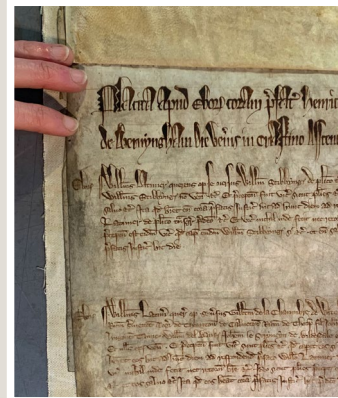
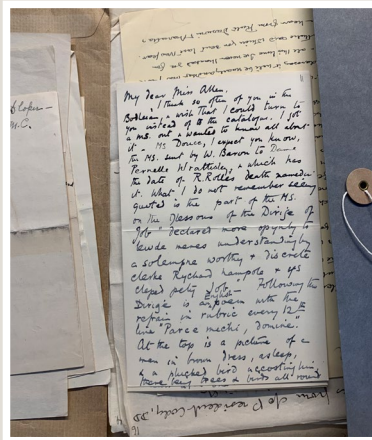
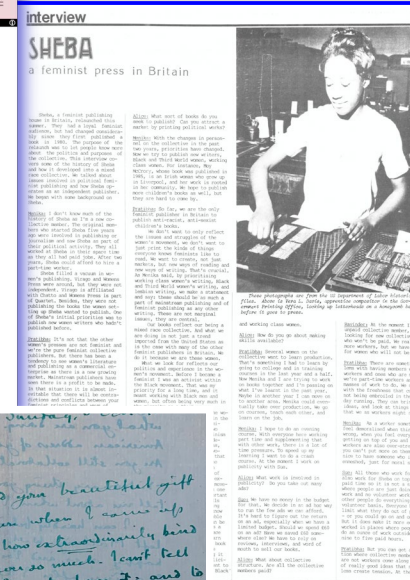


SEEKING THE TRUTH

USING COMICS TO DEPICT ARCHIVAL RESEARCH



Esther McManus
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HISTORICAL REPRESENTATION

Historians employ **specific cultural techniques** to piece together robust collages of the past ... offering compressed representations ... that are at once precise and imprecise. Every depiction of temporality of relations between certain objects—even accurate ones—remain just that: depictions, representations.

Werneke, T. (2025) 'Representation' in M. Sabrow and A. Saupe (eds) *Historical Authenticity*.

HISTORICAL REPRESENTATION

NARRATIVE FORMS: COHERENCE AND MEANING

... the plot of a narrative imposes a meaning on the events that make up its story level by revealing at the end a structure that was immanent in the events all along.

White, H. (1992) *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*.

Each form of historical representation has its own region of the past...and its own criteria for determining what counts as a fact, its research procedures and its criteria of evaluation. We simply do not have a set of generic meta-criteria that can be applied to any and every form of historical representation".

