Graphic Justice
in Times of Crisis

Tuesday 8 December 2020 – London/GMT times

9.30 – 10.45 Panel 1 War and Genocide (Parallel Session 1)

Maus – The story of a Survivor – Yuri Fonseca da Costa Freitas and Letícia Oliveira

Abstract: This essay seeks to debate the role of legal positivism in the standardization of the genocidal actions of Nazi Germany throughout the holocaust through an analysis of the Graphic Novel “Maus - The story of a survivor”, by the American Jew Art Spiegelman. Presenting through this work a brief analysis of "Nazi law", which corresponds to the law produced between 1933 and 1945 in Germany, the period in which the facts of this work occur. It is verified if the great spread that the genocide reached is based on laws that were corroborated with doctrinal theses pertaining to legal positivism, with theories of Carl Schmitt and Hans Kelsen, providing for example the first anti-Semitic laws, the Nuremberg Laws. Like the Reich Flag Law and the Reich Citizenship Law, which established that only those people with German blood, or related blood, were eligible to be citizens of the Reich with the purpose of “protecting the German people”. Presenting itself as a legitimate phenomenon of legal manifestation throughout the Nazi government, which has always sought the law as a popular support for the overlap of its race and standardization of genocidal acts.

Keywords: law and graphic novel; Nazi law; legal positivism; Art Spiegelman; genocide; crimes against humanity.

War Orphans in Masashi Kishimoto’s “Naruto Shippuden”: A Ninja Tale for a Real World Problem – Laura Ferriera Meletti and Maria Luiza Preested Magatti

Abstract: The Convention on Child’s Rights presents itself as a response to the needs shown in previous Covenants and Declarations, aiming to guarantee, among to the signatory States, effective protection on children and teenagers – specially on which refers to armed conflicts. Articles 38 and 39 of the Convention indicate that, according to international humanitarian law, all possible measures to ensure the protection and care of children affected by armed conflicts must be taken, as physical and psychological recovery, also social reintegration...
measures. Nothing still, the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts set that no boy or girl under eighteen years old would be enrolled to take part in armed conflicts along the State Forces. Nevertheless, according to UNICEF Annual Report 2019, 149 million children live in high-intensity conflict zones. In parallel, in Masashi Kishimoto’s graphic novel “Naruto Shippuden”, culture and governmental structures positively guide children’s armed activities, exposing them to great danger and destruction. Nagato, Yahiko and Konan, natural children from Amegakure, who became orphans during the Second Shinobi World War, are a clear example of that. Due to its location between three of the Five Great Shinobi Countries, this village has frequently served as a battleground during the various ninja wars, making most of its population war refugees. Unfortunately, this scenario is not just a fictional ninja tale; in the “real world” many cities and small villages end up being no man’s land, leaving many children helpless.

**Keywords:** Armed conflicts. Child’s Rights. Graphic Novel. Naruto. War orphans.

*Depicting Post-genocide Justice in Rwanda: Law, Revenge and Payback in Stassen’s Deogratias’ –* Anna Katila

**Abstract:** Genocide is a total rupture of a society, its social fabric and ways of being within it, which leaves behind questions of responsibility and calls for justice. In this paper, I will present a case study of Jean-Philippe Stassen’s *Deogratias: A Tale of Rwanda* (2006, first in French 2000) that responds to the aftermath of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. This paper will analyse how Stassen’s graphic novel depicts post-genocide justice and newly founded state institutions as simultaneously present and absent. The visual form of graphic novel is well-suited for conveying and exploring the precarious balance of order and chaos in the aftermath of genocide through juxtapositions of text and image. In *Deogratias*, Stassen uses particularly frames and their absence to distinguish between a façade of normalcy and ongoing emotional and societal crisis. The protagonist experiences persistent feelings of injustice that remain unaddressed due to the limited reach of legal institutions and other transitional justice mechanisms. Overwhelming pain and desperation create a space for revenge and further violence being carried out in the name of justice. I argue that by portraying complex moral positions beyond the labels of victim and perpetrator, Stassen draws attention to the significance of comprehensive justice – retributive and restorative – in the local context of the aftermath of genocide.

