

Call for Papers

International Workshop:

Border Crossings and Human Rights in Graphic Narratives

June 17-18, 2022

Online

Organisers:

Olga Michael (University of Cyprus), Laurike in 't Veld (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

This workshop aims to explore intersections between border crossings and human rights in fiction and non-fiction graphic narratives. According to Özgün E. Topak, 'borderzones are spaces where human rights are suspended in favour of sovereign practices, and migrants are left to die' (2014, 816). Border aesthetics, a theoretical lens through which borders can be examined, conceptualizes them as linguistic, cultural, social, political and spatial entities. Borders are also understood as enabling 'b/ordering' practices as well as the formation of 'narratives or tropes [...] which can [...] interrogate their including/excluding function' (Wolfe and Schimanski 2017, 149). 'B/ordering' practices include, inter alia, stereotypical understandings of racially or religiously 'othered' male migrants as 'monstrous' terrorists, and, correspondingly, of female migrants as silent, passive victims within patriarchal, oppressive contexts from the micro-level of the family to the macro-level of the nation (see Griffiths 2015; Ticktin 2017).

This workshop will focus on graphic narratives that explore borders as sites of exclusion, while also navigating and/or commenting upon practices of 'b/ordering.' In addition, it will examine to what extent graphic narratives depicting human rights violations that occur during migratory experiences can indeed challenge, or if they reproduce the 'including/excluding function' of the border. In exploring human rights violations emerging during regular or irregular migration journeys, this workshop aims at unpacking the ways in which a human-rights perspective on the border can complicate its conceptualization. As such, it is concerned with the 'friction and change [that appear] when borders and aesthetics rub against each other and change each other accordingly' (Rosello and Wolfe 2017: 6), and the ways in which these frictions and changes become manifested in graphic narratives depicting human rights violations at the border.

Migration and detention comics have increasingly drawn academic attention (see Naghibi, Rifkind and Ty 2020; Rifkind 2020; Serrano 2021) and, likewise, representations of human rights violations in contexts of war, conflict, and genocide in comics and graphic novels have also triggered the

publication of a significant body of scholarship (Earle 2017; In 't Veld 2019; Nayar 2021). In an attempt to bring comics studies in migration and human rights together, we invite papers examining any aspect of human rights violations occurring in or enabled by borders, which are here understood as linguistic, cultural, social, political and/or spatial entities, and as enabling both positive interactions and 'b/ordering' practices. The questions on human rights and the border as a physical space and a conceptual and framing device that are to be explored during this workshop include the following:

- To what extent does the comics form, itself based on borders that frame narrative fragments, enable nuanced representations of human rights as intersecting with border crossings?
- How do the positions of the perpetrator, the victim and the bystander become negotiated in such cases?
- How does Western humanitarianism become staged in and through borders?
- What is the educational use and impact of graphic narratives displaying human rights violations occurring at and through the border in higher and/or secondary education?
- What is the role of such graphic narratives in social justice?

Suggested topics include (but are not limited to):

- Border aesthetics, human rights and graphic life narratives
- Online graphic narratives, human rights and migration
- Perpetrators at the border
- Gender and perpetration
- Victims at the border
- Gender and human rights at the border
- Space and human rights
- Children's rights
- Western humanitarianism at the border

Please send your proposals of 250-300 words for presentations of no more than twenty minutes and a short bio note of 100-150 words to [bordercrossingcomics@gmail.com](mailto:bordercrossingcomics@gmail.com) by March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Notifications of acceptance will be sent out by April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The papers selected for the workshop will be published in a special issue of a peer-reviewed journal.

## References:

- Earle, H. 2017. *Comics, Trauma, and the New Art of War*. Jackson: U of Mississippi P.
- Griffiths, M. 2015. "‘Here Man is Nothing!’ Gender and Policy in an Asylum Context,' *Men and Masculinities* 18(4): 468-88.
- In 't Veld, L. 2019. *The Representation of Genocide in Graphic Novels: Considering the Role of Kitsch*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Naghbi, N., C. Rifkind and E. Ty, eds. 2020. 'Introduction: Migration, Exile and Diaspora in Graphic Life Narratives,' *a/b: Auto/biography Studies* 35(2): 295-304.
- Nayar, P. 2021. *The Human Rights Graphic Novel: Drawing it Just Right*. London: Routledge.
- Rifkind, C. 2020. 'Migrant Detention Comics and the Aesthetic Technologies of Compassion,' in *Documenting Trauma in Comics: Traumatic Pasts, Embodied Histories, and Graphic Reportage*, D. Davies and C. Rifkind, eds. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rosello, M. and S. F. Wolfe. 2017. 'Introduction,' in J. Schimanski and S. F. Wolfe (eds.), *Border Aesthetics: Concepts and Intersections*. New York: Berghahn, pp. 1-24.
- Schimanski, J. and S. F. Wolfe, eds. 2017. 'Intersections: A Conclusion in the Form of a Glossary,' in *Border Aesthetics: Concepts and Intersections*. New York: Berghahn, pp. 147-70.
- Serrano, L. N., ed. 2021. *Immigrants and Comics: Graphic Spaces of Remembrance, Transaction, and Mimesis*. New York: Routledge.
- Ticktin, M. 2017. 'A World Without Innocence,' *American Ethnologist: Journal of the American Ethnological Society* 44(4): 577-90.
- Topak, E. Ö. 2014. 'The Biopolitical Border in Practice: Surveillance and Death at the Greece–Turkey Borderzones,' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 32(5): 815-33.