

**Panel 34**  
**Intermediality in Popular Culture**

**Crippling the Comic: Ability, Attachment, and Embodied Difference  
in *Nimona* and Contemporary Webcomics Aesthetics .**

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This paper offers a postcritical and intermedial reading of ND Stevenson’s webcomic, *Nimona*, exploring how digital-native comics complicate and reimagine the concepts of ability, disability, and embodiment. Through the lens of Rita Felski’s theory of attachment and recognition, this study shifts the interpretive mode from critique to connection, analysing how readers emotionally engage with characters whose identities are marked by physical divergence, emotional volatility, and narrative instability.

*Nimona*, the shapeshifting protagonist with a childlike appearance, and Ballister, the disillusioned knight marked by a prosthetic arm, both represent bodies in flux, neither purely heroic nor completely villainous, neither fully disabled nor perfectly empowered. These ambiguous avatars invite a redefinition of disability not as absence or deficiency, but as a generative mode of embodied difference, one that generates both narrative complexity and aesthetic possibilities.

The paper incorporates crip theory, Scott McCloud’s visual grammar, Thierry Groensteen’s system of comics, and intermedial frameworks of Werner Wolf and Irina O. Rajewsky to examine how visual and spatial affordances of webcomics mediate non-normative embodiment. *Nimona* disrupts traditional narrative coherence through formal and emotional fragmentation, reflecting the affectively charged nonlinear experiences of trauma, neurodivergence, and other marginalised embodiments.

Ultimately, the paper argues that *Nimona* “crips” the comic form itself, challenging the norms of both print literature and able-bodied storytelling. It also contributes to conversations in disability studies, digital humanities, and contemporary children’s literature, advocating for new modes of reading practices that privilege affective complexity, formal experimentation, and inclusive aesthetics.

**Biography**

Devendar Sandhu is a research scholar based in India, pursuing a PhD in English Literature. Her work focuses on children’s and young adult literature, with special interests in social psychology, disability studies, bullying, and comics. She is currently interested in embodiment, digital aesthetics, and intermedial narratives in webcomics through the lens of crip theory.