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COMIC BOOK REVIEW

IN MY HUMBLE OPINION: A REVIEW OF IMAGE COMICS FATALE

JANUARY 23, 2015 | 1 COMMENT

I am huge fan of *film noir*. Although some may disagree with me, I do not feel that *noir* is a genre or even a subgenre of film. *Noir* is an aesthetic sensibility, a mood that pervades other genres and media, and a visual style that is unmistakable and, in the words of the late Roger Ebert, unequivocally American “because no society could have created a world so filled with doom, fate, fear and betrayal, unless it were essentially naive and optimistic.” The *noir* aesthetic can be identified in many film genres beyond traditional *noir* staples like *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and *Double Indemnity* (1944), as well as in other forms of media. Science Fiction films like *Blade Runner* (1982), video games like *Heavy Rain* (2010), *L.A. Noire* (2011) and *Murdered: Soul Suspect* (2014), comic books such as Dynamite Entertainment’s *Noir* and *Miss Fury*, and musicians like Neko Case, all borrow heavily from *film noir*’s thematic and aesthetic elements. It is in this context that I have recently discovered Image Comics’ *Fatale*.

Fatale is a supernatural noir comic book created by Ed Brubaker and Sean Phillips, which began publication in 2012. The series was initially announced as a twelve-issue maxi-series but was upgraded to an ongoing title in November 2012. I am obviously a latecomer to

this title; however, after reading the first issue, I have to say that I am extremely interested by the potential *Fatale* displays. In a nutshell, *Fatale* chronicles the life of Josephine, or “Jo”, an archetypal, yet immortal *femme fatale* who has a supernatural ability to involuntarily hypnotize men into becoming passionately infatuated with her. She is antagonized by an ancient cult, *à la* H.P. Lovecraft and his Cthulhu mythos. Issue number one begins, very appropriately, in a rainy cemetery, at the funeral for a famous writer. Nicolas Lash, executor of the writer’s estate, meets Jo, who wants something from the dead man’s property. This meeting results in a cat-and-mouse game with the aforementioned cult’s members and has tragic consequences for Nicolas.

The narrative of this comic book is squarely rooted in the *noir* tradition. It begins with Nicolas’ first-person narrative, which is reminiscent of the voiceover narration found in *Double Indemnity*, among many others. The narrative also jumps back and forth in time through flashbacks and tangential interludes, creating the temporal destabilization also common in *noir*. Visually, *Fatale* does not disappoint either. The color palette is limited to muted tones, and the images are heavily (almost overwhelmingly) shaded, contributing to the oppressive, menacing, and moody atmosphere of a story that is almost claustrophobic. Even during a car chase sequence, the reader constantly feels trapped. Notably, the car in this sequence is being chased by an airplane in what is, perhaps, a nod to Hitchcock’s *North by Northwest* (1959), another film with a strong *noir* aesthetic.

Overall, going by issue one, *Fatale* appears to be a solid title. As I am writing this, 24 issues have been published thus far and also been collected in a few different volumes, therefore, this piece is for the benefit of those who have not read the comic book. If you like crime fiction, man-on-the-run narratives, strong female characters, moody, Lovecraftian fiction, and Hitchcockian action, this book is for you.

◀ COMICS ▶ FILM NOIR

TV SHOW

IN MY HUMBLE OPINION: A BRIEF NOTE ON NBC’S CONSTANTINE

JUNE 27, 2014 | [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

In February Of 2005, comic fans were subjected to the film *Constantine*, starring Keanu Reeves as the eponymous occult detective. It was almost a perfect adaptation of the comic book, drawing heavily on the original’s elements, such Garth Ennis’ story arc “Dangerous Habits” and the “Original Sin” trade paperback. The film perfectly captured the *noir* aesthetic that characterized the comic book, as well as the layered, complex elements of the occult that gave the comic its structural underpinnings. The special effects were implemented sparingly, without muddying the central elements of the story, as so often happens in Hollywood (cf. anything

directed by Michael Bay). However, the otherwise superb film was haunted (pun intended) by two fatal flaws. First, John Constantine is not, and should never be, American. This robbed the film from taking advantage of the biting, dark humor that permeates every appearance of the character, including *Hellblazer* and the more recent *Justice League Dark*. Second, and perhaps more crucial, Keanu Reeves should have never been anywhere near this film. With all due respect to Mr. Reeves, his acting range is limited to a well-delivered “Whoa!” (cf. *Bill and Ted’s Excellent Adventure*, *The Matrix*, *Point Break* and every other film he has ever made).

NBC’s new incarnation of Alan Moore’s self-described “weirdness magnet” appears to make a point of correcting these two mistakes. Starring Welsh actor Matt Ryan, the show’s trailer promises to deliver what the film missed. In the trailer, John Constantine is seen speaking with the director of a mental institution. The paunchy gentleman asks “Before you checked yourself in here you were working as an exorcist and master of the Dark Arts?” With his trademark sarcasm John replies, “That says master, does it? I should really change that to petty dabbler. I hate to put on airs.” The trailer goes on to show a wide variety of scary images (enough to rival any *bona fide* horror flick) while establishing what promises to be a grandiose plot, following the comic book tradition. There are two major concerns when it comes to this show. One, it is on network television. *Hellblazer* has always been an adult-oriented comic book and its contents might be deemed as inappropriate for the medium. NBC has established a precedent of pushing the envelope with shows like *Hannibal* and the recently-defunct *Dracula*, so this might become a non-issue. The other concern is the show’s timeslot. It is scheduled for Friday nights (aka the kiss of death for TV shows), suggesting that the network does not have enough faith on the show. There are, of course, exceptions to this, as seen recently with NBC’s *Grimm* which started on Friday nights and thrived in that timeslot.

All in all, I am cautiously optimistic (and reluctantly excited) about this show. I’ll probably find myself yelling at the TV more than I care to admit. I will also revisit this issue after the first episode airs.

◊ ADAPTATION ◊ COMICS ◊ NEW MEDIA ◊ SUPERHEROES ◊ TELEVISION

CONFERENCE PAPER

FAULKNER’S SOUTH AND THE LATIN AMERICAN BOOM

JUNE 24, 2014 | LEAVE A COMMENT



William Faulkner is, arguably, the single most influential American writer in the literary atmosphere of the Latin American Boom, a

period in which the literary output of Latin America experienced a surge. During the 1960s and 1970s, Latin American writers such as Gabriel García Márquez, Julio Cortázar, Mario Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes and Juan Rulfo began to turn away from the regionalist style known as *criollismo*, an offshoot of realism that relied on the description of scenes, customs, culture and folklore of the writers' country of origin. Similar to the American literary regionalism of the late-19th century, *criollismo* had been the baseline for the Latin American narrative of the late-19th and early-20th centuries. The literary field at this time was dominated by popular writers such as Rómulo Gallegos and Horacio Quiroga, themselves precursors to the Boom. According to Randolph D. Pope, under Gallegos and Quiroga, Latin American literature was characterized by an existential pessimism, with well-rounded, tragic characters struggling against their destinies, and straightforward linear narratives (231). Heavily influenced by the experimental qualities of modernism, writers from the Latin American Boom began to explore new ideas, concepts and narrative styles. By the 1960s, the language became more fluid and colloquial, the characters became much more complex, and chronologies became intricate (sometimes with a prevalent temporal distortion), making the reader an active participant within the narrative through the deciphering of the text.

Many of the stylistic, thematic, and narrative elements prevalent in the literature of the Latin American Boom can be traced back to the works of William Faulkner. Using examples from some of the most prominent figures within the Latin American Boom, with particular attention paid to García Márquez, I will show that Faulkner's works are much more than a mere source of stylistic influence, but the cornerstone for the construction of literary worlds where issues of class, race, and gender are explored. I will also identify how Faulkner's legacy becomes part of the genetic composition of the literature of the Latin American Boom, by identifying some of the similarities between Faulkner and his Latin American counterparts.

William Faulkner's role in Latin American literature was not limited to his writings. His role as goodwill ambassador has been well documented. Deborah Cohn outlines how Faulkner's two trips to Central and South America in 1954 and 1961 were designed to promote U.S. interests abroad and to advance the fight against Communism. Cohn explains that Faulkner's visits to Latin America "sought to cultivate goodwill towards the U.S. through cultural channels during a period of significant anti-American political sentiments in the region" (396). Faulkner was not alone in this endeavor. Throughout the 50s and 60s, Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Frost, Robert Lowell, and Katherine Anne Porter traveled to South America "as part of a concerted campaign to improve relations with the region" (397). However, Faulkner was able to establish much closer ties with Latin American intellectuals than these other American authors, generating a great deal of good will towards the exchange of literary ideas.

Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez credited Faulkner as one of the most influential writers of his career, and is quoted with saying "after I read Faulkner, I said to myself: I have to become a writer" (qtd. in Oberhelman 6, translation mine). One of the most prominent examples of overlapping stylistic, thematic, and narrative elements between Faulkner and García Márquez is the creation of

the fictional locales of Yoknapatawpha County and the town of Macondo. Modeled after Faulkner's Lafayette County, Mississippi and García Márquez's childhood town of Aracataca, Colombia, respectively, these two fictional locations allow the authors to address issues of race, class and gender in two environments that act as fragments of a larger reality. E. Ernesto Delgado proposes that Macondo is "a splendid metaphor of certain Latin American values and thoughts that García Márquez could put into words when creating his fictions ... Macondo is somewhat like Latin America in the same sense that Yoknapatawpha is somewhat like the South" (34). Much like Yoknapatawpha, Macondo is an allegorical interpretation of García Márquez's historical perceptions of his home environment. These artificial settings frame novels like Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) and García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967). Early on both of these texts, the notion of a look at the past of a wild, undeveloped world is established. The opening passage of García Márquez's novel reads:

Many years later as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice. At that time Macondo was a village of twenty adobe houses, built on the bank of a river of clear water that ran along a bed of polished stones, which were white and enormous, like prehistoric eggs. The world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point (6).

