

**Annual Conference of
the Canadian Society
for the Study of Comics**

**Conférence annuelle de
la Société canadienne
pour l'étude de la
bande dessinée**

June 3 - 4, 2021

Conference Program



Day 1 - Session 1 - Thursday, 10:30 - 11:30 a.m. MST

1A Violence, War, and Displacement

[Elizabeth Nijdam](#) - The Smartphone and Social Media Aesthetics of Force Migration: Comics on the Refugee Crisis

[Amy Barlow](#) - Victim or Perpetrator?: Uncovering the Ambiguity of Perpetrators in Graphic Narratives

[Petros Tsakaliadis-Sotirakoglou](#) - War, Violence, and Ethnic Conflict in Hajime Isayama's *Shingeki no Kyojin*

1B Bodies and Boundaries

[Christina Pasqua](#) - The Divine Feminine? Idealizing Women's Bodies and Sexuality in the Work of R. Crumb and Chester Brown

[Elisabeth Pfeiffer](#) - "Where'm I s'posed to put my tits?!" The Radical, Rebellious Bodies in *Bitch Planet*

[William Bonfiglio](#) - Transformations of the Body and Face: The Graphic Novel Form and Conceit of Masks in *'The Outside Circle'*

Day 1 - Session 2 - Thursday, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. MST

[Special Seminar](#): Bridging Divides/Bâtir des passerelles: 2 Solitudes in Canadian Comics/BD Canadienne

Featuring: Chris Reys-Chikuma, Sylvain Rheault, Darren Préfontaine, and Sylvain Lemay

Day 1 - Session 3 - Thursday, 1:30 - 2:30 p.m. MST

3A Posthumanism - Humans, Animals, and Monsters

[Brandi Estey-Burt](#) - Embodying the Posthuman in Postsecular Times: violence and Monstrosity in Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda's *Monstress*

[Dany Prince](#) - "No One Made Me; I Was Always Like This": The *Monstress* in Us

[Dru Jeffries](#) - Representing Animal Sentience in *ANIMOSITY*

3B The Superhero: Breaking Molds

[Jeden O. Tolentino](#) - Miss America Chavez Using Audre Lorde's "The Erotic as Power" and "Anger" in Marvel Comics' *Vengeance*

[Taylor Green](#) - Plato, Eros, and The Dark Knight: Examining Tom King's Character Reversal

[Rehab Patel](#) - The Ms. Marvel Era: Examining Intersectional Identities of Young Muslims Through Lived Religion

Day 1 - Session 4 - Thursday, 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. MST

4A The Functions of Comics

[Maxwell Dickeson](#) - Text as a way of seeing: The persistence of the visual in the transcription and interpretation of comics for the blind

[Aaron Weiss](#) - Comics as a Pedagogical Tool in Education for Children - A Case Study in Toronto

[Tim Chandler](#) - Is Toronto Growing? Community Building and Unconventionality in Comics Festivals

4B Points of Inclusion and Erasure

[Chris Reyns-Chikuma](#) - BD Diversity in the Franco Belgian BD World

[Aaron Ricker](#) - The God of the Gutter: Jack T. Chick's Great White Judge

[Sylvain Rheault](#) - La reception de Michel Rabagliati et de Julie Doucet au Canada anglais

Day 2 - Session 1 - Friday, 9:00 - 10:00 a.m. MST

1A The Superheroes: Histories of Representation and Confrontation

[Anna Peppard](#) - "I Have Worked Out a Detailed Scheme that Will Force Him to Battle Us!": Confronting the Complex Otherness of the Postwar Supervillain

[Erika Chung](#) - A Case Study of *Superman Smashes the Klan*: Confronting Racism and White Supremacy

[Kalervo A. Sinervo](#) - Every Panel is Political: Representational Records in Mainstream Comics

1B Orientalism and the Othering of Racialized Identities

[Safdar Ahmed](#) - 'Postmodern Diplomacy': The discursive reproduction of Frank Miller's *300* and *Holy Terror*

[Safa Al-Shammary](#) - A Neo-Orientalist Study in Graphic Novels

[Paul M. Malone](#) - Representations of Black Characters in Viennese Newspaper Comics Strips 1929 - 1939

Day 2 - Session 2 - Friday, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. MST

Roundtable Session: Canadian Comics Studies Publishing

Featuring: Jonathan Crago, Carli Hansen, Candida Rifkind, and J. Andrew Deman

Day 2 - Session 3 - Friday, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. MST

3A North American Contexts

[Mazin Saffou](#) - Hockey as Canadian Mythmaking in Jeff Lemire's *Essex County* and *Roughnecks*

[Jaya Wathare](#) - Mira Jacob's *Good Talk*: A tale of racial vindication or compulsory education?

[Asif Hameed](#) - *Logan* and the Death of the Neoliberal American Dream

3B Comic Formats and Adaptations

[Reginald Wiebe](#) - A convoy of jeeps: Serial Adaptation in *The Adventures of Tintin*

[Daniel Marrone](#) - George Herriman and Ishmael Reed: Strategies of Circulation

[Neale Barnholden](#) - Big Chews, Big Comics: The Form of Bubblegum Comics

Day 2 - Session 4 - Friday, 1:30 - 2:30 p.m. MST

Creator Talk: Evan Narcisse

Presented in collaboration with the Canadian Games Studies Association (CGSA)

Day 2 - Session 5 - Friday, 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. MST

Annual General Meeting

[Link to Agenda](#)

Presenter Abstracts

Safdar Ahmed - Independent scholar

'Postmodern diplomacy': The discursive reproduction of Frank Miller's *300* and *Holy Terror*

In the context of the 'War on Terror' Frank Miller's *300* and *Holy Terror* have popularised Orientalist and Islamophobic tropes, aided by Zack Snyder's cinematic adaptation of *300* (on which Miller was a producer). In a 15 minute video essay, I will discuss the influence of historical orientalism and Islamophobia on Miller's representations of ancient Persia and contemporary Muslim communities. I will critically analyse the alignment of far-right wing ideology within his texts, problematising Miller's own wish that his comics function as 'propaganda' in a civilisational war between the West and Islam.

