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Neuroqueering the Ableist Spaces: Rethinking Post-Normative Possibilities through Neurocosmopolitanism in the Graphic Novel *The Thud*

Aritra Ghosal, (National Institute of Technology Durgapur, India),
aritraghosal935@gmail.com
Shri Krishan Rai, (National Institute of Technology Durgapur, India),
skrai.hu@nitdgp.ac.in

Abstract

Neurodivergent conditions (autism, ADHD, Bipolar Disorder and other neurological variations) have been deemed as symptoms of mental illness or cognitive deficit that need to be pathologised by ableist medical discourses like the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) that champion normative behaviour. This is not solely a misdiagnosis but a greater colonial conspiracy to synonymise neuroessentialism with whiteness, hereditarianism and perfection. In this context, graphic medicines/pathographies counter such neuronormative epistemologies by serving as tools of queering and unsettling such pathological paradigms, with an aim to foster neurodiversity. Thus, by deconstructing various multimodal narratologies, the paper intends to unravel how graphic medicine, *The Thud* (2021) by Mikael Ross (translated from German graphic novel *Der Umfall*, 2018) acts as a neuro-queer medium which aims at queering the dominant neurological epistemologies and reassessing the opportunities of creating neurocosmopolitan spaces which would embrace the neurodivergent individuals. The paper further incorporates the theoretical framework of neuroqueer ecologies to underscore how the ecology of place creates an impression in the psyche of a neurodivergent individual, evoking neurosensorial experiences within their ontology.

Keywords

Neurodiversity, neurocosmopolitanism, graphic medicine, neuronormativity, neuroqueer ecologies

Introduction

Cognitive and neurological discourses have been widely influenced by the pathology paradigm that aims to establish a binary opposition between normal and abnormal bodies. The term pathology paradigm was coined by Nick Walker, who defined it as 'the assumption that there is one "right" style of human neurocognitive functioning.'[1] Cognitive patterns 'that diverge substantially from socially constructed standards of "normal" … are framed within this

[1] Nick Walker, *Neuroqueer Heresies: Notes on the Neurodiversity Paradigm, Autistic Empowerment, and Postnormal Possibilities* (Autonomous Press, 2021), 135.

paradigm as medical pathologies, as deficits, damage, or "disorders".'[2] The historical emergence of the pathology paradigm can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century, especially with Francis Galton's (1822–1911) postulation of 'Eugenics.' For Galton, Eugenics was 'the science of improving stock'[3] that strengthened the principles of selective-heredity breeding of the human populace for decreasing 'undesirable' human traits in favour of 'desirable' ones. With this concept, the medical discourses on psychiatry and clinical psychology started focusing more on neurological deviations and imbalances. Robert Chapman, in his *Empire of Normality*, states:

> The core assumptions of the pathology paradigm are that mental and cognitive functioning are individual and based on natural abilities, and can be ranked in relation to a statistical norm across the species. And while there were earlier notions of the mean understanding and normal body, I locate Galton as the founder of the pathology paradigm proper.[4]

These settler epistemological visions on the pathology paradigm supplied the racial epistemologies with the scientific toolkit for validating and naturalising colonial hierarchies to subjugate and eliminate indigenous subjectivities. The politics of biomedical categorisation transcend the mere pathologisation of neurodivergent minds as disordered, as it also embeds cultural and moral judgments about what kinds of thinking and behaving are acceptable.

Neo-Galtonian paradigms are continuing to shape medical discourses even in today's progressive postcolonial world. As a counter-hegemonic move, thorough scrutinisation of such discourses have been done which has stimulated a counter-narrative for the sake of fostering a conducive environment for embracing neurominorities within a 'neurodiversity paradigm,'[5] paving the way for a neurocosmopolitan understanding.

Propounded by Nick Walker and Ralph Savarese, the theoretical framework of neurocosmopolitanism, which is drawn from the neurodiversity advocacy of disability studies, calls for the establishment of a neurologically diversified society where both the neurotypicals and the neurodivergents will share the same space and acquire equal rights.[6] While Walker thinks that 'a neurocosmopolitan individual accepts and welcomes neurocognitive differences in experience, communication, and embodiment,' and dismantles 'the prevailing attitude toward neurocognitive differences among humans,'[7] for Savarese neurocosmopolitanism is to 'put forward … [a] more active, mobile, and participatory notion' on neurodivergence.[8] To conceptualise neurocosmopolitanism, we draw upon the concept of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism is a transnational approach that claims that all individuals belong to a single

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[2] Walker, *Neuroqueer Heresies*, 135.

[3] Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development* (Macmillan, 1883), 25.

[4] Robert Chapman, *Empire of Normality: Neurodiversity and Capitalism* (Pluto Press, 2023), 63.

[5] Walker, *Neuroqueer Heresies*, 5.

[6] Walker, *Neuroqueer Heresies*, 77; Ralph Savarese, 'From Neurodiversity to Neurocosmopolitanism: Beyond Mere Acceptance and Inclusion,' in *Ethics and Neurodiversity*, ed. C.D. Herrera and Alexandra Perry (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 191.

[7] Nick Walker, interviewed by Dora M. Raymaker, 'Toward a Neuroqueer Future: An Interview with Nick Walker,' in *Autism in Adulthood* 4, no. 2 (2022): 9.

[8] Sevarese, 'From Neurodiversity to Neurocosmopolitanism,' 191

moral community, or to borrow Diogenes' phrasing, 'citizen[s] of the world,'[9] and must transcend national borders for the sake of assembling into a shared humanity. Neurocosmopolitanism, in contrast is an anti-neuroprovincialist approach that 'seeks to actively engage with and preserve human neurodiversity, and to honor, explore, and cultivate its creative potentials.'[10] Walker is of the opinion that the attainment of any neurocosmopolitan society is possible only through the act of neuroqueering, that is, through the process of subverting and thwarting the notion of cognitive deviation as the '"natural" default way of being' and thus welcoming and appreciating 'the differences among bodyminds.'[11]

In the context of these theoretical framings, we aim to explore how the city of Neuerkerode, as represented in Mikaël Ross's graphic novel *The Thud,*[12] acts as a neurocosmopolitan space that fosters and champions neurodivergence and showcases a synergy of both the neurotypicals and the neurodivergents in influencing and shaping the Neuerkerode community.[13]