From the beginning, this narrative hints at an idyllic place/creation story where human intervention will prove to be detrimental, or even fatal, since it begins with Colonel Buendía facing execution. Quentin Compson's summary of Rosa Coldfield's narration of the history of Sutpen's Hundred in *Absalom, Absalom!* also conveys a similar creationist thematic content. Quentin narrates:

It seems that this demon—his name was Sutpen—(Colonel Sutpen)—Colonel Sutpen. Who came out of nowhere and without warning upon the land with a band of strange niggers and built a plantation—(Tore violently a plantation, Miss Rosa Coldfield says)—tore violently. And married her sister Ellen and begot a son and daughter which—(Without gentleness begot, Miss Rosa Coldfield says)—without gentleness (5).

In both instances, the land suffers by the arrival of outsiders who will try to exploit it and shape it to their will, and who, ultimately, doom both the land and themselves. This theme is also present in García Márquez's *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975), Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* (1955), and Carlos Fuentes' *The Death of Artemio Cruz* (1962). Deborah Cohn argues that these novels "conclude with the death of the patriarch or family through which national history is allegorized ... the downfall of the way of life" ("Faulkner, Latin America and the Caribbean..." 505). Faulkner and García Márquez construct worlds where human shortsightedness, greed and ignorance destroy the natural order of things. The idealized vision of the primal, unsullied, and undeveloped Yoknapatawpha and Macondo are ultimately lost due to human intervention. Notably, some have argued that the impending doom of Yoknapatawpha and Macondo, as well as that of the characters in the novels, are inevitable. Harley D. Oberhelman posits that both fictional locations

suffer from a type of “societal incest that is only exacerbated by isolation and spiritual solitude. New blood to rejuvenate both societies is never accepted, and decay from within continues its unmitigating advance” (35).

Besides these thematic parallels, *Absalom, Absalom!* and *One hundred Years of Solitude* present formal similarities that point towards the broader context of modernist literature, such as the use of non-linear narrative structures, where chronological order is suppressed in order to intermittently and sporadically reveal the relevant details of the plot. This forces the reader to assemble the story like a puzzle, inserting him/her as an active participant. These temporal distortions also characterize some of Faulkner’s and García Márquez’s shorter works. Faulkner’s “A Rose for Emily” (1930) and “Dry September,” (1931) and García Márquez’s novella *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (1981) also make wide use of non-linear narrative structures. These serve as examples of storylines where the outcome is of lesser importance than the events leading to it. In “A Rose for Emily” the narrative begins “When Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her funeral...” (“A Rose for Emily” 2163), thus the reader is immediately aware that the main character is dead. However, the tragedy of Miss Emily and the underlining theme of the story (that of the end of a bloodline that cannot adapt to a changing world), is only revealed after the reader becomes aware of all the events in the text.

Similarly narrated in non-linear form, “Dry September” withholds many important details from the reader, even after one is done reading the text. The most prominent of these details is the truth behind the allegations that lead to Will Mayes lynching. Although the story hints that Miss Minnie Cooper seems to suffer from some mental illness and has a dubious reputation, and it clearly states that Will Mayes could not have been guilty, the racial prejudice and social sensibilities of the early-20th century South could not allow the casting of doubt on Miss Minnie’s (or any other white woman’s) words. The social environment and circumstances of “Dry September” made Will Mayes death the inevitable conclusion to a sequence of events that is characterized by the dismissal of the only seemingly reasonable voice in the story: that of Hawkshaw, the barber, who consistently expresses doubt over Miss Minnie’s account of the events while simultaneously praising Will Mayes character. Hawkshaw is speaking with the men in his barbershop when the following exchange takes place:

“Except it wasn’t Will Mayes,’ a barber said. He was a man of middle age; a thin, sand-colored man with a mild face, who was shaving a client. “I know Will Mayes. He’s a good nigger. And I know Miss Minnie Cooper, too.”

“What do you know about her?” a second barber said.

“Who is she?” the client said. “A young girl?”

“No,” the barber said. “She’s about forty, I reckon. She aint[sic] married. That’s why I dont[sic]believe–”

“Believe, hell!” a hulking youth in a sweat-stained silk shirt said.

“Wont [sic]you take a white woman’s word before a nigger’s?”

"I dont[sic]believe Will Mayes did it," the barber said. "I know Will Mayes."

"Maybe you know who did it, then. Maybe you already got him out of town, you damn niggerlover" ("Dry September" 1).

Ultimately, as seen in this passage, the question of Will Mayes' guilt or innocence takes a secondary role behind the need to punish a perceived slight to the honor of a white woman.

In the same thematic line as "Dry September," García Márquez's novella *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* deals with the similar topic of the defense of female honor, while making use of a non-linear narrative to obscure the sequence of events. The ominous, tragic outcome of the narrative is immediately addressed by the narrator. The first sentence in the text reads "On the day they were going to kill him, Santiago Nasar got up at five-thirty in the morning to wait for the boat the bishop was coming on." (*Chronicle...2*), ascertaining the impending death of Santiago Nasar, referred to in the title. However, similar to Faulkner's style in "A Rose for Emily" and "Dry September," the novella's main thematic components and relevant details are interspersed along the events leading up to Santiago Nasar's murder at the hands of the Vicario twins.

The novel deals with issues of class and gender, particularly in how marriage is seen as a means for social mobility, and how women are commodified and treated as property. When describing the Vicario siblings, the narrator explains that "The brothers were brought up to be men. The girls were brought up to be married ... my mother thought there were no better-reared daughters. 'They're perfect,' she was frequently heard to say. 'Any man will be happy with them because they've been raised to suffer' (*Chronicle... 18*). After Angela Vicario marries wealthy suitor Bayardo San Román, she is returned to her family after the wedding night once her new husband discovers she is not a virgin. After being brutally beaten by her mother, and under interrogation by her brothers, Angela claims that Santiago Nasar was responsible for deflowering her. The Vicario twins then decide to kill Nasar to restore their sister's and their family's honor. Notably, although Angela loses her husband, is beaten by her mother, and is ostracized by the community, the only person to receive any sympathy over what happened was Bayardo San Román, establishing him as the victim. This sympathy for Bayardo San Román caps the true tragedy of the novella: although dead at the hands of the Vicario twins, the townsfolk are ultimately responsible for Santiago Nasar's death. Many characters, including the town's butcher, mayor, and priest, could have prevented Santiago Nasar's death. Instead, according to John S. Christie, Nasar is doomed "not because he is unquestionably guilty, but because he has been accused ... once the word is spoken, the facts become secondary; the telling creates the reality" (23), echoing Will Mayes' fate in "Dry September."

Another narrative component that is prevalent in both Faulkner's and, subsequently, García Márquez's works is the use of shifting perspectives in order to present a multi-focalized view of the story. This technique, sometimes combined with the non-linear narrative, is prominent in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *Absalom, Absalom!* as well as in García Márquez's *One Hundred Years*

of *Solitude*. Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* is divided into four parts, each from the perspective of a different character: the Compson brothers Benjy, Quentin, and Jason, and Dilsey, the matriarch of the house servants. Each narrator tells an aspect of the story of the Compsons' sister, Caddy, who does not have her own voice in the novel. The different narrative perspectives provide a fractured view of the rise and fall of the Compson family within the broader context of a changing South. *Absalom, Absalom!* is also characterized by the shifting narrative perspective, using the voices of Rosa Coldfield and Quentin Compson, among others, to present what critics have described as "a recapitulat[ion] of the Old South" (Cohn, "Faulkner, Latin America, and the Caribbean... 504).

In the same manner, and for similar purposes as Faulkner, García Márquez implements shifting narrative perspectives in his works. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, although deceptively linear in terms of structure, uses numerous flashbacks to plot the history of the Buendía family's arrival in Macondo and the ultimate destruction of the bloodline, as it had been prophesized. The novel begins with a flashback; a glimpse into a time where Macondo was a land of virtual isolation. Throughout the text, the reader experiences numerous shifts in perspective. The fall of the six generations of the Buendía family is similar to that of the Compsons, in the sense that its inevitability symbolizes the ultimate result of a clash between humans and their fate. This clash is underscored by "an extensive cultural apparatus dedicated to preserve masterly innocence in new-world colonial Souths" (Matthews 239) that counteracts any realization of wrongdoing from the characters. Thus, regardless of how many tragedies they experience or how much adversity they must face, they are unable to learn their lesson. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* has been described as a tale that "is conducted through recollections, anticipations, digressions, and confusions over the limits of reality... being at once an attempt at symbolic epic, a historical romance, a family saga, [and] a national allegory" (Bell 1). This description can easily be applied to many of Faulkner's works, including *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!*

As we have seen there are numerous reasons for which Faulkner became so appealing to the authors of the Latin American Boom. First, the cultural parallels are obvious. Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa argued that "the world out of which [Faulkner] created his own world is quite similar to a Latin American world. In the Deep South, as in Latin America, two different cultures coexist, two different historical traditions, two different races — all forming a difficult coexistence full of prejudice and violence" (qtd. in Hamblin & Peek 221). Second, the socio-political attitudes based on ties to a past that prevents humanity from progressing in the future are always present in the contemporary life of Faulkner's and García Márquez's characters. Finally, the creation of rich, meticulously designed fictional worlds that present facets of the authors' own home environments, serves as a conduit for their criticisms regarding issues of class, race and gender. Ultimately, the parallels between Faulkner's and García Márquez's underlying cultural identities pave the way for the construction of literary masterpieces that still resonate in today's literary canon.