The visual genealogy of Miller's representations are seen in his intertextual references to cinema, comics and other traditions of print culture. The decadent and sexually ambiguous depiction of Xerxes in *300* and Egyptian Mummy-like representation of Muslim terrorists in *Holy Terror* have strong visual antecedents in Western literary and cinematic representations of Middle Eastern and Muslim culture. But what is more interesting is the way Miller's representations have been taken up in what George Hawley calls the 'Great Meme War', waged largely online, by members of the far right or so-called alt-right.

I argue that Miller's work has created a pop-cultural vehicle for the structural racism that became normalised in countries aligned with the ever-evolving 'war on terror' over the last 2 decades. This is shown in the impression *300* allegedly made on Australian SAS soldiers who are currently under investigation for war crimes against civilians during their deployments to Afghanistan.

Safa Al-Shammary - University of Granada

A Neo-Orientalist Study in Graphic Novels

Craig Thompson's *Habibi* (2011), is a fable that is set in an imaginary modern Middle-Eastern country. The novel is worth a thousand words; and a few words worth a thousand tales. It narrates a fictional tale that takes place in a (spatially and temporally) vaguely located Islamic world evoking an atmosphere uncannily identifiable between the past and the present. *Habibi* could be described as a graphic adaptation of Arabian Nights that includes an identifiably orientalist vision of the exotic East that stands in uneasy relation with contemporary representations of the Islamic world in the USA. Thompson claims that *Habibi* was inspired and motivated by the objective of countering the rise of hate towards Arabs and Muslims in the U.S following 9/11. The novel was written a decade after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center as a wave of Islamic fundamentalism swept the United States. The religious aspect is central in

the message and aesthetics of *Habibi*. But it could be argued that his work still resonates with ambiguously orientalist stereotypes of Middle Easterners in the eyes of the West.

Amy Barlow - York University

Victim or Perpetrator?: Uncovering the Ambiguity of Perpetrators in Graphic Narratives

Graphic narratives about genocide allow for different and unique ways for the visualization and imagination of trauma and trauma-induced subjective experiences. This form allows for the reader to engage differently than other forms of narratives, allowing the reader to engage more directly with character identification. The creator demands active reader participation through imagination, memory work, and through the act of performing the work of closure. By foregrounding active reader participation through reader-induced closure, graphic narratives are unique as they work with emotion in an attempt to mobilize their readers to act. These narratives demand that readers create connections between both image and text, placing the reader's subjectivity into play. This form of narrative also allows creators to more easily expose the liminality of subject positions.

Through an analysis of *Deogratias: A Tale of Rwanda* and *Waltz with Bashir: A Lebanon War Story* this paper will demonstrate that the dimensions of perpetratorhood are far from well-defined and show that the perpetrator often resides in the ambiguity of the 'grey zone' (Levi 2015). This zone describes a middle ground between good and evil which brings about complications in how perpetrators are judged as well as how victims are represented. Comics scholar Hilary Chute explains that power of graphic narratives comes from their ability to intervene against a culture of invisibility through the risk of representation (2016, 5). This risk is displayed in both *Deogratias* and *Waltz with Bashir* as they both centralize characters that defy the hidden nuances of perpetratorhood.

Neale Barnholden - University of Alberta

Big Chews, Big Comics: The Form of Bubblegum Comics

Bubblegum and comics have been associated almost since the candy was first invented, leading to some of the most well-known but poorly-regarded comics in American culture. Produced under restraints that were both physical and cultural, bubblegum comics are among the strangest forms of comics, and throughout their history artists and companies have adopted a variety of strategies for their creation. Some bubblegum comics were deliberately designed to be simplistic and thus visible at small sizes, while others adapted existing comics originally printed many times larger. At other times, the shape of bubblegum seems to have been changed to accommodate the comics. Because they could be read in any order, it wasn't possible for bubblegum comics to have narratives or running gags as in other media, while the need for bubblegum wrapping to function as branding meant that instantly recognizable characters had to be designed. This paper analyzes representative examples of bubblegum

comics to argue that they show a history of changing ideas about candy, comics, children, and marketing, shedding light on the previously shadowy intersection of these ideas in 20th century American consumer culture.

William Bonfiglio - University of New Brunswick

Transformations of the Body and Face: The Graphic Novel Form and Conceit of Masks in *'The Outside Circle'*

This paper discusses how conventions of the comic form – including the overlap of written and visual media and the common utilization of masks – are embraced, subverted, and repurposed to champion Indigenous identity in the graphic novel *'The Outside Circle.'* While acknowledging Western settler-scholar theory, priority is given to Indigenous historical and critical scholarship, encouraging readers to reconsider depictions of Indigeneity in comic books and in our day-to-day lived experiences.

Tim Chandler - Concordia University

Is Toronto Growing? Community Building and Unconventionality in Comic Festivals

This paper examines the Toronto Comic Arts Festival, a yearly comic, graphic novel, and independent art fair, within the context of large-scale arts festivals and exhibitions, drawing a parallel between larger comic and fandom conventions, such as FanExpo and ComicCon, and international art fairs and biennials. In doing so, I analyze the focus on spectacle in these bigger events (León, 2004) and how smaller organizers circumvent that focus on a local level.

