

### PANEL .01 Comics, Culture, and Critical Criminology

#### Castle, Taimi & Meade, Benjamin

##### *We are not vigilantes': Community activism and the real-life superhero (RLSH)*

Real-life superheroes (RLSH) are individuals who, inspired by comic books and movies, engage in community watch actions under the guise of an adopted superhero persona. While early versions of the subculture can be traced back to the 1970s, the proliferation of RLSH chapters globally has been heavily influenced by the viral nature of memes and stories on social media (Krulos, 2013). Although there have been a few academic studies on RLSHs, none have included participant observation of patrols. In this study, we explored the histories, motivations, and experiences of some RLSHs in the community through field research. Following Fishwick and Mak (2015), we employed a cultural criminological understanding of meaning-making and 'edgework' to RLSH activism, while also interrogating the degree to which the RLSH identity embraces dominant narratives found in comic books (Phillips & Strobl, 2013).

Drs. Taimi Castle & Benjamin Meade are Associate Professors in the Department of Justice Studies (AKA the Justice League) at James Madison University in Virginia. Dr. Castle's research and teaching interests are in the areas of comparative justice and media, while Dr. Meade focuses on institutional corrections and inmate behavior in prison. He is an avid DC comics fan, and Batman is his favorite superhero, while she prefers Marvel.

#### Strobl, Staci

##### *Global capitalism is a big mess, but what else is new?: Economic inequality and crime in Jonathan Hickman's Black Monday Murders*

A devil-worshipping financial cabal is the subject of Jonathan Hickman's graphic volume, *The Black Monday Murders* (Vol. 1, 2017), a cross between a crime procedural and a horror story for the global age. In this tale of Wall Street money and magic, Hickman explores the idea that money is magic. If the global financial system is one of the biggest illusions perpetrated on the planet, then the true crime is that this self-devouring machine continues to take its victims: the poor, the marginalized, the disempowered. Using a critical criminological lens, this presentation explores *The Black Monday Murders* as a dystopian fantasy of the slashing and burning of the capitalist regime. Its depiction of inequality and crime is a shift from more mainstream comic book depictions of these social problems as inevitable and ultimately unstoppable, and asks the reader what else could be imagined in their place.

Dr. Staci Strobl is Department Chair and Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. Her research focuses on comparative criminal justice, alternatives to criminal justice systems, and criminal justice in popular culture. She is the co-author, with Dr. Nickie Phillips, of *Comic Book Crime* (NYU Press, 2019). In 2009, she won the Radzinowicz Memorial Prize for her paper in the *British Journal of Criminology* about the criminalization of female domestic workers in Bahrain.

#### Hirschmann, Paula

##### *Batman: White Knight*

Recent years have seen an increase in critical comic book scholarship, with particular emphasis on their realist representations of hegemony and social relations of domination. Recurrent critiques, however, forget the very historical origins and political nature of crime comix and the continual class 'battleground' that even Iron Age superhero comics afford. *Batman: White Knight* is a series that reflects the dimensional and 'impure' nature of the struggle of hegemony. While the series reflects a conception of justice consistent with the actuarial logic of US Criminal Justice, it also conveys subtle but prevalent tones of social justice and class conflict. In contrast to traditional conceptions of vigilante justice, many of these issues do not illustrate vigilantism by way of legitimizing (albeit inefficient) State power. On the contrary, representations of the Criminal Justice System illustrate institutional and systemic dysfunction, discrimination, and portray prisons as warehouses for the marginalized. This series presents Jack Napier (aka the Joker) as the hero and warrior of the underclass; an individual who was unjustly targeted by Batman and the Gotham City Police Department (GCPD). While a thematic analysis might target the actuarial logic embedded within *Batman: White Knight*, a historically situated analysis reveals that this series more accurately echoes Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony as a 'moving equilibrium' between 'immersion' and 'resistance'.

Paula Hirschmann is a PhD candidate in Criminology at the University of Ottawa. My research interests include justice, comics, social theory and methodology, especially the ontological and epistemological foundations of realism. I have now taught a mini-enrichment course on justice in popular culture for two consecutive years and frequently attend the Ottawa Comiccon as Harley Quinn.

**Hoffin, Kevin**

***The first magick as transgression through DC/Vertigo's John Constantine': An ultra-realist approach to the discussion of comics as cultural criminology***

In this paper, the case will be made for the rebirth of the Victorian literature metaphorical device of using magic(k)al and supernatural elements to portray criminality and other taboo subjects, themes that writers could not freely express. The entirety of this paper will pursue the comic as a model of popular criminology. Here, it will become apparent that the late 20th Century comic book series 'Hellblazer' (DC Comics/Vertigo) with its litany of paranormal demons and macabre magicks, uses such mysticism in much the same way. The protagonist, John Constantine, an exceptional street-level mage, crosses paths with all manner of evil ephemera, spits and devils, and while he possesses the skill to 'out-magick' these threats, he is far more likely to use cunning and guile to out-manoeuvre them. Constantine regularly engages the reader directly 'breaking the fourth wall' and talks about how magick is essentially a ploy to 'trick the universe into handing us effects without the cause.'

Kevin Hoffin is a lecturer in Criminology at Birmingham City University, where he has taught since 2017. His research interests include comics and justice, black metal theory and ideas of personal sovereignty and transgression. He specialises in teaching cultural criminology subjects and is constantly trying to bring comics into the classroom.

### **PANEL .02 Social Justice and Human Rights**

**Buchter, Lisa**

***Learning through everyday exposure: Housing cooperative as a catalyst for social and political awareness***

As part of a participatory action research (PAR) project, I am exploring, through the use of visual storytelling, the politicization of young adults through living in housing cooperatives. This project is conducted in collaboration with the non-profit "North American Students of Cooperation" (NASCO) and many people involved in housing cooperatives across the country, and I rely on visual sociology (photographs) and interviews to highlight how living in housing cooperatives raises awareness among young adults about social justice issues. The issues to which they are exposed range from class issues (e.g. as affordable housing, anti-materialism, anti-consumerism and anti-capitalism) to environmental issues (sustainability, ethical consumption, veganism) and social issues (fighting against systemic racism, transphobia, homophobia, rape culture, sexism, etc.). Through this presentation, I hope to demonstrate how using photographs can help analyze how cooperative living enables an embodied learning of democratic values. It empowers young adults by giving them a sense of agency through consensus-based voting and self-management through meetings and fosters a sense of accountability through structuring systems for sharing house chores. Housing cooperatives also physically expose their members to many concepts of social justice. They might explore some social issues through conversations, pamphlets, or posters in their houses. In an even more impactful way, one can envision these spaces as "prefigurative spaces" (Polletta 1999) for more equitable and sustainable societies. The sharing of resources enabled by cooperatives favor for instance economies

of scales (time, resources, energy) and create an awareness that individualism favors a mentality of scarcity, lack of trust, and loneliness.

Lisa Buchter is a joint-PhD student between Northwestern University and Sciences Po (Paris, France).

**Ravi, Anita**

***Drawings from Dilley: A Family Doctor's Work In Family Detention***

I am a doctor and founder of the PurpLE Clinic- a medical clinic in New York City for people who have experienced sexual violence and human rights-related abuses. The nexus of my work involves collaboration with lawyers, immigration and the criminal justice system, to protect the health of our mutual client. I use comics as a way to depict the intersection between social justice and health. My presentation will include comics drawn during my work with the legal team at the Dilley Pro Bono Project to assist asylum seeking mothers and their children at the South Texas Family Residential Center. The purpose of this illustrated presentation is to demonstrate the multiple ways in which law and medicine intersect to impact immigration-related advocacy.

Dr. Anita Ravi, MD, MPH, MSHP is a family medicine physician at the Institute for Family Health (IFH) in New York City and Assistant Professor at the Ichan School of Medicine at Mount Sinai's Department of Family Medicine & Community Health. She is the founder and medical director of the PurpLE (Purpose: Listen & Engage) Clinic, a primary care clinic at IFH for people who have experienced sexual violence and human rights-related abuses, including human trafficking. She is also a public health researcher with a focus in womens health and conducts health empowerment workshops in correctional facilities and in collaboration with community based organizations. Dr. Ravi engages in health and social justice-related advocacy efforts through cartooning and comics.