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CONFERENCE PAPER

JOYCE'S EXPERIMENTAL TECHNIQUES IN ULYSSES AND THEIR ADAPTATION INTO THE COMICS FORM

JUNE 24, 2014 | 1 COMMENT

James Joyce's *Ulysses* is obsessed with the question of form and aesthetic achievement, using elaborate language and a number of different experimental techniques in order to construct the narrative, making the novel the perfect source material for adaptation into the graphic medium, as in the case of Robert Berry's webcomic and ongoing digital graphic novel *Ulysses "Seen."* Joyce implemented a number of innovative narrative techniques in the creation of *Ulysses*; techniques that have to be revised and transformed in order to adapt *Ulysses* into the comics form. I argue that with the webcomic, being both a revision and homage of Joyce's work, Berry takes the responsibility of piecing together the story away from the reader.

Instead of merely pointing out similarities and differences between both works, I will explore some of the adaptation techniques implemented in Berry's work, specifically within the narrow scope of the episodes titled "Telemachus" and "Calypso," and I'll describe how Joyce's experimental narrative is transformed into the language of comics. I will concentrate on engaging with the adaptive process in order to understand if Berry's webcomic is an explanation, homage, a revision of the original, a critical treatment, or something else.

When the reader begins to delve into *Ulysses* for the first time, the experience may be initially confusing. It takes the reader some time to become oriented within the text and start to interpret what is happening in the plot. The fact that *Ulysses* begins around 8:00 AM on Thursday, June 16th, 1904, is not obvious until the reader has explored several hundred pages in the novel. In contrast, Berry's webcomic makes this fact immediately obvious in the title page for "Telemachus." *Ulysses "Seen"* editor Mike Barsanti has expressed that:

Comics offer an almost infinite plasticity of form – and while there are a lot of conventions for certain elements, (like dialog balloons,

for instance, which get tricky on a few pages), there are infinite ways to use comic conventions to approximate the narrative innovations of the text. It isn't the same thing as the text, not by a long shot, and we try to be careful to talk about *Ulysses* "Seen" as an adaptation, not a substitute. We hope *Ulysses* "Seen" will serve as a bridge to the novel, a way of getting over all of the hype about its difficulty (Quoted in Took, "Ulysses to be "Seen" at NYC's Irish Arts Center").

What the title page of "Telemachus" from *Ulysses* "Seen" does is to compress some of the information found throughout Joyce's novel into a single image of a silhouetted Martello tower at sunrise with the superimposed title, time and date. This title page is an example of what happens to Joyce's experimentation with the narrative when translated into the comics form. Where *Ulysses* demands the reader's undivided attention, Berry's webcomic negates some of the interactive aspects of the novel, such as the need to be aware of the process of reading itself and of bringing order to a seemingly chaotic sequence of events. According to reviewer James Higgs, "decisions that are left entirely to the reader in the original novel – what characters look like, or how a house is laid out – are made for us" (*Ulysses* "Seen"). This would also imply that the "poisonous hermeneutical touch" (156) that according to Margo Norris, the reader exerts over a text due to his/her own preconceptions, would also be negated. Instead, the webcomic is singularly subjected to its creators' own preconceived ideas. However, this is not necessarily a limitation of the form; instead it is a revision of the role of the reader in his/her relationship with the text.

Berry's graphic adaptation also expands on Joyce's original text. In the opening passage of *Ulysses*, the reader encounters a sacrilegious mock mass/shaving ritual being performed:

Stately, plump, Buck Mulligan came out of the stairhead, bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed. A yellow dressing gown, ungirdled, was sustained gently behind him by the mild morning air. He held the bowl aloft and intoned: —*Introibo ad altare Dei* (Joyce 3).

Mulligan's first appearance is painstakingly detailed in *Ulysses* "Seen" where the beginning of his ritualistic shaving is presented and developed over the span of two pages. Berry shows Mulligan as a single subject going through the process of the morning ritual, while showing the reader different aspects of the setting, the mood, and the general atmosphere of the scene. However, the most significant link between Joyce's and Berry's versions of this scene is how Joyce's playful parody of the Catholic rite is portrayed, with Buck at its center.

Buck's appearance is never closely examined in *Ulysses*. Nevertheless, Berry's rendering of Mulligan's face on page five with an ever-present crooked smile, enhances the idea of Buck as a provocateur. The reader is immediately aware of his irreverent nature and his willingness to ridicule anything and everything, and is thus unable to lend any serious credence to Mulligan's actions. Once again, the comics form counteracts the need for the reader to wait until he/she is farther along the novel to piece together who Buck Mulligan is and how he is perceived by other characters.

Another interesting sequence from this episode concerns the arrival of the milk woman during breakfast scene with Stephen, Buck and Haines. Bernard McKenna summarizes the scene explaining that “the arrival of a milk woman interrupts their breakfast. As the milk woman speaks with a patronizing and arrogant Mulligan and Haines, Stephen reflects on her as a symbol of Ireland, as a symbol of a woman, and as a witch. She deferentially gives Haines and Mulligan their milk, essentially ignoring Stephen” (22). In contrast to Joyce’s novel, nothing in the pages of the webcomic clearly indicates that it is Stephen who is seeing the milk woman as the embodiment of a subjugated Ireland, with the Englishman Haines and Buck serving as conqueror and betrayer, respectively. In *Ulysses*, the narrator tells the reader that “[Stephen] watched her pour into the measure and thence into the jug rich white milk, not hers ... Old and secret she had entered from the morning world, maybe a messenger ... A wandering crone, lowly form of an immortal serving her conqueror and her gay betrayer...” (Joyce 13-14). However, in the webcomic, this notion is not as clear and it becomes somewhat problematic upon interpretation. In the Reader’s Guide that accompanies *Ulysses* “Seen,” Robert Berry intentionally obscures the idea of it being Stephen’s vision, stating that “Stephen (or is it Stephen?) imagines her as a messenger in disguise, like Athena” (“Telemachus” 0037).

The subject-to-subject transitions of the four-panel arrangement in page 36 of the webcomic create some confusion about who is experiencing the vision. In the first panel, the reader is looking at the arrival of the milk woman through the eyes of Buck, indicated by the presence of Stephen, the milk woman, and Haines in the panel. Then, in the second panel, the perspective becomes muddled, with only the milk woman and Haines appearing in the scene, meaning that the scene is being seen either through Buck’s or Stephen’s eyes. When the reader reaches the third panel, the perspective has completely shifted to Stephen, with Buck, the milk woman and Haines seen in the image. By the time the reader looks at the last panel, he/she only sees the milk being poured out of the jug, with three horizontal sub-panels inserted to show the beginnings of the vision. Once the vision has been presented and the reader reaches page 38, the reader is once again looking at the scene through the eyes of Stephen Dedalus.

The sequential nature of the comics form also contributes to the differences in narrative approaches found between the Joyce’s novel and Berry’s graphic adaptation. Modernism’s characteristic inclination to reconfigure the world and to experiment with issues of temporality and chronology also translate into the comics form. When the reader of *Ulysses* is introduced to Leopold Bloom in “Calypso” he/she is immediately told that the events described in the episode are chronologically parallel and simultaneous to those in “Telemachus.” Berry’s adaptation builds on the notion of a fluid temporality permeating *Ulysses*, and instead of releasing “Nestor” as the second episode, he opted to release “Calypso.” In the Reader’s Guide section for “Calypso” the creators explain and justify their decision to do this, asserting that:

these insights are about the specific language of comics and some are about helping first time readers get through a very challenging book. Some are about promoting the kind of reader discussions the book has engendered over the years. And, frankly, some are just

easier paths for me as a fledging cartoonist to take through illuminating one of the most daunting books in the history of the English language ("Calypso" 0001).

The creators of the webcomic show an awareness of the complexity of Joyce's work, as well as of a need to simplify and disseminate the text. By releasing "Calypso" as the second installment of *Ulysses* "Seen" Berry immediately makes it obvious to the reader that this is the story of various characters whose lives are meant to intersect at different points in the text.

In one of the passages from "Calypso" that serves as an example of Joyce's experimentation with temporal shifts, the readers of *Ulysses* encounter the scene where Bloom returns from purchasing the pork kidney for his breakfast and finds the morning mail at his doorstep:

Two letters and a card lay on the hallroom floor. He stopped and gathered them. Mrs Marion Bloom. His quick heart slowed at once. Bold hand. Mrs Marion.

—Poldy!

Entering the bedroom he halfclosed his eyes and walked through warm yellow twilight towards her tousled head.

—Who are the letters for?

He looked at them. Mullingar. Milly

—A letter from Milly, he said carefully, and a card to you. And a letter for you (Joyce 61-62).

This passage is characterized by time skipping, as if the narrator closed his/her eyes for a moment, ignoring a portion of the narrative that he/she deems insignificant. Bloom suddenly shifts from standing in the hallway and perusing the morning mail, to standing in the doorway of his bedroom and walking towards Molly lying in bed. This type of time shift may serve also as an example of how *Ulysses'* experimental elements are ideal for adaptation into the comics form. In pages 28 and 29 of *Ulysses* "Seen," Berry once again uses subject-to-subject panel transitions in order to elicit, and indeed demand the reader's involvement to give meaning to the scene.