This dissonance between visitor experiences is indicative of larger trends in the art world. In the past, communities have dealt with the globalization of the art world through local organizing and community-building on a grass roots level and there has already been scholarship on how this has been done in Toronto (Monk, 2016). By contextualizing the development of the Toronto Comic Arts Festival within Toronto's history of artist communities, as well as others worldwide, we can understand where it sits in relation to larger international narratives and the importance of community-building to success on a smaller scale.

Erika Chung - Ryerson University and York University

A Case Study on *Superman Smashes the Klan*: Confronting Racism and White Supremacy

Historically, the use of caricature and stereotype was the visual representation of people of colour in comic signaled difference, exclusion and othering. However, superhero comics in the last ten years have tried to expand on the inclusivity and visual imagination of who can be a superhero. In 2019, DC Comics published *Superman Smashes the Klan* written by Gene Luen

Yang with art by Gurihiru. While inspired by the 1940s Superman radio show, *Clan of the Fiery Cross*, the comic book follows siblings Tommy and Roberta Lee as their family moves from Metropolis' Chinatown to the city's center, and their experiences of identity, otherness and community in parallel to Superman. This paper is a case study on *Superman Smashes the Klan* and will examine how the superhero is used to reflect on the process of othering and racial stereotypes used in the past. It will identify how nuance plays a role in the representation of Asian Americans and their experiences of identity, belongingness and community in context to superhero comics. A close reading will enable a detail study of how the Yang and Gurihiru utilize the comic medium to reflect on history of racism and bigotry, and how the medium and genre tries to address white supremacy. The aim of this paper is to understand how representation is used in the superhero comics, and how the genre can be used to confront its racism.

Maxwell Dickeson - University of Alberta

Text as a way of seeing: The persistence of the visual in the transcription and interpretation of comics for the blind

In this paper, I explore my interactions with graphic narrative as a blind reader, interactions facilitated by text-based panel transcriptions provided by sighted interpreters, and the implications this way of experiencing comics has for our understanding of the relative importance of reading and seeing in graphic storytelling. I look at several text-based transcriptions of two pages from Sarah Leavitt's graphic memoir *Tangles* intended to make the text accessible to visually-impaired readers. Although each of these transcriptions covers the same pages and hits the same big narrative beats, each transcriber has interpreted — and then described — the comic's images differently in small but load-bearing ways. These discrepancies in turn change my interpretation as a reader without sight. Attending closely to these differences and to the ways each transcription of these pages presents me with a different version of the comic, I argue that descriptions of comics panels for the visually-impaired give us opportunities to highlight the degree to which the visual shapes the written in comics, and to question our tendency to equate the visual sphere with clarity, transparency, and understanding.

Brandi Estey-Burttt - Acadia University

Embodying the Posthuman in Postsecular Times: Violence and Monstrosity in Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda's *Monstress*

In Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda's award-winning comics series *Monstress*, Maika Halfwolf appears human but is outcast even by her own animal-like people known as the Arcanics. Her hybrid heritage mirrors her hybrid body: a genderless monster named Zinn lives inside her. Described as a terrifying god, Zinn emerges as a creature of appetite who often overwhelms Maika in order to satisfy that appetite. Their relationship begins in a struggle for power amid the politics of racial division. However, as the series continues, *Monstress* visually and narratively complicates notions of the human, the animal, and the other as it contemplates the ways in

which characters are coded as monstrous. Maika and Zinn undergo a painful, yet vital, re-negotiation of their relationship to each other as they respond to the threat of others attempting to control and exploit them. The series asks the questions: how do characters embody the divine, and what does such embodiment mean for social and political relationships marked by colonialism, rupture, and instability? I suggest that Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda's comics series *Monstress* explores possibilities for a postsecular understanding of posthuman embodiment. Drawing on the work of Achille Mbembe, Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, and Manav Ratti, I argue that this postsecular posthumanism challenges the techno-scientific racism that structures the politics in *Monstress*' world.

Taylor J. Green - Carleton University

Plato, Eros, and The Dark Knight: Examining Tom King's Character Reversal

Drake and Lloyd (2019) analyze Batman in relation to Plato's tripartite soul. They assert that Batman can never be happy as his soul is ill-ordered, with thymos, the spirited part of the soul, ruling over the rational and desirous parts. The spirited-ruled Batman serves as a watchful protector, or "noble dog", standing as guardian over Gotham. By vowing to avenge the loss of his parents, Batman also pledges not to be happy, to remain indebted to his anger to enact vengeance upon criminals. I want to revisit this thesis by turning to Tom King's recent run on the *Batman* flagship title (*Batman* #1-85, 2016-2020). Batman is bound to the image of his parents as martyrs for a greater cause. King plays on, and eventually reverses, this image, through Batman loving Catwoman, in his sprawling 85-issue narrative. Bruce encounters his living father from another universe, Thomas Wayne—who, in another world, also becomes Batman when he sees his little boy Bruce gunned down. Thomas becomes corrupt, and the innocent image is lost. Looking to Plato's treatises, I ask, can post-King Batman be ruled by the erotic longing for the Good? Does Batman's love for Catwoman transcend him up to a higher notion of wisdom, a higher creed than the one made by his parents' death? If true, would this reversal demonstrate similarities to the allegory in Plato's Symposium of Diotima's Ladder? I investigate to see if King has reintroduced us to a transcended hero fundamentally different from previous iterations.