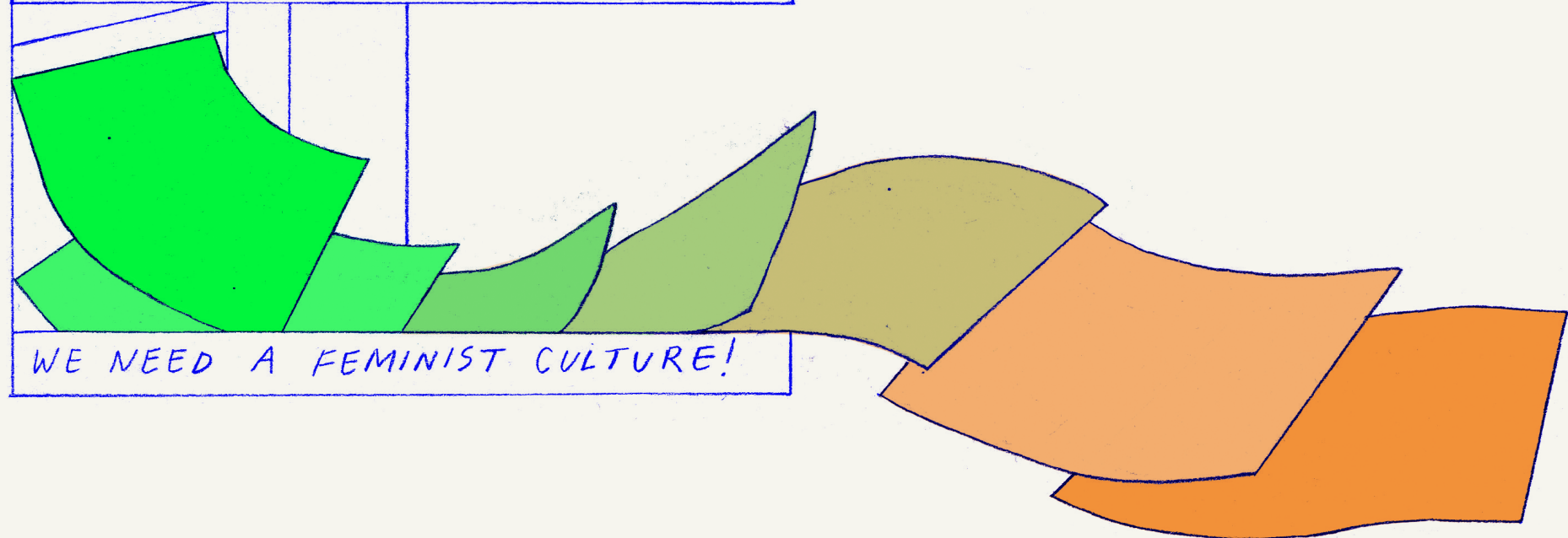
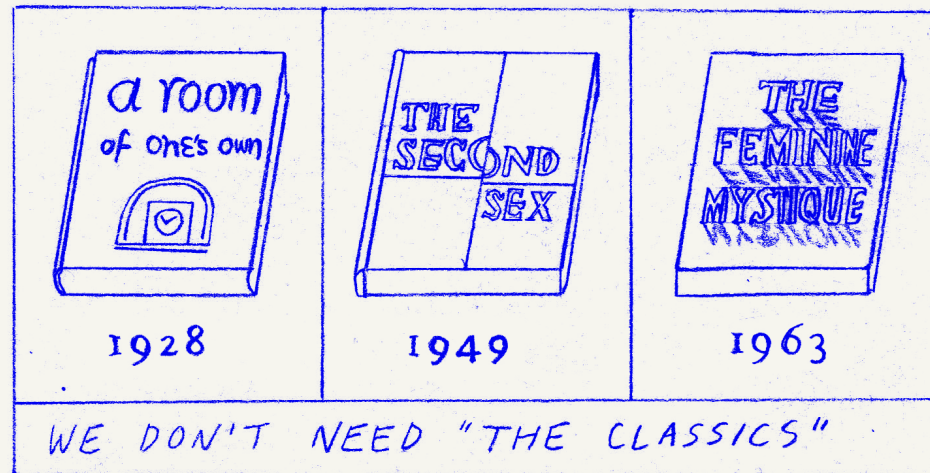
Harlan, D. (2007) 'Historical Fiction and Academic History', *Manifestos for History*

HISTORICAL REPRESENTATION

NARRATIVE CHRONOLOGY

... history can obey the logic of temporal sequence, but it can also accommodate other kinds of temporalities: history can be cyclical, circular, recursive, or reincarnated; ... continuous, discontinuous, or interrupted; ... eventful or everyday; ... lost, recovered, revised, rewritten.

Stein, J.A. (2013) 'American Literary History and Queer Temporalities', *American Literary History*, 25(4).



