CSSC/SCEBD Academic Conference

CSSC/SCEBD Academic Conference
Thursday May 12, Friday May 13, 2016
Toronto Marriott Yorkville Bloor Hotel, 90 Bloor St. E., Toronto
Free — All TCAF visitors welcome. No registration fee to attend.
Please consult schedule for presentations in English and in French.

The Canadian Society for the Study of Comics is a scholarly association for the exchange of knowledge and research regarding all forms of graphic narrative. The association is based in Canada and embraces an international membership. Their principle activity, an annual conference, is once again taking place in partnership with the Toronto Comic Arts Festival.

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CSSC / SCEBD Academic Conference 2016 Schedule
All programs take place at The Marriott Bloor Yorkville, 1st Hotel Floor, unless otherwise noted.

Thursday, May 12th, 2016
Three concurrent programs all day.

10:30-11:00: Registration

11:00-12:20: 1. The Comics Body, 2. Brutalities, 3. Metatextuality & Comics

12:30-1:30: Lunch Break

1:30-2:50: 1. Reading Alan Moore, 2. Des bandes dessinees, 3. The Manga Scene

3:00-4:20: 1. Complicating the Superhero, 2. L'Afrique de la bande desinee, 3. Negotiations of the Self

4:30-5:50: 1. Ugliness, Commerce, & Rob Liefeld, 2. Regions, Nations, Movements, 3. Comics & Disability

6:00-8:00pm: Book Launch Event:

Book Launch: Garbage and The Greatest Comic Book of All Time
@ The Firkin on Bloor, 81 Bloor Street East
6pm-8pm

Featuring "Garbage" author Matthew Reichertz, and "The Greatest Comic Book of All Time: Symbolic Capital in the Field of American Comics" author Benjamin Woo. Meet the authors, and unwind after a long day of Academic Conferencing!

Friday May 13th
Two concurrent programs all day.

8:30am-9:50: Keynote Speech by Ryan North, @ Toronto Reference Library, Appel Salon. Registration required.

10:00-11:20: 1. Gender and the Superhero, 2. Aesthetics of World-Building

11:30-12:30: Annual General Meeting

12:30-1:30: Lunch Break

1:30-2:50: 1. The Industry of Comics, 2. Hauntins

3:00-4:20: 1. On Modal Reach, 2. Evolving from the Margins

4:50-5:50: 1. The Narrative Burden, 2. Applied Paradigms

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CSSC/SCEBD 2016 Schedule & Abstracts

DAY ONE: Thursday May 12th

The Comics Body – 11:00-12:20

Ariella Freedman – <u>The Comics Body in Pain</u>

Critics have argued that pain and trauma frustrate and isolate because of their resistance to communicability; the experience cannot be adequately explained or displayed and defies absolute containment through either word or image. But because comics employ both word *and* image, they can try to bridge both the internal and external representation of pain; they can tell pain and show it. Perhaps even more strikingly, they can demonstrate the gulf between what can be told and what can be shown through a deliberate dissonance between the panel's narration and its visual content. Comics therefore present a historically dense and sophisticated vocabulary for pain language, synaesthetic and defined as much through its absences and exclusions as through what it represents. This paper attempts to begin to situate the representation of pain and suffering in comics by close readings of comics, graphic memoirs and novels which exemplify the recent turn of comics and graphic memoir to the serious representation of pain and suffering. In doing so, I want to suggest that comics contain discursive possibilities which respond to what Elaine Scarry calls the "unmaking" power of pain and its overflow of our usual modalities of representation.

Ariela Freedman is an Associate Professor at the Liberal Arts College, Concordia University, Montreal. Her essays on comics have been published in the Eisner-award winning anthology *Graphic Details* (2014) as well as *Literature Compass, Journal of Modern Literature,* and *Partial Answers* and she recently edited a special issue of *Partial Answers* on the topic of "Comics and the Canon." She has presented on comics at numerous conferences and other venues, including Ben Katchor's "Picture-Story Symposium" (2014).

Jonathan Chau – <u>I (Literally) Feel Your Pain: Transmitting Affect in Genevieve Castreé's Susceptible</u>

Since the early-2000s, the affective turn within the humanities has revitalized exhausted fields of study, and opened new avenues of inquiry in disciplines that had been stagnant. But the turn to affect theory in literary studies has largely been limited to works of prose, neglecting other mediums that may be more conducive to more immediate transmissions of affects. By employing illustration, the comics medium—particularly with the advent of graphic memoir, which emphasizes emotion over action, and introspection over extroversion—allows comics creators to embed emotion within the form of their texts; anger, depression, melancholia, exhilaration, and excitement are encoded within the art (and sometimes the form) in a starkly visual and visceral manner that produces an affective response as an

effect of the comic. My paper examines the affective efficiency of Genevieve Castreé's Susceptible. Through the use of features unique to the comics medium, such as small cursive script, claustrophobic panel designs, and spatial disorientation, Susceptible is not only constructed to tell the painful, semi-autobiographical story of its protagonist, but to also enact the same feelings of discomfort in its reader through the transmission of the comic's affects.

Jonathan Chau is a graduate student in comic studies at the University of Calgary. His research focuses on the ways in which the Canadian graphic novel reconstitutes and reconstructs a national literary identity.

Taryn Mahoney – <u>"As I Produce Myself": Illustrated Autobiographies of The Wimmen's Comix Collective</u>

This paper will establish the ways in which graphic narratives generate unfettered spaces for marginalized identities, focusing specifically on the first self-portrayals of women cartoonists in the 1960s comix underground. Aline Kominsky's autobiographical "Goldie: A Neurotic Women" was published in the inaugural issue of The Wimmen's Comix Collective, instituting a new and progressive conception of the female experience in graphic form. Drawing on the work of Judith Butler, Janet Miller, and Hillary L.

Chute, among others, I argue illustrated depictions of selfhood employ an alternative mode of expression from conventional writing methods. In doing so, graphic autobiographies necessitate a "recuperating [and] reconstructing" of the self, "even as [it is] produce[d]… differently in the very act of telling" ("Giving Account of Oneself"

Butler). In reconciling the work of Aline Kominsky and the Wimmen's Comix Collective with theories of self-expression and narratology, I demonstrate the emancipatory potential of graphic narratives. The graphic form liberates the eye from the repetitive and compulsory rituals of linear analysis, creating opportunities for progressive representations and complex understandings of gender, sexual, and racial identities.

Taryn Mahoney is a current MA candidate in English at the University of British Columbia, specializing in comics, graphic narratives, and visual rhetoric.

Bruatlities – 11:00-12:20

Felipe Gomez – <u>Drug-fueled Dystopias: The Drug Wars through Colombian and Mexican Comics</u>

Colombian and Mexican drug cartels are among the world's leading suppliers of illegal drugs such as cocaine and heroin. Much of their supply is smuggled to quell the demand stemming from places like the United States and Europe. To fight against this type of drug trafficking, the governments of both countries have in the past gotten involved in military and diplomatic initiatives, such as the US-backed Plan Colombia, aimed at combating drug cartels. Given this brief panorama, this paper focuses on recent Colombian and Mexican comics (e.g. Los perdidos, by Guerra and Neira; Operación Bolívar and Los perros salvajes, by Edgar Clément), exploring how the stories of these drug wars—including what is perceived as the causes and consequences of the military-style approach adopted by both countries—are told through utopian and dystopian scenarios. I also analyze the ways in which topics such as politics, economics, social stratification, technology and nature, and issues such as violence, the body, displacement, and memory are depicted within the particular language of the comics both at the collective and the individual levels to reinforce the sense of the utopian and the dystopian.

FELIPE GÓMEZ GUTIÉRREZ is an Associate Teaching Professor in the Hispanic Studies program at Carnegie Mellon University (Pittsburgh, PA, USA). His recent publications include articles on

PowerPaola's graphic biography Virus tropical (Iberoamericana XV.57 (2015): 85-102) and on drug trafficking and coloniality in Edgar Clément's Operación Bolívar and Los perros salvajes (Revista L.I.S. Letra. Imagen. Sonido. Ciudad Mediatizada. VI.12 (2014)). His chapter entitled "National Identity in Colombian Comics: Between Violence and New Configurations," has been accepted for publication in the forthcoming book The Colombia Reader, edited by Alejandro Herrero-Olaizola, Andrea Fanta, and Chloe Rutterjensen. He is currently working on the manuscript of a book on utopian and dystopian representations of Society in recent comics from Argentina, Colombia and Mexico. He can be reached at fgomez@andrew.cmu.edu

Christina Smylitopoulos – <u>Sourcing Violence: Graphic Satire and History Painting in the Proto-Modern Moment</u>

Forcefully portraying the realities of war that neoclassicism sanitized or even suppressed has become a marker of modernity in studies of early nineteenth-century art and visual culture. Although influenced by the Academy, graphic satire worked outside its jurisdiction and frequently portrayed scenes of horrific violence, often couching the trade in titillating brutality in struggles against tyranny, immorality, or challenges to national sovereignty. This paper examines the pictorial possibilities graphic satire afforded to those who portrayed the violence of the Napoleonic Wars. In this case study, large-scale academic history paintings will be brought into dialogue with works of graphic satire, the results of which suggest that to become modern, artists would need to caricature caricature.

Dr. Christina Smylitopoulos is a specialist in art and visual culture of the long eighteenth century. She received her PhD from McGill University and, before joining the art history faculty at the University of Guelph, she was a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Yale Center for British Art. Her current research traces the significance of Regency satirical illustrated books.

Tyler Ball – <u>Tarrying with the Negative: Representations of the Real in Persepolis</u>

At the 2016 CSSC Conference I would like to discuss representations of death in Marjane Satrapi's graphic memoir Persepolis. I approach this text from a psychoanalytic perspective, utilizing Freud's discussion of the death drive (todestreib) as well as Lacan's triadic libidinal economy (the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real). Persepolis is a graphic portrayal of the author's experience living through the Iranian revolution and the subsequent war with Iraq, which signifies on a number of different registers: as a visual documentation of her family history, an autobiographical account of a child coming of age in a war zone, and a testimonial that bears witness to the narrator's trauma. I argue that the graphic memoir is uniquely situated (as are comics more generally) to convey encounters with the real through the interplay of the imaginary (illustrations) and the symbolic (captions). My work looks more carefully at depictions of childhood trauma in art (Felman and Laub 1992; Luckhurst 2008), representations of war (Arendt 1970; Sontag 2003; Belsey 2005), and the power of the graphic memoir in revisiting sites of pain (Chaney 2011; Miller 2011; Darda 2013).

I am a PhD student at York University with an avid interest in comics and graphic texts. My research interests include world literature, literary theory, and graphic depictions of war. I have been attending your conference for a few years and would like to get more involved by presenting my own work.

Metatextuality & Comics – 11:00-12:20

Lin Young – <u>Gutter Ghosts and Panel Phantasms, to "The Present Darkness: Formal Elusion and the Supernatural in Emily Carroll's *Through the Woods*."</u>

All comics are haunted. In the same way that comic panels and gutters work as "a silent dance of the seen and the unseen" (McCloud 96), so too are supernatural entities such as ghosts and demons often

represented as figures of simultaneous absence and presence: conscious, but without physical form; ever-watching, but unseen. In Canadian cartoonist Emily Carroll's horror anthology, Through the Woods, the darkness under a child's bed operates in the same way as comics closure, wherein empty space is filled by the observer's imagination of what lies within. Fear of the unknown becomes the terror of what lies beneath the gutter-space, and those elements of comic form which exist visually for the reader but remain absent for the characters (such as dialogue boxes, panels, gutters) become likewise complicit in the visual construction of haunting. Drawing on comic formalists such as Thierry Groensteen, my paper will explore Carroll's transformation of the physical comic page into one of embodied possession, wherein ambiguous boundaries between comic elements act metaphorically to construct haunting within her characters' psyches. As such, I will produce a broader argument for the potential of structural elements of the comic page to become emotionally embodied and thematically vitalized.

Lin Young is a second year doctoral student in the English department at Queen's University. She studies eroticism and Spiritualist themes in Victorian monster literature, serves as Editor-in Chief of The Lamp, a creative writing journal for graduate students, and also writes her own comic— Shaderunners, a 1920s magic realism adventure comic—through Duckpatch Comics online.