In the three-vertical-panel arrangement of page 28, the reader can see Bloom entering his home and finding the mail. He then picks it up, noticing the senders, and is subsequently seen standing at the bottom of the stairs when Molly calls him. In the following page, Bloom is shown standing in the doorway of his bedroom, and Molly is shown lying abed. The time shift that may be confusing in Joyce's novel is much less noticeable in Berry's graphic adaptation, mainly because it is characteristic of the graphic medium.

In addition to the temporal shifts found in "Calypso," there are also broader elements of plot that deserve close examination in terms of how they are adapted into the comics form. In the previously discussed passage, the reader also meets Molly Bloom for the first time. Until this point in *Ulysses*, Molly is, in the eyes of the reader, a disembodied entity behind a door. Later in the novel, the reader

learns about her impending affair, her frustrations with her life, and her difficulties with her marriage. However, at this stage, Molly slowly comes into focus through her dialogue with Leopold. David Hayman maintains that at this point “our first impression is ambiguous, inconclusive, and unpleasant; for like the demanding cat, goddess of the hearth, Molly is only a footnote to the chapter, and the view we get is a function of Bloom’s role as the masochistic servant” (107). In the graphic adaptation, Molly’s introduction into the story consists of a single image showing her lazily lounging in her bed, bathed in the morning sunlight that is filtering through the closed blinds, gazing distractedly at the window. Meanwhile, a penitent Leopold Bloom seems hesitant to enter, standing at the door, holding his hat in his hand as if frozen. Then the view moves to a close-up of Molly’s eyes, keeping with her disembodied feeling. Furthermore, the reader can observe the pillow at Molly’s feet, hinting at their odd sleeping arrangement, as well as their lack of intimacy. This page compresses much of the information that is discovered later on in *Ulysses*.

The comics form is characterized by an ability to pack vast amounts of information in very limited space, by exploiting the interaction of pictures and words in order to convey a layered, nuanced form of meaning. In the case of Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Berry’s *Ulysses “Seen,”* the adaptation into the comics form presents its own unique set of challenges for the reader. Although the graphic adaptation negates some of the experimental and interactive aspects of reading *Ulysses*, such as eliminating the need for the reader to deduce the time and place of the plot, issues such as the blurring of perceptual and perspective lines imbue the webcomic with a new dimension of experimental qualities. These qualities add new relevance to the original, both inside and outside of academic environments.

The comics form also allows the reader to avoid having to approach the text with an awareness of the process of reading because it removes the reader’s “poisonous hermeneutic touch” through the elimination of the need for the reader to insert his/her own presuppositions and preconceptions into the reading. The webcomic’s creators’ own preconceptions have already been inserted into the text. The reader does not have to process a character’s description in the text in order to piece together his/her physical appearance, or to create a mental image of Bloom’s and Molly’s room, for example, through the text’s description. In the comics form, the reader receives all this information neatly packaged and ready for assimilation. Ultimately, *Ulysses “Seen”* presents a work of literature that seems to be, at times, a revision, a re-imagination, a tribute, an update, and a recreation of Joyce’s *magnum opus*. Regardless of how the reader assimilates the webcomic into his/her literary context, the webcomic appears to be (so far) a more than adequate adaptation of *Ulysses* that effectively adapts the text into the comics form.

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• COMICS • JOYCE • MODERNISM • NEW MEDIA

FILM REVIEW

IN MY HUMBLE OPINION: MY REVIEW OF MAN OF STEEL

JUNE 14, 2013 | 1 COMMENT

Many years ago, during one of my summers as an undergraduate student, I was presented with the opportunity to take my first film course. My mentality at the time was "Hey, I'll get to watch movies in an air-conditioned auditorium all summer and it'll be an easy A." Little did I know that I was about to face one of the most challenging and rewarding courses in my academic career, where I learned the difference between looking at a film (looking at the elements that form the film) and looking through a film (becoming immersed in the story for pure entertainment). I had this lesson in mind when I sat down to watch Zack Snyder's *Man of Steel*.

I approached this feature with cautious optimism and very low expectations. As a long-time fan of the Superman mythos, I have been disappointed many times by Hollywood when it comes to comic book films in general. In my 38 years, I have never been able to see the Last Son of Krypton go from the comic book page to the

silver screen in a manner that I found completely satisfying. However, *Man of Steel* was able to finally bring to the screen a Superman that is both compelling as a superhero and profoundly human in his struggle to fit in a world that, if he chose to, he could pulverize in a matter of minutes. With all due respect to the films of the 70s and 80s, this is definitely not the spit-curlled, square-jawed demigod, who swoops in and saves the day with jaunty aplomb, spouting inane platitudes, and smiling throughout the course of the conflict. He is also not the much-feared flying Batman that some people expected when they heard Christopher Nolan was attached to the film. This is a Kal-El who faces the familiar struggle of hiding his identity throughout his whole life, and that expresses the very real fear of what would happen if the world became aware of his existence. In *Man of Steel*, however, there is a deeper, more complex conflict at a profoundly existential level. This is a man does not know how he fits in a world where he is isolated by the mere notion of who he is.

This is a much grimmer portrait of Superman than what the average film audience is used to seeing. However, this darker portrayal stems from placing Superman in the real world, as opposed to an idealized version of society. In today's altered threat landscape, the sudden appearance of a near-invulnerable alien creature would be met with panic, particularly from the government. In *Man of Steel*, the appearance of Superman presents a multi-layered problem that shakes the foundations of human identity. Humans have to come to terms with the realization that not only are they not alone in the Universe, they are no longer at the top of the food chain. The idea that Superman would create a complete paradigm shift in terms of the role of humanity in the Universe was never explored in previous Hollywood adaptations of the character. For the first time, the audience is given a glimpse of Kal-El's life between leaving Smallville and becoming a reporter for the Daily Planet. Ultimately, the film is about Kal-El coming to terms with who he is, and the world coming to terms with the fact that life will never be the same due to Kal-El's existence.

In terms of acting, Henry Cavill embodies the struggle with identity that a modern Superman represents. With all due respect for the work of Christopher Reeve, Cavill is able to portray the dichotomy of innocence and heroism without a single "Golly, Miss Lane!" or without being a bumbling idiot, running into doors and spilling coffee cups left and right. Russell Crowe and Kevin Costner as Jor-El and Jonathan Kent, Kal-El's fathers, show a level of concern for their son rivaled only, strangely enough, by John Schneider in *Smallville*. I must also admit that, although I initially felt that Amy Adams was miscast as Lois Lane, she did a superb job balancing the roles of damsel in distress and *überfeminist* journalist. Ayelet Zurer and Diane Lane, as Lara Lor-Van and Martha Kent, embody the mother figures that a hero of Kal-El's caliber deserves. Both are doting mothers whose self-sacrifice is fundamental to Kal-El's formation. That being said, the film should have explored these supporting characters a little bit more. Finally, Michael Shannon's portrayal of General Zod is flawless, presenting a villain whose single-minded obsession with his mission in life, to preserve the Kryptonian way through his military might, offers a much more nuanced and layered personality than expected.

Visually, the only word I can use to describe this film is stunning. Compared with CGI-heavy films like Michael Bay's *Transformers*, where the screen becomes overloaded with effects in order to hide anything that looks artificial, *Man of Steel's* CGI sequences look much more organic and realistic. The Kryptonian costumes and general design looked more functional than previous incarnations. Before *Man of Steel*, Kryptonians tended to wear either long flowing robes or shiny bodysuits that served a more aesthetic purpose. The set designs also looked more functional. Instead of the well-known glass columns, the Kryptonian sets look more like something out of Ridley Scott's *Alien* franchise. The most noticeable aspect of the visuals in this film is, however, that the sheer power of the Kryptonian characters is given serious considerations. When two beings who are powerful enough to level mountains with a single blow decide that they want to beat each other to death, the collateral damage and loss of life would be staggering. *Man of Steel* is the first Superman film that actually acknowledges this fact, and offers a spectacular array of action sequences, made even more impressive by the IMAX 3D format.

Overall, this is the best Superman film adaptation ever made. This film far exceeds the constraints of a mere "comic book movie" and rebrands Superman as hero for a new generation, concentrating on the *man* instead of the *super*. It holds enough of the classic Superman story to pay tribute to those who came before, while adding critical elements that make the character much more relevant in contemporary society. Some critics have brought up the argument that this new Superman strays too far from what the essence of the character should be. The reality is that this is a new Superman for the 21st century in a film that is extremely fast-paced and action-oriented, something that previous Superman films were not. The sequel is already in the works and all I can say is that, personally, I can't wait.