**Gordon, Erin**

***From origin story to plot device: Visual representations of sexual violence in superhero comics***

In this paper, I present a survey of comic book narratives from Marvel and DC as well as independent publishers in order to analyze the genre of superhero comics for the way in which they uphold and normalize rape culture, sexual objectification, and victimization through depictions of sexual violence. The choice to focus a critical lens on this particular genre is deliberate as it is arguably the most popular, boasts a wide readership, and therefore has the most pronounced exposure and subsequent effect on consumers.

Superhero narratives and the heroes themselves often embody archetypal gender roles that make the gendered and sexual violence significant and therefore a perfect case study in which to analyze these depictions. Using the Social Learning Theory, I examine the cultural attitudes learned and conditioned through repeated exposure to these types of visual narratives, and how these problematic ideologies are then internalized by readers. Graphic novels are just one of numerous forms of media that readers are exposed to on a daily basis; all of which contribute in some way to shaping social norms through visual representation. I contend that, while fictional, these illustrations of rape, sexual violence, and sexualized violence subscribe to a broader social climate that propagates rape myth acceptance, sustains an environment that excuses sexual violence, promotes victim-blaming, and reinforces negative racial and gender stereotypes.

Erin Gordon is an independent scholar, currently holding the position of Assistant Registrar at the University of Florida's Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art in Gainesville, FL. She received a BS in Photography from the University of Central Florida in 2011, an MA in Fashion Photography from the London College of Fashion in 2013 and completed a second MA in

History and Criticism of Art from Florida State University in 2016. Her formal background in fine-art and art history informs her research, which interrogates pop culture and visual rhetoric, and explores gender roles, feminism, and representations of women.

**PANEL .03 Complicating Simplicity, Doing Justice in/on Iconic Images in Uncertain Times**

**Peppard, Anna**

***Just antiheroes: Reading between the engorged thighs and many lines of early image comics***

During the 1990s, Todd McFarlane, Jim Lee, and Rob Liefeld generated record-breaking comic book sales and reshaped the entire North American comics industry by co-founding Image Comics. They did so primarily by drawing hypersexualized and hyperviolent characters and storylines involving gritty antiheroes and assassins that both exemplify and complicate the superhero genre's conventional veneration of justice; in these comics, good/bad dichotomies are exaggerated to the point of excess, with heroes frequently becoming as graphically monstrous and morally suspect as villains.

Despite McFarlane, Lee, and Liefeld's tremendous popularity and influence, their work has been almost completely neglected by comics scholars. While it is understandable that a comics studies field still anxious to be taken seriously would reject the excessive and sometimes technically limited styles of these creators, excess is a meaningful mode of representation in its own right. Focusing on McFarlane, Lee, and Liefeld's first years of work for Image and taking inspiration from Scott Bukatman's argument that superheroes represent "a corporeal, rather than a cognitive, mapping of the subject into a cultural system," this paper will examine how these

creators' excessive superhero bodies reflect and respond to the culture wars of the 1980s and 90s and this same era's now-iconic deconstructions of the superhero genre in texts such as *Watchmen* (1985) and *The Dark Knight Returns* (1986). The following questions are at stake in this examination: What does justice look like when every character is spectacularly excessive and potentially monstrous? And: How does the superhero genre maintain (or modify) its conventional dramatization of the triumph of good over evil amid cultural upheavals that challenge traditional understandings of both? Ultimately, I will argue that the neglected work of McFarlane, Lee, and Liefeld is essential to understanding the history and fundamental operation of the superhero genre, and with it, one of the most popular modes of visualizing justice in both the 1990s and today.

Anna F. Peppard is an incoming postdoctoral fellow at Brock University. Her writing on the representation of sex, gender, and race in North American popular culture has appeared in *Canadian Review of American Studies*, *International Journal of Comic Art*, *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, *Fashion Studies Journal*, *Feminist Media Histories*, and the anthology *Make Ours Marvel: Media Convergence and a Comics Universe*.

**Buel, Jason**

***How dank was my meme stash?: Sequential art, social justice, and internet meme***

This project examines the role of visual storytelling in social justice online discourses. Specifically, it focuses on political memes that use conventions of sequential art both to entertain and to express calls for justice. How do people use internet memes in this context? How do such memes fold together conventions from comics with iconic images from film and television?

One of the most productive potentials for communicating through such memes is their capacity to foster extensive and continual remixing over time, as well as their ability through such remixing to help

generate what Stuart Hall would call oppositional decodings of culturally dominant messages. Further, I argue that using sequential art structures and conventions to remix such material affords expressive potentials that are limited in more common image macro memes or other single-panel combinations of images with written text. Such sequencing enables simple story structures to emerge quickly and, once a meme has been circulated widely enough to be recognized as a meme with its own internal logics and conventions, to develop stories in conjunction with the structure of the meme itself. Such stories frequently draw well-known images into a variation on the hero's journey, using this structure to express a straightforward moral claim. Often, these stories develop simple dialectical oppositions and resolve them in a way that makes a clear claim for what a just resolution would look like. Additionally, such a structure often enables a comedic setup and punchline that serves to reinforce group identity among the people who create, circulate, and consume such content.

Jason W. Buel is an Assistant Professor of Communication at North Carolina Wesleyan College, where he studies the intersections between media, technology, and politics. His research focuses on emerging documentary practices across media, activist film and video, and the media ecologies of contemporary social movements. His most recent article, "Assembling the Living Archive: A Media-Archaeological Excavation of Occupy Wall Street," appears in *Public Culture* 30.2.

### **Boucher, Ian**

***Assembling the ancestral frame: Successful comic book ambiguity in Captain America: Civil War and Black Panther***

Superhero films currently make up a significant portion of the Hollywood box office, and thus significantly contribute to cultural understandings about justice. Although comics have engaged justice in complex ways throughout their history, America has

historically considered comics simplistic. This has extended into preferences for how comics are adapted into other media, specifically as action films, in which premise is adapted to fit new priorities. Although vastly popular, the recent renaissance of superhero films affirms the long-held conception that superhero movies should be simple, despite growing popular awareness of their source material, the concept of justice, and the established reputation of cinema. This paper will explore audience reactions to comic book moral ambiguity when utilized within two critically and commercially successful entries within the current cycle of superhero films: *Captain America: Civil War* (2016) and *Black Panther* (2018). Why have moral quandaries been deemed successful in these films, and how have the techniques of their comic book inspirations lived on and affected that success? How has the format of the Marvel Cinematic Universe enriched, detracted from, or inspired the experiences of navigating these stories' ambiguity? When have audiences wanted ambiguity in these films, and when have they wanted affirmation? By analyzing cultural reactions to these films, this paper hopes to contribute to an understanding of how the techniques of sequential art are currently affecting and can further develop the ever ongoing conversation about justice on a mass scale.

Ian Boucher is a librarian who researches the role of superhero media in developing cultural understandings about justice. He edited the anthology *Humans and Paragons: Essays on Super-Hero Justice*, and his scholarly work consists of the article "Applying Suspense to Archetypal Superheroes: Hitchcockian Ambiguity in *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*," published by *Mise-en-scène*, and the essay "Casting a Wider Lasso: An Analysis of the Cultural Dismissal of Wonder Woman Through Her 1975-1979 Television Series," published by *Popular Culture Review*.

## **PANEL .04 Comics, Creativity, and Pedagogy**

### **Hoffin, Kevin & Lynes, Adam**

#### ***From villain to hero initiative: An origin story***

This paper represents the earliest stage on an ongoing project that will involve creating comic books to use as teaching tools for criminology. We justify the use of comics in the classroom and give a background to the project and its eventual destination.

Kevin Hoffin is a lecturer in Criminology at Birmingham City University, where he has taught since 2017. His research interests include comics and justice, black metal theory and ideas of personal sovereignty and transgression. He specialises in teaching cultural criminology subjects and is constantly trying to bring comics into the classroom.