The 'neo-Galtonian concept'[14] of a pathology paradigm that ostracises individuals with pathological conditions, not just limits itself to the categorisation of normal and abnormal but also expands its boundaries by focusing on the nature-culture schism, considering neurocognitive deviations as unnatural. To subvert this predominant hegemonic understanding of both ecology and neurology, James Aldridge, propounds the framework of neuroqueer ecologies, which rejects 'the boundaries and binaries that underpin established ways of thinking about "Nature" through paying attention to neurodivergent experience.'[15]

Thus, through an intersectional interpretation of both neurocosmopolitanism and neuroqueer ecologies in the paper, we focus on the ways in which the author of *The Thud* queers the normative narratives of space and environment, showing how neurodivergent ways of perception in the graphic novel produce alternative networks of communitarianism, care and ecological co-constitution. We would also like to showcase how neurological deviation aids us in discovering new perspectives about nature-culture interactions, valuing differences brought by neurodivergent individuals. Additionally, we aim to explore how *The Thud* acts as a multimodal agent that queers neuroessentialist dualities such as normal and abnormal, able and disable, self and other with the help of visual verbal iconographies to amplify and validate the neurodivergent experiences.

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[9] Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. Charles Duke Yonge (Henry G. Bohn, 1853), 240–41.

[10] Walker, *Neuroqueer Heresies*, 78.

[11] Walker, *Neuroqueer Heresies*,78.

[12] Mikaël Ross, *The Thud* (Fantagraphics Books, 2021).

[13] Ross, *The Thud*, 18.

[14] Robert Chapman, 'Neurodiversity and the Pathology Paradigm: Uncovering the Forgotten History of Normality,' *Psychology Today* (August 2021), https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/neurodiverse-age/202108/neurodiversity-and-the-pathology-paradigm.

[15] James Aldridge, 'What's Neurodivergence Got to Do With It?,' *Climate Museum UK* (February 2025), https://climatemuseumuk.org/2025/02/01/whats-neurodivergence-got-to-do-with-it/.

Exploring neurodivergence in graphic narratives

The interoperation of visual and verbal modalities has always played a determinant role in the representation of disenfranchised and marginalised experiences. One such graphic mode, which is recently gaining prominence in registering traditionally sidelined health narratives, is Graphic Medicine. Formalised by Ian Williams, graphic medicine is a kind of graphic narrative that 'combines the principles of narrative medicine with an exploration of the visual systems of comic art, interrogating the representation of physical and emotional signs and symptoms within the medium' while simultaneously challenging 'the dominant methods of scholarship in healthcare, offering a more inclusive perspective of medicine, illness, disability.'[16] Graphic medicines open up novel avenues for countering the fraught histories of disability by celebrating, sharing and valuing the differences they bring. Neurodivergence, which encompasses conditions like autism, ADHD, bipolar disorder, dyslexia, schizophrenia, and other cognitive variations, has received a generous representation in this genre. These graphic medicines/pathographies, instead of representing the 'discourse of pity,'[17] exhibit empathetic displays of the neurominorities by embracing diversity in thought, sensory processing and communication.

One of the recurring themes of these neurodivergent graphic medicines is to bring to the forefront the invisible experiences of neurodivergent individuals. Unlike physical illnesses, which are comparatively easier to illustrate, neurodivergence resists essentialist representation. In *Marbles: Mania, Depression, Michelangelo, and Me,*[18] one of the most compelling graphic medicine books on neurodiversity, the author, Ellen Forney, carefully handles the depiction of a protagonist with bipolar disorder by using dense, frenetic lines and enriched metaphors. Kristen Gay argues that 'Forney's self-portraits mark a significant point at which she uses a visual medium to retain a sense of herself and her own unique identity post-diagnosis.'[19] Similarly, *Lighter than My Shadow* by Katie Green[20] is a graphic medicine text about anorexia (eating disorder) where scribbled black patterns are used to depict the protagonist's psychological anxiety regarding her body, gender, sexuality and inappetence.

Sarah Birge asserts that, 'Comics' ability to represent complex interactions of emotions, thoughts, movements, and social relationships creates a promising opportunity for remedying the inadequacy of many contemporary representations of cognitive disability.'[21] In *Invisible Differences*, authors Julie Dachez and Mademoiselle Caroline[22] focus on the internal experience of autism and queer the representational codes through which neurotypicality is enforced. The protagonist Marguerite's autistic experience in the graphic novel has been aesthetically performed through the use of contrasting colours. One such instance can be seen

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[16] M.K. Czerwiec, Ian Williams, Susan Merrill Squier, Michael J. Green, Kimberly R. Myers, and Scott T. Smith. *Graphic Medicine Manifesto* (The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015), 1.

[17] Michael T. Hayes, 'Troubling Signs: Disability, Hollywood Movies and the Construction of a Discourse of Pity,' *Disability Studies Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (2003): 114.

[18] Ellen Forney, *Marbles: Mania, Depression, Michelangelo, and Me* (Gotham Books, 2012).

[19] Kristen Gay, 'Breaking Up at/with Illness Narratives,' in *Disability in Comic Books and Graphic Narratives*, ed. Chris Foss, Jonathan W. Gray, and Zach Whalen (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 178.

[20] Katie Green, *Lighter than My Shadow* (Jonathan Cape, 2013).

[21] Sarah Birge, 'No Life Lessons Here: Comics, Autism, and Empathetic Scholarship,' *Disability Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2009), https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v30i1.1067.

[22] Julie Dachez and Mademoiselle Caroline, *Invisible Differences* (Oni Press, 2016).

in a party setting where the author heightens the carnivalesque mood using vibrant red splashes upon the neurotypical party crowd and then suddenly defuses the joviality by casting a gloomy patch upon the protagonist, who sits alone on a couch. Thus, by weaponising colour effects as a powerful visual tool, the authors counter neurotypical ways of living and being which socially distances the neurodivergent population. Another important work that challenges the neuroessentialist notion with its multimodal medium is *Sensory: Life on the Spectrum*, edited by Bex Ollerton.[23] This graphic anthology consists of many life narratives by neurodivergent authors who have been the victims of neuroprovincialist society. In one of the stories titled 'Until There's Nothing Left,' the author Noel Fox sets the plot entirely with black and white colour palettes, which metaphorise neuronormative expectations of society from a neurodivergent protagonist who, in a quest to achieve social acceptance, scissors her autistic behavioural patterns and thus loses her individuality.