Asif Hameed - Carleton University

***Logan* and the Death of the Neoliberal American Dream**

Immortal samurai, masterless ronin, mutant. Wolverine is a cornerstone of the Marvel universe and more broadly, the comic book medium. He has become nearly omni-present in Marvel comics and related products from the House of Ideas since his creation in 1974. The character's translation to film has been the subject of universal praise, and the most recent iteration, the 2016 film *Logan*, was heralded as one of the defining presentations in the history of comic book film.

Following the man once known as The Wolverine in his final adventure, *Logan* is an anomaly in comic book films not only because of its somber tone, but its critical politics. While the X-Men franchise has a rich history of social and political critique in print, *Logan* takes that history of analogic mediation and translates it to an unlikely medium: a blockbuster film. Contrasting it to the liberal idealism of the Marvel Cinematic Universe and the inherent conservatism of the Dark Knight Trilogy, this paper considers *Logan* as a critical text of American neoliberalism and the contradictions of the American dream.

Focusing on its usage of mutant genocide as an allegory for the treatment of excluded “others” in American society, its commentary on the dissolution of familial bonds, the pangs of aging, the spectre of populism and the depths of corporate greed, this paper establishes *Logan* as a stark illustration of a pre-dystopic America and the logical end of the politics of the era of Trump.

Dru Jeffries - Wilfrid Laurier University

Representing Animal Sentience in *ANIMOSITY*

Animals have long held a central role as comic book characters, and animal-human hybrids (whether literal or symbolic) are pervasive throughout superhero comics. Seldom, however, do they ask the difficult but necessary questions about how humans engage with and represent non-human animals, and how those representations reflect (or influence) our attitudes towards them. For instance, can we consider non-human animals sentient, and if so, what are our moral obligations towards them? Marguerite Bennett and Rafael de Latorre’s comic book series *Animosity* (AfterShock Comics, 2016–) is the rare exception that engages with these questions head-on, exploring the consequences of a world in which non-human animals can actively voice their preferences and pursue self-determined lives. (The book’s logline: “One day, the Animals woke up. They started thinking. They started talking. They started taking revenge.”) In this presentation I will analyze *Animosity* to determine how it might clarify or further muddle the human-animal relationship in contemporary popular culture. The comics’ stance on animal sentience, which is defined largely in terms of anthropomorphic intelligence (e.g., the ability to speak and behave in recognizably human, rather than species-specific, ways), sends a mixed message with respect to readers’ moral obligations towards non-humans. However, the comic’s portrayal of non-humans as complex and individual personalities may serve a valuable function in getting readers to reflect upon their own values and how non-human animals are implicated in their own everyday behaviours.

Paul M. Malone - University of Waterloo

Representations of Black Characters in Viennese Newspaper Comic Strips, 1929-1939

The frequent appearance of newspaper comic strips in Vienna, Austria, during the 1920s and 1930s—some of them running for years—is a relatively unknown aspect of comics history.

Because most newspapers were linked to specific political parties, many of these strips wore their political orientation on their sleeves, whether they were aimed at children or at adults.

Although the Viennese were hardly aware that Black people were indeed present in Austria—by comparison, they were acutely conscious of Vienna’s Jewish population—there were nonetheless occasional representations of Black characters, always in exotic foreign locales, in the comic strips of the era. Without exception, these depictions were dominated by one-dimensional stereotypes little different from the portrayals in American or British comics of the period.

Nonetheless, papers of different political stripes handled these stereotypes differently, and on occasion even subverted them, if briefly. This will be demonstrated by an examination of Black representations in three different comic strips: Theo Henning’s *Bumsternazi* (despite its title, nothing to do with National Socialism) in the Christian Social Party newspaper *Das Kleine Volksblatt* in 1929; Bil Spira’s *Klipp und Klapp* in the (originally) Social Democratic *Das Kleine Blatt* in 1930; and repeated examples in Ludwig Kmoch’s *Tobias Seicherl*, also in *Das Kleine Blatt*, in 1935 and twice in 1938. Of the three, Kmoch’s *Seicherl* is the only strip aimed at adults, and the only one that offers examples from the period of the Austro-Fascist dictatorship (1934-38) and of the post-Anschluss Nazi era (1938-45).

Daniel Marrone

George Herriman and Ishmael Reed: Strategies of Circulation

Ishmael Reed’s 1972 novel *Mumbo Jumbo* is dedicated to “George Herriman, Afro-American, who created Krazy Kat.” Reed foregrounds the part of Herriman’s identity that the cartoonist himself elided, a gesture of recovery and affinity. Reed and Herriman both employ what James Snead – in his germinal essay “On Repetition in Black Culture” – refers to as “strategies of circulation.” Writing about *Mumbo Jumbo*, Snead notes that such strategies reject “the need for a definitive statement about the ‘black situation in America’” – and indeed the novel continually forestalls any reductive definition of identities. Reed’s dedication to Herriman invites a consideration of the rapport between *Mumbo Jumbo* and *Krazy Kat*.

Mixing genres and modes, *Mumbo Jumbo* recounts the spread of a “psychic epidemic” known as Jes Grew, which Snead describes as “disembodied rhythm” in search of a form. The novel is, Snead suggests, the textual trace of precisely the sort of recurring process that it literalizes in the figure of Jes Grew. *Krazy Kat*, another textual trace of this process, takes the form of a narrative cycle – an unrequited love triangle between cat, mouse, and dog.