**Keywords:** genocide, Rwanda, law, revenge, graphic novel
‘There’s Just one final test for you to pass’: Sexual harassment in The Boys – Amanda Muniz Oliveira and Rodolpho Alexandre Santos Melo Bastos

Abstract: This paper aims to analyze how sexual harassment is represented in The Boys, comics by Garth Ennis. Created to be a satire of classical superhero comics, it is set in a universe where heroes work for a powerful corporation (Vought International) which monetizes them. Therefore, if to the public audience they look fair and good, in fact most of them are cruel. In the issue 3, we see a new superhero joining The Seven (Vought’s premier superhero team). Her name is Starlight and she is a naïve girl who believes in justice. She is received by Homelander, the teams’ leader, and after she express all her admiration, he says that, before joining the team, she has “a final test” to do: then, he asks her for oral sex. At first, Starlight is frightened and thinks that some supervillain is controlling his mind; but later, two other team colleagues (Black Noir and A-Train) enter the room as asks her the same. Humiliated, she submits to the request. This is the presentation scene of The Seven and it tell us about the cruel reality of sexual harassment. After all, how can Starlight fight (even legally speaking) against the most powerful persons of the planet? How can women resist to the abuse they are subjected to by their bosses and coworkers, especially when dealing with powerful people? This are some questions we aim to debate from The Boys.

Keywords: The Boys; Sexual Harassment; Feminism; Labour Law.

Webcomics and Social Justice – Dan Crowley

Abstract: Webcomics are the bread and butter of the daily internet news feeds. Many of these attempt to communicate ideas about mental health and social justice, but by what metric can these be deemed effective? What can the field of moral psychology tell us about whether the contemporary scene of webcomics is useful for social justice? In this presentation, we hope to demonstrate the principles of effective altruism, how they are represented in webcomics, and how they can be improved using science as a foundation. These principles can be used by creators, teachers, and others as a metric for determining possible psychological outcomes from reading different kinds of graphic narratives. These are as follows: 1. Empathy and compassion are not the same and have different moral outcomes. 2. Tutorial comics must claim a correspondence to empirical science for maximum influence. 3. Language and narrative matter—slight various lead to highly different outcomes. The presentation will include examples of webcomics, including our own “fixes” to problematic comics, an activity on comic psychotherapy, and a bibliography of resources and works that support our argument. We are open to any questions and concerns at the end.

Keywords: Mental health, webcomics, social justice, psychology, morality, internet
**Confinada (Confined): Comics, Coronavirus and Critical Racial Theory** - Phillipe Oliveira de Almeida and Murilo Alan Silva

**Abstract:** Critical Racial Theory (CRT) is a branch of Critical Legal Studies, an academic movement that emerged in the 1970s in American Law Schools. CRT’s objective is to analyze the way in which, underlying the supposed “neutrality” of contemporary law, racist practices would continue to be promoted by the State. The legislation states that everyone must be treated equally, but it bases a system based on “hidden” racial segregation. Authors like Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw and Richard Delgado were essential to the creation of CRT. The coronavirus, in 2020, reached differently whites and blacks, rich and poor, men and women. COVID-19 is not democratic: socially vulnerable groups have more comorbidities, have less access to protection supplies and face greater difficulties in working remotely. Thus, social injustices were aggravated because of the pandemic. Some Brazilian comics have denounced these inequalities - perhaps the greatest example is Confinada (Confined), by Triscila Oliveira and Leandro Assis. Confinada tells the story of a wealthy digital influencer, Fran, and her maids, Dinah, Marli and Ju, during the coronavirus pandemic. The story shows the gap between the social conditions of the employer and her domestic workers, and indicates how Brazilian law works to legitimize this inequality. Our paper intends to analyze Confinada (and other comics produced in Brazil, throughout 2020) from concepts developed by Critical Racial Theory. We intend, in this way, to show how Brazilian economic and racial apartheid worsened during the pandemic and was the object of reflection by national artists and screenwriters.

**Keywords:** Critical Race Theory; coronavirus; Brazilian comics; racial segregation

**Y: The Last Man: The Pandemic of Toxic Masculinity.** - Angus Nurse

**Abstract:** *Y The Last Man* tells the story of a global pandemic in which masculinity literally becomes toxic. In the Summer of 2002, a plague whose origin is unknown destroys every last sperm, foetus and fully developed mammal with a Y chromosome. The only exception is Yorick Brown and his pet male helper monkey Ampersand.