Irene Velentzas – Self-Reflexivity and Recreating Remembrances in Scott Chantler's Two Generals

Gerard Genette defines transtextuality as "all that sets the text in relationship, whether obvious or concealed with other texts." In original graphic novels, transtexutality creates specific connections between the cover and surrounding elements prior to the first page of graphic narration. Scott Chantler's Two Generals' cover acts as "panel one" of the text, subverting the reader's expectations of warfare genre in favour of the author's self-reflexive recreation of his grandfather's diary. Transtextual elements create layers of symbolic complexity throughout the graphic through Theirry Gronesteen's notion of arthrology. The author prefaces role through the inclusion of such paratextual elements as the epigraphic poem, which asks the author's self-reflexive question: Can remembering bring someone back to life? The "true" contents of Two Generals are subject to the graphic medium's affordances and the cartoonist's interpretation – a notion the author reminds the reader of near the end of the text with the inclusion of the drawn photograph depicting the "two generals." Thematic considerations on remembrance and self-reflexivity are similarly infused into the church icon throughout the text and the cover, or "panel one." This paper examines the cartoonist's holistic story creation through arthrologically connected iconography and transtextuality.

Irene Velentzas is currently a Masters student at the University of Windsor. She has an academic background in Psychology, English, and Education. A practicing teacher, she became interested in the multimodal meaning-making of graphic novels for student literacy. She hopes to pursue a PhD involving graphic theory.

Jason Rankin – Reading Subjectivity: An Exploration of Reflexivity in Creative Nonfiction Comics

Early in Scott Chantler's Two Generals, the narrator states, "All of this is true." This frames the comic as creative nonfiction and brings into question how "truth" is built in this and in other creative nonfiction comics. As Becky Broadway and Doug Hesse write in Creating Nonfiction: "Creative nonfiction makes no pretence of objectivity, the writer admits that she is coming from her own point of view." Creative nonfiction comics are reflexive by nature, bringing attention to themselves as a fabrication to the reader, which reveals to the reader how "truth" is subjectively built. Reflexivity occurs both within Chantler's Two Generals and Joe Sacco's works. Both reveal themselves as subjective acts of creation, seen through the reflexivity found in their main texts and paratexts.

Reflexive acts occur through the authors revealing their depictions of sources, themselves, their tools of creation, as well as linking them to other literary texts and drawing attention to the reader as an agent in creating meaning from a work. Through each of these forms of reflexivity the cartoonists show the reader how "truth" is subjectively constructed in creative nonfiction comics, instead of trying to hide it under a pretence of objectivity.

Jay Rankin is a master's creative writing student at the University of Windsor. He has previously worked as journalist and is currently writing his thesis that intersects comics, photography and creative nonfiction.

Reading Alan Moore – 1:30-2:50

Aaron Service – "It's a Joke…S'All a Joke…": Massumi, Animality, and the Supernormal in Alan Moore's Watchmen

Alan Moore's Watchmen has become one of the oft cited examples of graphic novels entering the realm of contemporary scholarship, with interpretations focusing on areas of ethics, liberal humanism, and identity. By utilizing the work of Brian Massumi and his book What Animals Teach Us about Politics, a re-reading of Watchmen will be commenced, with the express goal of refocusing the lens of assessment of this seminal work of contemporary fiction to areas of embodied subjectivity, behavior and animality. This goal will be achieved through two interrelated means. First, there will be a focus on the essence of human existence as a form of corporeality, and the placement of humans within Massumi's spectrum of animals. This foundation is crucial in understanding the importance of Massumi's conceptions regarding behavior, especially human behavior. The second key focus is character studies of two of the most infamous figures in the novel: The Comedian and Ozymandias. In assessing the actions, motivations, and ethical quandaries faced by these men throughout the story, the applicability of Massumi's intersecting axioms of "intuition" (supernormative decision making based on consideration of current circumstances) and "instinct" (supernormative decision making based on previous experience) as modes of explanation for the behavior of comic book characters will be explored. The essay will conclude with the importance of balance between these concepts of intuition and instinct, and more broadly the utility of using comics (and posthuman readings of comics) to help conceptualize ideas within political theory and other scholarly works.

Aaron Service is a Comparative Politics graduate student at Brock University and comic enthusiast. An avid consumer of superhero stories, he advocates and espouses their use in explaining and elaborating upon contemporary scholarship. One of his latest projects concerns finding ways to use science fiction narratives to help undergraduate students grapple with difficult material in the areas of postmodern and posthuman philosophy.

Josh Grant-Young –   "It was a plant that thought it was Alec Holland…": Exploring Identity and Ecology through Swamp Thing

How might comics stimulate readers to think about environmentalism? Can they aid scholars and readers alike to engage in weird and inspiring philosophical inquiries? What might DC's Swamp Thing, specifically in the Alan Moore period, offer as answers to these and other queries? Moore left a brief but powerful mark on the Swamp Thing canon, writing the hero as a sentient plant endowed with the consciousness of scientist Alec Holland – prompting this new hybrid being to grapple with anthropocentrism, ecology and the nature of being itself. Exploring these themes through the eyes and thoughts of Swamp Thing itself, the reader will grapple with the existential odyssey Moore weaves. In this investigation the scholarship of Deep Ecologists like Frederic L. Bender will considerably aid in articulating the dangers of a "culture of extinction" – present both in the pages of Swamp Thing and in

our present condition. Bender's work will, provide considerable criticism of unrestrained capitalism and its detrimental effect on the world. In conjunction with Bender, I will introduce the work of Arne Naess to stimulate thought concerning the spiritual undercurrent of Moore's narrative – inviting readers to submerge themselves within the swamp and connect with 'the Green'. Naess' philosophy will present an alternative conception of the monism which Moore hints at in Swamp Thing's connection to the Earth. In sum, I intend to explore how Swamp Thing might empower scholars and readers alike to think about their spiritual connection to nature and prompt them to engage the looming threat of 'ecocide'.

Josh Grant-Young is a passionate comic book reader and graduate student in Political Theory at Brock University. In an effort to engage popular interest in political theory, Josh intends to dedicate his Doctoral work to blending comic narrative with philosophy and advocacy for nonhuman animals and environmental responsibility.

Aidan Diamond – <u>"We're just human": Posthuman Apocalypse and the Revision of the Superhero Narrative in Supreme: Blue Rose</u>

Despite the ease with which superhero comics may be read through posthumanism, few scholars have used posthumanism to interrogate humanness, apocalypse, or violence in these narratives. In this presentation, I propose to examine the trope of revisionary reboots as a traumatic posthumanist apocalypse, building on existing analyses of Alan Moore's Supreme (Orion Kidder, Jack Tiewes, Jeff Williams, Geoff Klock) and performing my own reading Warren Ellis'/Tula Lotay's Supreme: Blue Rose. Following Supreme's investigation of revision and genre conventions, I argue that Supreme: Blue Rose represents an inherently posthuman interpretation of the superhero genre and its tropes. I will first attempt a cohesive and comprehensible posthumanism, drawing on the work of Rosi Braidotti, Lynn Worsham, and Franklin Ginn, as I believe uniting their work will best allow me to examine Supreme: Blue Rose and, by extension, the superhero genre through a posthumanist lens. I will then turn to Ellis' and Lotay's comic's construction of revision, humanness, and the apocalypse to argue that it unites dominant threads of posthumanist thought by re-inscribing the superhero genre with different versions of super-bodies, and by critically examining revisionist and violent narratives typified by superhero comics.

Aidan Dubhain Diamond pursues a masters degree in English at Memorial University of Newfoundland. She is a contributor to the forthcoming volume of essays on Harley Quinn (McFarland & Co. 2017), and, with Lauranne Poharec, a guest editor of the Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics (2017).

Des bandes dessinées – 1:30-2:50

Sylvain Lemay – <u>Le Printemps de la bande dessinée québécoise, un état du champ</u>

Le Printemps de la bd québécoise (1968-1975) qui débute avec les publications du groupe Chiendent est considéré comme une renaissance. Il ne fait aucun doute pour le chercheur d'aujourd'hui que ce Groupe a révolutionné la bd québécoise. L'importance qui lui est accordée dans les écrits théoriques en témoigne. En voici quelques exemples au fil des décennies: « Chiendent est à l'origine de la nouvelle bande dessinée québécoise » (Georges Raby, 1971) ; « La première manifestation de ce renouveau fut le groupe Chiendent » (Pomerleau, 1980) ; « L'impulsion première de cette renaissance est d'abord le fait du Groupe du Chiendent » (Samson, 1991). « On appelle BDK par extension cette renaissance de la bande dessinée québécoise au tournant des années 70 » (Falardeau, 2008). Cette reconnaissance a de quoi étonner lorsque vient le temps de se pencher sur la production de Chiendent : aucun album n'a été

édité, à peine une trentaine de pages publiées, six mois d'existence et quatre créateurs qui n'ont plus jamais touché à la bd après 1974. Il semble que le succès de ce groupe soit inversement proportionnel à la quantité d'œuvres laissées à la postérité. Près de cinquante ans après ce Printemps, deux faits nous semblent paradoxaux : l'influence du groupe du Chiendent à l'intérieur de ce Printemps et l'importance de cette saison à l'intérieur de l'histoire de la bd québécoise. Nous proposons donc pour cette communication la présentation d'un inventaire du Printemps (1968-1974) et une discussion autour de l'importance du Chiendent Durant cette saison mémorable.

Sylvain Lemay est professeur titulaire en bande dessinée à l'Université du Québec en Outaouais depuis 1999. Il détient un doctorat de l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a publié 2 livres aux éditions les 400 coups et des articles, notamment, dans Médiation et information, Formule, Trip et Archives des lettres canadiennes. En avril 2016, il publiera un livre aux éditions Mém9ire sur Le printemps de la bande dessinée québécoise, sujet de la présente proposition.

[ENGLISH TRANSLATION via Google Translate]:

"Spring Quebecois comics, a field state"

Spring Quebec bd (1968-1975) beginning with publications Chiendent group is considered a renaissance. There is no doubt for today's researcher that the Group has revolutionized the Quebec bd. The importance accorded to it in the theoretical writings witnessed. Some examples over the decades: "Wheatgrass is the origin of the new Quebecois Comics" (Georges Raby, 1971); "The first manifestation of this revival was the Chiendent group" (Pomerleau, 1980); "The first impulse of this renaissance is first the fact of Wheatgrass Group" (Samson, 1991). "They call this extension by BDK renaissance of Quebec comics at the turn of the 70" (Falardeau, 2008). This recognition is surprising when it comes time to look at the production of Wheatgrass: no album has been published, only thirty pages published six months old and four designers who have never touched the comic after 1974. It seems that the success of this group is inversely proportional to the quantity of works left to posterity. Nearly fifty years later this spring, two facts seem paradoxical: the influence of the Chiendent group within this Spring and the importance of this season in the history of Quebec bd. We therefore propose for the call the presentation of an inventory of Spring (1968-1974) and a discussion of the importance of Wheatgrass During this memorable season.

Sylvain Lemay is a professor in comics at the Université du Québec en Outaouais since 1999. He holds a doctorate from the University of Quebec in Montreal. He has published two books published by the 400 shots and articles, notably in mediation and information, Formula, Trip and Archives Canadian letters. In April 2016, he published a book on the Spring Mém9ire editions of the Quebec comic, about this proposal.

Hales Latifa – <u>Le texte littéraire en bande dessinée dans l'enseignement du FLE</u>

La lecture des textes littéraires d'une langue étrangère est une activité très complexe pour des jeunes apprenants algériens habitués à leur langue maternelle. C'est un processus complexe qui nécessite l'appropriation d'un savoir linguistique indispensable. Pour la plupart d'entre eux, les premières lectures sont toujours lassantes et ennuyeuses à cause des lacunes en termes de vocabulaire. C'est pour cette raison, nous avons mis l'accent sur la bande dessinée qui nous semble un support didactique fructueux pour l'enseignement du FLE. Selon des tests menés sur des échantillons d'élèves de 2 ème année, dans un collège, nous avons effectué une étude comparative entre l'utilisation de la fable en prose et la fable en BD. Les résultats de cette expérimentation nous ont révélé qu'un tel document peut inculquer des notions chez les apprenants. D'abord, c'est un support attrayant sur lequel les enseignants s'appuient pour inoculer ou développer le goût de lecture chez les apprenants, ainsi que la BD leur facilite la compréhension de l'écrit. Ensuite, par la mise en correspondance des systèmes verbal et iconique, elle leur permet de progresser dans plusieurs domaines tells que : l'enrichissement de leur

vocabulaire par le travail du rapport signifiant/signifié et le développement de leurs compétences percepto-visuelles.

