



HISTORY IN COMICS

2022 THEME: ETHICS AND CHOICE

SCHEDULE

*All events will take place in hybrid form.
Online access will be provided through Zoom. You can register to receive access as an audience member here
<https://forms.gle/DCEBSfgB6xXmEeoE7>*

*The physical conference takes place in the Department
of English and American Studies at:*

*Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Palackého v Olomouci
Křížkovského 511/10, 771 80 Olomouc Česká republika.*



SCHEDULE

MONDAY 12.9.2022

- 12:00 Registration opens in front of Křížkovského 511/10, Room 3.16
- 13:00-13:30 welcome address (Rm 3.05)
- 13:45-14:45 Artist talk with Barbara Stok (Rm 3.05)
Vincent van Gogh and ancient philosopher Hipparchia
- 15:00-17:00 Roundtable 1 - History beyond the Gutter: Paratexts and Graphic Narrative (Rm 3.05)
moderated by Johannes Schmid

Evening: Low-key walking tour of Olomouc center, history and stories. Meeting 18h in front of Křížkovského 511/10, dinner will be located along the way.

TUESDAY 13.9.2022

- 10:00-11:30 Sketchnotes workshop with John Miers (Rm 2.40)
- 11:45-13:00 Lunch break
- 13-14 Artist talk with Flavia Scuderi (Rm 3.05)
Balancing realism and entertainment in a comic biography
- 14:15-16:15 Roundtable 2 - Images in Past Tense: Visual Representation of History in Comics
(Rm 3.05) moderated by Barbara Postema
- 16:30-17:30 Keynote: Joseph Witek (Rm 3.05)
Comics History, Comics Form, and Historicized Formalism

Evening: Dinner and a movie (film TBA). Meeting 18h in front of Křížkovského 511/10, dinner will be located along the way.



SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY 14.9.2022

9:00-10:00 Drawing history workshop 1 (Rm 2.40, no streaming available)

10:15-12:00 Session 1 (simultaneous panels)

Panel A - Big history in search of truth (Rm 3.05)

Chair: Kremena Dimitrova

Martin Foret

Between biography and hagiography: Czech Graphic Novels about Historical Figures as a Reflection of National Mythology

Marina O. M. Hertrampf

Between Graphic Travelogue and Ethical Discussion of the Anthropocene or the History of Nuclear Power in France

Maryanne Rhett

Creating a History Curriculum: Anglophone History Comics in the 1920s and 1930s

Panel B - Negotiating personal histories (Rm 3.16)

Chair: Mihaela Precup

Anders Høg Hansen

German comic artists engaging with memory and history Unapologetically "hairless:" Drahonovská and Jislová's Bez Vlasů

Martha Kuhlman

Vera Ociskova

Bodies Out of the Binary: Portrayals of the 'Non-binary Body' from Stone Butch Blues (1993) to Autobiographical Webcomics of the 2010s

12:00-13:30 Lunch break

13:45-14:45 Session 2 (simultaneous panels)

Panel C - Depicting destruction (Rm 3.05)

Chair: Kees Ribbens

James Willetts

Comic Books Confront the Atomic Bomb

Dominic Davies

Fracking Hell! Joe Sacco's Seismic Lines

Panel D - Built spaces around family stories (Rm 3.16)

Chair: Kremena Dimitrova

Barbara M. Eggert

Family Matters! Exemplary observations on the functional spectrum of comics in historical houses and memoiral sites

Rafael Garcia Roncalla

Each stone a memory: graphic testimonies of violence in Ya nadie te sacará de tu tierra

15:00-16:00 Keynote: Kate Polak (Rm 3.05)

The Real World or the Waking World?: Comics As Questions About History.



SCHEDULE

THURSDAY 15.9.2022

9:00-10:00 Drawing history workshop 2 (Rm 2.40, no streaming available)

10:15-12:00 Session 3 (simultaneous panels)

Panel E - National identities through memory (Rm 3.05)

Chair: Dragos Manea

Ivan Gomes

A war of several comics: interpretations of the War of the Triple Alliance in South American comics

Pavel Kořínek

Ye Who Are Warriors of God: Genre Transformations of Hussites in World Comics

Lawrence Abrams

The Age of Terror: Rethinking Conflict Representation in a Post-9/11 Comics World

Panel F - Comics as practice or process (Rm 3.16)

Chair: Eszter Szép

Alexander James Pollard

The Tangent Factories: Graphic Narrative Production and Interdisciplinary Writing as Contemporary Painting Practice

Kremena Dimitrova

Running with the runaway everywhere and nowhere: Comics-based research as a contemporary form of decolonial resistance

Patrick J. Murphy

Drawn-Out Conversations: Comics, Dialogue, and the History of a Language

12:00-13:30 Lunch break

13:45-14:45 Session 4 (simultaneous panels)

Panel G - Style and pedagogy (Rm 3.05)

Chair: Eszter Szép

Elizabeth Pollard

Comics about, and Sequential Art from, Ancient Rome

Kaleb Knoblauch

Verisimilitude and Expanding the Visual Vocabulary for History Comics

Panel H - War-time truths (Rm 3.16)

Chair: Mihaela Precup

Bálint Szántó

Historical Memory and Trauma in Marvel Comics

Kees Ribbens

An American perspective on a global war - Classics Illustrated's World War II

15:00-16:00 Keynote: Finnouala Doran (Rm 3.05)

Language, Reality, Pictures: Interpreting History Through Drawing'



SCHEDULE

FRIDAY 16.9.2022

9:00-10:00 Drawing history workshop 3 (Rm 2.40, no streaming available)

10:15-11:15 Comics social - sharing results of drawing workshops and sketchnotes (Rm 2.40)

11:30-12:45 Lunch break

13:00-15:00 Round table 3 - On the Ethics of Adapting History (Rm 3.05)
moderated by Mihaela Precup and Dragos Manea

15:15-16:00 Closing remarks (Rm 3.05)



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LAWRENCE ABRAMS

The Age of Terror: Rethinking Conflict Representation in a Post-9/11 Comics World

This paper presents critiques and possible solutions for problems of commonly used periodization in comics and graphic novels. In particular it addresses the problematic models currently extant for the digital comics medium, the need for a more systemic content-based system of periodization, and moving beyond the “Modern Age” comics period. The now almost forty-year length of the Modern Age – more than twice the length of the other three recognized comics ages – has obscured shifts in themes and content, increased diversity of creators and characters, and even a global shift in centers of production. Not least among these obscured features is the distinct shift after September 11th 2001. The drastic reordering of storylines, character ideologies, and continuities that followed the beginning of the global war on terror cannot be underestimated. The concurrent evolution of digital technology, information systems, digital media, and even digital surveillance, all likewise represented en masse in post 9/11 comics can provide a useful bridge between the ideas of a digital medium age of comics and a scheme for periodization. This Age of Terror idea is itself an incomplete reflection of changes, but it is a first step forward in moving beyond the Modern Age.