Graphic medicine books on neurodivergence are heavily dependent on their intricate illustrations to relive the experiences of the neurodivergent people and defy pathologising narratives. One such graphic novel is *Button Pusher* by Tyler Page,[24] where the author uses jittery linework, non-uniform panel sizes and overlapping speech balloons to accentuate the protagonist's inattention, hyperfocus and impulsivity because of their ADHD condition. The author carefully handles the narrative by integrating scientific explanation and diagnostic moments into the narrative without a mere pathologisation of the protagonist. The graphic novel *HOAX: Psychosis Blues* by Ravi Thornton,[25] dealing with schizophrenia, is a brilliant instance of 'how comics provide an expanded opportunity to visualise the (in)visible territory of schizophrenia'[26] and other neurological conditions. The ingenious visual strategies employed by the authors of these narratives connect readers with the emotional space of neurodivergent protagonists, offering an affective economy that combines narrative empathy with visual emotion. This is produced not solely by visual metaphor or embedded gestures but also by temporal spacing techniques such as sequencing, spacing, gutter and panelling.

Although the representations of neurodivergence in graphic medicine books are in abundance, scholarly works that focus primarily on these intersecting aspects remain relatively underdeveloped. Elizabeth J. Donaldson in 'Psychographics: Graphic Memoirs and Psychiatric Disability'[27] has narrowly touched upon the intersections of graphic memoirs and neurodivergence. Again in 'Breaking Up [at/with] Illness Narratives,' Kristen Gay opines how 'illness memoir' can 'break from classical genre conventions' and create new possibilities of 'speaking about illness that defy totalization and celebrate the inextricability of illness.'[28] Chris Foss in 'Reading in Pictures: Re-visioning Autism and Literature through the Medium of

[23] Bex Ollerton, ed., *Sensory: Life on the Spectrum* (Andrews McMeel Pub, 2022).

[24] Tyler Page, *Button Pusher* (Macmillan, 2022).

[25] Ravi Thornton, *HOAX: Psychosis Blues* (Ziggy's Wish, 2014).

[26] Shefali and Preeti Puri, 'Traversing the (In)Visible Territory of Schizophrenia in *HOAX Psychosis Blues*: An Intersection of Life Writing and Graphic Medicine in Comics,' *Life Writing* 22, no. 1 (2024): 138.

[27] Elizabeth J. Donaldson, 'Psychographics: Graphic memoirs and psychiatric disability,' in *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Disability,* ed. Alice Hall (Routledge, 2020).

[28] Gay, 'Breaking Up at/with Illness Narratives,' 173.

Manga' provides a painstaking demonstration of how varied 'visual gestalt'[29] in Mangas uniquely enrich and diversify the portrayal of autism. Susan M. Squier examines 'how graphic fictions articulate the embodied, ethical, and sociopolitical experiences of impairment and disability' and at the same time challenges 'our assumed dimensions and possibilities of the comics genre and medium, demonstrating the great potential comics hold for disability studies.'[30] With special focus on Marvel/DC, Jose Alaniz, in *Death, Disability, and the Superhero: The Silver Age and Beyond,*[31] has explored how superhero comics use disability and neurodivergence as metaphors with case studies of characters like Daredevil and Oracle.

Existing scholarship on the intersectional aspect of comics and neurodiversity meticulously addresses the issues of the stigmatisation of neurodivergence by predominant discourses like the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and how graphic medicines subvert these notions. However, there is a significant gap in exploring how the visual-verbal aspects of the graphic medium provide valuable insights into the intersecting framework of neurocosmopolitan and neuroqueer ecologies offering novel possibilities of understanding spaces and nature by subverting/queering the existing neuroessentialist discourses.

Neuerkerode as a neurocosmopolitan space in *The Thud*

Neuerkerode, a village located in Sickte, Lower Saxony, Germany, is unlike many rural settlements that we might imagine. This place, which is the setting of Ross's *The Thud*, was founded in the year 1868 by 'a philanthropist and a priest to accommodate people with various intellectual and physical disabilities,'[32] and now has transformed into an inclusive socio-spatial environment where both the neurodivergent and the neurotypical cohabit. Currently governed by the Evangelische Stiftung Neuerkerode (Evangelical Foundation Neuerkerode), the place functions as a fully integrated village that values aesthetic expressivity, communal living, and participatory labour. Originally published in German as *Der Umfall* in 2018, *The Thud* was translated into English by Nika Knight in 2021. The author Ross was commissioned by the then director of Neuerkerode, Rudiger Becker, to try to explain, through 'comics … the daily life of this community.'[33] Ross spent two of his years in Neuerkerode, interviewing and observing the residents and side by side analysing the patterns of the place. What emerges is not just a graphic narrative on intellectual disability but an envisioning of Neuerkerode as a neurocosmopolitan space. In this article we will extensively scrutinise the ways in which Ross, in *The Thud,* envisions Neuerkerode as a neurocosmopolitan space of inclusive becoming. As discussed earlier, the concept of neurocosmopolitanism calls

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[29] Chris Foss, 'Reading in Pictures: Re-visioning Autism and Literature through the Medium of Manga,' in *Disability in Comic Books and Graphic Narratives*, ed. Chris Foss, Jonathan W. Gray, and Zach Whalen (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 96.

[30] Susan M. Squier, 'So Long as They Grow out of It: Comics, the Discourse of Developmental Normalcy, and Disability,' *Journal of Medical Humanities* 29, no. 2 (2008): 71.

[31] Jose Alaniz*, Death, Disability, and the Superhero* (University Press of Mississippi, 2014).

[32] Sergio Andreu, '"Aprendiendo a caer" de Mikael Ross, el cómic que se cuela en una comunidad pionera de convivencia de personas con discapacidad.' ['Learning to Fall' by Mikael Ross, the comic that sneaks into a pioneering community for people with disabilities], in *20minutos* (February 2024), https://www.20minutos.es/noticia/5219250/0/comic-discapacidad-comic-se-cuela-una-comunidad-pionera-convivencia-personas-con-discapacidad/ (self-translated from Spanish).

[33] Andreu, '"Aprendiendo a caer".'

for a cultural and cognitive heterogeneity, a reimagining of a space where both neurotypical and neurodivergent individuals influence and shape each other by deterritorialising themselves from their homogeneity and reterritorialising into shared spaces.