Dr Adam Lynes is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology at Birmingham City University, where he has taught since 2012, covering topics from criminological theory to organised and violent crime. He has published research focusing on violent crimes from serial murder to family annihilation, and recently was an author on a new book on driving as an occupation of choice for serial murderers. He is also the lead for the Crime, Culture and Contemporary Media research cluster for the Centre for Applied Criminology.

### **Findlay, Laura**

#### ***Roots remain: Telling the story of the Golden State Killer***

My paper focuses on a short comic that I created with illustrator, Rebecca Horner (Inkpot Studio, Dundee), on the Golden State Killer. The comic formed part of

an anthology, *Retro*, and looked at a serial rapist and murderer who terrorised California throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Joseph James DeAngelo was recently arrested as the main suspect in this string of attacks and the comic flits between past and present, visualising the killer's MO, the impact he had on the victims, as well as the advances in DNA technology and the use of genealogy websites that ultimately led to DeAngelo's arrest. The use of the short comic form to tell this long, complex, and incomplete story of the Golden State Killer (GSK) was challenging but, my paper argues, is an ideal form with which to represent the gaps in one's knowledge of the case as well as the controversial and, likely unethical, use of familial DNA to apprehend the suspect. Formal and aesthetic concerns are discussed in my paper, such as the different colouring styles used for certain pages as well as making use of the gutter to create a sense of the reader's involvement in creating the story and the potential dangers in not acknowledging gaps in the narrative. Closure is also discussed as having connections with the many different cultural and mediated narratives that exist about GSK in news reports, podcasts, true crime books, and documentaries, addressing the difficulties in giving DeAngelo a fair trial.

Dr Laura Findlay is a Research Assistant for Sistema Scotland and the University of Dundee. Currently based in the Dundee Comics Creative Space, she is working on a number of projects, including a comic about Organ Donation and a comic report about evaluation planning for Big Noise Douglas. Dr Findlay has lectured in Film, English and American Literature, as well as Graphic Medicine and Trauma Studies and has published work on Art Spiegelman, post-9/11 literature and film, and Bret Easton Ellis. She has co-written informational comics on graphic justice and graphic medicine and has authored a comic essay on trauma, entitled *Closure* and a true crime comic, *Roots Remain: The Hunt for the Golden State Killer*. She is currently working on a monograph about the representation of true crime in comics, documentaries, and podcasts.

### **Sperandio, Christopher**

#### ***Pinko Joe: Remixing justice***

Artists build on existing works while adding to the growth of culture. American copyright law, which was enacted to protect creative work, has, ironically, become a major limiting factor of the artistic freedom due its draconian scope. Most modern and contemporary culturally relevant works have been locked off by a handful of corporations who have erected high legal barriers against the doctrine of Fair Use. Having said that, comics are one of the largest groups of modern creative works in the public domain (more than 15,000 books from the 1930s through the 1970s).

My current graphic novel, entitled *PINKO JOE*, is a 288-page political satire and a love story. The hero of the book is an alien forensic accountant working for the police in their fight against cowardly capitalists who are attempting to pervert democracy for their own greedy ends. I am using public domain comics as a raw material by reworking and merging short stories from genres including Crime, Romance, War and Science Fiction into a single narrative. The result is a new story that ruminates on the antagonistic relationship between private and public interests in the 21st century, including (but not limited to) election gerrymandering, for-profit prisons, healthcare and copyright law. I'll speak about the ideas contained in *PINKO JOE*, as well as the historical context of the Letterists/Situationists technique of *détournement* (hijacking), as well look at examples by other artists who have taken this approach in making comics.

Christopher Sperandio's work maps the numerous margins between mass and museum cultures, taking a variety of forms including comics and books, games, temporary sculptures, painted installations, television, billboards and digital media, all usually featuring a public involvement component, in the form of open calls, canvassing, or workshops. These works have been the subjects of exhibitions in museums and art

centers in the United States, Germany, Northern Ireland, Denmark, England, Scotland, Wales, Spain, and France. Commissioning institutions include: MoMA/PS1, the Public Art Fund, Creative Time, London's Institute of Contemporary Art, Project Row Houses, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, and DC Comics. At Rice University, I'm an Associate Professor of Studio Art and Director of the Comic Art Teaching and Study Workshop, a hybrid learning and research space. For a glimpse at my in-progress graphic novel, visit [pinkojoe.com](http://pinkojoe.com)

### **Dugan, Tim**

#### ***Operation Ajax***

*Operation Ajax: The Story of the CIA Coup That Remade the Middle East* is a severe, psychologically jarring graphic novel about a covert CIA operation planned and executed by the unelected, entitled plutocracy of post-World War II Washington DC. By the admix of classical and noir references in the novel's protracted title, the authors and illustrators seem to be reaching back to the classical milieu for audacity and authenticity. Like the portmanteau "Nike-Ajax" (a cold-war ballistic missile weapons system) *Operation Ajax* is an attempted rehabilitation of the Greek moniker Ajax (the partner and cousin of Achilles), known hyperbolically in Homer's *Iliad* as the "Bulwark of the Achaeans." Over the course of our Law, Comics, Justice conversation I will assert that "the Bulwark", more than any archetype in the classical oeuvre, is representative of an enduring and provocative legacy that has insinuated itself into our cultural displays including experimental performance and cinema; painting, sculpting and installation building; etching and lithography; sports and journalistic iconography, virtual and spatial advertising and, now, the most au currant of literary forms and adult pastimes—the graphic novel.

Graphic novels, like slam poetry and performance art, are an accomplished fact—bleeding edge forms that thrive in the academy and the marketplace according to purpose. In the case of Operation Ajax that purpose is the rehabilitation of a classical prototype—Ajax—in the pursuit of law, justice and the democratic process in the Middle East. To that end we will use two timely publications: *The Many Lives of Ajax: The Trojan War Hero From Antiquity to Modern Times*, and *Operation Ajax: The Story of the CIA Coup That Remade the Middle East*, as the point of departure for our discussion. Collaterally, we will unpack and reveal a CIA human rights abrogation that rivals Teapot Dome, Watergate, Iran-Contra, and the Gary Powers U2 scandal for its notoriety and criminality.

Timothy is an associate professor of Communication Arts at St. Francis College (NY) where he teaches Writing for Performance; Performance Studies; The Oral Tradition, and various performance and drama related courses. Timothy is a contributor to various academic journals such as *Bibliotekos*, *The Classical Review*, *The Eugene O'Neill Review*, *The Arthur Miller Journal* and *The Medieval Review of Literature*. His recent publication *The Many Lives of Ajax: The Trojan War Hero from Antiquity to Modern Times* was published in March by McFarland Publishing Inc.

### PANEL .05 Justice, Law, and Philosophy

#### Worcester, Kent

##### *The Punisher and normative theories of justice*

This paper explores Frank Castle's complex relationship to normative theories of justice. The first half considers the Punisher's stance vis-a-vis the criminal justice system as revealed by his interactions over a period of several decades with a trio of A-list Marvel Universe heroes - Captain America, Daredevil, and Spider-Man. The guiding assumption here is that the Punisher's attitude toward issues of law, justice, and morality are most often articulated in response to

the perspectives of others. Rather than advancing a positive conception of justice the character typically offers a negative critique that raises sharp objections to the kinds of approaches that are typically associated with mainstream superhero culture. The paper's second half would pull together the various strands of these negative critiques to consider whether they add up to a substantive position that is rooted in a coherent philosophical tradition. The aim of this second section is to show how the Punisher's stance toward justice overlaps not with the famously pessimistic ideas of Thomas Hobbes but rather with the critique of Western liberalism provided by the controversial writings of the German legal theorist Carl Schmitt (1888-1985), in particular Schmitt's emphasis on the friend/enemy distinction and his concept of the 'state of exception'. The aim of the talk would be to show how the Punisher's proximity to Schmittian values underscores the profound gulf between the Punisher's political-juridical worldview and that of superheroes more generally.

Kent Worcester teaches political theory at Marymount Manhattan College. His books include 'C.L.R. James: A Political Biography' (1996), 'Arguing Comics: Literary Masters on a Popular Medium' (2004), 'A Comics Studies Reader' (2008), and 'The Superhero Reader' (2013). His latest book is 'Silent Agitators: Cartoon Art From the Pages of New Politics' (2016).