Brian K Vaughan and Pia Guerra’s Vertigo series explores the aftermath of this fictional ‘gendercide’ that exterminates approximately 2.9 billion men (around 48% of the global population). Part dystopian narrative and part conspiracy thriller, *Y The Last Man* examines how society remakes itself freed from the harms caused by toxic masculinity and the dominance of patriarchal policy discourse. This paper examines the series’ critique of society and discussions of the plague as a weaponised tool to cripple a foreign nation’s economy are prescience in relation to contemporary concerns and conspiracy theories about viral
pandemics. In doing so, it argues that the series social commentary articulates a complex environmentalist message.

**Keywords:** Pandemic, Gendercide, Apocalypse, Dystopia, Environmentalism

_Come Together after Zombie Apocalypse? Political Philosophy of the New Social and Political Structures_ – Wojciech Lewandowski

Abstract: Social and political structures in the times of crises usually undergo serious transformation. Periods of watershed and chaos also encourage thinking in terms of apocalypse. Zombie narratives set in postapocalyptic realities of post plague world that portray the struggle of the few survivors trying not only to save their lives but also to recreate social order mirror such fears. But is it possible to return to old structures in the world changed by unspeakable catastrophe? Maybe new times demand new solutions adjusted to altered realities.

It is the aim of this paper to look at zombie comic books and graphic novels such as _The Walking Dead_ or _Year Zero_ in order to find the propositions of the new world order. After initial shock and a period of adjustment protagonists of such narratives are often looking for ways to establish social, and sometimes even political, organization that might ensure survival of human kind.

What is the philosophical or ideological background of new social and political order after zombie apocalypse? What kind of political structures are best suited to respond to critical demand of social organization? To answer these questions I will refer to major political philosophies and see if they can offer solutions for postapocalyptic realities.

**Keywords:** zombie, social contract, political philosophy, new world order, comics

12.20 – 13.20 LUNCH  Graphic Justice Alliance Annual Public Meeting (12.45 – 1.30)

13.30 – 14.15  PLENARY (Chair: Angus Nurse)

_Comic a Day: Building Community and Maintaining Connections under Covid_ – Elizabeth Shefrin

Elizabeth Shefrin has been creating art for social change for almost fifty years. She will be talking about her most recent project, Comic-a-Day and how she has used it to break down isolation and build community under Covid.

The comics she draws and sends to readers each day, present an optimistic picture of life in 2020. But within that optimism she gently tackles subjects like environmentalism, racism,
and gender issues. As background Elizabeth will describe some of her previous projects such as the Middle East Peace Quilt and the Embroidered Cancer Comic. This talk will be funny and hopeful, and you’ll get to see lots of comics. www.stitchingforsocialchange.ca

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**Getting Drastic with Plastic** – Nancy Silberkleit – co-CEO of Archie Comics

**Abstract:** Getting Drastic with Plastic was inspired by my trip to Rwanda. I went there specifically to observe how Rwanda as a country banned plastics and met with Rwanda’s environmental department.

As a comic book publisher, I take opportunities to get the word out there on various issues via comic books.

Our environment is a global issue and we watch in horror at how the garbage, plastics etc are thrown out carelessly by people who sorely need to be educated. Plastics continue to cause so much destruction and suffering. And no, no one is technically allowed to throw waste anywhere they please but sadly laws are broken. As a publisher of an iconic entertainment brand I utilize the beloved Riverdale characters as a touchstone of global culture to lean into the environmental conversation on single use plastics.

Cleaning up our environment is urgent and individual focus/knowledge on health and environmental issues is a must as number of organizations champion environmental causes, these specific comic stories Bottle Battle and Getting Drastic with Plastic tackle the
problems of an individual's waste and pollution. Graphic illustrations shown in the stories can help spark intellectual thinking to move one to get a grip with the problem of plastic pollution and inspire environmental citizenship. The storytelling of Getting Drastic with Plastic comes with a teachers study guide that helps teachers open up the conversation in their classroom about what students can do to combat and crush this global problem.