Discussing *Krazy Kat*’s recurring structures, Peter Sattler suggests that “in the title character’s mouth, language becomes opaque.” According to Snead, repetition “defuses” the meaning of the repeated signifiers: opacity is a related strategy of circulation. Like repetition, textual opacity can defuse the possibility of an identity that is too easy to recognize, exploit, or dismiss. *Mumbo Jumbo* and *Krazy Kat* hold the signification of identity in suspension.

Elizabeth Nijdam - University of British Columbia

The Smartphone and Social Media Aesthetics of Forced Migration: Comics on the Refugee Crisis

Mobilizing the modalities and visual language of smartphones and social media, contemporary comics and graphic novels are developing a new aesthetics of migration to communicate the experience of millions of individuals fleeing war-torn regions of the Middle East, Africa, and Asia and their perilous journeys to reach European soil. This presentation examines this recent trend in media portrayals of refugees to understand the emergence of the essential technologies of migration in representations of those experiences. Looking at the smartphone aesthetics and social media framework of Kate Evans' *Threads: From the Refugee Crisis* (2017) and Reinhard Kleist's *The Olympic Dream: The Story of Samia Yusuf Omar* (2015), this presentation assesses the significance of incorporating the technologies of migration into its representation.

Christina Pasqua - University of Toronto

The Divine Feminine? Idealizing Women's Bodies and Sexuality in the Work of R. Crumb and Chester Brown

R. Crumb and Chester Brown have both been criticized for their depictions of women in their comics. Overly sexualized and exoticized, women of colour are often presented as muse and object of desire. In this paper, I ask whether it is possible to read their work through a feminist lens, despite the anti-feminism and racism that manifests their work. To think this through, I turn to Crumb's *The Book of Genesis Illustrated* (2009), Brown's *Paying for It* (2011), and *Mary Wept over the Feet of Jesus* (2016), where both real and fictional women are not only depicted but perhaps also treated with a kind of reverence. I place these texts in conversation with feminist approaches to biblical studies and recent scholarship on racial caricatures in comics (Wanzo 2020) to reflect on the historical problem of the white male gaze, its role in both idealizing and erasing women for male gratification, and its cultural roots in the earliest stories about divine femininity.

Rehab Patel - Ryerson University

The Ms.Marvel Era: Examining Intersectional Identities of Young Muslims Through Lived Religion

How does Ms. Marvel's emergence in popular comics push towards positive media representation for Muslim identity in a post 9/11 society? This paper discusses how systematic racism and Islamophobia fuel stereotypical narratives of Muslim identities that further misconceptions of Muslim Americans today. *Ms. Marvel's* Kamala Khan has become a symbolic superhero that battles the intertwined social dynamics of power, identity and culture. Kamala Khan's introduction arc revolves around her adjusting to her newly discovered Inhuman abilities

and her choice to shape-shift into her idol, a white heroine by the named of Captain Marvel. Khan's conscious choice to shape-shift into a white heroine to combat foes and enemies highlights the internalized insecurities that come with being a brown-skinned Muslim superhero wanting to belong in a Western norm dominated society (Berlatsky, 2015). This presentation will use Mcguire's (2018) conceptualization of lived religion to examine how Muslim identity is uniquely performed by each individual and how intersecting experiences expand narratives of what it means to have adequate representation of Muslim identity in popular comics. Through the notion of lived religion and intersectionality young Muslims, especially Muslim women navigate their position in society through social dynamics of politics, religion and culture that shape their social positioning. Kamala Khan portrays the realities of many young American Muslims as they attempt to create their own narratives of authentic experiences and story-telling such as highlighting generational gaps within families and the struggle with belonging in a culturally enriched society dominated by Western norms. Ms. Marvel's physical existence in the Marvel Universe has opened opportunities for Muslim voices to be uniquely represented as personal and enriched which deviates from the Islamophobic media narratives of terrorism and oppression.

Anna Peppard - Brock University

“I Have Worked Out a Detailed Scheme that Will Force Him to Battle Us!': Confronting the Complex Otherness of the Postwar Supervillain”

In his influential 2006 book *Superhero: The Secret Origin of a Genre*, Peter Coogan argues that, “Just as a hero represents the virtues and values of a society or culture, a villain represents an inversion of those values.” This conception of supervillains as “inversions” of superheroes is so accepted, it is rarely discussed. Yet if postwar superheroes are, as recent scholars have argued, “inherently queer” (Stein), “polymorphous” (Taylor), and “marked by a crossing over of boundaries” and “the incorporation of Otherness” (Pitkethy), then what, exactly, does an inversion look like? This paper proposes a general theory of the supervillain for an era of increasingly complex superheroes. Beginning with a close reading of Spider-Man's battle against the Sinister Six in *Amazing Spider-Man Annual #1* (1964), I will argue that within the postwar era, the difference and hierarchy between superheroes and supervillains is not articulated through binary opposition, but rather through different arrangements of a shared multiplicity, some of which are more unstable and less beautiful—as well as less connotatively American, white, and gender and sexually normative—than others. Then, I will discuss the evolution of these strategies of representation, from the initial diversification of the superhero genre in the 1970s to the continued diversifications of the present. Ultimately, I argue that the ways in which Spider-Man's “good” multiplicity polices “bad” multiplicity helps us understand the ways in which Black, Asian, and female superheroes' representations of “good” diversity are similarly dependent on their satisfactorily violent policing of “bad” diversity.