[queer temporalities']
commitment to thinking
reflexively about the
relationship between
history and time

Stein, J.A. (2013)

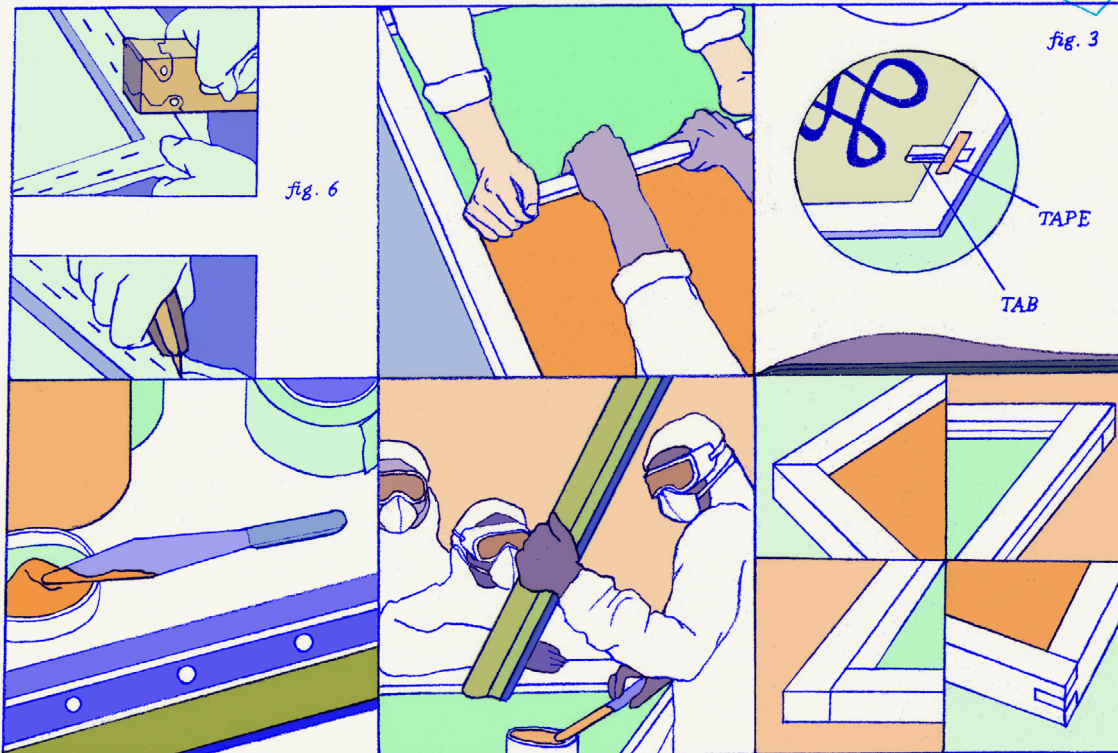
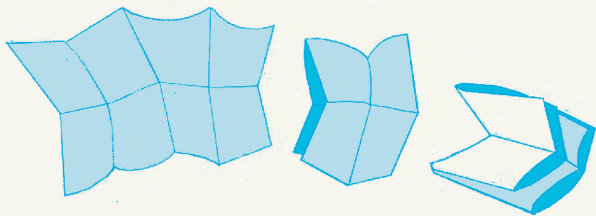
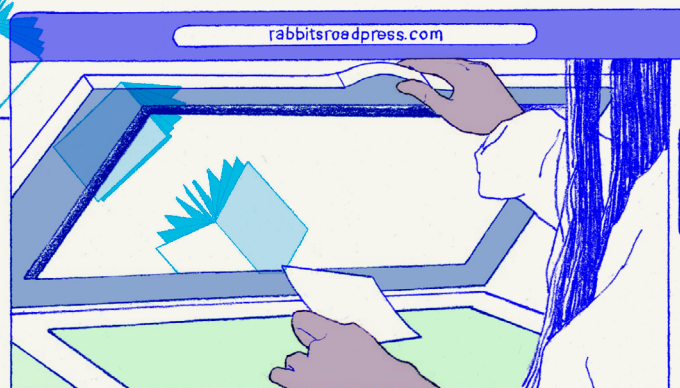


fig. 6

fig. 3

TAPE

TAB



Open Access Printing Sessions

Technicians will be on hand for 1:1 inductions on how to use our Riso MZ duplicators. No need to book, just turn up.

