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“Framing Frankenstein - Gothic Adaptations in the  
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# Introduction

The novel is one of the most common forms of literature encountered today, being considered of great cultural importance and undoubtedly worthy of academic studies and scholarly attention. Novels about all kinds of content are widely available and held in high regard by society and researchers in many fields of academic studies. Successful novelists are popular, well-respected individuals whose professions' value is not questioned in Western society of the early 21st century. Teachers, parents and society at large encourage children to read; and usually that means encouraging them to read novels. By doing so they can improve their reading and language skills, and by reading some of the so-called "classics" they can glimpse parts of a shared cultural canon of stories that are deemed to contain important meta-messages relevant for society. Among other effects, this encourages a communal feeling for having read the same novels as the generations before.

In the past however, society's opinion of novels was quite different from the high regard and natural ease with which they are treated in the present day. The academic world then considered novels to be inferior literature suited mostly for the under-educated lower classes and not worth reading, let alone worthy of academic study. At first it was generally assumed that novels were lowbrow literature. As Paul Poplawski points out in *English Literature in Context* (259):

[In the 18<sup>th</sup> century] Novels, of course, were written in English, and were already therefore thought to be the domain of the uneducated, the less completely literate. Not only did this reduce the novel's value at the time; it also created the impression that it was simply too easy to read novels. There was a critical sense at the time that novels were therefore bad for readers.

The early stages of that development are now clearly reflected in the way comics are regarded by the majority of the general populace, as well as by large parts of the European academic world and the media today. No other medium, including computer games, faces as much prejudice and suffers from as



negative a reputation as comics at this time. According to McCloud the negative connotations have historical reasons and seem to be largely based on the emergence of early modern comics as we shall see in chapter 2: A Short History of Comics. But another reason why comics as a literary form is facing even greater resistance in the academic world is because of its relative proximity to traditional media such as novels. Both media forms use written language, and both are traditionally printed (though recently digital forms are becoming more popular due to the greater availability, no printing cost and limited space in modern living environments). Though comics shares aspects with film and computer games, the fact that these media cannot be printed sets the further apart from comics. The medium infringes on the territory of traditional media due to the qualities it has in common with novels and other forms of written literature, while bringing with it aspects usually associated with other non-traditional media. This mixture of common and uncommon qualities is what seems to deter some scholars from readily accepting the medium as a subject worthy of study

More often than not the reasons for these misled assumptions seem to be based on a lack of information, a reliance on hearsay and the resulting un- or misinformed prejudice. As an example, I talked about the topic during the research for this paper with a fellow teacher who has a master's degree in German literature, is generally a well-reflected, liberal-minded person, open to new concepts and ideas. As soon as the topic of comics was brought up however, she claimed she took pride in the fact that she had never read a single comic-book so far, not even as a child. She then argued that comics could not be compared with 'proper' literature, implying by inflection and gestures that they were of lesser value.

One of the reasons this paper was written is to remedy the fact that this kind of prejudice keeps giving comics a bad reputation which is then passed on to new generations. Led by an urge to 'side with the underdog', which in itself may stem from reading stories that were actually presented in comic-book form as a child, the choice of comics studies as topic for this paper was easily made. Since the Gothic has been an important focal point of my studies so far,

combining the two seemed appealing at first and upon closer inspection indeed proved sensible, as will be explained below.

Comics provides an opportunity for literary studies to investigate a whole new medium that has its own rules and conventions and holds the potential for new, innovative ways of conveying written content and telling stories. It is not only an opportunity, but indeed an obligation of literature studies to look upon this new medium not with the frowning gaze of the sceptic, so set in their ways that they do not want to learn anything new, but with the neutral, scientific eye of an explorer setting out to map new territory. Or as Ndalianis (113) aptly puts it: "Asking the question "Why Comics Studies?" is like asking the question "Why Cinema, Television, Game, or Media Studies?"

