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Welcome!

The present booklet offers an overview of the abstracts that were accepted for our conference. The red thread that weaves through these proposals is the complex question of “the future.” During three days, our authors, who are scholars from different countries and academic fields (literature, gender studies, history, and several others), will analyze works from many traditions. Aside from our central theme, we believe that a second red thread is the authors’ passion for a medium that has become more intensely investigated in academic circles during the last two decades. Our committee is delighted to be able to include so many important aspects of these themes in this booklet and to be able to welcome you all to this conference.

Francesco-Alessio Ursini

Frida Beckman

Adnan Mahmutovic

Frank Bramlett

Keynote Presentations

Thursday 3 September

“A life laid out before us: Past, present and future in graphic memoirs from a cognitive linguistics perspective”

Elisabeth (Lisa) El Refaie
Cardiff University, UK

Graphic memoirs are not the most obvious genre to discuss in relation to ideas of future, since they appear to be so firmly focused on past experience. However, many such works do, either implicitly or explicitly, include anticipations of future events and circumstances. Moreover, the act of reading in-volves its own experience of time, which, in the case of comics, exists in and as space. According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, thinking and talking about time in terms of space comes naturally to us, because space is more concrete and easier to grasp. Thus, a common way of imagining a sequence of events is through the ego-moving metaphor, in which the observer progresses along a time-line towards the future. What makes the experience of reading comics unique is that they simultaneously invite both a linear and a two-dimensional view of time as space: “Wherever your eyes are focused, that’s now. But at the same time your eyes take in the surrounding landscape of past and fu-ture” (McCloud 1994: 104). These arguments will be discussed through the example of Held (2003) by German artist Flix, almost half of which is dedicated to the depiction of the author’s own imagined future.

Speaker Bio

Lisa El Refaie works at the Centre for Language and Communication Research, Cardiff University. The main focus of her research is on (verbo-)

visual forms of metaphor and narrative in graphic memoirs. She is the author of *Autobiographical Comics: Life Writing in Pictures* (2012), and her articles on comics have appeared in a wide range of edited volumes and journals, including *Visual Studies* (2010), *Studies in Comics* (2010), *The Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* (2012), *Semiotica* (2014) and *Autobiography Studies* (2014). For the past three years she has been working on a project with an NGO in Africa, using comics drawing workshops to encourage teenagers to express their thoughts and feelings about HIV and Ebola, and to share important health messages with their peers.

Friday 4 September

“Narrative, Time-travel, and Richard Maguire’s Here”

Roy T Cook
Professor & CLA Scholar of the College
Department of Philosophy
University of Minnesota—Twin Cities

Richard Maguire’s “Here” (as well as the longer *Here*) involves a multitude of shifts between the (roughly) present, the near and far past, and the near and far future. In more traditional narratives, such shifts play a number of familiar roles, two of the most obvious being (1) that one or more characters has travelled in time, or (2) that the narrator presenting past or future events that play an explanatory role in understanding events depicted before or after the shift – that is, a flash-back or flash-forward. In “Here,” however, we lack any obvious protagonist who might be traveling back in time – i.e. we can’t adopt reading (1), and we lack any cause-and-effect thread linking events – i.e. we can’t adopt reading (2). Hence, either “Here” is non-narrative, or we need an alternate account of how the constant shifts in temporal location throughout the comic are to be understood. In this talk I will explore both options. On the first, the protagonist of the comic is the location itself, and the comic is merely a catalogue of incidents in that character’s life. On the second, “Here” is a first-person time travel narrative – that is, the protagonist, who travels in time, is the reader him- or herself. I shall conclude with some tentative reasons for preferring the latter interpretation.

Speaker Bio

Roy T Cook works primarily on the philosophy of mathematics, the philosophy of logic, mathematical logic, and the aesthetics of popular art (especially comics). He is co-editor (with Aaron Meskin) of *The Art of Comics: A Philosophical Approach* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), co-editor (with Frank Bramlett and Aaron Meskin) of *The Routledge Companion to Comics and Graphic Novels* (Routledge, forthcoming), and coeditor (with Sondra Bacharach) of *LEGO and Philosophy* (Wiley-Blackwell, forthcoming). He has published essays on comics in *Image and Narrative*, *ImageText*, *The International Journal of Comic Art*, and *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, and a number of anthologies. His favorite topics include metafiction, Peanuts, and anything involving the Sensational She-Hulk!

Saturday 5 September

“Are Visions of the Future a Thing of the Past in Japanese SF Anime and Manga?”

Sharalyn Orbaugh
University of British Columbia

Since the end of World War Two Japanese manga and anime have provided prescient visions of the future in science fiction narratives that circulate globally and influence both technological innovation (inspiring robotics engineers) and considerations of the ethical or legal ramifications of technological advances. However, recent trends in Japanese SF have moved away from envisioning and exploring possible futures. The *seikaikei* and *kukikei* genres of the 1990s and early 2000s, despite their futuristic SF settings, emphasized small-scale stories of personal salvation through heterosexual romance, rather than the far-reaching, philosophically rich, and often intriguingly queer narratives of earlier Japanese anime and manga stories. The dominant trend now is for narratives that take their structure from video games, wherein visions of the future are abandoned in favor of endless replayings of the same time loop. In this presentation I will consider recent works such as *All You Need is Kill* (the basis for recent Hollywood live-action film *Edge of Tomorrow*), *Gantz*, and *Sky Crawlers* in terms of

the messages they provide regarding our present anxieties and our (lack of) hope for the future.

Speaker Bio

Sharalyn Orbaugh is a fan of queer and SF manga and anime. Representative publications include “Who Does the Feeling When There’s No Body There? Cyborgs and Companion Species in Oshii Mamoru’s Films” (*Simultaneous Worlds: Global Science Fiction Cinema*, ed. Wells and Feeley, 2015); “Emotional Infectivity: The Japanese Cyborg and the Limits of the Human” (*Mechademia 3*, 2008); and “Future City Tokyo: 1909 and 2009” (*Science Fiction and the Prediction of the Future: Essays on Foresight and Fallacy*, ed. Westfahl, Yuen and Chan, eds., 2011). She is professor of Asian Studies at the University of British Columbia, where she teaches Japanese narrative and visual cultures.

Conference Schedule

THURSDAY 3 SEPTEMBER

in U29 Geovetenskapenshus

Welcome—(12.00–12.15)

Keynote Presentation #1 (12.15–13.15)

A life laid out before us: Past, present and future in graphic memoirs from a cognitive linguistics perspective

Elisabeth El Refaie—Cardiff University, UK

Panel #1—The future is...here and now (13.20–15.20)

1. Where is the future? The construction of “space” and narrative locations (Francesco-Alessio Ursini)
2. The Future is Ahora: Visions of Near and Far Future in Two 21st Century Mexican Comics (Gabriela Mercado)
3. “The Rich Get Richer, The Poor Get Poorer, and There are Flying Cars”: The Present, The Future and the Familiar Dystopia of Joss Whedon’s *Fray* (Houman Sadri)
4. The Swedish Comics Miracle—Imagining Future in Swedish Comics Anthologies (Anna Nordenstam & Margareta Wallin Wictorin)

Fika—Swedish coffee break (15.20–15.40)

Panel #2—The future is...tomorrow (15.40–16.40)

1. I am the (Roman) Law—*Judge Dredd* and futuristic visions of ancient Rome (Isak Hammar)
2. Visions of the Future in *Dani Futuro* by Carlos Giménez and Victor Mora (Patricia Ayala García)

FRIDAY 4 SEPTEMBER

in U29 Geovetenskapenshus

Keynote Presentation #2—(9.00–10.00)

Narrative, Time-travel, and Richard Maguire's Here

Roy T Cook—University of Minnesota, US

Panel #3—The future is...coming soon (10:10–12:10)