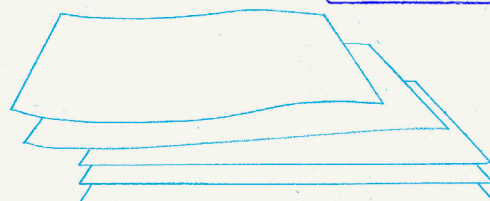
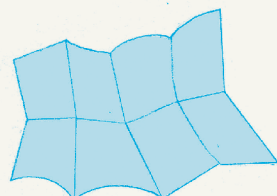
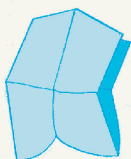
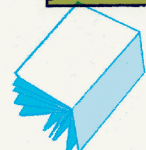
After completing an induction users will be able to use the Riso duplicators to work on their own projects during open access drop-in hours.

"I like that it's a space to work in because there are very few places where you can focus on the visual arts in this area"

"I've learned a lot - not just about Riso printing but from the other work being produced in the space and from the zines and posters on display"



**COMMUNITY
PRINTING
PRESS**



TEMPORALITY & CONVENTION

TIME ORIENTATION METAPHOR

Mental metaphors play a crucial role in how people understand time. In the case of temporality, Lakoff and Johnson conclude that “all of our understandings of time are relative to other concepts such as motion, space, and events” and that all temporal concepts appear to derive from a shared “time orientation metaphor”.

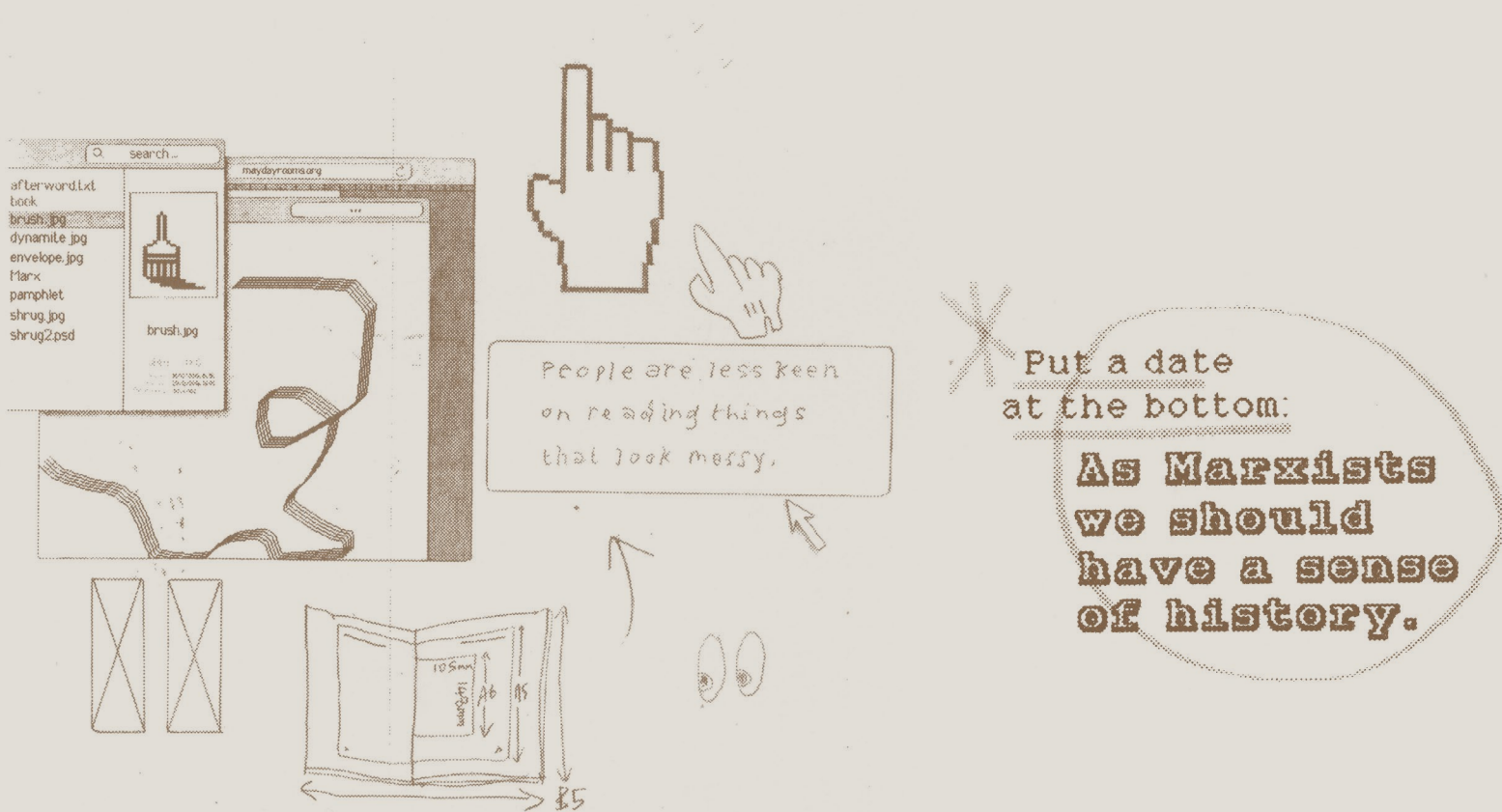
Borkent, M. (2023) *Comics and Cognition: Toward a Multimodal Cognitive Poetics*.