Bio: Lawrence Abrams is a PhD Candidate at University of California, Davis specializing in Modern British History, focusing on Scottish ethnic, national, and imperial history. His dissertation explores ideas of union and changing modes of Scottish identity in political, military, and cultural arenas. He is working on a project investigating the relationship between comics, violence, and national identity in an international and post-colonial context. Publications include examinations of Captain Britain, Black Panther, and the X-Men, and depictions of violence and racial trauma in Vertigo’s *The Sheriff of Babylon*. He is the co-editor of *Historians without Borders: New Studies in Multidisciplinary History*.

DOMINIC DAVIES

Fracking Hell! Joe Sacco’s Seismic Lines

In his most recent graphic novel, *Paying the Land* (2020), Joe Sacco thickens his hand drawn sketches and lines with the cartographic and legalistic weight that draughtsmanship as historically enabled. Sacco’s book documents the history of the Dene nation, an indigenous people in Canada’s Northwestern Territory. From initial enclosure and land dispossession through to the infamous residential school system and, most recently, the damaging fracking industry, the Dene have been subject to rounds of settler colonialism since the mid-nineteenth century. The story Sacco tells of the Dene’s struggle for recognition from Canada’s settler state is one of repeated (mis)representations, whether cartographic, legalistic, bureaucratic, or artistic – each of which have their own destructive effects. By implicating his own drawings in the politics of representation and recognition, Sacco provides not only a visual account of the Dene people, but a history of the power and politics of “drawing” itself.

In this paper, I show how Sacco’s thickened lines – his “seismic lines” – construe the act of drawing as a settler colonial weapon with devastating material consequences: from the cartographic



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lines of early settler maps that divided up and displaced indigenous people from their territories; to the bureaucratic lines of settler law and that further eroded indigenous solidarity and sovereignty; to the seismic lines of the fracking industry, which break up the land into subterranean fragments. However, against these settler colonial lines, Sacco also suggests another delineation: the line as a form of indigenous knowledge formed in connection with the land. As this paper argues, only when the settler notion of drawing-as-representation (cartographic, legal, etc.) is overturned can drawing instead be recovered as a way-of-being-in-the-world. Sacco's images are only notes, or sketches, towards a decolonised drawing practice, and by no means a finished picture. But as he concludes, it is in this "unfinishedness" that they might yet draw forth routes to new futures beyond settler dispossession and environmental destruction.

Bio: Dr Dom Davies is Senior Lecturer in English at City, University of London, where he is also the Programme Director for the BA English. He is most recently the author of *Urban Comics* (Routledge 2019) and the co-editor with Professor Candida Rifkind of *Documenting Trauma in Comics* (Palgrave 2020). He and Professor Rifkind are currently co-authoring a book called *Graphic Refuge: Visuality and Mobility in Refugee Comics*, which is forthcoming with Wilfred Laurier University Press in 2023.

KREMENA DIMITROVA

Running with the runaway everywhere and nowhere: Comics-based research as a contemporary form of decolonial resistance

This interdisciplinary practice-based PhD responds to the wider debates, interventions, and renewed attention concerning the decolonisation of museums and heritage sites which have risen in popularity in recent decades. It explores creative techniques that can produce a rethinking of the dynamics of power and of a hegemonic culture that have left very little space for the unrepresented and underrepresented enslaved 'other'. This research explores new paths in historical practice by examining ways in which the comics form can engage with limited and marginalised archival material and participate in changing the representations and commemorations of the past of enslavement. I examine the potentialities and affordances of comics' cartographies, that is the conceptual as well as functional commixing of comics with mapping, as an active way to learn about colonialism beyond the boundaries of the bound comics pages in time and space. Using walking and drawing to follow in the footsteps of John King, an enslaved boy who during the eighteenth century ran away from Benjamin Franklin House, London to Suffolk, this research maps the conceptualisation and employment of a comics-based methodology as a contemporary form of decolonial resistance.

Bio: Kremena Dimitrova is a lecturer in visual culture and an illustrator-as-historian specialising in visualising history in the museum and heritage sectors. She is conducting an interdisciplinary practice-based PhD which explores comics-based research as a contemporary form of decolonial resistance. Kremena is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and a member of the Social History Society and Amuse Experiences: Bespoke Museum and Gallery Experiences with the Experts. Kremena has chaired and presented at international conferences, written academic book



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reviews, and is currently contributing research papers stemming from her PhD to three international academic manuscripts with Routledge, Intellect, and Cambridge Scholars.

BARBARA MARGARETHE EGGERT

Family Matters! Exemplary Observations On The Functional Spectrum Of Comics In Historical Houses And Memorial Sites

When we talk about comics in general we usually address graphic narratives in the form of books, booklets, or comic strips in magazines or newspapers, as well as webcomics. In my contribution on Horst Stein's Haydn cycle (Hanak-Lettner 2017), I focus on yet another form of graphic narratives that transcends the boundaries of the carrier media paper and screen and extends the comic into the three-dimensional, architectural interior as I will address an example for comics in exhibition contexts. The Haydn cycle, which Horst Stein created in cooperation with Werner Hanak-Lettner for the permanent exhibition at the Haydn birthplace in Rohrau will be used to discuss some of the aesthetic and mediating tasks that comics and elements of comics can perform in the context of historical houses and memorial sites. I will show how (and to what extent) the seven sheets of the cycle with its focus on the Haydn family create inter- and intramedial connections both in relation to their own storyline and in relation to the storyline of the exhibition narrative unfolding across several rooms. In this context, the definition and significance of the original for the context of the comic exhibition will also be critically reflected upon.