Comics is as worthy of academic attention as are all other 'new' media (the term 'new' being used in quotation marks in this case, because one can argue that in the second decade of the 21st century, it does not truly apply anymore). It is a new form of literature as we know it, in that it can (but not necessarily needs to) be printed, like traditional, non-digital books, but carries within it a visual potential similar to films. This visual storytelling (or rather visual conveyance of meaning, as not all comics tell stories) is an additional aspect that offers a vastly different experience than reading a book does, and supplies both authors and scholars with a rich assortment of new possibilities.

Contrary to public belief, comics are by no means the kind of primitive, lowbrow works written only for children or the uneducated. Comics is a **medium**, not a genre, and can as such serve to carry an endless variety of diverse content, just as a book or a film can or, as Scott McCloud, the leading author on comics studies puts it:



(UC 5, panel 14)

Comics can in fact be very demanding to read, as it requires a level of prior knowledge that may not be required for reading a book. "Common experience and a history of observation are necessary to interpret the inner feelings of the actor" Eisner (CASA, 20) points out, talking about how even images without words can be used to convey meaning in what he calls a graphic narrative, which he demonstrates as follows (CASA, 31):

# FOUR-PAGE



He continues by arguing that not only the reading, but also the creation of such a narrative is very demanding and challenging, as the space is limited and must therefore convey the same meaning in a handful of pictures that a film uses hundreds of pictures for. What seems like a weakness is in fact a strength of the medium. Eisner (CASA, 20) claims that "[...] it enables comics' singular ability to allow a reader to consider many images at the same time, or from different directions, a capability film lacks." This ability which is unique to comics offers interesting new possibilities where narratology and the way time can be used in

storytelling are concerned, as the reader can see past, present and future of the action at a glance.

The most common reason for prejudice against comics is a lack of knowledge of the subject matter, leading to the assumption that comics only deals with a limited selection of topics, most of which are deemed of little literary value. In order to bridge this gap between students of literature and the world of comics, this paper will look into the adaptation of three works of Gothic literature. Belonging to the classical canon of English literature, the literary value of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is generally accepted. With the academic value of the content not being in question, the focus can be on the new medium. It is the aim of this paper to explore how these well-known, well-researched and much-analysed stories change in comics adaptations, what effects the medium-inherent features of comics have on the adaptations and how the source texts they are based on and their specific narratological features are represented.

In addition to this pragmatic reason, which offers the skeptical reader a chance for greater analytical focus, aesthetic reasons are also considered. The Gothic, with its dark, brooding settings of a desolate and decaying world, its depictions of the darker sides of human nature and repressed sexuality, carries a rich volume of images that have inspired graphic artists since the works were released. Due to the wealth of film and other visual adaptations of these works and the visualization of the Gothic therein, the artists who created these comics adaptations had access to and made use of a number of now-traditional representations of characters, items and surroundings in these stories which readers will likely find familiar.

This paper assumes that the reader is familiar with the content of the above-mentioned well-known classics. It will offer a short overview of the medium of comics, touching briefly on its history, technical concepts and terms necessary to understand the interpretations and analysis to follow, and common conventions prevalent in the current field of comics studies that are relevant to the analysis of the adaptations in question.

# 1 In Defence of Comics

Despite the existence of many well-known and highly appraised works<sup>1</sup>, the disregard for comics still remains a problem for its recognition as a serious medium. The advent of comics as we know it was at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the form of comic-strips in newspapers. From their very beginning, comic-strips had a negative connotation, even among the publishers of the daily papers they were published in. As Eisner (Comics And Sequential Art 1) points out “For many decades the strips and comic-books were printed on low-grade newsprint never intended for long shelf-life”, showing that comics was held in low regard even by the publishers. He also states that “Between 1940 and the early 1960s the industry commonly accepted the profile of the average comic book reader as that of a ‘ten-year-old from Iowa’. In adults, the reading of comic books for many years was regarded as a sign of low intelligence. Publishers neither encouraged nor supported anything more.” (Eisner, CASA 149)

Examples of comics being seen as a ‘lower’, non-academic form of literature can be found within modern studies, even if not stated in an overt fashion. In their 2010 article on *Gender differences in Adolescents’ Out-Of-School Literacy Practices: A Multifaceted Approach*, Ünlüsoy, de Haan, Leseman and van Kruistum (743) state that previous studies on gender specific engagement with old and new literacies have shown the following: “Regarding traditional literacy practices girls were portrayed as more academically oriented, preferring books and newspapers, while boys were seen more oriented towards comics and magazines.”

