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Programme de la conférence annuelle

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Les 4 et 5 juin

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The Canadian Society for the Study of Comics would like to thank the Toronto Comic Art Festival for its generous and ongoing partnership.

Keynote / Conférence d'honneur

Jamie Michaels, "Comics and Violence: Illustrating the Spectrum Between Nationalism and Human Rights."

Can comics change the way we understand politics? This process talk will unpack the role of comics as not only a form that might enable new understandings of politics, but also as a form that might enable us to understand ourselves and our world in new and perhaps more empathic ways.

Through my work as a comics creator, filmmaker, and publisher, I will explore three creative case studies that provide a window into the spectrum between nationalist violence and human rights, asking: What do the Christie Pits Riot, Jewish and Arab soldiers in the First World War, and Hungary in 1945 have in common? Might comics enable us to understand these moments in history in ways that would not be possible in other forms?

Presenter Abstracts / les résumés des présentateurs

Avery Blundell (McMaster University), "Alchemy in the Gutters: Aspect-to-Aspect Transitions and Complex Internal Turmoil in *Something, Not Nothing* and *Shoplifter*."

Looking at Scott McCloud's definitions for the building block panel transitions in *Understanding Comics* (1993), aspect-to-aspect transitions are defined as the transition type that "bypasses time for the most part and sets a wandering eye on different aspects of place, idea, or mood." Although McCloud is pessimistic about aspect-aspect transitions' narrative usefulness, he concedes a certain "alchemy" is present in these abstract transitions,

where readers must distinguish meaning between moments where the path isn't neatly presented. These abstract transitions can be used to great effect, however, as in Michael Cho's *Shoplifter* (2014) and Sarah Leavitt's *Something, Not Nothing* (2024): two Canadian graphic works that portray complex interior emotional states through aspect-to-aspect transitions. Although McCloud would categorize these transitions as mood-defining accessories to narrative progression, Cho and Leavitt, through abstraction, invert this hierarchy so that abstraction becomes the main stage, as abstract transitions most accurately depict how we feel emotions and grief, placing a responsibility on the reader that results in a paramount understanding between reader and the inarticulable interior turbulence depicted within the text itself.

Using Scott McCloud's understanding of closure and aspect-to-aspect transition, amplified by Ariela Freedman's understanding of comics as a medium perfectly constructed to handle pain and internal turbulence in "Sorting through My Grief and Putting It into Boxes': Comics and Pain" (2012), my paper will demonstrate how Cho's *Shoplifter* and Leavitt's *Something, Not Nothing* use abstract transitions to demonstrate deeply layered changes in a character's interiority, opening up interpretations that allow readers to engage with that abstraction in sequence, which allows for the most honest and poignant engagement with the deeply complex emotional turbulences these narratives depict.

Cyril W. Chen (McMaster University), "Transing the Narrative: Exploring Trans and Genderqueer Grief through Graphic Novel Research Creation."

How can we use mixed research modalities to create alternative narratives of queer and trans embodiment, grief, mental health and addiction (Febres-Cordero, 2021), and serve as a community intervention (Ferlatte et. al, 2020)? How can we use these interdisciplinary methods to disseminate this

knowledge? My in-progress comic book, *WYLOW: When You Left Our World*, is a semi-autobiographical comic prototype which I completed for my Master of Arts major creation-research project for the Communications and New Media program at McMaster University which explored these questions.

I believe that engaging with interdisciplinary research, including on queer semi-autobiographical methods (Newbigging, 2018), trans mental health data (Price et. al, 2023; Hughto et. al, 2021), and illustration methods using traditional methods (Eisner, 2008), digital media and zines (Stein, 2019), is pivotal for developing a graphic novel addressing mental health, suicidality and interpersonal relations of young adult trans and genderqueer communities throughout Canada.

Having close readings and positionalities to the topic can offer a dynamic of care within the mixed artist-researcher practice. Centering this comic on trans suicidality — the affective temporality of it, and how it could be visually represented, I was/am artistically and spiritually transmutating the grief that my close community and I experienced in the aftermath of the suicide of Z [name redacted], one of our dear friends and artistic collaborators.

Approaching this issue as a researcher-artist, I am exploring how to create a graphic novel that can help encourage more understanding and acceptance of gender-diverse people. Sparking conversation and curiosity with the art of comic narratives, I will share how I intend to bridge the divides of misrepresentation and under-representation of queerness through drawing on universal experiences that allow for more vulnerable and open dialogue. Combining these discursive artistic/narrative methods can create a story that crosses the boundaries between mainstream and alternative discourse, in addition to being a dialectical intervention.

Anastazia Csegeny (Western University), “‘A Little-Boy-Shaped Hole in the Universe’: Caregiver Grief and the Catharsis of Re-Imagining in Rick Louis’ *Ronan and the Endless Sea of Stars*.”

Terminal paediatric illness is a traumatic family experience complicated by the inevitable loss of young life. Pervasive, anticipatory grief overwhelms systems of understanding, and a caregiver’s ability to articulate and process the death of their child may be limited by words alone. As a hybrid literary form, the comics medium has long established itself as a legitimate site for conveying trauma, with quintessential works like Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* (1986), Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home* (2006), and Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis* (2003) demonstrating the form’s ability to capture and amplify otherwise intangible emotion and truth. Published in 2022, Rick Louis’ *Ronan and the Endless Sea of Stars*, illustrated by Lara Antal, follows the rich tradition of the graphic novel memoir, as the text’s combination of word and image distinctively recounts an autobiographical narrative of caring for a child with Tay-Sachs disease, a rare and fatal genetic disorder. In closely reading the visual and textual elements of this graphic novel, I critically examine Louis’ representation of his infant son Ronan’s life from diagnosis to death, as he re-tells and re-imagines his caregiving experience through popular culture, humour, and metaphors derived from his own childhood. My analysis demonstrates that Louis and Antal’s text marks a shift away from the uncensored, diagrammatic quality historically embodied by comics depicting illness, affirming that catharsis and coping may equally be felt by caregivers in self-produced, semi-fictional spaces. Unlike other forms of life writing, the graphic novel memoir enables individuals to strategically distance themselves from trauma. The ability to re-world and, as the comics medium particularly encourages, re-frame experiences through familiar symbols, images, and memories allows caregivers for the terminally ill to champion stories of life, no matter how short, in the face of profound, long-lasting grief.