Bio: A medievalist by training, Barbara "Eggy" Eggert works as a postdoctoral researcher with the University of Art and Design Linz / Department of Art and Education. Her research, teaching, and curatorial projects focus mainly on comics. As of 2020, she is responsible for the comics symposium at NEXTCOMIC, Austria's annual comics festival. In her habilitation project, Eggert investigates the functional spectrum of comics in exhibitions focusing mainly on Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. Eggert also works as a freelance curator and writes scenarios for webcomics and graphic narratives using her nom de plume, Eggy.

MARTIN FORET

Between biography and hagiography: Czech Graphic Novels about Historical Figures as a Reflection of National Mythology

In the first decade of the 21st century, the graphic novel as a new form of comics addressed to adult readers was only slowly establishing itself in Czech comics. Already then, historical topics were essential for its formative years. Since the second decade of the 21st century, graphic novels about historical figures and events have become de facto mainstream in Czech comics. The proposed paper will focus on those graphic novels that offer biographies of historical figures and will try to analyse in what ways the choice of the portrayed figures and the way their story is pro-



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cessed in the form of comics are based on the conventional national mythology and confirm it as such. Through the form of close reading, it will compare two particular graphic novels as the examples of opposing tendencies (Zdeněk Ležák – Holman: TGM, 2018; Michal Baláž, Gabriela Kyselová – Václav Šlajch: Štefánik. Komiksový román, 2021) that in one case present themselves as the given “revealed truth” about the life of a “national great” and in the other case tematize the construction and interpretation of the life story of a particular personality and its time-conditioned perception.

Bio: Martin Foret, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor at Department of Media and Cultural Studies and Journalism, Faculty of Arts, Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic. As the coordinator of activities of Centre for Comics Studies of ICL CAS and FA PU in Olomouc he participated in the preparation of the two-volume History of Czechoslovak Comics of the 20th Century (2014) and co-wrote the introductory treatise In Panels and Speech Balloons. Chapters from the Theory of Comics (2015). He is one of the authors of the book Before Comics: The Formation of the Czechoslovak Picture Story in the Second Half of the XIX Century (2016).

IVAN LIMA GOMES

A war of several comics: interpretations of the War of the Triple Alliance in South American comics

This paper aims to present a first discussion on some comic works produced in South America dedicated to graphically elaborating a historical process such as the War of the Triple Alliance, a conflict that involved Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay in a military coalition against Paraguay that lasted from 1864 to 1870. Besides the tragedy of the war losses and destruction, it is still conflictive from a historiographical point of view. This historiographical polyphony suggests not only that the war is still alive in South American social memory, but also that the past is made of fragmented discourses. And this points out to comics. To what extent the fragmented character of comics art stimulate the construction of a specific discourse of the War of the Triple Alliance history? This proposal aims to develop a first analysis of comics produced in Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay about the War of the Triple Alliance. The analysis will seek to conceptually reflect on such works in comics from conceptual frameworks such as memory, cultures of war, representation and historical narrative. It is expected to outline a conceptual definition of comic books that propose a specific reading of Latin American historical experiences as “graphic pasts”.

Bio: Ivan Lima Gomes is a PhD in History (PPGH-UFG, CNPq researcher). Adjunct Professor of Latin American history (Faculty of History, Federal University of Goias). Published articles on academic journals (LARR, IJOCA, IDEAS, among others), edited two books – one about Trauma and History and the other on the Covid-19 crisis and its impacts in the teaching of History – and wrote one book on South American comics (“Novos Homens do Amanhã”, out of print). Research areas: visual history and publishing history, focusing on Latin American comics during the 19th and 20th centuries. My current research deals with comics and/as public history.



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ANDERS HØG HANSEN

German comic artists engaging with memory and history

An increasing number of comics by German authors have engaged with the country's past – as in works by Weyhe, Krug, Mawil, and Flix. This paper engages with the period around the fall of the Berlin Wall – an era representing a promising, but today at least ambiguous, turning point where a new Europe was dawning. I explore how a couple of artists convey personal and partly hidden histories in literary and documentary comic form. One author and work from the East, Mawil's *Kinderland*, and another from West Germany, Flix's *Da war mal was*. Two books also representing different approaches to youth memories and comics arts.

Kinderland is a coming of age portrayal typical for the *Bildungsroman*, while *Da war mal was* is a collection of graphic 'exposures' of interviews, each a few pages long, inspired by oral history's recapture of 'the-subject-in-history'-focus, but depicted in very short form. I discuss how the books incorporate mundane objects that take up functions in everyday life as well as symbolise societal changes. A handful of 'tricks' with objects and storytelling produce intriguing visual popular archives of the twilight of the GDR and a changed Germany, I argue.

This paper is based on parts of a work in progress with Jakob F. Dittmar and as well a case study for a monograph on life writing

Bio: Anders Høg Hansen is associate professor in media and communication studies at Malmö University, Sweden where he works primarily on the MA in Communication for Development program. He did an MA in Cultural studies: history and theory, at University of East London, and PhD in Cultural studies at Nottingham Trent. His recent research and writings engage with migration and memory in e.g. 'Footballers and Conductors' (2020) and 'Amendments and Frames' (2019) and various forms of life writing, including comics.

MARINA ORTRUD M. HERTRAMPF

Between Graphic Travelogue and Ethical Discussion of the Anthropocene or the History of Nuclear Power in France

With *Sapiens. A Brief History of Humankind*, Yuval Noah Harari presented a graphic novel in 2011 that depicts human history in a way that is as unusual as it is complex and transdisciplinary, and puts forward the provocative argument that homo sapiens may dominate the planet, but the capitalist and anthropocentric exploitation of nature by no means makes him happier than our ancient ancestors. In 2021, Étienne Davodeau published *Le droit du sol. Journal d'un vertige* ("The right to earth. Diary of a dizziness"), a graphic novel that indirectly takes up many of Harari's ideas and transforms them into a mixture of autofictional travelogue and ethical reflection on the history of the Anthropocene. The title refers to the central ethical question of the right of humans to intervene in the earth's geology and ecosystem by pure virtue of their existence (*droit du sol* = birth right citizenship). To get to the bottom of this dizzying question of the legitimacy of human impact on the planet, the author hikes from Pech Merle in southwest France, where our prehistoric ancestors left traces with impressive cave murals to this day, to Bure in the northeast, where the today's nuclear lobby intends to leave traces for our descendants in a nuclear repository. During the 800-kilome-



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tre-long hike through landscapes that have been shaped by man over thousands of years, the author experiences first-hand the existential importance of water and the effects of heat waves favoured by climate change. Starting from the fact that France is the world's largest producer of nuclear power and that nuclear energy could be labelled as "green" energy by the European Union, the graphic novel presents the French history of nuclear power and its opponents, making the connection to the global threats to the future of humanity.

