**The Curse that Dare Not Speak its Name: Representing Menstruation in Comics – Notes**

This talk discusses menstruation in comics and how comics can challenge assumptions about menstruation and the silences it evokes. Menstruation is rarely discussed in culture (Houppert 2000; Wood 2020) but it has recently become more prevalent with the release of films like *Is That You God? This is Me Margaret* (2023) adapted from the 1972 Judy Blume book and menstrual activism. Comics rarely represent menstruation - it is mostly found in autobiographic, graphic medicine and educational genres. Often the analytical approaches used concentrate on the grotesque body and include monstrosity (Køhlert 2012; Venkatesan and Pater 2020), stigma, shame and secrecy using the theories of Michel Foucault (1984; 1973; Frangos 2020), Erving Goffman (1963; 1959), Mikhail Bakhtin (1968) and Julia Kristeva (1982).

However, issues surrounding menstruation can open up debates on gender binaries (Frank and Dellaria 2020) and diverse attitudes towards menstruators in transnational contexts (Sukumar 2020). This paper uses case studies from autobiographic, superhero and educational comics to show how different approaches can be used to open up other avenues of analysis beyond the grotesque. The case studies show that the problems faced by menstruating people can be addressed through comic’s capacity to enlighten, educate and promote positive messages about the menstruating body.

There were few comics or graphic novels that dealt exclusively with menstruation. I refer to the following:

**Autobiography**

Julie Doucet *Dirty Plotte/ Heavy Flow*

LivStrömquist *The Fruit of Knowledge: the Vulva vs The Patriarchy*

Paula Knight *The Facts of Life*

Sarah Anderson *Sarah’s Scribbles, Big Happy, Mushy Lump*

**Education**

*UNICEF* comic (2016)

*Menstrupedia (2016)*

*The Mean Magenta/ Go with the Flow (2020)*

**Superhero**

Emilia Clarke, Marguerite Bennett, Isobel Richardson, Jo Radcliffe, Leila Leiz *MOM (Mother of Madness*) (Image 2020)

**Trans and Genderqueer Comics**

S. E. Frank and Jac Dellaria

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