Pierre Dairon (Kenyon College), “Etat des lieux de la bande dessinée autochtone francophone canadienne.”

La bande dessinée autochtone francophone canadienne en est toujours, en 2026, à ses balbutiements. Un nouveau champ littéraire est en train de naître. En 2026, la bande dessinée autochtone francophone canadienne en est encore à ses débuts, bien qu’un nouveau champ littéraire émerge. Les récits graphiques autochtones sont apparus principalement au début des années 2000, souvent écrits d’abord par des auteurs allochtones, comme *Agaguk* d’Yves Thériault (1958), adapté en BD en 2008. La BD anglophone, déjà bien établie, a inspiré les premières œuvres francophones, souvent des traductions.

Les précurseurs incluent OBOM avec des récits poétiques comme *Plus tard...* (1997, 2007) ou *Pink Mimi Drink* (2008), qui explorent un imaginaire détaché des réalités autochtones. Ensuite, des auteurs autochtones anglophones, traduits en français, ont diversifié les récits en abordant des thèmes sociaux et historiques, comme David Robertson (depuis 2016), Katherena Vermette (*Elle s’appelle Echo*, années 2020) ou Gord Hill (*500 ans de résistance autochtone*, 2023).

Dans les années 2020, de nouvelles voix francophones émergent, s’intéressant à la réalité historique, politique et sociale autochtone, comme *Odibi : Voyage dans l’histoire anicinabe de Lac Simon* (2023, collectif incluant le Groupe Miaji) ou *C’est le Québec qui est né dans mon pays !* d’Emmanuelle Dufour (2021). Ces œuvres, qu’elles soient poétiques ou ancrées dans le réel, contribuent à forger un nouvel imaginaire autochtone pour les lecteurs francophones. (197 mots)

Dr. Elke Defever (Binghamton University), “Rebooting Francophonie: Algerian Comics and the Visual Reconstruction of Postcolonial Identity.”

In the decades following independence, Algerian comics artists confronted a fundamental representational challenge: how to construct new cultural narratives in the aftermath of colonial rupture. Neither wholly aligned with Franco-Belgian traditions nor entirely detached from them, francophone Algerian comics occupy a space of creative tension that invites reconsideration of what “Francophonie” signifies within comics history.

This paper argues that Algerian francophone comics function as a site of symbolic rebirth, using the inherited language of the former colonizer to articulate newly localized identities. Through satire, political commentary, and experiments in visual style, each generation of Algerian comic artists, from Mohamed Zebda to today’s emerging cartoonists, reframe the comics medium as a tool for negotiating memory, nationhood, and cultural plurality.

Rather than interpreting francophone production as evidence of cultural dependence, this paper positions it as a strategic reboot of visual language—one that transforms French from a colonial instrument into a medium of critique and self-definition. Drawing on postcolonial theory and comics studies, the paper examines how these works challenge binary models of influence and resistance while revealing the medium’s capacity to participate in broader processes of social and cultural reconstruction.

By foregrounding an often-overlooked comics tradition, this paper contributes to expanding the geographic and conceptual boundaries of comics studies and highlights Algerian artists’ role in reframing the possibilities of francophone visual culture.

Julie McDonough Dolmaya, Associate Professor, Professional Translation program (York University) and Olivia Giraldi, undergraduate student, Professional Translation program (York University), “Visual and textual (re)framing of language and translation in comics.”

Translation has been described conceptually as a way of framing or reframing phenomena like conflict (e.g. Baker 2007) or news (e.g. Liu 2017, Valdeón 2014). Occasionally, the concepts have been inverted, with researchers studying the way a phenomenon (re)frames translation (e.g. Nunes Viera 2020). Nonetheless, despite the considerable number of scholarly publications that have drawn connections between translation and comics over the past 50 years (McDonough Dolmaya forthcoming), the existing body of research has not yet explored how comics (re)frame translation and translators, interpreting and interpreters. This paper uses a corpus of 40 graphic novels, graphic memoirs, graphic non-fiction, comic anthologies and web comics originally published in English, French and Spanish to explore how translation/translators and interpreting/interpreters are represented visually and textually in comics. It categorizes the most common strategies and explores how these different approaches affect plot, characters, setting, and a reader’s sense of what is true, real, or authentic.

Carissa Faria (University of Western Ontario), “Ethical Citational Practice in Chester Brown’s ‘Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography’.”

This paper focuses on Canadian comic artist Chester Brown’s *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography* and its particular citational practice. Constructing a biography of an “oppositional” historical figure in comic form, Brown is particularly attentive to the contestations, contradictions, incoherencies, and silences of the archive and his role in engaging with it. By “oppositional,” I mean Louis Riel’s opposition to the Canadian government and his contentious role in the historical record of a settler-colonial nation. Relying openly on a multitude of sources that disagree with or contradict each other on both major and minor details, and making note of his sources’ polarizing

perspectives, Brown also implicates himself by admitting “[t]here will also be distortions reflecting [his] own biases” (Louis Riel no. 1, p. 24). In the published collection, his thoroughly-researched footnotes take up 22 pages. Brown adapts the graphic narrative into a medium that can invite archival rigour and ethical citational practice — one that refuses to simplify or authorize history, and instead facilitates an open dialogue with the archive.