#### Giddens, Thom

##### *The science fiction unconscious*

The carefully wrought comics work of Tom Kaczynski presents a critical philosophy of the contemporary world. Engaging wide-ranging social and economic contexts, his short stories encounter the limits of human structure within an unknown context. His work explores life within vast cosmic, temporal, or multi-dimensional settings, bringing to consciousness the fluidity and uncertainty that is typically repressed within the orders of contemporary capitalism. His closely drawn architectural style lends itself to this rupture of structure, presenting an ordered visual

surface beneath or beyond which exists a disruptive or endless unconscious. Focusing on his anthology *Beta-Testing the Apocalypse*, I will examine and frame this 'bringing to consciousness' as an acknowledgment of a 'science fiction unconscious' of law that is made up of the rich and expansive outsides of human knowledge and socio-cultural activity encountered in the many speculative or science fiction narratives: the abyss of space, the otherness of the beyond, the problematics of technological advance, and the commodification or objectification of human life.

Thomas Giddens is Lecturer in Law at Dundee University, UK. He is a cultural, comics, and critical legal scholar with a particular interest in aesthetics and epistemology. He is founder of the Graphic Justice Research Alliance, and recently published *On Comics and Legal Aesthetics* (Routledge 2018).

#### Thomas, Mark

##### *The Dredd-ful day of judgement: Judicial activism and the labours of Hercules*

It is hard to imagine two more disparate characters than Judge Joseph Dredd and Hercules J – the one an over-muscular, faceless and heavily armed street judge astride a Lawmaster motorcycle who overidentifies with his role ("I am the Law"); the other devoid of any physical presence or image, and structurally decoupled from the execution of law by a fierce determination to maintain the separation of powers and accountability which Dredd so effortlessly ignores.

Hercules J, a liberal Wunderkind, is the embodiment of an intellectualised, yet creative, operationalisation of law. To the academic spirit, Hercules is infinitely preferable as a model of judicial activism: his world conjures a contemplative modality, parsing/interpreting law in search of internal coherence, while ever alert to the requirements of rights and the transience of each solution.

By contrast, Dredd is the personification of the worst aspects of law-and-order as the debased and

politicised manifestation of the Rule of Law. His is an intensely visceral presence, the metonymic blindness of Themis replaced, in Dredd-space, by the fractured eyeline mandated by Dredd's creator: blindness as a signifier of impartiality yields to blindness as a symptom of rage.

To the conservative mind, Dredd's intrusion into the executive is a desirable mechanism for "making justice more immediately apparent" (as Sir Ian Blair imagined the conferral of police powers which by-passed the courts). Dredd is the literal embodiment of a Pascalian distrust of natural law, glimpsed through the distorting lens of original sin, demanding a strong and determinate positive law, positively enforced. Yet both Hercules and Dredd are, each in his own inimitable way, seeking a solution to Derrida's three aporias, those impassable points in the relationship between law and justice - a solution to the existential discomfort generated when law runs out, to be replaced by Law.

Hercules resolves this apparent absence, this lack, through the creative interpretation of the extant, resolutely clothing the ghost of the undecidable with the flesh of reason, remapping the legal territory, and conscious that each solution is merely another, necessarily tentative, step towards the horizon of (an ever-retreating) determinate justice. Dredd's solutions (if indeed they are solutions) are manifest in the denial of these aporias: he is (equally resolutely) dismissive of undecidability, finds no juridical space for "re-instituting" the rule, and enacts decisions blithely indifferent to any horizon of knowability, secure in his infallibility and the permanence of his judgement. ¿Quo vadis?

Mark is a late onset lawyer, admitted to the Bar and accepting a position in academia in 2000 after previous lives in theatre and econometric modelling. He combines an academic career with practice as a Barrister, mostly in matters relating to admission as a lawyer and criminal defence.

Mark has also been closely involved with the community legal sector, having been the President of Caxton Legal Centre for over 12 years, a member of the Board of Prisoners' Legal Service for ten years,

and a founding member of the LGBTI Queensland Community Legal Centre.

Mark has co-authored books on Legal Theory and Professional Ethics, and his major research interest focusses on the idea of Law – the toponomic spaces where Law is indeterminate, inadequate or simply absent. These failings of Law are explored particularly as they are illustrated in literary forms and/or popular culture (eg J G Ballard's Crash and Suzanne Collins's The Hunger Games).

### Tranter, Kieran

#### *Doing Right in the World with 100,000 Horsepower: Osamu Tezuka's Tetsuwan Atomu (Astro Boy), Essence, Posthumanity and Techno-humanism*

This presentation considers the legalities of the posthuman embodied by Osamu Tezuka's Tetsuwan Atomu ('Mighty Atom', although known in the West as Astro Boy). Through using the omnibus republished editions of Tezuka's original manga from the 1950s and 1960s (which were published in English by Dark Horse Comics 2002-2004) it is shown that it is a text concerned with law. This is not, however, because many of the stories are 'cops and robber' crime stories or that some of the stories deal with discrimination against and the fights for civil rights, for robots. It is text about law in a fundamental sense in that throughout the diversity of the original manga there is a continual theme of transcending essence. Tezuka draws Atomu's world as inhabited by beings that are constrained, yet struggle to overcome, their inherent, limitations. Tetsuwan Atomu, in showing that essence does not limit nor constrain, shows good and bad is not determined by programming or by biology, but by choice and doing-in-the-world. In this Tezuka's has drawn a world of responsibility, responsibility borne not so much from formal duty, but from participation in 'life'. This could be understood as a techno-humanist law of love. However, instead of the latent paternalism that might attach to a serious 'law of love', what Tetsuwan Atomu reveals is a

responsibility to 'life' that comes through engagement, play and laughter.

The value of this presentation is in thinking about responsibility and doing right for the beings that come after human. Beings, whose origins are a hybrid flux of plastic biology and digital flows, beings whose capacity to know, gather resources and do in the real and the digital, potentially outstrips their human ancestors. It is a presentation about finding how to do right as a posthuman.

This presentation is in three parts. The first part locates Tetsuwan Atomu as a hybrid text. Atomu is definitely Japanese, yet suggestive of the West, and has fought and flown to become a global icon. The second part looks at 'programming' in Tetsuwan Atomu and how some of the robots and humans eclipse their limits. In this it is seen that there is choice notwithstanding essences or law. The third part reflects on the failure of programming in Tetsuwan Atomu to identify what could be characterised as a techno-humanist 'law of love', but more properly is a suggestion to nurture life through engagement, play and laughter.

Kieran Tranter is an Associate Professor at Griffith Law School, Griffith University, Australia.

### PANEL .06 Violence, Justice, and Deathworthiness

#### Beard, David, Vollum, Scott & Garland, Tammy

##### *"How many walkers have you have you killed? How many people have you killed? Why?" Moral disengagement and the choice to kill in The Walking Dead*

The study of violence in comics presumes that media models violent behavior, encouraging copycats, or desensitizes us to violence (e.g. Phillips, "Violence,

Media Effects, and Criminology” in the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice). Prior studies of violence in *The Walking Dead* have noted that the zombie apocalypse offers a blank tableau for the reinscription of the violent culture we experience today (e.g. Garland, Phillips, and Vollum, “Gender Politics and *The Walking Dead*” in *Feminist Criminology*).

This essay is structured around the choice to kill [or not to kill] in *The Walking Dead* drawing on Albert Bandura’s theory of moral disengagement. In slaying a “Walker” or in killing a human in a zombie apocalypse, the killer suffers trauma, too. According to Bandura, such perpetration of violence causes individuals cognitive dissonance by violating their moral sensibilities (sensibilities by which they would typically abide under normal circumstances). As a result, one must cope with this dissonance or trauma. Bandura proposed that the presence and internalization of mechanisms of moral disengagement offer a way to cope and relieve individuals from moral controls. Using Bandura’s mechanisms of moral disengagement, we examine how characters in Kirkman’s *The Walking Dead* choose to kill and cope with the effects of their violent actions.

David E. Beard is Associate Professor of Rhetoric at the University of Minnesota Duluth. He researches rhetoric in popular culture, including wrestling, comic books, and games.