Bio: Marina Ortrud M. Hertrampf is a Professor of French and Spanish Philology (Literature and Cultural Studies) at the University of Passau (Germany). She is the author of a monography on the interrelations of photography and novel in French Postmodernism (2011), a study on the spatial dimensions in Spanish Corpus Christy plays (2018) and a small book on French graphic novels on the Arabic Spring (2016). Her research interests include: spatial theories, cultural contact, imagology, migration, intermediality, graphic novels. She is the co-editor of the journal *Hispanorama* and the book series "Aesthetics of Roma – Self and External Representations" (AVM), "Forum Junge Romanistik" (AVM) and "LiteraturKulturRäume" (Stauffenburg Verlag).

KALEB KNOBLAUCH

Verisimilitude and Expanding the Visual Vocabulary for History Comics

Graphic Histories have seen an explosive rise in academic publishing over the last decade, most prominently with Oxford University Press's Graphic History Series that includes *Abina and the Important Men*, by Trevor Getz, *The Great Hanoi Rat Hunt*, by Michael Vann, and *Perpetua's Journey*, by Jennifer Rea, all illustrated by Liz Clarke. There has never been a better time to learn and teach history with comics. Despite the growth of history comics, series like Oxford's have settled into a new kind of house style—while the subjects may vary, the style of the comics remains much the same. These new publications raise new questions about the limits of the comic form to represent the past. This paper will explore the question of style within history comics, biographies, and memoirs, examining how different creators choose to represent the past and whether history comics must look "real" to faithfully represent and examine the past. This paper asks if and how the comics medium is being used to its fullest potential as historians work to create a visual vocabulary to explain their scholarship and what comics creators can contribute to this evolving genre of comics.

Bio: Kaleb Knoblauch is a PhD Candidate in Modern European History at the University of California, Davis. His dissertation examines the creation and tensions of Breton and French identities in the modern period, arguing that the creation of mass culture allowed Breton identity to flourish where political agitation and separatism had failed. He has written and presented on Bécassine, resource extraction and imperialism in Marvel's *Black Panther*, violence and sound effects in *Vertigo's The Sheriff of Babylon*, and French fascist comics. He is the co-editor of *Historians Without Borders: New Studies in Multidisciplinary History* from Routledge Press.



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PAVEL KOŘÍNEK

Ye Who Are Warriors of God: Genre Transformations of Hussites in World Comics

The proposed paper, based on a comparative close reading of four historical comics set in the Hussite period, from Japan, France and the Czech Republic (Václav Šorel – František Kobík: *Tvrz*, 1980–1981, Czechoslovakia; David B. – *Le Jardin armé*, 1996/2006, France; Kouichi Ohnishi / *Otome sensou*, 2013–2019, Japan; Zdeněk Ležák – Michal Kocián: *Jan Žižka*, 2019, Czech Republic), will focus on different ways of representing historical events of the Hussite wars with its national, religious and social consequences, and on different approaches to the construction of the fictional and fictionalized factual (historical) protagonists. The formative influences of different genre characteristics, provenance or publication platforms, as well as differing approaches towards model (implied) reader will also be examined. These comics “retellings” of the religious wars of the early 15th century draw on diverse contemporary and regional genre and format traditions, and in relation to them tell the story of Czech Hussitism differently each time. To compare these approaches allows us to address once again the specificity, subjectivity and variability of the historical comics as a genre and genre stereotype.

Bio: Pavel Kořínek is a Prague-based comics theorist, historian and journalist, working at the Institute of Czech Literature, Czech Academy of Sciences, and a founding member of the Centre for the Study of Comics ICL / UP and Czech Academy of Comics. As a researcher, he has written and co-written a number of monographs on Czech comics history and theory (f.e. *History of Czechoslovak Comics of the 20th Century*, 2014; *In Panels and Speech Balloons: Chapters from the Theory of Comics*, 2015; *Punťa: The Forgotten Hero of Czech Comics /1934–1942/*, 2018).

MARTHA KUHLMAN

Unapologetically “hairless:” Drahonovská and Jislová’s Bez Vlasů

After the “slap heard ‘round the world,” the autoimmune disorder alopecia is suddenly having its moment. Although the famous tiff between Will Smith and Chris Rock could hardly seem farther from a graphic biography by two Czech women, Tereza Drahonovská (story) and Štěpánka Jislová (cartoonist), there are common threads. In the wake of the Oscar scandal, commentators have been writing about the sensitivity of the subject of “hair” in American popular culture. *Bez Vlasů* (2020), or “Hairless,” explores the symbolic significance of hair, gender identity, and living with an autoimmune disorder from the perspective of Drahonovská, Czech journalist and writer, who was diagnosed with alopecia at the age of 30. Intimate and unflinchingly honest, the graphic biography depicts the trials and (unexpected) advantages of the disorder with humor and grace.

In this presentation, I will trace how this remarkable, Muriel-winning work is located at the intersection of the history of feminist comics, autobiographical comics, and graphic medicine. Drahonovská and Jislová, founders of the Czech chapter of Ladyeez do Comics Praha (2015), have brought much more visibility to Czech female cartoonists through their organization, exhibits, festivals, and their first anthology, *Komiksodějky* (2019). I want to argue that *Bez Vlasů* represents one of the best examples of what feminist comics can do by bringing together art, personal experience, trauma, and humor to reach a broad (and I hope, one day, international) audience.



