

I spent six weeks at the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum between 9 February and 22 March 2015, conducting extensive research and elaborating the outline of my dissertation. I am sure everybody knows Belinda Carlisle's song, *Heaven is a Place on Earth* – well, it was written about the Billy Ireland. With a collection of three million items (books, serials, strips, and original art) it is the largest of its kind. The Library belongs to the Ohio State University at Columbus, and it is a hub of comics-related events. For example, during my stay I had the chance to attend a mini-symposium on Charlie Hebdo and caricature. I also wrote a report on this event for the [Comics Forum](#).

This special collection library has resources that are unheard of in Hungary. I have managed to read both primary and secondary literature that are inaccessible at home. I have had the opportunity to read a wide range of autobiographical comics, way more than I had hoped. This made it possible for me to extend the corpus that I would like to examine in my dissertation, and to get a grip on the context of other works in the same topic. Without this research stay I would not have had the chance to familiarize myself with this amount of graphic narratives. The head librarian of the Billy Ireland, Susan Liberator, was also practicing as mind-reader: she really wanted to understand my research, followed its latest twists and turns, and her recommendations always pointed at relevant books to check out. Thank you, Susan!

As I mentioned earlier, during my stay I wrote a detailed outline for my dissertation. Under the influence of the scholarly literature I had access to at the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum, the project with which I applied for the travel grant has undergone considerable changes. The Library has an *amazing* collection of monographs and edited volumes on comics, as well as access to all the scholarly journals on comics and graphic novels (none are available in

Hungary), and they also provide special access to the *Comics and Popular Culture* series of the University of Mississippi Press via Project Muse. Under the influence of all these materials, the focus of my research project about the representation of war and trauma in autobiographical comics and comics journalism has shifted to an analysis of the line, the act of drawing, and the role of color in nonfiction comics. I still focus on comics that claim to be about events that actually happened, that is, on graphic memoirs and journalism, but my approach is now based on the concept of vulnerability (Judith Butler, 2004) as a common denominator and only means of interaction among artist, comic book object, and reader. I also intend to examine the response of the reader to upsetting nonfiction graphic narratives: I am primarily interested in the role of touch in reading upsetting scenes with blood, incest, and death.

Professor Jared Gardner agreed to be my mentor during my stay: I had the chance to discuss aspects of my topic and the state of comics scholarship by lunch or coffee. He is an excellent teacher, very open about sharing knowledge and ideas. I feel really fortunate that I could consult with him about my dissertation.

On 12 March Professor Gardner organized a roundtable for the two other visiting researchers and me to present what we are working on. This event was also the first meeting of the Comics Studies Working Group. I am really honored and proud that I could present my PhD topic in front of the audience of the Ohio State University and the members of Project Narrative. Let me mention the names of the other two presenters, Lukas Etter (University of Bern, former EAAS research grantee) and Christina Koch (Philipps University of Marburg).

With Lukas and Christina we also had the opportunity to take part in a tour of the hidden depths of the archive – an experience of a lifetime! Thank you Caitlin McGurk, curator of the museum, for showing us the secrets! Furthermore, I would like to thank curator Jenny Robb for showing me the original art of the upcoming exhibit that was unfortunately opening one week after I had left. The exhibit, *Graphic Details: Confessional Comics by Jewish Women*, is organized around a topic

that is very close to what I am focusing on in my dissertation. I also would like to thank Paul Williams, senior lecturer at the University of Exeter, visiting researcher at the Cartoon Library, for teaching me research discipline in the empirical way, and also for his insight and advice. But the biggest thank you goes to Jared: you are the best mentor.