1. Where Comics and Movies Converge: *Days of Future Present* (Ana Cabral Martins)
2. Manga's Future: On Post-Genre Imaginations by Female Artists (Jaqueline Berndt)
3. Hallucinations of Present Future (Maxime Boyer-Degoul)

Lunch—(12.10–13.40)

Panel #4—The future is...yesterday (13:40–15:10)

1. Tragicomic Books: Moore/Gibbons, Waid/Ross, and the Nostalgia of Pop Apocalyptic (Aaron Ricker)
2. Literary History and the Construction of the Future in the Dark Age of Superhero Comics (Fred Francis)

3. Dystopian Chaos, Dystopian Order: A Comparative Analysis of Differing Ideological Reinterpretations of the Masked Vigilante in Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* and Moore and Lloyd's *V for Vendetta* (Joakim Jahlmar)

Fika—(15.00–15.30)

Panel #5—The future is...next to us (15.40–16.40)

1. Reviving the Past in the Graphic Novels: Reflecting the Jewish American Future in the Transforming Cities (Bülent Ayyıldız)
2. Childhood or adolescence in the city of Michi *Urushihara's Yorukumo*—future or present day? (Steinhäuser)

Conference Dinner—(18:00) Place to be announced

SATURDAY 5 SEPTEMBER

in D7 main building

Panel #6—The future is...abstraction (10:00–12:00)

1. The comic page as time machine—panel based time travel and simultaneity in *From Hell*, *One Soul* and *Here* (Alex Fitch)
2. Does the Future Speak to Us?: Representations of Future English in Selected Comics and Graphic Novels (Joe Trotta)
3. Analog in a Digital World: The Future of Teaching (in) Comics (Alison Mandaville)

Lunch—(12:00–13:30)

Panel #7—The future is...for everyone (13:30–15:00)

1. From Human Rights to Robot Rights: Artificial Consciousness and Humanity Run Amok in Contemporary Comic Books (David Scott Diffrient)
2. Race and the Failed Futures of EC Comics (Qiana Whitted)
3. English Apocalypses and Robot Skateboards: Warren Ellis' Futures (Keith Scott)

Fika—(15:00–15:20)

Keynote Presentation #3—(15.20–16.20)

Are Visions of the future a Thing of the Past in Japanese SF Anime and Manga?

Sharalyn Orbaugh—University of British Columbia, Canada

Closing Address—(16.20-16.25)

Abstracts

Visions of the Future in Dani Futuro by Carlos Gimenez and Victor Mora

Patricia Ayala Garcia

This paper would discuss one example of a Spanish comic that was also published in French, Italian and German: *Dani Futuro* (Dani Future) created by Carlos Giménez and Victor Mora from 1969 to 1975. This comic tells the story of a young man that was traveling by plane to meet his father. His plane crashes and he hibernates for more than 150 years, and when he awakens, he is a witness of the new world, a future that includes humans of the future: mutants, monsters and cyborgs, cities of the future, politics of the future, and the 70s idea of utopia and dystopia. The main character of the story, Dani, thinks and behaves as the reader would do in front of the wonders of the future he encounters in every episode. The series was a big success in Spain; nowadays it is considered a classic. The way the future is portrayed was so innovating that it is considered a huge influence for George Lucas' *Star Wars*.

My lecture would include similarities with other works and the history of the different publications and reprints of the comic, being the most recently in 2013, in a black and white version of the comics that was colored during the first edition. *Dani Futuro* was a very experimental comic in the professional world of graphic narrative. The scripts were perfectly adapted in the visual way and they even include some social critic and ecologic subthemes that were new to the 70s society. The new version, in one volume with more than 300 pages, can be read with the eyes of the 21st century and the way the future is described still surprises the reader.

The use of color would be a point of analysis in the lecture. During the

70s it was considered that science fiction comics would be more successful if colored. The creators of *Dani Futuro* decided to publish in black and white, but the publishing houses added color and changed the lettering to a printed one, however, in the most recent version, the original form demonstrated that the color was not needed to impact the reader.

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Reviving the Past in the Graphic Novels: Reflecting the Jewish American Future in the Transforming Cities

Bülent Ayyıldız

As graphic narrative techniques are able to depict various lifestyles, the strategic use of frames, stereotypes, and gutters strengthen the narration to penetrate social dilemmas and changes that Jewish immigrants experience in America. Stereotypes are both used to show the otherness of the immigrants and they are associated with the landscape/cityscape that creates a form of unity or a network among Jewish immigrants. Moreover, frames and panels are illustrated in such a way that they enable the reader to view both effects

of the environment: a safe haven for the American Jewish society but also a place of perpetual problems for the individual and social life. Nevertheless, the relationship between the land and Jewish identity in the graphic narratives depicts the historical change Jewish Americans have experienced. The future of Jewish immigrant society in the tenements is represented and constructed in graphic novels by focusing on landscape, space and stereotypes.

In this thesis, four different Jewish American artists' graphic novels, namely Eisner's *The Contract with God* trilogy, Pekar's *The Quitter* and *Cleveland*, Katchor's *The Jew of New York*, Kubert's *Jew Gangster* will be analyzed to show how Jewish American identity is constructed with graphic narratives through Jewish cultural elements, environment, heritage and how these characters' lives are affected by their particular condition in the United States. These works offer different perspectives on Jewish identity and problems Jewish Americans face due to social, ethnic and economic constraints and they indicate that Jewish American characters possess a Jewish consciousness in various degrees, which play a decisive role in their social lives. Therefore, the Jewish experience reflected in these works indicates American Jews' awareness of their political, ethnic and social status in the United States. Residential environment of American Jews sustain their identity awareness or struggles to establish their identities in a WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestant) American culture, or the environmental elements carries out the traces of assimilation or acculturation of American Jews. At the same time, while the city, its institutions and the land stand for the communal unity among American Jews, they also reflect individual struggles and the change of the environment in the context of Jewish society.

This thesis analyzes how the environment, where Jewish immigrants settle and create a communal society to preserve their Jewish values, are depicted in the selected graphic narratives and how this depiction constitutes a strong relation between the land and the American Jewish identity. The mentioned works deal with Jewish immigrants' personal and social problems in the areas they settle. These settlements dissolve and transform in time, which triggers characters' aspiration towards upward mobility. The transformation of the cities and characters are interrelated in the mentioned works and this theme is effectively portrayed through texts and images.

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Manga's Future: On Post-Genre Imaginations by Female Artists

Jaqueline Berndt

One major gateway for manga to attract critical attention within Anglophone academia has been the generic framework of Science Fiction. Accordingly, dystopian visions of the future, created by male artists and reaching non-Japanese audiences in the form of anime (or games) rather than graphic

narratives, have dominated the image of “future in manga.” Yet, as effective as the framework of Science Fiction may have been with respect to interconnecting “subcultural clusters” (Kacsuk) across borders, it also involves a number of blind spots, which this paper intends to address from the perspective of Japan-based manga discourse. First of all, the thematic genre of Science Fiction is often been assumed to be of universal relevance across cultures and decades. But regarding manga in Japan, thematic genres come to the fore mainly whenever the otherwise prevalent age- and gender-specific categories forfeit efficacy. The Triple Disaster of 11 March 2011 has been one of such cases, inducing manga artists to go beyond dystopian anticipations as familiar from highly formulaic series targeted at non-infant male readers, for example, in *gekiga* style. Female artists, usually less noted abroad with respect to issues of the “future,” have published noteworthy narratives which prompt not only rereadings of already classic manga by female pioneers, but also questions about the concept of future in general (Berardi) and manga-specific takes on its lack in particular. My paper shall demonstrate this by means of two major examples, “*Mitsuami no kamisama*” (The pigtail-braid deity, 2011-12) by Kyō Machiko (*1980) which relates the Fukushima Daiichi accident and its consequences in an unusually implicit way by focusing on a young woman who seems to live in an idyllic, timeless swathe of land, and *Toward the Terra...* (1977-80) by Takemiya Keiko (*1950), the very first manga by a female artist to receive the prestigious Sei’un Award for Science Fiction, a series which due to its emphasis on self-determined thought and action achieved an unexpected topicality after 3/11. Works like these point to the future of manga itself.