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Bio:

Martha Kuhlman is professor of Comparative Literature in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at Bryant University

PATRICK J. MURPHY

Drawn-Out Conversations: Comics, Dialogue, and the History of a Language

Charles Hatfield (2005) has characterized comics as an “art of tensions”: text in conversation with image, layout in conversation with sequence, and images in sequential conversation with each other. Any comics maker works with such “tensions” (among others), but those creating within nonfiction historical genres—whether personal memoir, graphic history, or scholarly sequential art—confront another tension: that between perspectives of the present and an undistorted image of the past. Such a tension is central to the field of medievalism studies, which often highlights the blurred line between imaginative creativity and detached scholarly study in the ongoing invention/discovery of the medieval past. Indeed Richard Utz has called for medievalist scholars to embrace, rather than deny, our “own investigating subjects’ role in the long history [of medieval reception],” and comics seems to offer an ideal medium for doing just that. After all, many nonfiction comics are notable for visible narrators who represent the author, whether as a personal witness or interviewer (for example, in the work of Art Spiegelman, Joe Sacco, and Carol Tyler) or in the guise of a cartoonized pedagogical guide (for example, in the work of Scott McCloud, Jessica Abel, and Lynda Barry). At the same time, a “talking heads” approach can be associated with some of the more superficial attempts to leverage the comics medium for serious scholarly purposes, as Nick Sousanis (2018) has regretted, while E. Allyn Woock (2021) has meditated on the ethics of self-representation in scholarly comics, questioning the value of “hyper-personalizing the page.” Yet some comics scholars have pointed to the handmade quality of comics as an important formal marker of authenticity and “honesty” in genres such as comics memoir and comics journalism, with the imperfect, hand-drawn lines themselves an implicit admission of subjectivity (Wibke Weber and Hans-Martin Rall, 2017). In the case of scholarly or pedagogical comics, the presence of a visible narrator might similarly underline an admission that the academic authority’s relation to a subject is not transparent or detached. But in comics, of course, other voices can talk back to the talking heads. And indeed, the comics form might be particularly conducive to inviting other perspectives into the panel, so that dialogue itself works to dispel illusions of a disembodied and disinterested scholarly voice. To consider this possibility, my presentation draws on examples from my own in-progress work of graphic nonfiction, *A Comics History of the English Language*, which features a cartoonized stand-in for myself, interacting with both students and our subject matter. In the process of writing and illustrating this book, I have come to find such conversational possibilities of the comics form to be at least as important as its graphic/illustrative resources—particularly in navigating a subject of such richness and risk.

Bio: Patrick J. Murphy is Professor of English at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. He is the author of *Unriddling the Exeter Riddles* (2011) and *Medieval Studies and the Ghost Stories of M.R. James* (2017), both published by Penn State University Press. His current project is a work



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of graphic nonfiction, *A Comics History of the English Language*, which he is in the process of both writing and illustrating.

VERA OCISKOVA

Bodies Out of the Binary: Portrayals of the 'Non-binary Body' from Stone Butch Blues (1993) to Autobiographical Webcomics of the 2010s

Recent research concerning non-normative bodies and identities in comics has largely considered the 'enfreakment' or 'othering' of certain bodies as compared to others (Lipenga 2019; Finlay 2017). Aidan Dubhain Diamond argues that media demonize non-normativity by showing "the deformed body as deficient (...) and, by contrast, the able body as the practically un-killable hero" (Dubhain Diamond 2017), while Mihaela Precup shows that Nimona (2015) typifies 'monster' as an ambiguous role which, much like non-binary individuals, evades established social binaries (Precup 2017). The concept of non-binary/genderqueer bodies and identities in autobiographical works, and the ways the protagonists (desire to) embody their gender identity, remains largely undiscussed. In my paper, I compare the analyses of the semi-autobiographical novel *Stone Butch Blues* (1993), where 'butch' is defined as "neither female nor male," with three recent auto-biographical comics: *Gender Queer: A Memoir* (2019), *Gender Slices* (2017–2020), and *GQutie!* (2014–2017). I argue that the narrative evolved from showing medical transition as the requirement for identity-embodiment into seeing the nonbinary body as a non-concretized ideal with the least amount of gendered attributes possible. The study serves to describe the androgynous or 'nonbinary' body type as seen by gender non-normative individuals through modern history, as well as to amplify voices of nonbinary/genderqueer creators in assessing the (possible) non-normativity of their bodies.

Bio: Vera Ociskova is currently a graduate student at the Department of English and American Studies at Palacký University, in Czech Republic. Her research is concerned with common character tropes in children's literature with LGBTQ themes, extending to comics and graphic novels for young readers. Her thesis work focuses on the depiction of non-binary and gender non-conforming people and bodies in comics.

ALEXANDER POLLARD

The Tangent Factories: Bastard Pop as Auto-Theory Trigger

The Tangent Factories: Bastard Pop as Auto-Theory Trigger is a graphic novel "mash-up". The narrative is built out of existing lines from Philip K Dick's oeuvre, cut-up and re-arranged to tell a different story. The direction of *The Tangent Factories* narrative is not one-hundred percent "random" like William Burroughs' cut-ups. Dick's words are used to tell a story very similar to that of Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. But the narrative deviates away from Dahl's famous "Chocolate Factory", telling the story of an eccentric art school in a futuristic "After the Bomb London". As the story develops aspects of Pollard's life begin to overlap with the narrative, appearing in the footnotes of the text, which influence the visuals. A bridge is formed between fiction and



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autobiography through moments of “synchronicity” (Jung). The visuals are “detoured”. Built out of cut-up and rearranged crypto currency logos, clip art, emojis, other graphic novels and re-purposed paintings and palettes.

The paper delivered here will consist of a short reading from The Tangent Factories graphic novel (with visuals). Pollard will then discuss/unpack some of the issues at stake within the work. Exploring some of the personal narratives, and the Jungian guidance system which has led him here.

The central questions within this research are as follows:

- Can a blend of Carl Jung’s “Synchronicity” and Lauren Fournier’s “auto-theory” be useful in exploring new avenues for appropriation? - personalising the impersonal?
- Can experimental writing and graphic narrative production move contemporary painting practice into new territories?

