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## **Presentation**

This special issue of *Belphégor* on the study of comics originates from the 2003 initiative of the IBDS (International Bande Dessinée Society), to organize a conference at the University of Leicester on the rather unusual theme of autobiography in bande dessinée. Our modest initial goal was to collect a certain number of articles from this conference – investigations that did not deserve to live only in the memory of those who attended. At the same time, we issued a Call for Papers intended very much as a message in a bottle, to see what kind of echo the study of comics would have amongst international researchers. The results have been extremely gratifying. We are therefore pleased to present to you in this issue a choice of texts that bear witness, through the variety of their subjects and approaches, to the liveliness of present research in this still relatively untended field. The large number of proposals we have received has convinced us of the usefulness of preparing a second issue of the journal on the same theme, to be made available during 2004. The issue you are now reading is therefore only a first foray into a field that still holds many delightful surprises for those who attempt its interpretation. It is our hope that the analyses presented in these virtual pages, and those that will follow shortly, will contribute to further develop criticism in an area whose cultural interest is becoming impossible to ignore.