[ENGLISH translation via Google Translate]

The reading of literary texts from a foreign language is a very complex activity for young Algerian learners accustomed to their mother tongue. It is a complex process that requires ownership of an essential linguistic knowledge. For most of them, the first readings are always tiresome and boring because of gaps in vocabulary. For this reason, we have focused on comics that seems fruitful didactic support for the teaching of FLE. According to tests conducted on samples of students of 2nd year in college, we conducted a comparative study between the use of the fable in prose and comic fable. The results of this experiment have revealed that such a document can instill notions among learners. First, it is an attractive medium in which teachers are supported to inoculate or develop the reading tastes among learners, as well as the BD makes their reading comprehension. Then, the matching of verbal and iconic systems, it enables them to progress in several areas that tells the enrichment of their vocabulary by the Labour report signifier / signified and developing their Percepto-visual skills

Pierre Dairon – Récits d'enfance et de passage à l'âge adulte dans les romans graphiques francophones

La Bande Dessinée francophone des années 2000 a vu l'émergence et l'affirmation du roman graphique qui est vite rentré dans le canon formal du 9e art. Ce nouvel engouement pour cette forme narrative a été notamment appropriée par de nombreux écrivains francophones qui y ont vu une forme de récit parfaitement adaptés à la narration des récits d'enfance ou des récits de passage à l'âge adulte. Les auteurs se sont aussi bien essayés aux auto-fictions qu'à la pure autobiographie avec souvent en ligne de mire des adaptations cinématographiques ou des films d'animation qui ont connu un large succès. On citera par exemple, *Couleur de peau : miel* de Jung, *Le bleu est une couleur chaude* de Julie Maroh, *Quitter Saigon* de Clément Baloup, *Aya de Yopougon* de Marguerite Abouet, *Le jeu des hirondelles* et le *Piano oriental* de Zeina Abirached ou ou encore *Persepolis* de Marjane Satrapi et sont autant de succès d'édition qui ont permis à leurs auteurs de toucher un large public qui dépasse celui des lecteurs de Bande Dessinée traditionnels. Cette présentation proposera de caractériser les grandes lignes directrices de ces récits et de dégager les qui font du roman graphique une forme particulièrement adaptée à ces formes d'introspection personnelle, familiale et historique.

Pierre Dairon est professeur assistant de français à Kenyon College en Ohio. Il s'intéresse de manière général aux différentes formes de littératures francophone. Après avoir effectué plusieurs séjours de recherche au Centre international de la BD à Angoulême, il a offert en 2014 un cours sur les représentations de l'identité et de l'altérité dans la BD francophone.

[ENGLISH TRANSLATION via Google Translate]

Comics French 2000s saw the emergence and affirmation of the graphic novel that quickly retracted into the barrel formal 9th art. This new craze for this narrative was especially appropriate by many French writers who saw a story form are perfectly suited to the narrative of childhood stories or narratives passage to adulthood. The authors have both tried to self-fictions that pure autobiography with often in the crosshairs film adaptations or animated films that have been very successful. Examples include, Skin Color: Honey Jung, Blue is a hot color Julie Maroh, Exit Saigon Clement Baloup, Aya de Yopougon Marguerite Abouet, The game swallows and Piano Oriental Zeina Abirached or or Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi and are all publishing success that enabled the authors to reach a wide audience that exceeds that readers Comic Strip traditional. This presentation will characterize the broad guidelines of these stories and identify which of the graphic novel form particularly suited to these forms of personal introspection, and family history.

Pierre Dairon is French teacher assistant at Kenyon College in Ohio. He is interested general way to various forms of francophone literatures. After conducting several research stays at the International Centre in Angoulême BD, in 2014 he offered a course on representations of identity and otherness in the French comics.

The Manga Scene – 1:30-2:50

Mimi Okabe – <u>Tracking the Boy Sleuth in Shōnen Tantei Manga</u>

Much critical attention has been paid to Japanese detective fiction in Western scholarship (Kawana; Saito; Silver; Seaman). However, there have been fewer attempts that explore adaptations of Japanese detective fiction in manga and specifically the role of children as detecting agents. This paper addresses a gap in scholarship by tracing the role of the boy sleuth in manga. While an examination of Edogawa Ranpo's juvenile fictions, featuring young Kobayashi and his entourage of children detectives, are crucial in tracing the literary origin of the boy sleuth in Japanese detective fiction, I also foreground the works of Osamu Tezuka and Mitsuteru Yokoyama as precursors of the genre of shōnen tantei manga (detective manga for boys). In doing so, this paper will explore how conventions, tropes, patterns and trends from both literary and popular forms of art have inspired contemporary retellings of detective stories in manga. This paper ultimately works to define shōnen tantei manga in terms of its aesthetics in comparison to other manga within the shōnen genre through a close analysis of its visual grammar and language.

Mimi Okabe is a PhD candidate at the University of Alberta. Her research explores manga adaptations of British and Japanese detective fiction, but she is particularly interested in tracing the (literary) construction of the boy sleuth in shōnen tantei manga (detective manga for boys).

Katie Turcotte – <u>"The Aesthetics of (Japanese) Grief: Noh Theatre in Fumio Obata's Just so Happens"</u>

In a text which is driven by silence, the major tension in Fumio Obata's Just so Happens is the struggle to express the inexpressible, grief. Noh, a highly conventionalized form of Japanese theatre, is used throughout the text as the stage upon which this tension is enacted. In the text, Yumiko notes that Noh's aesthetic demands that the performers restrict characters' emotions and in doing so renders them into a beautiful piece of art. Obata interrogates the ways in which meaning is made through the aesthetic of absence and contrast, which are fundamental to Noh aesthetics. Obata's illustrations clearly engage with Noh aesthetics as the silences and empty spaces of the text recreate the simplicity and elegance of Noh. By using Noh, Obata engages with the ways in which cultural identity is shaped by ritualized approaches to emotion and how these rituals, like Noh, combine convention and tradition with nuance and spontaneity. These seemingly paradoxical elements of Noh are extended to several other paradoxical themes of the text: Western and Eastern; interior and exterior; and authenticity and inauthenticity. These seemingly incongruous elements of Noh are replicated in Just so Happens as the author asks what it means to perform grief.

Currently a PhD candidate at Queen's University in Kingston, Katie Turcotte received her Bachelor of Arts with Honours in English in 2013 and her Masters in English in 2015 at York University in Toronto. Her current research interests are in comics and graphic novels and nonsense literature.

Kathy Nguyen – <u>Intersections Through Panels: Displacement of Words, Time, Space, Memories, and Emotions in Shinkai</u>

Language has a long, entangled, and "intimate relationship" with the visual arts, (re)converting language into a visceral-like visual language (Burn and Nixon 2005: 1). Japan's visual language, in

particular, has long been archived through their printed manga-like medium that were printed in woodblock forms/technology called kibyôshi (literally translated as "yellow covers") (Thorn 1996). Not only has Japanese manga universally flourished in recent years, but its form, narratives, and themes have constantly transgressed lexiconical boundaries. Manga's visual narrative form often use panels to structure a specific diagram to produce meaning through "sequential images" (Cohn 2013: 413). As such, this paper examines Shinkai Makoto's two popular works, 5 Centimeters Per Second and The Garden of Words. In investigating manga's visual lexicon, this paper examines how Shinkai uses Neil Cohn's visual narrative model that warrants "canonical arcs" to be reimagined as a "generative schema" that enables various narratives and themes to be extended as a node within a "tree structure" (2013: 413). Shinkai uses a generative schema approach to demonstrate how manga is a medium that (re)generates disjointed panel-based intersections, where displacements of words, space, and emotions denote conceptual nodes that encode and evoke the connections between time and memories.

Kathy Nguyen is a women's studies doctoral student at Texas Woman's University. Her research interests include cyborgian theory, Harawayian theories, anime/manga studies, posthumanism, network theory/the "mangle," technology studies, quantum fiction and time in Japanese film and literature, philosophy of time, speculative realisms/new materialisms, Eastern philosophies, Asian subcultures, and consciousness studies.

Giannis Tsouras – <u>Post-war Japan and the Monstrous Feminine in Junji Ito's Gyo</u>

The focus of Junji Ito's horror manga, Gyo (2001-2002), is the grotesque mutation of the text's lead female character. Kaori transforms into a bulbous and abject monster after being exposed to a contagious disease spread by mechanical fish—a long dormant, but now awakened, experiment conducted by the Japanese military during World War II. In my paper, I will examine Gyo's depiction of the monstrous feminine in the context of post-war Japan. Critics such as Linnie Blake and Jay McRoy have argued that the trope of the vengeful feminine ghoul emerged in postwar Japanese horror cinema, and I wish to extend this line of inquiry to horror manga. These scholars argue that vengeful spirits in Japanese horror enact violence on behalf of a wounded post-war Japanese nation, and I will explore how Kaori's transformation in Gyo engages with ideas of Japanese female identity. How may her transformation be situated in a feminist (or an anti-feminist) politic? Moreover, much has been made of the monstrous feminine's onscreen grotesqueness, and my paper will extend ideas about the male gaze in cinema to the manga page. At the outset of Gyo, Kaori's neuroses is posited as a feminine nuisance to her boyfriend, Tadashi, and my paper will explore how her mutation highlights anxieties about heterosexual love.

Giannis Tsouras is a MA candidate in English at York University. He earned his B.A. (Hons.) from the University of Winnipeg in 2014. His research interests include performance studies, queer theory, HIV/AIDS studies, American modernisms, and horror comics.

Complicating the Superhero – 3:00-4:20

Taylor Green – <u>What time travel IN comic-books teaches us about discrimination: An analysis of how DC's continuity, concept of a multiverse, and displaced temporal locations lend value in solving social complexities</u>

There is a moment in Vantage Point #1 (part of DC's Return of Bruce Wayne Saga: 2010) where Superman turns to Rip Hunter, a time traveling master, and asks "are you even native to our era?" Using this as an entry point, I argue that time travel yields insight into the political relations between social groups. Such an inquiry necessitates the graphic story medium because this platform allows for vast continuity, which as a consequence of juggling myriad narratives, isolates certain temporal

realities at the cost of others. As my argumentative foundation I use the chapter "Identity Crisis: Time Travel and Metaphysics in the DC Multiverse" by Richard Hanley in Superheros and Philosophy: Truth, Justice, and the Socratic Way (2005), but further relate the topic to my work on Immanuel Kant's political writings on progress towards a perpetual peace. Exploring coherent historical narratives within different temporal realities in DC's multiverse provides certain synchronization with our political understandings of social relations in the modern world. For example, an exclusionary temporal discourse operates unintentionally within industrial and capitalistic societies. There are excluded communities who are isolated from a conception of progress and consequently perceived as "backwards", "regressive", or "not-with-the-times". Through research into how DC's heroes and villains deal with not being "native" to conventional historic realities, we can break down these temporal discourses in our own society and situate multiple temporal groups within an accommodating horizontal human "multiverse".

I am Taylor J. Green: a Master of Arts student at Brock University, specializing in Political Theory. My research areas are reason, society, and progress. I have been a comic book fan for over a decade and would love nothing more than to join CSSC.

Chris McGunnigle – <u>Crisis in Infinite Ghettos: Superhero Multidentity and Cultural-Textual Spaces</u>

In mainstream superhero comic books, the inclusion of non-white superheroes rarely results in the creation of new characters but rather the re-iteration of successful white characters into multiple culturally diverse identities. Captain America, as an example, is no longer a singular character but a multiple identity entity, or multidentity, composed of several white men, two African-Americans, and a black Hispanic Asian Native American. But multidentities create problems in the way such characters are positioned within company narratives. Specific textual spaces are often created similar to real world cultural spaces like ghettos, ethnic islands, and contact zones. When these spaces are entered or exited, the superhero narrative must be re-balanced. This presentation will trace the history of how and where non-white characters with identities tied to white superheroes have been placed in relation to their white counterparts, focusing on the hegemonic implications of such positioning. One of the earliest approaches was to limit non-white characters to parallel worlds. In time, superheroes of color became more integrated into white superhero spaces, serving as legacy characters but within some type of hegemonic structure. Most recently, multidentities have converged into a permeable system which contains all identities but is still separated from mainstream narratives.

Chris McGunnigle is a graduate student in the Rhetoric and Composition doctoral program at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette. He is defending his dissertation on magic and media in the graphic narratives of Grant Morrison in the Spring of 2016.

Etienne Domingue – <u>Towards a Pluralist Hermeneutic of Religion in the Superhero Genre: An Approach Inspired by Marshall McLuhan.</u>

It appears we are living in an age of imagination; current enthusiasm for speculative fiction cannot help but pique scholarly curiosity. How – and to what extent – are we influenced by genre culture? Inversely, in what way might we qualify such phenomena as expressions of individual and collective agency? This presentation aims to account for a specific aspect of popular narratives (i.e., its relation to religion) from three interpretive perspectives inspired by McLuhan's Laws of Media. Consequently, three dynamics of mutual influence are described: criticism, retrieval, and deconstruction. Popular narratives and religion criticize one another through selective representation; they retrieve each other through creative borrowing; and they deconstruct one another by undermining conventional expectations. The object of this presentation is not to argue for the superiority of any one method of interpretation, but rather to explore some of the meanings made available by a pluralist

hermeneutic. Due to time constraints, this presentation focuses on superhero comics and their derivatives.