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Hallucinations of Present Future

Maxime Boyer-Degoul

Philippe Pons declares that manga and television are “two factories of imagination within contemporary Japan’s mass culture” and the fact is that both of them are everywhere in everyday life. Such vision echoes Chris Marker who, through his filmic essay, *Sunless* (1983), defined Tōkyō as a cartooned city. Kon Satoshi, who worked on manga and “anime” – or *japanimation* – often used his works in a way to question mass produced images as embodying the real and serving a consumerist purpose. From his manga *OPUS* to his last picture *Paprika*, he depicts characters as imitations from real but also as beings modeled by these same images. So, *Paprika* explicitly portrays a present-like future in which imagination printed by *japanimation* is allowed, through futuristic technological tools, to break boundaries and spread across realities.

In that view, Koike Keiichi’s still unfinished manga *Ultra Heaven* shares similarities related to the position of media image within Japanese society. Japan is depicted like a futuristic dystopian society in which media encourage people to take hallucinogenic substances under the pretext of social and therapeutic benefits. But this gradually appears as a system to keep people under control through dependency and consumption so as to prevent them from any potential rebellion. More specifically, this vision of future echoes contemporary Japan’s mass-produced imagery in reference to *japanimation*’s culture.

Kabu, the main character, is a perpetual unsatisfied young addicted man, still looking for more sensations. In the same time, he is aware of drugs’ limits and consequently deluded by this mass culture of images. He

is as addicted to drugs of images as an *otaku* to technological tools and imageries. Moreover, Koike, as Kon, depicts a reality of images “modeling” people experimenting it in a Cronenbergian way and causing several means of hallucinated states such as resulted from *Videodrome*’s signal or more specifically from atomic legacy as portrayed by Ôtomo’s *Akira* and *Domú*. Under the influence of drugs, Kabu loses himself between real and fantasy to finally merge with the reality that he models and that models him, to become an image, such as Ultraman’s, this Japanese TV hero of the now dead future past.

Through Koike’s works, as well as Kon’s, culture of images is depicted as a mean to keep people under control and modeling a context of postmodernist “eternal present” at the cost of an individual crisis without past nor identity.

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Philippe Pons, *D’Edo à Tokyo. Mémoires et modernités*, Mayenne, Editions Gallimard, 1988, p.410

Where Comics and Movies Converge: Days of Future Present

Ana Cabral Martins

I will be contending with the question of the future in relation to comics through film industry studies perspective. As Thomas Schatz has argued, the increasing convergence between film and media industries — along with the convergence culture, i.e., “the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries” (Henry Jenkins, 2006: 322) — and the associated trend towards media conglomeration led to the expansion of media and entertainment operations and the promotion of corporate synergy. Concerning filmmaking, this conglomeration trend has deepened the studios’ reliance on blockbusters. Corporate synergy furthers “the strategic expansion of established movie ‘brands’ into worldwide entertainment franchises that benefit the parent company’s other divisions” (Schatz, 2009: 45).

While films based on comic books are not a new or recent phenomenon, recent years have seen a growing trend towards that genre, with comic book films being heralded as the “ideal model for the Hollywood blockbuster” (Gordon, Jancovich, and McAllister 2007: vii). Moreover, Henry Jenkins

argues that the “comic book industry now functions as Hollywood’s research and development department,” which has resulted in a veritable “comic book fixation” (Jenkins, 2013: 373). This “fixation” in comic book films, especially superhero related, has given way to the adaptation not only of various characters but also of famous storylines. As these blockbuster films’ success is translated into franchise territory, the relationship between the adopted storyline and film evolves. The case of “Days of Future Past” is particularly interesting given that the adaptation from comic to film had to obey not only practical constraints but was also used to unite two different casts from two different trilogies and course-correct, while obeying to the canon set by earlier movies (bringing up questions of canonicity as what is canon in one medium may not be so in the other), previous entries opening up the franchise for future installments.

The success of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, which transported the shared universe model from the comic book world, has transformed the superhero movie landscape and studios with superhero properties are creating their own movie universes, through different approaches: the *mélange* of worlds happening with the Marvel Cinematic Universe (Disney/Marvel Studios) and the separation of universes of the DC Cinematic Universe (DC Comics, Warner Bros.). The construction of these universes presents challenges for the foreseeable future, not only because the slate of superheroes films for the next 5 years includes dozens of films (Keyes, 2015), but also considering the effects this “superhero glut” has had and may have on comic books (i.e., the canceling of the *Fantastic Four* series as a result of Fox’s ownership of the movie rights to the characters). Couple the strong trend towards convergence with Disney notorious penchant for corporate synergy — and a notable influence of the movies in the comics —, and the recent announcement of the “Secret Wars” begins to look as an overhaul of the Marvel Multiverse to bring it closer to the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

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The comic page as time machine: panel-based time travel and simultaneity in *From Hell*, *One Soul* and *Here*

Alex Fitch

All comics are a form of time travel. By viewing a panel in the middle of a page designed to be read in chronological order, we are aware of, and able to visit, the past and future of a moment in time by moving our eyes back and forth across its breadth. Most comics and graphic novels are designed to be read from start to finish in a linear order, however creators can take advantage of the simultaneity of all panels confronting us on the page (Berlatsky 2008), whether via a subliminal awareness of a dramatic panel to come, or foreshadowing of future events through panel layout and repetitions. Taking this idea one stage further, a handful of graphic novels have used the time travel sensibilities of comics to weave asynchronous narratives across their pages.

Alan Moore uses time travel narratives – and the reader’s ability to traverse them by going backwards and forwards in the text – in his collaborations with Dave Gibbons, such as ‘Chrono-Cops’ in *2000AD* prog 310 (April 1983) and ‘Watchmaker’ in *Watchmen* #4 (December 1986), but the entirety of his graphic novel *From Hell*, illustrated by Eddie Campbell (originally serialised 1989-1998) is inspired by this construction (Carter 2004). Moore reconfigures his Jack the Ripper as a time travelling spirit, who moves back and forth within the narrative, sometimes on the same page, showing his crimes as ones that have ripples backwards and forwards in time.

The graphic novel *One Soul* (2011) by Ray Fawkes takes the idea of simultaneity to its logical conclusion, juxtaposing 18 stories simultaneously on each double page spread of the story, with each narrative - from mediaeval times to the 21st century - progressing independently in the same position in

paired page and thematically intersecting on occasion in a poetic framework (Bennett 2014). By reading one spread at a time, the reader is aware of events taking place simultaneously in 18 different time zones, or can choose to read just one panel on a page a time, for a frame based comic book experience.

The graphic novel *Here* (2015) by Richard McGuire, takes a more abstract approach to simultaneity, with narrative reduced to vignettes lasting no more than half a dozen pages, as the reader travels (somewhat randomly) backwards and forwards in time, and specially never moving beyond the corner of one room. *Here* takes the reader from the creation of the Earth to the far future, and hints that the entire comic may be a reproduction of the experience of a viewer from that future using a technological window into the past, reflecting the author's interest in technology and the experience of reading comics (Bartual 2011).

In the paper I will be comparing how these three works of graphic fiction, with consideration of the more limited way that cinema – a medium which now seems increasingly influenced by the experience of reading comics on tablets (Loyer 2015) - has displayed simultaneity on screen in the past. With references to other examples of time travel in comics such as Grant Morrison's *The Invisibles* and Chris Ware's *Building Stories*, the paper will show the possibilities of the comic book page to present trans-temporal and simultaneous narratives the way no other medium can, and how the paper page of the comic can create a transcendent experience that more interactive formats (such as tablet computers) can only hint at.