Bio: Alexander James Pollard studied BA (Hons) Painting and Drawing at Glasgow School of Art from 1996-99. His MPhil titled A Genealogy of Bad Painting – Legacies, Soft Objects and Networks was undertaken at Goldsmiths College, London (2017). He is currently a PhD candidate at Kingston School of Art – undertaking a practice-based PhD titled: The Tangent Factories: Graphic Narrative Production and Interdisciplinary Writing as Contemporary Painting Practice In 2005 Pollard represented Scotland at the Venice Biennale. Other selected exhibitions include: Reboot: Ruins In Reverse, La Plate-forme, Dunkerque, France (2020), Paleo Fauvism, Hop Projects, Folkestone (2018), Jungle, Celine Gallery, Glasgow (2017), WoW PAINTINGS, Young Team HQ, London (2016), Black Marks, Talbot Rice Gallery, University of Edinburgh (2007), Counter Fature, Luhring Augustine, New York (2007), The Santorini Biennale (2012) and The Irregular Correct – New Art from Glasgow at the Fremantle Art Centre, Fremantle, Australia (2012). Pollard is currently working on a graphic novel titled: Aleister Crowley and Charles Dawson: The Order of the Dawn Man, (with Luke Pendrell) which will be published in 2022. Pollard has worked as a lecturer in Fine Art Painting and Printmaking at the Glasgow school of Art (2006-2013), and a Lecturer in Painting at Wimbledon College of Art (2013-14) and presently at the University of Brighton (since 2014), where he is a Senior Lecturer in Fine Art Painting and MA Fine Art. His work is held in major international private and public collections including: The Arts Council of England collection, Scottish National Gallery, Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal, The Government Art Collection. Pollard lives and works in London.

ELIZABETH POLLARD

Comics about, and Sequential Art from, Ancient Rome

Examining comics from and about ancient Rome provides a framework for 1000 years of Roman history and a hermeneutic for understanding how historical narrative is visualized over time. Goscinny and Uderzo’s Asterix (1961-) and Martin’s Adventures of Alix (1958-) quickly come to mind when brainstorming comics about ancient Rome; but many other comic creators have visualized Rome, from Mansfield’s Highlights of History (1920s and 1930s), to Brave and the Bold’s Golden Gladiator (1955) and various 1950s single-shot fall-through-time horror comics, to various titles in



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the 1960s Classics Illustrated Series, to modern depictions such as Perpetua's Journey (Rea and Clark, 2018), Eagles of Rome (Marini, 2015-) and Murena (Dufaux and Delaby, 2016-). Similarly, when thinking about sequential art from ancient Rome, one immediately thinks Trajan's column; but frescoes, triumphal arches, sarcophagi, relief inscriptions, and even coin-minting series, provide sequential art from ancient Rome. This talk explores how engaging students with comics about ancient Rome builds capacity for students to interpret sequential narratives from ancient Rome and to negotiate that shared visualization. Examples of comics about and from ancient Rome will be analyzed and a collaborative student timeline (created via TimelineJS) of comics from and about the Roman past will be shared.

Bio: Elizabeth Pollard is Distinguished Professor for Teaching Excellence at San Diego State University, where she teaches Roman History, World History, and witchcraft studies. She co-leads the Comics@SDSU collaborative and recently debuted a Comics and History course exploring sequential art from the paleolithic to today. Pollard is currently working on a graphic history exploring the influence of classical understandings of witchcraft on modern pop-culture representations of witches (from comics to film). Pollard has co-authored a world history survey (Worlds Together, Worlds Apart) and has published on various pedagogical and digital history topics, including DH approaches to visualizing Roman History.

MARYANNE RHETT

Creating a History Curriculum: Anglophone History Comics in the 1920s and 1930s

The 1920s and 1930s experienced a marked uptick in the production and consumption of History Comics across the anglophone world. Titles like High Lights of History were both intended to entertain and to supplement history curriculums. Cultural and National boundaries influenced style and content of these comics, with notable contrast between the British More Humours of History and the US What American Histories Omit. Examining roughly ten of the specifically history focused comics of this era this paper will explore how history was presented by the creators, who was included or excluded, and what historiographic lessons can be drawn from the works.

Bio: Maryanne A. Rhett is Professor of History at Monmouth University in West Long Branch, New Jersey. A world historian by training, Rhett works at the intersections of fin-de-siècle politics, history and popular culture in Middle Eastern, North American, and British imperial settings. In addition to work on Middle Eastern and Islamic representations in comics (Representations Islam in United States Comics, 1880-1922. Bloomsbury, 2019) Rhett is currently working on a critical guide to the Islamic world in comics and a larger project examining depictions of (non-fiction) historical narratives in global, pre-1940s comics.

KEES RIBBENS

An American perspective on a global war - Classics Illustrated's World War II

Since the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, the events and developments that would



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take place during the following war years have appealed to a variety of comic book and comic strip creators. Not only did the war provide a convenient setting for many adventurous and heroic comic strips, particularly in the United States where a young but thriving comic book industry had emerged at the time, but current events were also exploited by various belligerents, both on the side of the Allies and on the side of the Axis powers, to engage in propaganda in comic book form. In addition, new comic strips appeared, in magazines such as Real Life Comics, which pretended to offer a more documentary view.

While in many countries history education in the first years after the war hardly focused on the most recent past, there was a certain need for a historical overview of the war years. The publisher of the American comic book series Classics Illustrated, which attempted to emphasize the educational and serious potential of the medium by publishing famous novels from the canon of Western literature as comics, sought to meet this need by releasing a special volume in 1961 that attempted to outline the war history in less than 100 pages.

Although this comic was created in one specific national context, that of the United States, this publication provides an interesting view of a global conflict, one that would moreover be widely disseminated in Western Europe through translations and reprints. This presentation will take a closer look at what perspectives the comic shows on this recent past and what choices were made in highlighting specific topics and actors. The question is not only which war-narrative is visualized here and how this relates to the dominant historical portrayal of this war in the 1960s, but also which visual material (particularly press photos and propaganda posters) served as the basis for the realization of this narrative.