Elisabeth Pfeiffer - Trent University

“Where’m I s’posed to put my tits?!” The radical, rebellious bodies in *Bitch Planet*

Bitch Planet is a feminist satirical graphic novel set in a world where women can be sent to an off-world prison planet for rehabilitation for any infraction: be they too sassy, too fat, too Black, too queer, too femme, too proud, too ambitious or too political. The series, co-created in 2014 by Kelly Sue DeConnick and Canadian illustrator Valentine DeLandro, subverts typical literary genres -- like prison exploitation, grind house and science fiction, and above all, satire, to criticize colonialist, patriarchal standards. The comic series also uses paratextual elements, which include fake advertisements, back matter feminist essays, Twitter posts and a writer's column to explore and deconstruct the status quo. *Bitch Planet* is retro, rebellious, and entirely “non-compliant.” What is most radical is that the feminine bodies throughout the world of *Bitch Planet* are not created as sexual objects; and this immediately sets it apart from nearly every other popular comic book series. This paper will analyze the diversity of bodies within *Bitch Planet* and how they revolutionize the typical feminine form in comic books for a modern, feminist audience. This paper is a part of an overall thesis on *Bitch Planet*, called “Non-compliance’ and the patriarchy: Bitch Planet as a satirical exploration of gender constructs.”

Dany Prince - Western University

“No One Made Me; I Was Always Like This”: The *Monstress* in Us

As speculative and genre fiction evolve, more and more creators pen literature, both comics and prose alike, that explore and contest common tropes that exist within the speculative umbrella. In Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda’s comic, *Monstress*, both creators explore feminine monstrosity in a genre where women are supposed to be weak, submissive, and ultra-feminine. Comparing *Monstress* with well-established works of fantasy, like George R. R. Martin, David Benioff, and D.B. Weiss’s *Game of Thrones*, is crucial to understanding how Liu works with this trope of monstrosity within her fantastical realm. While looking at the original text of *Game of Thrones* is a more traditional approach, I believe that looking at the visual words that Benioff and Weiss present in their adaptations of these high fantasy worlds is more relevant to how Liu and Takeda challenge the trope of the monstrous feminine.

From here, it is also important to look at how contemporary feminist theorists, like Barbara Creed, approach the monstrous feminine from a feminist psychoanalytical perspective. Using these theories, I want to explore how *Monstress* pushes back and subverts this concept of the monstrous feminine to establish a narrative where monstrosity is both celebrated and treated as a wholly separate issue from femininity. Building from psychoanalytical theory, we can also look at how comics theory links together these ideas of monstrosity with concepts that Scott McCloud outlines in his book, *Understanding Comics*, like his theories on colour and the gutter space. Analyzing *Monstress* from this perspective is important since, as McCloud presents within his

first book, comics ought to be treated as a medium rather than a genre (*Understanding Comics* 8-9, 20-23) since comics often encompass multiple genres and mediums.

Chris Reyns-Chikuma - University of Alberta

BD-Diversity in the Franco-Belgian BD World

Gauging comics (BD) and graphic narratives' popularity in France is more complicated than it is in the US (or even maybe in Canada for other reasons). This is due to the fact that French "literature" does not have a centralized source of information like the MLA, but also that French legitimizing sources, until very recently, seem not to be as seriously preoccupied by (non-)diversity in the BD field, as its Anglo-Saxon counterparts came to be in recent decades through multiculturalist debates and policies.

Sylvain Rheault - University of Regina

La réception de Michel Rabagliati et de Julie Doucet au Canada anglais

L'étude de la réception peut aider à révéler l'attitude d'une culture face à une autre. Il existe peu de bandes dessinées d'auteurs québécois qui aient été traduites spécifiquement pour le marché canadien-anglais. Michel Rabagliati, auteur de la série "Paul", connaît un certain succès commercial en français et il est l'un des rares francophones dont les oeuvres aient été traduites en anglais. Il serait à propos de se demander quelle est la réception de ses oeuvres au Canada anglais. Pour ce faire, il faudra faire le tour de la presse anglophone ainsi que des sites Internet qui parlent de ses oeuvres. Quant à Julie Doucet, d'entrée de jeu, elle a créé ses oeuvres en anglais. Elle a toutefois grandi dans la culture francophone du Québec. Il faudra faire ici un double travail archéologique. Il faudra d'abord s'interroger sur la présence de la culture francophone chez Doucet et faire la part de ce qui constitue, chez elle, une culture "indie" universelle. Il faudra ensuite fouiller dans la critique anglophone du Canada pour retrouver les traces de cette culture francophone et observer le traitement qui lui est réservé.

Aaron Ricker - Independent scholar

The God of the Gutter: Jack T. Chick's Great White Judge

Evangelical cartoonist Jack T. Chick (1924-2016) sold enough of his infamous little tracts to earn himself the title of "the world's most published author" (Robert Ito, 2003; Kurt Kursteiner, 2004). Of all the retina-burning images Chick has churned out over the decades, one of the most remarkable and recognizable is the enthroned heavenly figure that culture critic Mark Dery called "the cosmic hanging judge with a light bulb for a head." For the purposes of Comics Studies, there is a lot inscribed in the eerie blank that passes for this divine figure's face. The fact that he sits on a "Great White Throne" of eschatological judgment reveals a creative debt to Revelation, and his oh-so-visibly invisible face points to an inheritance of that visionary book's

conflicted relationship with visual representation. The facelessness of the figure on the throne also provides an artistic rug under which to brush the delicate traditional Christian problem of Jesus's individual human appearance (including the awkward modern problem of his precise level of "whiteness"), in a way convenient to the white majority culture of 20th-century American Evangelicalism. By contextualizing and addressing these points about ideology and representation, my presentation delineates the "how," the "why," and the "so what" of the ways in which strategic erasure is marketed as revelation in pop apocalyptic art like Chick's, with a particular focus on thinking about race and representation in North American Evangelical culture.