Lakoff and Johnson clarify that cultural experience shapes how metaphors are formed and used, and that “a vast background of cultural presuppositions” inform metaphor. This invites attention to the preponderance of able-bodied metaphors (which) reflects **a refusal to recognise and include disability**, both as human experience and metaphoric phenomenon.

Vidali, A. (2010) ‘Seeing What We Know: Disability and Theories of Metaphor’, *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*.

HISTORICAL REPRESENTATION IN COMICS

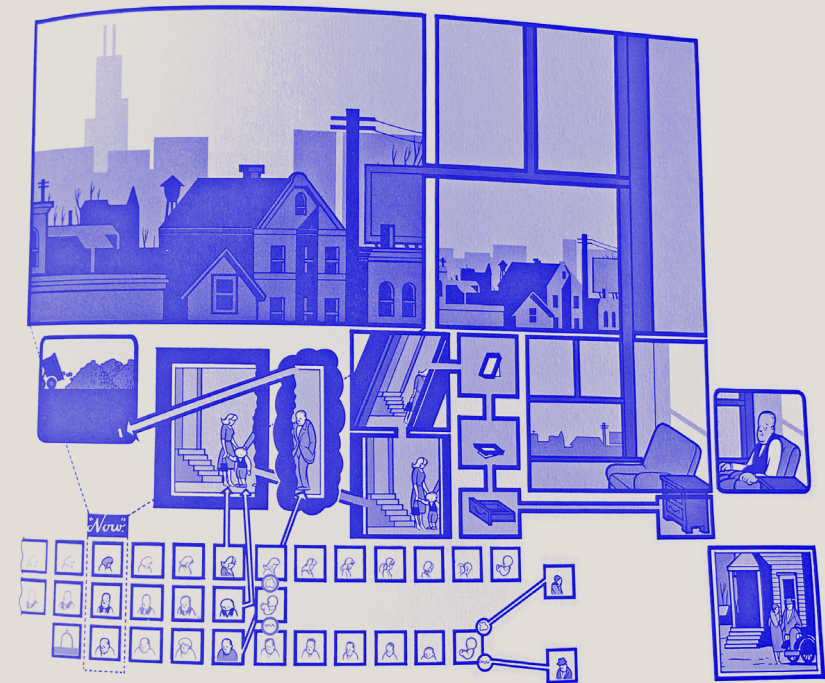
CODES & CONVENTIONS; POWERS, LIMITATIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES



