ACMI & THE AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL PRESENT

SUPERHEROES BEYOND

6–8 December
9am–7pm

JOIN 50 LEADING EXPERTS AS THEY UNMASK THE CRITICAL THINKING BEHIND SUPERHEROES FROM COMICS TO FILM, TV AND VIDEOGAMES

#ACMISUPERHEROES
Welcome to the
Superheroes Beyond Conference!

Superheroes are transmedia, transcultural, and transhistorical icons, and yet discussions of these caped crusaders often fixate on familiar examples. This conference will go beyond out-dated definitions of superheroes. Over the next three days we will unmask international examples, examine superheroes beyond the comic book page, identify historical antecedents, consider real world examples of superheroism, and explore heroes whose secret identities are not cisgender men.

This conference is part of the larger Superheroes & Me Linkage research project funded by the Australian Research Council. Partners in this project included Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne University, National University of Singapore, and our industry partner ACMI. While at ACMI please make sure to visit some of the other project outcomes including the newly curated Cleverman: The Exhibition, which goes behind the scenes of the ground-breaking Australian superhero television and comic book series. Also, explore a comic book version of Melbourne with the new VR experience Superheroes: Realities Collide, which you can find in ACMI's Screen Worlds exhibition (see the back of this booklet for further details).

Superheroes Beyond would not be possible with the contribution of many people. We would like to thank Ewan, Helen, Amita, Travis and the entire team at ACMI for hosting and co-organising this conference; Swinburne University's Cinema and Screen Studies major for its support of the Cleverman exhibition; our Pro-Vice Chancellor Professor Scott Thompson-Whiteside for offering additional Faculty support for the conference; and, last but not least, our great keynotes and guest speakers, and all of you who have travelled from near and far to be here.

Academics Assemble!
Angela, Liam, Liz, Wendy, and Ian
#ACMISuperheroes

Stan Lee Excelsior!

We’d like to acknowledge the legendary Stan Lee. He may have gone to SuperHeaven but his inspired and inspiring imagination lives on in the characters and stories he shared with millions of readers and viewers.

Supernatural Acknowledgement

ACMI acknowledges the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation, on whose land we meet, share and work. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from all nations of this land.

A VR experience at Screen Worlds at ACMI.

We’ve been waiting for you! Superheroes: Realities Collide is a trip to an alternative comic dimension in room-scale virtual reality. The city of Melbourne needs you to create your own unique character, choose powers and abilities to transform into a superhero who will protect us from a dangerous comic contagion.

Created in a unique collaboration between Swinburne University of Technology, celebrated technology artist Stuart Campbell aka SUTU and award-winning VR studio VISITOR, Superheroes: Realities Collide populates a living, breathing comic book version of our iconic city with everything from cars, trams, streets and buildings just waiting to be jumped on.

We’ve all watched our favourite heroes jump, fly, web-sling and explode on the big and small screens, but what would it actually feel like to be bestowed with powers and set free? Answer our call, don the virtual reality headsets, gloves and super powers to destroy this alternative Melbourne before it swallows our beautiful city in a cloud of anti-matter!

Credits:
Charles Henden - Director
Craig Bowler - Art Director
Zoe Horne - Producer
SUTU - VR Artist
Jacob Steele - Composer
Bailey Drucker - Voice Actor
Angela Ndalianis and Liam Burke - Executive Producers
Angela Ndalianis - Creative Director

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Superheroes: Realities Collide

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### Wednesday, 5 December

**Pre-Conference Welcome Event**
- (Registration and RSVP needed)

**Conference Welcome**
- Opening Keynote - Trina Robbins
- Wonder Woman: Lesbian Or Dyke? Paradise Island as a Woman’s Community
  - Chair: Angela Ndalianis

**Lunch**
- Lightwell

### Thursday, 6 December

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<th>Time</th>
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| 10:00 – 12:00 | Conference Welcome  
  Opening Keynote - Trina Robbins  
  Wonder Woman: Lesbian Or Dyke? Paradise Island as a Woman’s Community  
  Chair: Angela Ndalianis | Cinema 1       |
| 12:00 – 1:00 | Lunch | Lightwell | Cinema 1 |
| 1:00 – 2.20 | Panel 1A: Superheroes on TV  
  1. Gone in a Single Season: Analyzing the Genre of Superheroes Original to Television – Jason Bainbridge (UniSA)  
  2. Beyond the ‘no flights, no tights’ rule: Representing the fantastical in Superhero TV – Andrew Lynch (University of Melbourne)  
  3. Brick Breaking: colour, costume, and powers in FX’s Legion – Jared Orth (University of Melbourne)  
  Chair: Ian Gordon | Cinema 1       |
| 2.30 – 3.50 | Panel 2A: Of Monsters and Supermen  
  1. Eco-horror, Mutation, and the World Without Us – Octavia Cade  
  2. Beyond Superman: Bizarre and the Limits of Satire as Critique – Ian Gordon (National University of Singapore)  
  Chair: Angela Ndalianis | Cinema 1       |
| 3.50 – 4.20 | Break | Lightwell | Cinema 1 |
| 4.20 – 5.40 | Panel 3A: Superheroes Around the World… Part 1  
  1. We Do Need Another Hero: The Incompatibility of Superheroes and Australia – Liam Burke (Swinburne University of Technology)  
  2. A European Superman – Lars Konzack (University of Copenhagen)  
  3. Where are the Italian Superheroes? From Bonelliani to Spaghetti Superheroes – Angela Ndalianis (Swinburne University of Technology)  
  Chair: Sebastian Svegaard | Cinema 1       |
| 6.30 – 7.30 | Panel 3B: Twilight of the Supermen  
  1. Life After Crisis: Cruel optimism and the logic of exception in All-New Wolverine: Old Woman Laura – Katherine Cox (ANU)  
  2. A Matter of Life and Death: Staying Alive in the Marvel Universe – Adam Daniel (Western Sydney University)  
  3. "Where are you now, Batman?: time and ageing in graphic and prose superhero novels – Julian Novitz (Swinburne University of Technology)  
  Chair: Wendy Haslem | Studio 1       |
| 7:30 – 9:00 | Inside the Minds of Cleverman  
  Ryan Griffen, Tamala Shelton, Uncle Gary, Katherine Brown  
  Hosted by Cienan Muir | Cinema 1       |
| 9:00 – 10:00 | Informal drinks | ACMI café |
### Day 2 - Friday, 7 December

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<th>Time</th>
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| 9.30 – 10.45 | **Keynote:** Sheena C Howard  
*The Power of Comics, Superhero(ines) and Ideology*  
Chair: Liam Burke | Cinema 1   |
| 10:45 – 11:15 | **Break**  | Lightwell   |
| 11:15 – 1:00 | **Panel 4A: Superheroes Around the World... Part 2**  
1. Pakistani Superheroes and Beyond: Tales from an emerging comic industry - Wajeeah Aayeshah (University of Melbourne) and Sameera Durrani (UNSW)  
2. *Yoko Tsuno: The Superhero and the Bande Dessiné* – Esther De Dauw (University of Leicester)  
3. The transformation of the comic book superhero into an international multifORMAT IP: From *Tukano* to *Zambo Dende* – Uribe-Jongbloed (Universidad Externado de Colombia) and Hernán David Espinosa-Medina (University of La Sabana)  
4. Korea's Quotidian Superheroes and the Noir Politics of Webtoons – Brian Yecies (University of Wollongong)  
Chair: Sebastian Svegaard | Cinema 1   |
| 1:00 – 2:00 | **Lunch**  | Lightwell   |
| 2:00 – 3.45 | **Panel 4B: Modern Mythology**  
1. Teaching Wonder Woman: Towards a pedagogy of superhero mythology – Djoymi Baker (University of Melbourne)  
2. Origins beyond Origins: Superhero as folk tale, legend and myth – Neal Curtis (University of Auckland)  
4. Fictionalising fact: how a folk legend was re-imagined into a pop culture icon – Brad Webb (Comixpo)  
Chair: Ian Gordon | Cube   |
| 4:00 – 5.30 | **Australian Comics and their Creators**  
Tom Taylor, Wolfgang Bylsma, Nicola Scott, Sutu,  
MC - Liam Burke | Cinema 2   |
| 6:00 – 7:15 | **Trina Robbins In Conversation**  
MC - Nicola Scott | Cinema 2   |
| 8:30 | **Conference dinner (registration needed)** | Chocolate Buddha (next to ACMI) |
### Panel 6A: Superhero Movies
1. The Buried Secrets of M. Night Shyamalan: The Millennial Twist Film and the Superhero Genre – Jessica Balanzategui (Swinburne University of Technology)
2. Creating a Kingsman: An Exploration of the Impact of the Paternal Relationship and Socio-Economic Influences on the Development of the Non-Traditional British Hero – Holly Fitzmaurice (Mary Immaculate College)
3. The Legacy of Superhero Film Serials: Early Adaptations, Crude License Agreements, and the Case of Republic Pictures’ Captain America (1944) – Tara Lomax (University of Melbourne)
4. Heroic Poses: Observing the personalities of superheroes through film fight sequences – Thomas Stockdale (Swinburne University of Technology)

**Chair:** Dan Golding

### Panel 6B: Comic Book Heroes
1. From Comic Books to Courtroom: Unmasking the Intellectual Property behind the Superhero – Mitchell Adams (Swinburne University of Technology)
2. Honest Abe saves the day: Lincoln as a Comic Book Hero – Max Bleidstein
3. Every Variation, Every Supremium Delusion: (Re)Defining the Superhero and the Limits of Reinvention – Aidan Diamond
4. Secret Identities and Public Personas – Darren Fisher (Swinburne University of Technology)

**Chair:** Neal Curtis

### Day 3 – Saturday, 8 December

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<th>Time</th>
<th>Panel 7A: Superhero Identities Panel:</th>
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<td>Trina Robbins, Sheena C Howard, Cienan Muir and Brian Tilley</td>
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<td>1. Will Asian superheroes ever have their Black Panther moment? – Andrea Chan (Swinburne University of Technology)</td>
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<td>2. The New Normal: Marvel Comics’ Diversification of Superhero Titles and the Legacy Problem – Naja Later (Swinburne University of Technology)</td>
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<td>3. The Heart of a Hero: Disability and Humanity in the Origin Stories of Marvel Studios’ Superheroes - Alexandra Ostrowski Schilling</td>
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<td><strong>Chair:</strong> Bertha Chin</td>
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<td>2. Who can sing T’Challa’s name? The music of Black Panther and the spectre of Africa in Hollywood soundtracks – Dan Golding (Swinburne University of Technology)</td>
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<td>3. The Black Panther: Radical Newspaper or Super Hero? – Aaron Humphrey (University of Adelaide)</td>
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<td>4. Children are Our Future Teach them Well: Erik Killmonger, Marvel’s Latest Monstrous Child – Diana Sanders (University of Melbourne)</td>
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<td><strong>Chair:</strong> Jessica Balanzategui</td>
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<td>1. The Marvel Age: Continuity, Shared Universes, and the Bricolage of Superhero Narratives – Michael Kobre (Queens University of Charlotte)</td>
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<td>2. Secret Origins: Journey into History of the Shared Universe – Vincent Tran (Swinburne University of Technology)</td>
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<td>3. The Impossibles Revived: Hannah-Barbera’s superheroes universe in TV and comics – Tomasz Zaglewski (University of Poznan)</td>
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<td><strong>Chair:</strong> Adam Daniel</td>
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**All panels and events will take place at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) Federation Square, Flinders St, Melbourne VIC 3000. The registration desk will open at 9am on Day 1 of the conference and will remain open throughout the conference.**

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In his now-infamous 1954 indictment of comic books, Seduction of the Innocent, Dr. Frederic Wertham called the Wonder Woman comic book of the 1940s and 50s “The Lesbian counterpart of Batman,” whom, along with his young sidekick, Robin, he had already accused of membership in NAMBLA. So, did Wonder Woman creator William Moulton Marston intend the Amazon princess Diana, her home-town Amazons, and her Holliday girl sidekicks, to be lesbians? And is this a bad thing? Using sample panels from Golden Age Wonder Woman comics, Trina Robbins answers the question both ways, and offers a third interpretation. This talk and presentation comes to no positive conclusion, but leaves the audience informed and amused.

**Bio:** Trina Robbins has been drawing and writing comics since 1966, when she drew comics for the East Village Other, New York’s iconic underground newspaper, while at the same time designing and selling clothes from her Lower East Side boutique, Broccoli. In 1970, she produced the very first all-woman comic book, It Ain’t me, Babe. In 1972 she was one of the founding mothers of Wimmin’s Comix, the longest-lasting women's anthology comic book. (1972 – 1980) In the mid-1980s, tired of hearing publishers and editors say that girls don’t read comics and that women had never drawn comics, she co-wrote (with Catherine Yronwode) Women and the Comics, the first book on women cartoonists. She has been responsible for rediscovering previously forgotten early women cartoonists like Nell Brinkley, Tarpe Mills, Barbara Hall, and Lily Renee. In 1986 she became the first woman to draw a Wonder Woman comic book. In 2013 Trina was inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame. In 2013 she was inducted into the Wizard World Hall of Legends, and at the San Diego comic convention she received the Eisner award for editing the two-volume reprint collection of the complete Wimmin’s Comix.

This talk will connect our real life conceptions of what a superhero is and can be, with the expectations we have of superhero(ines) in comics books. Throughout this keynote, the audience will be asked to compare their real life superhero(ines) with the rigid historical boundaries of how superhero(ines) have and have not been portrayed in comics. The audience will be challenged to be self-reflective in the ways comics have produced and re-produced dominant ideologies around who can be the hero and who cannot be the hero. Examples of modern lesser-known comics that challenge historical representations across the genre will be shared as a way to show the audience how inclusive comics have become. Dr. Sheena C. Howard will end the talk by discussing her vision and outlook on the future of comics.

**Bio:** Sheena C. Howard is an award-winning scholar, writer and documentary filmmaker. Howard is an Associate Professor of Communication, with a Ph.D. from Howard University in Intercultural and Rhetorical Communication. In 2014, Howard became the first woman of colour to win an Eisner Award at San-Diego International Comic-Con for her first book, *Black Comics: Politics of Race and Representation*. Howard is the co-writer of the critically acclaimed comic book, *SUPERB* and the author-editor of the *Encyclopedia of Black Comics*. Howard has been featured in the LA Times, NY Times, and Washington Post. She has been featured in films and documentaries as an expert on race, gender, and sexual orientation. Howard is also the author of *Black Queer Identity Matrix* and editor of *Critical Articulations of Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation*. Howard recently appeared in the Comcast On-demand short film, *Groundbreakers: Heroes Behind the Mask*.
Australian Comics
and their Creators
Gain an insider’s perspective with some of the stars of the Australian comics industry — Wolfgang Bylsma, Nicola Scott, Sutu, Tom Taylor.

