

An Art of Loss

Tahneer Oksman (Marymount Manhattan College)

“The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled,” writes John Berger early on in his foundational book on visual rhetoric, *Ways of Seeing*. Indeed, this connection—between what we see, or don’t see, and what we think we know of the world around us—is often tenuous and always complicated. Many storytellers have taken up comics as a mode of examining this difficult relationship, and in this talk, Tahneer Oksman will interrogate why.

In particular, she will draw on the works of contemporary women cartoonists who have used comics to explore the dynamics of loss. In loss, we experience the unsettled condition of trying to know absence: that something or someone once there no longer exists. Dr. Oksman will investigate the ways in which cartoonists have taken up the medium to portray a wide range of losses, which sometimes overlap, including the loss of a certain sense of self, the loss of a beloved, and the loss of a way of being in a particular place.

She will look at the visual dynamics of loss as it has been portrayed in several fictional and non-fictional graphic narratives, including Canadian cartoonist Julie Delporte’s *Journal* (Koyama Press, 2013), Austrian cartoonist Ulli Lust’s *Today is the Last Day of the Rest of Your Life* (Fantagraphics, 2013), and Belgian cartoonist Dominique Goblet’s *Pretending is Lying* (New York Review Comics, 2017). Reading these three works-in-translation alongside each other, she will consider some of the ways these cartoonists have played with shifting perspectives and visual accretion, among other formal and narrative strategies, to picture their losses on the page.

Kurzbiographie

Tahneer Oksman is an Assistant Professor of Academic Writing at Marymount Manhattan College with research and teaching interests in women’s literature, memoir, and comics and visual narrative. She is the author of “How Come Boys Get to Keep Their Noses”: *Women and Jewish American Identity in Contemporary Graphic Memoirs* (Columbia University Press, 2016), and the co-editor, with Seamus O’Malley, of the forthcoming anthology, *The Comics of Julie Doucet and Gabrielle Bell: A Place Inside Yourself* (University Press of Mississippi, 2018). Her articles and chapters have appeared in numerous academic journals and collections including *A/B: Auto/Biography Studies*, *Studies in Comics*, *Studies in American Jewish Literature*, and *Visualizing Jewish Narrative* (Bloomsbury, 2016). She also regularly writes related cultural criticism, and her journalistic pieces have appeared or are forthcoming in the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *The Comics Journal*, *The Women’s Review of Books*, *the Forward*, *Public Books*, *The Guardian*, *Lilith*, and *Cleaver Magazine*, where she is the graphic narrative reviews editor. She is currently writing a book on the visual dimensions of absence, loss, and grief.