A graduate student of Université de Sherbrooke's Centre d'étude du religieux contemporain, Etienne Domingue just submitted his master's thesis for evaluation. His interests lie chiefly in the study of religion and magic in popular narratives. He is equally (un)comfortable presenting in English or French.

L' Afrique de la bande dessinée – 3:00-4:20

Alain Agnessan – <u>La Ligne naïve dans la B.D populaire d'Afrique noire francophone : postures et esthétique postcoloniales</u>

La bande dessinée africaine n'existe pas. » C'est le constat ou encore le postulat péremptoire prôné par bon nombre de critiques. Cette approche définitionnelle du neuvième art africain par la négation est moins le fait d'une analyse générique, esthétique et graphique des corpus en question qu'une lecture de cet univers textuel à la lumière de la conception bourdieusienne du champ sociologique. Lire le graphisme de la bande dessinée africaine francophone permet de noter l'existence d'un style graphique particulier qui chevauche entre la ligne Claire –héritage colonial –et l'esthétique de l'art naïf haïtien. Nous l'appelons la ligne naïve. Cette « ligne » se caractérise par un graphisme grossier, une deconstruction du cadre et de l'hypercadre ; elle est souvent mise en forme dans le moule carnavalesque –au sens bakhtinien du terme. Cette contribution entend explorer les diverses formes et tendances inhérentes à la ligne naïve à la lumière de quelques bandes dessinées africaines francophones ; pour ensuite dans quelle mesure celles-ci s'inscrivent dans le giron du post-colonialisme et du postmodernisme.

Inscrit en première année de doctorat à l'Université de Western Ontario, mes travaux de thèse portent sur les représentations du génocide rwandais dans la bande dessinée et le cinéma francophones. J'ai, entre autres, publié deux articles de recherche respectivement sur les postures paralittéraires chez Alain Mabanckou et la mobilité dans les Aventures de Tintin à la lumière du culturème.

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African comics does not exist. "That is the conclusion or the peremptory assumption advocated by many critics. This definitional approach of the ninth African art by negation is less the fact of a generic analysis, aesthetic and graphic corpus in question that reading this textual universe in light of Bourdieu's concept of sociological field. Read graphics of the Francophone African comics used to note the existence of a particular graphic style that straddles between Claire -héritage colonial line-and the aesthetics of the Haitian naive art. We call it naive line. This "line" is characterized by a coarse graphic design, a deconstruction of the frame and the hyperframe; it is often shaped in the mold carnival -at Bakhtinian sense of the term. This paper will explore various forms and tendencies inherent in the naive line in light of some Francophone African comics; then how they fit into the lap of postcolonialism and postmodernism.

Joined first year PhD at the University of Western Ontario, my thesis work focuses on representations of the Rwandan genocide in the comic and the French cinema. I, among others, published two research papers respectively on paraliterary postures at Alain Mabanckou and mobility in the Adventures of Tintin in the light of culturème.

Claver Bibang – <u>LE STATUT DE L'ANIMAL DANS LA BANDE DESSINEE: Entre figurations idéologiques et exigences contextuelles</u>

La bande dessinée est un art associatif qui mêle récit et dessins, autrement dit écriture et images.

Certains théoriciens la considèrent comme « le neuvième art », d'où l'intitulé de Francis Lacassin, qui sonne comme un plaidoyer, Pour un neuvième art : la bande dessinée (1982) – lorsque pour d'autres, il s'agit bien d'une littérature à part entière, qui a cependant la particularité d'être illustrée par des images construites. Harry Morgan parle ainsi de « littératures dessinées » (2003). Nous voulons tenter une approche sémio- communicationnelle du statut de l'animal dans la bande dessinée, spécifiquement lorsqu'elle explore l'univers tropical. Deux personnages emblématiques nous serviront ainsi de base d'analyse : Tintin, reporter dont les aventures mettent en lumière l'intelligence et le courage, et Tarzan, orphelin perdu dans la jungle, condamné à une mort certaine s'il n'avait été recueilli et élevé par des primates. Notre analyse portera principalement sur le statut de Milou dans Tintin au Congo (1931), qui est bien plus qu'un simple chien, tandis que les personnalités des deux meilleurs amis de Tarzan, l'éléphant Tantor et la femelle du gorille, Terk, nous intéresseront dans Tarzan et les pygmées (1940).

Docteur en Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication, Spécialiste en Sémiotique et Analyse des discours médiatiques. Institut de la Communication et des Médias, Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3 (CIM) / Membre du Groupe d'Etude et de Recherche sur les Médias (GERMÉDIAS) – France.

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The comic is an associative narrative that mixes art and drawings, ie writing and images. Some theorists consider the "ninth art", hence the title of Francis Lacassin, that sounds like a plea to a ninth art: comic (1982) – while for others, it is indeed a full literature, which however has the distinction of being built illustrated by images. Harry Morgan speaks of "comic literature" (2003). We want to try a communicative semiotic approach the status of the animal in the comics, specifically when it explores the world tropical. Two iconic characters and serve as our base analysis: Tintin, a reporter whose adventures highlight the intelligence and courage, and Tarzan, orphan lost in the jungle, condemned to certain death if it had not been collected and raised by primates. Our analysis will focus on the status Snowy in Tintin in the Congo (1931), which is much more than a dog, while the personalities of the two best friends of Tarzan, Tantor the elephant and the female gorilla, Terk, we interested in Tarzan and the pygmies (1940).

Doctor in Sciences of Information and Communication, Specialist Semiotics and media discourse analysis. Institute of Communication and Media, University of Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3 (CIM) / Member of the Study and Research Group on Media (GERMÉDIAS) – France.

Kevin Pat Fong – <u>L'identité raciale dans Blacksad de Juan Díaz Canales et Juanjo Guarnido</u>

Le thème de l'appartenance raciale figure au centre de Artic Nation, le deuxième volet des aventures du détective-chat Blacksad. Investiguant la disparition d'une petite fille noire, Blacksad se trouve pris au milieu d'une guerre raciale entre les Arctic Nation (groupe similaire au Ku Klux Klan) et les Black Crows (une version des Black Panthers). En lisant Artic Nation (ainsi que les autres albums de la série), certaines questions viennent à l'esprit : pourquoi Díaz Canales et Guarnido se sont-ils intéressés à la culture américaine? Ont-ils pris la décision pour des raisons commerciales? Est-ce que des bédéistes espagnols ont le « droit » d'aborder la question du racisme aux États-Unis? Dans le contexte des études de la race, l'identité de l'auteur est devenue, en elle-même, un sujet d'analyse. Ainsi, beaucoup d'auteurs ont été accusés d'exploiter des sujets sensibles attachés à un groupe racial particulier pour ensuite donner une représentation fausse et sensationnaliste basée sur les stéréotypes et sur le « white gaze ». Je montrerai, quant à moi, comment cette question de l'identité raciale d'un bédéiste joue dans la réception de l'œuvre, mais aussi comment c'est la représentation non stéréotypée de l'identité raciale dans l'œuvre qui, ultimement, importe le plus.

Kevin Pat Fong est un étudiant de doctorat au Département d'Études françaises à l'Université Queen's. Il travaille sur la représentation de l'identité raciale dans les bandes dessinées francophones et

anglophones et s'intéresse également aux études culturelles.

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The theme of racial belonging is central to Artic Nation, the second installment of the adventures of detective Blacksad-chat. Investigating the disappearance of a little black girl, Blacksad finds himself caught in the middle of a race war between the Arctic Nation (group similar to the Ku Klux Klan) and the Black Crows (a version of the Black Panthers). By reading Artic Nation (and other albums of the series), some questions come to mind: why Díaz Canales and Guarnido were they interested in American culture? Have they made the decision for commercial reasons? Does the Spanish cartoonists have the "right" to address the issue of racism in the United States? In the context of studies of race, identity of the author became in itself a subject of analysis. Thus, many authors have been accused of exploiting sensitive issues attached to a particular racial group and then give a false and sensationalist representation based on stereotypes and the "white gauze." I shall show, in my opinion, how this question of racial identity plays a cartoonist in the reception of the work, but also how it is the non-stereotyped portrayal of racial identity in the work that ultimately , matters most.

Pat Kevin Fong is a doctoral student in the Department of French Studies at Queen's University. He works on the representation of racial identity in francophone comics and English and is also interested in cultural studies.

Goufo Zemmo – POUR UNE LECTURE DES REPRÉSENTATIONS DES SUJETS DANS LA BANDE DESSINÉE AFRICAINE : LE CAS DES SUJETS FÉMININS

Les campagnes de sensibilisation développées ces dernières années à travers internet, les festivals de bandes dessinées, sans oublier le succès de la bande dessinée Aya de Yopougon 1 ont contribué véritablement à lever un pan de voile sur les romans graphiques africains d'expression française. Ils les ont également confirmés comme des produits de consummation quotidienne dans la société. À cet effet, on y découvre de plus en plus une subjectivité imagée qui porte sur les représentations des sujets et les relations qu'ils entretiendraient au sein de la planche en général et de la vignette en particulier. Considérant la bande dessinée africaine comme un lieu de savoir, c'est-à- dire le lieu où l'on voit des choses, nous nous proposons dans le cadre de cette analyse de montrer que les images y seraient le siège concret de l'activité humaine et de la productivité sociale et culturelle. En tant que telles, les dispositions spatiales qui en sont faites, ne seraient plus aléatoires mais s'inscriraient dans un processus permettant de comprendre le jeu représentationnel entre les sujets de manière générale et les sujets féminins de manière particulière.

Leslie Goufo Zemmo (Université de Liège/Belgique), doctorante en sémiotique visuelle; s'intéresse aux questions langagières portant sur la bande dessinée d'Afrique noire Francophone. Des publications en cours sur la BD, elle a participé, entre autres, au congrès de l'Association International de Sémiotique Visuelle (AISV) en 2015. Rédige des comptes rendus pour la revue en ligne «Interfaces Numériques » France.

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Awareness campaigns developed in recent years through internet, comics festivals, not to mention the success of the comic Aya de Yopougon 1 have truly helped to lift a veil on Pan African graphic novels in French. They also confirmed as the daily consummation of products in society. To this end, we discover more and more a pictorial subjectivity which focuses on representations of subjects and whether they maintain relationships within the general and in particular vignette board. Considering the African comics as a place of knowledge, that is, the place where we see things, we propose as part of this analysis show that the images would be the concrete office of the human activity and the social and cultural productivity. As such, the spatial arrangements that are made, would no longer be random but

would be part of a process to understand the representational game between subjects in general and female subjects in a particular way.

Leslie Gougo Zemmo (University of Liege / Belgium), doctoral student in visual semiotics; is interested in linguistic questions about comics Francophone black Africa. Ongoing publications on comics, she has participated, among others, the Congress of the International Association of Visual Semiotics (AISV) in 2015. Writes reports for the online magazine "Digital Interfaces" France.

Negotiations of the Self – 3:00-4:20

Matt Yockey – <u>"Ghost Writing: Enunciation and Identity in Ghost World"</u>

This essay explores the ways in which the reflexive nature of Daniel Clowes' 1998 graphic novel Ghost World is amplified and complicated by its 2001 film adaptation (directed by Terry Zwigoff and co-written by Zwigoff and Clowes). In a close comparative visual, narrative, and thematic analysis between the graphic novel and the film, my presentation will demonstrate how the diegetic spaces of the graphic novel and film (the titular "Ghost World") are written as a palimpsest, bearing the traces of layers of popular culture and (paradoxically) each other. Through the remediation of Clowes and Zwigoff's concerns in the film, the audience participates in the reflexive deconstruction of pop culture as a ghost world, staking a claim of ownership within that culture and their own subjectivities (via the affects of nostalgia that primarily inform both versions of Ghost World) while ostensibly disavowing it through ironic distance. The reader/viewer relationship to popular culture is thus productively complicated through the independent film adaptation of an alternative comic book, in which both forms operate on principles of intimate disclosure that are ultimately articulated as a complex discourse between comics/film, reader/viewer, and past/present.

Matt Yockey is an Associate Professor in the Department of Theatre and Film at the University of Toledo. His work on comics and fandom has appeared in a number of journals, including The European Journal of American Studies, Transformative Works and Cultures, Studies in Comics, Journal of Fandom Studies, The Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies, and The Velvet Light Trap. His monograph on the Batman television series was published by Wayne State University Press in 2014. His book Tomorrow is Yesterday: Memory and Affect in 50 Years of Star Trek World-Building is forthcoming from Amsterdam University Press.