In recent years Australian comic creators have made a big impact on the global market, writing, drawing, and publishing celebrated comics across a range of genres and platforms. This panel of leading comic book creators celebrates the flowering of Australian comic book culture. Topics will include how to break into the comic book industry, representations of Australia in comics, and working from Australia on global icons like X-Men, Wonder Woman, and Doctor Strange.


Moderated by Dr Liam Burke (Swinburne University of Technology)

Inside the Minds of Cleverman
Ryan Griffen, Tamala Shelton, Uncle Gary, Katherine Brown
Join Cleverman cast and crew in conversation about the ageless stories and myths that inspired the TV show.

How are ancient stories and myths interpreted in popular culture? The thought-provoking, acclaimed television series Cleverman entered new territory in its hybridisation of science fiction and superhero genres with the rich stories of Dreamtime. Co-producer Rosemary Blight explains that “The arc of the stories is fiction but the heart and genesis of the stories come from Aboriginal story-telling. There is a definite truth to the stories.” With an 80% Indigenous cast, Cleverman set the benchmark for diversity on Australian television, while also using genre in an innovative way as a vehicle for exploring powerful contemporary themes dealing with race, class, and politics.

Join Cleverman creator Ryan Griffen, actor Tamala Shelton, Uncle Gary Williams and co-host’s Kimberley Lovegrove and Cienan Muir in a powerful conversation spanning Aboriginal stories, comic book characters, science fiction languages and all things wrapped up in the origins and production of the ground breaking Cleverman series.

Hosted by Cienan Muir
IN CONVERSATION WITH TRINA ROBBINS
JOIN GROUNDBREAKING COMICS ARTIST, WRITER AND “HERSTORIAN” IN HER FIRST AUSTRALIAN APPEARANCE

Get insight from a comic book legend and the first woman to ever draw a Wonder Woman comic book.

Trina Robbins has been drawing and writing comics since 1966, when she drew comics for the East Village Other, New York's iconic underground newspaper.

By the 70s she had produced the first all-woman comic book, It Ain't me, Babe, and was one of the founding mothers of Wimmin’s Comix, the longest-lasting women's anthology comic (1972–1992). In the mid-80s, tired of hearing publishers and editors say that girls don’t read comics and that women had never drawn comics, she co-wrote (with Catherine Yronwode) Women and the Comics, the first in a series of histories of women cartoonists. She has been responsible for rediscovering previously forgotten early women cartoonists like Nell Brinkley, Tarpe Mills, Barbara Hall, and Lily Renee.

An inductee into the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame and the Wizard World Hall of Legends, Robbins also earned an Eisner award for editing the two-volume reprint collection of the complete Wimmin’s Comix.

Moderated by Australian based Wonder Woman artist Nicola Scott.

SUPERHERO IDENTITIES PANEL - TRINA ROBBINS, SHEENA C. HOWARD, CIENAN MUIR AND BRIAN TILLEY
NOT ALL SUPERHEROES SHOUT FROM THE TOPS OF BUILDINGS

From Black Panther to Jessica Jones superheroes on the page and screen are more diverse than ever before. Join a panel of industry experts and superhero creators as they unmask the secret identities of the contemporary superhero.

Sheena C. Howard is an award-winning scholar, writer and documentary filmmaker. In 2014, Howard became the first woman of colour to win an Eisner Award for her first book, Black Comics: Politics of Race and Representation. She is also the co-writer of the critically acclaimed comic book SUPERB.

Cienan Muir is a Yorta Yorta man from Narrm. He is a cosplayer (Ceejayandthecosplay), storyteller and 2019 Indigenous Comic Con - Australian Coordinator. The Indigenous Comic Con will be a platform for Indigenous people in the pop culture industry from film/tv to comicbook writing. He is passionate about all things sci-fi, pop culture, comics and cosplay, and believes that these mediums can give voice to new Indigenous perspectives, and society around us.

Trina Robbins produced the first all-woman comic book, It Ain’t me, Babe in 1970, and is one of the founding mothers of Wimmin’s Comix, the longest-lasting women’s anthology comic book (1972–1992). In 1986 she became the first woman to draw a Wonder Woman comic book and in 2013 Trina was inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame.

Brian Tilley began his work with Back to Back Theatre in 1995 as a member of Theatre of Speed – taking lead roles in Minotaur, POD 7 in Geelong and DMI. He has performed in numerous Theatre of Speed productions, in Tour Guide (Austria) and as a collaborator with The Democratic Set. He is a devisor/performer in Ganesh Versus the Third Reich.

Moderated by Odette Kelada, Lecturer in Creative Writing at Melbourne University. Her writing focuses on marginalised voices, gender and racial literacy, and has appeared in numerous publications. Odette’s novel, Drawing Sybylla, won the Dorothy Hewett Award for an Unpublished Manuscript in 2017.
From comic books to court room: Unmasking the intellectual property behind the superhero

Since the first appearance of Superman in 1938, the control of comic book characters has become increasingly important to comic book creators. Moving beyond the pages of their comic book covers, superheroes have become the subject of registrations under intellectual property regimes, including trade marks and copyright. Control of these characters via intellectual property rights has been instrumental to those involved in comic book publication. For decades Marvel and DC, in particular, have fiercely protected the intellectual property interests in their inside and outside of court. With comic books and similar artistic and literary works initially protected by copyright as a whole, there has been a shift to protect individual characters and associated attributes using the copyright system to exert control and prevent others from exploiting similar characters. Over the past few decades DC and Marvel have led a push to move from copyright to trade mark protection, augmenting intellectual property law to exploit and control characters in increasingly critical merchandising activities. Trade mark protection of characters correlates with the introduction of transmedia versions of these characters. As merchandising activities have increased along with transmedia and storylines are embedded in Pakistani culture, history and politics. ‘Heroes’ is a bold vigilante fighting crimes. An important aspect of these comics are their connection with their regional and local culture. These aren’t just an imitation of Western comics. Rather, the characters and storylines are embedded in Pakistani culture, history and politics. ‘Heroes’ is a bold vigilante fighting crimes. An important aspect of these comics are their connection with their regional and local culture. These aren’t just an imitation of Western comics. Rather, the characters and storylines are embedded in Pakistani culture, history and politics.

In this paper we will explore a body of these comics. Based on data from in-depth interviews with the relevant writers and artists, it will investigate their motivations, challenges, aspirations and future objectives. This paper will contribute to the existing knowledge gap in the discourse about Pakistan’s comic industry that is producing contemporary cultural artefacts.

Bio: Wajeeah Aayeshah is a Lecturer in Screen and Cultural Studies at the University of Melbourne. She is the author of Teaching Wonder Woman: Towards a pedagogy of superhero mythology. Wonder Woman first appeared in DC’s All Star Comics #8, in December 1941. The Amazons of Greek myth - who inspired the creation of Wonder Woman - were powerful warriors who Homer calls “men’s equals” in battle (Illiad 3.189). However, they were also conflicted figures of gender anxiety, whose depiction shifted according to historical and political events in the ancient world. Similarly, as the first female superhero, Wonder Woman resonated with an era in which women were encouraged to enter non-traditional roles during the war. However, she came under attack in the post-war era, when women were supposed to be returning to the home. The rise of second-wave feminism signalled a return in Wonder Woman’s popularity, reflected in and assisted by her adaptation into television in the 1970s. Most recently, Patty Jenkins’ 2017 feature film became bound up in timely debates around gender, power and representation in the Hollywood industry.

In Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology, Richard Reynolds suggests that comic book creators originally stressed the mythic connections of superheroes to provide them with a cultural legitimacy they were otherwise seen to lack (1992: 53). With the dominance of the superhero film in the current era, this legitimation is now seen as ground - and ancient myths are deemed relevant to popular culture through its revival in superhero narratives.

This paper reflects upon teaching Wonder Woman across an interdisciplinary subject, a classical studies subject, and a screen studies subject respectively, charting changes in academic and student attitudes, and shifts in interdisciplinary debates around fidelity and legitimacy. The myth/superhero alignment is now resituated in classical reception studies on the one hand, and discussions of transmedia franchise storytelling on the other. What remains relatively constant is the amazons as a figure of gender controversy.

JESS BALANZATEGUI (SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY)

The buried secrets of M. Night Shyamalan: The millennial twist film and the superhero genre

M. Night Shyamalan is primarily associated with a distinctive approach to the twist film that heavily influenced the puzzle/mystery film trend of the millennial turn. Emerging from the superhero boom of the early 2000s, this diverse group of films – which has been variously defined as the “puzzle” (Buckland), “complex narrative” (Hven), and “mind-game” (Blaséreview) films – foregrounds narrative complexity and was one of the most prevalent and successful types of popular cinema around the turn of the millennium. For instance, Shyamalan’s breakout release, The Sixth Sense, was the second highest grossing film of 1999 behind only the highly anticipated Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace (Lucas). While the puzzle/mystery film and the superhero genre are often considered to be dichotomous responses to millennial anxieties, this paper contends that Shyamalan’s body of work self-reflexively plays upon the stylistic and thematic nexus between both modes.

Shyamalan’s interest in superhero mythology is most explicitly signaled in Unbreakable (2000), in which the much anticipated narrative twist is a dramatically signalled genre shift, as this apparent gothic mystery film is exposed in the final third to be a superhero film. More recently, Shyamalan’s Split (2016) features a similar manoeuvre, as a film commercially positioned as a return to Shyamalan’s mystery/puzzle film “roots” was revealed to be a sequel to Unbreakable. While critics saw this as an unarguably attempt to capitalize on the lucrative shared universe approach of contemporary superhero franchises, Shyamalan has used his trademark twist film structure to examine superhero mythology since The Sixth Sense. Furthermore, Shyamalan had been conceiving of a shared universe approach can be found in a little known Syfy Channel movie, The Buried Secrets of M Night Shyamalan (Nathaniel Kahn, 2004). As an unauthorized documentary about the allegedly reclusive filmmaker, the film features a combined narrative twist and generic shift that self-consciously parallels Unbreakable: as it becomes apparent that Buried Secrets is a faux documentary with supernatural overtones, it also reveals itself to be a depiction of Shyamalan’s own mysterious superhero origin story.

Bio: Jessica Balanzategui is a Lecturer in Cinema and Screen Studies at Swinburne University of Technology. Jessica’s research, published in numerous refereed journals and edited collections, examines the impact of technological, cultural, and industrial change on screen genres and aesthetics, and the ways in which these are incorporated into global screen cultures. Her book, The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema, is forthcoming with Amsterdam University Press/The University of Chicago Press (2018).

CLEM BASTOW

No more guns in the valley: Gender liberation through ultraviolence in 20th Century Fox’s X-Rated X-Men films

When the young mutant Laura/X-23 marries Logan/ Wolverine at the end of Logan (2017), she eulogises him with the “no more guns in the valley” speech from George Stevens’ classic Western Shane (1953). As Laura forges a new path with her fellow young and gender diverse mutants – having brutalised countless male “Reavers” – the ultraviolent film ends on a bittersweet note of hope, and the guns of the Shane eulogy are recast as phallic signifiers: could this be a new era dawning after decades of male-focused superhero movies?

The author John Edgar Wideman has said, “Real change is always violent”, and the X-rated films of 20th Century Fox’s X-Men Universe – Deadpool (2016), Logan (2017), and Deadpool 2 (2018) – present female characters who are set apart from their PG-rated equivalents in both their depth of characterisation and their willingness to engage in violent combat.

Far from the unrealistic expectations set by the Fox, Sony and Marvel Cinematic Universes’ treatment of female Marvel superheroes, these characters present as, beyond the “mutations” that give them superpowers, ordinary people: a lonely 11-year-old Latina (Logan’s Laura), a grumpy teenage boy (Deadpool’s Negasonic Teenage Warhead), a carefree black woman (Deadpool’s Domino). This paper seeks to locate these R-rated heroines of the Fox X-Men Universe as existing beyond the expected roles of women within other Marvel adaptations, where they are only permitted to be damsels (Wolverine, 2016; “Rambolinas” (Tasker, 1993), or ultimately beholden to patriarchal myths despite their strengths and talents (Krakowski).

This paper will also, then, explore the irony of the restrictive “adults only” classification. The female and queer characters in these films reflect diverse contemporary US representations far better than their family-friendly competitors, which begs the question: can viewers only be exposed to this diversity if it is delivered through violence?

Bio: Clem Bastow is a screenwriter and award-winning cultural critic whose work appears regularly in The Saturday Paper and The Guardian. She has written about film for journals including The Lifted Brow, Kill Your Darlings, Film Quarterly, and books including Copyright (NewSouth Publishing, 2015) and Doing It (UQP, 2016). In 2017 she presented the ABC First Run podcast Behind The Belt, a documentary “deep dive” into professional wrestling; her feature screenplay Farrell Four is currently in development at Renegade Films. She holds a Master of Screenwriting from VCA, and teaches screenwriting at University of Melbourne. Clem will be undertaking a PhD in action cinema in 2019 if nobody manages to stop her.

MAX BLEDSTEIN

Honest Abe saves the day: Lincoln as comic book hero

This paper examines the heroic depiction of Abraham Lincoln in comic books ranging from more traditional biographical comics of the late 1950s, such as Abraham Lincoln: Life Story (1958) and All About, Mr. Lincoln! (1959), to Noah Van Sciver’s dementiologising graphic biography The Hypo (2012). In spite of the works’ contrasting approaches and publication dates, all three celebrate Lincoln as a moral and intellectual hero of American history. As Fenris Merton Saaz describes in ‘The 1958-1959 Comic Book Biographies of Abraham Lincoln’ (2010), the earlier Lincoln comics were created primarily to educate children about his greatness on the occasion of his 150th birthday. Both Life Story and All About offer chronological overviews of Lincoln’s life, focusing on his accomplishments and commitment to helping others. The comics’ influence on Van Sciver can be seen in the close visual resemblance between the establishing shot of Springfield, Illinois that opens The Hypo and a panel in Life Story: The two images depict identical sets of storefronts with similar signs and arrangements of people in front of them; this compositional similarity evokes the earlier work. Van Sciver also demonstrates a thematic affinity with both Life Story and All About in his depiction of laudable characteristics of Lincoln highlighted in the fifties comics, such as his intelligence, rhetorical skill, physical size, work ethic, and belief in justice. Although Van Sciver’s treatment of these themes coexists with the representation of Lincoln as a troubled but resilient young man, his admirable virtues nonetheless stand out throughout the text. My readings of Life Story, All About, and The Hypo highlight comics’ role in the perpetuation of Lincoln’s historiographic image in American culture, thereby exploring a key way in which comics have engaged with historiography: as a medium for the lionisation of historical figures.

Bio: Max Bledstein is an independent scholar of comics, film, and other visual media. He has taught courses on comics and composition at the University of Winnipeg and Brandon University. He holds an MA in Cultural Studies from the University of Winnipeg, and will be starting a PhD in Film Studies at the University of New South Wales in July. He received the 2018 Governor General’s Gold Medal from the University of Winnipeg, awarded to the student who achieves the highest academic standing at the graduate level. His work has been published in journals: Young People, Texts, Cultures and Roundtable; his forthcoming article will be published in Inks: The Journal of the Comics Studies Society. His research examines relationships between visual narrative and cultural identity.