Katherine McKittrick writes on the labour of citation as a generative practice, insisting that “perhaps the function of communication, referencing, citation, is not to master knowing and centralize our knowingness, but to share how we know, and share how we came to know...” (2021, p. 17). This paper takes up a synthesis of citational and comics studies in order to engage with the possibility of the graphic novel to cite and be cited, to seriously undertake the archive, and to engage sincerely and unendingly with the bibliography. This conference’s theme is “Rebirth / Reframe / Reboot” — I believe Brown’s comic biography of Louis Riel, through its rigorous citational practice, to be doing all three for both the historical figure of Riel, the graphic narrative medium, and the biographic genre.

Kristin Franseen (Western University), “‘Is my music all that?’: Speculation and Subjectivity in *Mademoiselle Mozart* and *Mozart in Paris*.”

Comics might seem an odd medium for exploring Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s emotional state and compositional process. Yet, as musicological research by Richards (2022), Yamada (2022), and Fine (2025) demonstrates, popular fascination with famous composers has long included visual components—from images of musicians in 18th-century portrait collections to 19th-century postcards from composer “house museums” to 20th-century manga and comics on musical subjects. This presentation explores the interplay between the historical and the speculative in two examples of adapting Mozart’s life into graphic fiction: Yōji Fukuyama’s *Mademoiselle Mozart* (1989–1990; reprinted as a single volume in Japanese in 2021 and

French in 2023) and Frantz Duchazeau's *Mozart in Paris* (2018; English edition in 2019). Building on Unseld's and Yamada's work on representations of musical performances in comics (2024), I argue that both Fukuyama and Duchazeau use fanciful visuals as the jumping-off points for biographical speculation and opportunities for readers to reinterpret the historical Mozart's music. By expanding upon familiar images of Mozart from both history and fiction and creating texts that link real historical sources to the accumulated Mozartian mythology, both creators deftly guide readers back and forth between history and fiction.

Keith Friedlander (Olds College of Agriculture and Technology), "Not-Quite-Indie: An Overview of the Media Ecosystem of North American Comics."

The North American comics industry occupies a unique position in the entertainment media landscape. Compared to larger entertainment media, such as the film or video game industries, it is characterized by a relatively small audience and thin profit margins. Compared to Japan's manga industry or Franco-Belgium BD, it lacks production infrastructure and cultural capital. At the same time, the past two decades has seen the medium flourish in North America in many ways. Indeed, it could be argued that the creative audacity and diversity of comics across online, indie, and direct market spheres outstrips other mainstream media.

This paper examines the possible relationship between the relatively small scale and marginal status of the comics industry and the conditions for creative risk taking and artistic experimentation. Drawing upon Jenkins' theory of spreadable media and Resha's concept of the Blue Age of Comics, it attempts to outline the current conditions of the North American comics industry to identify the cultural and market conditions that shape the medium's output.

Andrew Furman (Toronto Metropolitan University), “In the Era of Double Nostalgia.”

Comics are now available in more versions than ever before with all manner of reprints in print and Webcomics. But what are we to do about the confusion that arises with our ability to separate the “layers of first-hand longing and second-hand nostalgia” that David Berry questions in *On Nostalgia* (2020)? Whether we’re looking back at the nostalgia for the large-format newsprint Sunday edition of the comics pages, or the many paperback and hardcover reprints issued in Schulz’s Peanuts over the last half century, our own sense of nostalgia rests on murky memories we hold onto based on the format and media that first delighted our eyes. When a comic is presented at a particular scale relative to the eye-hand interface its unique material qualities, giant format, muted colours, dog-eared paperbacks, et al, are essential to the experience that generates nostalgia. For example, Bill Watterson’s *Calvin and Hobbes* struggled to turn back time during the early 1990’s when coming back from his sabbatical, the ever-shrinking Sunday comics pages were challenged by Watterson to grow back into a half page layout that lasted for the remaining four years of the strip. His newspaper readers were enjoying a double nostalgia — the nostalgia of the long-lost era of giant Sunday comics that existed in strips such as *Krazy Kat* during the 1920’s to 1941 and the memory of the temporary blip of the larger Sunday comics that, when viewed again in the later reprints of *Calvin and Hobbes*, the strips are taken out of their context again but the recollection for the reader is still there, even if the colours are different than what one remembers. This experience isn’t limited to print, as it is difficult to archive the Webcomics from 1995 onwards.

Janine Gallant (Université de Moncton), “De l’abstrait au concret : comment faire exister la peinture dans l’adaptation d’œuvres littéraires en bande dessinée.”

Dans le vaste champ d’étude des adaptations d’œuvres littéraires en bande dessinée, nous nous proposons d’analyser un cas particulier. Certaines œuvres littéraires font jouer un rôle déterminant à la peinture, en mettant par exemple au cœur de l’action un tableau peint. Or, le texte littéraire ne peut qu’établir un rapport *in absentia* avec l’art pictural, c’est-à-dire en l’absence matérielle de l’image (Vouilloux). Il est donc contraint d’évoquer de manière abstraite, avec les mots, l’œuvre d’art visuel dont il est question dans le texte. Qu’en est-il alors de la réinvention d’une telle œuvre littéraire quand elle est transposée dans la forme de la bande dessinée lors de son adaptation? Si, cette fois, le rapport *in praesentia* du tableau peint jouant un rôle dans le récit est possible, il reste toutefois que toute évocation d’une œuvre picturale doit s’intégrer à la « solidarité iconique » (Groensteen) qui est le propre de la bande dessinée. En d’autres termes, le tableau peint peut passer de l’abstraction qu’il revêtait dans le texte littéraire à une forme plus concrète dans l’adaptation en bande dessinée, mais il doit aussi s’accorder avec la séquence d’images de l’œuvre du neuvième art dans laquelle il figure. Il s’agit donc d’une opération de réinvention qui peut s’avérer particulièrement complexe. À l’aide d’un corpus d’œuvres littéraires et de leur adaptation en bande dessinée, nous nous proposons d’analyser les stratégies formelles mises en place par les bédéistes pour effectuer cette transposition.

Professor Fernando Garcia (Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México), “Rebooting the Now: Narrative Accessibility and Industrial Strategy in Long-Running Comics.”