Bio: Kees Ribbens is senior researcher at NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam and endowed professor of Popular historical culture of Global Conflicts and Mass Violence at Erasmus University Rotterdam. His interest is in how memories of war, genocide and mass violence in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are represented in words and images, in particular in comics and graphic novels. He looks at how individuals, groups and societies relate to these histories and he is fascinated by the ways in which the Second World War is given meaning, represented and appropriated, each time anew, across various communities.

RAFAEL GARCIA RONCALLA

Each stone a memory: graphic testimonies of violence in Ya nadie te sacará de tu tierra (Now no one will remove you from your land)

The agrarian reform that took place in Peru in the late 60s proved to be one of the most significant historical processes in the nation, as it redrew the economic and social structures in the rural areas and the country as a whole. The first installment of the Peruvian comic *Ya nadie te sacará de tu tierra*¹ by Carla Sagástegui and Jesus Cossio is a recount of what the comic frames as the “reasons” that justified said reform. In this paper, I will focus on the first chapter, “1. Nakaq”, which explores the exploitative nature of work in the “hacienda” system, emphasizing the vulnerability of native women. Graphically, the comic manages to represent this violence from the cultural point of view of the victims,



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a graphic interpretation that privileges the subjective experience of the colonized subject to be understood as a testimony in the sense of Paul Ricoeur. Thus, the final sequence in the chapter, in which the abused main character wanders back to a pile of rocks, resignifies the creation of memory beyond the written record and represents a resistance against what seems an overwhelmingly powerful system.

Bio: Rafael Garcia Roncalla (Lima, 1993) holds a BA in Hispanic Literature from the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, where he worked as a Teaching Assistant from 2016 to 2021. In 2017, he was awarded a PADET prize for his thesis “Not one, but many masks: analysis of the performative identity in the graphic novel *City of Clowns*” (2018). He currently pursues a master’s degree in Interamerican Studies at the University of Bielefeld.

BÁLINT SZÁNTÓ

Historical Memory and Trauma in Marvel Comics

In this paper, I will discuss how historical memory has been influencing the portrayal of villains in the transmedial narratives of Marvel Comics. Due to the nature of their long-running, serialized graphic novels, Marvel characters have faced many instances of historical trauma since the 1940s, such as World War II, the Cold War, and the 9/11 World Trade Center bombings. These events have all had major impact on their stories, including the representations of evil in them. My aim with this paper is to examine how these manifestations of trauma have appeared in the form of villains in the 80 year-long grand narrative of the Marvel series. I will also discuss how the unique perception of historical time in comics makes these representations possible. My analysis will focus on three particular instances: World War II in *Captain America*; the Cold War in *The Invincible Iron Man*; and the 9/11 attacks in *The Amazing Spider-Man*. The main tools for this analysis will be Maurice Halbwachs’ concept of “collective memory” and Marianne Hirsch’s concept of “postmemory”.

Bio: Bálint Szántó is a PhD student at the Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies, University of Szeged, Hungary. He is currently participating in the Literatures and Cultures in English Doctoral program at the university. He previously studied English Studies with Business English specialization and American Studies. His research interests include modern American cinema, fandom studies, transmedia storytelling, digital culture, graphic novels, science fiction and fantasy literature.

JAMES WILLETTS

Comic Books Confront the Atomic Bomb

This paper will serve to showcase the ways in which comic book portrayals of nuclear science changed following the development of the Soviet atomic bomb, from a positive view of utopian



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atomic power to a fear of imminent annihilation.

In 1945 comic books served to inform the public about nuclear power, using imagery that emphasized the scientific achievements behind the bomb. Early optimism saw comic book writers and publishers push atomic weapons as a scientific triumph, which the U.S. alone had the power to develop and control. Soviet acquisition of their own atomic bomb saw the decline of a 'nuclear optic' which emphasized American science and power, replaced by more pessimistic presentations of the dangers of atomic weaponry. This new set of imagery emphasized the terrible consequences of proliferation and saw the comic book industry forced to engage with the potential for nuclear annihilation.

In the early 1950s comic book imagery showed the ways that the United States grappled with the consequences of the bomb; a simultaneous pessimism for what had been unleashed and belief that only by working together could Americans survive. From DC's Captain Marvel failing to prevent a nuclear exchange, to EC comic's horror-tinged visions of atomic war between the West and Soviet Union, the comic book industry grappled with the consequences of what the Manhattan Project had unleashed.

Bio: As part of the University of Colorado, Boulder's History Program, James is interested in the ways that pop culture and U.S. diplomacy intersect. His research is primarily around the use of comic books as a vehicle for U.S. foreign policy goals, especially early Cold War anti-communism and internationalist organization building.



SPEAKERS

FIONNUALA DORAN

Language, Reality, Pictures: Interpreting History Through Drawing

Bio: Fionnuala Doran is an Irish artist, living and working in Scotland. She has worked between fine art and comics, acting as a director of Catalyst Arts, Belfast's foremost artist-led gallery, and as co-editor of Modern Times, Britain's first magazine of graphic journalism since the 19th Century. She graduated with an MA in Visual Communication from the Royal College of Art in 2015 and lectures in Illustration at the Edinburgh College of Art. Her first graphic novel, *The Trial of Roger Casement*, was published by Self Made Hero in 2016.

JOHN MIERS

Sketchnotes workshop

Bio: John Miers is senior lecturer in illustration at Kingston School of Art and associate lecturer at Central Saint Martins and the Royal College of Art. His recent comics work deals with his experience of living with multiple sclerosis. His first comic on this topic, *So I Guess My Body Pretty Much Hates Me Now*, was produced during a postdoctoral residency in University of the Arts London's Archives and Special Collections Centre at London College of Communication, and voted "Best One-Shot" in the 2020 Broken Frontier awards. Recent publications in comics form include contributions to the *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* (2021) and *Biography: an Interdisciplinary Quarterly* (2022), and in prose, chapters in *Seeing Comics Through Art History: Alternative Approaches to the Form* (Palgrave 2022) and *Representing Acts of Violence in Comics* (Routledge 2019).

KATE POLAK

The Real World or the Waking World?: Comics As Questions About History.

