Podium Presentation
The Carnivalesque and Dialogic: An Analysis of the Feminist Webcomics “Mom Body” and “Hark, A Vagrant”
Haley Helgesen
Faculty Mentor: Christopher Morrow
English

In an era defined by emerging new media forms, and technological and communicative possibilities, a movement to redefine pre-existing media forms is underway. In this redefinition, old media forms are being repurposed to suit contemporary ideologies, trends and social structures. One such medium undergoing this conversion is comics. Comic artists, authors and enthusiasts have embraced the accessibility and artistic freedom enabled by an online medium and created a subgenre known as webcomics. Rather than acting solely as a means to deliver fantastical narratives, some webcomics are now being used by self-proclaimed feminist artists to create spaces for safe, open and unhindered feminist discussion. Artists such as Kate Beaton and Rebecca Roher use their webcomics and the space afforded to them by the accessible and uncensored Internet to employ Carnivalesque imagery and the dialogic in order to encourage discourse within feminist social spaces. Through the use of paradox, excess, and ridiculousness, Beaton and Roher assert that societal inequality is not an antiquated and discarded ideology, but is still a pressing issue in contemporary society. By using Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of the carnivalesque and dialogic within their comics, they are able to challenge static traditional criticism about the representation of feminism in popular media forms, and offer a subversive and dynamic response to key gender issues present in society such as historic representation and pregnancy ownership.