Long-running comic book characters and storyworlds face a structural tension between narrative continuity and cultural relevance.

As decades of accumulated canon increasingly function as a barrier to new readers, publishers have repeatedly turned to reboots, relaunches, and “soft resets” as a dominant industry practice. This paper argues that rebooting operates simultaneously as a narrative accessibility strategy and as an editorial-economic response to the temporal demands of contemporary readership.

Drawing on examples from mainstream superhero comics, this study examines how reboots function to reposition stories in a present-tense framework—stories that happen now, rather than being anchored to events, politics, or cultural assumptions from ten or twenty years prior. Reboots are analyzed not merely as continuity erasures, but as acts of narrative recalibration that allow storyworlds to absorb current social, technological, and ideological contexts while lowering the cognitive cost of entry for new audiences.

At the industrial level, the paper situates rebooting within broader editorial strategies aimed at market sustainability: attracting new readers, reactivating lapsed ones, and creating commercially viable entry points for intellectual properties that must continuously justify their relevance. Through this lens, rebooting emerges as a negotiated practice between storytelling needs and economic imperatives, rather than as a failure of narrative planning or creative exhaustion.

By bridging comics narratology with industry analysis, this paper reframes rebooting as a structural feature of contemporary comics production. It proposes rebooting as a key mechanism through which long-running comics manage time, relevance, and market survival in an increasingly competitive cultural economy.

Megan Halsband (Library of Congress), “Archiving the Festival: the Small Press Expo Collection at the Library of Congress.”

For over twenty years, the Toronto Comic Arts Festival (TCAF) has been a space championing independent comics and cartooning, offering a place for artists, publishers, scholars, and fans to come together. Like TCAF the Small Press Expo (SPX), held annually in Bethesda, Maryland since 1994, has also been an advocate and avid supporter of the comics community. Since 2011, the Library of Congress, in partnership with SPX, has been collecting material, both print and digital, from the festival. This partnership has resulted in a unique collection that both documents the festival itself as well as the creativity of the community, archiving what has previously been only ephemeral. The growing popularity and interest in independent comics both in the United States and globally demonstrates the importance of actively collecting these ephemeral materials in print and digital forms for future research and inspiration. This paper will discuss the origins of the Small Press Expo Collection, its role as one of the only such archives globally, some successes and challenges, and suggestions for establishing similar collections at other libraries and archives.

Brandon Hollingshead (York University and Toronto Metropolitan University), “Reframing Settler Colonial Histories of Canada and Stretching Conventions of the Comics Form with Indigenous-centred Textile Comics.”

This paper addresses the relationship of text and textile in comic books and graphic histories of Canada. Recent Indigenous-created and Indigenous-centred textile comics reframe settler colonial histories of Canada and stretch conventions of the comics form. My analysis of these comics follows Langlois's method of interpreting how textiles function as media, the production and circulation of textiles as political acts, and ways Indigenous textile practices contribute to the work of decolonization. I consider textiles and comics in three categories. The category textiles in comics considers the

presence and circulation of textiles in comics stories. The second category is comics arranged as textiles, where the structure and arrangement of panels, pages, and complete works are modelled after textile forms. The third category is textiles as comics, where textile objects tell comics stories.

Safiyya Hosein (Toronto Metropolitan University), “Scheherazade Reborn: Feminist World-Making in the Digital Comic, 1001.”

This paper examines Pakistani-Canadian artist Sanya Anwar’s digital comic *1001* as a feminist and decolonial reboot of *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*. It argues that Anwar’s retelling challenges the Orientalist visual and narrative traditions that have historically shaped Western representations of Scheherazade and the broader “Orient.” Drawing on feminist and postcolonial scholarship, this paper situates Scheherazade as a figure repeatedly contested within literary and visual culture, while tracing how illustrated editions and popular media have long rendered her and other female characters as exoticized objects within an imperial gaze. Through close visual and narrative analysis, the paper demonstrates how *1001* reclaims narrative agency by centring female subjectivity, foregrounding systemic gendered violence, and rejecting the spectacle of Orientalist fantasy. Anwar’s reimagining positions Scheherazade and her sister Dunyazade as intellectually driven, resilient protagonists navigating a patriarchal and corrupt social order, thereby transforming them from passive figures into active agents of resistance. The paper also considers the significance of the digital comics medium, arguing that its relative independence from traditional publishing gatekeepers enables creators to challenge dominant visual regimes and circulate counter-narratives globally. Ultimately, *1001* exemplifies how digital visual storytelling can decolonize canonical texts and restore agency to characters long constrained by Orientalist and patriarchal imaginaries.

**Paul M. Malone, Associate Professor of German (University of Waterloo),
“Respawning Spawn: Image Comics’ Influence on German
Independent Superheroes.”**

Partly due to the fascist associations of uniformed vigilantism, American superhero comics never became popular in postwar West Germany. Though DC’s crimebusters appeared in German translation already in the 1950s, and Marvel’s heroes joined them in the 1960s, none of them found a wide audience; the licenses bounced between publishers in vain. Nor was there much interest in creating German imitators.

After German reunification, however, the political “normalization” of Germany fostered the belief that German superheroes need not symbolize reactionary nationalism, while the near-collapse of the local comics industry encouraged outsiders. The result was a mini-wave of original German superhero comics at the turn of the century—surprisingly inspired by the newcomers of Image Comics: heroes like Spawn, marked by stylized violence and eroticism (Lavin 81), were also newly licensed in Germany. Homegrown German attempts to emulate the Image formula of visual and narrative “excess” (Peppard; Céspedes González) in *Cool Patrol* (1998), *Power Freaks* (2000) and *Der Morgenstern, bekannt als Dorn* (2001-4) were failures—only *New Arden Chronicles* (1999-2002) completed a single story arc—and they arrived too early to capitalize on the global popularity of Hollywood superhero films. Nonetheless, they constitute a little-known attempt to create German mainstream commercial comics for an adult audience.