Natalja Chestopalova – <u>"Blood, Rage, and the Hunt in the New 52: Re-turn to Affective Enactment in Red Lanterns and Animal Man"</u>

Comics and graphic novels are evolving as popular forms of entertainment and cultural mythologizing, but they also evolve as multimodal forms of immersive storytelling. This paper argues that the 2011 reinvigoration of the DC Comics universe(s) as part of The New 52 is indicative of the demand within the comics industry, fandom communities, and writer/artist creative collaborations for comics that showcase an implicit interest in cognition, enactment, and affect. Specifically, this paper looks at the two first issues of Red Lanterns: Blood and Rage (Issues 1-6, 2012) by Peter Milligan, Ed Benes, and Rob Hunter, and Animal Man: the Hunt (Issues 1-7, 2012) by Jeff Lemire and Travel Foreman as symptomatic of this trend. Looking beyond its notoriety for the over-sexualized gendered portrayal of Bleez, The New 52's Red Lanterns' narrative is concerned with cognition and affect (for example rage and compassion) as an interdependent and even co-evolving phenomena. Behind the series' expanded origin-stories, the narrative asks the readers to contemplate, borrowing Giovanna Colombetti's terminology – an enactive approach to cognition and affect. Echoing the themes developed by Lemire in the Underwater Welder, Animal Man features a protagonist negotiating a fluid threshold between conscious/unconscious enactment. Jarringly distinct in visual styles, both series share an essential turn

to pathologizing their protagonists and their capacity to affectively enact their selfhood.

Natalja Chestopalova is a researcher at York and Ryerson Universities and her scholarship is informed by popular culture aesthetics and psychoanalysis. She specifically focuses on the transformative sensory experience and multimodality in literature, film, graphic novel medium, and theatrical site-specific performances. Her publications appeared in the White Wall Review, Excalibur, The Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism, and Sound Effects: The Object Voice in Fiction.

Scott Duchesne – <u>Structures of Feeling in *Fun Home*</u>

One of the primary narrative threads in Alison Bechdel's Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic is an exploration of a significant historical experience in America, and its collective and individual effects. "Allison", the protagonist of the graphic novel, is both witness to and actor in the struggle of the emergent LTBG movement of the latter half of the 20 th century, in opposition to the constraints of the dominant institutional cultural and political structures of the time. Bechdel combines personal and historical material with her accessible and formalist compositional style to produce a compelling study of a culture, a family, and a person in the throes of change. This presentation will apply the concept of the "structures of feeling", devised and refined by Raymond Williams, in order to parse out what I will argue is the "cultural hypothesis" of Fun Home; that in her direct experience and detached observation of the "totality" of her historical moment under consideration, and through her textual and visual use of cultural evidence, Bechdel persuasively demonstrates that emergent "practical consciousness", feeling and thinking that is "actually being lived", is a powerful progressive force that can successfully interrogate dominant "official consciousness" – or, what is "thought is being lived."

Scott Duchesne is a sessional instructor at the School of English and Theatre Studies at the University of Guelph, where he has included the study of graphic novels in numerous courses. He is currently writing a book on the character of Khan Noonien Singh in the Star Trek franchise.

Ugliness, Commerce & Rob Liefeld – 4:30-5:50

Benjamin Woo – <u>Symbolic Capital in the Field of American Comics: The Extreme Case of Rob Liefeld</u>

Few cartoonists have been simultaneously so successful and so despised as Rob Liefeld. A superstar artist and Image Comics cofounder, Liefeld's oeuvre and aesthetic have long been emblematic of everything wrong with the mainstream comics of the 1990s. However, recent quasicollaborations with independent creators on reimagined versions of his Image properties Prophet, Glory, and Bloodstrike, point to a potential recuperation. Why have fans and critics maligned Liefeld's comics so much? Conversely, if they're objectively as awful as his naysayers suggest, why were they so popular? We suggest the answers are to be found in the dynamics that structure the comics world as a field of cultural production. Liefeld and his peers were aligned with the heteronomous principle and the pursuit of economic capital, and necessarily opposed to the still emergent "comics as literature" paradigm. While strategies exist for the conversion of economic to cultural capital, these were not successful in during Image's initial heyday. However, transformations within the field enabled the rise of non-superhero genre works as a new category of "quality" popular comics – including many notable titles published by Image, among them the reimagined versions of Liefeld characters.

Benjamin Woo is Assistant Professor of communication studies at Carleton University. His research examines contemporary geek media cultures, with particular emphasis on the producers, institutions and audiences oriented to comics and graphic novels. With Bart Beaty, he is the author of The Greatest Comic Book of All Time: Symbolic Capital in the Field of American Comics (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

Anna Peppard – <u>"But he doesn't 'draw' comics": Re-evaluating Rob Liefeld, Auteur</u>

During the 1990s, Rob Liefeld created some of the best-selling comics of all time, and was heralded as a bold new creative force. Today, however, he is widely disparaged, the first Google result for "Rob Liefeld" being a blog post entitled "The 40 Worst Drawings of Rob Liefeld." Technically, Liefeld is a limited artist; his superhero bodies are often so grossly disproportionate that it would be impossible for them to stand. Yet criticizing these limitations does not explain Liefeld's success. This paper argues that understanding Liefeld's appeal requires reading his work on its own terms, and interrogating its particular excesses. To that end, I consider his work's contradictions—particularly how the exaggeration of "natural" gender differences produces flagrantly unnatural forms. Through these contradictions, I examine how Liefeld's artwork reflects then-contemporary (but still unfortunately relevant) struggles to preserve traditional gender boundaries within a culture in which the success of feminism, as well as rising rates of cosmetic surgery, supplement use, and gym membership among both men and women, ensured increased gender blending. Ultimately, I will argue that the "bad-ness" of Liefeld's artwork also makes it very revealing—of Liefeld's own vision, but also of the culture that once voraciously embraced it.

Anna F. Peppard is a PhD candidate in English at York University, where she has taught several course on comics and cartoons. Her scholarly work has appeared in the Canadian Review of American Studies, the International Journal of Comic Art, and the Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts.

Daniel Marrone – <u>Ugly on Purpose: Patrick Kyle and the Aesthetics of Displeasure</u>

The work of Patrick Kyle contains many revealing instances of what Susan Sontag once called the "new sensibility," a mode of art that often elicits frustration as a result of its unfamiliarity. In Against Interpretation, Sontag observed that "our sensibilities may take time to catch up with the forms of pleasure that art in a given time may offer." Part of an emerging generation of contemporary Canadian cartoonists who are testing the formal limits of narrative comics, Kyle cultivates precisely these unfamiliar forms of pleasure. In interviews, Kyle often cites Marc Bell and Mark Beyer as significant stylistic influences; these cartoonists serve as useful points of reference in the investigation of unconventional aesthetic pleasures in comics. Of particular interest is Kyle's statement that he is sometimes attempting to deliberately create work that many would consider ugly. Equally noteworthy is his failure to do so – in other words, despite his best efforts, Kyle often achieves an idiosyncratic beauty, in which the frustration of familiar pleasures is offset by his skill as a cartoonist. The accomplished drawing, unerring sense of balance, and cascading momentum of Kyle's narratives invite a reevaluation of aesthetic concepts like "ugly" and "beautiful" in the context of comics.

Daniel Marrone's research often explores the semiotic operations of comics and the unique capacity of the medium to represent history, memory and longing for the past. He is the author of Forging the Past: Seth and the Art of Memory (University Press of Mississippi).

Regions, Nations, Movements – 4:30-5:50

Kent Allin – <u>Exploring cultural awareness through First Nations, Metis and Inuit Comic Books and Graphic Literature.</u>

This paper examines the use of First Nations, Metis and Inuit Graphic Literature to promote cultural awareness. The goal is to use the specific texts Sugar Falls by David Alexander Robertson, Seven Generations by David Alexander Robertson (Author) & Scott Scott B. Henderson (Illustrator), The Outside Circle by Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Author) & Kelly Mellings (Illustrator) and Red: A Haida Manga by Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas to have the reader become more culturally aware of First Nations, Metis and Inuit issues and culture. The central aspects of culture awareness that the graphic

literature represent are: symbols, heroes, rituals, values and stories. These books allow the reader to examine First Nations, Metis and Inuit culture through both a historical and a traditional sense, as well as a modern view point of First Nations issues. Through the cultural symbols, heroes, rituals, values and stories within each text we can create a well-rounded examination of First Nations, Metis and Inuit. The concept for this paper/panel came from an article on Canadian literature, specifically a statement by Wab Kinew, "Because reconciliation with Native People is still the most pressing social justice issue Canada faces.". The more we can educate people to be culturally aware of First Nations culture the better the chances of reconciliation. Through comic books and graphic literature, specifically the texts outlined, everyone can be more culturally aware.

I am a high school teacher at Bayside Secondary School in Belleville Ontario. Some of my career highlights have been that since 2008 I have created and been teaching a grade 12 focus course on comic books and graphic literature, I have spoken on a panel on Graphic Literature in School libraries at TCAF, I have worked closely with the creators of Kill Shakespeare and run several comic book Symposiums at Bayside Secondary. Over the past 5 years I have been combining my passion for Graphic Literature with the First Nations literature and have been teaching several First Nations literature focus courses.

Harriet Kennedy – "OK, everybody take a valium": Panels and Politics in Quebec, 1976 – 1996

From the earliest origins of Québécois Bande Dessinée (BDQ) it has been closely linked to the political development of the province. However, despite sitting at the meeting point of three of the major comic book traditions, BDQ has not always been subject to the same level of critical attention as other incarnations of the comic book form. The links between the politics and bande dessinées of the province become particularly evident when looking at text/image responses to questions of Québécois Nationalism and Identity in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Familiar faces from the political sphere appear with great regularity in texts produced not only for adults but also the children of Quebec. This paper will look at key bandes dessinées produced in Quebec between 1976 and 1996 and explore how these text/image depictions of political figures work together to create a compelling version of the events surrounding the 1980 and 1995 referendums on Québécois Sovereignty.

Harriet Kennedy is an early career researcher who recently completed a PhD in Canadian Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Her research interests include comics, politics, Quebec, Canada, nationalisms and questions of voice, form and identity. She writes about comics for Graphixia and Panels, is on the Editorial Board of the Comics Grid and is on the organising committee for Comics Forum.

Julian Peters – "The Springtime of Quebec Comics": The Chiendent Comics Collective and the Quebec Pop Art Movement, 1968-1969

"Le printemps de la BD québécoise" ("The springtime of Quebec comics") is a phrase coined by Georges Raby in a 1971 article for the Montreal arts magazine Culture Vivante. Raby identified the genesis of what he saw as an ongoing comics renaissance in the province in the work of Chiendent, a collective of comics creators operating in Montreal in the late 1960s. All four members of Chiendent were active participants in the city's avant-garde literary and visual arts scene, and their texts and drawings reflect this involvement. In my presentation, I will examine the specific factors within francophone Quebec's avant-garde arts community that propitiated this ground-breaking interchange between "high art" and comics, and the ways in which these factors were in turn reflected in the content of Chiendent's production. In particular, I will look at two of the central objectives of what could loosely be described as the province's "Pop art" scene: the desire to arrive at a form of artistic expression that could speak more directly to the broad majority of the population, and the effort to re-appropriate various elements of Québécois popular culture in an ironic fashion, in keeping with the tenets of the "Ti-Pop" movement.

Julian Peters is a comics artist and comics scholar living in Montreal. In 2014 he earned a Master's degree in Art History from Concordia University with a thesis focusing on two experimental graphic narratives, Poema a fumetti (1969) by Dino Buzzati and The Projector (1971) by Martin Vaughn-James.

Paul Malone – <u>Leo Leonhard and Otto Jägersberg's Rüssel in Komikland: An Art History of German Comics, in the Guise of a Comic about German Art History</u>

In 1972, artist Leo Leonhard and writer Otto Jägersberg published what Germany's newsmagazine Der Spiegel described as "one of the most original books of the year … a clever collage of comic strip elements and stylistic quotations from art history." This was Rüssel in Komikland, the story of Rüssel, a courtly mixture of human and elephant, and his beloved, Schüssel, a sentient and animated serving bowl. Together, the two produce a hybrid child, Schrüssel, and undergo a series of adventures that take them from the black-and- white world of nineteenth-century engraved picture stories à la Wilhelm Busch, with dialogue printed as text beneath the pictures, into the psychedelically coloured and speech-balloon infested landscape of 1970s comics. Although Henry Sussman, in a misleading summary of Rüssel, is right to describe the volume as "a warning about the cultural environmental impact of voracious global capitalism and the creeping Americanization of mass culture,"1 from his aesthetically conservative viewpoint he overlooks the fact that Rüssel also affectionately recapitulates the history of comics development in Germany, champions the contemporary avant-garde as much as the European artistic past, and demonstrates that some Americanization, in terms of the acceptance of comics storytelling, had in fact been welcomed and put down roots.