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From Human Rights to Robot Rights: Artificial Consciousness and Humanity Run Amok in Contemporary Comic Books

David Scott Diffrient

The expression “technology run amok” — long associated with dystopian and post-apocalyptic strains of science fiction literature and film — continues to reflect widespread societal attitudes toward robots. Ranging from the Hal 9000, a monotone-voiced AI system that casts an evil eye on astronaut David Bowman before its cognitive circuits are disconnected in Arthur C. Clarke’s *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), to Arnold Schwarzenegger’s time-traveling cyborg programmed to assassinate Sarah Connor in James Cameron’s *The Terminator* (1984), robots are frequently portrayed as nightmarish figures of methodical menace and rampaging destruction in narratives set in the near or distant future. Increasingly, however, comic book writers and artists have begun to extrapolate the consequences of a very different scenario; that of *humanity run amok*, with artificial agents and electromechanical machines situated on the receiving end of sometimes brutal, suppressive efforts to rein in robot rights. This essay explores the recent history of such alternative cultural representations, taking new and ongoing American comic book series such as *Alex + Ada* (2014-), *Copperhead* (2014-), and *Descender* (2015-) as case studies through which to engage the controversial topic of roboethics.

As David Levy states, “To many people the notion of robots having rights is unthinkable.” In part, such incredulity springs from the supposition that they are *objects* rather than subjects, functionally subservient extensions of humans fulfilling the latter’s wants and needs rather than individual “selves” pursuing their own desires. However, the aforementioned graphic narratives, in addition to classic and contemporary Japanese manga series such as Osamu Tezuka’s *Astro Boy* (1952-1968) and Naoki Urasawa’s *Pluto* (2003-2009), showcase the challenges that robots face in a world that has become increasingly hostile to their presence, where fearmongers prophesize the onset of a post-human society and even lash out against their once-helpful artificial companions.

A particularly compelling example of this publishing trend is Jonathan Luna and Sarah Vaughn's fifteen-issue series *Alex + Ada*, a futuristic story in which the developing relationship between the titular protagonists strengthens and solidifies once Ada — a Tanaka X-5 android gifted to twentysomething Alex by his grandmother (so as to alleviate his depression) — achieves sentience. Experiencing ostensibly “human” sensations such as love and anger, she comes into full consciousness and self-awareness as a *person* rather than thing. And yet, despite her newfound capacity to make decisions based on her *feelings*, as a robot she poses a threat to the dominant social order. As a result, Ada is forced to evade the authorities before going into hiding once the United States government mounts a military clampdown on her and other artificial beings' fundamental freedoms (including their freedom to simply *exist*). Like Jeff Lemire and Dustin Nguyen's recently launched *Descender*, a comic book series about a prepubescent robot's “struggle to stay alive in a universe where all androids have been outlawed,” *Alex + Ada* asks its readers to identify with individuals who face existential dilemmas in addition to physical threats in the form of humans who wish to terminate their AI programs. Luna and Vaughn introduce these themes in a subtle but consciousness-raising way, reminding the reader that *consciousness itself* can be artificially embodied in the form of robots. This idea gains salience when delivered via the uniquely hybridized medium of comic books, a machinic art that not only bears the imprint of human endeavor (writers and artists who use computer software as well as traditional tools of creation, like pens and brushes), but also asks its readers to engage in a participatory mode of fictional world-building that bears strong similarities to their own world — a place in which popular cultural texts are bringing increasingly inclusive human rights discourses to the fore.

Literary History and the Construction of the Future in the Dark Age of Superhero Comics

Fred Francis

The history that has become standard in comics scholarship today, to the degree that the contemporary superhero narrative is read as “a series of footnotes to Miller and Moore” (Klock 4), is that in the 1980s, a small group of comics creators broke from the conventions of the costumed

hero by writing superhero comics marked by complexity of narrative, an abandonment of moral absolutism, and a markedly sombre tone and aesthetic. In doing so these creators inaugurated what became known as the Modern or “Dark” age of mainstream superhero comics. However, there are several elements of this narrative which require development. One of the most prominent of these is the fact that Miller and Moore’s most highly praised works of the period – *The Dark Knight Returns* and *Watchmen* – situate themselves in an alternate future of advanced technological development, yet also aesthetically recall a gothic past. Although both elements have been considered to some degree, my paper will suggest that it is specifically the combination of scientific futurism and literary history that can be found in both works which offers a way of understanding the construction of the texts, and can therefore be used as a tool for the periodization of the Dark Age. The utilisation of a literary history to assemble a scientific future can be shown to offer particular advantages for Dark Age comics creators. Moore’s description of the world of *Watchmen* as one where “science, traditional enemy of mysticism and religion, has taken on a growing understanding that the model of the universe suggested by quantum physics differs very little from the universe that ... mystics have existed in for centuries” (*Watchmen* IV:30) suggests that in order to understand the futurism of *Watchmen*, one must look for a negotiated territory between the two poles of science and mysticism in the past. The clear reference point then becomes the moment of post-Enlightenment negotiation, played out in Romantic and Gothic writing.

My paper will present several instances from key Dark Age superhero works, including *Watchmen*, *The Dark Knight Returns* and *Kraven’s Last Hunt*, where themes, elements of plot, or direct quotations from Romantic and gothic literature are incorporated into futuristic settings. These will be used to argue that it is the dual-vision of these works, the ability to simultaneously look back into literary history and forwards to a potential future, that is the key development of the Dark Age of superhero comics.

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I am the (Roman) Law – *Judge Dredd* and Futuristic Visions of Ancient Rome

Isak Hammar

In *Judge Dredd*, references to 20th century history and popular culture are not only common but also a distinct aspect of the comic book universe. Often such allusions are used to highlight comedic absurdities for which the comic book is known. However, *Judge Dredd* also features recurring historical references to ancient Rome. From *The Foundation* to *Star Wars* and *The Hunger Games*, Roman history is repeatedly conjured up in science fiction. In fact, it has become hard to avoid certain stereotypical motifs of ancient Rome in visions of the future due in part to the prominence of classical themes, topics and visuals in Western culture in general and in science fiction in particular. Ancient Rome can therefore be viewed as a culturally shared frame of reference that highlights certain aspects of a futuristic society while offering the reader a sense of familiarity, even though the story takes place a hundred years from now.

In *Judge Dredd* there are general allusions to the Roman past through the motif of the Mega-City One, plagued by crime and poverty; the place of law in this city; the chaotic provinces; a slave society in the form of robots such as Dredd's loyal Walther. Furthermore, there are references through names such as Judge Cicero and titles like the "Triumverate" and symbols like the eagle. More remarkable though are those story lines which make explicit references to Roman history. In the classic *Judge Dredd* story "Robot Wars," where a Spartacus-like uprising is led by the robot Call-Me-Kenneth, numerous distinct references to ancient Rome are made. In the major story line "The Day the Law Died," revolving around the despotism of Judge Caligula, the Roman themes and motifs are even more apparent. In both these stories the comic book establishes a dialogue with history in order to define and describe the society of the future.

Thus, the idea of the future in *Dredd* is shaped by historical references. But at the same time, visions of the future in comics and on film and TV also shape our perceptions of the past. By using stereotypical motifs of ancient Rome in science fiction – including moral decadence, slavery, tyranny, violent games and gangs – our understanding of an historical period is reaffirmed. As our society's previous vivid dialogue with the distant

past becomes weaker, new generations of readers might face narratives about ancient Rome primarily through popular media like science fiction.

In this paper, I will discuss the nature of the references and allusions to ancient Rome that can be found in *Judge Dredd* as well as discuss how visions of the future in popular culture can draw on experiences of the past in order to highlight expectations of the present.