*Shapeless Shapes and Justice for the Stateless in Times of Crisis* – Hanna Kim and Amal de Chickera

**Abstract:** “The world was full of shapes...” A fairy tale, a history book, a call to action to shape our future!

Statelessness—having no nationality—is one of the most acute, but invisible human rights violations in the world. The 15+ million stateless people are often forced to live in the shadows, where they face further marginalisation due to COVID-19. Shapeless Shapes is a collaborative arts and advocacy project by the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion (housed in Middlesex University) that challenges narratives and highlights activism around the instrumentalisation of citizenship. It is a graphic novel about identity, belonging, history, freedom, discrimination, injustice, activism and statelessness. It tells a story of a world that was, is and can be. This graphic novel explains this complex human rights issue as never before, and it has taken new-found relevance in our COVID-19 world. This book seeks to untangle the complex legal, historical, and political forces that create and justify state-sanctioned exclusion and mobilize the public on this issue. As co-authors of Shapeless Shapes, Hanna Kim and Amal de Chickera will offer a discussion on how this book can contribute to raising awareness, strengthening solidarity, and movement building on this little-known issue, to promote justice for the stateless in the time of COVID-19. They will present the central themes of the book while underscoring the connection between visual representation, narrative, and justice. By using this graphic narrative as a mirror, they aim to shine light on the public’s role in bringing justice to the stateless community.

**Keywords:** #statelessness #humanrights #citizenship #identity #belonging #activism

*Melancholias Lunar and Legal in Tom Gauld’s Mooncop* – Thom Giddens

**Abstract:** Tom Gauld’s *Mooncop* presents a vision of the dissipation of law. Set on the Moon, in the final days of the first human lunar colony, amidst the gentle crisis of the colony’s failure, Gauld’s work depicts the re-emergence of a peaceful cosmos and individual life outside the strictures of law and governance. Across 95 brief pages of Gauld’s characteristically charming, clean inscriptions, *Mooncop* articulates a powerful and lasting glimpse of the complex melancholias of the human and legal conditions, and the hopeful possibility of a receding legality. This paper will explore the temporal and atemporal
database of Mooncop’s multiframe in an exploration of the subject’s entanglement within the labyrinth database aesthetic of law’s *ratio scripta*—and the possibility of escape.

*Informed consent and dangerousness: Is it possible to control an unimaginable power?* – Renato Antonia Constantino Caycho

**Abstract:** For years, Law has ousted madness. Madness (and people with psychosocial disabilities) have been confined to psychiatric institutions (Foucault, 2001, 2014). Their lives are controlled in every little aspect (Goffman, 2001). This is why they have been typically excluded from the possibility to make their own decisions (Dhanda, 2007). In comic books, madness is the representation of the opposite of the rationality that Law seeks (Giddens, 2018). But, madness “is part of our humanity” (Giddens, 2018, p. 66).

In *Dark Phoenix* (Kinberg, 2019) and *X Men: The Last Stand* (Ratner, 2006), Charles Xavier decides to intervene in Jean Grey’s psyche in order to protect her and the world. Something similar happens in *House of M*, regarding Scarlet Witch (Bendis & Coipel, 2008). Who gets to decide about persons with disabilities when in crisis is still a problematic issue in human rights (Martin & Gurbai, 2019). The X-Men cases bring up a more difficult situation: how to deal with an unimaginable power. In this presentation, I will try to set the current standards on informed consent for persons with disabilities (Burch, 2017; Dawson, 2015; Gooding & Flynn, 2015; Szumukler, 2018) and under what circumstances may coercion be applied (Bach & Kerzner, 2010; Flynn & Arstein-Kerslake, 2017). After that, I will analyse if the dangerousness approach changes when dealing with unimaginable power. Then, I will propose who get to decide and under what criteria. Finally, I will address the problems balancing paternalism, autonomy and the rights of others.