Paul M. Malone is Associate Professor of German in the Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies at the University of Waterloo, Canada. He is the author of Franz Kafka's The Trial: Four Stage Adaptations (Peter Lang, 2003), and has also published on performance theory; Faustian rock musicals; and German drama, film, and comic books.

Comics & Disability – 4:30-5:50

Evi Tampold and Carol Nash – <u>The Hallway Closet</u>

What is it for a young girl to take responsibility for managing her ADHD by willingly remaining in a dark closet with her mother just outside the door until she feels ready to come out? The hallway closet as a calming, thought-evoking place is the focus of this graphic novel depicting the daughter/mother relationship of the two presenters during this difficult, yet meaningful, time during their lives. Illustrated and written by Evi Tampold, the story tells what it was like for the daughter to experience her anger, her exhaustion, and her self-control in the healing place that was the hallway closet. Although within the physical space the daughter was alone, neither participant considered the time in the closet a solitary confinement. As a philosopher of education, the mother created the closet as a place for the daughter to transform her overwhelming emotions into thoughtful and well-considered language in unbroken dialogue with the mother, separated only by the door. The transfer of emotions to self-directed language is the heart of The Hallway Closet.

Evi Tampold is a young artist and storyteller. Her work is displayed in a number of locations in southern Ontario. The Hallway Closet is her first solo graphic novel. Evi attends Alpha II Alternative School. You can see more of her work at evizoa@tumbler.com and at yorkvilledesigncentre.ca/service/art-installations.

Carol Nash PhD is Evi Tampold's mother. She is Scholar in Residence, History of Medicine Program, Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto and facilitates a weekly Health Narratives Research Group at the Mount Sinai Hospital.

Emily Wilson – <u>Mad Artistry in Ink: Navigating Narratives of Mental Illness and Creativity in Ellen Forney's Marbles and Barbara Stok's Vincent</u>

Ellen Forney's Marbles and Barbara Stok's Vincent each attempt to tell the story of a life, and particularly a life affected by mental illness in the form of comics. Forney's autobiography changes in style alongside the clinically bipolar ups and downs of her avatar, and Stok's panels explode with colour and pattern when Vincent experiences episodes of mental unrest. Not only do these narratives engage with the task of representing mental illness graphically, they also work to use this visuality to question, challenge and reconceptualize narratives of mad artistry: the romantic madness of the artist as genius. In a comparative analysis of the two texts, I seek to explore how mental illness can be represented within and in relation to art. I am particularly interested in the comparison to be made between Forney as a pop comic artist, and Van Gogh as a canonical painter, and how this classed distinction affects their respective representations of illness. Forney's text provides an important reflection on the complicated position of care, therapy and medication in relation to these narratives of mad artistry I seek to deconstruct and challenge.

Emily Wilson is currently completing a Master's degree in English at York University Her research interests include genre fiction, mental illness, and disability studies. She intends to begin PhD studies in the fall and has proposed a project entitled The Detective and Disability: Investigating the Representational Politics of a Popular Genre. She presented her very first conference paper at CSSC in 2015.

Lauranne Poharec – <u>"Of Course, I am a Hero": Disability as Posthuman Ideal in Cece Bell's El Deafo</u>

Disability autobiography is a new 'popular' topics in autobiographical writing, and scholars such as G. Thomas Couser and Donna McDonald have been reading the rise of this new genre as a powerful counter discourse to traditional representation of disability in literature. Disability writing also has been influencing autobiographical comics. In her widely praised autobiographical comic about growing up deaf, El Deafo (2014), Cece Bell draws herself as a little girl that looks like a rabbit, but who also has a superheroine alter-ego "El Deafo". She shows to the readers what it is like to be deaf and invite them to experience her world. In doing so she challenges the stereotypical humanist idea that has prejudiced, negative representations of disability, and suggests a move toward a posthumanist sense of self. More specifically, I argue that Bell asks us to redefine what we mean by disability, and through anthropomorphic and superheroic rhetoric, encourages a new conceptualization of the self and humanity, one that is posthuman and inhabits a liminal space that breaks the boundaries between human and animal, human and machine, abled and disabled bodies.

Lauranne Poharec is a PhD student in English at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Her research focuses primarily on north American female-authored autobiographical comics, but sometimes she has a word or two to say about French comics, too.

BOOK-LAUNCH EVENT – 6:00-8:00

Hosted by The Firkin on Bloor, 81 Bloor Street East, Directly across the street from The Marriott. This event will celebrate "Garbage" by Matthew Reichertz and "The Greatest Comic Book of All Time: Symbolic Capital in the Field of American Comics" by Bart Beaty and Benjamin Woo.

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DAY TWO: Friday May 13th

KEYNOTE PROLOGUE (CSSC/SCEBD MEMBERS): Bram and Bluma Appel Salon @ Toronto Reference Library, 789 Yonge St., Prologue Room – 8:30-9:00

KEYNOTE SPEECH: Ryan North – Appel Salon, Epic Hall – 9:00-10:00
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Gender & The Superhero – 10:00-11:20

Neta Gordon – <u>The enemy is The Centre: the dilemma of retrograde masculinity in Darwyn Cooke's DC: The New Frontier</u>

In his reimagining of DC's Cold War superheroes in the acclaimed comic book series *DC: The New Frontier* (2004), Darwyn Cooke combines a nostalgic, mid-50s aesthetic with an explicitly contemporary take on certain historical movements and moments. Cooke's strategy of "forcing these fictional characters to take stands on impossibly complex, real situations" (425), however, is less visible in the comic's representations of white, male characters, in particular the various military men and fly boys. In this paper, I will argue that for all its radical interest in challenging notions of sexism and racism, as well as questioning the idea of slavish political allegiances, Cooke's *DC: The New Frontier* tends to be uncritical in its portrayal of retrograde white masculinity; in this way, the comic recalls Sally Robinson's argument in *Marked Men: White Masculinity in Crisis* (2000) that – before the rise of the civil rights and women's rights movements in 1960s America – white men were "conflated with normativity," and therefore "benefit[ted] from the invisibility of their own racial and gender specificity" (2). In Cooke's text, the relatively straightforward representation of purveyors of traditional masculinity points to the difficulty of imagining new forms of masculinity, especially in a text that is set in the past and that wishes to trace a genealogy of progressive human activity. My paper will begin by situating *DC: The New Frontier* within the history of American comic books, drawing attention the post-WWII setting, a time when superhero titles underwent a sharp decline in popularity and comics devoted solely to war stories began to appear. Next, I will address shifting conceptions of American masculinity, first, in the 1950s and early 60s when Cooke's comic is set and, second, in the new millennium, when the comic was published. Finally, I will pursue a close reading of such figures featured in Cooke's text as Rick Flagg, exemplary military man and leader of the Suicide Squad and Task Force X; "Ace" Morgan, flyboy, mentor and friend of Hal Jordan, and leader of the Challengers of the Unknown; and Hal Jordan, former flying ace, veteran of the Korean War, and the new Green Lantern. I will consider, first, how in representing as normative these archetypes of traditional American masculinity, Cooke undercuts some of the text's radical critique and how Cooke's apparent blind spot points to the difficulty of developing a history of progressive masculinity.

Neta Gordon is an Associate Professor at Brock University, in the Department of English Language and Literature. She is the author of *Catching the Torch: Contemporary Canadian Literary Representations of World War One*, published by Wilfrid Laurier UP, and *A Tour of Fabletown: Patterns and Plots in Bill Willingham's Fables*, forthcoming from McFarland Press.

Christine Atchison – <u>"Auteurism, Gender, and Female Heroics"</u>

This paper examines how auteurs continue to inform discussion surrounding advertising, merchandising, and justifying major canon changes in popular media. I suggest that accepted authorial authority in these realms of popular media is—seeming inextricably—connected to gender by conducting case-studies that demonstrate the importance of the male auteur in authoring or supporting gender-swap canon changes. The case studies focus on three well-known gender-swapped characters— namely, Starbuck from the popular Battlestar Galactica series, the norse-God turned comic book hero Thor, and Green Arrow's comic book sidekick Speedy—the creative team behind those characters, and popular and critical receptions to gender-related changes and compares the reception to these changes to the reactions to pieces of fan-fiction that are written by women and undermine the male-centric gender of these characters in a similar way. I conclude by suggesting that the apparent need for male auteurs to bring or sponsor gender-related changes to these characters points to seemingly entrenched norms of patriarchy: change can happen, but only when a patriarchal figure gives his permission.

Christine Atchison is a PhD Candidate whose interdisciplinary research combines fandom, audience, comic book, religious studies. She has spoken at numerous international conferences as a delegate or keynote speaker, is assistant editor of *Cinema Journal,* and has been published or has forthcoming publications in conference proceedings and journals including *Cinema Journal*.

Travis Smith – <u>Responsibility and Victimhood: Analyzing Wolverine</u>

This paper presents a critical analysis of the character of the Marvel super-hero Wolverine in order to illuminate several tensions inherent to the human condition. First, among super-heroes Wolverine epitomizes the animal nature of humankind. He also represents humankind's natural aspiration to be more than merely animal. We aim at what is honourable or noble and not merely what is pleasurable. Wolverine thus calls modern hedonistic prejudices into question—but problematically, given his healing factor. Second, Wolverine draws attention to the tension between the honourable and the moral, two different kinds of standards of right action. He forces us to reconsider modernity's preference for the latter and our disregard for or disparagement of the former, given his unfashionable dedication to it. Third, moral and noble actions alike depend on our exhibiting responsible agency. As with many super-heroes, Wolverine's origin establishes him as a victim. He becomes a champion of the similarly victimized or threatened. His actions, however, metaphorically reproduce his own victimization. Given our animal nature, our external obligations, the harms we endure, and the behaviours we repeat, reflecting on Wolverine makes us wonder about the degree to which human beings can behave responsibly and should be held responsible.

Travis D. Smith teaches political philosophy at Concordia University. His publications have focused on early modern authors, especially Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes. He is also writing a book on superhero ethics.

Aesthetics of World Building – 10:00-11:20

Glenn Willmott – <u>How Is Worldbuilding in Comics Different?</u>

Abstract: While formalist comics scholarship has flourished in relation to the study of language and the theory of narrative, less attention has been devoted to its non-narrative registers of worldbuilding. This is despite a widely acknowledged centrality of worldbuilding to its art. In this paper, I would like first to consider how comics undertake worldbuilding in ways that are transmedial (drawing on leading "storyworld" theory by David Herman and "worldbuilding" theory by Mark Wolf). Then, with reference to influential comics writers who have focused on the non-narrative reading of spatial form (the practice of "world building" considered by Scott McCloud and the "precedence" of "spatio-topia"

argued by Thierry Groensteen), I will propose ways in which worldbuilding in comics involve unique meaning-generating propositions and reading practices in the communication of its imaginary worlds. I will argue that comics worldbuilding as such always generates implicit or explicit environmental and ecological perspectives, and these may be either beneficial or deleterious to our real world conditions. I plan to draw on a range of examples from comics genres and history, a diversity including strips and books, like Herriman's Krazy Kat and Mills' Miss Fury, and industry, alternatives and independents, like the 12 cent Archie, Woodring's Unifactor and Graham's Scaffold.

Glenn Willmott is Professor of English at Queen's University where he teaches modernism, comics, and a variety of popular genres, from economic and ecocritical perspectives. He has published Modern Animalism: Habitats of Scarcity and Wealth in Comics and Literature (University of Toronto Press, 2012), and is a Past President of the CSSC.

Lisa Macklem – <u>Sin City as Film Noir: There and Back Again</u>

Frank Miller's Sin City comics strove to capture the film noir of cinema in the graphic novel medium. Luke Arnott states that the work has "long been renowned for its striking, nihilistic style… and the storytelling conventions of crime comics and noir cinema" (380). Robert Rodriguez strove to capture the graphic novel in the cinematic medium in his two Sin City films. Is something lost or gained by filtering this genre through these different lenses? Adapting the hardboiled crime narrative at the heart of film noir from book to screen has a long tradition as does film noir and neo-noir cinema. There is little consensus over the definitions of film noir, but narrative strategies, including convoluted storylines with a mystery, a femme fatale, and violent crime at the heart are de rigeur. The setting is generally urban and the visual style of stark black and white chiaroscuro are also standard and reflected in both graphic novel and film versions of Sin City. While the first Sin City movie was a much greater financial success than the second, the two movies intertwine in classic film noir style. Arguably, no other film adaptation of a graphic novel has so captured the medium as Rodriguez's films. The films stand as an homage to the graphic novel, employing the violence and storytelling conventions of both comic and cartoon conventions. Rather than downplaying the violence, Rodriguez's techniques create a more disturbingly absurdist rendering. This paper will examine the ways in which Rodriguez's films capture the essence of noir from Miller's graphic novels.