The Thud centres around a neurodivergent protagonist named Noel, who, after his mother's debilitating stroke, initially loses track of his life and is taken to Neuerkerode, a place which has a long history of homing or perhaps accommodating those with 'disabilities,' and where the majority of the population has been either neurologically or physically atypical. Noel fails to comprehend his mother's 'medically induced coma,'[34] and his sudden dislocation from his neighbouring surroundings to an absolutely alien place troubled his psyche. However, the ecology of Neuerkerode offered him a familial refuge, and provided him with scope for self-exploration. He found this place to be a thriving space for all people, where the possibility for encountering love, care, compassion and empathy existed. His ontological introspection allowed him to learn ways of being in a new environment and forming relationships within the community.

Figure 1. Robert, Noel, Valentin and people from all manner of neurologies can be seen actively participating in a discussion within their trans-neurocommunity.

Source. Ross, *The Thud*, 7.

Ross has carefully crafted his narrative technique by placing Noel as the first-person narrator, granting him the upper hand in engaging with the neurocosmopolitan space of Neuerkerode and avoiding every possibility of 'Ablesplaining Noel's disability.'[35] To better conceptualise the neurocosmopolitan ethics within Neuerkerode, a thorough observation of Walker's theory of neurocosmopolitanism is necessary, which would help us in critically analysing Neuerkerode as an ideal city space. Walker states that the foundation of a neurocosmopolitan space requires a strict refusal to 'pathologize neurocognitive styles and experiences that differ from our own, and to accept neurodiversity as a natural, healthy, and

[34] Ross, *The Thud*, 18.

[35] Priscilla Layne, 'Drawing on Pain: Depicting Disability and Trauma in Mikael Ross' Graphic Novel *Der Umfall*,' in *The Health Humanities in German Studies*, ed. Stephanie M. Hilger (Bloomsbury, 2024), 115.

important form of human biodiversity.'[36] Neuerkerode, just like an ideal society imagined by Walker, fulfils all the criteria of being a neurocosmopolitan space as it embraces diversity by encapsulating both the neurotypical as well as the neurodivergent within its sphere, infusing agency and spontaneity to all neurocognitive individuals. The people of Neuerkerode, who welcome and celebrate neurodiversity and engage in difference of mind, heartily accepted Noel into their community.

The place provided both intra and inter communicational space, resulting in Noel's self-awakening journey from dependency to co-dependence; a stage when he no longer needs to rely on the neurotypical individuals for self-expressions. His intimate friendship with Valentin and Alice, and reciprocity with the other members of the community, (Figure 1) such as Irma (the elderly woman), the caretaker Robert, Penelope and the man whom he calls 'Stache,' provides him with a 'trans-neurocommunity.'[37] A trans-neurocommunity, as Savarese explains, provides the 'feeling of being respectfully at home with all manner of neurologies,'[38] through mutual constitution. This thriving community in Neuerkerode aids Noel to deterritorialise himself, making his ontological boundaries porous and opening up space for 'a denaturalization, even a dethronement'[39] from his older self in Berlin that had socio-cultural restrictions.

As the novel progresses, the author's vivid illustrations throw more introspection upon the behavioural patterns of most of the members of his new community, which heavily deviate from neuronormative behavioural patterns. The author carefully fixes the agency of the narrative upon Noel, who observes everyone as neurologically equal, thus avoiding further tendencies of pathologisation of neurological functions. Ross leaves an air of obscurity regarding the neurodivergent condition of Noel or other members of Neuerkerode, and therefore the narrative engages in a neurocosmopolitan act by privileging 'no bodymind as the "natural" default way of being, nor as more "normal" or intrinsically correct than any other.'[40] Neuerkerode is thus an ideal representation of what Nick Walker conceptualises as a neurocosmopolitan space whose residents seek to critically engage with and safeguard human neurodiversity, while simultaneously acknowledging, investigating, and fostering its creative potential.[41]The novel brings the essence of neurocosmopolitanism to life by contrasting Neuerkerode, which is Noel's present residence, with his former place of residence, Berlin. This contrast implicates a process of unlearning and transcendence from the 'neuroprovincialist mindset of the pathology paradigm.'[42]

The narrative conceptualises Berlin as an exclusionary urban space, the failure of which is symbolised through the imagery of the defeated prince who loses his province, where the imaginary adversarial troops march in front of Noel's door and dethrone the imagined prince (Noel) from his apartment: 'Because of the thud, I can't live at home anymore.... They say.

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[36] Walker, *Neuroqueer Heresies*, 77–78.

[37] Ralph James Savarese and Lisa Zunshine, 'The Critic as Neurocosmopolite; Or, What Cognitive Approaches to Literature Can Learn from Disability Studies: Lisa Zunshine in Conversation with Ralph James Savarese,' *Narrative* 22, no. 1 (2014): 20.

[38] Savarese and Zunshine, 'The Critic as Neurocosmopolite,' 20.

[39] Savarese and Zunshine, 'The Critic as Neurocosmopolite,' 20.

[40] Walker, *Neuroqueer Heresies*, 78

[41] Walker, *Neuroqueer Heresies*,78.

[42] Walker, *Neuroqueer Heresies*, 79.

Home is not my home anymore.'[43] In Berlin, Noel's neurodivergence was not embraced, as he utterly failed in engaging with the metropolitan neurotypical lifestyle. When Noel and his mother went to a shopping mall to buy gifts for him on his birthday, we observe a serious gap in reciprocity between the salesperson and Noel. When the salesman asks Noel, 'How old are you?'[44] He replies: 'Huh? What do you mean, how old? I am not old!' [45] Again, another important instance of this vacuity takes place when Noel dials the emergency helpline number to call an ambulance for his mother, where we again witness a communication gap as he finds it difficult to share his own address and house number with the authority, emphasising the fraught neurotypical strictures of Berlin. The author in one of his interviews says: 'In Berlin … many of these people may not be able to go out alone because it's dangerous, there's a lot of traffic, and they're constantly dependent on their caregivers to get out.'[46] The city's administration, thus, has failed in accepting neurodivergent individuals within broader societal norms.