Dystopian Order, Dystopian Chaos: A Comparative Analysis of Differing Ideological Reinterpretations of the Masked Vigilante in Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* and Moore and Lloyd's *V for Vendetta*

Joakim Jahlmar

In the 1980s, the comics field in the US, and in particular the superhero genre, was revolutionised by among others Frank Miller and Alan Moore. This paper will investigate how Miller, on the one hand, and Moore, in collaboration with David Lloyd, on the other, offer radically different, yet equally ideological reinterpretations of the masked vigilante archetype in *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (1986) and *V for Vendetta* (1990) respectively. Miller's Batman not only reproduces the inherent conservative values of the genre itself – the idea that the role of the superhero is to protect the status quo of the cultural hegemony – but also reaffirms a masculine power fantasy with fascist leanings, by suggesting that the vigilante should be the strong leader around whom we should rally. Moore and Lloyd's *V*, however, presents an inverted model, where the vigilante is constructed as an atypical anarchist hero who aims to change the system itself rather than preserve it.

Arguably both these reinterpretations are achieved, in part, by using future settings as a backdrop. In Miller's case, it is an enhanced, media-saturated version of the 1970s/-80s Republican to Libertarian fiction of a society disease-ridden with crime and chaos, which requires order to be restored (cf. e.g. *Dirty Harry* (1971) or *Cobra* (1986)). The underlying ideological assumption of this fiction is, of course, the old fascist myth that chaos will consume our values unless order is restored, and the restoration of this, arguably new, order requires (masculine) strength. In Moore and Lloyd's case, on the other hand, society has not crumbled under the forces

of chaos; instead, the fascist myth of order has been drawn to its logical conclusion and is itself established as the status quo: a de facto fascist state.

The paper aims to analyse these two vigilantes in relation to the future societies which produce them, in order to see how two different dystopian visions are used to reinterpret a particular hero archetype in fundamentally contrasting ways, while drawing upon Maggie Gray's (2010) analysis of *V for Vendetta* as an argument for comics as cultural resistance, and Jordana Greenblatt's (2009) interesting if not unproblematic reading of (inter) subjectivities and sidekicks in *V for Vendetta* and *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*.

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Analog in a Digital World: The Future of Teaching (in) Comics

Alison Mandaville

The pedagogical tools we use to teach comics will inform the future of comics studies. Our work with students will help develop the next generation of advanced comics studies researchers. Indeed, the future of teaching "new

media” literacy may be found in the comics form. Comics—a “slow” word-and-image medium—have exploded in popularity concurrent with far “faster” new visual media forms (film, Youtube, gaming, social media). While this increased interest in comics and other “book arts” has sometimes been seen as reactionary resistance to more ephemeral “new media,” the comics form may instead play an integral and necessary role in this new media narrative landscape. Comics are largely, if not essentially, an analog -- paper and pen – form. As such, for the purposes of learning about narrative, comics hold something that new media lacks: an accessible kinesthetic connection to “making” and “reading” (and, so, to making meaning). As comics increasingly make their way not only into our research but also into our so-called twenty-first century syllabi, we must consider new ways to teach—and so to investigate—this form. How can we best teach comics? What unique tools can comics pedagogy can offer the future of narrative study in new media contexts? How do we avoid antiquated prose teaching pedagogies so that a more relevant, future-oriented discourse of comics and all narrative forms can emerge?

In this presentation I argue that comics are a highly current, even prescient form for narrative studies. This accessible, explicit, and “slow” form offers critical tools for learning about all kinds of narrative, about the multi-sensory ways humans make and communicate knowledge, whether analog or digital. From thirteen years teaching and writing about comics pedagogy at the university level, I offer examples of powerful comics pedagogical moves, supported by examples of student work. I outline teaching strategies that both advance the study of comics and help students (and researchers!) learn to be more critical perceivers, actors, and makers in a world of “fast and seamless” media. The future is in the form.

The Future is *Abora*: Visions of Near and Far Future in Two 21st Century Mexican Comics

Gabriela Mercado

Mexican comics form a tradition almost unknown outside of the Spanish-speaking world. This lack of divulgation is a result, among other reasons, of low publication and even lower translation rates in the country, due in

part to their reputation as a medium belonging to popular periodicals but not to the format of books. Most of the big names in Mexico are mainly working on political cartoons and comic strips, rather than comic books, and sometimes their material is collected by publishing houses once they become iconic enough.

Still, there is a new generation of comics writers who have been working through social media and independent publishing houses in order to release personal anthologies and graphic novels in proper book format: sometimes electronic, sometimes print. These writers, many of them literary authors as well, have used comics as a medium to portray their different visions of the near and the far future, having as a starting point a current Mexican reality where violence, political scandals and corruption are exacerbated as years pass.

In this presentation, I take two comics belonging to two different authors from this new generation: *La blanda patria* ('The soft country') by Luis Fernando (1992, final version 2010) and *1874*, by Bernardo Fernández *BEF* (with illustrations by Yorko, 2013). In these, we have two different examples of how Mexican comics envision a near future and a far future. On the one hand, there is the not so distant post-apocalyptic Mexico of *La blanda patria*, in which contemporary Mexican reality is still predominant. It is an experimental comic with intertwined stories, which differ in style and mode of narration but which are similarly characterized by popular and cultural icons as well as by a common story anchored in the Mexican reality of the end of the 20th century. On the other hand, *1874* presents a unified story and style, where the future transcends Mexican reality into a human catastrophe in a dystopian world where robots have finally created functional and peaceful societies.

Both nostalgic and crude in different manners, these works voice the characteristic blend of humor and pessimism of turn-of-the-millennium Mexican fiction. This presentation aims to introduce these authors as spokesmen for the current Mexican comics tradition, as well as to present a comparison on the Mexican vision of what the near future and what the far future can be like.

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The Swedish Comics Miracle – Imagining Future in Swedish Comics Anthologies

Anna Nordenstam & Margareta Wallin Wictorin

Since the beginning of the 21st century the Swedish comics field has expanded significantly. Today comics and graphic novels are influential in the public cultural debate. Albums and books are sold in bookstores, reviewed in the cultural fora and get a lot of attention in all kinds of media. Young people create visual stories and some of them are political, while other are more epic. Both categories contain examples that address questions about the future.

Many of these comics are published in Swedish anthologies, such as Galago, which has existed as a forum for alternative comics since 1980. Started by a collective of comics artists, it has been bought and sold several times. Still it has produced some of the most artistic Swedish comics ever. Another creative collective in the comic field in Sweden is Dotterbolaget (The Subsidiary, but in Swedish literally meaning The Daughter Company), which published an anthology with the same name in 2009. Between 2011 and 2014 Utopi Magasin published mainly Swedish comics with epic ambitions and character. The comics field in Sweden is expanding, and the phenomenon has been paid attention to abroad. Since 2001 C'est Bon Anthology presents Swedish comics artist to an international audience four times a year. More recent additions are From the Shadow of the Northern Lights I and II, containing comics by artists from the alternative scene in Sweden. Examples of comics creators in these anthologies are Sara Granér, Lotta Sjöberg, Liv Strömquist, Mattias Elftorp and Mats Jonsson.

The paper aims to analyse a sample of comics assembled from these anthologies, and to discuss how they explore the idea of the future. We argue that many of these comics problematise visions of the future through a critical perspective on the neoliberal ideology in the Swedish debate and society. The criticisms are often based on a gender and class analysis. Different kinds of humour, such as irony, satire and black comedy, are

important strategies in the visual as well as the verbal narratives. Deterrent and alternative visualizations of the future are presented with a humorous twist, sometimes by telling one version in words and another in images. The paper describes and analyses the visual and verbal narratives, how the *mise en scène* is designed in the single panels and how visual and verbal conventions are used (Groensteen 1999 and Kukkonen 2013).