COMICS & TEMPORALITY

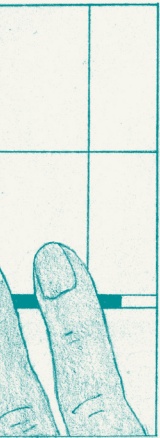
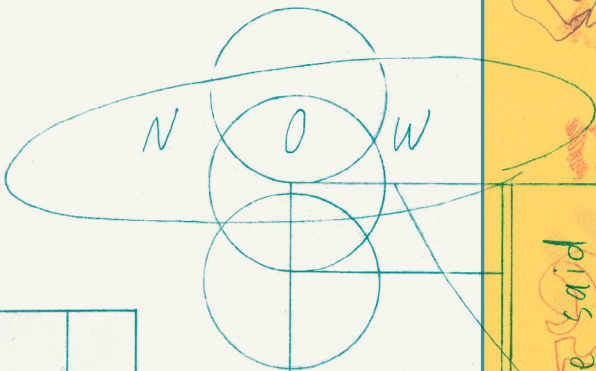
The time orientation metaphor... grounds two mental metaphors: **moving time** & **moving observer**. [the first] has events move past the observer, embedding them within the experience of the event, while the other places the observer outside of the temporal order, viewing the whole sequence of events as a singular timeline.

Borkent, M. (2023) *Comics and Cognition: Toward a Multimodal Cognitive Poetics*.



Ware, C. (2001) *Jimmy Corrigan, the smartest kid on Earth*.

“*no*”
slips it



shifts

now is a long time

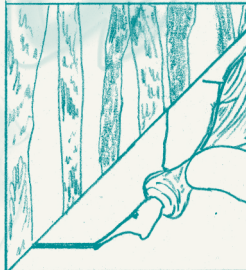
How can it be said
to exist at all?

THE "FIRST"

THE "SECOND"

THE "SECOND"

"Marks may be detected using a leaf of paper, steeped in an infusion of nut galls... when copperas is applied, for the purpose of writing, it immediately turns black."



THE "FIRST"

time

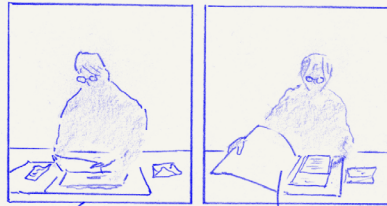
PERFORMING AMBIVALENCE

The graphic narrative's form forces the reader not only to work with disparate elements, but also to be aware of how those fragments and absences come together to generate a sense of narrative cohesion.

Santos, J. (2019) *Graphic memories of the civil rights movement: reframing history in comics.*

Foregrounding the ambivalence of archival research can enable us to appreciate it as an affective, creative process. Acknowledging that records from the past speak in unruly, ambiguous ways challenges the perception of archival collections' cold, hard factuality.

In reality, the researcher (like the reader of comics) brings their own knowledge, literacy and imagination to forge their understanding. This interpretative process is highly situated: a chance encounter, an interaction between object and text, maker and reader.



MS. Eng.lett.d.268

Collection overview
Letters to Hope Emily Allen
Extent: 177 leaves, loose.

*Letters to
Hope Allen from friends
(mostly alive) 1967
e.g.*

Gardner, J. (2006)

...the comic form is ideally suited to making the present aware of its own 'archive' a past that it is always in the process of becoming.

The excess data – the remains of the everyday – is always left behind, even as the narrative progresses forward in time: a visual archive for the reader's necessary work of rereading, resorting and reframing.

Understanding this process of engagement with the archive as an affective one recasts history (and historical research) as a dynamic that's alive, filled with personal longing, and not fully in the writer's control. If the past and present are suffused with ambivalence, so too is the method of putting them into conversation.

Hemmings, C. (2018)

*My dear Miss Allen,
I think so often of you
in the Bodleian + wish
that I could turn to you
instead of to the catalogue.
I got a MS. out & I*

Even if we admit that a comic's narrative is inherently in the past, it doesn't mean that the reader perceives it that way.

Groensteen, T. and Miller, A. (2013)

nota



Dinshaw, C. (2012) How Soon Is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time.