To better understand the dichotomy of these two places from a neurocosmopolitan viewpoint, the theoretical framework of deterritorialisation becomes crucial. From a context of cosmopolitan understanding, deterritorialisation rests not 'on ties to local places but on ties to territories and systems that are understood to encompass the planet as a whole.'[47] Hence, it calls for moving out of the shell of provincialism without just being reserved to one identity. Deterritorialisation, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari propound, is not only about leaving one's territory, but it also 'constitutes and extends the territory itself.'[48] It embraces multicultural, polyvalent encounters and a diversified understanding of things rather than just engaging in distinctions between us and them. A similar reiteration can be found in *The Thud*, through the dichotomy between the abjection posed by Berlin and the inclusivity of Neuerkerode. The place even provides neurotypicals with the scope to develop the ability to deterritorialise themselves from their conventional neurological state and celebrate the existing diversified neurocognitive characteristics. Adept illustration of such instances can be found within Noel's interaction with Robert, the caretaker.[49] Robert, in spite of being neurotypical, deterritorialises from his own neuroprovincial zone, engaging in a healthy interaction with Noel, Valentine and all the other intellectually challenged people. These instances gradually create and nurture a neurocosmopolitan canopy by rejecting a neuroprovincial approach of staying reserved within one's own neurological territory and by engaging with diverse neurological behaviours. Walker opines that in an ideal

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[43] Ross, *The Thud*, 21.

[44] Ross, *The Thud*, 2.

[45] Ross, *The Thud*, 2.

[46]Mikael Ross, interviewed by Merche Borja, 'Mikael Ross, autor de *Aprendiendo a caer*: 'Padres de niños con discapacidad intelectual me han dado las gracias por este libro' [Mikael Ross, author of *Learning to Fall*: 'Parents of children with intellectual disabilities have thanked me for this book'],' in *20minutos,* September 2024, https://www.20minutos.es/noticia/5242818/0/mikael-ross-autor-aprendiendo-caer-padres-ninos-con-discapacidad-intelectual-me-han-dado-las-gracias-por-este-libro/ (self-translated from Spanish).

[47] Ursula K. Heise, S*ense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 2.

[48] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 372.

[49] Ross, *The Thud*, 28, 58, 72.

neurocosmopolitan society, all the neurodiverse individuals 'are empowered to participate in the ongoing collective cocreation and shaping of that environment while openly acting in ways that violate the constraints of neuronormative performance.'[50] Resonating with this, Noel's interaction with Stache and his reciprocal dependence upon Julia (another neurotypical support staff member) and other characters attests to the ways in which both the neurotypicals and the neurodivergents in Neuerkerode engage in a radical ethics of shared humanism, of kinship, pluralism and co-existence.[51]

Neuerkerode is not merely an institution with care facilities for the intellectually challenged. It is instead a planned space in a pastoral setting, which is ideal for healthy neurocognitive functioning. The village is not designed to accommodate neurodiverse individuals with a neurotypical structure but instead, it prioritises neurodivergent needs, sensibilities and forms of relationality. *The Thud*'s representation of Neuerkerode might become a crucial discourse for urban planners who must incorporate neurocosmopolitan ethics in their studies by valuing spatial practices that centre the voice of the neurominorities in the planning system. Neuerkerode is an epitome of what Leonie Sandercock theorises as an ideal 'cosmopolis' that registers neurodivergence as a cultural identity, and that queers the ableist constructions.[52] Sandercock, an esteemed scholar of city space theory, has defined the cosmopolis as a space that constitutes a 'common civic culture' embracing 'the social project of tolerance, alterity and inclusion.'[53] In a similar vein, using the parameters set by Sandercock, Neuerkerode has qualified, as a space governed through co-dependency of both the neurotypical and neurodivergents, thus constituting a trans-neurocommunity.

Moving to the visual-verbal strategies employed by Ross, we witness how his techniques resonate with the deterritorialising effect of the graphic novel. While Ross retains the conventionality of visual grammar with regular panel structures and standard gutters, he chooses to defy the neurotypical assumptions through neurodiverse behavioural patterns. For instance, Noel's infatuation for Penelope has been expressed through his painting of an eel fish, which is quite unconventional compared to neurotypical expressions of love. This prompts the readers to deterritorialise from their neurotypical thought process and decipher neurodiverse ways of expression. Even emotional moments of grief, longing or anger are depicted through narrative fragmentation and symbolic slippage where animals become symbols of loss, the mother becomes a princess, and caretakers become symbols of authority.

Ross's structurisation of the panels creates a participatory communicative environment that provokes neurotypical readers to piece together the disjointed thoughts of Noel during his distressed phase in Berlin. This is a neurocosmopolitan act, where readers are propelled to engage in a neurodiverse narrative technique for comprehending the protagonist's disoriented sensorium. Again, the visuals that are set in Neuerkerode, are in contrast with the ones from Berlin as we can see spatial regularity with the use of breathable panels, slower paced discourse and clearer rhythms which metaphorise the inclusive ethos of this neurocosmopolitan space.

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[50] Walker, *Neuroqueer Heresies*, 81.

[51] Ross, *The Thud*, 21, 91.

[52] Leonie Sandercock, *Towards Cosmopolis* (John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1998), 182.

[53] Sandercock, *Towards Cosmopolis,* 182.

Queering the neuronormative epistemologies through neuroqueer ecologies

Neuerkerode, which has been the home of many neurominorities for more than a century has chronicled a gloomy history of the Nazi regime. During Hitler's reign, people with disability were considered what Zygmunt Bauman, in his 2004 monograph, *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts,* calls 'human waste,' which comprises the 'population of those who either could not or were not wished to be recognized or allowed to stay.'[54] The Nazis, for the sake of upholding and preserving neuronormativity or to be precise, their concept of what Hitler terms as 'master people (Herrvolk)'[55] was in favour of exterminating the neurodiverse populace. *The Thud* accounts such details of the Nazi Holocaust through the voice of a gerontic named Irma, who acts as a copula in the narrative, bridging together the past and the present of Neuerkerode. Citing reports of the *Holocaust Encyclopaedia*, people with 'physical and mental disabilities were viewed as "useless" to society' and 'were targeted for murder in what the Nazis called the "T-4," or "euthanasia," program.'[56] Medical discourses have termed this attempt at elimination the 'eugenics paradox,' in an endeavour to foster the selective breeding of humans in favour of eradicating 'undesirable traits.'[57] This concept, coined by Francis Galton and later popularised by R.A. Fisher as a forceful sterilisation of the 'genetically unfit,'[58] was adopted by the Nazis so as to avoid a 'threat to Aryan genetic purity.' [59] One such form that draws its inspiration from the concept of eugenics is the pathology paradigm, which germinates from the desire to advocate neuronormativity and promote able bodies as natural bodies. The conceptualisation, as unnatural, of these cognitive heterogeneities by the eugenics paradox, is countered by the theoretical framework of neuroqueer ecologies that reconceptualises difference as a natural facet of life.

