *City of Glass* (1985) and *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel* (1994), the original novella's adaptation into the titular genre by artists Paul Karasik and David Mazzucchelli. As I will show, while being consistently loyal to its original in terms of plot development, the graphic counterpart of Auster's postmodern neo-noir

succeeds in making a remarkably original contribution as a poignant (graphic) madness narrative by employing the genre's distinct formal characteristics in the service of shedding a stark and accentuating light on the delusional or/and schizoid symptomatology that a number of characters demonstrate. Some of the clinical syndromes<sup>1</sup> alluded to in both works include "the subjective double"—more commonly found in the jargon of literary criticism as the "doppelganger"—"the clonal pluralization of the self," and the rare "Cotard's syndrome," all of which, as I will demonstrate, are employed by both Auster and Karazik and Mazzucchelli in order to portray the crushing alienation experienced by the postmodern city dweller in the age of late capitalism. To corroborate my argument, I will turn to such critics as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari and Mark Fisher. Lastly, by drawing on the work of comics theorists such as Scott McCloud and Will Eisner, I will illustrate the ways in which the discussed adaptation proves to be equally, if not, at times, even more incisive than the adapted text in terms of their respective portrayal of mental illness.

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### **Tapeinou, Myrto, "Time to Shift to Emergency Mode': The Multiple Duration in Daniel Clowes's *Patience*"**

The long-standing trope of time-travel in sci-fi texts and films virtually defies the linearity of time and space, in order to envision the world otherwise or to urgently find answers. Daniel Clowes in his longest graphic novel *Patience* (2016) simultaneously debunks and enriches the canonical imaginings of the time warp as a narratorial device, bringing together cosmic time and space with the decision-making adventures of the grotesquely heroic and romantic protagonist, Jack Barlow. The latter's to-ing and fro-ing in the multiple dimensions of memory and imagination exemplifies what Henri Bergson calls in *Time and Free Will* (1889) the

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<sup>1</sup> These syndromes are described by psychiatrist G.N. Christodoulou in his book *The Delusional Misidentification Syndromes* (1986).

"qualitative multiplicity" of duration [*durée*] that informs the heterogeneity of the events and data collected by the human consciousness. Interconnecting the mystical organization of the universe with Jack's quest for absolute truth amidst a world going serially wrong, Clowes echoes the individual's "entering into" (Bergson, *The Creative Mind*) the infinite abyss of temporal difference — a metaphorical time-travel of the individual towards "absoluteness;" as Clowes names it, towards "the one unassailable truth." By reading Jack's time-travels as inner explorations towards the Bergsonian 'intuition,' I will argue that the intentionally mock-futuristic time-machine functions as a playful artistic device that allows Clowes to expand not only the narratorial conventions of sci-fi and superhero comics, but also the possibilities of representing retrospection, self-examination, and understanding. Juxtaposed with the Bergsonian process of reaching self-sympathy through co-experiencing the multiplicity and heterogeneity of duration, *Patience* appears as a spiritual journey of Clowes himself towards an understanding of a person's life-truth through his mystical and yet humorously cartoony artistic means. What I ultimately aim to suggest is that Clowes's polyvalent representation of time and space in *Patience*, whose stylistic variations and connotations overflow from panel to panel, morphs into a concurrently universal and unapologetically personal whole that encompasses the heterogeneous elements of inner growth, loving, and patience.

**Myrto Tapeinou** holds a bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature and a Master's in Film and Cultural Studies. She is now pursuing an MA in English Literature and Culture. In July 2021, she was awarded the Partial SUISS Scholarship to participate in the summer school's module on Modernism.

**Vergetaki, Georgia, "The 'GAPS that need to be filled by the individual': Spirituality and Coming-of-age in Craig Thompson's *Blankets*"**

This presentation revolves around the crucial role of religion in the formation of the young individual's sense of self in Craig Thompson's *Blankets*. Specifically, in this paper, I will be exploring how religious symbols and iconography are employed within this coming-of-age novel in order to suggest that, in the Christian collective consciousness, both life in general and the journey towards adulthood in particular constitute a type of holy martyrdom. Moreover, I am going to argue that the fundamental concepts of sin and sinner that Thompson incorporates in his novel are

fixed notions used by Christianity in order to prevent the people that populate the narrative scene of *Blankets* from becoming fully aware of who they truly are and what they aspire to achieve in life. Additionally, by discussing the juxtaposition between creativity and religion and the latter's attempt to suppress the former, I am going to suggest that for Thompson the formation of religious consciousness perpetuates a general sense of inexpressibility and a collective legacy of unspoken trauma. Furthermore, I will be tracing the main character's endeavors to break free from Christianity's restrictions by refusing to constitute a Christ-like figure that would be willing to endure the pain its silencing would entail. Finally, I am going to analyze the new type of spirituality that Thompson's narrative persona advocates towards the end of the novel. This being stated, I will be dealing with the graphic novel as a whole as the concrete outcome of this "secular spirituality" which is described by Cornel W du Toit as "the contemporary phenomenon of spirituality as experienced in different spheres not associated with structured, institutionalized religion" (1251).<sup>2</sup>

**Georgia Vergetaki** was born on the 26th of June 1999 in Heraklion, Crete. She studied English Language and Literature in the National Kapodistrian University of Athens and graduated with honors (8,5/10) in 2021. She has been working as an English language teacher since 2019. In October 2020, she attended Oxford Brookes University as an Erasmus student and stayed in England for four months. Furthermore, she has participated twice in the 'One for All, All for Green' Erasmus plus program in Istanbul, Turkey (2016), and Nyíregyháza, Hungary (2017).



*The End?*

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<sup>2</sup> Cornel W du Toit, *Secular Spirituality versus Secular Dualism: Towards Postsecular Holism as Model for a Natural Theology* (2016), 1251.