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[• FILM](#) [• REVIEWS](#) [• SUPERHEROES](#) [• SUPERMAN](#)

CONFERENCE PAPER

OBSERVATIS IPSOS CUSTODES: NARRATIVE COMPONENTS IN ALAN MOORE'S WATCHMEN AND THEIR ADAPTATION INTO FILM

FEBRUARY 7, 2013 | [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

During the 1980s, the comic book industry experienced a sort of renaissance due to a number of events that revitalized creative output and attracted a broader, more mature audience. Following the backlash against comic books instigated by the publication of Fredric Wertham's 1954 book *Seduction of the Innocent*, and the

establishment of the Comics Code Authority, the comic book industry experienced dwindling sales and crippling censorship throughout the 60s and 70s. In the socio-political environment of the mid- to late-1980s, particularly within the atmosphere created by the final years of the Cold War, a number of British writers and creators “invaded” the American comic book industry, introducing characters that were much more psychologically complex and that deviated from the stereotypical roles assigned by the industry. These newcomers exhibited more sophisticated tastes and catered to the comic book aficionados’ prevalent desire for a new kind of comic book character that was more attuned to the social context of the period. One of the main contributors to the revival of the comic book medium was British author Alan Moore, who along with artist Dave Gibbons created 1986’s *Watchmen*, arguably the most influential and industry-altering publication of the 1980s. *Watchmen* maximized the use of the comics form, creating a work of art that was both a narrative and visual masterpiece. Almost immediately after the publication of *Watchmen*, many Hollywood studios expressed interest in adapting Moore’s magnum opus (Hughes 144). Although many attempts were made to begin production, the film version of *Watchmen* remained in what is colloquially known as “pre-production hell” until 2005 when the film was finally green-lit, with Zack Snyder attached to direct. *Watchmen* was released on Mar 6th, 2009 receiving generally favorable reviews. Notably, Alan Moore refused to be associated in any way with the film adaptation, refusing both to write a screenplay for the film and payment for his share of the royalties (Hughes 144). Moore maintained that “there are things that [him and Gibbons] did with *Watchmen* that could only work in a comic, and were indeed designed to show off things that other media can’t” (Gopalan 1). Although there are numerous parallel and diverging narrative components between the book and the film due to issues of form, content, and the inherent nature of each medium, the most significant differences between the original work and the film adaptation are the result of the socio-political disparities found between late-Cold War and post-9/11 United States. In the case of *Watchmen*, both the graphic novel and the film depict an alternate history where costumed heroes emerged in the 1940s and peaked in the 1960s, helping the United States win the Vietnam War and establish global dominance throughout the latter part of the Cold War. The role of the United States as the sole political and military powerhouse was due to the existence of Dr. Manhattan, a blue-skinned, god-like being whose powers manifested themselves after he was disintegrated in a nuclear laboratory accident. The story itself focuses on the personal development and struggles of the protagonists, a group of retired costumed adventurers, as an investigation into the murder of the Comedian, himself a former costumed hero and government operative, draws them out of retirement. Eventually, they are forced to confront a plot set in motion by Ozymandias (another retired hero and multi-billionaire) that would avert nuclear war by killing millions of New Yorkers. Moore’s graphic novel implements a number of narrative strategies commonly found in comic books in order to frame the story. For example, *Watchmen* takes place in an alternate historical period. In the top-right panel of page four, there is a newspaper displaying the headline “VIETNAM 51ST STATE,” thus establishing that this is not the Cold War-era United States the reader knows, but one where history has been dictated by Dr. Manhattan’s existence (Moore and

Gibbons 4). The whole graphic novel is peppered with these intentionally hidden messages or, as they are colloquially known, “Easter eggs,” in order to provide the reader with information that goes beyond the action of the plot. In the film adaptation, the annexation of Vietnam to the United States is also addressed using the cinematographic equivalent of an “Easter egg”. During Nite Owl’s flashback scene at the Comedian’s funeral, one of the rioters in 1970s New York is seen defacing a mural of an American flag that reads “Welcome Vietnam as our 51st state”. Thus, the United States is established as the predominant world superpower, with Dr. Manhattan as its foremost asset. This “Easter-egg” subtext is Moore’s interweaving of his own political views on the nuclear arms race and the social quagmire of the Cold War as a whole. Moore’s politics are also observed in his literary references. The restaurant named Gunga Diner, which appears prominently throughout both the comic book and the film adaptation, with the characters rarely ever making a direct reference to it. Both the readers and the theater audiences encounter the diner numerous times in the backgrounds, find discarded takeout boxes on the ground, and see an elephant-shaped blimp advertising the restaurant flying over the New York skyline. The name Gunga Diner is a reference to Kipling’s poem “Gunga Din”, which, in turn, is a commentary on Imperialism and the colonial pursuits of powerful nations. Combined with the character Ozymandias (in itself a reference to a poem of the same name by Percy Bysshe Shelley) Gunga Din becomes Moore’s veiled remark on the fleeting and ephemeral nature of political power, and how all would-be conquerors are eventually doomed to fall regardless of their might. Another narrative element from Moore’s graphic novel is how the story is framed by the integration of supplementary documents from within the Watchmen universe at the end of each chapter. For example, the first two chapters end with excerpts from the book *Under the Hood*, a book-within-the-book that is a fictional autobiography penned by retired costumed adventurer Hollis Mason, the first Nite Owl. This fictional publication contains many background details about how the costumed heroes developed and how they subsequently fell from grace. *Under the Hood* covers the demise of heroes like the Silhouette who was murdered along with her lesbian lover, how Mothman went insane and became institutionalized, and how Dollar Bill was shot in cold blood by bank robbers after his cape became stuck in a revolving door. In the film adaptation, these events are portrayed through an extended montage, set to the tune of Bob Dylan’s *The Times They Are a-Changin’*, while also serving as the opening credits sequence. The sexuality of some of the characters is also an element of the graphic novel that is further explored in the film’s opening montage. The idea of a homosexual relationship between costumed heroes Captain Metropolis and Hooded Justice is addressed in the graphic novel. In the documents printed at the end of chapter ten, there is a letter that reads “Nelly called last night, upset over yet another tiff with H.J. Those two are getting worse. The more they row and act like an old married couple in public, the harder they are to cover for” (Moore and Gibbons 307). Nelly is meant to be Nelson Gardner, Captain Metropolis’ real identity and H.J. refers to Hooded Justice, another hero. In the film this is addressed in a brief portrayal of heroine Sally Jupiter’s retirement party, in which all the costumed heroes are arranged in a manner emulating DaVinci’s *Last Supper*, with Captain Metropolis and Hooded Justice gazing lovingly at each

other at the far right. Simultaneously, a pregnant Sally Jupiter is seen being scolded by her husband while she stares provocatively at the Comedian, who is the biological father of her child. This points towards the perceived promiscuity of the character, which is presented as a sex symbol throughout the graphic novel. The sexuality of the book's main villain, Ozymandias, is also questioned during the opening credit sequence. This character is described in the novel as "pampered and decadent ... possibly homosexual?" (Moore and Gibbons 21). However, the film takes this a step further during the opening credit sequence, which shows Ozymandias outside the famous Studio 54 nightclub in New York City, along with David Bowie's alter ego Ziggy Stardust, Mick Jagger, and the Village People. These real-life popular culture icons are widely perceived as symbols of androgyny and sexual ambiguity, which ties into the questionability of Ozymandias' sexuality.

These narrative components shape and support the idea of an alternate history. Furthermore, they are Moore's way of telling us that the inherent danger of political systems is the human element, regardless of how history is shaped. *Watchmen* presents a historical period where the energy crisis has been solved, the United States is clearly the most powerful nation in the world, where the economy is stronger than ever. However, even within these conditions, people make the same mistakes, based on greed, selfishness and human weakness.

Besides the issue of how parallels between the graphic novel and the film are presented, there are marked differences between Moore's narrative and the film adaptation. Probably the most prominent, is Ozymandias' doomsday plan. In the graphic novel, Ozymandias believes that the world needs to be saved from itself, and that he is the only one who can offer salvation. His hubris leads him to set in motion an Armageddon plot that would kill half the population of New York in what would be perceived as a failed extraterrestrial invasion. This would lead to a United States-Soviet alliance and, consequently, world peace. In the film adaptation, Ozymandias' plan is much larger in scope but has the same final objective. His plan is to unify the United States and the Soviet Union and halt nuclear holocaust, by destroying the world's largest and most important cities with exploding energy reactors, blaming Dr. Manhattan as the enemy of humanity, and ultimately uniting the nations of the world against him.

Although most of the dialogue is copied verbatim from the graphic novel and although Zack Snyder has admitted that he used the graphic novel as inspiration for his decisions as director, this disparity between the book and the film is fundamental to the historical context of the plot. The twenty-three year gap between the graphic novel and the film adaptation creates a necessity for some narrative elements to be changed. In his article "Adapting *Watchmen* after 9/11," Bob Rehak explains that for a film which used the graphic novel "as script, storyboard, and design bible," the radical differences between the endings came as a surprise to many (154). According to Rehak, the ending of the book would present a "dated version of New York's destruction, out of step with 9/11's altered threat landscape" (157). The film distances itself from the idea of New York City as the main target of an Armageddon plot and sets the perceived threat as a global concern, less in tune with a Cold War context and more closely aligned to a post-9/11 global stage. The film adaptation also changes the circumstances of one of the main characters' defining moments. In the graphic novel, the