**Fred Petrossian (Independent scholar), “The AI World in the Mirror of
Judge Dredd: Orwell Meets Huxley.”**

This paper examines Judge Dredd as a long-running comics property through which shifting cultural anxieties about justice, authority, automation, and absurdity are continually rebooted. First appearing in the late 1970s, Judge Dredd has undergone multiple narrative, tonal, and

aesthetic renewals across comics and film adaptations, making the character an especially productive site for exploring the theme of “reboot” within comics studies. Its exaggerated satire of bureaucratic overreach—once confined to the pursuit of citizens for trivial infractions—today finds uncanny echoes in real-world headlines, from children detained by immigration authorities to arrests over social media posts in liberal democracies.

Drawing on close readings of Judge Dredd comics and collected editions such as *I Am the Law*, as well as interviews with scholars from multiple disciplines, this paper situates Judge Dredd within a mythological lineage that extends back to the ancient “judge-warrior” archetype found in the biblical Book of Judges. In this tradition, justice is embodied rather than deliberated, enacted through force rather than institutional mediation. The paper argues that Judge Dredd represents a modern reboot of this archetype, reframed through dystopian satire and procedural extremity.

A central focus of the paper is absurdity. Judge Dredd’s exaggerated enforcement of minor legal infractions functions as a satirical critique of institutional logic, exposing how rigid systems can detach law from proportionality and moral reasoning. These moments resonate with contemporary examples of bureaucratic overreach, revealing how comics translate abstract concerns about authority into concrete narrative scenarios.

Finally, the paper connects Judge Dredd’s evolving portrayal to contemporary debates surrounding automated decision-making and AI-driven governance. By reading Mega-City One as a fusion of Orwellian surveillance and Huxleyan conditioning, and by examining black-box systems, procedural justice, and data-driven enforcement, it argues that Judge Dredd anticipates a future in which justice risks becoming mechanized, opaque, and authoritarian. Through its repeated reinventions, Judge Dredd shows how comics can reboot ancient myths to interrogate modern forms of power.

Bruno Porto (Tilburg University), “Cycles of Graphic Rebirth: The Covers of Action Comics and the Visual Legacy of Superman.”

This paper examines *Action Comics* covers as ongoing sites of symbolic renewal. I argue that this long-running comic book title, continuously published since 1938, undergoes recurring cycles of graphic “rebirth” that parallel the narrative reboots characteristic of the Superhero genre. Through successive logo redesigns and trade dress transformations, *Action Comics* continually redefines its visual identity while maintaining a visual dependence on Superman’s iconography. Drawing on methods from design history and comics studies, the paper traces how the series’ evolving visual identity reflects editorial strategies, market pressures, and genre conventions, revealing how design functions as a narrative agent, reinforcing continuity while enabling transformation within serialized Superhero publication. From its Golden Age origins, through the adoption of the Comics Code Seal and the rise of Marvel Comics, to the shifts prompted by the Direct Market, the Digital Age, and the Variant Cover era, *Action Comics* is positioned as a case study in the material and symbolic regeneration of Superhero comic book branding. In doing so, it highlights how the act of visual reconfiguration becomes a means of sustaining cultural continuity and reader recognition amid changing market and aesthetic conditions.

Kalervo Sinervo (Independent Scholar), “Unlocking the Hall of Records: Institutional Memory in the Comics World.”

In Spring 2000, Marvel Comics teamed with Wizard Magazine to market an upcoming miniseries about an enigmatic Silver Age hero called The Sentry. The companies fabricated a fictional artist whose personal archives unearthed collaborative work with Stan Lee on a character deemed “too powerful” to publish, going so far as to run an obituary for the nonexistent penciller. After the marketing campaign had run its course, Wizard revealed the nature of the hoax, pointing to the fact that the first false article had appeared in its April (fools) issue, suggesting it had all been in good fun.

The believability of this lie—that both the artist and their contribution to Marvel had been completely forgotten—stems from a culture of poor record-keeping and worse institutional memory across the American mainstream comics industry. This difficulty in preserving the markers of the past is further enabled by a longstanding self-perception of comics content and materiality as ephemeral. The Sentry incident offers a launch point to explore how publishers leverage access and control, examining how fan-run wikis have supplanted “official” archives and their attendant responsibilities. These practices shape cultural conversations around continuity and canon, and industrial attitudes towards creators and the both professional and fan labour.

Reginald Wiebe (Concordia University of Edmonton) and Neale Barnholden (University of Alberta), “Secret Origins of the DC Universe: Distant Reading the Immediate Post-Crisis.”

In 1986, DC published its most significant continuity revision to date. One of the most influential superhero series ever published, its very title has become both brand and metonym for decades-long serialized IP farm of the DCU. In this paper, we propose to examine the most influential DC series from 1986: *Secret Origins (Volume 2)*. Born of necessity after the narrative corporate streamlining of *Crisis on Infinite Earths* (the *other* other most influential DC series from 1986), *Secret Origins* is the prime site of DC’s sisyphusian drive to provide a coherent canon and continuity for its characters. It is also an ideal test case for distant reading’s usefulness for superhero comics. *Secret Origins* is a series where the retcon can be called the main character, as each issue features a different cast and creative team. It provides us with an archive to consider how publishing lines such as DC’s function on a macro scale. Every issue provides at least one stand alone origin for a DC character, ranging from lesser known Golden Age figures to DC’s most marketable characters. The series’s mission, however, extends beyond merely informing new readers of the history of DC’s catalogue of characters; it helped inform long-

time readers about who the characters were in the wake of COIE. Origin stories, central to the foundation of superhero comics, become a vessel to explain a publishing line in flux. If we consider the origin story free from the authorial mode, we can productively compare *Batman: Year One* to Batman's origin in *Secret Origins* #6, which came out only five months earlier. If the origin of a superhero is an essential component of both their corporate value and their thematic purchase, *Secret Origins* is the series best equipped for us to consider the origin and the retcon writ large.