Bio: Kate Polak is currently Instructor and Assistant Director of the UCEW at Florida Atlantic University. Her book, *Ethics in the Gutter: Empathy and Historical Fiction in Comics*, was nominated for an Eisner Award. Her recent research focuses mainly on the representation of violence and genocide, historical fiction, and 21st century women writers, and she is working on a monograph exploring the effect of social media on practices of Holocaust memorialization, entitled *Excessive Feels: What is Empathy in the Age of the YOLOcaust?* as well as developing an edited collection *Days of Future Past*, on the intersections between historical fiction and science fiction with her husband, Dr. Ian MacDonald. Her current creative projects include a collection of poetry and a graphic memoir exploring teenaged girlhood during the 1990s, tentatively entitled *Just Okay*.



SPEAKERS

FLAVIA SCUDERI

Balancing Realism and Entertainment in a Comic Biography

How much can a comic artist dare to explore in terms of graphic style and storytelling in a biographical graphic novel? Flavia Scuderi will talk about her experience in decision making and compromising while still enjoying the process.

Bio: Flavia Scuderi is a Roman artist based in Berlin since 2006. In the past 25 years, she has been working as comic artist, illustrator, characters designer, storyboard artist and script writer for many different projects and companies. Mostly known for her long collaboration with the Walt Disney Company she also signed the character design of some beloved Tv series like “Mia and Me” and mobile games like “Tropicats”. After her first graphic novel, about the life of Richard Wagner, written by Andreas Völlinger; she’s now working on the second volume of a comic biography about Marlene Dietrich, written by Alessandro Q Ferrari.

BARBARA STOK

Vincent van Gogh and ancient philosopher Hipparchia

Bio: Barbara Stok is an award-winning graphic novelist from The Netherlands. Her book Vincent is published in more than twenty countries around the world. Her latest graphic novel The Philosopher, the Dog and the Wedding, about Hipparchia, one of the first female philosophers from Ancient Greece, got nominated for the Hypatia Price. Stok has 14 books to her name.

JOSEPH WITEK

Comics History, Comics Form, and Historicized Formalism

Bio: Joseph “Rusty” Witek has been publishing on comics and graphic novels for nearly 40 years and has been teaching courses on comics at Stetson University since 1989. He has been described as “probably the first American academic to carve out a career on the basis of his work on comics.” His publications include Comic Books as History: The Narrative Art of Jack Jackson, Art Spiegelman, and Harvey Pekar, the edited collection Art Spiegelman: Conversations and numerous articles on such topics as war comics, comics criticism, and teaching comics. He is currently working on a book manuscript on the worst comics ever published in the mainstream comics industry



PROJECT TEAM

DRAGOȘ MANEA

I'm a lecturer at the University of Bucharest, where I teach courses in contemporary American literature, cultural memory studies, and media studies. My current research deals primarily with the figure of the perpetrator in British and American historical comics and focuses on the following questions: how can narratives about the past contribute to a more nuanced understanding of perpetration? How do they contribute to the cultural memory of perpetration, particularly when the depiction of well-known historical figures is mixed with elements of fantasy? What is the benefit of producing an ethics of empathy, wherein the perpetrator is both humanized and even made to appear endearing or comical? How can stories that offer perpetrators a platform, thus positioning their audience in intimate proximity to the (largely imagined) workings of their psyche, negotiate the risk of being co-opted by extremist ideologies and their proponents?

BARBARA POSTEMA

I am a Lecturer in English for Academic Purposes at the University of Groningen, after having spent time teaching at universities in New Zealand, Canada, and the US. In my comics scholarship I focus on issues of form and narration, and I have written research contributions on comics theory, on Canadian comics, and on wordless comics. My monograph *Narrative Structure in Comics* was published in a Brazilian translation in 2018, and I have published work on comics in *Image and Narrative*, the *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, *9a Arte*, and the *International Journal of Comic Art*, as well as collections such as *The Routledge Companion to Comics and Graphic Novels*, *The Cambridge History of the Graphic Novel*, and *Abstraction and Comics*. From 2013-2015 I held a SSHRC postdoctoral fellowship at Ryerson University, during which time I began work on my study of silent comics. I am a former president of the Canadian Society of the Study of Comics and a founding member of the Comics Studies Society, where I currently serve as a Member at Large. With Candida Rifkind and Nhora Lucía Serrano, I am a co-editor of the Wilfrid Laurier UP book series *Crossing Lines: Transcultural/ Transnational Comics Studies*.

MIHAELA PRECUP

I'm an associate professor at the American Studies program in the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures at University of Bucharest. My work explores the graphic representation of violence (particularly in the context of war and conflict), post-traumatic memory, autobiography, and subversive femininity. I have also co-edited three special issues of the *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* (on War and Conflict and Sexual Violence; with Rebecca Scherr).



PROJECT TEAM

JOHANNES SCHMID

I am a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Flensburg and associate editor of *Amerikastudien / American Studies: A Quarterly*, the official journal of the German Society for American Studies. I am also co-organizer of an editorial board member for *[Inter]sections – The American Studies Journal* at the University of Bucharest.

Previously, I worked as a research assistant in the research project *Media-Aesthetic Strategies of Framing and Translation in Graphic Novels* as part of the *Forschungsverbund Übersetzen und Rahmen. Praktiken medialer Transformation (FÜR)* at the University of Hamburg. My research interests include (nonfiction) comics, photography, (digital) visual culture, and video games.

ESZTER SZÉP

I am a freelance educator, festival manager, curator, and journalist. Currently I teach comics making classes and classes on art theory/contemporary culture at Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design, Budapest. I am also a module leader and mentor at Milestone Institute, Budapest where I have taught a course on ethics and critical thinking, and I am currently teaching a course on art history. I am one of the judges of Hungary's only comics prize, the *Alfabéta Prize*, and of Hungary's biggest prize for speculative fiction, the *Zsoldos Prize*.

ELIZABETH ALLYN WOOCK

I'm an assistant professor in the Department of English and American Studies at Palacky University in the beautiful city of Olomouc, in the Czech Republic. I'm happily occupying a little corner of the American Literature section of our department, where I teach courses on American and British history, comic book studies, and late 19th or early 20th century American literature. I'm a sneaky medievalist who gave up studying 13th century religious disputes to research medievalism (and the spooky or fantastic versions of it) in comic books, graphic novels and memes.