Lisa Macklem is a PhD Candidate in Law at the University of Western Ontario and has an LLM in Entertainment and Media Law as well as an MA in Media Studies. She is on the editorial board for The Journal of Fandom Studies. Recent publications include "From Monstrous Mommies to Hunting Heroines: The Evolution of Women on Supernatural" in The Canadian Fantastic in Focus: New Perspectives edited by Allan Weiss (McFarland, 2015), and "I See What You Did There: SPN and the Fourth Wall" in Fan Phenomena: Supernatural edited by Lynn Zubernis and Katherine Larsen (Intellect, 2014). Among her conference papers in 2015 was "A Journey Into the Past: Manifest Destiny Re-Imagines How the West Was Won" delivered at the Voyages Conference in Paris, France, in June.

Barbara Postema – <u>The Politics of Silence: Negotiating Status and Resistance with Wordless Comics</u>

Silent comics, which create their narratives without the reliance on text in word balloons or captions, have a long tradition of drawing attention to social ills and calling for change and resistance. From the wordless narratives in the early 20 th -century woodcut novels of Frans Masereel and Lynd Ward to the silent graphic novels of Eric Drooker, Peter Kuper, Sara Varon, and Daishu Ma, this genre has been used to draw attention to the struggles of workers, the oppressive influences of companies and capital, and the insidious presence of racism and sexism. Simultaneously, the form is often used as a silent call to action, whether it is as straightforward as an appeal to join a union, in Giacomo Patri's 1939 White Collar, or as ambivalent as Walking Shadows (2010) by Neil Bousfield, which shows the difficulties of

growing up in working class Britain, but also shows that people living through the same circumstances come up with different ways to deal with life and perhaps break a negative cycle. This paper considers why the silent comic genre specifically has been used so frequently to relay social messages, touching on some notable examples, and connecting with theoretical engagements of the form by David A Beronä and Thierry Groensteen.

Barbara Postema is an Assistant Professor at Concordia University, where she teaches comics and contemporary literature. She is working on a book about silent comics. Her monograph Narrative Structure in Comics came out in 2013, and she has published articles in the Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics and elsewhere.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 11:30-12:30

The Industry of Comics – 1:30-2:50

Robert Hutton – <u>Blood and Thunder: *The Comics Journal* and 'Literary' Comics</u>

My paper will examine the role of long-running fanzine *The Comics Journal* in the alternative comics movement in the 1980s. There has been much critical writing on this period in comics, where independent and artistically-minded comics began to flourish and challenge the monotony of the comics mainstream, but little attention has been paid to the role of critical publications and fan writing in both encouraging and shaping the parameters of this movement.   I argue that while the creators and advocates of alternative comics often portrayed themselves as rebels and revolutionaries, a close reading of *The Comics Journal* finds a surprising adherence to conservative literary values. Gary Groth, Kim Thompson and the writers of the *Journal* drew on an already-existing discourse of literature as an autonomous and apolitical sphere. Also implicit in the discourse of the *Journal* is a submerged association of comics with stunted adolescence and sexual deviance, a malady that could only be remedied with studiously literary comics. This paper builds on and revises earlier comics scholarship by highlighting the role of critics and pointing out the ways in which this "revolution" drew on hegemonic cultural discourses to justify itself.

I am a PhD student in my fourth year at Carleton University, currently working on a dissertation about how alternative comics treat the concept of the literary. I have previously presented at NePCA (2013), SCMLA (2014), NeMLA (2015), ACCUTE Congress (2015) and the 2015 edition of this conference. I have previously been published in *TOPIA* and have an article forthcoming in *South Central Review*.

Keith Friedlander – <u>Anthologies and Creative Communities: Mapping the Social Function of Editors</u>

Anthologies occupy an important position in the comic world and serve a number of different purposes. Anthologies can often serve as a starting point for young artists and writers, providing them with a publishing outlet for their work and helping them grow a professional network. Some anthology projects serve as a showcase for existing creative communities, while others help communities take shape by bringing together isolated creative talent under a single title. In this regard, the work performed by the editors of these series in gathering talent, setting guidelines, and managing the project to publication is as crucial to the cultural impact of these anthologies as the artists' words and images. In order to better understand the influence that anthologies can have on the formation of creative communities, it is necessary to study the social function that editors serve as an organizing force behind creative talent. I propose to write a paper that will evaluate the role anthologies play in creating and sustaining creative communities within the comic world. In doing so, I will draw upon primary

research in the form of interviews and surveys with the editors and creative talents who have worked on these anthologies. I will examine a cross section of anthologies including Moonshot: The Indigenous Comic Collection, Jewish Comix Anthology, Beyond: The Queer Sci-Fi/Fantasy Comics Anthology, and Toronto Comics, amongst others.

Keith Friedlander teaches composition and literature at Humber College, Seneca College, and Trent University. He recently completed a doctoral dissertation on British Romanticism and is awaiting his defense. His research examines how matters of publishing mode and market position affect concepts of authorship and subjecthood.

Hauntings – 1:30-2:50

Skot Deeming – <u>Haunted Timelines and Apocryphal Technologies: Spectres of Science Fiction and the Trans-Medial Presence of Warren Ellis.</u>

A dominant figure in the comics industry in the early post-milenium, Warren Ellis' impact on both the medium and the industry are well documented. Once regarded as the "Internet Jesus", Ellis's career has been marked by both his online presence and periods of prolific writing. Perhaps best known for series' such as Planetary and Transmetropolitan, Ellis has helmed seminal popular culture properties (including the X-Men, James Bond, and Gi Joe), written several novels, been adapted into film and television, and has contributed columns, criticism and commentary for a number of trans-national Throughout much of Ellis' corpus, several themes emerge and reoccur: transhumanism, the deconstruction of the super hero, forgotten histories, alternative universes, and the transformative power of technology. This presentation will examine selected works from Ellis' trans-medial catalogue, as a means of discussing Ellis' preoccupation with a haunted present. Ellis' present is haunted not only by the spectres of the past, but also the spectres of possible futures, and futures which have failed to emerge. Through these works, Ellis renders much of the technological determinism embedded in science fiction as aprocryphal rhetoric; melding discourses of scientific speculation, with those of magic and mysticism.

Skot Deeming is an artist, curator and scholar, whose work spans the spectrum of new media practice from broadcast media to computational art, focusing on new media histories and DIY technology cultures. He resides in Montreal where he is a doctoral student in the Individualized Program at Concordia University.

Tamara El-Hoss – <u>Drawing Exile</u>

Baddawi is a recently published graphic novel written and illustrated by Leila Abdelrazaq, a Chicago-based Palestinian artist and organizer. Although, on the surface, the book is the coming-of-age story of a young Palestinian refugee boy, this graphic novel follows (and draws) the path of thousands of Palestinian refugees during the 1948 Nakba (catastrophe). Most of these refugees fled at night, by foot, and crossed Palestine's Northern border into neighbouring Lebanon where they lived in make-shift refugee camps. Baddawi, which means "nomad" in Arabic, is one such camp, and is located in Northern Lebanon. Palestinians lived there in exile for decades, separate and separated from the Lebanese population, hoping to return "home" one day. "Palestinians", notes Abdelrazaq, "make up the largest refugee population in the world" (notwithstanding the recent Syrian refugee crisis). The author/artist's black and white illustrations draw on Palestinian "visuals" (landscapes, embroideries) and are heavily influenced by Marjane Satrapi's Persepolis. The purpose of this paper will be to examine the manner in which Leila Abdelrazaq depicts and traces this exile, an exile mediated through an activist's lens and an artistic license.

Tamara El-Hoss is an Assistant Professor at Brock University. Her research interests include graphic

novels & bande dessinée, with a special interest in (im)migrant identity, marginality, testimonials, colonial history and politics, gender roles, trauma, diaspora, and queer identity.

Dominick Grace – <u>Wimbledon Green and Nostalgia</u>

"I hate the word 'nostalgia,'" Seth told Robin McConnell in 2009 (25). This is perhaps unsurprising, since Seth's nostalgia has become a truism, a largely unexamined assertion about how his work privileges the past over the present. Anne Thalhemier states that his work is "suffused with nostalgia" (560). Kelli Korducki speaks of "his nostalgic graphic narratives." Madeline Coleman, among others, even works Seth's nostalgia into the title of her piece. To be sure, Seth invites such an association. He has commented frequently in his work but also in interviews about how things were better in the past, and he has underscored this assertion by adopting a personal style that rejects contemporary fashion in favor of 1940s models. However, there is a countervailing trend in his work, perhaps most acerbically reflected in the figure of Jonah, Wimbledon Green's least admirable character (itself no mean feat) and clearly Seth's caustic parody of his public persona—right down to the single name. As such Jonah is perhaps the most clear marker of Wimbledon Green's problematizing of the nostalgic impulse. Despite its whimsy, Wimbledon Green brutally interrogates the nostalgic impulse that lies beneath the comic-book collecting impulse. This paper will explore the book's anti-nostalgic strategies.

Dominick Grace is an Associate Professor of English at Brescia University College in London, Ontario. He is the author of The Science Fiction of Phyllis Gotlieb and coeditor with Eric Hoffman of Dave Sim: Conversations, Chester Brown: Conversations, and Seth: Conversations.

On Modal Reach – 3:00-4:20

Brian Donnelly – <u>North American Comics and the Aesthetics of Drawing</u>

Cultural studies if often positioned in a false opposition to the aesthetic, as though in developing a theoretical or social analysis of an object one had to ignore the logic of its form. This observation might also be applied to the growing study of comics. Without taking anything away from such approaches, most comics are read for the literary or sociological significance of their characters and story lines; or analysis of the unique narrative structures of the medium; or descriptions of the semiotics of the graphic marks and idioms that are the parole of the images. But what if we were to develop an interpretive language to describe the visual style of comics, so as to see them as master drawings? Comics are drawn: like all visual aspects of culture, they have a deliberate form that is particular and sensual. They demand close attention not only to the work they do, but also to the way in which they work, in particular the effects of their visual style and quality as drawings. If we are to understand them socially—in fact, if we want to read them at all—we must also understand them aesthetically. This paper will argue that there is a consistency of style and a particular strength of drawing which distinguishes the best works, by the best artists, working for the two principal American mainstream comics publishers (Marvel and DC) of the 1960s and 70s.

Brian Donnelly teaches design studies, history and theory at Sheridan College in Oakville. His dissertation topic was a study of the mechanisms of meaning in graphic design, and he researches and publishes on the history of graphic design in Canada.

Peter Schwenger – <u>Grawlixes, Emanata, and Asemic Writing</u>

Mort Walker's Lexicon of Comicana describes various signs used in comics, such as "grawlixes" (signs for cursing) and "emanata" (lines around a body to indicate certain physical states). Marc Van Elburg's study of these signs, while provocative, has a flaw: Elburg confuses the grawlixes that are emitted after a contretemps with the processes that led up to it. Rather, grawlixes indicate an emotional response to

the contretemps. Such emotion defies any attempt to verbalize it: even curse words are inadequate to the sensation of rage. Emanata, as well, indicate bodily states that, according to Brian Rotman, are precisely what is missing from written language. To evoke what is missing from language is also an important objective of asemic writing. "Asemic" translates as "without meaning" – not even that of recognizable letters. This abstract writing communicates at a pre-verbal level through the gestural force of its lines. Grawlixes and emanata are akin to asemic writing in that both resort to drawn signs to express something that words cannot; so, many asemic artists also produce abstract comics. Yet there is a difference: illegible asemic writing throws conventional writing into question, while grawlixes have become absorbed into legible comic book conventions.

Peter Schwenger, Professor of English Emeritus from Mount St. Vincent University, is the Resident Fellow of Western University's Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism. He is the author of five books and numerous articles, two of which are pertinent to his paper: "Abstract Comics and the Decomposition of Horror" and "Asemic Writing: Backwards into the Future."

Brandon Christopher – <u>Crisis on Infinite Elsinores: *Kill Shakespeare* and the Quantum Potentialities of Adaptation</u>

Borrowing from the worldbuilding (and housecleaning) strategies of mainstream superhero comics, Anthony Del Col and Conor McCreery's *Kill Shakespeare* famously reimagines Shakespeare's plays as if they existed in a fictional shared universe, bringing together their most famous characters in pursuit of a common end. Though less frequently noted, the series borrows another significant aspect of mainstream comics: its attitude toward its source material. Simultaneously venerating and radically revising its "past," *Kill Shakespeare* puts into play a constant tension between original and appropriation, making the struggle for narrative dominance one of its central subjects. This paper examines the way in which the comic's negotiation of fidelity and infidelity to Shakespeare's plays effectively creates within *Kill Shakespeare* a series of parallel quantum Shakespeares, whose potentiality is brought into focus and emphasized by the comic's inescapable, if possibly ineffectual, source texts. Ultimately shying away from the swaggering, patricidal fantasy promised in its title, it offers, I argue, an extended meditation on what it means to borrow and to transform another's text, resulting in a comic that is, like its characters, virtually overwhelmed by the spectral presence of its (textual) past.