Apart from the obvious fallacy that the above quote suggests that **any** newspaper or book is more academically oriented than **any** comic book or magazine, short statements like this in modern academic papers make clear how poorly comics is still regarded in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. As Angela Ndalanian puts it in her article *Why Comics Studies?* “As a medium, comics are older than

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<sup>1</sup> Works such as Art Spiegelman’s *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale*, Neil Gaiman’s *Sandman*, Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis*, Will Eisner’s *A Contract with God* or Alan Moore’s *Watchmen*

film, television, and video games, and yet there has been resistance from within the academy to the serious study and analysis of the medium. “ (Ndalianis 113)

While it is undoubtedly true that many comics nowadays aim for the same kind of audience as those in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, comics is a **medium** that can be used as well or as poorly as any other medium to carry content as complex or simple as the author desires or is able to create.

### 1.1 How to Define ‘Comics’?

To examine comics as a medium we must differentiate between the medium itself and the works created therewith, such as comic books, graphic novels or comic strips, and so on. Comic strips are a specific form of comics, and despite sharing some basic attributes with each other; they can be vastly different in aim, scope and content. It is not uncommon however to mistake the word ‘comics’ for comic strips and/or even cartoons (a specific simplified **style** of drawing characters, as for example used by Bill Watterson for his highly acclaimed series *Calvin and Hobbes*). Academic research of comics therefore demands a clear definition of what is meant by the word. When looking at dictionary entries for ‘comics’, the lack of awareness of the medium becomes instantly apparent.

The Oxford English dictionary gives the following definition: “a periodical containing comic strips, intended chiefly for children” (4 April, 2013; <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com>) .The Merriam-Webster Online Thesaurus links to similar words: “a : comic strip :a group of cartoons in narrative sequence b : comic book : a magazine containing sequences of comic strips — usually hyphenated in attributive use c *plural* : the part of a newspaper devoted to comic strips” (4 April 2013; <http://www.merriam-webster.com>)

While the Longman Online Dictionary of Contemporary English lists comics as follows: comic [countable]: a magazine for children that tells a story using comic strips.” (4 April 2013; <http://www.ldoceonline.com>)

If even dictionary entries of renowned publishers give definitions that either regard comics either entertainment intended for children, or claim comics to be synonymous with cartoons or comic strips, the prevalent low opinion of comics is of little surprise.<sup>2</sup>

Ndalianis (113) claims that

Despite its immense popularity, the public perception for a long time was that comics were a kid's medium - or, more specifically a young boys' medium. As such, it was generally perceived (in higher circles, of course) as the lowliest of popular culture media.

Greater acceptance for comics was created by the growing popularity of anime and manga imported to Europe and the U.S. from Japan in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since the 1970s, the term 'graphic novel' referring to novel-length comics that are often considered more sophisticated, has become increasingly popular and is relevant for this paper as it is the basis of the adaptation of novels. This would lead to the assumption that the dictionary definition for graphic novel would be more accurate than that of comics.

The Oxford English dictionaries defines graphic novels as "n. a novel in comic-strip format." the Merriam Webster Online Dictionary states that "a graphic novel is: a fictional story that is presented in comic-strip format and published as a book." while the Longman Online Dictionary of Contemporary English does not have any entry at all for the term.<sup>3</sup>

While the first of these definitions is incorrect in claiming that graphic novels are in "comic-strip format" (technically wrong, as the format of graphic novels is not limited to comic strips, but can include countless different page layouts as is shown in chapter 3.3), the second definition claims that graphic novels need to be published as books, neglecting the fact that digital media are an increasingly popular format for comic books, including graphic novels.

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<sup>2</sup> Some of the above dictionary entries have changed until the completion of this paper, yet the above-listed definition still existed relatively recently ( 4. April 2013).