Roundtables / Tables rondes

Filipino Canadian Comics

Lucas Tromly (University of Manitoba), Emmanuelle Châteauneuf (Queen Street); Motzie Dapul (The Pinoy Monster Lover Anthology, Aswang at Berdugo); Keet Geniza (Picking Bones); Allan Matudio (Kasama); Jackie Reynolds (Marble Hornets, The Divide & I); and J. Torres (Stealing Home, Lola: A Ghost Story, Teen Titans Go!)

Canada's vibrant and growing Filipino population includes many talented comics creators, whose work is still under-examined in Canadian comics studies. My proposed roundtable will bring together a number of Filipino Canadian creators, whose comics work ranges from memoir, to folk horror, to Batman. Our conversation will explore the way their comics grow out of different cultural and aesthetic traditions and speak to a range of communities.

This roundtable will be of much interest to comics scholars, for Filipino Canadian experiences engage pressing issues in contemporary comics studies. Our conversation will necessarily situate Canadian comics in the overlapping contexts of colonialization, globalization, and multiculturalism, and will link Canadian comics to global histories more often linked to the U.S.

More importantly, the roundtable will be a valuable chance to connect creators, readers, and the community. Toronto's Filipino community is large and I anticipate a significant presence at TCAF. I will take the opportunity to reach out to Filipino Canadian media outlets ahead of time to ensure lively audience participation. Some confirmed participants publish independently, some with small presses, and some with Marvel and DC. Moreover, the roundtable will feature comics creators at different stages of their careers. As a result, panelists are equipped to speak about a range of different experiences in comics spaces, and I anticipate much audience interest in their work and their career trajectories.

“Dramatic Niagara Falls Cartoon Rescue Mission Quite A Stunt!”

Arden Phair (St. Catharines Museum, retired), Dr. Jaleen Grove (Rhode Island School of Design), Yiwei “Vivian” Cai (RISD), Rita “Wanxin” Li (RISD).

This panel launches the open-access Arden Phair Cartoon Collection on JSTOR. Over 700 historic editorial cartoons and comic ephemera picturing Niagara Falls and nearby Southwestern Ontario regional issues from 1850 to 2025 are already processed, with thousands more to come. We orient the project within the field of Canadian cartoon and caricature studies, and document how institutional and systemic barriers have led to gaps in Canadian cultural history, resulting in cartoonists' families – thinking no-one cares – liable to destroy original art and records. Arden Phair describes his intervention through research in archives, microfilm, genealogies, estates and interviews. We discuss copyright, and grad student assistants demonstrate the meticulous JSTOR metadata entry process. Noting the irony of building this resource in the US, we give our perspective on cultural stewardship and transnational collaboration, with advice for others wishing to rescue historical commercial arts. An overview of ways the collection informs multiple fields of study follows, and risograph zines about the collection will be given out.

Collection: [https://www.jstor.org/site/risd/ardenphaircartooncollection/?so=item title str asc](https://www.jstor.org/site/risd/ardenphaircartooncollection/?so=item+title+str+asc)

Heavy Lines – Fatness and Comics in the Age of Ozempic.

Mollie Cronin (York University), May Friedman (Toronto Metropolitan University), Ramanpreet A. Bahra (York University), Rosena Fung, and Dr. Rachel Thomas.

Comics are a medium preoccupied with bodies: how they look, leak, desire, fail, transform, and take up space. From the embodied provocations of 1970s underground and alternative comix to contemporary autobiographical and life-writing practices, comics have offered a site for narrating menstruation, sex, disability and other forms of embodied experience that exceed respectability. For fat and queer subjects this kind of construction is baked into our socialization. This panel argues that fatness belongs centrally within this tradition and that the discipline of fat studies offers a crucial framework for understanding how bodies are represented, disciplined and imagined in comics.

Fat studies is an emergent field, particularly in what many have called the “age of Ozempic,” a moment that imagines the future without fat people. Grounded in feminist, queer and anti-racist scholarship, fat studies examines how anti-fat bias functions as systems of power shaping narrative, aesthetics and lived experience. Bringing this lens to comics allows scholars to identify how fat phobia has been embedded in visual tropes, character archetypes, and autobiographical storytelling across the medium. Alongside this critical analysis, the panel highlights contemporary cartoonists such as Rosena Fung, Mariko & Jillian Tamaki, Siobhán Gallagher, and Mollie Cronin, whose comics unpack diet culture and generate unapologetically fat characters, grounded in real lived fat experience.

Drawing on feminist life writing and fat studies methodologies, the panel focuses in particular on women and queer autobiographical comics, where anti-fat ideas are deeply entangled with stories of girlhood, fashioning

selfhood, health and care. Featuring fat studies scholars Dr. May Friedman and Ramanpreet Bahra (PhD candidate), cartoonist Rosena Fung, and fat scholars/artists Mollie Cronin (PhD student) and Dr. Allyson Mitchell, this panel explores fat studies as a tool for reading, studying and making comics. It proposes a generative dialogue between comics studies and fat studies that expands how embodiment, identity and power are understood.

Montreal's Alt Comix

Jean Sébastien, Izabeau Legendre, Marc Tessier, and Andy Brown

Montreal's alternative comics scene played an instrumental role in the development of contemporary Canadian comics, both in English and French. Mostly revolving around self-published zines and small-scale publishing ventures until the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, the city saw the rise of numerous influential publishers. Yet, despite a considerable extension and professionalization, the field still offers pride of place to zines and independent publishing, alongside major players such as Drawn & Quarterly, Pow Pow, and La Pastèque and Conundrum Press (now moved to Nova Scotia but still active in Montreal's local scene). Many cartoonists combine various forms of self-publishing and work with conventional publishers who, in turn, still exhibit an independent or alternative ethos, distancing themselves from large conglomerates and championing an author-centric approach, despite operating within an industrial framework. This situation, perhaps explained by the relatively small size of the Canadian market(s), has created a paradoxical situation, restraining editorial and commercial possibilities while limiting the gap between the "centre" and its margins, thus leaving the door open to various forms of experimentation.