Neuroqueer ecologies, as propounded by James Aldridge, is the intersection of the two theoretical frameworks: neurodiversity and queer ecologies. It aims at 'listening to the experiences and perspectives of ND [neurodivergent] people, and valuing the differences they bring,' which 'might inform our understanding of the ecologies of place.'[60] Aldridge, an autistic artist and a researcher, states that he has developed the theory with his own experiences of 'places as a neuroqueer person' and has used his 'arts practice to map and share' his 'relationship with other beings.'[61] Although his theorisation of this concept is limited to the

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[54] Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts* (Polity Press, 2004), 4.

[55] Hitler as quoted in Meir Michaelis, 'World Power Status or World Dominion? A Survey of the Literature on Hitler's "Plan of World Dominion" (1937-1970),' *The Historical Journal* 15, no. 2 (1972): 349, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X00002624.

[56] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 'The Murder of People with Disabilities,' *Holocaust Encyclopedia* (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.), https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-murder-of-people-with-disabilities,

[57] A. Dirk Moses and Dan Stone, 'Eugenics and Genocide,' in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, ed. Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine (Oxford University Press, 2010), 202.

[58] Sarah-Marie Da Silva and Katharine Hubbard, 'Confronting the Legacy of Eugenics and Ableism: Towards Anti-Ableist Bioscience Education,' *CBE—Life Sciences Education* 23, no. 3 (2024): 4.

[59] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 'The Murder of People with Disabilities.'

[60] James Aldridge, 'Neuroqueer Ecologies,' *Art, Ecology and Learning,* March 2023, https://jamesaldridgeart.wordpress.com/2023/03/31/neuroqueer-ecologies/.

[61] James Aldridge, 'On Neuro/Queering Nature,' *ClimateCultures,* 19 November 2024, https://climatecultures.net/challenges-of-creative-engagement/on-neuro-queering-nature/.

arts and ecology, a thorough introspection into his theory proffers possibilities of applying this framework to the field of graphic literature. *The Thud*, being a visual-verbal narratological medium itself, reverberates with a similar neuroqueer essence like the visual art forms of Aldridge. Neuroqueer ecologies also provide a vocabulary and framework to perform a compositional analysis (space, gutter, colour, texture) and allow for a semiological interpretation of *The Thud.* The commonality between these two mediums (art and literature) lies not only in their shared aesthetics and material logic but also in their shared resolution for foregrounding and endorsing the differences of neurodivergent experiences of ecology. This cross-application of methodologies from visual culture, literary disability studies, and ecocriticism is essential for addressing the neurodivergent's potency of experiencing and asserting their place within that ecology. Through neuroqueer ecological perspectives, we foreground a counterargument against the eugenics paradox by taking into account the Foucauldian concept of 'biopower.'

Michel Foucault conceptualises biopower as something that transcends juridical sovereignty towards the management of power itself, operating under the principle of 'to make live and let die.'[62] It is a new form of power that regulates the lives of all individuals in terms of their health, reproduction, longevity, and biological optimisation. In his theorisation of power, Foucault states that power operates around two poles: one is the functioning of power at the micro level, that is, 'anatomo-politics of the human body,'[63] and the other is the 'bio-politics of the population,'[64] which operates at the macro level of governmentality. Anatomo-politics function within a totalitarian politics of disciplining of the body (the optimisation of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces[65]) by excusing the betterment of one society. Biopolitics on the contrary exerts its power over 'a global mass that is affected by overall processes, characteristics of birth, death, production, illness and so on.'[66]

Looking at *The Thud* through the lens of these two poles of power becomes relevant in the context of its references to Nazi-Germany. Irma registers her agony in the narrative by recounting her traumatic past to Noel. As discussed earlier, she unravels the abominable visuals of Neuerkerode back to the Nazi era. She recalls how 'nothing was allowed then'[67] in Neuerkerode. The Nazi regime exerted its biopower on the neurodivergent population by separating boys and girls through erecting a large fence and using religious figures called hornets (nuns) to monitor the population. This physical barrier is clearly reflective of the anatomo-politics as we see the regulation and disciplining of disabled bodies and sexuality by the authoritarian power in the Nazi governed Neuerkerode. We see Irma recalling how a Nazi official echoed fascist views about people with disabilities: 'God cannot desire for sick people and invalids to reproduce with other sick people and invalids.'[68] One of the most harrowing incidents is when the elderly woman gives an account of a grey bus that used to load members

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[62] Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*, translated by David Macey, edited by Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana (Picador, 2003), 241.

[63] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction,* trans. Robert Hurley (Pantheon Books, 1978), 139.

[64] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 139.

[65] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 139.

[66] Foucault, *Society must be defended,* 242–43.

[67] Ross, *The Thud,* 63.

[68] Ross, *The Thud*, 64.

of the disabled population in Neuerkerode for the Aktion T4 euthanasia program in which disabled people were exterminated under the false promise of treatment.

This politics of regulating the 'species body'[69] (mass of bodies that must be regulated for the sake of political stability) and denying agency to the disabled by calling them invalid and sick is not merely an act of dehumanisation but also categorises them as something which exists outside the domain of nature. They are labelled as unnatural beings, or in an Agambenian sense, 'Homo sacer'[70] (a concept that emerged from Foucault's biopolitics), that is, the 'life unworthy of being lived.'[71] This labelling makes them eligible to be killed by the authoritarian force. In this context, Ross's narrative politicises Neuerkerode for advocating the neurodivergent epistemologies and for neuroqueering the illegitimate appellation of the intellectually disabled as 'unnatural bodies,'[72] as evident in emerging neo-fascist/neo-Galtonian paradigm discourses. Nevertheless, the narrative demonstrates how contemporary Neuerkerode, by embracing a neuroqueer ecological approach, constitutes a powerful counter-discourse to the prevailing neo-Galtonian paradigm, thereby championing and 'valuing the differences' brought by Noel and other neurodivergent individuals. [73]

For a better understanding of neuroqueer ecology, a comprehensive study of the theory of Queer Ecology is imperative, as this will help connect the two different frameworks of neurology and ecology and explore the neurosensorial experiences and ecological interactions of Noel in *The Thud*. As defined by Catriona Mortimer Sandilands, Queer Ecology is an interdisciplinary practice within queer studies and ecocriticism that aims at disrupting predominant heterosexist discourses on sexuality and nature, which have so far negated the concepts of interdependency and fluidity and have naturalised heteronormativity as the only existing norm. It reimagines 'evolutionary processes, ecological interactions, and environmental politics in light of queer theory.'[74] In essence, it calls for a radical departure from traditional, hierarchical and oppressive ways of understanding nature and moving towards knowing nature through an absolutely new lens or in the words of Gregory Luke Chwala, 'moving from the European colonial (now globalized) logic that informs our relationships with our environment to more sustainable non-modern ways of thinking.'[75] We contend that in a similar vein, neuroqueer ecologies can be interpreted as ideas that aim to break free from the dominant constraints of the pathology paradigm and endorse a neurodiverse understanding through an epistemic delinking of the neo-Galtonian discourses. It not only advocates for the establishment of a neurocosmopolitan society but also aims for the inclusivity of neurodivergence inside the domain of nature.

