

= Gunnerkrigg Court =

Gunnerkrigg Court is a science @-@ fantasy webcomic created by Tom Siddell and launched in April 2005 . It is updated online three days a week , and the first volume of the comic was published in print format by Archaia Studios Press and Titan Books ( in the UK and Ireland ) . The comic has been critically acclaimed and has won numerous Web Cartoonists ' Choice Awards , as well as receiving positive reviews for its artwork and storytelling .

The comic tells the story of Antimony Carver , a young girl who has just started attending a strange and mysterious school called Gunnerkrigg Court , and the events that unfold around her as she becomes embroiled in political intrigues between Gunnerkrigg Court and the inhabitants of the Gillitie Wood , a forest outside the school . The comic 's style and themes include elements from science , fantasy creatures , mythology from a variety of traditions , and alchemical symbols and theories ; the literary style is heavily influenced by mystery and manga comics .

= = Production = =

Gunnerkrigg Court was first posted online on 4 April 2005 , and was originally updated two days per week . The comic began updating three days per week on 25 December 2006 . The end of the seventh chapter in May 2006 marked the end of the " first book , " which Siddell published through Lulu.com in 2007 ; that book is no longer in print . In August 2008 , Tom Siddell explained that the comic had a standard " comic book format " which was useful when he had sufficient pages to print a hard copy . The first fourteen chapters of the webcomic were printed as the first Archaia Studios Press edition of 296 pages bound in a hardcover collection titled " Orientation " . In 2012 he announced that he had quit his regular job to work on the comic full @-@ time . In addition to books and merchandising the comic is supported through crowdfunding by Patreon since July 2014 .

= = = Format = = =

The Gunnerkrigg Court webcomic is told in a series of episodic chapters such that each , while forming part of the overall storyline , also functions individually as a stand @-@ alone plot arc . The themes and topics of the chapters vary widely : as one reviewer describes , " You are also not subjected to 400 @-@ plus pages of intricate plot movement . While there is an overall story arc , there are also lighter chapters that focus on unusual classes ... or small moments that build the main characters . " Each chapter begins with a title page and ends with one or more " bonus pages , " which are not integral to the main storyline but often offer ancillary details about the world of Gunnerkrigg Court or about minor characters . The chapters have varied in length from four pages to over eighty . Each page is drawn in traditional ( A4 ; 210 × 297 mm ) page format and divided arbitrarily into frames . At the bottom of the most recent page is a link to a comments thread for that page , in which readers may comment on and discuss that day 's comic .

= = = Influences = = =

Siddell has stated that he enjoyed reading Alfred Hitchcock & The Three Investigators as a child , and that it has heavily influenced the literary style of his comic . His artistic style is influenced by many artists , among which he cites as his favorites Jamie Hewlett , Yukito Kishiro , and Mike Mignola , as well as the manga Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Dragon Ball .

One notable feature of the comic is the blending of mythological elements from many different cultural traditions , especially from the British Isles and Native American mythology . Siddell attributes this style to his experience as a child : " I moved about a lot when I was younger and had the opportunity to grow up hearing stories from different parts of the world and I 've always been fascinated by them . " In addition to mythology , Siddell makes heavy use of alchemical themes ; for example , the main character is named Antimony , after a toxic chemical element , and many pages feature artistic depictions of alchemical symbols . The symbol for antimony appears frequently in

Gunnerkrigg Court : the character Antimony wears a necklace shaped like that symbol , the character Reynardine has the symbol imprinted on his wolf body , and the symbol is used to mark the end of a chapter .

The artwork of Gunnerkrigg Court has been described as " stylized , " with simple character designs . At least one reviewer , on the other hand , has noticed that the backgrounds , in contrast to the characters , are often very elaborate . The comic has also been described as having a " rich " look in spite of its limited color palette , and Siddell himself has stated that he first developed the idea for the comic using only a limited number of colors . The pieces of artwork that Siddell has posted at the end of each printed book , entitled " Treatise " and " Second Treatise , " demonstrate many such of Siddell 's artistic and storytelling motifs : they integrate alchemical symbols , mythological figures , nature , and technology .

= = Synopsis = =

= = = Setting = = =

Gunnerkrigg Court is set in a boarding school in a country that resembles the United Kingdom , identifiable from the grey skies and mandatory uniforms . The comic contains other clues about the setting , such as the house system that is described at the end of the first chapter . This system is similar to that used by many UK schools , including the one the author attended ; Siddell has even stated that the school in which Gunnerkrigg Court takes place is modeled after his own secondary school .

Gunnerkrigg Court , the fictional school around which the story revolves , is a mysterious and vast establishment that many characters suspect hides much more than just a school . The school appears to actively recruit many talented or extraordinary students . As the story progresses , it is soon revealed that the school is inhabited by a wide variety of both supernatural creatures ? many of which become characters involved in the story 's plot ? and ultra @-@ modern technology . One character explains that " the Court was founded on a union between technological and etheric design . " Another describes it as " man 's endeavor to become god . "

The court is built on the edge of a wide chasm , on the other side of which lies the Gillitie Wood , which is inhabited by " etheric " or magical creatures . At the time when the main story takes place , the two sides exist in a kind of truce , with the Court as the realm of science and technology and the Wood the realm of nature and the etheric . The denizens of the Gillitie Wood do not allow technology in the Wood , and the rules of the Court forbid students from leaving school grounds .

= = = Plot = = =

The story of Gunnerkrigg Court involves several different ongoing plot arcs . The main story is that of the protagonist , Antimony Carver , and her deepening involvement in the intrigues between Gunnerkrigg Court and the Gillitie Wood , the forest outside Gunnerkrigg Court ; she is accompanied throughout the storyline by her friend and classmate Katerina Donlan and her companion Reynardine , a demon living within her stuffed animal . As the story progresses , Antimony and her companions also slowly learn more about their surroundings , the relationship between Gunnerkrigg Court and the Gillitie Wood , and the beings they encounter .

