

International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA)
Standing Research Committee on Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative
Report to the Executive Committee
Reporting Period: September 2024 – June 2025

Overview

This report presents a summary of academic activities undertaken by members of the ICLA Standing Research Committee on Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative from September 2024 to June 2025. These activities include conference organization and participation, scholarly publications, teaching, invited talks, editorial work, and committee-related initiatives.

1. Major Committee Events and Panel Organization

A. Framing the Unreal: Exploring Graphic/Visual Science Fiction and Fantasy

Date: 11–15 November 2024

Location: Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Organizer: Research Committee on Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative, ICLA (Angelo Piepoli *et al.*)

Highlights:

- Seminar: *Comics Multiverses* (David Coughlan)
- Keynote: Prof. Noriko Hiraishi, “Girls, Space, and Science Fiction Comics: Their Potential to Challenge Gender Issues”
- Panels on science in comics (Dr. Anna-Sophie Jürgens and Crystal-Leigh Clitheroe)
- Selected presentations:
 - Barbara Grüning: *From Necron to Lilith: Deconstructing Gender Stereotypes in Italian SF-Comics*
 - David Coughlan: *Comics Multiverses and Infinite Adaptations*
 - Tom Sewel: *Broken Heroes and Strange Bodies: A Science-Fictional Invasion*
 - Maaheen Ahmed: *Childish Imagination and the Contemporary Graphic Novel*

B. Comparative Literature Association of India (CLAI) XVII Biennial Conference

Date: 10–12 September 2024

Location: University of Delhi, India

Panels Organized: Research Committee on Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative

Session Chair: Dr. Abhishek Chatterjee

Selected Presentations:

- Topics ranged from refugee aesthetics, Partition memory, satire in Indian web comics, to feminist and decolonial narratives.

C. Beyond Masks and Capes: Comparative “Heroisms” in Graphic Narratives, Panel at the ICLA congress in Seoul, July 2025

Panel Organizers: Stefan Buchenberger & Abhishek Chatterjee

Submissions: 19 abstracts accepted

Themes: Cross-cultural heroism, new conceptions of the heroic, anti-heroes, trauma in graphic narrative, postmodern narrative theory

2. Member Activities and Publications

Prof. Dr. Barbara Grüning (University of Milan-Bicocca)

- **Monograph:** *Sociologia del fumetto. Concetti, metodi e pratiche di ricerca* (Carocci, 2025, co-authored with A. Scavarda)
- **Conference Presentation:** *Framing the Unreal* — “From Necron to Lilith: Deconstructing Gender Stereotypes in Italian SF-Comics”

Dr. David Coughlan (University of Limerick)

- **Panel Organizer:** *Comics Multiverses* (Venice, 2024)
- **Presentation:** *Comics Multiverses and Infinite Adaptations*

Dr. Tom Sewel (LUMS, Lahore)

- **Teaching:** ENGL 2402 - Comics Scholarship and Graphic Narrative (Fall 2024)
- **Conference Presentation:** *Framing the Unreal* — “Broken Heroes and Strange Bodies: A Science-Fictional Invasion”
- **Forthcoming Presentation:** *ICLA Triennial, Seoul (July 2025)* — “The Fascist Superhero”

Dr. Francesco-Alessio Ursini (Central China Normal University)

- **Article** (2024): “Italian places in Japanese manga” in *Journal of Literary Semantics*
- **Previously Unreported Publications:**
 - *Cyberpunk, Steampunk and all that -punk* (Linguistics Vanguard, 2023)
 - *The Purple Thread: Prince in Graphic Narratives* (Studies in Comics, 2022)
- **Note:** Awaiting release of forthcoming book chapter

Prof. Noriko Hiraishi (University of Tsukuba, Malaysia)

- **Keynote:** *Framing the Unreal* — “Girls, Space, and Science Fiction Comics”
- **Other Presentations:**
 - “Indonesian Girl Culture and Japanese/Korean Manga” (Feb 2025, Tsukuba)
 - “Tradition and Innovation in Indonesian Superheroine Reboot Comics” (AAS-in-Asia, June 2025)

Dr. Micaela Manansala (University of Tsukuba / University of the Philippines)

- **Presentations:**
 - *Shakespeare and manga*: ASA Conference (Dec 2024)
 - *Faust adaptations in manga*: CAL Research Forum (March 2025)
- **Teaching:** Popular Literature (Graphic Narratives), BA Comparative Literature

Dr. Marco Petrelli (University of Pisa)

- **Presentation:** “Strange Fruit: Bitter Root’s Harlem Renaissance” at the ICLA conference

Dr. Fernanda Díaz-Basteris

- **Editorial Work:** *Latinx Comics Studies: Critical and Creative Crossings* (First edited volume released)

Prof. Maaheen Ahmed (University of Gent)

- **Articles:** Two recent publications on comics (see UGent bibliography)
- **Edited Special Issue:** *Comics and Children's Magazines, Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* (Aug 2024)
- **Talks:**
 - Venice (Nov 2024)
 - Osnabrück (Oct 2024)
 - Liège (March 2025)
 - Söderton University (May 2025)
- **Exhibition:** *Visionary Comics* at the Comics Art Museum, Brussels
- **Catalogue:** Co-edited with Hugo Frey — *The Visionary Art of Franco-Belgian Comics*

Dr. Anna-Sophie Jürgens (Australian National University)

- **Panel Organizer:** *Science in Comics* at Venice
- **Workshop Organizer:** “Science goes Pop” (Cologne, 2024 and 2025)
- **Editorial Initiatives:**
 - Co-launched a series in *w/k – Between Science and Art*
 - Recent article on *African SuperScientists*
- **Publications:**
 - Article on *Joker comics and film adaptations*
 - Book chapter: “*The Cheshire Clown: Infectious Laughter*”

Dr. Tracy Lassiter (University of New Mexico-Gallup)

- **Conference Participation:** Venice 2024
- **Forthcoming Presentations:** ICLA Seoul; Kanagawa University
- **Event Organization:** Hosted Native American comic artist Dale Deforest (April 2025)
- **Publication:** “The Potential for Scholarship in Comics and Graphic Narrative Studies,” Recherche Littéraire/Literary Research, Fall 2024.

3. Summary of Select Contributions

Name	Publications	Presentations	Teaching	Organization	Editorial Work
Barbara Grüning	1 book	1	–	–	–
David Coughlan	–	1	–	1 panel	–
Tom Sewel	–	2	1 course	–	–
Francesco Ursini	3 articles	–	–	–	–
Noriko Hiraishi	–	3	–	–	–
Micaela Manansala	–	2	1 course	–	–
Marco Petrelli	–	1	–	–	–
Fernanda Díaz-Basteris	1 book	–	–	–	Editor
Maaheen Ahmed	2 articles, 1 edited issue	4	–	1 exhibition	1 catalogue
Anna-Sophie Jürgens	2 publications	–	–	1 panel 1 workshop	1 series
Tracy Lassiter	1 article	1	–	1 event	–

4. Conclusion

The committee has remained highly active across all areas of scholarly engagement, continuing to expand the field of Comics Studies through cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, and comparative approaches. Members have organized and participated in international conferences, published scholarly work in a wide array of venues, curated exhibitions, and initiated pedagogical innovation.

This report testifies to the committee's strong presence in global comics scholarship and its leadership within the ICLA's broader intellectual community.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Stefan Buchenberger

Co-chair, Standing Research Committee on Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative

This report was compiled by the Research Committee's secretary, Dr. Tom Sewel

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