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[69] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 139

[70] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford University Press, 1998), 82.

[71] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 80

[72] David Livingstone Smith, ''Unnatural Bodies: Disability as Metaphysical Threat,'' *Blog of the American Philosophical Association (APA)* (April 2022), https://blog.apaonline.org/2022/04/11/unnatural-bodies-disability-as-metaphysical-threat/?amp.

[73] Aldridge, 'Neuroqueer Ecologies.'

[74] Catriona Sandilands, 'Queer Ecology,' in *Keywords for Environmental Studies*, ed. Joni Adamson, William A. Gleason and David Pellow (New York University Press, 2016), 169.

[75] Gregory Luke Chwala, 'Toward a Decolonial Queer Ecology: Reparative Reading of Gothic and Speculative Fiction,' PhD diss., Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2017, 15.

In post-Nazi Neuerkerode, the bodies that were once considered unnatural have been shown engaging with ecology in neuroqueer ways, that is, to understand and express their ideas about the ecology of place through their neurosensorial experiences. One such instance in *The Thud* is during the examination of a dead woodpecker by Noel and his friend Valentin (Figure 2). When Valentin interrupts Noel in the woods with the corpse of a dead bird ('It was lying here just like this … the bird'),[76] he associates its enigmatic stillness with 'coma' and thereby with the stillness of his mother in the hospital: 'Had a thud. Plopped down from the sky. Now it's sleeping.'[77] This reflects a neuroqueer engagement of Noel and the others with nature and the ecology of the place that aids them to untangle the incomprehensible neurotypical concepts such as coma, death, and illness, and also soothes them in their daily struggle. Correlating the condition of the bird with his mother's coma, he assures himself and the others that 'it's just inna cooma' and will be 'flying home soon. Like Mumsie.'[78]

Figure 2. The image showcases the ecological sensibilities of neurodiverse communities that help them in understanding and resolving the complicacies within their lived experiences.

Source. Ross, *The Thud*, 41.

Neuroqueer ecologies investigate how divergent sensory patterns formed through social forces or trauma can transform one's perception of the ecologies of place. Analogously, Noel's act of understanding the human aspects through his interaction with nonhuman phenomena and through his traumatic neurosensorial experience of 'thud' qualifies his cognitive deviation as a natural human variation. This neurodivergent experience not only breaches the Eurocentric nature-culture binary but also neuroqueers the neo-Galtonian discourses by 'provid[ing] us with inspirational perspectives and awareness of ecological and social systems.'[79] Further, Noel's neuro-cognitive patterns are anchored through his

[76] Ross, *The Thud*, 40.

[77] Ross, *The Thud*, 40.

[78] Ross, *The Thud*, 41.

[79] Aldridge, 'On Neuro/Queering Nature.'

neurosensorial understanding of his surrounding environment, which in the narrative is highlighted by animal imageries. While recalling the emergency number, he imagines three fishes in his mind shaped as '112.'[80] This is one of the finest instances of neuroqueer ecologies where we see memory is not framed through neural units but through symbols, creatures and affective senses, where aquatic imagery becomes a neurodivergent way of mnemonic dependency. Again, at the hospital, when Noel fails to comprehend the medical jargon used by the doctors, he pictures them as ducks quacking incoherently. This act of imagining the doctors as ducks is an act of defiance against neurotypical medical practices by refusing to accept their hierarchy and reclaiming agency by forming different perceptions. Such non-human imageries reflect the deep engagement and dependence that neurodivergents share with the natural world for understanding and memorising things. Noel's experiences of the seasonal transition in the pastoral setting of Neuerkerode: 'From shade to shade. Such heat. Everything totally green. It's like a jungle,'[81] and his relationships with various non-humans (fish, dogs, ducks, cows, sheep etc.), demonstrate neurodiverse possibilities of grasping the ecology of place and rekindling a relationship with nature through a neuroqueer understanding.

Deconstructing the visual-verbal syntax in *The Thud*

Most of the graphic medicines maintain a conventional unidirectional pattern with careful use of rich symbolism and metaphors for the sake of inculcating a proper sense of diagnosis and questioning the 'epistemological authority of medical professions.'[82] One of the important aspects of graphic medicine on neurodiversity is the careful illustration of behavioural patterns. The author has minutely illustrated the neurosensorial experiences of Noel, especially through his use of visual-onomatopoeic expressions or Sound Effects (SFX) like 'thud,' 'beep', 'bom,' 'quack,' which is significant enough to constitute the title *The Thud*. These visual expressions not only convey auditory cues to the readers but also annotate Noel's disorientation and anxiety, aiding the readers to connect with the inner conflict of his psyche. Unlike conventional superhero and suspense comics, where SFX are used vividly to alleviate actions through immersive soundscape, in *The Thud,* these SFX serve as intimate signals rather than spectacles for externalising his cognitive complexities. Scott Smith in his *Graphic Medicine Manifesto* argues that 'comics are a powerful medium for presenting different ways of seeing and thinking about our views, perception and values.'[83] *The Thud* presents alternate ways of perceiving the struggle of the protagonist. Noel's mother's stroke, for instance, has not been graphically shown in the narrative. Instead, the author chooses to engage the readers with this tragedy through the visualisation of the sound 'thud' to heighten the trauma of the protagonist.

Thierry Groensteen has introduced the concept of a 'spatio-topical system' into the field of graphic narratives, which states that a 'comic is not only an art of fragments, of scattering, of distribution; it is also an art of conjunction, of repetition, of linking together.'[84]

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[80] Ross, *The Thud*, 8.

[81] Ross, *The Thud*, 98.

[82] Susan Squier and J. Ryan Marks, 'Introduction,' *Configurations* 22, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 150.