LIAM BURKE (SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY)

We Do Need Another Hero: The Incompatibility of Superheroes and Australia

Born in the depths of the Great Depression as a four-colour response to the challenges of the Machine Age, the comic book superhero was an uniquely American creation. However, from Captain Britain to Captain Canuck international creators have reimagined the superhero archetype to reflect local traditions and culture. While US superheroes on the page and screen are popular in Australia, local creators have avoided creating their own superheroes in favour of more grounded icons like Mad Max. In the absence of Australian voices, the few Australian superheroes created (e.g. Talsman, Dark Ranger) have been produced by overseas artists who often perpetuate long-standing stereotypes. Drawing on interviews with more than 100 fans and creators at Australian comic book conventions, this presentation will examine Australian抗pathy to local superheroes, even while there is an enthusiasm for this heroic type. Key topics will include National Identity, Cultural Cringe, and Marketplace Differentiation. This paper will also consider the recent growth of Australian comic book creators, as well as, Cleverman, the first high-profile indigenous Australian superhero by an Aboriginal creator. It argues that these local examples are beginning to redress the dearth of Australian superheroes and, in many cases, challenge outdated conventions.

Bio: Liam Burke is a senior media studies lecturer and major coordinator at Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia. Liam has published widely on comic books and adaptation, with his books including The Comic Book Film Adaptation: Exploring Modern Hollywood’s Leading Genre, Superhero Movies, and the edited collection Fan Phenomena Batman. His next book, the edited collection The Superhero Symbol (with Ian Gordon and Angela Nolandas), will be published by Rutgers University Press in 2019. Liam is a chief investigator of the Australian Research Council funded project Superheroes & Me.
**OCTAVIA CADE**

**Eco-horror, mutation, and the world without us**

The Swamp Thing, like the swamp ecosystem, exists on borderlines. Mutated from its original human form, or with the swamp itself absorbing the memories and knowledge of the lost human body, Swamp Thing carries on the superhero trope of involuntary mutation. But mutation is not the sole province of superheroes. The mutated human may retain audience identification and sympathy, but the mutated non-human, especially the mutated animal, is more often perceived as simply monstrous. This perception remains even when the mutant creature’s role within that narrative is effectively similar to that of the superhero. Yet if the Swamp Thing has tact enough to destroy threats to the functioning ecology of the swamp, can we really give less approval to the actions of mutant animals defending their own habitat from perceived threat? From our human perspective, mutant monsters often attack innocent humans who are not immediately threatening... but how do we define innocence and immediacy?

Superhero narratives tend to privilege the importance of choice, of individual ethical action, of personal responsibility. Yet who is responsible for climate change? Who is responsible for microplastics entering the marine ecosystem, or the production of toxic or nuclear waste? There’s an argument to be made that such responsibility is global and communal - that humans bear responsibility as a species, and as a species we are shirking it.

The existence, therefore, of mutant, ecologically-focused species are shirking it. Mutant superheroes, especially those who identify with liminal environments such as swamps, may be an early signpost for the existence, therefore, of mutant, ecologically-focused species are shirking it. Mutant superheroes, especially those who identify with liminal environments such as swamps, may be an early signpost for the existence of the lost human body, Swamp Thing, like the swamp ecosystem, exists on borderlines. Mutated from its original human form, or with the swamp itself absorbing the memories and knowledge of the lost human body, Swamp Thing carries on the superhero trope of involuntary mutation. But mutation is not the sole province of superheroes. The mutated human may retain audience identification and sympathy, but the mutated non-human, especially the mutated animal, is more often perceived as simply monstrous. This perception remains even when the mutant creature’s role within that narrative is effectively similar to that of the superhero. Yet if the Swamp Thing has tact enough to destroy threats to the functioning ecology of the swamp, can we really give less approval to the actions of mutant animals defending their own habitat from perceived threat? From our human perspective, mutant monsters often attack innocent humans who are not immediately threatening... but how do we define innocence and immediacy?

**ANDREA CHAN**

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**SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SARAWAK**

**Will Asian superheroes ever have their Black Panther moment?**

The success of the Black Panther movie has caused many to hail it as a cultural phenomenon, possibly signalling that Hollywood is finally ready for more diversity. Together with The Defenders and Luke Cage, these are the louder calls of action for more diverse representation. Although the ‘current golden age of television’ (Leslie 2017) indicates an increased representation of African-Americans onscreen, Asian characters have not fared as well, despite the increasing ‘soft power’ of the Asian market.

In recent years, Hollywood blockbusters, especially Marvel movies, have relied on the Chinese and South Korean box offices. Asian locations and characters have appeared in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), mainly playing supporting or token roles with issues of whitewashing and stereotyping of Asian culture causing fan furor previously. These issues show that the representation and inclusion of Asian characters is still limited, stereotypical while also appearing to be negatively received or misunderstood by some. This may be attributed to a lack of cultural sensitivity and experience as Hollywood has predominantly depicted their protagonists to be white. The audience may be unfamiliar with how difference is represented (Hall 2013) and have become used to expressing their opinions loudly online when these depictions compromise their ideals of meaning and fidelity (Burke 2015).

While Asian iterations of Marvel superheroes are familiar for comic book fans who are accustomed to various versions coexisting, moviegoers are less familiar with diverse superheroes with the limited representations thus far. Although the MCU may be hesitant to prominently feature Asians, television demonstrates signs of progress with several Asian characters, playing various seemingly non-stereotypical roles. As such, this paper proposes to examine the current representation of Asian superheroes in the onscreen Marvel universe, their authenticity, the elicited audience and/or fan responses, and how they may lead to more representation. Would it be the Asian influence or Marvel/Hollywood which decides the future of Asians in superhero adaptations?

**Bio:** Andrea Chan (MA TESOL, Swinburne) is a Lecturer at Swinburne University of Technology (Sarawak). Her experience in teaching across various levels has led her to be interested in the use of pop culture in education, K-pop, superheroes, media and depictions of current social issues, social media, and digital learning technologies. She is currently preparing to pursue a PhD.

**BERTHA CHIN**

**ANDREA CHAN**

**ANDREA CHAN**

**SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

**Shethority: moving beyond playing a superhero on television**

In the wake of the #MeToo and #TimesUp movement in Hollywood, the DC TV universe was plagued with its own controversy. Andrew Kreisberg, an executive producer on DC’s TV adaptation series, Arrow (2012 – current), The Flash (2014 – current), Supergirl (2015 - current) and Legends of Tomorrow (2016 – current) was accused of sexual harassment, subsequently suspended by Warner TV, and finally fired from his position after much vocal pressure from fandom. On top of speaking up for those who made these allegations against Kreisberg, the lead female actors across all four shows launched Shethority, an online platform that enables women to share their personal stories via social media (most notably on Instagram and Twitter). Indeed, the community’s Instagram profile describes it as a ‘positive space for all things female’. The social media feeds feature frequent positive messages from the actors who play superheroes on television, combining them with those from their fans. The existence of the Shethority community demonstrate the participatory culture of the DC TV community, facilitated by social media.

This paper proposes to examine how social media has enabled this interactivity between fans and celebrities, extending the roles of these actors who play superheroes on television beyond the screen into real life as they use their celebrity status to spread positive messages; essentially embracing their superhero alter egos in real life for their fans and enabling the exploration of feminist activism beyond Hollywood’s often passive show of solidarity through fashion at major awards shows.

**Bio:** Bertha Chin lectures on social media at Swinburne University of Technology (Sarawak). She has published extensively on fan labour, anti-fandom and fan-producer relationships, is a board member of the Fan Studies Network; and co-editor of Video Game Policy: Production, Distribution and Consumption.

**STEVEN CONWAY**

**SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

**Poisonous pantheons: God of war and toxic masculinity**

Kratos, protagonist of Sony Santa Monica Studios’ God of War series (2005-current), is an archetypal representation of toxic masculinity. For much of the series a singular emotion, rage, famously drives much of the narrative, as Kratos destroys the entire Greek pantheon. The latest iteration of the series, God of War (2018), moves Kratos into Norse mythology and introduces a son. This father-son relationship allows the developers to ruminate upon the toxic masculinity that has defined much of the series’ past. Kratos’ trajectory moves from the flattness of one defining characteristic, rage, to an introspective consideration of this emotion and its consequences, for his life and relationship with his son. A parabolic casting set cast the stage, each illustrating an aspect of toxicity. Most interesting of all is the parable of Baldur. Within Norse mythology, Baldur is traditionally depicted as one of the kinder and most beautiful of Gods. His mother, Frigg, travels the nine realms of Norse myth, entertaining all entities to bring no harm to her son. All accede, except mistletoe, whom Frigg believes too young to pledge an oath. From that point Baldur is considered invulnerable, except for the mistletoe which ends his life via the scheming of Loki. Yet within God of War (2018), this character attribute offers a fascinating twist. Baldur’s invulnerability is translated, experimentally, as numbness. Which is to say, Baldur’s imperviousness is interpreted as the removal of sense, i.e. he cannot feel any external sensation. In its place, Baldur simply feels aggression and psychotic hatred towards his mother, Freya. Thus we are provided with one of mythology’s classic tropes, the power-asserce. This both reifies and critiques an entrenched logic of masculinity: emotion as inferior, as weakness, aggression as legitimate. This presentation will investigate how God of War ponders the central characteristics of toxic masculinity, and explores its repercussions.

**Bio:** Steven Conway is senior lecturer within the Games & Entertainment program at Swinburne University of Technology. He has presented on many aspects of play, philosophy, aesthetics and culture, and has had a variety of articles published on these subjects in journals such as Convergence, Ludumario, Game Studies, The Journal of Games & Virtual Worlds, the Sociology of Sport Journal and Westminster Papers in Communication & Culture. Steven is also co-editor of the first collection in academia on the relationship between policy and digital games, Video Game Policy: Production, Distribution and Consumption.
Superheroes present a few big challenges for game designers, especially if you want to make a system that lets the player design their own characters. For starters, there's the staggering breadth of abilities available to them, all of which have to be wrapped up in a coherent and balanced game system. From a narrative point of view, there's the adage from the Incredibles - that if everyone is special, then no-one is.

How do you go about designing a multiplayer world in which everyone's a superhero? There are also some interesting legal issues in creating a superhero game. Game development folklore spoke of "the curse of the superhero game". It took until 2002 for this to finally be broken, when Australian studio Irrational Games released the critically acclaimed Freedom Force.

We'll take a look at the earliest attempts to reflect the superhero genre in games by looking at the early pen and paper role playing games such as Villains & Vigilantes and Champions.

We'll then move through the history of computer games featuring player-created characters, and see how they drew on the lessons of their digital predecessors, and broke new ground in the Massively Multiplayer Online market that emerged in the early 21st Century. Finally, we'll have a look ahead at what might happen next in the superhero genre in games. Do virtual reality or augmented reality lend themselves to superhero games? Will the latest trends in game development help out here?

Bio: Dr Mike Cooper is a physicist, programmer, games designer and comic creator based in Adelaide, South Australia. After a long career as a games programmer and designer he is currently teaching games programming at the Academy of Interactive Entertainment. He is also working on a comprehensive superhero game system for publication.

As "Dr Mike 2000" he has produced world class superhero games narratives and systems with his add-ons the superhero game Freedom Force, made in Canberra by Irrational Games. "The Strangers" was a story campaign featuring original characters, and longer than the Freedom Force game itself. "Freedom Force X" was an add-on that created 200 new abilities for use in the game, and was widely regarded as the unofficial must-have sequel/expansion pack. Mike is also the writer and artist of the independent superhero/sci-fi comic "Universe Gun".

KATHERINE COX
(ANU)

Life After Crisis: Cruel optimism and the logic of exception in All-New Wolverine: Old Woman Laura

What is a superhero without crisis? In our world, and in the worlds of superheroes, crisis seems to be a new norm. For the superhero genre, however, constant crisis is a structural expectation that justifies the existence and activity of the superhero. The superhero genre pits its heroes against an endless cycle of threats, which despite their frequency are addressed according to a Schitzian logic of exception: an exceptional threat requires an exceptional response. But this logic implies that at some point the emergency will end and the hero who faced it can return to ordinary life, when in fact one crisis is inevitably followed by another in a cycle that becomes ordinary. This paper will examine one instance in which the superhero genre engages with the ordinairiness of crisis and the difficulty of imagining a future beyond it. Tom Taylor's recent All-New Wolverine story, 'Old Woman Laura' (2018), imagines a world beyond constant crisis and uses a utopian lens to frame the heroine's struggle to move past life lived as a weapon. In this story, female superheroes attempt to repair the damage caused by cruel attachments to exceptional logic. I read these attachments as a relation of cruel optimism, which Lauren Berlant defines as an affective mechanism that binds people to objects of attachment that promise something sustaining but impossible to achieve, or "too possible, and toxic." When Laura finally defeats the last super villain threat to society and completes her mission, her inability to comprehend a future for herself suggests that crisis has become her norm and that her strategies for survival are inadequate for "normal" life. I will argue that these efforts to rehabilitate a damaged hero - such as her sister's exhortation to "enjoy this utopia you've worked so damn hard for" - suggests that superheroes too can move beyond crisis.

Bio: Katherine Cox is a PhD candidate in Literature at the Australian National University. Her doctoral project considers the affective influence of national security in Marvel's Iron Man myths. Her other research interests include science fiction and fantasy, apocalyptic fiction, critical theory, film and game studies, and popular culture.

JOHN CRAIG
(Temple University)

Wakanda forever: Exploring the Wakandan-ness of black spaces

Marvel's Black Panther answered the question of what Africa could have been had it not been underdeveloped due to European involvement and colonialism. The film unlocked people's imaginations, not just about the future of African culture, but also what can happen when you allow Black people to develop freely from detrimental outside forces. The beauty of the fictional nation of Wakanda was in its ability to maintain traditional African practices, customs and spiritual systems in the wake of tremendous technological and scientific advancement. Following the release of film, multiple think pieces in academic journals and online newswires reflected on the importance of real Black intellectual, cultural and communal spaces that were safe from oppression and external harm. They claim that Black people currently have no spaces that could possible compare to Wakanda.

I propose Wakanda is not some mythical place only found in comic books, but exists in actually throughout the diaspora. Using an Afrofuturist perspective and bell hook's concept of homeplace, I assert that there are spaces of Black excellence that appear lackluster to the outside (White) world, but in reality are hidden jewels of thriving Black spaces that encourage survival, creativity, brilliance, and innovation. These "Wakandas" are African American institutions and neighborhoods such as Baldwin Hill in Los Angeles, Cascade Heights in Atlanta, Oosla and Aahs in Washington D.C., the Breakfast Klub in Houston, and the numerous Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) that produce some of the most accomplished and brilliant Black minds in the African diaspora. By demonstrating the Wakandan-ness of these spaces where Blackness thrives, I reveal that Black people throughout the world do more than struggle against oppression or subversion in these spaces but use them to build advanced Black futures away from the world. To quote an African proverb, "A farmer who cultivates near the roadside will be always be eyed by the robbers".

