

The Department of French and Italian is pleased to present a PhD dissertation defense

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August 3, 2020, 2:00 pm  
This is a CLOSED defense.

### Auteur comics magazines in Italy: the case of *Orient Express* (1982–1985)

My current research centers on the contribution of the comics magazine *Orient Express* (1982-1985) to the evolution of auteur comics culture in Italy. Auteur comics magazines appeared in late 1960s and thrived in the following two decades, mainly re-publishing works from Anglo-Saxon, Franco-Belgian, and Hispanic authors. Beside few masters and some avant-garde artists, Italian authors were not equally represented.

Among the competitors, *Orient Express* distinguished itself for its carefully planned editorial line, its emphasis on quality storytelling, and its commitment to showcase Italian authors, many of whom were not established auteurs yet. Due to its short editorial life *Orient Express* is an oft-overlooked product among scholars of Italian comics. I contend that there are several reasons for reversing this trend.

First, *Orient Express* collaborated with several young comic-makers and well-known artists of serial comics who had been given little visibility elsewhere. Second, some of the stories that *Orient Express* published are widely acknowledged as the finest comics productions of the period. Third, the editorial trajectory of *Orient Express* is particularly representative of the evolution of the Italian comics market in the 1970s-1990s. The way in which *Orient Express* blended auteur and popular comics anticipated the blurring of boundaries that took place in the late 1980s and ended up expanding the possibilities of the medium.

By examining both the comics content (genres, formats, etc.) and the editorial content (editorials, letter section, columns, etc.), I address questions of authorship, reception, and the publishing industry that extend beyond the comics field. Moreover, I explore the predominant modes and genres of the period, as well as its most representative authors. The aim is to deepen the knowledge of an understudied cultural phenomenon (i.e. auteur comics) and also to offer a hermeneutic tool for understanding more recent contemporary issues related to the world of comics.

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