Tragicomic Books: *Watchmen*, *Kingdom Come*, and the Nostalgia of Pop Apocalyptic

Aaron Ricker

This presentation provides a scholarly analysis of the ways in which the bestselling *Watchmen* series (Moore and Gibbons, 1986-1987) creatively engages popular apocalyptic traditions like those based on the book of Revelation, and then of the creative answers offered explicitly by the *Kingdom Come* series (Mark Waid and Alex Ross, 1996) to both *Watchmen* and pop apocalyptic. In recent years, scholars like Annalisa Di Liddo (2009) and Christine Hoff Kraemer (2010) have given serious academic attention to Alan Moore's use of the apocalyptic imagination, including the book of revelation. Others like Kawa (2000), Price (2012), and Lanzendörfer (2015) have examined Ross and Waid's generous use of words and imagery from Revelation. In 2010, Terry Ray Clark read the genealogical relationship in the opposite direction, and presented a case for treating the "tragic" and "comic" visions of *Watchmen* and *Kingdom Come* as secular pop apocalyptic "scriptures" in their own right.

This paper extends and refines the work of such scholars through a close reading's turn to specifics, "zooming in" on and weighing the details of how *Kingdom Come* cites both *Watchmen* and the book of revelation (both boldly and subtly) in building its particular secular pop apocalyptic vision. I argue that certain "nostalgic" and "formalist" family resemblances shared by these related sources locate them on one identifiable Western branch of the apocalyptic medium-as-message. The most significant strand of cultural-creative DNA driving all three sources is, interestingly, a constellation of characteristics often associated with Pop Art: irony, nostalgia, a heatedly conflicted ambivalence toward visual image communication, and a creative obsession with the nature and status of their own media within economies

of technology and production. On this branch of the tree of Western pop apocalyptic, forward-looking visions of anxiety and hope are insistently (if not obsessively) articulated in inward-looking and backward-looking terms. Utopia and dystopia are twins conceived and born in nostalgia.

The investigative payoff of this triangulated comparison is a summary hypothesis of *how* the medium is the message in such works, when “New Ages” and “Ends of Ages” are articulated by creatively cannibalizing Golden Ages: past, within environments of popular culture and mass production: these textual means of articulating pop apocalyptic imagination are socio-rhetorically inseparable from the culturally contingent “beginnings and ends” they evolved to mediate.

“The Rich Get Richer, The Poor Get Poorer and There Are Flying Cars”: The Present, The Future and The Familiar Dystopia of Joss Whedon’s *Fray*

Houman Sadri

In his own foreword to the collected edition of *Fray*, Joss Whedon explains that, in formulating the world in which his Slayer of the future was to live, he made no efforts to, “Re-imagine, or predict, the future” (Whedon 3). At first glance, this assertion seems curious – the series in question is, after all, set in a dystopian future, and as such must surely be seen to involve a degree of prediction. More curious still is Whedon’s use of the word, ‘re-imagine’: the future, after all, does not exist yet, and so cannot be re-imagined, only imagined. On closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that Whedon’s supposed future is essentially an adaptation, as opposed to an extrapolation, of his view of present-day American society. This interpretation is supported by ideas and assertions present within other works within what is seen broadly as the Whedon canon: from the insistence of *Angel*’s Harland Manners that the apocalypse is ongoing and ever-present, as opposed to a future event to be prevented and avoided, due to the inherent selfishness of mankind and the economic and social systems they place stock in (“Reprise,” – *Angel* season 2, episode 15), to the swift degeneration of society into barbarism and guerrilla warfare as a result of the spread of the Active Architecture software central to *Dollhouse*, it can be argued that Whedon sees and presents society

itself as broken to such an extent that a dystopian future is, essentially, an inescapable fact of life as opposed to a cautionary allegory.

In other words, all appearances to the contrary, the “future” environment in which Melaka Fray lives and operates is, at its root, simply a version of a present day urban wasteland albeit (as Whedon himself is at pains to point out) with flying cars and other science fiction and fantasy trappings. As such, the metaphors Whedon uses have more in common with those of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* – which is to say that they refer directly to the pressures and concerns brought to bear on both individuals and the communities in which they find themselves by the mechanisms and expectations of social and societal realities over which they have neither real power nor the ability to refuse to participate – than with those of the other dystopian urban landscapes of speculative fiction. This project, then, represents an attempt to unpack, contextualise and interpret these metaphors, and situate them within the greater whole of Joss Whedon’s social, societal and political preoccupations and concerns, while simultaneously examining the difference between the postlapsarian concepts of the dystopian future and the inevitable realities of post-industrial urban existence.

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English Apocalypses and Robot Skateboards: Warren Ellis’ Futures

Keith Scott

Someone stole your future. Don't you ever wonder who?

—Warren Ellis

To view literary and artistic depictions of the future as predictive is always dangerous; they are better read as speculative (“what if?”, not “what will be”), or extrapolative, thought experiments based on the basis of the present. It is a truism that Science/Speculative Fiction is never about the future, but about the present; *1984* is a magnification of the state of the world in 1948,

Brave New World is a response to a culture of mass-media sensation and post-Fordist industrialization, and so on. In this paper I will examine the work of Warren Ellis, whose writing continually returns to ideas of futures both possible and thwarted, the “what might be” and the “what never was”. In the most recent of his email newsletters, *Orbital Operations*, he quotes from Christopher Vitale’s *Networkologies*: “The future is not what it used to be: it is much more unpredictable, dangerous, sly, and interesting.” What I will do here is outline the contours of the future landscapes Ellis delineates, moving from the traditional mode of extrapolative Speculative Fiction (as in *Orbiter*, *Transmetropolitan*, and the as-yet incomplete series *Doktor Sleepless*) to his works dealing with the futures that never were, most notably in *The Authority*, *Ignition City* and above all *Ministry of Space*. Throughout his writing, Ellis seeks to recapture a sense of wonder at the potential of possible advances, and a refusal to surrender to either post-millennial ennui or despair at a possible “Grim Meathook Future”; for him, the future represents the fundamentally unknowable, a zone of marvels which far outstrips our attempts at prediction:

Somewhere, there’s a mouse with a human ear growing out of its back, and a rat that produces monkey sperm. Mars is being explored by two motorised skateboards. Wernher Von Braun, who designed a Mars expedition for a crew of two hundred using available technology in the 1950s, would have shat blood in anger.

(Ellis, “Future Underground”)

Above all, I will examine Ellis’ futures as springing from a uniquely British (and indeed English) sensibility, formed from past visions of the world to come; his work offers a fascinating synthesis of influences, from Ballard and Wyndham (clearly seen in *Freakangels*), through *Thunderbirds*, *Doctor Who* and *Quatermass*, to the cosmic derring-do of *Jeff Hawke* and *Dan Dare*. Rooted in the past (and in past visions of the future), Ellis’ futures are not designed to tell us what will be, but to inspire us to dream of what *could* be, if we allow our imagination to drive our innovations. Both warning and call to arms, his work collapses past, present and future, in an attempt to arrive at a deeper understanding of humanity: “We all forgot that the future is yet to be written. No-one knows how it’s going to turn out. The best we can do

is track the future as it happens, and use our fiction as a tool with which to understand where we are.”

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Does the Future Speak to us?: Representations of Future English in Selected Comics and Graphic Novels

Joe Trotta

More than other literary genres, Speculative Fiction (SF) is reliant on world-building strategies that enhance the immersive experience of readers and transport them to distinctly different fictional worlds. Since one of the basic premises of the genre is that it involves a reimagining of reality which is different in fundamental ways from the world in which we live, SF authors are faced with an apparent paradox: on the one hand the constructed fictional world in question must maintain some similarities with our present world (sometimes referred to as orienting components), but on the other hand the narrative per definition must sever its ties to the real world in order to exploit the denaturalization and defamiliarization processes which license it to vicariously explore contemporary societal anxieties as well as provide an appropriate setting to examine problematic moral and philosophical issues which may otherwise be difficult to approach in a more realistic fictional world.