This roundtable will address Montreal's comics scene of the last 30-40 years. It will gather scholars (Jean Sébastien and Izabeau Legendre) as well as practitioners (Marc Tessier and Andy Brown) who have been active over the period, and address questions such as the peculiarities of the Canadian

comics market, the English/French dynamics in Montreal's comics scene, the lasting influence of zines, self- and small-scale publishing, and experimentation, as well as the strategies readily available to publishers and artists in that context.

Reinventing Indian Graphic Narratives

Anu Sugathan (University of Oregon), Suhaan Mehta (University of Colorado), Shreya Sangai (York University), Dr. Rudrani Gangopadhyay (Rutgers University)

Our panel will examine how Indian graphic narratives recycle aesthetic forms and narrative practices to address topics such as caste discrimination, queerness, nationalism, and global pandemics.

Anu Sugathan and Shreya Sangai will focus on caste. Sugathan will present on *A Gardener in the Wasteland* (2011), adapted from the social reformer Jotiba Phule's book *Gulamgiri* (1873). She will analyze how caste hierarchies are maintained through persistence of religious doctrine and repetition of history and are also critiqued by reframing visual symbols as tools of resistance.

Sangai will talk about *Bhimayana* (2011), the life story of the Dalit icon Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, drawn as a comic by Durgabai and Subhash Vyam. She will focus on how the Vyams's repurposing of Gond art resists conventional comics' paneling and thereby adds a symbolic layer to Ambedkar's life and ideas.

Following these papers on caste, Megha Sirkar will discuss Amruta Patil's queer text, *Kari* (2008). Set in Mumbai, *Kari* traces how queer subjectivity navigates social precarity prior to pro-LGBTQ+ legal reforms. She will argue that *Kari* translates urban alienation into an Indian visual framework by incorporating the painter Egon Schiele's visual strategies and by reinterpreting global lesbian bildungsroman tropes.

Rudrani Gangopadhyay too will consider urban-centric graphic narratives, albeit with keen attention to their critiques of the nation state. She will argue

that works such as Vishwajyoti Ghosh's *Delhi Calm* (2010) and Sarnath Banerjee's *The Harappa Files* (2011) reuse and overload the nation-state's images, documents, and aesthetic codes, exposing the repetition and fragility through which political authority is sustained.

Suhaan Mehta will present on Sarnath Banerjee's recent work *The Moral Contagion* (2024) co-authored with Julia Hauser. He will explore how Banerjee's drawing complements the cyclical elements of the plague in Hauser's text, such as suffering of the poor, pseudo-medical cures, and transformation in social relations.

Comment s'y rendre

Jour 1, « Archives and Special Collections » (Bibliothèque de TMU)

La première journée de la conférence (jeudi 4 juin) se déroulera aux Archives et Collections spéciales de Université Métropolitaine de Toronto, situées au 4e étage de la bibliothèque, au 350, Victoria St. Des toilettes accessibles et non genrées se trouvent au même étage ; suivez la signalétique « all-gender barrier-free washrooms ».

Pour trouver les salles de conférence, le plus simple est d'entrer par le Sheldon & Tracy Levy Student Learning Centre (Centre d'apprentissage étudiant Sheldon et Tracy Levy), au 341, rue Yonge, puis de monter au 2e étage et de vous diriger vers la bibliothèque. Après avoir repéré le comptoir d'information, les ascenseurs se trouvent sur votre droite, au coin.

Jour 2, International Living & Learning Centre

La deuxième journée de la conférence (vendredi 5 juin) se déroule au International Living & Learning Centre (« Centre international de vie et d'apprentissage »), situé au 133, Mutual St. Les salles sont ILC100 et ILC102. Des toilettes accessibles et non genrées se trouvent au deuxième étage, ILC210 ; suivez la signalétique « all-gender barrier-free washrooms ».

Pour trouver les salles de conférence, suivez Gould St jusqu'à son intersection avec la Mutual St. Dépassez l'intersection des rues Gould et Church, puis le Metro Supermarket (supermarché Metro). L'International Living & Learning Centre (« le Centre international de vie et d'apprentissage est le bâtiment ») situé au bout de Gould St. Les salles de conférence se trouvent à gauche en entrant dans le couloir.

« The Beguiling » livres et art

Une librairie éphémère, tenue par « The Beguiling », sera installée à proximité du lieu de la conférence les deux jours. Elle proposera notamment des ouvrages universitaires le jeudi.

Réception : Stormcrow Manor

(580 Church St), 4 juin, 18h-20h

Nous vous invitons à nous rejoindre pour prendre un verre et une bouchée au Stormcrow, situé à l'angle de Church St et Dundonald St, à un pâté de maisons de la station Wellesley.

Présence au TCAF

Mattamy Athletic Centre (« Centre sportif Mattamy »), 50 Carlton St.

CSSC/SCEBD tiendra un stand au TCAF les 6 et 7 juin (samedi et dimanche). Un membre du comité exécutif ou un ancien membre sera présent de 9h à 17h. Venez nous rencontrer et discuter avec nous de l'avenir de la Société et de ce qu'elle peut vous apporter.

How to Get There

Day 1, Archives and Special Collections (TMU Library)

Day 1 of the conference (Thursday, June 4th) is in TMU's Archives and Special Collections, which takes up the 4th floor of Toronto Metropolitan University's Library, located at 350 Victoria St. Accessible and gender-neutral washrooms are on the same floor and locatable by following signs for "all-gender barrier-free washrooms."

The best way to find the conference rooms is to enter from the Sheldon & Tracy Levy Student Learning Centre on 341 Yonge St, and go up the stairs to

the second floor and proceed toward the library building. Upon seeing the library help desk, the elevators are on the right around the corner.