Bio: John Craig is a doctoral student at Temple University in the Africana and African American Studies Department. His research focuses on the images and culture of African and African Americans within sequential art. Prior to enrolling in Temple University, he was a high school social studies teacher in Atlanta, Georgia. He holds a master's degree in Africana studies from University at Albany, SUNY and a B.A. in History with a concentration in Secondary Education from Morehouse College.

NEAL CURTIS
(University of Auckland)

Origins beyond origins: Superhero as folklore, legend and myth

It is well documented how much superheroes have borrowed from a range of mythologies, pantheons, most notably Greek and Norse, in order to build their story worlds. Myths by definition are stories of origin integral to religious and communal life, and while superheroes have used all kinds of characters from a host of mythological universes, is there a way to speak of the comic books themselves having a conception of their own mythology, one that is internal to the fictional universes they have created? The paper uses Richard Reynolds's seminal book Superheroes: A Modern Mythology as a framework to consider the ways in which myth might be pertinent to superheroes in the ideological sense of reproducing America's view of itself and its origin; the structural sense of providing continuity and coherence (a point of departure) within a fictional world; and the derivative sense set out above in terms of the borrowing from other pantheons. The paper then moves on to consider how it might be possible to talk about a mythology internal to the comics themselves. In the first instance it considers to what extent we might consider "origin stories" in this role, and to what extent these origins are better thought in terms of the related concepts of folktales and legends. Secondly, it considers to what extent the meta-textual, increasingly self-knowing tropes associated with characters like Deadpool might be used to articulate an understanding of the comic's origins as works of fiction. Finally, the paper turns to Alan Moore's Promethea, and Grant Morrison's Final Crisis, amongst others to examine how stories and the metaphysics of meaning making might themselves be used as the internal mythic origins for these universes.

Bio: Neal Curtis is Associate Professor in Media and Communication at the University of Auckland where he teaches the course 'Comics and Visual Narrative'. He is the author of four books on a variety of topics, but most recently published Savagey and Superheroes with Manchester University Press in 2016.
**ESTHER DE DAUW**

(U N I V E R S I T Y O F L E I C H E R T)

Yoko Tsuno: The superhero and the Bande Dessinée

This conference paper focuses on the Belgian comic book, Yoko Tsuno, written by Roger Leloup and the idea of the superhero as defined by Peter Coogan. Considering Umberto Eco’s understanding of superhero comic books as propagating a conservative ideology, this paper discusses the possibility of a different kind of superhero. It will touch on the differences between European comics and the Anglo-American tradition, but primarily focus on the idea of the superhero as it originated in American superhero comic books and transposed to Belgian comics.

Yoko is a well-rounded character, whose comics fit into a wide variety of genres, such as gothic (On the Edge of Life and The Pray and the Ghost), science fiction (The Time Spiral and The Light of lie) as well as spy stories and thrillers (Message for Eternity and The Cannon of Kila). Building on Baldwin Van Gorp’s work, which considers Yoko as the scientist adventurer, this paper considers Yoko as the scientist, spy and superhero. It analyses Yoko’s performance of superheroism in her multi-genre-spanning narrative and how it differs from other female superheroes and the gendered script they perpetuate. Analysing Yoko’s evolution as a character compared to other female superheroes published at the time, such as Marvel’s Black Widow and DC’s Wonder Woman (specifically, the Diana Prince mod-era), it seeks to place Yoko in a continuum or evolution of female superheroes that is consistent being identified by other scholars in Anglo-American comic studies.

Bio: I am an early career scholar who graduated in January 2017 from the University of Leicester. I completed my MA at Cardiff University and did my undergraduate degree at Antwerp University in Belgium. I am currently working on several publication projects, such as my thesis, Race Ports and Sponde: Selves Gendered Representation in American Superhero Comics, and public engagement projects with the David Wilson Library. These public engagement projects include a Monthly Graphic Novel Recommendation via the Read@Leicester initiative and a series of comic book workshops.

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**AIDAN DIAMOND**

(U N I V E R S I T Y O F L E I C H E R T)

“Every Variation, Every Supremum Delusion”: (Re)Defining the Superhero and the Limits of Reinvention

In the current political climate, nostalgia is a dangerous force. On the right, slogans like ‘Make America Great Again’ call back to a fictional past accessible only to a few, on the left, the apparent hopelessness of fascism’s resurgence inspires the warnings of recent historical atrocities. Each does so through nostalgia: the idea that the past was better, that there is nowhere to go but down. Nostalgia is, in Alan Moore’s revision of Supreme (1996-1999), a powerful narrative tool: created by Rob Liefeld as a transparent and shallow caricature of Superman, Alan Moore reclaimed the eponymous hero’s nostalgic possibilities in a dedicated homage to the Goldenen-Silver Age Superman. This, Divin Lusser Kidder argues, is Moore’s thesis in Supreme: that American comics should know, respect, and preserve for posterity their history, and that they can (and should) do so without embarrassment or guilt. However, this raises the pressing question of who, exactly, is able to indulge in this unembarrassed nostalgia, and who is excluded from it?

There is much to examine in Moore’s Supreme. It is a beautifully executed tribute to the very best of superhero comics and a brilliant distillation of the genre’s history. But Supreme is a trapped by its own nostalgia: it cannot envision a future beyond what it is. It is, as Robert Liefeld’s Superman prototype, a trapped in its own time. Moore can only imagine that no Superman will follow, that he is the last of his kind, that there will be no more tales of this kind. This, Orion Ussner Kidder argues, is Moore’s thesis in Supreme: that American comics should know, respect, and preserve for posterity their history, and that they can (and should) do so without embarrassment or guilt. However, this raises the pressing question of who, exactly, is able to indulge in this unembarrassed nostalgia, and who is excluded from it?

Bio: Aidan Diamond (B.A., Mount Holyoke College; M.A., Memorial University of Newfoundland) studies comics and pop culture. Having written two theses on Batman, she is working on a book examining discipline, confinement, and surveillance in 1986-2011 Batman comics. She has presented in Canada, the U.K., and the U.S.; contributed to The Ascention of Harley Quinn (2017), Studies in Comics (2018), and Politics in Gotham (2019); co-edited, and authored the introduction to, the Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics’ “Freaked and Othered Bodies” special issue (2017); and co-organized the Mixing Visual Media in Comics conference (St. John’s, 2016). She currently studies comparative media and culture at the University of Southern California.

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**DARREN FISHER**

(S W I N B U R N E U N I V E R S I T Y O F T E C H N O L O G Y)

Secret Identities and Public Personas

Secret identities are a delineation and simplification of otherwise complex identity states, and a hallmark of the conventional and arguably outdated superhero. A secret identity is commonly assumed in comics with the main purpose of interacting with the everyday world, allowing assimilation within the context of society, work, and relationships. Thus, the secret identity is an inhibited version of the fully expressed, confident, and powerful public superhero persona.

This paper will position the superhero genre’s secret identity and public persona concepts within the context of the lived experience, both online and offline, asking if these simplified distinctions of identity might provide some insight into the way in which we conduct ourselves within our different daily roles and interactions. Exemplars from Superman to Savage Dragon will be used to investigate authorial ideals of identity, questioning their usefulness as tentative guides for understanding and conducting ourselves within the modern world.

Bio: Darren’s studio practice straddles traditional and digital means of production in illustration and sequential anti/communication, particularly as they relate to concepts of identity and the human condition. His teaching practice in animation explores relationships across media and genre and facilitates engaging tales, exploiting the inherent intermixing of relationships across media and genre and facilitates engaging tales, exploiting the inherent intermixing of genre’s history. But as a trapped by its own nostalgia: it cannot envision a future beyond what it is. It is, as Robert Liefeld’s Superman prototype, a trapped in its own time. Moore can only imagine that no Superman will follow, that he is the last of his kind, that there will be no more tales of this kind. This, Orion Ussner Kidder argues, is Moore’s thesis in Supreme: that American comics should know, respect, and preserve for posterity their history, and that they can (and should) do so without embarrassment or guilt. However, this raises the pressing question of who, exactly, is able to indulge in this unembarrassed nostalgia, and who is excluded from it?

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**HOLLIE FITZMAURICE**


Creating a Kingsman: An exploration of the impact of the paternal relationship and socio-economic influences on the development of the non-traditional British hero.

The word ‘superhero’ conjures up an image of a masked vigilante in tights and a cape. Yet within the genre more kinds of hero exist than just the stereotypical male superhero. The notion of a hero that does not take the traditional path is becoming increasingly popular. Mark Millar’s ever expanding Kingsman Franchise is a testament to the burgeoning popularity of the non-traditional hero narrative. The aim of this paper is to explore the impact a different type of origin story can have on the development of the hero. As a British hero representing a different economic status than is typically seen, Eggy Unwin faces many challenges not depicted in the typical American superhero narrative. Unlike many, his origin story is not fraught with unrealistic tragedy. Instead his story focuses on ordinary experiences. While his origin story is far from idealistic, it does not have the same traumas synonymous with characters like Batman. He faces his own hurdles. Batman and his contemporaries are defined in many ways by their childhood relationships with their parents, and Eggy is influenced in a similar way. Through the use of John Bowlby’s Attachment Theory, and Diana Baumbirns parenting style models, I aim to explore the influence of the parent-child relationship on the development of a non-traditional hero in both the comic book and film franchises. This will focus specifically on a paternal figure, viewing the impact of both positive and negative father figures. It will also take into account the different socio-economic elements within the franchise, and explore the impact these differences have on the development of the hero.

Bio: Hollie Fitzmaurice is a final year Ph.D. Candidate and Departmental Assistant with the Department of English Language and Literature in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland. Her current research is: An Analysis of the Parent - Child Relationship within Comic Books and Graphic Novels, and its Psychological Impact on the Development of the Hero. Through this research she aims to explore the different bonds protagonists have with biological or adoptive caregivers, and how these relationships influence their methods as heroes. Her Masters Degree explored the ways the relationship between Batman and the Joker defined them as hero and villain. Her other research interests include comics studies, popular culture, feminist and gender studies, as well as Gothic, dystopian, fantasy and young adult literatures. She is also interested in intersectionality and the representation of women in comic books and graphic novels. Her research predominantly applies traditional literary and psychological theories to the comic book medium.
**EMIL M. FLORES**
(UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES)

Onward for Filipino freedom! The Filipino Kid and American superhero comics

Much like the guerilla fighters in World War Two, Filipino Kid has remained hidden and unappreciated in American comics history. Given that The Kid appeared at the end of the obscure Yellowjacket comics in the 1940s gives more than ample reason for the character’s obscurity. However, the fact that a Filipino heroic character even existed as a transplanted Western series in an American superhero anthology comic book is an intriguing subject to explore. For this project, Philippine-American relationships as represented in superhero comics will be examined through a postcolonial lens. The subject of Asian representation will also be explored as Filipino, Japanese and Chinese characters navigate through an American comic book construction of World War Two.

Bio: Emil M. Flores is an Associate Professor at the Department of English and Comparative Literature in the University of the Philippines where he pioneered the first writing class on comics in 1995. Dr. Flores has given lectures and read papers on comics and superheroes in different parts of the Philippines, in Singapore and in the UK. His essay on Filipino superhero komiks is included in NEGOTIATING CULTURE THROUGH COMICS published by the Inter-Disciplinary Press in Oxford, UK. His memoir VIRGINIA TECH MEMORIES published by the UST Publishing House includes insights on using comics in the composition classroom. He is the co-editor of DIASPORA AD ASTRA, a science fiction anthology published by the UP Press. He also writes fiction and nonfiction works that have been published in various anthologies.

**DAN GOLDFING**
(SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY)

Who can sing T’Challa’s name? The music of Black Panther and the spectre of Africa in Hollywood soundtracks

Swedish composer Ludwig Göransson’s soundtrack for Black Panther represents a complex case study for how we understand not just superhero music, but the ability (or inability), as Edward Said famously put it, for the Orient, or in this case the cinematic ‘other’, to musically represent themselves in contemporary blockbustert cinema. As Jelani Cobb puts it, Black Panther ‘exists in an invented nation in Africa, a continent that has been grappling with invented versions of itself ever since white men first declared it the “dark continent” and set about plundering its people and its resources.’ So where is the Black Panther musical sound from, and whose is it? Africa, as an uncritically homogenized continent, has a long musical history in Hollywood, with films like Zulu (1964), King Solomon’s Mines (1950) and Hatari! (1962) all including elements of a reified ‘African’ soundscape composed and often performed by white musicians and with little regard for the diversity of these musical traditions. For the music of Black Panther, Göransson travelled to Senegal and South Africa, toured with Senegalese musician Baaba Maal, and spent time at the International Library of African Music in Grahamstown. Eventually, recordings of African musicians (including Maal) were directly used in the score as a part of Göransson’s music, while T’Challa’s name was chanted by a British choir and played on talking drums. In addition to this, Göransson’s music contains elements inspired by Oakland’s hip hop scene, and the more usual contemporary superhero soundscape descended from Hollywood’s digitally-augmented Viennese orchestral tradition. Black Panther remains, in the words of Larry Madawo, ‘an approximation of African culture, an outsider’s version of what African culture might be like.’ Yet as the highest grossing film ever made by a black director, and the centerpiece of contemporary superhero culture’s attempts to move outside the straight white man paradigm, the question remains: who can sing T’Challa’s name, and who composes his music?

Bio: Dr. Dan Golding is a lecturer in Media and Communications at Swinburne University and the co-host of What Is Music for ABC’s ‘View and Triple J.’ He is an award-winning writer with over 200 publications (ABC Arts, Crickey, BuzzFeed, Meanjin, Kotaku), and a video essayist with 1 million views on YouTube. He co-authored Game Changers (Affirm Press, 2016), made the soundtrack to Push Me Pull You (PS4, 2016), and from 2014-2017 was director of the Freeplay Independent Games Festival. His new book, Star Wars After Lucas, will be published in 2019.

**IAN GORDON**
(NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE)

Beyond Superman: Bizarro and the Limits of Satire as Critique

By the 1950s the rough and ready Superman of Jerry Siegel and Joe Shusters original comics had become rather tame and subject to the widespread embarrassment of American society that went hand-in-hand with the baby boom and white flight to the suburbs. Bizarro recaptured some of the anarchic humour of the early Superman and in its satire posed something of a critique of Superman’s various tropes. Bizarro was an early example of comics creators trying to move beyond the limited scope of superhero story telling in the 1950s and 1960s. But as my paper will show there were distinct limits to the transgressions offered by this satire. Indeed the writers of the white face characters may well have been drawing consciously or unconsciously on minstrelsy traditions and gags. By comparing Bizarro with the earlier Mad satire “Supermanman” from 1953 I will examine the limited frame of this satire.