Scott Vollum is an Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Anthropology, Sociology, & Criminology at the University of Minnesota Duluth. His primary areas of academic interest and research are violence, the death penalty, restorative justice, media and crime, and moral disengagement.

Tammy S. Garland is a Professor in Criminal Justice and MSCJ Graduate Coordinator for the UTC Department of Social, Cultural, and Justice Studies. Her primary areas of research include the victimization of women, children, and the homeless, crime and popular culture, and drug policy issues.

### Quevedo, Murilo

#### *The Doctrinaire: Vigilantism and the oppressor-oppressed distinction*

Created in 2008 by Luciano Costa, O Doutrinador (*The Doctrinaire*) tells the story of a Brazilian vigilante who travels the whole country hunting down politicians involved in corruption. Motivated by popular manifestations which occurred in Brazil in the last ten years, the character first appeared in social media in 2008 and its graphic novel was published in 2013. In 2013, increases in bus-fares lead to protests in the country, motivated by the misuse of taxes by politicians and fueled by the violence of the policemen trying to repress the manifestations. *The Doctrinaire* then rises representing the population’s desire for change, using violence to eradicate one of Brazil’s biggest social problems. However, it is criticizable that Costa’s character uses violence, which was being reprehended by Brazilian people, to defend the interest of this same people. In addition, the acceptance of this graphic novel is a sign not only that Brazilians are unsatisfied with corruption and violence, but also that they do not know how to solve it, appealing to the only known method: corruption and violence. It is true that systematic corruption in politics oppresses people, but it is undeniable that the solution proposed in this fictional work is a symptom of a deeper social problem in Brazil: Education Inequality. The creation of the first Brazilian anti-hero accomplishes its cathartic function, but also attests what Brazilian educator Paulo Freire said: “When education is not liberating, the oppressed ones dream of becoming oppressors” (GADOTTI, 2014).

Murilo Ariel de Araujo Quevedo is a graduate student who is currently taking his master’s degree in literature at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (Brazil), on the subject of Subjectivity, Memory and History. He is interested in comics and cultural studies. He has a teacher’s degree in Languages (Portuguese and English), Linguistics and Literature by the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil).

### Hastings, Wally

#### *Law and justice in Greg Rucka’s Wonder Woman: Hiketeia (2003)*

From her beginnings, *Wonder Woman* was designed to be a different sort of superhero, one who espoused less aggression than the male heroes who dominated the comics. Specifically, she was developed by William Moulton Marston to promote a feminist ethos. This development was spotty from the first and all but obliterated by subsequent writers.

Along with a 1990s series by George Perez, Greg Rucka’s 2003 graphic novella, *Wonder Woman: Hiketeia*, was part of a major move to restore some of the character’s unique qualities, primarily by establishing her classical roots. In the story of a murderer who seeks sanctuary in Princess Diana’s Themysciran embassy, Rucka contrasts two distinct superhero ethics: rigid obedience to the law, through Batman’s implacable pursuit of the killer, and *Wonder Woman*’s compassionate embrace of the higher, older, and ritualistic law of sanctuary.

Although neither Diana nor Batman is concerned with the justification for the murders, this paper will argue that *Wonder Woman*’s espousal of hiketeia leads to a more just view of events, in contrast to Batman’s refusal to entertain any mitigating factors – a position that upholds law by creating an injustice. The story thus calls attention to a continuing conflict between law and justice in superhero comics generally, one which goes back to the early years of the form.

Wally Hastings is a professor of English at West Liberty University in West Virginia, where I developed a program in graphic literature. His primary area of research has been children’s and young adult literature, but I have been moving into studies of the history of comics as well. He previously taught at Northern State (SD) University and Rutgers.



### Schmid, Johannes

#### ***Framing legislative change in John Lewis's March-trilogy***

This paper will investigate framing strategies of the graphic memoir trilogy March that U.S. Congressman and civil rights leader John Lewis co-authored with Andrew Aydin and artist Nate Powell. While the trilogy primarily conveys Lewis' remembrance of the Civil Rights Movement Lewis himself has repeatedly expressed that he envisions March to be a "road map" for a new generation of protesters to raise what he calls "good trouble". March, thus, presents the Civil Rights Movement and John Lewis as role models. The aim of this talk will be to discuss visual, narrative, and paratextual framing strategies that the work employs to negotiate justice, injustice, and the law.

The concept of framing has been employed in a variety of academic fields, both as a semiotic and material boundary (Kress 2010; in comics studies especially Groensteen 2007) and as a cognitive category (Goffman 1974; Entman 1993; Lakoff 2014). To make sense of the world and medial artifacts human beings essentially depend on cognitive frames as preconceived and conventionalized evaluative schemata that ascribe default causalities and roles to the agents and objects in a situation encountered. By 'framing' a situation within the logic of one such schema communicators may seek to influence the conclusion their audiences draw. Especially in social movement research the concept has been employed productively, to describe how actors such as leaders, organizations, the state, and the media seek to control narratives and mobilize (or demobilize) potential followers and shape public opinion (Snow and Benford 1988; 1992; Morris and Staggenborg 2004; Snow 2016). To use an example by David A. Snow, "whether baton-wielding police officers clubbing protesters are seen as riotous or responsible social control agents, depends in part on which of the other elements of the scene are enframed and accented." (2016, 124) In this light, the paper will discuss how the Marchtrilogy frames the

remembrance of the civil rights movement, the narrative frames that the books employ, and how they attribute the reasons for the successes of the movement. In particular, it will be examined how legislative watershed moments, such as the U.S. Supreme Court's Decision in the case of Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 are framed within the logic of the story.

Johannes C. P. Schmid holds a one-year Ph.D. completion scholarship with the University of Hamburg, Germany, where he was a Research Assistant from 2015 to 2017 in the research project "Media-Aesthetic Strategies of Framing and Translation in Graphic Novels". His dissertation project is titled "The Frames of Documentary Comics", and his recent book Shooting Pictures, Drawing Blood: The Photographic Image in the Graphic War Memoir (Berlin: Bachmann, 2016) was presented with the 2015 American Studies Award of the University of Hamburg, as well as the 2016 Roland Faelske-Award for Comic and Animation Studies. From August to October 2018 he will be a guest scholar at Northeastern University in Boston.

### **PANEL .07 Black & The Wilds: Black Mask Creators Explore Crime and Justice in Comics**

#### **Ayala, Vita**

#### ***The Wilds - "After a cataclysmic plague sweeps across America, survivors come together to form citystate-like communities for safety."***

Vita Ayala is a writer based out of New York City. She penned her first piece of fiction at the tender age of ten, and never looked back. Traditionally a prose writer, she has a few soon-to-be-released comics projects in the works—including Our Work Fills The Pews through the publisher Black Mask Studios. When she is not actively writing, Vita spends her time

scheming ways to get tickets to see Hamilton and cultivating an appreciation for New York's finest cheap pizza. - <https://www.dccomicstalentworkshop.com/alumnus/vita-ayala/>

#### **Osajyefo, K. & Smith III, T.**

#### ***Black - "In a world that already hates and fears them -- what if only Black people had superpowers. After miraculously surviving being gunned down by police, a young man learns that he is part of the biggest lie in history. Now he must decide whether it's safer to keep it a secret or if the truth will set him free."***

Creator and writer of BLACK, Kwanza Osajyefo is a former digital editor at Marvel and DC Comics – best known for launching DC's Zuda imprint, which published series like the award-winning Bayou, High Moon, Night Owls, as well as Supertron, Celadore, Black Cherry Bombshells, Bottle of Awesome, and I Rule the Night.

Co-creator and designer of BLACK, Tim Smith 3 (A.K.A TS3), has been working in the comic industry for over 15 years. He created and self-published Red After the Party, and has worked on hit titles for some of the biggest publishers in the industry! To see more of TS3's work, check out: [JUNEMOON.NET](https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/kwanzer/black-1/description). - <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/kwanzer/black-1/description>

### PANEL .08 Investigations, Courts, and Corrections

#### Walters, Lisa & Raze, Jennifer

##### *The architecture of justice in comic-book courtrooms and courthouses*

How do the settings of courthouses and their courtrooms, as graphic “landscapes” that frame and choreograph judicial performance, serve to inform (and deform, and reform) our shifting views of justice?