In the Now

Margery Kempe,
Hope Emily Allen
and Me.

How does it
feel to be
asynchronous?

In this interaction – with an archival document or a panel of comics – we experience an indeterminacy between past and present.

We know that a story is being re-told from the past (for how else can it be told in the present?) But we don't perceive it as 'simply' past – we experience the moment unfurling in our present.

transitions are not a forward-driven process, but one that goes back and forth assessing the juxtaposition between panels, and composites of panels, that build and update inferential patterns about characters, events, and temporal relations.

Borkent, M. (2023) Comics and Cognition: Toward a Multimodal Cognitive Poetics.

Thys boke is not wretyn in ordyr

The Book of Margery Kempe
MEECH AND ALLEN

EETS 212
1940

AMBIVALENCE AND TEMPORAL STRUCTURE

The simultaneity of past
and present ... destabilises
teleologies of racial progress
that privilege an understanding
of US history as an ascendant,
progressive movement forward.

Cutter, M.J. & Schlund-Vials, C.J. (2018)
*Redrawing the historical past: history,
memory, and multiethnic graphic novels.*

COMICS & ACADEMIC HISTORY

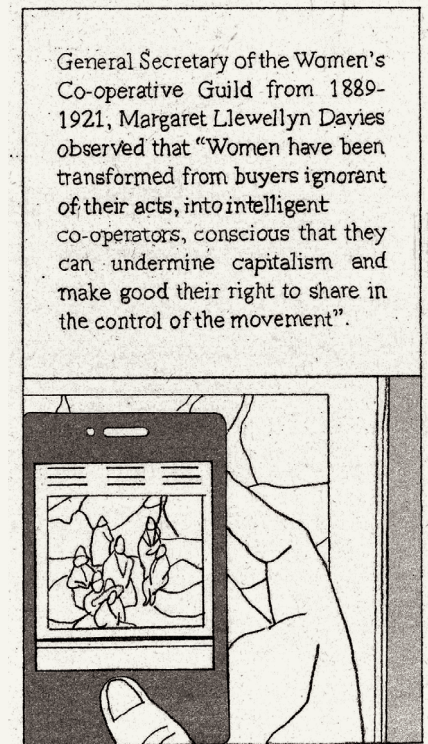
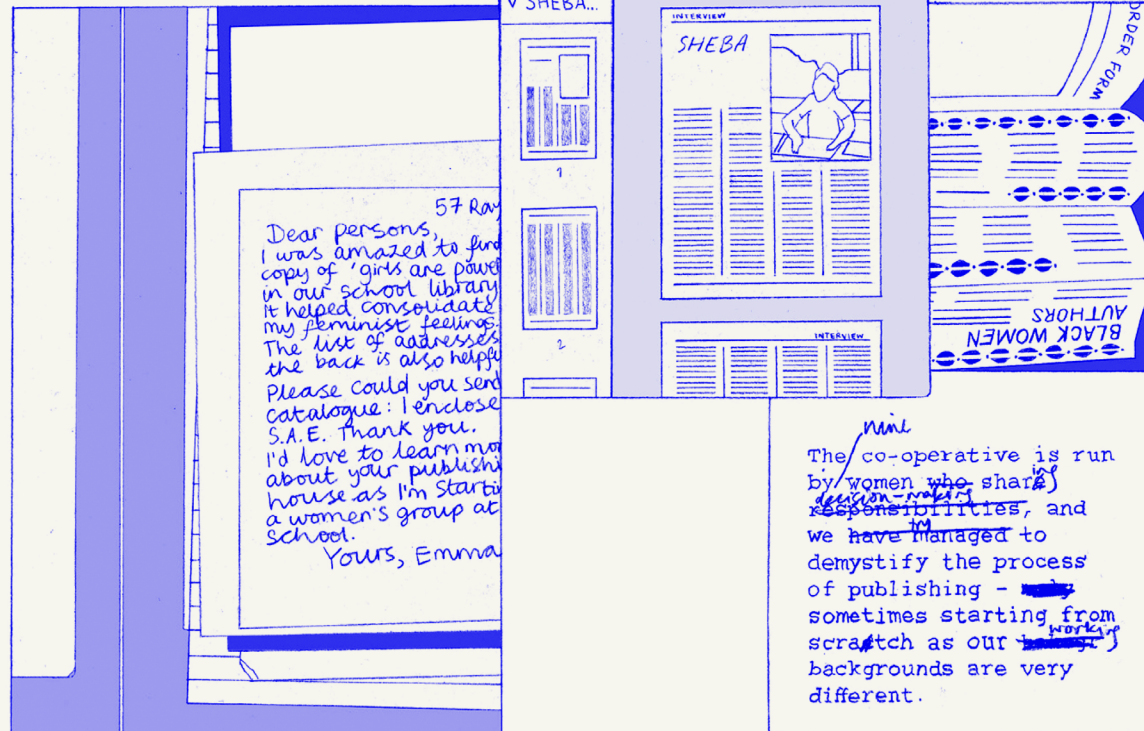
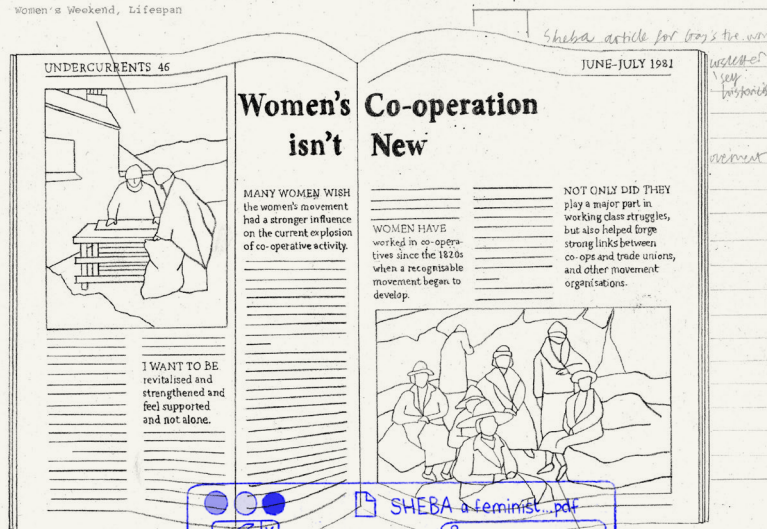
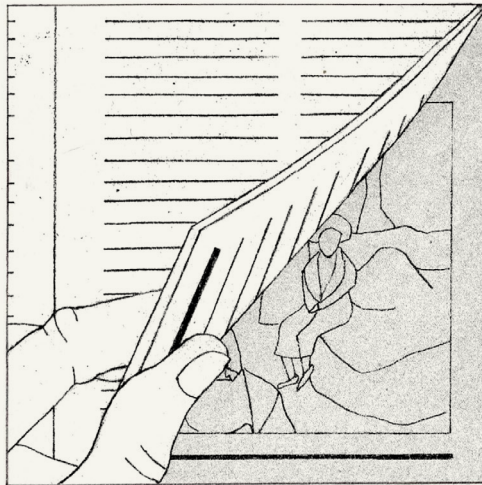
POWERS, LIMITATIONS, RESPONSIBILITIES

The **interpretability of images** is the major obstacle for the integration of comics text to the mainstream of historiography as the meaning of images in sequential context is not as definitive as the meaning of words tend to be.

Ashkenazi, O. and Dittmar, J. (2021) 'Comics as Historiography', ImageText.

comics conventions "facilitate an aesthetic appreciation of intricately networked figures and compositions" where "recurrent visual devices ... come to make sense gradually, with close attention and repeated readings **teasing out connections** that braid every panel ... iteratively vesting non-iconic visual forms with new significance"

Miodrag, H. (2015) *Comics and Language: reimagining critical discourse on the form.*



REFERENCE LIST

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Hemmings, C. (2011) Why stories matter: the political grammar of feminist theory.

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