Bio: Ian Gordon’s most recent books are Superman: The Persistence of an American Icon (2017), the Eisner nominated The Comics of Charles Schulz (2017) and Ben Katchor Conversations (2018). His other works include Kid Comic Strips: A Genre Across Four Countries (2016), and Comic Strips and Consumer Culture (1998). He teaches cultural history and American Studies at the National University of Singapore where he is the Head of the Department of History. He is a member of the editorial boards of the Australasian Journal of American Studies, imageText, Inks, the International Journal of Comic Art, the Journal of American History, the Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics, Popular Communication, and Studies in Comics.

**TAYLOR HARDWICK**

Spotting exposed Panties: Representations of female superheroes and Japanese femininity in Seven Deadly Sins

Women are undoubtedly just as super as men in Seven Deadly Sins. However, as a shōnen (boy’s) manga, Seven Deadly Sins is one of the most popular manga series in Japan in recent years, suggesting that the ways in which characters are depicted is of interest to a considerable number of (particularly male) readers. Bearing in mind that shōnen (boy’s) manga is written by and for men, developing an understanding of gender representation in shōnen is important as these texts become increasingly influential both in Japan and globally, communicating and popularising hegemonic ideologies. This paper argues that the representation of women in Seven Deadly Sins upholds Japanese hegemonic masculinity. Superheroes in Seven Deadly Sins go beyond cisgendered men in tights; however, depictions of female superheroes in the series are typically hyper-focused on overtly sexualised physical and sexual situations they are often placed in (usually without their consent). Additionally, women in the series are rarely rewarded for challenging the masculine status quo, whether through their fighting abilities or by reacting negatively to a non-consensual sexual situation. Although immensely powerful, female superheroes in Seven Deadly Sins are seemingly bound by stereotypical notions of Japanese femininity and regarded as objects of heterosexual desire.

Bio: Taylor Hardwick teaches and researches feminism, representations of gender and sexuality in popular culture, and online fandoms. She recently completed her honours year at Swinburne University of Technology, her thesis titled: “2D is just fine” Visual Representations of Women’s Roles in Shonen Manga”. She has always been an avid fan of comics (especially manga and anything Batman-related), and her particular interest in Japanese feminism was sparked after she spent time living in Japan. She is looking forward to taking her next step into research by starting a PhD in 2019, examining online fan communities, geek culture, and feminism.
SHEENA C HOWARD
(KEYNOTE)
The Power of Comics, Superhero(ines) and Ideology
This talk will connect our real life conceptions of what a superhero is and can be, with the expectations we have of superhero(ines) in comics books. Throughout this keynote, the audience will be asked to compare their real life superhero(ines) with the rigid historical boundaries of superhero(ines) have and have not been portrayed in comics. The audience will be challenged to be self-reflective in the ways comics have produced and re-produced dominant ideologies around who can be the hero and who cannot be the hero. Examples of modern lesser-known comics that challenge historical representations across the genre will be shared as a way to show the audience how inclusive comics have become. Dr. Sheena C. Howard will end the talk by discussing her vision and outlook on the future of comics.

Bio: Sheena C. Howard is an award-winning scholar, writer and documentary filmmaker. Howard is an Associate Professor of Communication, with a Ph.D. from Howard University in Intercultural and Rhetorical Communication. In 2014, Howard became the first woman of colour to win an Elsie Award (considered the Oscars of Comics) at San Diego International Comic-Con for her first book, Black Comics: Politics of Race and Representation. Howard is the co-writer of the critically acclaimed comic book, SUPERB and the author-editor of the Encyclopedia of Black Comics. Howard has been featured in films and documentaries as an expert on race, gender, and sexual orientation. Howard is also the author of Black Queer Identity Matrix and editor of Critical Articulations of Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation. Howard recently appeared in the Comcast On-demand short film, Groundbreakers: Heroes Behind the Mask.

AARON HUMPHREY
(UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE)
The Black Panther: Radical Newspaper or Super Hero?
The Black Panther was a radical weekly newsletter published out of Oakland California by the Black Panther Party beginning in 1967, eventually reaching a peak circulation of more than 300,000 in by 1970s. The height of the popularity of the paper also coincided with the emergence of the superhero known as the Black Panther. Although the character's initial appearance in Fantastic Four #52 (1966) predates the founding of the Black Panther Party, the majority of the fictional Black Panther's appearances in Marvel Comics were concurrent with the publication of The Black Panther: radical newsletter with the same name. Reading both The Black Panther and the Marvel Comics appearances of T'Challa in parallel reveals connections that go beyond their shared name. Both texts deal with heroism, struggle, conflict and violence, and Marvel used contemporary issues such as Civil Rights as a way to make their stories relevant. The Black Panther mythologised high-profile figures as a way of making their struggle compelling. Both featured letter columns, offered subscriptions, and sold posters and merchandise of their heroes via mail-order.

Perhaps most interestingly to comics scholars, The Black Panther frequently published original comics in the early 1960s by artists including Emory Douglas and Joan Tarkis Lewis (aka Matliba). Douglas' thick-lined style resembles woodcuts, while his frequent motif of depicting police as pigs in violent battle with the human Panthers has a comic book sensibility. Lewis' drawings employed a sophisticated sense of graphic design, which would not have been out of place in the visually inventive Black Panther stories scripted by Don McGregor in the early 1970s.

This presentation will discuss the confluences between the publications, and demonstrate that although the aims and politics of Marvel Comics and the Black Panther Party were wildly divergent, their parallel Black Panthers reveal the ways both organisations were constructing Black identities and heroism in the Civil Rights era.

Bio: Dr. Aaron Humphrey is a Media Lecturer at the University of Adelaide. His publications have appeared in The International Journal of Comics Studies, Media International Australia, Digital Humanities Quarterly and other scholarly journals. He is a cartoonist and the author of an upcoming book on educational comics.

DARSHANA JAYEMANNE
(ABERYTUN UNIVERSITY)
Ethical temporality: Refiguring time as political speech in 13 Minutes and Bury Me My Love
This paper draws on the concepts of diachrony and synchrony to provide a comparative method for analysing the complex temporalities of performative texts, with a focus on digital games’ representations of refugee stories and experiences. Where synchrony aligns temporal frameworks (as in the sense of ‘synchronising’ watches), diachrony separates or splits them apart, generating experiences of speed and acceleration. Digital games are particularly powerful drivers of diachronic experience, and superhero characters are often central to these designs - their powers creating a sense of hurtling into a different, compelling future.

However such designs and characters, with their extreme focus on diachrony, are ill-suited to documentary subject matter – in particular, the plight of refugees. Here, designs focused on super-empowerment risk trivialisation and inappropriateness. Instead, different temporal regimes are required that are capable of recognizing the complex political issues facing refugees in the contemporary world.

This paper will draw on the concepts of diachrony and synchrony in order to examine some recent games which make distinctive use of comparative temporal schemas in ethical, political and documentary modes. The major case studies will be 13 Minutes Ago and Bury Me, My Love, which re-articulate the typically diachronic videogame temporal schema with different rhythms and tempos. For many games, feedback loops are designed to be intensive and immediately respond to player inputs - however in both of the case studies, immediate gratification is delayed or short-circuited. The superheroics common to game designs are re-aligned with the rhythms and temporaliies of everyday life. The aesthetic approach thus denatures the normative experience of time in games, creating two temporal effects: firstly, a diachronic effect which separates these games from the typical organisation of time in consumer media; secondly, a synchronic effect which aligns these games with extra-legal and documentary texts. In concert with other aesthetic techniques, the chronotopology of 13 Minutes Ago and Bury Me, My Love seeks to overcome the magic circle which can deactivate the ethical gravity of gaming, and thus articulate the value of lives in exile.

Bio: Dr. Darshana Jayemanne is Lecturer in Art, Media and Games at Abertyun University and the author of “Performativity in Art, Literature and Videogames” (Palgrave Macmillan 2017). His work focuses on temporality and narrative in contemporary digital media. He is co-investigator on the Reality Remix project on the Next Generation of Immersive Experiences.

JULIE B. JOLO
(UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Vagina Violence: A Discourse Analytic Study on the Female Revolutionary Heroes in Emiliana Kampilan's Sticker Series
This panel evaluates notions of ‘everyday superhero(ines)’ within the conditions of an oppressive and fascistic political order in three texts: the graphic novel Ello Arcangot (2017); the illustrations series Sabukon Mo Lang Baniin sa Paki Just Try and Shoot Me in the Vagina (2017); and the comics Akibong Sandatahan ng Katigbandan (Armed Forces of the Haggar) (2015).

These narratives depict how the fascist regimes in the country have fashioned mass discontent into a weapon directed at those in the margins, sowing fear on one level but also art and resistance on another. The papers explore the histories and possibilities of subversion in the simultaneously overlooked and targeted sectors of Philippine society. Heroes here become less idealizations of desirable social values than embodiments of latent power in their various exercises of agency – symbolic of an oppressed people’s indefatigable struggle toward peace and justice.

This presentation is concerned with the discursive implications of the illustration of female revolutionary figures amidst Rodrigo Duterte’s recent pronouncements against women rebels. Heroism here is seen through the lens of subversion, given the power structures opposed by the women in the images and the artist that created them. The interplay of language and image will be highlighted as a means of socio-political engagement.

The cover to Marvel’s 1972 Adventure into Fear beckoned readers to “Taste Man-Thing’s Swamp Justice” indeed, inside the pages of the comic. Man-Thing delivers his own brand of manly accountability, killing a sheriff for his murder of an innocent black man. As it turns out Man-Thing was just one of 6 new monster-themed comics Marvel produced throughout the 1970s. The paper proposed here takes a deep dive into the monstrous realm created by Marvel in this era, a new world made possible by the 1971 reconfiguration of the Comics Code Authority (CCA) which allowed monsters from traditional literary genres to appear in the world of superhero comics.

With the relaxing of the CCA Marvel Comics, more so than its competitors, quickly moved to produce a series of titles that took full advantage of this more permissive landscape. In some ways I find that this was not new ground. Creatures like Frankenstein, Man-Thing, and Werewolf-by-Night drew quite consciously from earlier monstrous superheroes such as the Hulk and the Thing. Like their heroic predecessors these brutes were tortured and misunderstood figures who nevertheless valiantly saved the day when the right moment arrived. In contrast to these heroic monsters, Dracula and the zombie Simon Garth were the bad guys in their own titles, occasionally switching to a more heroic stance as the presence of evil in their world shifted. The paper concludes by examining the current slipperiness between the worlds of the horrific and the heroic, a porosity which traces its lineage in part back to the early 1970s. I ask if the presence of monsters both inside and beyond the land of the supers requires us to generate a more elastic definition of what it means to be a superhero… and a monster?

Bio: Henry Kamerling is a professor in the history department at Seattle University where he serves as the Director of the Public History Internship Program. He is the author of Capital and Comic: Race, Region, and Punishment in Post-Civil War America (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017). Dr. Kamerling has presented papers at national and international conferences and teaches courses on American history, punishment in modern society, and the history of the undead. He presented a paper at the 2016 Superhero Identity Symposium in Melbourne, Australia that asked the question “Are Zombies Superheroes?” He has recently completed the chapter on “Zombies and the City” to be included in the collection of essays in the Spaces and Places of Horror edited by Sandy Waters Francesco Pascuzzi (forthcoming, Praeger Press). Dr. Kamerling is currently a manuscript exploring the overlapping worlds of monsters and superheroes.

The Marvel Age: Continuity, Shared Universes, and the Bricolage of Superhero Narratives

At Marvel Comics in the 1960s, Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and other creators developed a set of new narrative conventions for superhero comics that became defining characteristics of the genre: a shared universe inhabited by characters across titles and an increasingly detailed sense of continuity threading from issue to issue over decades. These new conventions amounted, in effect, to an entirely new kind of narrative form, what Stan Howie in his introduction to Gee Gor to the Arrow in the Smasher’s: Writers on Comics describes as “perpetually running narrative machines” (vii). But as decades of superhero narratives accumulated and as these narratives, from the 1980s onward, were increasingly reconfigured and rehosted to adapt continuity to the lengthening histories of major characters, the construction of superhero narratives became a process of “bricolage,” akin to the process by which the structural anthropologist Claude Levi Strauss saw the development of “mythical thought” as “always really (consisting) of a new arrangement of elements” of older myths and images in a “continual reconstruction from the same elements” (13). In this late age of superheroes, writers and artists (and increasingly producers, directors, and screenwriters) select and reassemble elements from decades of superhero history, picking and choosing tropes and images that are meant to both evoke that history and comment on it. Often created by fans steeped in the genre’s history, superhero narratives, through this bricolage, have become perhaps the most overtly self-reflexive genre in popular culture. This paper will explore the development of these narrative conventions and examine how the process of superhero bricolage is embodied at its most baroque and ambitious in Jonathan Hickman’s work on such Marvel titles as Avengers, Fantastic Four and the Wars and at its most popular in the film productions of Marvel Studios.

Bio: Michael Kobre is Dana Professor of Literature and Chair of the Department of English and Creative Writing at Queens University of Charlotte. His essays and stories have appeared in Tin House, TriQuarterly, West Branch, MWW, and other journals. His critical writing and fiction have appeared in Tin House, TriQuarterly, Michigan Quarterly Review, West Branch, Critic, and MWW, and in anthologies of essays on such subjects as the novelist Walker Percy, the rock star Bruce Springsteen, and superhero narratives. He’s the author of Walker Percy’s Voices (University of Georgia Press, 2000).

A European Superman

In 1990, a time still immensely influenced by the Cold War, the Danish comic book company Interpresse licensed from DC Comics published the one and to this date, only Superman comic produced outside USA (Rhode & Bottorff, Jr., 2001). The result was a graphic novel Superman and Fredsdobben (Superman and the Peace Bomb) written by Niels Sandegaard and visual art by Teddy Kristiansen heavily inspired by the artwork from The Dark Knight Returns (1986) by Frank Miller. The graphic novel had a different take on the Man of Steel. In the graphic novel, Superman visits five European Capitals (Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm, and Helsinki) and meet local superheroes like The Little Mermaid in Copenhagen and the Ice Virgin of Norway. It is a gaze into Cold War dilemmas and how America, personified by Superman, is, at the same time perceived as a protector of Western democracies and as exponent of American cultural imperialism (Bertrand, 1987). The graphic novel refers directly to cultural imperialism when Superman encounters Swedish protesters. Superman answers, “I am not an exponent of anything. I am… I am just me.” Superman and Fredsdobben was originally written in Danish and then translated into six other languages (Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, Spanish and Italian), but an American/English translation never occurred. It is a rare glimpse into how European comic culture relates to American comic book culture. This mixture of conflicting ideologies and double binds makes Superman and Fredsdobben unique.