The story begins when Antimony builds a robot to transport a mysterious shadow into Gillitie Wood , the forest outside Gunnerkrigg Court . Several chapters later in the comic , and apparently several months later in the story 's timeline , the robot reappears on the bridge outside Gunnerkrigg Court ; being controlled by a malevolent creature from Gillitie Wood , it pushes Antimony off the bridge when she goes out to it . Antimony spends a night at the banks of the river below the bridge , and encounters a ghost , before she is rescued by Kat and taken back to the school . Her brief time outside Gunnerkrigg Court , though , sets off a dispute between Gunnerkrigg Court and the Gillitie Wood . Not long after Antimony 's return , the Court is visited by Coyote , a god from the Gillitie

Wood , and General Ysengrin , the being who caused the robot to attack Antimony at the bridge . They express anger over the robot 's visit to the forest , and over the damage Antimony caused when she left the Court .

During the time that the robot is gone , Antimony meets a creature named Reynardine , who tries to take over her body but , by accident , instead becomes trapped in the body of a stuffed animal she carries ; and becomes subject to her command . Because of her relationship with Reynardine and the events with Coyote and Ysengrin , Antimony is nominated to begin training to become a medium , one of the individuals who moderate disputes between the Wood and the Court and communicates with etheric beings , and she decides to return to the woods to speak with Coyote . When Antimony visits Coyote , she learns that in the past Coyote had travelled across the sea to find Reynardine and Ysengrin and make them into " powerful being [ s ] " like himself . He had given Ysengrin " power over the trees " and given Reynardine the power to take bodies , but bodies that Reynardine took always died after he left them and Ysengrin was hardly strong enough to stand without the help of Coyote 's tree armor . Reynardine had been in love with Antimony 's mother , Surma , and had used his power to steal a young man 's body and woo Surma ; the man died , however , and Reynardine was imprisoned in Gunnerkrigg Court until the events surrounding his first meeting with Antimony .

In addition to this plotline , the story includes several additional plot arcs interspersed with the main story . One concerns two girls from the Court , Zimmy and Gamma , who communicate with one another telepathically . Zimmy sees hallucinations of monsters which her etheric abilities turn into reality , which she relies on Gamma to dispel . In one chapter , Antimony and another student , Jack , also become trapped briefly in Zimmy 's hallucinatory world , and escape after they " find " Gamma there . Another storyline revolves around Kat 's attempts to repair Antimony 's robot ( which had been temporarily taken control of when it pushed her off the bridge ) , during which time they discover a set of highly complex robots that Antimony speculates are related in some way to the ghost she encountered at the river .

= = = Main characters = = =

= = Reception = =

In addition to being officially recognized at the Web Cartoonists ' Choice Awards , Gunnerkrigg Court has been critically acclaimed in a number of online reviews , and has a large readership and an active forum . Author Tom Siddell has been interviewed about his work numerous times , mostly by non @-@ mainstream online magazines such as ComixTalk . Kevin Powers of the Comics Bulletin and Graphic Smash listed Gunnerkrigg Court as one of the series he " respect [ s ] , " and ComixTalk ( then called Comixpedia ) listed Siddell as one of the twenty @-@ five " People of Webcomics " in 2006 .

The comic has received praise for its artwork and use of color , dark mood , slowly revealed mysteries , and pacing . Al Schroeder of ComixTalk has called Gunnerkrigg Court 's setting " marvelous " and " unique , " and said the comic is " delightfully fun " in spite of its moody backdrop . Along with the evolution in art style since the start of the comic , many reviewers have praised the age progression of the protagonists and their maturation with the plot , likening it to that of Harry Potter .

Some reviewers , on the other hand , have criticized its dark and depressing tone as potentially being frightening for younger audiences , also noting that there can be " lots [ of information ] to take in at times . "

In 2006 , science fiction author Neil Gaiman praised Gunnerkrigg Court in his blog , which brought the comic to the attention of many more readers .

= = = Awards = = =

Gunnerkrigg Court has been nominated for and has won a number of Web Cartoonist 's Choice Awards , shown in the table below . When the Web Cartoonists ' Choice Awards were discontinued in 2008 and replaced by The Webcomic List Awards ( run by The Webcomic List Community ) in 2009 , it won several of those as well . It was also nominated in 2006 for a Clickie award in the " International Clickie " category at Stripedagen Haarlem , a webcomics festival in the Netherlands . Gunnerkrigg Court : Orientation won a 2008 gold book of the year award from ForeWord magazine in their graphic novel category . Gunnerkrigg Court : Orientation was nominated for a 2009 Cybils Award in the graphic novel category . Gunnerkrigg Court was nominated for the 2014 Harvey Award for Best Online Comics Work .

= = Books = =

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Siddell , Tom ( 2013 ) . Gunnerkrigg Court , Volume 4 : Materia . Gunnerkrigg Court . Archaia Studios Press . ISBN 978 @-@ 1936393992 .

Siddell , Tom ( 2015 ) . Gunnerkrigg Court Volume 5 : Refine . Gunnerkrigg Court . Archaia Studios Press . ISBN 978 @-@ 1608866915 .

= = = Side comics = = =

Siddell , Tom ( 2013 ) . Annie in the Forest Part One . Beyond The Walls . Robot Voice Comics .

Siddell , Tom ( 2013 ) . Annie in the Forest Part Two . Beyond The Walls . Robot Voice Comics .

Siddell , Tom ( 2015 ) . Traveller . Beyond The Walls . Robot Voice Comics .

= = = Explanatory footnotes = = =

= = = Story notes = = =