character Rorschach shares with a prison psychiatrist the circumstances that led to the rise of his costumed vigilante persona. After a failed rescue of a five year-old girl who was killed, dismembered, and fed to a pair of German Shepherds, Rorschach located the kidnapper, handcuffed him to an iron stove and set the house on fire. He then gave the kidnapper a hacksaw telling him not bother sawing through the cuffs, meaning that he should saw through his own wrist, and simply walked away. Rorschach claims that at that moment he felt he “was free to scrawl [his] own design on this morally blank world” (Moore and Gibbons 200). The events surrounding this kidnapping are the catalyst that set off the most violent of Rorschach’s actions and what caused his loss of faith in humanity. In the film, Rorschach instead hacks the kidnapper to pieces with a large butcher’s cleaver. Once again, the differences between the socio-political contexts of the late-1980s and post-9/11 contemporary society create a need to diverge from the original concept. If the film adaptation had been released chronologically closer to the time of the graphic novel’s publication, the original version of the events would have been found to be innovative and shocking, but by 2009 the notion of forcing someone to cut through his own flesh to escape certain death had already been seen in 1979’s Australian dystopian action film *Mad Max* and, more prominently, in 2004’s American independent horror film *Saw*. Ultimately, the graphic novel highlights Rorschach’s capacity for cruelty where the film highlights his capacity for violence. To adapt means to adjust and modify an object in order to make it fit a certain criteria. In the case of *Watchmen*, the need to overcome the obstacles and limitations presented by the comic book medium provides for many of the changes in narrative structure, ultimately being attributed to issues of content, form, and the inherent characteristics of graphic literature and film. However, the differences between the fundamental elements of the plot in the graphic novel and the film are the result of the very different socio-political environments in which they found an audience. *Watchmen* is a graphic novel that makes strong criticisms about the Cold War, United States foreign policy, the nuclear arms race, and the socio-political attitudes prevalent during the late-1980s. The film adaptation was released over two decades later, in a world where the Cold War is over and the Soviet Union no longer exists. The current global socio-political climate is very different from that of the late-1980s, and the target audience (that all-important 18-34 demographic) did not experience the profound, life-altering effects of the Cold War first-hand. Thus the fundamental narrative elements in both the graphic novel and the film adaptation of *Watchmen* respond to two very different time periods with greatly diverging socio-political circumstances.

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• ADAPTATION • COMICS • FILM • NEW MEDIA • SUPERHEROES
• WATCHMEN

UNCATEGORIZED

NON-FICTION COMICS: THE CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE VOL.1, COMICS AND SEQUENTIAL ART, AND THE 9/11 REPORT: A GRAPHIC ADAPTATION

SEPTEMBER 25, 2012 | LEAVE A COMMENT

The use of rhetorical devices and strategies is an essential part of any work of literature. These techniques use language to convey to the target audience a meaning or message that will increase the persuasiveness of a piece of writing. The goal of implementing these rhetorical techniques is to influence and persuade an audience towards a particular stance or plan, and is an integral component of any literary work that attempts to guide an audience in the direction of a specific point of view. While rhetorical strategies are generally used to evoke an emotional response in the audience, there are other reasons to use them, such as lending weight to an argument, and making one's writing more powerful and affective. Graphic literature is no exception to such phenomena, particularly in non-fiction works. Three such examples are Larry Gonick's series *The Cartoon History of the Universe*, Will Eisner's book on comic book theory *Comics and Sequential Art*, and Sid Jacobson's and Ernie Colón's *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation*. These three examples have very different authorial intentions and implement a number of different rhetorical strategies in order to achieve their goals.

Larry Gonick's series have an overt pedagogical purpose. His books have, in fact, been integrated into lesson plans by teachers both in the United States and abroad. The series are framed by a narrator (a cartoon version of Gonick) that has a time machine that allows him to travel to different points in human history. The books use narration, definition, and description, similar to any other history text. However, Gonick's series is characterized by the use of humor. In this instance, humor, in combination with the artwork, provides entertainment value to material that some students may find boring. The main component of the books' humor is the use of puns, alliteration, and the intentional use of faulty logic. Gonick exploits the multiple meanings of words, or of similar-sounding words, for an intended humorous or rhetorical effect. He also uses farfetched notions in order to illustrate a point. An example of Gonick's use of puns can be seen in his attempt to explain how geologists date rocks (as in determining their age) and having an image of a man with a pickaxe asking a pile of rubble out on a date (as in dinner and a

movie). Alliteration can be seen when Gonick describes “romantic reptiles” as examples of sexual reproduction involving intercourse. The intentional use of faulty logic can be found in the description of the theory of receding galaxies. The cartoon version of Gonick exclaims that the reason for this phenomenon is that “the galaxies are fleeing because they hate us” (Gonick 5). In Eisner’s *Comics and Sequential Art* there are also instances of these rhetorical strategies.

Eisner’s seminal book on comic book theory has the distinction of being much more than a textbook containing interspersed examples of Eisner’s work. Although each illustration is used to give an example of the graphic literature element in discussion, the fact that Eisner had been implementing these techniques before reflecting on them and putting them to paper makes them even more relevant. The use of Eisner’s illustrations and their accompanying notes are examples of the use of anecdotes. The simple fact that people enjoy interesting stories makes this rhetorical strategy extremely effective. Eisner gives context to each illustration, effectively engaging, involving and creating interest in the reader, thus adding a personal, human touch to his book. This book, although thematically divergent from Gonick’s, successfully uses rhetorical devices to achieve its purposes. This is also the case with Jacobson’s and Colón’s *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation*.

Jacobson and Colón’s graphic novel was written as a response to the confusing nature of the 585-page *9/11 Commission Report* published by the United States government. Elements such as the sequence of events and the interactions between the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) are clarified through the implementation of a shorter visual format. The rhetorical devices used in this book are the traditional Aristotelian modes of persuasion of logos, pathos and ethos. Logos is aimed at the audience’s intellect and can be found in the logical, matter-of-fact nature of the language within Jacobson’s and Colón’s book. Clear examples of this are the pages that establish the parallel timelines of the four hijacked flights, where there is no emotion evoked by the language. Pathos, the use of emotional appeal in order to persuade, is not found in the language but in the images of the Twin Towers and the Pentagon engulfed in flames. Finally, ethos, the appeal to the conscience, ethics, morals, standards, values, and principles of society, can be exemplified by the opening page, which points out the inadequacies and unsuitability of the agencies involved.

All three texts discussed in this essay, although drastically different from each other, contain examples of some of the numerous rhetorical strategies implemented in nonfiction graphic literature in order to elicit reader emotions, and to propose and defend a point of view. Ultimately, each book has a lesson to teach, and they serve the two fundamental applications of graphic literature: instruction and entertainment.

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THE GRAPHIC MEMOIR II:
STITCHES: A MEMOIR,

BLANKETS: A GRAPHIC NOVEL, AND PERSEPOLIS: THE STORY OF A CHILDHOOD

SEPTEMBER 25, 2012 | LEAVE A COMMENT

Graphic memoirs are an integral component of nonfiction graphic literature. This subgenre includes some of the most relevant and critically acclaimed works found in modern literature. These memoirs are windows through which the reader is able to look inside the lives of the authors and become a conduit for their feelings, emotions and life experiences. Memoirs in general have the purpose of letting the authors tell their stories in their own words, as well as exorcising the demons from their past that may be torturing them. Three examples of memoirs that have become staples of graphic literature in recent years are David Small's *Stitches: A Memoir*, Craig Thompson's *Blankets: A Graphic Novel*, and Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*. Each of these texts is an exercise in painting a portrait of three complicated lives, as well as examples of coming-of-age narratives (Bildungsroman). These graphic memoirs show characters that rise through adversity, break away from and come to terms with their pasts, and have a lesson for the reader. These memoirs deal with culturally relevant topics such as child abuse and neglect, sociopolitical upheaval, immigration, homosexuality, teen relationships, religion and spirituality, and cultural relativism, to name a few. These books use a number of different narrative strategies in order to achieve their individual purposes. Small, Thompson and Satrapi use characterization, the need for characters to distance themselves from their immediate environment, and a structuring of events that go beyond the mere telling of the story and are able to draw empathy from the readers. David Small's *Stitches: A Memoir* tells the reader of his journey from an infirm six year-old, to an accidental cancer patient, to a troubled teen, whose brave and uncertain decision to run away from home at the age of sixteen with nothing more than the dream of becoming an artist and an unwavering desire to distance himself from his parents would ultimately become an inspiring story of survival.

Small's narrative begins in his childhood, showing a family dynamic that is characterized by emotional repression and included a mother who was a distant, unaffectionate, uncommunicative, and authoritarian penny-pincher with a secret; a father who was seen by young David as a remote, almost ethereal creature who was absent most of the time; and a brother who was abusive and that took advantage of David as much as he could. As a sick child, David's father gave him X-ray treatments that would subsequently lead to throat cancer, the loss of half his vocal cords, and a ghastly scar on his neck (hence the title *Stitches*). Even after the surgery, David's parents never told him that he had cancer, because he "did not need to know" at the time. Some of the other insights into the Small's family were the facts that his mother was a sexually repressed, closeted lesbian and that his maternal grandmother was mentally ill, to the point that she tried to burn down her house with her husband trapped inside. Ultimately, this memoir can be considered a story of a voice lost and found through art; a way for Small to say everything he could not say while functionally mute.

Stitches: A Memoir has been widely acclaimed due to the nature of its narrative; it is engaging, heart-wrenchingly honest, and humorous. One narrative strategy that immediately leaps at the reader is the depiction of David's therapist as a white rabbit. Influenced by the white rabbit from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the therapist's depiction is the result of David Small's journey into himself, with the therapist as the guide who helps him come to terms with who he is and what he wants to be. In her review of the memoir, Lauren Kirshner reflects that "like Alice, his childhood heroine, he descends into a rabbit hole in search of identity, which takes him into the inner city of Detroit. Cocooned in afternoon matinees with other lost souls, he dreams of turning himself into an artist, and it is here that Small's artistic virtuosity soars" (F-20). Kirshner's review clearly establishes the influence of Carroll's book in Small's narrative by drawing a parallel between him and Alice. Another example of a memoir that shows a main character that finds his voice (albeit symbolically) through art is Craig Thompson's *Blankets: A Graphic Novel*, a story of the author's adolescence and adulthood, his relationship with his younger brother, and the conflicts he experiences regarding his religion, his family, and his first love.