[83] Scott T. Smith, quoted in Czerwiec et al., *Graphic Medicine Manifesto,* 8.

[84] Thierry Groensteen, *The System of Comics,* trans. Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen (University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 22.

That is, the meaning of a context in a graphic novel is built not only through its linear sequencing, but also through the interrelation of all the existing panels in one page. Observing the graphical illustrations of *The Thud* through this lens is crucial, as we find significant instances of open layouts that the author has used for highlighting the heightened neurosensorial experiences and thought process of the protagonist. One such instance is when Noel imagines three fish (Figure 3) to recall the emergency number. Here, the author chose to apply a borderless vignette (an illustration that lacks a defined border) for illustrating the three fish panel, while the other panels of the same page remain bordered.[85] This strategy becomes a crucial semiological expression of the neuroqueer experiences, as it emphasises the fact that the protagonist's thought processes are not confined within neuronormative patterns of cognitive functioning. The layout itself becomes a narration that connects the remaining events of the page. Another such instance can be found within Irma's recollection of her traumatic past. The events of the past are not painted in black patches, unlike neurotypical art patterns, which highlight the nonlinear temporality of the neurodiverse people.

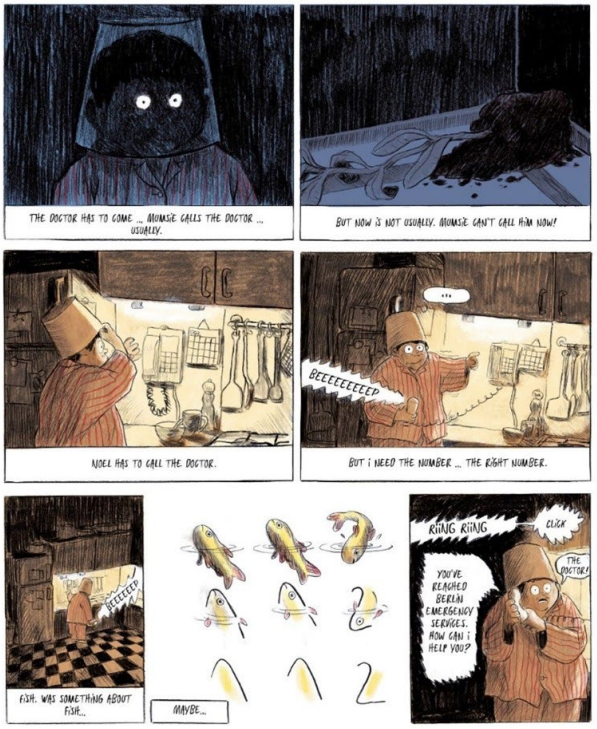

Figure 3. The image shows the three fish sketched using the technique of a borderless vignette for indicating the unconfined neurodiverse imaginary process.

Source. Ross, *The Thud*, 8.

In the narrative, Ross has used pencil-sketched illustrations along with digital colours. The use of open borderless vignettes infuses moments of fantasy with realism, welcoming the readers to experience Noel's sensory-rich thought patterns without overt explanation and romanticisation. As Ross mentions, his target audience is basically neurotypical individuals, and to impart to them the knowledge and experiences of neurodivergent people,[86] he employs unique visual-verbal strategies to convey the full spectrum of their complexities. He emphasises the crucial role that images and visuals play in underscoring how neurodiverse

[85] Ross, *The Thud*, 8.

[86] Ross, interviewed by Borja, 'Mikael Ross, autor de *Aprendiendo a caer*.'

individuals engage with their quotidian life. Clara Bled and colleagues claim that autistic adults experience and use visual mental imagery in day-to-day contexts.[87] Ross's novel is replete with instances of such a neurodivergent feature—Noel recollects the street name through the picturisation of Karl Marx; he again imagines fishes to recall the emergency number. Noel draws the picture of an eel fish when he experiences love for Penelope: 'me 'n her are eel-ectric with each other.'[88] It aids readers to process the neurosensory ways of expressing love, which are encountered through Noel's imag(in)ing emotions with pictures.

Conclusion

We have argued that *The Thud* demonstrates the potential of graphic narrative as a neuroqueer ecological medium by delinking the ableist biomedical epistemologies on neurology and rethinking diagnosis through the shared space of neurocosmopolitanism. By disrupting temporal linearity through its visual techniques, we have focused on the ways in which the graphic novel subverts the clinical gaze. We have also explored how the graphic novel has unravelled new possibilities of inclusivity by recalibrating Neuerkerode as an all-inclusive space where residents cohabit with their post-normative mindset, sharing with and caring for all neurocognitive members of humanity.

We have dissected how the graphic novel has also focused on the neo-Fascist approaches towards intellectually challenged people and transmogrified into a counter-narrative to these hegemonic discourses, which stigmatise neurodivergent conditions as unnatural. The narrative subtly touches upon the intersections of neurology and ecology, exploring neurodivergent insights on nature and hence advocating the idea that neurodivergence is not an unnatural concept but is instead a radiant aspect of nature. Notably, *The Thud* exhibits unconventional traits of graphic medicine by not conforming to the clichéd patterns of structuring the text as an inculcating memoir, but rather rethinking new ways of narration by building the plot through the protagonist's fragmented memories. By assigning the narrative authority to an intellectually disabled protagonist, the author performs a neurocosmopolitan act, for valuing and upholding cognitive differences. Thus, unlike other graphic medicines, *The Thud* provides an alternative way of understanding the medical discourse. It evokes our sense of empathy by projecting the neurosensorial experiences of intellectually challenged people, championing and prioritising their perspectives in the neurocosmopolitan space of Neuerkerode and hence queering the neuroprovincialist approach.

Contemporary graphic medicines, mostly emerging from the global north, have a monocentric emphasis on the pathologisation of white skin. While this study explores the representation of neurodivergence within Western Europe, a comprehensive literature review of graphic medicines from the Global South might highlight a few graphic pathographies which are written by authors from Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) communities. A deeper engagement of neurodiversity in graphic narratives through indigenous epistemologies would be an interesting area of research, which would provide a plausible means of decolonising the existing hegemonic epistemologies of medical science and reframing medical discourse.

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[87] Clara Bled, Quentin Guillon, Isabelle Soulières, and Lucie Bouvet, 'Thinking in pictures in everyday life situations among autistic adults,' *PLOS ONE* 16, no. 7 (2021): 1.

[88] Ross, *The Thud*, 62.

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