Bio: Lars Konzack (b. 1969) is associate professor in information studies and Chair of Information Studies, the University of Copenhagen. Konzack won gold medal for his Master thesis on software genres in 1998 and received his Ph. D. in multimedia at Aarhus University in 2003. In 2005, he was co-founder of the Danish game development academy DADIU (The National Academy of Digital, Interactive Entertainment). His main research subjects are role-playing games, video games, ludology, geek culture, digital culture, and transmedial culture. Lars Konzack's research articles include among others 'Computer Game Criticism: A Methological and Experimental Analysis' (2002/2016), 'The Origins of Geek Culture: Perspectives on a Parallel Intellectual Milieu' (2014), 'The Cultural History of LEGO' (2014), The Subukan Mo Lang Banilin sa Puki: Superwoman of the Slums: the political configuring of an underclass hero (Armed Forces of the Philippines) (2017). These narratives depict how the fascist regimes in the country have fashioned mass discontent into a weapon directed at those in the margins, sowing fear on one level but also art and resistance on another. The papers explore the histories and possibilities of subversion in the simultaneously overlooked and targeted sectors of Philippine society. Heroes here become less idealizations of desirable social values than embodiments of latent power in their various exercises of agency — symbolic of an oppressed people's indefatigable struggle toward peace and justice.

This presentation examines how the figure of Ella, child superhero of the slums, is an update to a tradition of Filipino superwomen defined by both political and economic marginalization. How can the anti-fascist resistance be read in the insular heroics of a juvenile superwoman, and what is her potential to stake a claim in the prevailing definition of the superhero?

Bio: Francesca C. Kwe is an associate professor at the University of the Philippines, where she teaches creative writing. She obtained her master's degree from the same university and is also a published short story writer, whose work has appeared in various literary anthologies and national publications.
The legacy of superhero film serials: Early adaptations, crude license agreements, and the case of Republic Pictures’ Captain America (1944)

The adaptation of comic book superheroes into movie franchises is a decedently dominant feature of current entertainment, but the history of superheroes in Hollywood cinema extends beyond the contemporary blockbuster period. The historical precedent for this current moment of peak superhero cinema is frequently charted back to the beginning of the blockbuster era of the late 1970s with Superman (Richard Donner, 1978), and the conglomeration era of the new millennium with X-Men (Bryan Singer, 2000) and Spider-Man (Sam Raimi, 2002). However, these milestones only trace part of the ‘historical narrative’ of the superhero movie adaptation.

Comic book superheroes have been adapted for cinema since the classical Hollywood era in the form of film serials, which were short cliffhanger narratives that screened weekly before Hollywood features typically as part of a Saturday matinee program. The superhero genre was significant to the film serial form, with The Adventures of Captain Marvel (Republic, 1941) being the first superhero project produced as a costumed superhero property from a comic book; this initiated a decade-long genre cycle until the decline of the film serial form in the 1950s.

Republic Pictures’ 15-chapter film serial Captain America (1944) is noteworthy because it reveals the unrefined licensing arrangements of superhero properties during this early adaptation period. Only loosely based on the superhero character of the comic, the serial adaptation of Captain America is a productive example of what I call ‘crude licensing agreements,’ which are common during this early adaptation period and pay very little attention to a consistency of brand or narrative mythos—indeed, in Republic’s film serial, Captain America wielded a shield instead of a shield. Like the film serial form itself, the cycle of early adaptations of comic book superheroes is significantly under-researched and often marginalised within studies of classical Hollywood cinema and the emergent interest in superhero scholarship. The objective of this paper is to counter this critical deficiency by acknowledging how the earliest adaptations of comic book superheroes in Hollywood cinema extends beyond the contemporary era.

Bio: Tara Lomax is a Sessional Lecturer in the School of Film and Television at the Victorian College of the Arts and is completing a PhD in screen studies at The University of Melbourne. Her research focuses on media franchises and transmedia storytelling, visual effects industries, and Hollywood empowerment and has been published in the book Star Wars and the History of Transmedia Storytelling and the journal Quarterly Review of Film and Video for forthcoming publications in The Dark Side: A Supervillain Reader, The Superhero Symbol: Culture, History, Politics, and Becoming: Essays on BBC’s Hannibal. She is also a sessional tutor in cinema studies at RMIT University and a research assistant at Swinburne University of Technology. Her research portfolio can be read online at assembled-illusions.com.

Beyond the ‘no flights, no tights’ rule: Representing the fantastical in Superhero TV

With the current swell of new and aesthetically ambitious Superhero TV across a variety of platforms, this paper will argue that Superhero TV is moving beyond the era of downplaying the vibrant and fantastical nature of Superheroes to make them more naturalistic and supposedly ‘approachable’ for a TV audience.

This paper will discuss a range of representations of Superhero TV and their varying approaches to depicting the fantastical. Almost 20 years ago, the developers of the WB (later the CW’s) Smallville (2001–11) established a ‘no flights, no tights’ rule on their small-screen adaptation of Superman. This meant that the show’s protagonist, a young Clark Kent, years before he donned the Superman mantle, would not demonstrate arguably his most well-known superpower, flight, nor wear his iconic Superman costume. This reinforced a binary scenario in which fully-fledged costumed, super-powered Superheroes tended to exist primarily in films, whereas Comic Book Adaptations to TV were restricted to either lower-tier, non-Superhero characters or more naturalistic representations of Super-heroes.

We can see echoes of this in some recent Superhero TV programs like Netflix’s Daredevil (2015–) and Jessica Jones (2015–2019). These programs (taken from more adult-oriented, crime-focused comic books) either wear no costumes or notably muted versions of those worn by their comic counterparts. However, those Superhero TV properties which followed Smallville at the CW like The Flash (2014–) and Legends of Tomorrow (2016–) have become increasingly comfortable presenting highly-stylized, boldly-coloured costumed heroes. Unlike their Netflix counterparts, this new set of broadcast TV Superheroes seem happy to demonstrate their fantastical abilities as often as their series’ budgets will allow.

Even in the traditionally naturalistic space of basic-cable Prestige TV, FX’s Legion (2017–) manages to present a vision of Super-heroes that is bursting with colour and fantastical special effects and a cast of outstanding heroes and villains which bear a closer relationship to stylized comic book illustrations than our contemporary reality.

Bio: Andrew Lynch is a PhD candidate in The School of Culture and Communication at The University of Melbourne, Australia. His current research area is TV Studies, and the contemporary mainstream of the ‘Quality TV’ aesthetic as well as SF, Horror and Fantasy genre fandom. He has recently presented at Game of Thrones: an international conference in Hertfordshire, and the TRANSV TV conference in London. He has a recently published book chapter titled “The Last-night’s Watch: Game of Thrones, contemporary reception and HBO’s continuing legacy” in HBO’s Original Voices: Race, Gender, Sexuality and Power (The Cultural Politics of Media and Popular Culture), an edited compilation published by Routledge. He also has an article titled ‘Tossed salads and human flesh: Fraser, Hannibal and ‘taste’ in Quality TV’ to be published in a Hannibal Lecter themed special issue of Quarterly Review of Film and Video in 2018.

Precarious origins and cosmicomic inclusivity in Dead Balagtas: Mga Sayaw ng Dagat at Lupa

Every hero has an origin story. In myth-making, that origin encompasses the world and its heroes rising out of obscurity and chaos together. In this study I propose to explore how myth-making and inclusivity are wrought together in Emekiana Kamplian’s Dead Balagtas: Mga Sayaw ng Dagat at Lupa. In a superhero feat to reimagine Philippine cultural identity along multiple vectors simultaneously, Kamplian draws portraits of contemporary Filipinos in a bid to reclaim the geophysical history of the Philippine archipelago; at the same time, he imagines contemporary interpersonal relations between Filipinos in cosmicomic and geophysical terms.

In this study I investigate how, through a variety of lead characters, Kamplian’s visual language restores not just fluidity, but tectonic vitality, to how Philippine identities may be viewed. By distributing cosmicomic power—reproductive/destructive/creative—to such characters as mythic figure Larzon Sina or factory-worker Anais, Kamplian grants them literal, and indeed literal, spaces in which to impact society at large, no matter their experience of individual disenfranchisement or social precarity. Their intersectional ontologies can be read as counter-current and potentially follicular in that they negotiate complex intertwinements, in narratological and ideological terms, and yet remain mundane. Following loosely Wim van Weel’s insight that we can consider a mythical protagonist who ‘features in a Flood story as actually surviving the Flood’, Kamplian’s characters can be read as flood heroes whose stories move beyond the Noahic Model: they navigate differences in religion, class, and gender to find a common foothold on territories as precarious as the Philippines.

Bio: Ana Micaela Chuñ Manangüla is an Assistant Professor at the Department of English and Comparative Literature of the University of the Philippines, Diliman, where she attained her Master’s degree in Comparative Literature. Her research interests revolve around the narratology of myth in popular genres across media, particularly in novels, comics, and anime.
Female Superheroes in the Aftermath of 9/11: Suppression and the Rise of the Female Super Soldier

To put into context the emergence/re-emergence of female superheroes in the comics and their importance to the genre today, it is helpful to understand what happened to the leading female characters of superhero comics before and after 9/11. While male heroes again took centre stage and many female superheroes were side lined, space opened up for other articulations of female superpower.

Susan Faludi’s observed that in the aftermath of 9/11 superheroes were sideline, space opened up for heroes again took centre stage and many female superhero comics before and after 9/11. While male to the genre today, it is helpful to understand what female superheroes in the comics and their importance.

To put into context the emergence/re-emergence of Female Superheroes in the

John McGuire (Western Sydney University)

Where are the Italian Superheroes? From Action/Adventure to Spaghetti Superheroes

This paper examines the relative absence of the persona of the superhero in Italian comics and popular media. It will be argued that while Italian comics included an endless stream of action, crime-fighting heroes, they rarely possessed the characteristics of the superhumans who dominated in US comics. Asso di Piche (The Ace of Spades), Tex Willer, Zagor, Diabolik, and Satani are creative hybrids that often push the heroes into diverse generic directions – the western, the spy genre, action, paranormal, and the futuristic. It’s not until the 1960s that the Italian superhero is introduced, not in comics but in cinema. This paper will examine the 1966 superhero-spy film Argonaut the Fantastic Superman and the sequels that followed; and The Three Fantastic Supermen, directed by the famed director of Spaghetti Western Gianfranco Parolini, and its sequels. The paper ends with a discussion of the infamous cult “found footage” classic, Italian Spiderman. While Italian Spiderman has production circumstances that differ to the other films, it will be argued that the film’s approach to the superhero genre is rooted in the earlier examples.

Bio: Angela Ndalianis is Research Professor in Media and Entertainment at Swinburne University of Technology. Her research focuses on entertainment media and its histories; and the superhero, horror and science fiction genres. Some of her book publications include Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment (2004), Science Fiction Experience (2010), The Horror Domain: Media and the Senses (2012) and the edited books The Contemporary Comic Book Superhero (2009), and SuperHeroes; from Hercules to Superman (co-editor, 2006). She is also co-editor of The Superhero Symbol (with Liam Burke and Ian Gordon), which will be published by Rutgers University Press in 2019. Angela is lead investigator of the Australian Research Council funded project Superheroes & Me. She is currently writing the book: Batman: Myth and Superhero, which will be published by Rutgers University Press.

Julian Novitz (Swinburne University of Technology)

“Where are you now, Batman?”: time and aging in graphic and prose superhero novels.

The general commitment of superhero comics to maintaining a ‘status-quo’ situation via episodic storytelling and reboots has been frequently remarked upon and parodied. This tendency does not generally allow for the depiction of aging in ‘canonical’ superhero comics, where the protagonists are constantly reset to their more recognisable younger selves. Depictions of aging have typically been confined to one-off or ‘what if’ narratives existing beyond the current continuity of the comics. While some of these narratives in the golden or silver age of comics offered idealised or utopian speculations on their superheroes’ future, the tendency from the 80s and 90s onwards has been to explore dystopian possibilities for aging superheroes. This tendency to consider the ways in which physical aging and the passage of time may inevitably lead to the failure or rejection of super-heroic identities is also frequently considered in superhero prose literature. Diverse works like Thomas Pynchon’s Gravity’s Rainbow (1973), Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children (1981), Jonathan Lethem’s Fortress of Solitude, all see either a breakdown in super-heroic identities as their characters age. Where the graphic novels tend to accentuate the physical deterioration and/or absurdity of the aging superhero body, the prose novels tend to focus on the disillusionment or psychological isolation of characters who are invested in super-heroic identities, as aging exposes them to contrasting priorities and realities. This paper will compare and contrast the approaches to aging and/or dwindling superheroes in seminal superhero graphic novels with those found in the small but growing body of literary superhero novels, posing that the almost inevitably negative and pessimistic speculations on superhero futures suggests an awareness of the limitations of hyper-masculine ideals that tend to be expressed through depictions of super-heroic identity.

Bio: Julian Novitz is a lecturer in writing at the Swinburne University of Technology. He is the author of two novels and a collection of short stories and his fiction and criticism has been published in a wide range of journals, magazines and anthologies.

Jared Orth (University of Melbourne)

Brick Breaking: colour, costume, and powers in FX’s Legion

Legion tells a story primarily set inside the mind of David Haller, a mutant institutionalised with symptoms of schizophrenia. His powers, along with those of other mutants in the show are mental, rather than physical, including telepathy, mind transfer, memory manipulation, and telekinetic links. As we move between reality, memory, and the inside of Haller’s mind, the show is grounded through the use of costume and colour. Carol Case, Legion’s Costume Designer, wanted to “stay away from that whole superheroes in spandex” to tell the story. Instead, the show builds its own lexicon of colour, through set and costume, to convey complex emotional states that can physically manifest. The eclectic blend of color-blocking, graphic tees, British mod and space age chic, make the setting simultaneously ambiguous and familiar. In doing so, Legion breaks from other recent representations of the X-men in distinct historical contexts, but from the prevailing visual aesthetics of the screen superhero.

Bio: Jared Orth is a PhD candidate in the School of Culture and Communication (Screen Studies) at the University of Melbourne. His research looks at problem solving, the mystery genre, the viewing experience, and popular culture. Specifically, his PhD project looks at how viewers engage in problem solving while viewing mystery films.

Bio:
John McGuire is a Lecturer in Sociology and Criminology at the School of Social Sciences & Psychology, and Academic Director (Sydney City Campus) at Western Sydney University. He completed his thesis, With us or Against us? Hegemony and Ideology within American Superhero Comic Books 2001-2008, in 2015. His work explores the ability of superhero comic books to reproduce critique, critique, challenge, and contest dominant ideology. He has published on the Captain America comic’s critique of the ideological response to the War on Terror, and its contribution to the 2008 presidential election of Barack Obama. More broadly John is interested in social commentary within popular culture, and its ability to contribute to societal understanding.

Bio: Angela Ndalianis is Research Professor in Media and Entertainment at Swinburne University of Technology. Her research focuses on entertainment media and its histories; and the superhero, horror and science fiction genres. Some of her book publications include Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment (2004), Science Fiction Experience (2010), The Horror Domain: Media and the Senses (2012) and the edited books The Contemporary Comic Book Superhero (2009), and SuperHeroes; from Hercules to Superman (co-editor, 2006). She is also co-editor of The Superhero Symbol (with Liam Burke and Ian Gordon), which will be published by Rutgers University Press in 2019. Angela is lead investigator of the Australian Research Council funded project Superheroes & Me. She is currently writing the book: Batman: Myth and Superhero, which will be published by Rutgers University Press.