We (two presenters) begin by briefly touching on some classic graphic narrative courtroom scenes, including Fagin’s trial and its mob rule in the Classics Illustrated 1964 rendition of *Oliver Twist* as well as the comedic “Court Costs!” story in the 1989 *Solo Avengers* 1:14, in which a green Jennifer Walters (aka She-Hulk) argues before an all-white Supreme Court against the Mutant Registration Act (and is frequently interrupted to battle the villain Titania on the courthouse steps).

We’ll then focus on *Daredevil*’s 2002 Volume 2 issues 38–40. These issues invite us to watch the prelude, execution, and epilogue of “The Trial of the Century.” In this three-act graphic tragedy, an initially reluctant Matt Murdock, JD (aka *Daredevil*), unsuccessfully defends Hector Ayala (aka *White Tiger*) against the charge(s) that Ayala killed a police officer during the commission of a crime—and Murdock ends up witnessing Ayer’s death by cop on the courthouse steps. Our close reading, aided by the work of artists, jurists, and critics ranging from Eisner to Foucault, will interrogate individual panels. We’ll ask attendees to contribute to our investigation of how these panels depict the public space of courthouses and courtrooms; how these depictions compare with real-world courtroom procedures and design; and how these graphic scenes can reflect and challenge our encounters with courthouses as loci of justice (and its institutional miscarriage).

LisaRoxanne Walters, JD, a graduate of the Cardoza School of Law, is a lawyer, independent scholar, and award-winning stage and film actress who lives in Brooklyn with her husband and four children. Her early love of superhero comic books fed her appetite for righting wrongs, and graphic-art depictions of justice continue to inform her local and global activism.

LisaRoxanne’s sister Jennifer Raze, MFA and ABD, is a teacher, librarian, poet, and independent scholar published in *Snake Nation Review* and other literary and academic journals, and who has presented at the University of Florida’s Conference on Comics and Graphic Novels in 2002, 2003, and 2014.

#### Klippan, Lucy

##### *Visualising the invisible: The use of comic-style illustrations to explain legal processes to inmates in correctional centres*

This paper explores the potential for visual representation to help achieve social justice in the context of law and corrections. In the field of law, text has traditionally been “treated as a sacred source” (Mulcahy, 2017), which is a view that reinforces the field’s exclusive status. Law and legal processes are seemingly designed by and for highly educated people, sometimes at the expense of the people who are statistically more likely to feel their full force (for example, people from lower socio-economic backgrounds with lower education levels). There is an inherent power imbalance here. However, there is also great – and so far, largely untapped – potential for the use of visual representation, particularly that which is relatable and “human”, to redress this.

A design project aiming to improve the experience of court-custody video conferencing for participants serves as an interesting case study to examine in this context. In this project, comic-style illustrations were used in conjunction with text in a series of visual communication products to visualise and simplify complicated legal systems and processes. The use of

illustration allowed the products to be accessible and approachable for people in custody, many of whom have lower level literacy or English language skills. The process of developing these products enabled interesting and unexpected conversations to occur, not only with the intended end users (i.e. people in custody), but also with staff from courts and correctional environments. In this respect, visual representation served as a powerful equaliser between people, regardless of hierarchy or role.

Lucy is an Australian illustrator and strategic designer. Her work spans illustration and design of publications such as *Towards Humane Prisons* (ICRC, 2018) and *Designing for the Common Good* (BIS Publishers, 2016), to brand design, through to environmental signage designed to enhance public spaces in culturally diverse contexts.

Lucy is also experienced in the application of design and innovation methodologies to address complex crime and social problems in a range of areas, including detention environments and systems, mental health and community safety.

Lucy is passionate about visual communication and illustration, and about the potential for art and design to help people to thrive in their environment.

#### Webster, Liz

##### *Benevolence and malevolence: Two Face and prosecutorial legitimacy*

This paper examines the Batman super villain, Two Face, aka Harvey Dent, and explores what popular culture representations of the character suggest about prosecutorial legitimacy from the character’s origin story in 1942 to the present day. While police officers are regularly depicted in comic folklore, prosecutors much less so. The enduring popularity of District Attorney Dent therefore appears exceptional, providing a window into public views of prosecutors and how these perceptions have changed over time. Legal ideals of the prosecutor as a “minister of

justice,” and “servant of the law” are challenged through representations of Dent as duplicitous and corrupt in early portrayals and as suffering from psychological disorders in later years. I draw from legitimacy theory and critical criminology to contrast legal representations of the prosecutor as inherently legitimate with popular representations of the prosecutor as compromised through his proximity to crime and tainted by his unchecked authority. Moreover, I argue that these representations have historical significance as reflections of popular culture attitudes towards prosecutors and crime control.

Elizabeth Webster is an assistant professor of criminal justice and criminology at Loyola University – Chicago. Her research interests include miscarriages of justice and criminal justice system processing. She has published research about prosecutors’ assistance in exoneration cases and also about gender and wrongful convictions. She formerly worked in the communications department of the Innocence Project, an organization that represents prisoners with innocence claims. Email her at [ewebster1@luc.edu](mailto:ewebster1@luc.edu)

### **Cadwell, Shelby**

#### ***A taste for justice: Chew and the advent of the gustatory detective***

Chew, a comic series published by Image Comics between 2009 and 2016, explores a post-avian flu pandemic United States in which the FDA has been granted totalitarian power to prevent future food-borne catastrophes. The parallels to the powers granted to the TSA and DHS following the attacks on 9/11 are clear, but Chew is no simple alternate history. In addition to the dystopian logic of the series’ premise, Chew also features characters with food-related superpowers. The protagonist, FDA agent Tony Chu gets “psychic sensations” from the food he eats. He can sense when an apple was grown or envision the moment a cow was slaughtered. Tony Chu’s superpower, and the way he uses it to detect clues and solve food-related crimes, upturn traditional notions of detective work, particularly as it is

portrayed in comic form. Detective work and comics alike are ocularcentric – vision is the most crucial sense for both the detective within the diegesis and the comics reader scanning the page for clues. In a comic where taste, eating, and digestion take on new and unusual resonances, the reader is asked to shift their perspective on what constitutes “detective work” and consider how the less “relevant” aspects of the human sensorium may play into that work. As senses, the sensual, and the intimacy of eating and digesting are also deeply connected to ideas of gender and race, Tony Chu’s extraordinary capabilities – and the way he chooses to use them – are worth further exploration and considerable thought.

Shelby Cadwell is a Ph. D candidate in the English Department at Wayne State University. Her research interests include Afrofuturism, ecocriticism, animal human studies, and science fiction studies. Her published work has appeared in the journal Science Fiction Film & Television.

### **PANEL .09 Disability and Difference**

#### **Purcell, JoAnn**

##### ***Disability daily drawn: Encounters with difference***

Social justice often begins with visual representation and thus this project combines my work as a diary cartoonist with a theoretical discussion of the unique ability of comics to elucidate encounters with disability and difference. My practice began over two years ago in the ordinary days of family life where I began to draw a four panel comic every day alongside my twelve-year-old daughter, born with the genetic difference Down syndrome. As part of my PhD research, I undertake these daily entries to consider the mundane experience of living beside disability. What is uniquely humorous, difficult, peculiar or lovely in my daily encounters with her difference? To illustrate these quotidian encounters makes the imperceptible visible and encapsulates each

encounter individually and as a multi-page sequence. This practice is now habit and follows my daughter into puberty.

This presentation reads my drawing practice through comics’ theory, more specifically the subgenre of autographics coined by Whitlock and DeFalco’s ethics of care. My daily practice draws upon the methods of anthropologists Taussig’s fieldwork observations and Myers’ “affective entanglement of inquiry”. To confront the difference between us visually can be the stepping stone to social justice for marginalized persons. Each drawn encounter is not about smoothing out the edges and finding the commonalities; rather, I follow critical disability theorist Shildrick’s assertion that it is about “opening oneself – becoming vulnerable – to an encounter with irreducible strangeness”. Encounters that often wouldn’t otherwise occur except through the engagement with comics, recorded at the source of difference.