Blankets: A Graphic Novel's narrative is characterized by its distinctive, quasi-linear structure since, although written chronologically, the memoir contains numerous flashbacks to establish parallels between Thompson's adulthood and childhood. Thompson gives the reader a look into his childhood in Wisconsin as part of a fundamentalist Christian family where the title's namesake blankets fail to provide comfort for Thompson and his baby brother in a life full of severe punishments for small infractions, child molestation, and school bullying. The most affecting component of this childhood, however, is the constant attempt by adults to stamp down Craig's creativity to the point that he gives up his artistic ambitions. Craig's life reaches a pivotal point when he meets "Raina and a handful of misfits who don't match the well-adjusted Christian ideal laid out by his parents and pastor" (Fiske 179) at Bible camp and subsequently spends time with her at her home. This relationship establishes once again the notion of distancing oneself from one's environment in order to grow as a person and break away from a home that is oppressive and stifling. Raina is also the character that provides Craig with a handmade quilt; the only blanket that actually gives him some comfort and a sense of safety. Through this relationship, Craig manages to find his self-worth and learns to question and challenge what he has been told all his life. Ultimately, Craig transformed by this experience and given the tools to manage the crisis of faith that makes him withdraw from his home and his religion. Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* also deals with many of the thematic elements found in *Stitches: A Memoir* and *Blankets: A Graphic Novel* but it offers a female perspective and a response to the one-dimensional portrayal of Iran as a terrorist nation that was promulgated by the George W. Bush administration (Elahi 312).

Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood (titled after the ancient capital of the Persian Empire) was originally written in French and depicts Satrapi's childhood up to her early adult years. The text provides a detailed account of Satrapi's life through the turmoil that led to the eventual overthrow of the Shah during the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979. However, as Marji (as she is called by her

parents) grows up, she witnesses firsthand how the new Iran, now ruled by Islamic fundamentalists, has become a tyrannical autocracy on its own. With Marji dangerously refusing to remain silent at this injustice, her parents send her abroad to Vienna to study, hoping for a better life, and to keep her away from the grasp of a government that was increasingly oppressive towards women and any uplifting elements of the female identity. However, this change proves an equally difficult experience with the young woman finding herself in a different culture and dealing with the inherent struggles related to immigration and cultural differences. Furthermore, when she returns home, Marji finds that she has changed much as an individual and that her homeland has become a place where she does not belong. Satrapi's memoir also exemplifies the coming-of-age story or Bildungsroman. Marji undergoes a process of intense personal growth and self-actualization where her belief system is shattered and she is forced to assert her own identity and reconcile her own religious beliefs (as seen in her reaction to her uncle Anoosh's execution), and understanding of the world with the strict cultural rules of the Islamic government's imperativem. This narrative has been aptly described as "a telling memoir of girlhood; an informative and empathic window into the life of Iranian progressives as the country shifted from a dictatorship of the greedy to a fundamentalist regime; and a graphic novel providing immediate impact" (Notkin 8).

David Small, Craig Thompson and Marjane Satrapi all give the reader narratives that paint a self-portrait of characters that have to define their identities through a process of overcoming adversity, personal growth, and self-actualization. Their lives were defined by a conflict with their origins and the need to distancing themselves from those origins to gain a much-needed perspective that remained elusive while they were still immersed in those environments. The graphic medium provides a unique method for authorial commentary on their own life stories, and *Stitches: A Memoir*, *Blankets: A Graphic Novel*, and *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* are masterpieces that effectively engage the reader and legitimize the graphic memoir as a literary subgenre.

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UNCATEGORIZED

THE GRAPHIC MEMOIR: ART SPIEGELMAN'S MAUS

SEPTEMBER 25, 2012 | LEAVE A COMMENT

Art Spiegelman's *Maus* is a masterpiece of graphic literature that has been lauded by some as the single most important comic book of the 20th century. The popular and critical reception of Spiegelman's graphic novel garnered *Maus* a Pulitzer Prized Special Award in 1992. This book narrates the tale of Vladek Spiegelman, the author's father, who grew up in Poland before the onslaught of World War II experienced the changes in German policy regarding Jews and, ultimately, became a prisoner of war and was sent to Auschwitz. Besides being a story of survival, the book also deals with other thematic elements such as rising through adversity, racial issues, stereotypes, generational perspectives and differences, bigotry and interpersonal relationships. For the purposes of this paper, *Maus* will be analyzed using a three-pronged approach. First, I will look at the narrative itself, analyzing the historical elements of the story, the literary devices employed by the author, and the importance of thematic elements such as prejudice, morality and survival. Second, I will break down some of the stylistic components of the graphic aspects of the story such as the use of animals to differentiate between nationalities, the mechanics of the artwork and the panel arrangement, and some of the design choices and strategies implemented throughout the novel. Finally, I will briefly describe how the literary and graphic aspects of the novel meld into the seminal autobiographical text that *Maus* has become.

The reader encounters a narrative that is framed by the interactions of Vladek, the main character, with his son during the late-1950s in Rego Park, New York. These conversations are about Vladek's life before, during and after World War II, beginning with his youth and how he fell in love with his wife, Anja, serve as the framework for Spiegelman's story. Throughout narrating how he ended up marrying Anja, the story inserts the issue of social unrest and the changes in German policies toward Jews. Then the narrative moves towards Vladek's participation in the war, the sub-human conditions of his imprisonment as a POW, his subsequent placement as a worker in a labor camp for the Germans and his "Parshas Truma" release to Lublin. This is the first time that Vladek passes himself as Polish to escape German-controlled lands and return home. The narrative skips back and forth between the present (1950s New York) and WWII Poland, but at this point the story moves completely to the present, showing the reader the tense nature of the relationship between Vladek and Artie. This is where the issue of generational differences and perspectives comes into play. For example, Vladek throws away Artie's coat because he feels embarrassed that his son is wearing an old, ragged piece of clothing, without any regard for Artie's opinion on the matter. These humorous interludes are diametrically opposed to the tragic events

narrated by Vladek; nevertheless, they help the reader take a mental break from the gloomy, depressive feelings conveyed by the story.

In the following visit, Vladek tells Art about the year he was able to maneuver through German oppression by dealing in black market goods until his home was taken away and they were forced to move into another part of town. It is at this point that Vladek encounters the execution of Jews for disobeying their German masters, forcing him to deal in more easily concealable goods such as gold and gems. Also, throughout this part of the narrative, the threat of Auschwitz begins to be foreshadowed.

Another interesting literary device in *Maus* is the integration of Spiegelman's real-life comic book *Prisoner on the Hell Planet*, in which Spiegelman portrays himself dressed in a prison uniform and venting all the frustrations he had due to his mother's suicide. Noticeably, it deals with how his family and friends blamed him for his mother's death and how he coped with the grieving process, and also seems to provide a type of catharsis in the father-son dialectic, to the point that the narrative begins to flow at a faster pace, particularly when dealing with the death of Artie's brother Richieu, the ingenious methods implemented by Jews to hide from the German soldiers, how they were betrayed by one of their own, and the fact that Vladek had never stopped loving Artie's mother, Anja, as seen in the interstitials of the narrative.

The final chapter in this volume, aptly titled "Mouse Trap" further develops the tension between present-day Vladek and his current wife Mala (which had been hinted at throughout the story) and how Artie is consistently put in the middle to act as referee. Furthermore, this chapter also looks at Spiegelman's perception of his father as the "racist caricature of the miserly old Jew" (131). This is a meta-fictional, introspective look by the story into itself. Furthermore, Artie's justification of his book to his father also serves to tell the reader point blank what his objectives for writing this book, which is to target people who generally do not read Holocaust narratives. Vladek's narrative itself presents his and Anja's return to Sosnowiec passing themselves as Polish. Once again they had to resort to a number of tactics to remain hidden, such as hiding in midden heaps. After all their trials, Vladek and Anja are captured, sent to Auschwitz, and separated. The narrative stops at this point, and returns to Artie's interactions with present-day Vladek, who finally confesses to having destroyed Anja's journals. This draws Artie's rage, who calls his father a murderer for killing his mother's memories.

The historical aspects, the literary and narrative devices of the story, and the thematic elements of the story form a multifaceted lens through which the reader takes in not only Vladek's story, but also glimpses inside Spiegelman's process for writing this novel. Nevertheless, the gripping effects of the literary aspects that characterize *Maus* are subjected by the graphic elements of the story, without which it would not have the same effectiveness.

The graphic elements and stylistic characteristics of *Maus* have the main purpose of drawing in readers who otherwise might not be interested in Holocaust narratives. The character design is characterized by an aura of "sameness" that is only broken by the

clothing of the characters. The Jews are mice, the Germans are cats, and the Poles are swine, but all mice, cats and swine look the same, a fact that may be interpreted as Spiegelman's critique of how people see different ethnic groups as single entities. This concept is even more insidious if one looks at the characters' use of pig masks to symbolize the way the Jews passed themselves as Polish and their need to deny their ethnicity in order to survive. The cat-mouse dichotomy also serves as Spiegelman's interpretation of the Nazi-Jew dialectic, particularly in the fact that just as mice have virtually no chances of survival when facing a cat, so did the Jews when faced by the Nazi war machine.

