Dodds, Nick (2018) Reframing the graphic memoir: how can the comic-strip artist negotiate modality and fidelity in the depiction of personal and historical narratives? In: Creating Comics, Creative Comics Symposium, 1-2 June 2018, University of South Wales, Cardiff, UK. (Unpublished)

Downloaded from: http://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/4597/

Usage of any items from the University of Cumbria’s institutional repository ‘Insight’ must conform to the following fair usage guidelines.

Any item and its associated metadata held in the University of Cumbria’s institutional repository Insight (unless stated otherwise on the metadata record) may be copied, displayed or performed, and stored in line with the JISC fair dealing guidelines (available here) for educational and not-for-profit activities provided that

- the authors, title and full bibliographic details of the item are cited clearly when any part of the work is referred to verbally or in the written form
- a hyperlink/URL to the original Insight record of that item is included in any citations of the work
- the content is not changed in any way
- all files required for usage of the item are kept together with the main item file.

You may not

- sell any part of an item
- refer to any part of an item without citation
- amend any item or contextualise it in a way that will impugn the creator’s reputation
- remove or alter the copyright statement on an item.

The full policy can be found here.
Alternatively contact the University of Cumbria Repository Editor by emailing insight@cumbria.ac.uk.
Reframing the Graphic Memoir: How does the comic-strip artist negotiate modality and fidelity in the depiction of personal and historical narratives?
This thesis investigates the potency of the comic strip as a medium to address real-life narratives, which are “fabricated in and through drawing and design” (Whitlock & Poletti:v).
Defining the Graphic Memoir*

The term ‘memoir’ is preferred over ‘autobiography’ as it refers to selected memories or episodes taken from life, rather than the story of a life . . .

. . . and best describes what will be the outcome of practice-led research.

*also referred to in comic-book scholarship as autobiographix, autography, autographics, autobiocomics, graphic life writing etc . . .
Practice-led research - themes

- Modality
- Temporality (and memory)
- Authenticity

(The Graphic Memoir)
Modality

The formal & structural properties of the comic strip and their application within the graphic memoir genre;

• page multi-frame & readership control
• the comics graphic-code
• anchorage > the relay between text & image
• representational style
Temporality (& memory)

Chronology, tempo and issues concerning the depiction of time and memory within the memoir;

- clock time/subjective time/psychic time in comic book narratives
- the panel as time controller
- the transitional influence of negative space
Authenticity

How does the stylized and iconographic content of the graphic work complicate perceptions of fidelity?

- the authorial ‘pact’ and/or ‘performed integrity’ of the artist (Refaie:171)
- historical accuracy and/or ‘memory retrieval’.
- relation of the graphic text to other memoir texts or ‘truth’ discourses.
- the drawn image vs other visual means of capturing real life people and events.
The Checkweighman
Pilgrimage from Nenthead  (Chester Armstrong)

working class memoir (1928)

Key themes from PFN
• mining community
• growing politicalization
• autodidactism
• rationalisation & enlightenment

Project in hand
Graphic adaptation of Pilgrimage text - a work that intertwines familial & sociopolitical storylines.
In 1898, aged 30, Chester co-founded the Ashington Debating and Literary Improvement Society (ADLIS) with John Moffett Gillians, with a modus-operandi to debate social and philosophical issues, and dissect the keynote modernist works of the day (Armstrong:121-173).

The Morpeth Herald archive.
textual & pictorial resources for time period
Psychogeography (from Guy Debord SI) - how the geographical location and/or environment effects the emotions and behaviour of individuals
Roaming in thought over the universe

And the vast all that is called evil

I saw the little that is good

I saw hastening to nurse itself

steadily hastening towards mortality

and became lost and dead
In this bread earth of ours

And the measureless grossness

And the slag

Enclosed and safe

Within its central heart

Nestles the seed perfection
O the bliss eyes, the happy hearts

That See, that know the guiding thread so fine

Along the might labyrinth

In thy ensemble, whatever else withhold not from us.

Belief in plan of thee, enclosed in time and space

Health, peace, salvation, universal
'Nay, but the lack of it the dream.'

'And failure in life's love and wealth, a dream.'

'And all the world a dream.'
The mediating role of the artist . . .

'It's about choices being made, of finding what one can tell . . . and what one can reveal beyond what one knows one is revealing"  
(Spiegelman:2011:73)
References

- Armstrong, C. 1938. *Pilgrimage to Nenthead* [Methuen]
- Bechdel, A. 2006. *Fun Home* [Jonathan Cape]