Among the standard variables that are typically manipulated for world-building purposes in SF (e.g. physics, monetary systems, cultural behavior, ecology, societal relations, among others), constructed languages (or *conlangs*) can play a powerful role in shaping, communicating, and understanding the identities of the fictional characters of a story and the world in which they live. In addition, because of the very intricate connection between human language and human cognition, Conlangs can also open up the potential of Speculative Fiction to explore the ways in which we understand the relation between language, culture and perception—both within the fictionalized

world and without; in other words such language use has not only the potential to convey the otherness of the fictional world, it can perform it through our very reading and processing of the text.

Thus, choosing language as a narrative vehicle for world-building purposes involves obvious additional complexities—it is one thing to construct a defamiliarized world using familiar, present-day language to describe it, but it is quite another to defamiliarize the language itself and then use that language to convey crucial elements of the narrative or perhaps even the entire story itself.

With this background in mind, in this paper I examine the use of imagined future Englishes in comics such as Alan Moore's *Crossed + 100* and Azzarello and Risso's *Spaceman*. What do these dialects tell us about the imagined future world? How are they constructed and why? In what ways do they convey social meaning? What potential do they have to influence the cognitive process of reading to include the reader in the meaning-making process? The dialects discussed are also compared and contrasted with other well-known constructed fictional dialects, e.g. Orwell's 'Newspeak' (*Nineteen-eighty Four*), Burgess's 'Nadsat' (*Clockwork Orange*), or the future English presented in Holban's *Riddley Walker*. In this context, I also discuss the ways in which the linguistic and non-linguistic semiotic components of comics are exploited in order to determine the salient differences between the use of future Englishes in the standard text format as opposed to the medium of comics/graphic novels.

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Race and the Failed Futures of EC Comics

Qiana Whitted

How is the future of anti-black racism and restorative justice imagined in EC Comics from the 1950s? While Entertaining Comics Group (EC) is most well known for horror, nearly a third of the American comic book company's pre-Comics Code titles explored science fiction and fantasy. Published from 1948 to 1950, these titles took advantage of a different kind of Golden Age

in science fiction to project the fears and aspirations of modern society onto visual narratives of future worlds. Stories like “Slave Ship” (1951) and “Judgment Day” (1953) use invading aliens and colonized robots to invite comparisons with transatlantic slavery and Jim Crow segregation. Racial and ethnic anxieties also emerge in “Close Shave” (1955) where “ape-like” outer space immigrants struggle with the decision to pass as humans in order to lead fulfilling lives.

EC’s approach to racism in science fiction stories reflects the tensions of a transformative historical moment in the United States, one in which the early legal interventions of the Civil Rights Movement were taking place against the increasingly isolationist sentiments from the American public over conflicts abroad. As the Cold War began to escalate, President Truman bypassed the Congress to issue an executive order in 1948 to desegregate the U.S. armed forces, while the Supreme Court’s 1954 ruling declared public school segregation illegal. The actions may have been clear and definitive, but they would take years to enforce.

My paper argues that in EC’s vision of the future, political and legislative measures such as these provide the only hope of keeping humanity’s legacy of domination and cruelty in check, even on an interplanetary scale. They contrast the EC *Shock SuspenStories* that took place present-day – “In Gratitude” or “Blood Brothers” for example – where anti-racist messages often emphasized shame as a lasting transformative agent within white male protagonists. The allegories of racial prejudice unfold somewhat differently in EC’s weird worlds of tomorrow. I consider how the robot civilization of Cybrinia falls short on “Judgment Day” without its own *Brown v. Board of Education* in place. And what are we to make of the fact that the people of Earth in the 25th century of “Close Shave” appear to abhor difference as much as they did in 1955? At issue in these narratives then is not an individual’s change of heart, but rather the deep, systemic failure of societies that continue to make the same mistakes. These comics expose an underlying ambivalence about the extent to which real progress is possible: EC envisions a future that may well be freed of racism, but not of racists.

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Participant Bios

Patricia Ayala Garcia is a full-time professor at the University of Colima in Mexico. She obtained two master's degrees and a doctorate at Columbia University in New York. Her research interests include comics as visual language and the influence of comics on the development of artistic abilities. Ayala has earned several scholarships, including a Fulbright, to study abroad and do research. She has written three books and published in indexed journals of Mexico, Chile and Spain. She has participated in 21 collective exhibitions of photography, painting and sculpture in Mexico and the U.S. Currently, she is the director of the Society of Graphic Storytellers of Colima (SoNaGraCo) and since 2005 has conducted research on graphic narrative and cartooning.

Bülent Ayyıldız is a PhD student in the Department of American Culture and Literature at Hacettepe University. He received a Master's Degree in the same department. His fields of interest are media studies, visual culture, and the contemporary American novel.

Jaqueline Berndt is professor in comics studies at the Graduate School of Manga, Kyoto Seika University, Japan, and deputy director of the International Manga Research Center at the Kyoto International Manga Museum. Holding a first degree in Japanese Studies and a PhD in Aesthetics/ Art Theory, she has worked at Japanese universities since 1991, focusing on manga, modern Japanese art, and anime mainly from the perspective of media studies. She also curates exhibitions, for example, Manga Hokusai Manga for The Japan Foundation. Her publications include the co-edited *Manga's Cultural Crossroads* (2013) and the monograph *Manga: Medium, Art and Material* (2015).

Maxime Boyer-Degoul is a PhD student in Cinema and Performing Arts under the supervision of M. Fabien Gérard (Université Libre de Bruxelles) and M. Benjamin Thomas (Université de Strasbourg), currently writing a thesis entitled "Cinema and audiovisual media – Representations of individual crisis in Japanese contemporary society." After completing an

MA in Classics and an MA in Cinema and Performing Arts, he taught French language for two years in China and traveled many times in Asia before returning in Europe. Currently, he is preparing a cartoon project focused on Japan.

Ana Cabral Martins has an undergraduate and an M.A. in Communication Sciences, specializing in Cinema and Television. Her Master's thesis project, "Overlap and the Cinematographic Experience," marked the starting point of her examination of the digital paradigm shift that is remaking the entire motion picture industry. Her PhD thesis in Digital Media is titled "Cinema in the Age of Digital Technology: A New Architecture of Immersion."

David Scott Diffrient is the William E. Morgan Endowed Chair of Liberal Arts and Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies in the Department of Communication Studies at Colorado State University. His articles have been published in several journals and edited collections concerning film, television, and popular culture. His most recent books are *Omnibus Films: Theorizing Transauthorial Cinema* (Edinburgh University Press, 2014), and *Movie Migrations: Transnational Genre Flows and South Korean Cinema* (Rutgers University Press, 2015). He is the co-editor of the *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema*.

Alex Fitch is the presenter of the UK's only weekly radio show about comics, "Panel Borders" on Resonance 104.4 FM (the Arts Council radio station in London). Alex commissions comic strips and writes articles on cinema for Electric Sheep Magazine online, has lectured on pop culture at the Science Museum and been published on the subject of film in anthologies released by University of Chicago Press and University Press of Mississippi. He is currently undertaking the MRes in Arts and Cultural Research at the University of Brighton, looking at "Unreliable Narrators in City based Science-Fiction".

Fred Francis is a PhD candidate and assistant lecturer at the University of Kent, UK, where his research focuses on exposing and explaining the influence of 19th-Century American fiction on the 'Dark Age' of American superhero comics. More broadly, his research interests are in American fiction and popular culture, cultural studies and comics studies, and he currently teaches undergraduate American literature. He is also co-founder

of the Cultural Studies in America reading group at Kent, and is a comics writer in his spare time, with work forthcoming in several UK-based small press anthologies.