**Keywords:** psychosocial disability, dangerousness, madness, mutant, informed consent

15.55 – 17.10  

**Panel 5  

The Capitalist Crisis (Parallel Session 3)**

*Crisis and Corporate Personhood in Mark Russell’s Prez* – Timothy Peters and Michaella Duggan

**Abstract:** In 2015, DC Comics released Mark Russell’s Prez, a 6-issue mini-series re-envisioning a short-lived 1970s comic about a teenager elected president of the United States. With its reflection on the ludicrous excesses of American politics, a hyper-real consumer culture dominated by advertising and social media, and a mysterious ‘cat flu’ ravaging the US, this political satire now appears prescient of our current times. What underlies its indictment of the fundamentally mediate nature of contemporary politics (determining both the superficial and substance aspects of political life, with voting now occurring by Twitter) is a critical presentation of corporations, corporate personhood and the intertwining of corporate interests with the political. This comes in comic’s meditation on the nature of the corporate image, with CEOs able to hide their individual identity behind a corporate logo projected
upon and replacing their face in all public interactions. However, it is the very law enabling this duality of corporate identity and personal anonymity that also enables teenager Beth Ross to be elected President and challenge the political dominance of corporate interests. This paper presents a cultural legal reading of Prez’s short-lived critical interrogation of corporate personhood, politics and the image.

**Keywords:** Corporate Personhood; Cultural Legal Studies; Critical Comics Studies

*The Economy or Your Life: Comic book depictions of Neoliberal Capitalism and related Criminal Violence* – Nickie Phillips and Staci Strobl

Abstract: Global economic catastrophes attributed to the failures of neoliberal capitalism have long created, maintained, and exacerbated socio-economic inequalities. Scholars have recognised that this global order is criminogenic, but nevertheless, the logic of neoliberal capitalism continues to be supported by publics in the West. Because these logics are typically reinforced through narratives in media and popular culture, in this presentation, we examine how economic inequalities are depicted in American comic books with an eye out for the potential for comic books to potentially re-imagine the global economic order. We use a critical criminological approach to explore comic book depictions of economic inequality starting with the financial crisis of 2008 through the Occupy Wall Street movement (OWS) and to the more recent portrayals of envisioned post-capitalist scenarios. As such, we primarily look at Lazarus, The Flintstones, and The Black Monday Murders, which act as important examples of comic books whose plots centre around economic inequality and related criminal violence. We place these books in contrast to more mainstream comic book depictions and discuss how the selected books imagine a political trade-off between global capitalism and the sanctity of human life, a cruel proposal that explicitly entered U.S. public discourse during the 2020 coronavirus pandemic.

**Keywords:** comic books, coronavirus, crimes of the powerful, neoliberal capitalism, popular culture, post-capitalism.

*Fracking Hell! Joe Sacco’s Seismic Lines* – Dom Davies

**Abstract:** In his most recent graphic novel, Paying the Land (2020), Joe Sacco thickens the cartographic and legalistic histories of draughtsmanship into his own hand drawn line. The book documents the history of the Dene nation, an indigenous people in Canada’s Northwestern Territory who have been subject to settler colonialism since the mid-nineteenth century, from initial land dispossession through to the infamous residential school system and, most recently, the damaging fracking industry. The story Sacco tells of the Dene people’s struggle for recognition from Canada’s settler state is one of repeated (mis)representations, whether cartographic, legalistic, bureaucratic, or artistic – each of
which have their own destructive effects. By implicating his own drawings in the politics of representation and recognition, Sacco provides not only a history of the Dene people, but a history of “drawing” itself. In this paper, I show how Sacco’s thickened lines – his “seismic lines” – construe the act of drawing as a settler colonial weapon with devastating material consequences: from the cartographic lines of early settler maps that divided up and displaced indigenous people from their territories; to the bureaucratic lines of settler law and that further eroded indigenous solidarity and sovereignty; to the seismic lines of the fracking industry, which break up the land into subterranean fragments. Against these settler colonial lines, however, Sacco suggests another delineation: the line as a form of indigenous knowledge formed in connection with the land. As this paper argues, only when the settler notion of drawing-as-representation (cartographic, legal, etc.) is overturned can drawing be recovered as a way-of-being-in-the-world, instead. Sacco’s images are only notes, or sketches, towards a decolonised drawing practice, and by no means a finished picture. But as he concludes, it is in this “unfinishedness” that they might yet draw forth routes to new futures beyond settler dispossession and environmental destruction.