<sup>3</sup> See Footnote #1 above



The first attempt of an accurate definition of comics as we know it today was done by Will Eisner. He simply defines it as “sequential art”, arguing that the unique feature is that the single pictures that comprise comics are viewed in sequence in order to produce meaning. This somewhat vague term was taken up by Scott McCloud (UC 9), who came up with the aforementioned definition that we shall now revisit in order to try to extrapolate a definition for one specific kind of comics, namely the graphic novel.

## 1.2 McCloud's Definition and Graphic Novels

Comics are defined by McCloud (*UC*, 9 ) as “Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer.” This definition excludes written texts without pictures, yet includes comics **with and without** written text.<sup>4</sup>

According to this, graphic novels are undoubtedly comics, but the term ‘graphic novel’ itself is only vaguely defined so far and thus often problematic. As Hillary Chute (453) points out:

[...] graphic novel is often a misnomer. Many fascinating works grouped under this umbrella—including Spiegelman’s World War II–focused *Maus*, which helped rocket the term into public consciousness—aren’t novels at all: they are rich works of nonfiction; hence my emphasis here on the broader term narrative. (Indeed, the form confronts the default assumption that drawing as a system is inherently more fictional than prose and gives a new cast to what we consider fiction and nonfiction.)

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<sup>4</sup> On the 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2013, McCloud was so kind as to give the author of this thesis a short interview after a lecture he held in the “Literaturhaus Wien” in Vienna, Austria. When asked about a current definition of comics and whether it had changed since the publication of “Understanding Comics”, McCloud explained that he had discovered a loophole in his definition: The old definition leaves out certain types of webcomics – those which show only one panel at a time and exchange it for another one when the user clicks a button, much like a slide-show. These works, while clearly comics, fall out of the definition, because they do not contain juxtaposed images. McCloud stated that maybe it was impossible to create a fully “waterproof” definition of comics that encompasses all potential forms it can take. His definition however still may be the most accurate one available at this time.

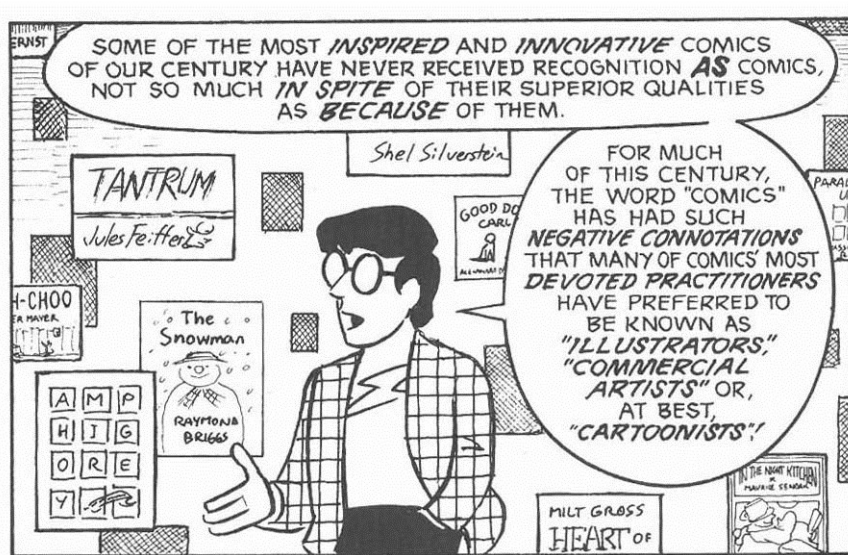
For the purposes of this paper, the following attempt of defining the graphic novel has been created by the author, with the intention of including such works usually referred to as graphic novels, even those not having novel characteristics:

“A graphic novel is a fictional or non-fictional story in form of book-length comics”

This definition of the graphic novel also takes into account Hillary Chute's criticism of the term, though instead of introducing a new term that would render the well-established term 'graphic novel' incorrect for a vast number of works that are already commonly referred to as 'graphic novels', it defines the existing and widely-used term in a fashion that will hopefully include all the works commonly referred to as graphic novels. The term 'narrative' used by Chute appears far too broad a term which encompasses a vast majority of works, as most content presented in comics form is some sort of narrative or another. It therefore lacks the focus of the term 'graphic novel' which refers to a specific type of comics.