Bio: Julian Novitz is a lecturer in writing at the Swinburne University of Technology. He is the author of two novels and a collection of short stories and his fiction and criticism has been published in a wide range of journals, magazines and anthologies.
MARTYN PEDLER
Mild-mannered: Whatever happened to the secret identity?
Peter Coogan, defining the superhero, said the secret identity is “the customary counterpart to the [superhero] codename”. Whether Clark Kent, Bruce Wayne, or Peter Parker, secret identities were once an integral part of superhero mythology. But that seemed to change the moment Robert Downey Jr.’s Tony Stark admitted to the world that he was Iron Man at the end of his 2008 movie. Is the notion of a secret identity more and more difficult to believe in the age of the Marvel Cinematic Universe?
On the comics page, Bruce Wayne is just another stocky dark-haired man, almost indistinguishable from any other; on the cinema screen, he has the famous faces of Michael Keaton, Christian Bale, or Ben Affleck. These alter the logic of the superhero mask, making the bare-faced identity as prominent as the covered, and requiring masks to be consistently circumvented or removed.
Now regular civilians have disappeared from films like Avengers: Infinity War almost altogether. There’s simply no reason to interact with anyone who’s not another superhero or supervillian. Only Spider-Man retains a secret identity due to his connection to the teen movie. As Danny Fingeroth points out in his book Superman on the Couch, the teen movie has always promoted secret identities, like when the moosey girl lets down her hair to reveal “the sexpot within”.
What is gained from refusing to narratively foreground these characters’ secret identities, and what is lost? Fingeroth describes the primal appeal of the superhero secret identity as follows: “Don’t underestimate me. I may not be who you think I am.” By collapsing the secret and public identities of superheroes, these stories remove a pivotal pillar of wish fulfillment – the sense that anyone, under their street clothes, could be hiding a costume.
Bio: Martyn Pedler is a writer in Fitzroy, Melbourne. He’s halfway through an interdisciplinary PhD on superhero stories begun at the University of Melbourne. He was the literary site Bookslut’s comic book commentator for many years, and now regularly writes for The Comics Journal. He was a film critic for outlets such as Time Out and Triple J Magazine before turning his attention to screenwriting and the independent feature film EXIT. He now has several screenplays in development in the US.

TRINA ROBBINS (KEYNOTE)
WONDER WOMAN: LESBIAN OR DYKE? - Paradise Island as a woman’s community
In his now infamous 1954 indictment of comic books, Seduction of the Innocent, Dr. Frederic Wertham called the Wonder Woman comic book of the 1940s and 50s “The Lesbian counterpart of Batman,” whom, along with his young sidekick, Robin, he had already accused of membership in NAMBLA.
So, did Wonder Woman creator William Moulton Marston intend the amazon princess Diana, her home-town amazons, and her Holliday girl sidekicks, to be lesbians? And is this a bad thing? Using sample panels from Golden Age Wonder Woman comics, Trina Robbins answers the question both ways, and offers a third interpretation. This talk and presentation comes to no positive conclusion, but leaves the audience informed and amused.
Bio: Trina Robbins has been drawing and writing comics since 1966, when she drew comics for the East Village Other, New York’s iconic underground newspaper, while at the same time designing and selling clothes from her Lower East Side boutique, Brocclii. In 1970, she produced the very first all-woman comic book, It Ain’t Me, Babe. In 1972 she was one of the founding mothers of Wimmin’s Comix, the longest-lasting women’s anthology comic book. (1972 – 1992) In the mid-1980s, tired of hearing publishers and editors say that girls don’t read comics and that women had never drawn comics, she co-wrote (with Catherine Yronwode) Women and the Comics, the first of what would become a series of histories of women cartoonists. She has been responsible for rediscovering, previously forgotten early women cartoonists like Nell Brinkley, Tarpe Mills, Barbara Hall, and Lily Renee. In 1986 she became the first woman to draw a Wonder Woman comic book. In 2013 Trina was inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame. In 2017 she was inducted into the Wizard World Hall of Legends, and at the San Diego comic convention she received the Eisner award for editing the two-volume reprint collection of the complete Wimmin’s Comix.

DIANA SANDARS (UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE)
Children are our future teach them Well: Erik Killmonger, Marvel’s latest monstrous child
The Marvel universe is characterized by its extensive repertoire of monstrous characters. In Black Panther (Ryan Coogler 2018) these protests ricochet around the world, starting in the fictitious, technologically advanced and walled off African nation Wakanda, reaching to the US Civil Rights movement in the late 1960s and ending in a present day meeting of the United Nations. In this paper, I will argue that the strength of Black Panther’s protest against the legacies of colonialism lies in its combination of the conventions of superhero justice with a reconsideration of the child, particularly the monstrous child.
In Black Panther, born of African royalty both hero and villain define themselves by their status as sons and the burdens imposed upon them by the actions of their fathers. “Challa’s transhuman superhero status signifies the changing expectations of a leader and an Earthling. In contrast, his cousin Erik Killmonger redefines the children of the Civil Rights movement and global diaspora as a monstrous threat. Similar to Erik Lehninger (Magneto from the X-Men Franchise), Erik Killmonger has been exiled from his ancestral homelands and trained to be a sociopathic weapon of destruction. The extent and complexity of this threat exceeds the Black Panther’s transhuman powers and results in a civil war that seemingly can only be resolved with US aid. Erik Killmonger thereby heartbreakingly embodies James Baldwin’s assertion that, “a study of superheroes is therefore also a study of the perceived deficiencies in society that are addressed by the need for that hero” – and more particularly, the deficiencies in that society’s legal system.” (2007:456) Erik is a new iteration of the figure monstrous child, one born from the fears and guilt associated with the systemic injustice arising from deficiencies in post colonial legal and social systems that have contributed to the rise radicalized children of Western nations.

MARIA LORENA SANTOS (UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Without seeing the dawn (of the Dead): Monstrous heroes and Philippine myths in Mervin Malonzo’s Tabi Po
The nineteenth-century novels of national hero Jose Rizal played a pivotal role in Philippine political history, today Rizal’s scathing critiques are seen as catalysts of the country’s revolt against Spanish colonial rule. While the plot of each revolves around the privileged and Western-educated protagonist, Ibarra, the novels feature many other fascinating characters, such as the mysterious revolutionary Elias and the even more enigmatic Salome, Elias’s sweetheart, who appears only in what is now known as “The Missing Chapter”, dropped by Rizal to cut down on publication expenses. Mervin Malonzo’s graphic novel Tabi Po re-imagines Elias for a contemporary audience as the mythological aswang, an outsider Othered-monster turned vigilante hero, merging Philippine horror, mythology, history, and political critique in a comic book narrative. The National Book Award-winning series also transforms Salome into a rape survivor, freed by Elias, on a quest to avenge the abuses of the Spanish clergy and their cohorts. The title, which alludes to the pagan practice of saying “tabi-tabi po” as a sign of respect when one trespasses into the territory of spirits, is a layered subversion of the Spanish demonizing of local mythology to suppress political dissent.
My paper examines Malonzo’s appropriation of Elias and Salome as monstrous heroes, which highlights these marginalized literary characters’ relationship to institutions of power during the Spanish colonial period. It does so by zooming in on the complex construction and claiming of Philippine heroism via the naked (unguarded and uncaged), blood thirsty, Christian-pagan hybrids Elias and Salome.
Bio: Maria Lorena Santos earned her PhD at the National University of Singapore where she wrote her dissertation on the cultural phenomenon of global fan communities surrounding the works of – and inspired by – Jane Austen. She has delivered talks on adaptation, celebrity and fandom, and popular culture. She also has a Master’s degree in English Language Studies from the University of the Philippines and an undergraduate degree in Creative Writing from the same university. She currently teaches graduate and undergraduate courses with the University of the Philippines’ Department of English and Comparative Literature.
**Alexandra Ostrowski Schilling**

The Heart of a Hero: Disability and Humanity in the Origin Stories of Marvel Studios’ Superheroes

All superheroes have an origin story, a mythos surrounding their entry into the world of the heroic. This tells the audience who the hero was before they were a “hero,” and how they came to be this way. It also subtly shows the conditions needed for an ordinary human to become a superhuman.

Drawing from work in disability studies and individual research, I will show how the conditions for being superhuman in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) are such that a character must first experience disability before acquiring super-abilities. I will argue that the MCU treats disability as a weakness, only acceptable in the bodies of heroes when it will result in superhumanity. I aim to show that the MCU frames disability as imbuing a character with greater morality, with the “struggles” of disability somehow making the hero more human than the average person. Disability only remains until the character has completed their moral arc.

In the MCU, then, humanity is just as important to heroism as physical strength, and is developed through moral growth. Heroes can only achieve this growth by working through their “weakness” and “misfortune” of disability to fully develop their humanity.

My research focuses on two cases of this kind of origin in the MCU. Tony Stark transforms from a cocky billionaire into a godly man trying to recover his morality through becoming Iron Man – but only after experiencing severe heart trauma. Steve Rogers is only able to become Captain America due to his strong morals, developed during his time as a severely disabled man. Once transformed, his physically perfect body makes physically perfect choices. I will argue that these depictions of disability in the MCU reinforce damaging narratives around disability as something purely inspirational, and incompatible with true heroism.

Bio: Alexandra Ostrowski Schilling recently graduated with her B.A. in Film and Media Studies from Smith College. She has a long-standing passion for the modern superhero film, and Marvel Studios films in particular, and has channeled this into a seven-year journey of various academic research on the subject, alongside work on disability studies, sound in film, and various digital production work. This has culminated in her most recent academic work, her thesis, “Superheroes Aren’t Born – They’re Built” – An Exploration of the Interactions Between Technology and Humanity in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, on which she received academic honors. She hopes to publish sections of this thesis in various film journals. In the future, she intends on pursuing a PhD in film studies. With her graduate degree she hopes to become a college professor, inspiring the next generation of film students to be passionate about the things they love, no matter how unique.

**Bailey Smith**

(Swinburne University of Technology)

Synthesising heroic models in the Marvel Cinematic Universe

My proposed presentation will focus on superheroes beyond two key historical contexts: comics and traditional epic heroism. I will examine the Marvel Cinematic Universe and the manner in which it addresses a need for heroism beyond the traditional ‘epic heroism’ of superhero culture. To do this I will be drawing on an original framework that considers the heroic spectrum as bookended by the extremes of Epic heroism and Everyday heroism.

I will explore how superhero cinema has become not only the dominant point of reference for superhero culture but a key instrument in superhero culture’s synthesis of Epic and Everyday heroism— from Tony Stark’s anxieties over being just “a man in a car” (Iron Man 3 2013) to Steve Rogers’ pride in being “just a kid from Brooklyn” (Captain America: The First Avenger 2011). I hope to demonstrate how superheroes, continue to perform and transform the discourse of American heroism.

Bio: Bailey Smith resides in Melbourne, Australia, and has been a passionate scholar of superhero culture since beginning his undergraduate degree, for which he majored in literature and cinema studies. In 2010 he completed his Honours thesis in cinema studies, which explored pre- and post-9/11 expressions of American apocalyptic thought in Warner Bros.’ Batman film franchises. He is currently completing his PhD at the Swinburne University of Technology, continuing his interests of the role of superhero culture in Western society. The focus of his PhD dissertation is the manner in which Marvel Studios’ Iron Man film franchise works in a dialogical relationship with other social elements to help build an image of American heroism in a post-9/11 world. As well as superhero culture, his research interests include Critical Discourse Analysis, fan culture, and the horror genre in both literature and film.

**Luke Stickels**

(Swinburne University of Technology)

The Spectacular Personages of Perry and MacArthur: colonial fantasy in an exotic, alien world

The spectacular textual personages of Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers Douglas MacArthur and Commodore Matthew Perry are heroic frontier icons, flagbearers for US Manifest Destiny, constructed as pivotal figures shifting geopolitical balance of power and securing global dominance. MacArthur’s theatrical entrance at the head of the Allied occupation to Tokyo Bay in 1945 overtly echoed Perry’s belligerent incursion to force trade 92 years earlier. Technologically superior metal gunships were loaded with deliberate signs of dominance, waving the same flags that had accompanied Perry’s retrace in the mid-19th century.

I argue that historical documents show how tropes of both men’s track records formed and began to be transferred into myth as soon as actions occurred, at times to wildly symbolic, resonating effect. Reprinted since, like that of fictional protagonist Liberty Valance (The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, John Ford, 1962), their twinned legends reach back to epic tropes in the Western tradition, for singular men capable of imposing their will on their fellow men, altering the course of world events. In both cases, constructed persons of both men told of unwaveringly resolute yet principled men. The market demand for modern comic-based superheroes to be constantly renotated, "reborned" and reloaded – but repeating the same powerful visual and narrative tropes – has carved out a deep history in a short amount of time, of heroes walking the footsteps of their precursors, being morally reified by their successors and precursors (whether in a linear narrative of succession, a contemporaneous mulitverse, or trans-media narrative pluralism). In the case of Perry and MacArthur, I argue this creates a sense of inevitability, and rhetorical, moral force, to actions and decisions the historical record shows to be far more structural, contingent, partial, peculiar, and perhaps even lucky.

Revisionist superhero stories always threaten to demystify the powers, fates and legacies of those we hold high. My analysis will show that well they should. Bio: Luke Stickels is a passionate contributor to education, culture, and social justice. He has worked internationally in political campaigns, tertiary institutions, and community organisations. Luke is a professional writer and publisher of fiction and analysis. His PhD analyses violence and liberal democracy in Japan’s shared History with western nations.

**Thomas Stockdale**

(Swinburne University of Technology)

Heroic Poses: Observing the personalities of superheroes through film fight sequences

From Batman stopping the plots of the Joker through to Spiderman versus Venom, one of the most iconic aspects of superheroes is the battles they engage in with their villains. Many superheroes and villains have their own unique moves or actions they perform in these conflicts. Some of these movements have also become iconic to the superhero who uses them, such as Captain America blowing his shield off walls or Superman swooping down from high up with his cloak billowing to land on an evil henchman. Many of these moves have passed from the pages of the comic book to the screens of cinema.

The fights in the stories and the moves performed in these are inherently important to the nature of superheroes. However, few studies look at film fight sequences in any depth and it is common for them to only be mentioned in passing, if at all. This paper aims to show that rather than mere spectacle, fights in films are another way that character information can be passed along to the audience and need more attention paid to them. By providing a more detailed look at what fight sequences can tell us, the scholarship around superheroes can develop and an iconic aspect of the topic can be better understood.

This paper examines how the different moves used by superheroes and villains in their fight sequences can give the audience an insight into the characters’ personalities. Specifically characters from the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) and the DC Extended Universe (DCEU). The fight sequences of several films in these two film universes are analysed using sign theory to examine characterisation by observing how the movements and gestures of the superheroes reflect aspects of their nature and personality.

