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Editorial issue 8 2

In this issue we welcome aboard Ian Horton on the editorial team. Ian is Contextual and Theoretical Studies Coordinator for the Design School at London College of Communication, University of the Arts London. He has a broad range of experience with comics research that focuses on two main areas, issues of national identity in British comic books and informational/educational comics. In collaboration with Lydia Wysocki and John Swogger in 2014 he was a founder member of the *Applied Comics Network* which focuses on making and using applied comics - bringing comics and information together. He has recently published work on multiculturalism and stereotypes in British comics, the relationship between art history and Comics Studies and is currently working on a book chapter titled 'Info-Comics, Science (Fiction) and Public Engagement'. In his academic life outside of Comics Studies he has just completed a book titled *Hard Werken: One for All – Graphic Art and Design 1979-1994* about the Dutch graphic design group Hard Werken to be published by Valiz in Summer 2017. Ian will be working on some of the forthcoming special issues and in some of the general articles.

In this issue general issue the themes of the articles overlap in issues of comics production, readership and aesthetics. In "De/facing race: towards a model for a universal World Comics," Jeeshan Gazi recounts the attempts by Kodansha, the largest publisher of manga in Japan, to create 'World Comics' – 'a comics style that would be universal, the style of the twenty-first century understood by all readers' by recruiting foreign artists. Gazi proposes that the failure of this initiative because of the manga aesthetic and its depiction of race and suggests that, through abstraction found in the work of Paul Pope, one of the artists recruited by Kodansha, "a transcendence of race might be achieved."

In the second article, "Critical perspectives on mainstream, groundlevel, and alternative comics in *The Comics Journal*, 1977 to 1996," Doug Singen maps the development of rhetoric in the hugely influential *The Comics Journal*. The development of critical responses to comics is an important aspect of the gradual acceptance of comics as an important medium that is not just all about superheroes. *The Comics Journal* that started in 1977, is one of the most important publications in developing this respect with its championing of alternative comics. However, Singen observes that the journal's championing of alternative comics did not happen overnight and in its first twenty years its "critical perspective was complex and contradictory." Singen notes that it was not until the late 1980s that the journal turned its energies away from ground level and superhero comics towards alternative comics.

The next article is on a recurring theme in comics studies, education and the use of comics as a teaching device. Lars Wallner describes a Grade 3 (ages 9-10) classroom literacy project in "Speak of the bubble – constructing comic book bubbles as literary devices in a primary school classroom." In this project, pupils examined the use of bubbles as literary devices to show how, "teachers use pupils' drawn bubbles, adding to them a variety of multimodal expressions, thereby illustrating how narrative focalization

and character prosody are constructed in the reading of comics.” As Wallner notes, the significance of this study is its contribution to the use of comics in teaching literacy.

Brandon Nelson’s article, “‘Sick humor which serves no purpose’: Whiteman, Angelfood and the aesthetics of obscenity in the comix of R. Crumb” tackles the controversial representations of women and ethnic minorities in the work of R. Crumb. Crumb’s work presents a problem for the comics researcher because it is difficult to identify a ‘coherent ideology’ at work in the comics that could form the basis for an analysis. Nelson’s solution is to turn to the disturbing imagery of 1930s Surrealist art in its opposition to analysis thereby, “creating an artistic dumping ground for the author’s fetishes and antisocial preoccupations.” There follows an intriguing discussion of the ways a researcher can read the clear line style by Jan Baetens and Hugo Frey. In “‘Layouting’ for the plot: Charles Burns and the clear line revisited” Baetens and Frey argue for a new debate on the use of layout and nonlinear storytelling techniques using as example, a close reading of Charles Burns work.

Next, Jeffery Klaehn interviews Canadian comic book writer, Jim Zub, who works out of Toronto, Ontario, where he is Program Coordinator for Seneca College’s award-winning Animation programme. His credits include *Wayward* (Image Comics), *Samurai Jack* (IDW), *Figment* (Disney/Marvel) and *Pathfinder* (Dynamite/Paizo). The interview explores the evolution of Zub’s career in comics to date. The issue finishes with two book reviews, Christina Fawcett reviews *Chainmail Bikini: the anthology of women gamers*, by Hazel Newlevant. This is a curious anthology that examines women’s gaming using comics form. It is no less interesting for its non traditional use of fundraising to publish through the Kickstarter Project rather than a publisher. Finally, in his review of *The French Comics Theory Reader*, edited by Ann Miller and Bart Beaty, Valentino Zullo provides a thoughtful account of the debates about comics form and theory in the edited collection of an edited collection that will be a useful addition to the theoretical tools for comics analysis.

In all, this issue provides a broad range of materials that we hope you will enjoy. The next issue is a special issue based on Sex and Violence. It is edited by Mihaela Precup and Rebecca Scherr.