### **1.3 Comics in Everyday Life**

Examining the development of comics from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century up until now shows that comics is in no way limited to entertainment, but serves a multitude of purposes and is encountered more frequently than one would expect. Many forms of comics do not use the term 'comics' however, though the similarities with other such forms are obvious. McCloud (UC, page 18, panel 3) has a theory on this.



McCloud then goes on to point out that the negative image of comics is self-perpetuating. Since many works that qualify as comics deny any connection to the medium and use a broad variety of different 'euphemisms' (for lack of a better term) to avoid being linked to it.

The creators of elaborate works such as Raymond Briggs or Lynd Ward have used different terms than 'comics' for their works in the past ("book without words" and 'woodcut novel' or 'wordless novel' respectively). As a result, the general public and the academy have, in most cases, failed to see the connection between these works and a medium they considered to be only suited for children's stories and the uneducated.

Conversely, Charles Hatfield points out in his paper *Comic Art, Children's Literature, and the New Comics Studies* that comics is no longer a medium for children and has in fact mostly abandoned children as a target audience in order to compensate for the lack of academic credibility the medium has been given so far. Though there has recently been a rise of renewed interest in comics for children (and studies about them), Hatfield (377) says that

Unfortunately the recent re-evaluation of comics in the United States, has, to some extent, been based on a denial of Childhood and childishness. [...] This has led belatedly to an anguished realization that most comic books are not for children at all, and a concerted effort among Comics professionals to reclaim child readers.

Hatfield observes that at the turn of the twentieth century, comics was hardly a medium for the young anymore – quite the opposite of wide-spread assumptions. Only now, the field is slowly being reclaimed by (or seeing more instances of) works aimed at a younger audience.

McCloud (UC, 20) mentions that one form of comics encountered in everyday life is found in manuals with sequential images depicting the usage of all kinds of devices, from security measures on airplanes to the assembly of furniture. These images are used to communicate meaning without being burdened by language barriers, making information accessible to a larger, multi-lingual audience. Such images have seen public attention in arts exhibits and history of art studies, but have hardly received any consideration where their ability to communicate meaning as a literary medium is concerned. Though these sequential depictions clearly are comics in a very traditional form - including panels with clear borders, as well as a simplified graphical depiction of characters - the term 'comics' is not generally used for them. Another interesting example McCloud mentions can be found in depictions of religious scenes on stained-glass windows in churches, showing deliberate sequences of scenes such as the life, suffering, death and rebirth of Jesus of Nazareth. However, it seems unlikely that these depictions will be officially referred to as 'comics' any time soon.

#### **1.4 Raising Awareness: Graphic Novels and Film Adaptations**

The graphic novel has helped raise awareness of the fact that comics as a medium is not limited to light-hearted entertainment for children, but indeed can deal with far more serious topics. Eisner (CASA 149) opines that “The continued growth and acceptance of the graphic novel can be attributed to the creators' choice of wide-ranging and worthwhile themes and in the continuing innovation of exposition.” Two renowned examples of such graphic novels dealing with what Eisner calls “worthwhile themes” are Art Spiegelman's Pulitzer Award winning *Maus- A Survivor's Tale*, a biographical graphic novel dealing with the horrors of the Holocaust and persecution of the Jewish populace. The

story is based on tales of Spiegelman's ancestors who had been imprisoned in a concentration camp during the Second World War.

Another example is popular English novelist Neil Gaiman's fictional work *Sandman*, a ten volume epic about a quest to find out what it means to be human, which was nominated for the Hugo Award and won several Eisner awards.