JoAnn Purcell is a PhD student in Critical Disability Studies at York University where she can combine her background as a visual artist and registered nurse and create comics alongside disability and difference. She holds an MA in Art History from York University, a BScN from the University of Toronto and is a graduate of the Ontario College of Art in Toronto. She is the current and founding Program Coordinator of Illustration at Seneca College. She was instrumental in the creation of the award winning Animation Arts Centre and was coordinator in the early years. As Faculty she teaches drawing, painting, colour theory and visual art and illustration history. She has years of hands on experience as a visual artist, animator and visual effects artist and previously, psychiatric nursing.

#### **Rubalcava, Rolando**

##### ***Graphic narratives in a post-ADA America***

The comics of Max Bemis and Larime Taylor are works that operate with a specific consciousness on disability. The two authors are disabled and their

narratives function as platforms for marginalized perspectives. While superhero comics have been brought under the lens of disability studies, examining body politics and representations of disabled bodies, what makes Taylor and Bemis unique is how they are the product of the advancements of disability rights and representations. While activism and diverse voices are key to advancing marginalized voices, I argue that legislation, specifically the Americans with Disabilities Act, plays a vital function in aiding in the lifting of such perspectives. This is evident in the composition of these works, both in their narrative and format; *Polarity* by Bemis explores the emotional and psychological toll of having super powers induced by bipolar episodes, consciously and purposefully critiquing the superhero genre, while *A Voice in the Dark* by Taylor is a comic that was created by a quadriplegic using technology that could not have come to exist without the ADA. Aiding in the development and effort of lifting marginalized voices in the disabled community, I wish to argue how the ADA is a vehicle for progress, clearing avenues that were once closed to specific communities, when actively focusing on access to public spaces.

Becoming ratified in 1991 and going through several reiterations, the ADA has been one of the most progressive pieces of legislation, created for the sole purpose of granting access to all Americans. This effort has now made access to public spaces an issue of justice, ensuring all spaces, including where citizens can express themselves. Looking at the history of this legislation, including its revisions, I will show how its use in the public sector is targeted for a specific community, yet has become a benefit to all, allowing a cultural and institutional shift in practicing policy. Researching this approach to legislation is multidisciplinary in nature, examining the influence and impact of said legislation historically, while looking at the rhetorical use of its policies, as well as examining it through the lens of comics studies. Also, applying the work of Leonard Davis, whose approach to disability studies is essential in examining how spaces are designed, this research will look at how public spaces can be politicized or coopted by institutions. The research I wish to present will be part

of a research project to further emphasize how legislation is one part of the activism needed to advance the voices of specific communities that have been historically disenfranchised. Connecting these two can help solidify the connection between legislation and progress.

Rolando Rubalcava is a comics studies scholar, with an emphasis on disability studies and textual criticism. His latest research project includes a phenomenological approach to Chris Ware's *Building Stories*, examining the role of Form in the meaning making process. He currently lives in Los Angeles, CA, but will move to Columbus, OH in the Fall to begin his first year of doctoral studies at Ohio State University.

### Hassan, Moises

***The mutant code: The struggle of discrimination in Chris Claremont's X-Men between metaphoric discourses and comic code authority regulation***

During World War II, the United States Government and comic book publishers had a common agenda: to defeat the Nazis in Europe. The end of the War marked the beginning of a new political era with a new enemy: Communism. In this case the enemy was a difficult idea to combat, but in the U.S. this fight was institutionalized by Senator Joseph McCarthy's witch-hunt that affected the entire American society. The comic industry was no exception and the publishers established a very strict self-regulatory code: the Comic Code Authority. The Golden Age of comic book had come to an end.

In the 60s, the comic book industry was resurrected with a reinvention of superheroes that brought them closer to the reader. One of those series was *The X-Men*, created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. The *X-Men* presented a group of mutants with supernatural abilities, feared and discriminated against by society. However, aside from the initial premise, the title failed to discuss discrimination explicitly until the late 70s with Chris Claremont's run.

In this paper I argue that Chris Claremont use of metaphors of the mutant in *The X-Men* and *New Mutants* allows him to discuss discrimination against different religions, ethnicities and nationalities. Through a close reading of anti-discrimination discourses in the franchise, I explore the use of metaphors as a way to foil the Comic Code Authority.'

Moisés Hassan Bendahan is a PhD student of Hispanic Language and Literature at Stony Brook University. He is interested in comic books and graphic novels as forms of visual culture and sequential art, and how immigration is represented within them. His research will collate the testimonies of first generation Americans in the form of a graphic narrative from a psychoanalytic perspective of trauma and memory. He is also interested in other forms of popular culture such as comedy and animation.

### Linton, Matt

***From convict to jailer: The re-incarceration of Luke Cage***

Adilifu Nama, in *Super Black* writes that Luke Cage "symbolizes the triumphant transformation of a black underclass convict to a politicized black antihero on an epic scale," adding, "the character's literal mutation [...] is bound to issues of unjust black incarceration, black political disenfranchisement, and institutional racism in America" (55). In April of 2010, Luke Cage starred in a relaunched version of the comic series *Thunderbolts*. Cage is put in charge of a group of super-powered criminals housed in The Raft. These criminals, in exchange for a reduced sentence, will be used to carry out dangerous missions for the good of the world. Their compliance is guaranteed both by the physical danger Cage poses to them, as well as through injections of nanites into their bodies - which Cage has control over. Instead of being a victim of and threat to state violence, he becomes a representative and instrument of that system. He is given authority over a vulnerable population,

presenting to them a dangerous option as their only means for re-entry into society.

In this presentation I will examine the larger implications of such a reconceptualization of the character, narratively, racially, and politically. This is in line with what I argue is a gradual de-politicizing and de-racializing of the character. Much of this is seen in the character's move from antihero to mainstream superhero, as well as the alignment with respectability politics, and the abandonment of the "hero for hire" modus operandi.

Matt Linton is a PhD student in the Film & Media Studies program at Wayne State University in Detroit, MI. His areas of research include constructions and representations of race, biopolitics, and visual narrative in comics and film.

### **PANEL .10 Comics, Politics, Resistance, and Censorship**

#### **Kidd, Dustin**

##### ***Queer graphic resistance***

I examine representations of queer politics in mainstream comics using a purposive sampling of titles. Much of the work on representation in comics has focused on representations of identities. There is great work, for example, on representations of gender, race, class, disability, and (yes) sexuality in comic books. This work is certainly influential on my own project. However, I move the analysis to a focus on queer politics with a distinct emphasis on the visual elements of representation in comics. How are contested queer relationships of power, politics, economics, and intimacy represented through the visual element of comic books? How do these representations differ across various types of artists and their positions within the comic book industry? How do these visual representations enable new types of political imaginary for artists and audiences?

How do these graphic representations draw from the canon of comic book narratives while also distinctly transforming it? The goal of the analysis is to establish a typology of queer graphic resistance strategies that can be used for larger scale analyses, and to track transformations of queer political representation in comic books over time. This typology also allows for a comparison of comic book political representations to similar representations across other types of media such as film, TV, fiction, and games. The interpretive theoretical lens brings together elements of queer theory with components of visual sociology. Although the paper uses an intersectional lens throughout, particular attention is given to issues of race and the representations offered by non-white artists in the comic book industry.

Dustin Kidd, PhD, is a pop culture expert and a professor in the sociology department at Temple University. His research examines film, television, fiction, social media, comics, video games, music, and the arts, focusing on both inequalities and the ways marginalized groups use media to challenge those inequalities. He is the author of the books *Social Media Freaks*, *Pop Culture Freaks*, and *Legislating Creativity*.