Isak Hammar defended his doctoral thesis “Making Enemies: The Logic of Immorality in Ciceronian Oratory at the Department of History,” Lund University in 2013. The focus of his thesis is the use of immorality as a political argument in the speeches of Marcus Tullius Cicero. He has recently edited the first Swedish volume on antiquity on film and television (together with Ulf Zander) entitled, *Svärd, sandaler och skandaler: Antiken på film och i tv* (Studentlitteratur, 2015). His current research interests include the reception and use of antiquity.

Joakim Jahlmar is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Gothenburg and a lecturer at University West. He is currently working on the dissertation “Shedding the Mortal Coil in Salman Rushdie’s Novels Before the Fatwa: The *Ars Moriendi* Revisited.” In June this year, his article “‘Give the devil his due’: Freedom, Damnation, and John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* in Neil Gaiman’s *The Sandman: Season of Mists*” was published in *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* (13.2).

Alison Mandaville, assistant professor at California State University Fresno, teaches American and comics literature, and prepares future English teachers. Her articles on comics literature have appeared in book collections *Teaching the Graphic Novel*, *Comics and the U.S. South*, *Comics and U.S. Cultural History*, and *The Ages of Wonder Woman* and in journals *ImageText*, *The Comics Journal*, *Philology*, and *The International Journal of Comic Arts*. Current research projects include cartooning in the early 20th century Azerbaijani satirical journal *Molla Nasraddin*; a history of alternative comics in Fresno, California; and a book project on violence in word and image narratives.

Gabriela Mercado is a PhD candidate of Spanish at Gothenburg University. She is from Monterrey, north of Mexico. Her research focuses on the images of masculinity seen in contemporary Mexican end-of-the-world speculative fiction. Her theoretical and methodological framework parts from theories of and literary approaches to male human behavior in relation to the nature

and mechanisms of violence, the survival instinct and coping strategies when confronted with extreme situations. The objective of her research is to show the way this literature reflects how masculinity is perceived and reinterpreted in a modern Mexican society characterized by exacerbated violence, social instability and political scandals.

Anna Nordenstam is associate professor and senior lecturer in Comparative Literature at University of Gothenburg and Professor in Swedish and Education at Luleå University of Technology. Her most recent book *Från fabler till manga: Litteraturhistoriska och didaktiska perspektiv på barnlitteratur* (co-authored with Boglind, 2015). She has published an article about Liv Strömqvist (2014) and was invited to give a talk about Feminist comics at the symposium “Tecknade serier – ett utforskat språk” in Stockholm, May 2015. She is working with Wallin Wictorin and Daniel Brodén on a project about comics and politics in Sweden.

Aaron Ricker is a PhD candidate (ABD) in Religious Studies, and his area of specialization is the New Testament, but since he is primarily interested in the habits and ethics of ancient rhetoric, he often tells strangers that he’s in Classics or something. This lie is a self-serving attempt to avoid long speeches (at least they feel long) about how “all religions are really about [x, y, or z], when you get right down to it.” His dissertation is on Romans 13, but he sure seems to read and write about Revelation and pop culture a lot. Don’t tell his supervisors.

Houman Sadri is a doctoral student and teacher of English Literature at Gothenburg University, whose primary field of research is Joseph Campbell’s Monomyth, specifically the implications of modern society and societal norms for a pattern that, while apparently outmoded, is still hugely prevalent across multiple media. Houman has presented conference papers examining the implications for the Monomyth of the rise in popularity and ubiquity of female heroic figures (one of the main prongs of the Monomyth research) as well as an examination of the effect of the pattern on modern narratives of mass-surveillance.

Keith Scott is a senior lecturer in English Language at De Montfort University (UK). His research concerns the intersection of communication

and culture, with particular interests in the fields of influence and persuasion, and the role of comics as vehicles for cultural transmission and critique. With colleagues in Warwick and Oxford, he has recently set up the Prometheus Research Group, which investigates “cyber” as a technological, philosophical and cultural domain.

Luisa Steinhäuser was born in Germany and studied Communication Science and English, Historical and Comparative Linguistics in Jena. Since her Master’s Degree in 2014, she has worked as a research fellow on a project on information structure in Early New High German at the University of Potsdam and also as a lecturer for various ancient Germanic languages. Currently, she is writing her PhD thesis about onomatopoeic verb formations in the history of the English language. Besides her scientific work she enjoys hiking tours with her dog as well as doing yoga and reading. She prefers comics and seinen-manga about dystopic and horror future events, her favorite comic being “Lenore, The Cute Little Dead Girl.”

Joe Trotta is a linguist and an expatriate American who lives in Gothenburg, Sweden. At present, he is an Associate Professor in English Linguistics at the University of Gothenburg. His linguistic research has been ‘descriptive-oriented theory’; an approach which incorporates generative, functional and cognitive insights along with corpus research into a theory-neutral framework. Despite his grounding in grammar/syntax, Joe’s work is broad and eclectic, including among other things, semantics, sociolinguistics, urban dialectology, semiotics, and, naturally, Popular Culture. Most of Joe’s recent publications deal with identity and linguistic representation in different Popular Culture channels, not least, comics and graphic novels.

Margareta Wallin Wictorin is senior lecturer in Art History and Visual Studies at Linnaeus University, Växjö, and in Cultural Studies at Karlstad University, Sweden. She is active in the Linnaeus University Center for Colonial and Postcolonial Studies. Her main focuses in the field of comics studies are politics, postcolonial perspectives, educational comics, and autobiographical/autofictional comics.

Qiana Whitted is Associate Professor of English and African-American Studies at University of South Carolina, USA. She received her PhD in American Studies from Yale University. Her research on American comics

and graphic novels focuses on race, history, and regional representation. Her publications include the edited collection, *Comics and the U.S. South*; the monograph, *“A God of Justice?”: The Problem of Evil in Twentieth-Century Black Literature*; and essays in *The Blacker The Ink: Constructions of Black Identity in Comics*, *Essays on Teaching with Graphic Narratives*, *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, *African American Review*, and *Southern Literary Journal*.

Comics Program Committee

Frida Beckman is associate professor at the Department of English, Stockholm University. She has published articles on literature, film, comics, and philosophy in journals such as *SubStance*, *Journal of Narrative Theory*, *Cinema Journal*, and *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*. She is the author of *Between Desire and Pleasure: A Deleuzian Theory of Sexuality* (EUP, 2013), editor of *Deleuze and Sex* (EUP, 2011), and co-editor of two special issues on sadism and masochism in *Angelaki: Journal of Narrative Theory*. Her current work centers on theories of biopolitics and control. She is coordinating the international network Cultures of Control and is site chair of the SLSAeu conference on “Control” in Stockholm in June 2016.

Frank Bramlett works in the English Department at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He teaches and researches in linguistics and is the director of the graduate TESOL certificate program. In comics studies, his research spans gender, sexuality, and race and ethnicity as they are constructed through language in comics. As a visiting lecturer at Stockholm University, he co-organized a workshop on Grant Morrison (December 2013) and co-edited a special issue of *ImageText* (8.2) that grew out of that workshop. He is the editor of *Linguistics and the Study of Comics* (Palgrave 2012) and is co-editor of the *Routledge Companion to Comics and Graphic Novels* (forthcoming 2016).

Adnan Mahmutovic is an associate professor of literature and creative writing at Stockholm University. His works include *Ways of Being Free* (Rodopi 2010), *Thinner than a Hair* (Cinnamon Press 2010), and *How to Fare Well and Stay Fair* (Salt Publishing 2012).

Francesco-Alessio Ursini is currently senior lecturer in Semantics in the English Department at Stockholm University. He has recently expanded his interests to comics studies, starting by carrying out research on one of his beloved authors: Grant Morrison. He is a co-organizer of the workshop “Which Side are you on? The worlds of Grant Morrison” and is a co-editor of the Grant Morrison special issue of *ImageText* (8.2). Francesco has a chapter on punk bodies in the forthcoming “How comics predicted and embraced punk” (McFarland Press).

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