Bio: Thomas Stockdale began his academic education with a double degree in directing and scriptwriting from Edith Cowen University in Perth, Western Australia. Currently Thomas is a 2nd year PhD candidate at the Swinburne University of Technology in the Media and Communication department. After his graduate degree but before beginning his PhD, Thomas worked for almost a decade in the film industry as a professional fight instructor and choreographer for various studios and film companies. Through this time he gained experience in choreographing fight sequences at a professional level and worked on numerous high budget productions in different countries around the world. Now he is studying the performance art of Fight Choreography and its relation to cinematic narrative and characterisation in modern Hollywood films.
A soft centre and a hard shell: Superhero masculinities in vids

Vids are short, remix music videos created within media fandom. According to Gray (2010), a vid shows the vidder’s path through the source text. Likewise, a vid can show a vidder’s engagement with the source’s use in creating her vid, and be understood as a deconstruction and intentional reconstruction of a text. According to Francesca Coppa (2008) a vid is an argument, and this argument is made and received within fandom; thus a vid is part of the ongoing negotiation of fandom’s and critique within media fandom.

Vids are particularly fascinating because they are remixed artworks, literally repurposing a text to change, comment or expand on it. From slash vids over character studies to metatexts, texts are remixed to serve the purpose of the vidder and her view of her fandoms.

Through examples I will examine some of the different masculinities portrayed in vids from Marvel fandom, building on my work on vids as textual criticism. This will include attention to how the vid is constructed in order to engage in fandom discourse and show the affective links between vidder and text/s as well as explore some of the recurrent portrayals of characters which speak to and with established fan discourses. Media fandom is interested in characters, and in vidding this is perhaps an interest in interventions in character study vids and shipping vids, where the choice of music and editing shows the vidder’s interpretation of and engagement with characters, with a focus on the source text rather than the heroic outer form, these vids show the softer and more approaches of superheroes.

Bio: Sebastian F. K. Svegaard is a MA. Musicology and a PhD candidate at Birmingham City University. His current work centers around vids, particularly critical vids, which use this remix art form to critique media. In this work he is using musicology, and affect as analytical tools. Publications include “Critical Vidders” (2015) and “Fans at Work” (forthcoming) and he has previously presented on superhero vids and music use in vids.

Super Fans or toxic madmen? Fantasy, reality and marginalised identities in countercultural superheroes indie films.

Over the past two decades, superhero cinema has rapidly ballooned from a near-dormant genre to becoming nigh-dominant Hollywood blockbusters. Parallel to establishing this newfound ubiquity is a cluster of low-budget indie films which took as a deconstructive and at times countercultural approach to the mainstream image of superheroes. These include the American films Special (2006), Defendor (2009), Kick-Ass (2010), and Super (2010), as well as Australia’s Griff the Invisible (2010), and China’s Inseparable (2011).

The majority of these offbeat films take a subversive or even whimsical look at the “realistic” consequences of dressing up in an outlandish costume to fight actual criminals. These comedy techniques, with intentionally unsettling bursts of ultraviolence in contrast to mainstream blockbusters’ sanitized action.

I shall examine how these films are fundamentally character dramas, depicting their heroes as in some way marginalised or othered. While still predominantly cisgendered white males, these protagonists self-consciously do not measure up to the all-powerful comic book alpha-males they seek to emulate. Variously suffering from mental illness, physical disability and social isolation or subject to delusional breaks from reality, these misfit antiheroes both undermine and reaffirm familiar superhero tropes when applying them to real life.

These include a distribution for minor crimes, compulsively seeking to cast an archness in their personal narrative, or attempting to “rescue” women they cast (against their will) into damsel-in-distress roles.

This paper will also unpack how these protagonists are portrayed as current or former comics fans, with undercurrents of meta-commentary on geek culture and toxic masculinity, questioning the sociopolitical underpinnings and psychological appeal of masked vigilantes and vigilante educators. This is particularly in reference to these films closely predating and overlapping with the beginning of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, and its much-talked of mainstreaming fan culture and the designating of geek identities.

Bio: Jack Teives received a PhD from the University of Melbourne for his thesis; “Gender of Infinite Interests: Continuity as Adaptation in the Superman Multimedia Franchise”, examining how intertextuality in cyclical continuity revisions acts as a web of complex textual transmission within transmedia franchises. Jack has been published in the journal IMAGE/TXT with the article “A Man of Steel (by any other name)?”, his chapter “The New Man of Steel is a Queer-Eating White Male” in Media Reactions to the Reimaging of Superman in the Reagan Era” in Joseph Darowski’s anthology book The Ages of Superman. Essays on The Man of Steel in Changing Times, and “The Man of Steel vs. Reactiory Meta-Reboots” in a forthcoming special issue of Refractory. Jack has presented papers at the 2010 San Diego Comic Art Conference, 2010’s PopCAANZ Conference, and the 2016 Superhero Identities Symposium. In 2018 he is longstanding theatre critic for AustralianStage.com.

Secret Origins: Journey into History of the Shared Universe

Dating back to when the Sub-Mariner first fought the Human Torch in Marvel Comics #1 (1941) and when Superman first met Batman in Superman #76 (1952), the shared universe has become synonymous with the superhero. This narrative practice of writing in a unified diegetic world has continued across multiple media platforms, extending to today with superhero comic adaptations such as Marvel Studio’s MCU and DC’s DCEU.

These periods and franchises have been extensively investigated in both comic book and screen studies, with particular emphasis that the shared universe is a formative feature of the superhero. Furthermore, some scholars view examples such as the MCU as simply transposing the shared universe concept from its comic book roots. However, few studies have investigated the shared universe beyond these time periods and media. This paper sets out to chart the development of the shared universe from the 19th century onwards, focusing on authors such as Menéndez de Balboa’s La Comedia humana (1934 - 1850), Jules Verne (1863 - 1905), L. Frank Baum’s Oz (1900 - 1920), Edgar Rice Burroughs and H.P. Lovecraft’s Cthulhu Mythos (1928 - ).

This paper will examine ways in which these authors constructed their shared universe and compare these antecedents with contemporary practices. This paper will argue that shared universes escalated in elements and scale throughout literary history. This escalation can be characterised with the increase and complexity of character relations, to the expansion of geography of lands to worlds and finally to multiple authors working within one shared universe. Together, this paper will show that many of the narrative devices used in superhero comic books can be found within an earlier history.

Bio: Vincent Tran is currently a PhD student at Swinburne University in Media and Communication. He completed his Honours thesis at the University of Melbourne, researching into construction of The CW’s Arrowverse, examining the translation of the shared universe from comic book to television. His doctoral research is into the history, rise and proliferation of the shared universe from 19th century literature to current day. His investigation looks into how the tactics in which such universes have been developed have translated to the mainstream image of superheroes. He has published over 20 academic articles in a variety of journals, including a TV animation series, a live action film that is still in development, and a graphic novel. His research focuses on the transformation of cultural products travel amongst media platforms, extending to today with superhero comic adaptations such as Marvel Studio’s MCU and DC’s DCEU.

The transformation of the comic book superhero into an international mutiformat IP: From Tukano to Zambo Dende

In Colombia the halcyon-years of Comics came from the late 60s to the 80s, when the sales of imported comic books reached a very extensive audience. In 1968, Miku and Miku, our first two superheroes, appeared in each issue a single issue comic book. Thirty years later, Jorge Franco made Miku-created a new hero, similar in many ways to Tarzan, an indigenous protector of the Amazon jungle by the name of Tulko, who would appear on the Sunday funny supplement of the national newspaper El Espectador. After a few years, Tuloko would also disappear, remaining the only Colombian hero to last more than one single issue in the last century. Then, in 2013 a new superhero would come to the fore. Appearing in a series of comic books as an extra of one of the local free tabloids in Colombia, Zambo Dende managed to surpass the success of Tuloko. Zambo Dende’s creator, Nicolas Rodriguez, approached the development of his character and its world of superheroes inspired by the management of international IPs, Nicolas envisioned Zambo Dende as a figure that would cross into other media products. Now, Zambo Dende has a variety of outputs including a TV animation series, a live action film that is still in production, and a graphic novel. The internationalisation and de-localization (or, better yet, reglocalization) of Zambo Dende is an interesting case in point, both as a strategy of internationalizing intellectual property. Our presentation seeks to highlight the transformation from Tuloko to Zambo Dende and the creative and historic relations that connect them to better understand the way they work and the direction this evolution is taking.

Bio: Enrique Uribe-Jongbloed is a Professor and Researcher at the School of Social Communication and Journalism, Universidad Estandardo de Colombia. His research focuses on the transformation of cultural products travel amongst media platforms, extending to today with superhero comic adaptations such as Marvel Studio’s MCU and DC’s DCEU, including adaptation, and international TV format trade, as well as studies on Colombian television and popular culture. He has published on the Colombian Comic Book Industry for the international book Cultures of Comics Work (Palgrave-MacMillan). He has published recently in a variety of international journals, including Media International Australia, International Journal of Book industry for the international Book Cultures of Comics Work (Palgrave-MacMillan). He has published recently in a variety of international journals, including Media International Australia, International Journal of Book industry for the international Book Cultures of Comics Work (Palgrave-MacMillan). He has published recently in a variety of international journals, including Media International Australia, International Journal of Book industry for the international Book Cultures of Comics Work (Palgrave-MacMillan).
BRAD WEBB (COMIXPO)

Fictionalising fact: how a folk legend was re-imagined into a pop culture icon

During Ned Kelly’s reign as an outlaw in the late 1870s, mainstream literature portrayed him as a ruthless criminal while pulp publications incited notoriety, encouraging it to spread through oral supposition and folk songs. As the hunt for the Kelly Gang dragged on, illustrative publications such as The Citizen Police News held the public’s attention with cutting satire that often pitched Ned against the hapless authorities. After his execution in 1880, the image of popular hero was kept alive through penny dreadfuls that captivated readers with a heady mix of fiction and fact. This fascination culminated in 1906 with The Story of the Kelly Gang, the world’s first feature length movie which screened to full houses and toured Australia, New Zealand, and England. The government tried to circumvent such folklore by banning production of bushranger films in 1912. While the Act devastated the local film industry, advocates for Ned returned to print and Kelly literature began in earnest. Titles like Iron Ned Kelly and his Gang caught the attention Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who, during the First World War, petitioned the London War Office for ‘Kelly Armour’. J.J. Kenneally’s The Complete Inner History of the Kelly Gang was the inspiration for Inner History of the Kelly Gang work was released. J.J. Kenneally’s more publications and, in 1929, the first major pro-
apocalyptic zombie fest

During Ned Kelly’s reign as an outlaw in the late 1870s, the troops. This fresh interest in Ned encouraged

**Bio:**
Brad Webb is a PhD in the Institute of Cultural Studies at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland. He is an author of many comics-related academic papers published in the most related academic papers published in the most

TOMASZ ŻAGLEWSKI (ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY IN POZNA\N, POLAND)

The Impossibles Revived: Hanna-Barbera’s superheroes universe in TV and comics

Hanna-Barbera’s Superheroes Universe – also known as Hanna-Barbera’s World of Super Adventure – is a common name for a series of animated short-features produced by the famous Hanna-Barbera Productions between 1960’s and 1980’s. Originally it included a characters like Birdman, Space Ghost, Galaxy Trio, The Impossibles of The Herculoids – all of them presented as a syndicated line of cartoons shown in American networks like CBS, NBC or Cartoon Network. It is not difficult to define Hanna-Barbera’s heroes as a straight response to the reborn of superheroes narratives in the 60’s, with its main idea of a shared universe concept (however rarely manifested directly by the animated episodes). Nevertheless the whole World of Super Adventure line presents a very interesting case for analyzing the superhero paradigm moving beyond the basic comic book medium and adapting for the purpose of the much simpler, kids-friendly form of television stories. In my presentation I would like to focus on three components of Hanna-Barbera’s superheroes construct: 1. The cartoons themselves and theirs visual/narrative specifics in following the Marvel/ DC patterns; 2. The Gold Key Comics adaptations/ expansions of the Hanna-Barbera’s cartoons – namely “Super TV Heroes” comic book magazine – as a part of Hanna-Barbera’s primal transmedia system; 3. The modern comic book series - “Future Quest” - as a revival of the Hanna-Barbera’s superheroes in a strictly universe-dedicated and much more serious approach that brings back the heroes like Birdman and Galaxy Trio to theirs initial, graphic storytelling form.

**Bio:**
Tomasz Żaglewski is a PhD in the Institute of Cultural Studies at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland. He is an author of many comics-related academic papers published in the most

BRIAN YECIES (UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG)

Korea’s quotidian superheroes and the Noir politics of webtoons

This paper introduces the meteonic rise of South Korean webtoons – a particular type of digital comic, and some of the anti-superheroes that appear in leading webtoons such as Kang Full’s Bridge (2017), Youn Inwoan’s Distant Sky (2014 – ), Yoon Tae-ho’s The Insiders (2010-2012) and Go Yeong-hu’s Trace (2007 – ). In their unique ways, the characters and narratives in each of these webtoon series explore the type of biting social satire that mark Korea’s progressive digital media scene, while pushing the boundaries of freedom of expression. To illustrate this phenomenon, this paper analyses the depictions of deep-seated political corruption in Korea, while scrutinising the complex interrelationships between seemingly real-life journalists, family-run conglomerates (aka chaebols), politicians, prosecutors, gangsters and a motley-crew of other interesting fringe characters that attempt to blend into society. The transmedia storytelling featured in these webtoons unveils a new presence beyond Marvel and DC in North America, thus exposing how some Korean stories are being shaped in incontinent ways for Asian and global audiences. In sum, this study offers an engaging discussion of Korean webtoons themselves, and what makes this new media form so compelling and attractive to millions upon millions of readers beyond one nation’s borders. This is a significant and understudied aspect of the new screen ecologies and their role in a new wave of modern media globalisation.

**Bio:**

**Bio:**
In 1995, Brad Webb launched IronOutlaw.com which has grown to be the world's largest site on Ned Kelly. Brad has spoken about the Kelly legend on television, radio, and in print. In 2017, New Holland published Brad’s novel Ned Kelly: The Iron Outlaw. Brad also publishes books on behalf of authors including eight Kelly related titles such as Max Brown’s Australian Sun. Brad has held academic positions at James Cook University, RMITS School of Advertising, and was a senior lecturer and subject coordinator for the Bachelor of Writing and Publishing at Melbourne Polytechnic. In 2010, Brad completed a Master of Publishing and Editing and is currently researching his PhD on the impact of American pop culture on the Australian comic book industry. In 2016, Brad launched Comixo, a twice yearly pop culture event that showcases science fiction and fantasy comics, movies, television, animation, gaming, and cosplay.
ALL PANELS AND EVENTS WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR THE MOVING IMAGE (ACMI) FEDERATION SQUARE, FLINDERS ST, MELBOURNE VIC 3000.

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