Mazin Saffou - Wilfred Laurier University

Hockey as Canadian Mythmaking in Jeff Lemire's *Essex County* and *Roughneck*

This paper will discuss two graphic novels (*The Essex County Trilogy* and *Roughneck*) written and illustrated by comics creator, Jeff Lemire, and will explore how the author/illustrator conveys hockey as motif and theme of Canadian identity and nostalgia for a bygone era – but also loss, trauma, isolation, and the failure of the "Canadian Dream". The hockey players in these works are portrayed as longing for their youthful pasts when being "on the ice" was their sole source of happiness and fulfillment before tragedy and misfortune derails their lives. This paper will explore the role of hockey in the Canadian imagination (similar to romantic ideas of baseball as a symbol of the American Dream), but also how this romantic idea fails to truly unify Canada – and the white settler Ontario culture that Lemire depicts. Lemire's characters over identify with hockey as their source of pride, youthful vigour, masculine prowess, and sense of community and belonging, and yet the contentment and serenity that they desire is always beyond their reach. In *Roughneck* Lemire turns to Indigenous worldviews as antidote to the sorrow of its two main protagonists who have long been separated from their Métis heritage. In doing so Lemire replaces the colonial game of hockey with cultural touchstones that predate white settler experience and offer new (and yet more traditional) ways of knowing one's history and self.

Kalervo A. Sinervo - University of Calgary

Every Panel is Political: Representation and the Record at the Big Two

This paper interrogates the schizophrenic tactics employed by comics publishing giants DC and Marvel over the past decade as superhero media has grown in popularity, social media has fundamentally altered the expression of fandom, and progressive politics have moved the representational needle in comics stories. It recounts a fragmented history of virtue signalling and backlash for the Big Two as they seek to simultaneously claim allyship with diverse creators, characters, and narratives while also mitigating risk and quickly pointing at diversity pushes as causing problems. Contextualizing these issues within fan and audience studies (Rebecca Wanzo, Suzanne Scott) and critical theory (Horkheimer and Adorno, Rosalind Morris,

Gayatri Spivak), the paper looks to clarify the basic political motivators at play for the publishers and propose responsive tactics for audiences going forward and scholars looking to document the history of an industry characterized by ephemerality.

Jeden O. Tolentino - York University

Miss America Chavez Using Audre Lorde's "the Erotic as Power" and "Anger" in Marvel Comics' *Vengeance*

In my proposed blog post with images, I will seek to situate within the uses of both "the erotic as power" and "anger," which Audre Lorde had advocated, the representation of the Marvel Comics character, Miss America Chavez, in the limited series *Vengeance*. I will show that, first, MAC not only expresses "the erotic" in the physical sense through her superpowers (much as other superheroes do), she more importantly expresses it in the emotional sense through her embrace of her *lenguaje de la frontera* and in the psychic sense through the kinship that she shares with the Teen Brigade. Second, Miss America Chavez directs her "anger" towards exclusion, the allegorical representations of which appear in some of the characters that she encountered in *Vengeance*. These characteristics have spurred creators after writer Joe Casey and illustrator Nick Dragotta to use Miss America Chavez as a vessel for foregrounding marginalized identities in Marvel Comics. And so, while the limited academic literature that exists on Miss America Chavez has focused on her appearances after *Vengeance*, I hope that my blog post with images will demonstrate that going back to the beginning of Miss America Chavez's fictional biography can inform any future reading of her adventures.

Petros Tsakaliadis - Sotirakoglou - Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

War, violence and ethnic conflict in Hajime Isayama's *Shingeki no Kyojin*

Shingeki no Kyojin (*Attack on Titan*), the extremely popular manga series by Hajime Isayama, has recently come under scrutiny for the way it handles its themes of ethnic conflict, war and genocide, by using historical parallels from the 20th century. In 2015 it was banned by the Chinese Ministry of Culture and it has also come under attack in South Korea and, most recently by some western cultural commentators. Is the criticism justified? We argue that not only are the charges of nationalism and fascism being made against it completely misguided, but that *Attack on Titan* offers one of the most profound critiques of war and ethnic conflict in contemporary comics. Avoiding any simplistic moralizing, that would not only diminish its artistic merit but would also undercut its message; it tries to understand how these things come to pass by putting you in the heads of characters that are led by circumstances to commit heinous acts.

In this presentation, we are going to examine *Attack on Titan's* cultural impact in an even handed way, provide context, and explain the ways Isayama succeeds in making a genuine anti-war story, that often gets misunderstood, precisely because of its uniqueness and maturity

in handling its complicated subjects. Themes such as the image of the Other, violence, existentialism and death are also going to be explored.

Jaya Wathare - University of Mumbai, India

Mira Jacob's *Good Talk*: A tale of racial vindication or compulsory education?

It is observed quite often that novels written by Indo-American authors have deplorable overrepresentation of narratives that lay emphasis on the model minority attributes of Indians as well as other South Asians in the United States, validating the existence of only the affluent section of the South Asian ethnic groups, thereby leaving a gaping lacuna in the discourse of cultural assimilation and racialization of the model minority ways of belonging. From the first decade of the twenty-first century to the second, there has been a drastic, more so, frequent transition in the way in which racism has been manifested, at least, overtly. While tall claims of becoming a post-racist society were being countered by the discourse of colour-blindness during Obama's rule, white insurgency was swiftly spreading its roots polarising the American demography into white parochial supremacists and black victims of police brutality. This paper aims to explore how Mira Jacob's graphic memoir, *Good Talk* published in 2018, addresses the concept of racialized identities using the verbal-visual mode of comics through the lens of critical race theory. Furthermore, an attempt will be made to evaluate the possibilities as well as the pitfalls of situating the narrative of racial hostilities meted out to people of colour within the larger framework of anti-black racism.