Brandon Christopher is an Associate Professor in the Department of English and Coordinator of the University of Winnipeg's MA in Cultural Studies. His research and teaching focus on Renaissance drama, on adaptations of Shakespeare, and on comics and graphic narratives. He is currently working on a book project titled "Shakespeare and Comics / Comics and Shakespeare: Adaptation, Reciprocity, and the Contingency of Cultural Value."

Evolving from the Margins – 3:00-4:20

Daniel Pinti – <u>Discourse in the (Graphic) Novel: Toward a Bakhtinian Theory of Comics</u>

Thirty-five years after the publication in English of the essays collected in The Dialogic Imagination, including the seminal treatise "Discourse in the Novel," Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin may not enjoy the widespread currency and fervent champions he once did within literary theory, but his presence persists nonetheless, not only in literary studies but in the humanities and cultural studies more generally. Somewhat in contrast, critical and theoretical work on comics I currently burgeoning, with one major question being how critical discourses from other disciplines might responsibly inform and be integrated with comics studies. This paper employs Bakhtin's own writings, scholarship on Bakhtin, and the work of several influential comics scholars, to further a Bakhtinian approach to

interpreting comics. Focused primarily on Bakhtin's understandings of dialogue, heteroglossia, and simultaneity, alongside the work of comics scholars Thierry Groensteen and Hannah Miodrag, the essay opens a fresh dialogue between Bakhtin's ideas and comics theory, suggesting how they might be mutually illuminating, and particularly how Bakhtin's concepts can offer new insights on formalist issues in comics studies. It does so by drawing on both Gene Yang's graphic novel American Born Chinese and Matt Fraction/David Aja's Hawkeye for illustrative examples.

Dr. Daniel Pinti is Professor of English at Niagara University where he teaches early British literature, children's literature, and graphic novels. His most recent publications include an essay on illustrated versions of Beowulf for young adult readers, and a forthcoming essay on theology and identity in Yang's American Born Chinese.

Julian Lawrence – <u>Regarding the marginalization of comic books in North American schools: Two questions for scholars.</u>

Julian Lawrence is an artist/educator specializing in comic books. Born in England and raised bilingual English-French in Québec, his work has been published and displayed internationally by <u>Fantagraphics Books</u>, <u>Conundrum Press</u>, <u>National Film Board of Canada</u>, <u>Penguin Books</u>, <u>Cartoon Network</u> and <u>Aboriginal Peoples Television Network</u>. Julian lives in Vancouver, Canada, teaches courses in contemporary comics at <u>Emily Carr University of Art and Design</u> and is a Master's Candidate in Art Education at the University of British Columbia.

Ryan Clement

Comics are not what they used to be. The days of serving as nothing more than light humour at the back of a newspaper periodical are long over, these days the comic medium has successful exploded into a plethora of new traditions from the American graphic novel to Japanese manga. These two popular artistic movements in themselves have inspired influence in other aspects of the global society including other comic traditions such as Chinese manhua or even other media industries such as Hollywood. The influence of comics has risen, even as print itself has declined.
The question remains, however, as to whether or not such seemingly culturally specific art movements such as the Japanese manga tradition or the American graphic novel tradition are representative of their respective cultural homelands and identities, or whether or not they represented a hybridized form derived from a globalized interchange of ideas. If an American creates a work of manga that appears? for all intents and purposes?to be Japanese, should the work be considered Japanese, American, or some form of hybrid of the two? What about a Canadian such as Brian O?Malley who combines influences of both in his Scott Pilgrim series? What is pushing this renewed association between the visual and the textual? What, ultimately is the nature of the relationship between comic and cultural identity?

Ryan Clement, PhD candidate (University of Waterloo, English Language and Literature), MA (York and Ryerson Universities, Communication and Culture), and BA (Brandon University, English and History), is interested, scholarly or otherwise, in globalization, international development, interactive art projects, travel writing, games (both board and video), comics, and subculture. In general, he enjoys looking at how narrative emerges from interactive play and how it can be used to bring groups of people together through various types of media and technology. His he has a short comic ?One Night on the TTC? coming up in this year?s edition of the Toronto Comics Anthology.

The Narrative Burden – 4:30-5:50

Jean Braithwaite – <u>The Status of Objective Narration in Chris Ware's Fictional Worlds</u>

Ware's oeuvre reflects his skepticism about objectivity, and information can prove unreliable suddenly. For instance, one of Jordan Lint's early experiences—with his mother, we thought—turns out to have occurred after her death, a mashup created in his own fallible memory. We believed we were looking through a clear window onto events as they unfolded… but we weren't. Ware avoids traditional central omniscience, but he also resists his work being called "metafictional." I will show that, at least in *Building Stories*, no logically consistent reading avoids both categories: so choose your poison. Some of *Building Stories* is narrated by the building itself. Another section, though, strongly hints that the building's first-person commentary could all have been written by the one-legged woman. Similarly, Branford Bee is in one sense her creation—naptime stories for daughter Lucy—yet Branford's reality, his diegetic world, extends far beyond anything told to a child. Ware himself has said that he regards the one-legged woman as the narrator of *Building Stories*; this interpretation, though, requires us to push most experiences of other major human characters onto hypodiegetic levels relative to the one-legged woman. I argue that reading *Building Stories* as if through the eyes of an extradiegetic omniscient/objective witness maximizes reader empathy with all the characters, even if this is not the author's own preferred interpretation.

Jean Braithwaite is Associate Professor of English at the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley, and Comics Editor of *riverSedge, A Journal of Art and Literature*. Her book *Chris Ware: Conversations* will be published in 2016 by the University Press of Mississippi.

Kalervo Sinervo & Natalie Walschots – <u>LYING: Narrative (Un)Reliability and Believing Victims in Vaughn and Staples' Saga</u>

Written by Brian K. Vaughn and illustrated by Fiona Staples, the comic series Saga has proven to be a deeply intimate space opera since its launch with Image Comics in 2012. Also an unusually literary comic, the series has been compared to everything from Game of Thrones and Lord of the Rings for its epic scope full of shifting and interweaving subplots, to Shakespearian romances for its central love story. Alana and Marko, the core protagonists, have fallen in love despite the fact that their worlds and species are at war (Alana is in fact one of Marko's jailers when they meet), and the series opens with Alana giving birth to the couple's child, Hazel. Hazel's birth heralds not only drastic changes in the lives of Alana and Marko, but also the birth of the story's narrator: Saga is told, impossibly, by Hazel, telling the story with detail and clarity obviously impossible for her to remember in her earliest infancy. The story is also simultaneously told from a third person omniscient perspective, as we see glimpses into times before Hazel's birth, or follow other characters for a time. The reliability of the narration is thus a central conceit of the series: Hazel's telling of her story though she could not possibly cognizant of it; characters whose stories are believed unequivocally despite occupying positions where their narratives would be ruthlessly questioned. This paper uses narratological theory to how the series does not always try to resolve these conflicts, but rather revels in the unreliability of the narration and uses it to the series' advantage as a piece of storytelling.

Natalie Zina Walschots is a freelance writer and bailed academic based in Toronto. She writes everything from reviews of speculative fiction novels and interviews with heavy metal musicians to in-depth feminist games criticism and pieces of long-form journalism. She is the author of two books of poetry, and is presently finishing a novel about super villainy and henchpeople, exploring the poetic potential of the notes engine in the video game Bloodborne, and writing a collection of polyamorous fairytales. She also plays a lot of D&D, participates in a lot of Nordic LARPs, watches a lot of horror movies and reads a lot of speculative fiction.

Kalervo A. Sinervo is a PhD student in Concordia University's Interdisplinary Humanities Program, where he researches issues of intellectual property and authorship in media franchises, as well as games, comics, and general pop culture detritus. In addition to teaching a comics course in Concordia's English department, Kalervo serves as VP Communications (English) for the CSSC. Reach him at

kalervo.sinervo@gmail.com or on the tweets as @kalervideo.

Jessica Fontaine – "Hello, I'm Johnny Cash": Visualizing Cash's Songs in Reinhard Kleist's Johnny Cash: I See a Darkness

In the opening pages of Reinhard Kleist's graphic biography Johnny Cash: I See a Darkness, Folsom Prison inmate Sherley states of Cash "The man is a story teller. He lives in his songs" (19). Cash's songs are Kleist's central vehicles for telling Cash's life story. By exploring the challenges of illustrating an auditory form, Kleist interrogates the tensions between the legend and private experiences of the Man in Black. Operating in shades of gray, Kleist's graphic biography surrounds Cash in darkness, visualizing how Cash's songs have come to signify the internal emotional turmoil experienced by Cash himself. I identify and analyze three ways Kleist represents Cash's songs in his graphic biography: long, uneven speech balloons, portrayals of musical performances, and depictions of the narratives contained within the songs, in order to illustrate how the songs visually drive Kleist's narrative. Drawing on Ian Hague's concept of "producible sounds" (2014: 88) and Camilo Diaz Pino's work with Hague's concept in relation to "music-as-culture" (2015:88), I argue that by visually embodying Cash's music, Kleist not only blurs Cash's legend, but, by rousing his songs from the page, blurs the divisions between the senses of sight and sound. See a Darkness

Jessica Fontaine has a BA from UBC and is currently a graduate student in the University of Winnipeg MA in Cultural Studies program. Her research interests include comics, life writing, popular music, and Indigenous narratives. She is the Research Fellow for Project GraphicBio at the University of Winnipeg.

Applied Paradigms – 4:30-5:50

Jorge Alam Pereira Dos Santos – Comics as Metaphilosophy

Metaphilosophy can be summed up as an exercise of comparison between traditions, authors and methodologies, and by this way, a quest about the philosophical enterprise itself. Scott McCloud in the sixth chapter of his Understanding Comics, brings the explanation of the functioning of comics close to the differences between 'say' and 'show' – one intriguing distinction about the limits of the language proposed by the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. His answer is well known: there are limits to the language, what can't be said could be (or should be) shown and what is shown can't be said, we should be silent about it. This paper tries to consider the following questions: The results of his arguments would be the same if he had taken a different kind of language, a pictorial one? Can we consider the comics as a refutation of this thesis by their mixture of codes, their ability to 'say' and 'show' simultaneously? Should we accepted the silence before the limits or (as Deleuze proposed) try to surpass those limits by the work over the language to made its 'say' a way of 'showing'? Arts in general and Comics specially can contribute to the project of exceed the limits of language?

Jorge Alam Pereira dos Santos is master in Philosophy of Language by the Universidade de Brasília (UnB). Nowadays he has performed a investigation on the bridges between some philosophers (Wittgenstein, Deleuze, Julio Cabrera) and the formal aspects of comics (Groesteen, McCloud, Neil Cohn) as a PhD Thesis.

Andrew Lesk – Being Less than Frank? The Ambiguities of Jim Woodring

Similar to the manner by which Charles Schultz's Charlie Brown prominently inhabits the world that is Peanuts, so does Jim Woodring's Frank occupy the Unifactor. Wandering in this peculiar world, Frank is wide-eyed in observing his surroundings, giving rise to the critical observation that Frank possesses child-like wonderment in trying to make sense of it all. Frank usually encounters or sets in motion

conflicts that often have no clear resolution; the motivations of various characters are regularly strange-seeming or outright baffling, in as much as the Unifactor is strange-yet- familiar. If the impulse or reasoning behind characters' actions or the Unifactor's sensibility is, at times, known only to Woodring, it becomes plausible to state that Woodring, consciously or not, works against interpretation. He displaces a critical emphasis on "plot" in favour of fueling a subjective appreciation of the comic's aesthetics and the energies therein contained. This is conjoined by the pressing theme of the spiritual that becomes, more than anything, perhaps the most striking yet subtle aspect of Frank's world, infusing it to the extent that the spiritual principle of animism is the chief philosophical feature of the Unifactor. This is not surprising, considering Woodring's professed study of Ramakrishna, the 19 th century Hindu mystic who embraced Advaita Vedanta, with its emphasis on non-dualism and unity. (In this light, the name "Unifactor" bears particular potency.) If Frank's constant forgetfulness and self-concern is any indication, a lack of awareness of the world that one is indeed an intrinsic part of will always present a bar to embracing the spiritual and its attendant freedoms. It is the resulting contradiction—between the aesthetics of the material and spiritual worlds—that this paper seeks to explore.

Andrew Lesk teaches The Graphic Novel at the University of Toronto. He is also a member of the Editorial Board of both The Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics and The Comics Grid. See more at andrewlesk.com