Day 2, International Living & Learning Centre

Day 2 of the conference (Friday, June 5th) is in TMU's International Living & Learning Centre, located at 133 Mutual Street. The room numbers are ILC100 and ILC102. Accessible and gender-neutral washrooms are on the 2nd floor, ILC210, and locatable by following signs for "all-gender barrier-free washrooms."

The best way to find the conference rooms is to go all the way down (westward) on Gould St until it ends at Mutual St. Go past the intersection of Gould St. and Church St. and past the Metro Supermarket. The building at the end of Gould St is the International Living/Learning Centre. The conference rooms themselves are on the left hand side of the hallway upon entering the building.

The Beguiling Books and Art

There will be an on-site popup bookstore near the conference on both days, hosted by The Beguiling. It will include academic texts on Thursday.

Reception: Stormcrow Manor

580 Church St, June 4th, 6 – 8pm

Please join us for drinks and snacks at Stormcrow, located at the corner of Church and Dundonald, one block from the Wellesly Station.

Tabling at TCAF

Mattamy Athletic Centre, 50 Carlton St.

CSSC/SCEBD will have a table on the floor at TCAF on June 6th and 7th (Saturday/Sunday). An executive or former exec member will be at the table,

9am – 5pm. Please come down and chat with us about what the future of the Society and what it can do for you.

Dîner / Lunch

Les lieux suivants se situent entre deux et quatre pâtés de maisons du campus. Les prix des repas sont donnés à titre indicatif seulement.

The locations below are within a block of TMU campus. The meal prices are estimates only.

- Lucky Donkatsu: Korean/Japanese, ~\$30 meal/repas
- Flippers: Fusion brunch, ~\$30 meal/repas
- Congee Queen: Chinese, ~\$50 meal/repas
- Pita and Hummus: Middle-Eastern take out, ~\$20 meal/repas
- Salad King: Thai, ~\$25 meal/repas

Les lieux suivants se situent à deux à quatre entre deux et quatre pâtés de maisons du campus. Comme indiqué précédemment, les prix ne sont que des estimations.

The following locations are within two to four blocks of campus. As above, the prices are estimates only:

- Hinoya Curry: Japanese Curry, ~\$25 meal/repas
- W-Burger: burgers and pub food, ~\$25 meal/repas
- Ginger, Vietnamese, ~\$25 meal/repas
- Si Lom Thai Bistro, ~\$30 meal/repas
- Alforat Iraqi Street Food, ~\$30 meal/repas
- Fran's Restaurant (diner), ~\$30 meal/repas

Les aires de restauration suivantes, de type centre commercial, se trouvent à deux ou trois pâtés de maisons du campus de TMU.

The following mall-style food courts are within two to three blocks of TMU campus.

- Eaton Centre
- College Park Food Court
- Chef's Hall (Food Hall)

Day 1 / jour 1: Archives and Special Collections (350 Victoria St.)		
	4th Floor	4th Floor
9:00 – 10:30	1A: Reboots and Rebirths	1B: Dramatic Niagara Falls Rescue Mission Quite A Stunt! (Roundtable)
	Porto, "Cycles of Graphic Rebirth"	Jaleen Grove, Arden Phair, Yiwei "Vivian" Cai, and Rita "Wanxin" Li
	Garcia, "Rebooting the Now"	
	Wiebe & Barnholden, "Secret Origins"	
10:45 – 12:15	2A: Heavy Lines – Fatness and Comics (Roundtable)	2B: Superheroes
	Mollie Cronin, May Friedman, Dr. Rachel Thomas, Rosena Fung, and Ramanpreet A. Bahra	Petrossian, "The AI World in the Mirror of Judge Dredd"
		Malone, "Respawning Spawn"
		Sinervo, "Unlocking the Hall of Records"
12:15 – 1:45	Lunch / dîner	
1:45 – 3:15	3A: The Comics Industry	3B: Filipino Canadian Comics (Roundtable)
	Friedlander, "Not-Quite-Indie"	Lucas Tromly, Emmanuelle Châteauneuf, Motzie Dapul, Keet Geniza, Matudio, Jackie Reynolds, and J. Torres
	Halsband, "Archiving the Festival"	
	Faria, "Ethical Citational Practice in <i>Chester Brown</i> "	
3:30 – 5:00	KEYNOTE / DISCOURS-PROGRAMME: Jamie Michaels: "Comics and Violence: Illustrating the Spectrum Between Nationalism and Human Rights."	
6:00 – 8:00	RECEPTION / RÉCEPTION: Stormcrow Manor (580 Church St)	

Day 2 / jour 2: International Living/Learning Centre (133 Mutual St)		
	ILC100	ILC102
9:00 – 10:30	5B: Formalism	4B: Indigeneity and Colonialism
	Gallant, "De l'abstrait au concret"	Hollingshead, "Reframing Settler Colonial Histories"
	Dolmaya & Giraldi, "Visual and Textual (Re)Framing"	Defever, "Rebooting Francophonie: Algerian Comics"
		Dairon, "La BD autochtone francophone canadienne"
10:45 – 12:15	5A: Trauma and Healing	4A: Montreal's Alt Comix (Roundtable)
	Csegeny, "A Little Boy-Shaped Hole in the Universe"	Izabeau Legendre, Jean Sébastien, Andy Brown, and Marc Tessier
	Blundell, "Alchemy in the Gutters"	
	Chen, "Transing the Narrative"	
12:15 – 1:45	Lunch / dîner	
1:45 – 3:15	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING / ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE ANNUELLE	
3:30 – 5pm	6A: Reinventing Indian Graphic Narratives (Roundtable)	6B: (Re)Imagining
	Anu Sugathan, Suhaan Mehta, Megha Sirkar, Shreya Sangai, and Dr. Rudrani Gangopadhyay	Hosein, "Scheherazde Reborn"
		Franseen, " <i>Mademoiselle Mozart and Mozart in Paris</i> "
		Furman, "In the Era of Double Nostalgia"

Toronto Metropolitan University Campus Map