Non-fictional biographical works like Spiegelman's *Maus* or the more recent graphic novel *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi demonstrate that the medium has more to offer than slapstick comedy with cartoon characters or stories about overly muscular super heroes and scantily-clad women. The growing popularity of comics is also visible in the vast amount of film adaptations of comics in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. In early 2011 Ndalianis (114) gives a long list of recent adaptations:

Its public prominence has been felt most overtly in the adaptation of comics to films, and while the superhero genre definitely dominates in the blockbuster arena (including two versions of *The Incredible Hulk* [Ang Lee, 2003; Louis Leterrier, 2008], *Fantastic Four* and its sequel [Tim Story, 2005, 2007], the *X-Men* trilogy [Bryan Singer, 2000, 2003; Brett Ratner, 2006], the *Blade* trilogy [Stephen Norrington, 1998; Guillermo del Toro, 2002; David S. Goyer, 2004], two *Hellboy* films [Toro, 2004, 2008], two *Iron Man* films [Jon Favreau, 2008, 2010], two attempts at adapting *The Punisher* [Jonathan Hensleigh, 2004; Lexi Alexander, 2008], the *Spider-Man* trilogy [Sam Raimi, 2002, 2004, 2007], *Watchmen* [Zack Snyder, 2009], *Kick-Ass* [Matthew Vaughn, 2010], *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* [Edgar Wright, 2010], and the latest incarnations of *Superman* [Singer, 2006] and *Batman* [Christopher Nolan, 2005, 2008]), other non-superhero comics adaptations have also proved to be popular (*Ghost World* [Terry Zwigoff, 2001], *A History of Violence* [David Cronenberg, 2005], *Road to Perdition* [Sam Mendes, 2002], *American Splendor* [Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini, 2003], *300* [Snyder, 2006], *30 Days of Night* [David Slade, 2007], *Sin City* [Frank Miller and Robert Rodriguez, 2005]). Other countries exhibit a similar trend, with Japan at the forefront of manga-to-film adaptations in examples as varied as *Akira* (Katsuhiro Otomo, 1988), the many *Doraemon* films (various, 1982–2010), *Ichi the Killer* (*Koroshiya 1*; Takashi Miike, 2001), *Lady Snowblood* (*Shurayukihime*; Toshiya Fujita, 1973, 1974), *Lone Wolf Cub* (*Kozure kami*; various, 1972–1974), and *Ranma ½* (various, 1989–1995), many of which are also among the many manga to have been adapted for immensely popular limited-run TV series. Even the French and Belgians have taken part in the trend with the recent release of *Persepolis* (Vincent Paronnaud and Marjane Satrapi, 2007), and the soon to be released Hollywood adaptations of *The Smurfs* (Raja Gosnell, 2011) and *Adventures of Tintin* (Steven Spielberg, 2011).

In addition to the films mentioned above, recent additions include *The Avengers* (Joss Whedon, 2012), *Batman: The Dark Knight rises* (Christopher Nolan, 2012), *The Amazing Spider-Man* (Marc Webb, 2012), *Ghost Rider Spirit of Vengeance* (Mark Neveidine, Brian Taylor, 2012), *Dredd 3D* (Pete Travis), *Superman vs. The Elite* (Michael Chang, 2012) and upcoming films *Man of Steel* (Zack Snyder, 2013), *The Wolverine* (James Mangold, 2013), *Iron Man 3* (Shane Black, 2013), *Thor: The Dark World* (Alan Taylor, 2013) and *Superman: Unbound* (James Tucker, 2013).

These two lists demonstrate that the Hollywood film industry still strongly focuses on superhero comics, which are the most popular form of comics in the United States. It is worth mentioning that a great number of comics exist as extended series of books instead of single stand-alone works. Therefore their adaptations frequently take the form of TV shows instead of full-length movies, or a combination of both. This is especially popular in Japan, where many manga (traditional Japanese comics) series have been adapted as anime (a term used in English to refer to Japanese animation films) TV shows.