#### **Horowitz, Emily**

##### ***The Mike Diana obscenity conviction***

Mike Diana was the first and only U.S. artist convicted of obscenity, in 1994, as a result of images from his self-published zine *Boiled Angel*. The prosecution argued Diana's work had no artistic value, appealing only to "sexual sadists" and was dangerous because it could cause "deviant sexual arousal". This paper argues that the Diana case, as well as more recent efforts to censor comics as a result of the 2003 PROTECT act, are also closely linked to the satanic panic and daycare sex panic of the 1980s/early 1990s, the missing child panic in the early 1990s, and the current sex-offense legal regime. The Comic Book Legal Defense Fund and artists defended Diana because his case was understood to be about

censorship, art, and free speech, yet it cannot be divorced from the fact that *Boiled Angel* involved children and sex, and a number of images reflected incest and child sexual abuse by priests. Even prior to the Diana matter, comic-book censorship bore upon matters related to children and sexuality, as shown by the obscenity case involving 1969 R. Crumb "Joe Blow" comic, featuring an incestuous family. The 2003 PROTECT Act intended to protect (real) children from sexual exploitation includes an entirely new crime category: "obscene child pornography," which includes non-photographic art of all mediums depicting child sexual abuse. This paper explores how censorship of art defying sexual norms is inexorably bound to our ongoing "war on sex" and increasingly draconian sex offense policies, involving issues more complex than First Amendment freedoms.

Emily Horowitz is a professor of sociology & criminal justice at St. Francis College (Brooklyn, NY). She is the author of *Protecting Our Kids? How Sex Offender Laws Are Failing Us* (2015) and a co-editor of *Caught in the Web of the Criminal Justice System: Autism, Developmental Disabilities, and Sex Offenses* (2017). Emily founded and codirects a program at St. Francis College that helps formerly incarcerated students earn college degrees, and co-coordinates a New York City group that sponsors speakers and events to raise awareness about sex offense policies.

#### **Nurse, Angus**

##### ***Moral crusaders: perspectives on comics and censorship***

This paper examines direct censorship of graphic justice via analysis of the banning of comics, primarily in the US. Books are frequently banned for containing 'adult content', for reasons of language, for depictions of sex/nudity or because they are not considered to be 'age appropriate'. According to the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (CBLDF) comics are uniquely banned because reliance on static images within the medium allows a single page or panel which is part of a larger work/narrative to provide the impetus for

challenge or objection; different to challenges to movies or pure prose fiction. Movies can be cut; allowing the 'offending' images and language to be removed and revised work to be distributed. Comics once published are static/permanent and may be subject to challenge on grounds of how the juxtaposition of text and images is interpreted or socially constructed as 'offensive'. Through content analysis of material on US library bans and obscenity charges laid against comics, this paper explores the social construction of comics as 'low value' and 'offensive' speech. Its analysis of challenges to the public availability of comics explores the manner and context in which comics are subject to regulation as 'obscene' material on various grounds such as: profanity/offensive language; sex or nudity; violence and horror, drugs and alcohol; politically/socially/ racially offensive material and material deemed to be offensive to religious beliefs.

Dr Angus Nurse is Associate Professor, Environmental Justice at Middlesex University School of Law where he teaches and researches criminology and law. Angus has research interests in criminality, critical criminal justice, green criminology and Graphic Justice. He has contributed book chapters on vigilantism in graphic justice and on the representation of serial killers on television and chaired the Graphic Justice panel at the Socio-Legal Studies Association's annual conference in 2018. His paper on the criminalization of free speech and DMZ was published in the Comics Grid, the Journal of Comics Scholarship's Graphic Justice collection in August 2017. Angus has previously worked in the environmental NGO field and as an Investigator for the Local Government Ombudsman. His books include Policing Wildlife (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), Animal Harm: Perspectives on why People Harm and Kill Animals (Ashgate, 2013) and Miscarriages of Justice: Causes, consequences and remedies (together with Sam Poyser and Rebecca Milne) (Policy Press, 2018).

**Astro, Alan**

**Charlie Hebdo vs. Mediapart:  
The libertarian left versus the identity/social justice left**

Charlie Hebdo is the major French comics magazine of the libertarian left. While the well-known murder of its cartoonists by Islamist terrorists has earned it a bum rap for “Islamophobia,” the magazine has always featured numerous cartoons that fiercely mock Christianity and Judaism. Charlie Hebdo thus inscribes itself in the long legacy of French anticlericalism that goes back to Voltaire—a tendency that has been traditionally considered on the left. Indeed, the massive protest against the terrorist attack was led by the then president of France, the socialist François Hollande. Arguably, this was a seal of approval offered to Charlie Hebdo by the State.

Charlie Hebdo was recently involved in another matter intensely reported on in France, but little known elsewhere: a controversy that erupted between the comic magazine and Mediapart, a major investigative journal. Mediapart editor Edwy Plenel accused Charlie Hebdo of waging “war” on Muslims—a charge that, if taken literally, would justify the terrorist attack. Plenel and his journal Mediapart embody an avatar of the left newer than that of Charlie Hebdo: a movement for social justice that sees the immigrant population—along with other minorities—as the new proletariat, replacing the white working class as a force for change or even revolution. Like Charlie Hebdo, Mediapart has received a kind of State consecration: the current president, centrist Emmanuel Macron, chose Edwy Plenel to interview him on TV.

In response to Plenel’s charge, Charlie Hebdo has roundly mocked Mediapart. This occurred when a significant ally of Plenel’s—Muslim cleric Tariq Ramadan, immensely popular in immigrant neighborhoods—was accused of sexual assault by several women. In a cartoon that has become one of its classic covers, Charlie Hebdo shows Plenel with eyes, ears and mouth covered by his somewhat Stalinesque moustache. The legend reads:

The Ramadan Affair:  
Mediapart Reveals:  
“We Didn’t Know”  
(i.e., we didn’t know that rumors were circulating about Ramadan—rumors that a proper investigative journal should have followed up to see if they had any substance).

In my presentation to the conference of the Graphic Justice Research Alliance, I shall offer more background to this and other controversies Charlie Hebdo has been embroiled in—controversies that can be seen as pitting two vastly different conceptions of the left against each other.

A native of Brooklyn, Alan Astro has taught for 31 years in the modern languages department of Trinity University in San Antonio. The author of over 35 articles on writers as varied as Bashevis, Baudelaire, Beckett and Borges, Astro is the editor of Yiddish South of the Border: An Anthology of Yiddish Writing from Latin America (published by University of New Mexico Press). His translation of Eric Marty’s Radical French Thought and the Return of the “Jewish Question” appeared in 2015 with Indiana University Press. Splendor, Decline and Recovery of Yiddish in Latin America, a volume Astro has edited with Malena Chinski, is forthcoming from Brill. Astro is no stranger to St. Francis College, having spoken here on French antiracism (in 2002), on Yiddish poetry of the Holocaust (in 2008), and on Christianity and Judaism in Élie Wiesel’s Night (in 2014).

### **Skrill, Howard**

#### ***Captain America on the Battlefields of Brooklyn***

Captain America on the Battlefields of Brooklyn is a pictorial essay from Howard Skril's Anna Pierrepont Series [[HowardSkrill.blogspot.com](http://HowardSkrill.blogspot.com)] exploring the temporary placement in 2016 of a bronze statue of the Marvel superhero Captain America on the sprawling Revolutionary Battlefields of Brooklyn of August 1776, the site the largest battle of the American Revolution, a military disaster where no figurative monuments to the actual American warriors who perished there were ever erected.

The work imagines the largely forgotten fate of a decidedly ragtag and ultimately doomed soldier in the newly minted American army confronting and eventually succumbing to professional soldiers from the world's most powerful empire, Great Britain, in marked contrast to the acclaim that accompanied the installation of a monument to the fictional and fantastically equipped super soldier upon the earlier soldier's plowed under battlefields.

The Anna Pierrepont Series explores the inconstancy and erasure of public and private memory in plein air paintings and drawing of extant public figurative monuments and occasionally their absences after objects' removals. Images from the series have been published worldwide standing alone and incorporated into pictorial essays and have also been exhibited on the East Coast, including a related work 'HMS Jersey: Absences and Memory from the Battlefields of Brooklyn' that was the subject of a 2015 solo exhibition of the Anna Pierrepont Series at St. Francis College's Callaghan Center with a related pictorial essay of the same name published in 2017 in War, Literature and the Arts.

Prof. Skril is an adjunct professor at St. Francis College.