**Keywords:** Joe Sacco, Paying the Land, settler colonialism, drawing, decolonisation, cartography, law

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**15.55 – 17.10 Panel 6 Legality, Crime and Moral Certainty (Parallel Session 4) (Chair: Dale Mitchell)**

**Compulsive Legality: The Horror of the Spiral** – Ashley Pearson and Dale Mitchell

**Abstract**

Junji Ito’s prominent and prolific oeuvre of horror manga is laden with unsettling imagery, uncomfortable ideas, and unnatural imaginings of the world. Throughout his work, the theme of inexplicable compulsion is recurrent and is nowhere more present than in the manga series, *Uzumaki* or ‘Spiral’. This paper interrogates the image of the inescapable, hypnotic spiral of *Uzumaki* as a cipher for the form of law and the compulsive nature of legality.

In *Uzumaki*, the image of the spiral serves to capture the citizens of the town, the town’s landscape, weather, and anything manipulatable within its borders. Humans entranced by the spiral seek to become it, transforming into snails and centipedes; the town bends cyclical creating whirlpools in otherwise still water and cyclones out of puffs of air; everything is affected, nothing is spared. The spiral can be seen as a structural form that actively
transforms people and the world, compelling compliance, and replicating its own structure through its very existence. In this paper, we propose that Uzumaki's spiral mimics the function of the legal form, endlessly capturing and compelling the transformation of everything it touches into a configuration that conforms to the pattern.

Should Light Yagami be punished? An Analysis of culpability in Death Note from the perspective of Brazilian Criminal law – Rommel Costa Furtado

Abstract: Death Note, a manga published between January 2003 and May 2006, tells the story of the protagonist a young man called Light Yagami, who finds a notebook called "Death Note" where, whoever he writes the name dies. Upon realizing this, Light uses this notebook to, as he says, "cleanse the world of those who are not worthy to live", killing terrorists, murderers, and other criminals who, according to his moral judgment, should not remain alive. We perceive in this behaviour a modus operandi typical of individuals with antisocial personality disorder with a penchant for serial killings. Such behavior, according to Brazilian jurisprudence, could classify him as unimputable, or semiimputable, given that his conduct, in the course of the story, undergoes significant transformations. It is clear that Light must be punished, but the magistrate must take into account his possible mental disorders. For the development of this summary, we start from the following problem: "Are the murders committed by Light Yagami in the Death Note manga punishable? "In order to answer this question, we use as a specific objective "to analyze the institute of culpability in Brazilian law and its application to the crimes committed by Light Yagami in Death Note", in addition, we will have as a specific objective "to present the functioning of the brains of people with anti-social personality disorder", "analysis of the requirements and applications of culpability", "analysis of culpability in relation to the crimes committed by individuals with anti-social personality". We use as methodology the deductive theoretical method through bibliographic research in Brazilian books, articles, journals and jurisprudence.

Keywords: Death Note; Light Yagami; Antisocial personality disorder. Culpability

Lurking Bats: The Dark Knight’s lore and Brazil’s right-wing iconography– Victor Abi-Rihan Ávila and Philippe Oliveira de Almeida

Abstract: Amidst the rise of right-wing radicalism and its organized movements, it’s not unusual for Brazilians to find Batman cosplayers among protesters at conservative demonstrations, an observation that moved past absurdity through the sheer force of repetition. The imagery of the Dark Knight - ruthless in his duty to cleanse a crime-infested city, while unbound to the corruption- or ineptitude-inducing structures of legitimate power - is one very fond to the anti-establishment discourse, and efficient its contradictory effect of reinforcing the underlying rationality of that very own establishment. As impactful as Frank Miller’s dialogues and David Mazzucchelli’s compositions are, immemorial comics like
“Year One” and their movie and television adaptations provide an alluring and compelling myth that resounds perfectly with urban unwellness; an endless story that affects, induces, and conforms itself to the feeling of being victimized by gang, slum and white-collar criminality. Furthermore, through the lenses of cultural criminology, and articulating works like Eric Hobsbawn’s “Bandits” while analyzing Miller’s and Mazzucchelli’s “Batman: Year One”, our paper takes on the aesthetics of police enforcement, vigilantism and rationality through an analysis of the bearing and relevance of the Dark Knight’s symbolism to brazilian right wing movements and organizations.

**Keywords:** Batman; Cultural Criminology; Vigilantism; Brazilian right wing; Urban studies

The event is free to GJRA members, £10 to non-members. Join the GJRA for free at graphicjustice.org.