Aaron Weiss - York University

Comics as a Pedagogical tool in Education for Children – A Case Study in Toronto

The presentation is a case study that will explore a comic book-based anti-bullying project that was started in 2017 and rolled out over 2018 targeting children in schools and summer camps. It involved creating a comic book and building workshops around the content to deliver to children. This activity was an independent, unfunded project that sought to address gaps in the education of children with regards to bullying and its various manifestations. The project was piloted at a summer camp in a designated "Neighbourhood Improvement Area (NIA)" in the City of Toronto in August 2016. Based on the success of the pilot the material was revised and school boards and community organisations in the GTA were contacted to utilise the programming. The Toronto District School Board accepted the workshop to be part of its community partnership program in the English department under 'media literacy' and other NGOs have utilised the materials in schools and summer camps.

The presentation discusses the comic book and workshop content as it relates to the importance of diverse representations in curricula; comics as a powerful pedagogical tool to

engage students; student reaction; staff/teacher feedback; motivations and author intent; reflections, and observations of the facilitators and outcomes of the initiative to date.

Reginald Wiebe - Concordia University of Edmonton

A convoy of jeeps: Serial adaptation in *The Adventures of Tintin*

The Adventures of Tintin cartoon series (1991-1992) should be considered part of a series of revisions rather than as strict adaptations of Hergé's comics. The recursive nature of the Tintin stories demands that we read the cartoon series not as a corresponding body of separate texts but as part of the ongoing history of revisions of the stories upon which the animated series is based. The discontinuous material production of Tintin's serialized stories suggests that we read the 1990s cartoon series as part of that chain of production. It is in its fidelity to Hergé's bandes dessinées that *The Adventures of Tintin* offers a unique avenue to the study of adaptation. Tintin, like Archie, is an enduring and widely popular character. Like Archie, Tintin stories are guided by a particular style, though not one that has quite as articulated a code of narrative tropes. Unlike Archie, however, Tintin is mostly the product of a single creator. The influences that helped shape the Tintin comics can be understood as a web of adaptation that generates meaning even when novelty is not present in the animated adaptation.

Special Plenary Sessions

Special Seminar: Bridging Divides/Bâtir des passerelles: 2 Solitudes in Canadian Comics/BD Canadienne

This panel will present a project that a group of researchers are working on. The project is called “Beyond the two solitudes in the Canadian World of Comics.”

(<https://beyondthe2solitudes.wordpress.com/>) It explores the Canadian world of comics from different angles within Howard Becker’s perspective of the “Art World,” including all the factors and actors that are involved in, in this case, the Canadian Comics Art World. It focuses specifically on the connections that the various “solitudes” (English, French, indigenous) are or are not establishing through authors’ personal connections, publishers’ initiatives about translation, festivals’ bilingual and multicultural events, local and federal governments’ exchange programs and grants, and more. After an introduction to the project, Chris R-C. will talk about Montreal as a (non)bilingual city for Canadian comics. Sylvain Rheault and Jean Sébastien will then talk about indigenous publications in Canada with Darren Prefontaine.

Roundtable Session: Canadian Comics Studies Publishing

This professional development roundtable will highlight the publishing opportunities that exist in Canadian academia and Canadian public intellectual spaces for comic scholars. It is divided into four categories – pedagogical comic texts, bande dessinée comic scholarship, scholarly journals, and public intellectual scholarship. Both the pedagogical comics and bande dessinée categories will address scholarly book publishing opportunities in Canada. The editor-in-chief of McGill-Queens University Press, Jonathan Crago, will discuss general aspects of book publishing as well as bande dessinée opportunities. The editor of the *EthnoGRAPHIC* series from the University of Toronto Press, Carli Hansen, will discuss this pedagogical comic series which speaks to the range of opportunities available from Canadian academic publishers. The comics scholar and past president of the CSSC, Andrew Deman, will discuss public intellectual scholarship by speaking about his work in Canadian public intellectual venues such as *The Conversation Canada*. The comics scholar and past president of the Comic Studies Society, Candida Rifkind, will discuss her experience publishing in the Canadian scholarly journal, *Jeunesse*, by speaking about her project, the “Indigenous Comics and Graphic Novels: An Annotated Bibliography”. This roundtable will be of benefit to comic scholars at any stage in their career.

Creator Talk: Evan Narcisse

(Registration necessary; use link in conference portal to register)

This year, the CSSC/SCEBD is proud to collaborate with the [Canadian Games Studies Association/L'Association canadienne d'études vidéoludiques \(CBSA/ACEV\)](#) to host our special guest speaker, Evan Narcisse. A writer and podcast host, he writes about video games, comics, books, and TV. As a journalist and critic, his work examines the representation of Blackness in pop culture and has been published by The Atlantic, Time Magazine, and Kotaku. As a creator, he has written for some of Marvel Comics most prominent characters in both comics (*Rise of the Black Panther*) and video games (*Spider-Man: Miles Morales*). He also just closed out the first season of the *Marvel Declassified* podcast with his co-host Lorraine Cink. This session will be a fireside chat, talking about the experience of writing for Black legacy superheroes and the challenges of writing across different media.

Annual General Meeting

([Link to agenda](#))

The Annual General Meeting will be held at the conclusion of the conference. This will be an important AGM for the society, as we need to discuss the CSSC/SCEBD's future relationship with the Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences following the incident of racial profiling that took place at Congress in 2019. We will also be discussing the incorporation of online programming for future events.