Maus' artwork is drawn in stark black and white, giving the story a gritty, dirty feeling, parallel to the ghettos of Poland, as seen in such films as Peter Kassovitz's *Jakob the Liar*. This minimalist approach belies the emotion conveyed by artwork and panel arrangement. Each panel is minutely detailed (sometimes to the point of clutter) to maximize the oppressive feeling of the story, and each transition is carefully designed to set the pace of the narrative, which speeds up and slows down constantly for dramatic effect. The artwork is also noticeably peppered with little explanatory notes and images to keep the reader on track. In the case of the comic-within-the-comic *Prisoner on the Hell Planet*, the design is all at once ominous, heart-wrenching, and evocative. In four pages, Spiegelman deals with his mother's suicide and effectively establishes it as one of the defining moments in Vladek's life, as well as his own. As with any comic book worth reading, *Maus'* flawless combination of gripping dialogue and clear, provocative imagery, work seamlessly to create a masterpiece of graphic literature.

As established elsewhere in this paper, *Maus* revolutionized the world of Holocaust narratives by being atypical, in the sense that it is designed to reach a much broader audience than *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank, for example, making the novel an influential, seminal work of not only graphic literature, but Holocaust narratives in general. Furthermore, the novel explores the differences between the historical and contemporary Vladeks, thus juxtaposing the historical narrative with the time of writing the novel. Ultimately, *Maus* unquestionably legitimizes comic books, a medium that has been treated as the ugly duckling of literature, even to this day.

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ARZACH VS. THE LARGELY- ENDOWED ORANGUTAN: REFLECTIONS ON A "SILENT" COMIC

SEPTEMBER 25, 2012 | [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

The Arzach story by Moebius titled "Harzak" begins with a splash page showing our main character flying towards the reader on his pterodactyl-like flying beast, along with a similar beast that serves a purpose similar to that of a packhorse. The background seems ominous, with threatening clouds that hide the sun and stretch along

the horizon, hinting at some unseen danger. From the horizon to the foreground, the reader encounters a field of tentacle-like “plants” that seem to dance in the wind. The page as a whole has a “Western” feeling to it, reminiscent of the lonesome rider arriving scenes in many films.

The second page is composed of six panels that seem to be pairs of twins (1 and 4; 2 and 5; 3 and 6), each pair showing similar images. In panel one the reader can see the main character, Arzach in the distance looking at something that is happening to his packhorse flying beast. This beast seems to be in some distress. Panel two stems from an action-to-action transition where Arzach is coming around for a closer look at the situation. At the bottom of this panel the tentacle-like plants seem to be reaching towards the falling beast, this being the first hint of that unseen danger suggested in page one. After another action-to-action transition, panel three shows a close-up, detailed view of our phallic main character’s facial expression of worry, confusion and fear. Another action-to-action transition takes us to panel four, which shows a wide shot of Arzach looking at the packhorse flying beast falling within the reach of the “plants”. This panel, in tandem with panel one, shows our hero in the distance, unable to take any action. After a moment-to-moment transition, panel five shows the packhorse flying beast fully in grasp of the “plants” while Arzach impotently observes from the background. Another action-to-action transition brings us to panel six where one finds another detailed close-up of Arzach’s face, this time showing a combination aggravation, frustration, and anger. The curvature of Arzach’s lower lip suggests that he might even be mumbling or muttering a curse.

Page three is composed of a combination of five panels. Panel one shows the final moments of the packhorse flying beast as it is being devoured by the “plants” while Arzach flies away in his flying mount. Panel two shows Arzach’s mount in some distress, similar to the other flying beast. After an action-to-action transition, panel three shows Arzach reaching into a pouch with some sense of urgency. Moving to panel four in a moment-to-moment transition, the reader sees Arzach triumphantly holding something that looks like a cookie with an expression of focus and determination in his face. A moment-to-moment transition takes us to panel five where Arzach is feeding the “cookie” to his mount, suggesting that the other flying beast died of starvation.

On page four we encounter a two-panel arrangement. The first panel shows Arzach on his mount with his back to the reader, flying toward a platform waiting in the distance. Through an action-to-action transition, the second panel shows that the platform is occupied by some sort of ferocious, gigantic orangutan-like creature. Arzach flies around the platform, seemingly contemplating what to do next.

Page five has a four-panel arrangement beginning with one showing Arzach flying his mount toward the creature on the platform. In this panel the reader also can observe the first hint of the creature’s sharp teeth and claws, large eyes, and gigantic phallus. These physical traits suggest that the creature is of a particularly aggressive nature, and it should also be noted that the creature’s coloration is similar to that of the menacing clouds of page one. An action-to-action transition takes us to panel two where we see that Arzach has flown around the back of the creature and is now standing on the back of his mount, hurtling toward and seemingly about to pounce on the awaiting beast. The creature’s facial

expression shows confusion, or perhaps even fear. Following another action-to-action transition, panel three shows Arzach in midair falling toward the platform, at the creature's back, while his mount flies on. The creature is looking over its shoulder, noticing the interloping Arzach. With a moment-to-moment transition, we go to panel four which shows Arzach landing on the platform, still at the creature's back, knife in hand. In the distance, Arzach's mount is flying around, turning towards the platform. Noticeably, in this panel the reader finally encounters the full magnitude of the creature's enormous phallus and testicles, which were previously hinted at elsewhere in the story.

Page six's three-panel arrangement shows a definite increase in the pace of the story and begins with Arzach standing with his fists at his waist in a classic heroic pose as the creature charges at him. Meanwhile, Arzach's mount is seen in the distance behind the creature. With an action-to-action transition, panel two shows a close-up of Arzach (who has turned around) and the creature standing menacingly behind him. Arzach's facial expression of boredom is diametrically opposed to the creature's expression of ferociousness and aggressiveness. After a moment-to-moment transition, panel three shows Arzach dropping from the platform while the confused creature reaches toward Arzach and is thrown off-balance. Simultaneously, Arzach's mount is approaching from the background.

Page seven shows a panel-in-panel arrangement of the aftermath of the creature's charge. The outer panel shows that Arzach has landed on the back of his mount and is flying away over the seemingly endless field of carnivorous "plants" while the creature is already in midair, falling to its doom. The interior panel shows the creature's hand gripping the edge of the platform and beginning to slip while Arzach ignores it completely.

The eighth and final page shows a five-panel arrangement. In the foreground of panel one the reader encounters the "plants" reaching up towards the platform where the creature is hanging for dear life. The reader also finds that Arzach has already landed on the platform along with his mount. In the background the ominous clouds have dispersed and a bright sun can be seen. With an action-to-action transition, panel two shows that some time has passed and due to the sun's position in the background. Arzach has already set up a camp and is enjoying some food, while the creature keeps slipping off the edge of the platform. The story's only aspect-to-aspect transition occurs as we move to panel three in the center of the page which shows an extreme close-up of the creature's face; an interlude in Arzach's story. This panel is my particular favorite because, in the context of the story, it shows a disturbingly human-like quality to the creature, which is no longer all teeth and ferocity, but fear incarnate. Moving to panel five, some more time has passed as seen in the position of the sun and the long, deep furrows made by the creature's claws at the edge of the platform. In this panel (and at this point in the story) the creature is barely hanging by the tip of its claws. The final panel shows that the creature has fallen and is engulfed by the "plants" while the vague outline of Arzach and his mount can be seen atop the platform as the sun is already setting in the horizon.

The genius of this story (as well as of many of Moebius' Arzach stories) is that no a single word is uttered by any of the characters. The narrative is exclusively driven by the artist's mastery of color, the character's iconicity, and the panel arrangements.

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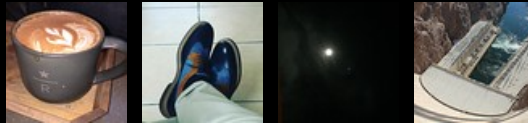
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Luke Cage does the same. A young man stands in a corner selling recorded footage of the 'The Incident' where the Avengers stopped an alien invasion. However, Luke's problems remain local, even in the face of Diamondback's arrival and his possession of bullets made from some alien technology that can hurt Luke. Thus, the brilliance of the Marvel Netflix shows is their ability to be virtually self-contained. Maybe it was only the shock of seeing such an ambitious appropriation of comic book elements, or maybe the fanboy in me has dimmed my view. Maybe I need to watch BvS: DoJ a second time. At the end of the day, I want fun from my films, and this is what I got from Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice. A description of tropes appearing in Fanboy and Chum Chum. It all started with a simple idea: two kids wearing superhero costumes and hanging out at a ... Fanboy's costume was white and purple, Chum Chum was bigger and taller, Barry the Ice Monster was large and fierce, and Lenny was a white guy with an orange afro. Now the animation is much more lucid, colorful, character designs and voices have changed, and it's more along the lines of what The Ren & Stimpy Show would look like in CGI. Artistic License - Education: "Excuse Me": Fanboy, Chum Chum and Kyle get away with missing class constantly due to all kinds of unrealistic fake excuse notes. Mr Mufflin falls for all of them until it is discovered outright that they are Wisdom Nun Children Daughters Brother Bucket Corner Painting Daughter. Filles de la Sagesse, Daughters of Wisdom Wisdom Nun Children Daughters Brother Bucket Corner Painting Daughter. Filles de la Sagesse, Daughters of Wisdom, Educated

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France, in 1673. Educated at Rennes, he was ordained there in 1700, becoming a chaplain in a hospital in Poitiers.