Popular examples - many of which have been exported to the West, and some of which have been dubbed - include *Sailor Moon* (Iriya Azuma, Naoko Takeuchi, 1995-2000), *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (Toshimichi Otsuki 1995-1996), *Record of Lodoss War* (Akio Sakai, Shigeto Makino, Kazunori Mizuno, Akinori Nagaoka, Taiji Ryu, Katsuhisa Yamada, 1990-1998), *Inuyasha* (Rumiko Takahashi, 2000-2005), *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* (Akiyuki Shinbo, 2011-), *Bleach* (Tite Kubo, 2004-2013), *Erufen rito* (Lynn Okamoto, 2004), *D.N. Angel* ( Nobuyoshi Habara, Yuichi Nihei, Yuki Hayashi, Koji Yoshikawa, Akihiro Eonomoto, Atsushi Otsuki, Hideki Kiroshima, 2003) and *Kids on the Slope* (Shinichiro Watanabe, Seiki Sugawara, 2012-)

Though heroic, action-oriented themes are very popular in anime, many of the works mentioned above have a much stronger focus on social interaction than is common in film adaptations of comics in the U.S. Many of the above-listed mangas, these anime are based on, such as *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, *Kids on*

*the Slope* or *Sailor Moon* feature intricate social relations between characters and portray complex societal differences. These themes are then directly transferred into the adaptation to a level of detail and length that is rarely done in films or TV shows directed at a Western audience, as among other factors, the pacing conventions are vastly different. This recent trend to adapt the content of comic books into films shows that the medium itself is growing in popularity, as well as growing in influence.

Just as comics is in some respects similar to film and has adapted many aspects typical of film, such as zooming in and out, changing perspectives, and more, film recently started to adapt and incorporate features typical of comics. Such features include dramatic visual stills or even the use of different comics-like panels showing an animated character at different moments in time, yet displaying them all at once, as when reading a comic book. This can, for example, be seen in many of the recent Marvel adaptations that were mentioned above.

### 1.5 Rules for Comics Citation

We have established in the previous chapters that in comics, meaning is created by using juxtaposed pictures that can, but do not necessarily have to be combined with text. The fact that meaning in comics is created by a combination of pictures and text, or even by pictures alone, demands a different way of handling in academic texts. If one were for example to quote only the text of comics, a large part of the original meaning would be lost, since the words alone usually are not enough to express what a certain sequence of panels communicates through the combination of pictures and words. In some cases, the text is only there to compliment the pictorial depiction of the story, while in other cases meaning is created by using text that is contrary to what the pictures show. Furthermore, comics are usually divided into a number of panels, each of which contains pictures and possibly text, leading to a page layout that is vastly different from that of a traditional text and can itself carry meaning.

We therefore need a new system of citation in order to be able to accurately quote from any works presented in comics form. For this purpose we might quote text as usual, giving a page number and the name of the author(s), and so on. In addition to this we could then describe the accompanying pictures in detail in order to try to express what the comics tried to convey. But that approach is full of inherent flaws. First of all, a description of a picture is never the same as seeing the picture, as a margin of interpretation is an important factor of visual art. Words are limited in their ability to describe the nuances of differences when it comes to visual artistic style, and two readers may well interpret a picture differently.

Another aspect to consider is that the pictures used in comics are often intended to trigger an emotional response, which also gets lost in transcription. To compare it to traditional literature – quoting only the text of comics would be like a rough description of how an author writes instead of actually quoting him, enabling the reader to actually catch a glimpse of the work in question. It would be like reading a summary of a poem's plot together with a description of its formal aspects instead of actually reading the poem itself.

However not only the pictures have something to say. The writing – lettering style, size, inflection – is another outlet of expression for the artist, and can contribute more information for the reader to interpret, something else which would disappear if merely transcribed into Arial, Text Size 12. Eisner (CASA 24) points out that “[...] the lettering reflects the nature and emotion of the speech. It is most often symptomatic of the artist's own personality (style), as well as that of the character speaking. Emulating a foreign language style of letter and similar devices add to the sound level and the dimension of the character itself.” The visual representation of text itself in comics can therefore be just as important as the pictures. To quote from comics thus requires placing a copy of the panels in question in the appropriate sequence and in the same spaces in relation to each other, as in the work cited. Panels prior to and after the relevant section would be either removed where possible or blackened out in case the deletion of the panel would destroy the overall composition. This citation system will be used throughout this paper and page numbers will be given as usual. In addition however, the relevant panel numbers will be given as well,



counting from left to right and from top to bottom, starting at panel “1” with the top left panel on each individual page.

## 2 A Short History of Comics

Before Scott McCloud's ground-breaking work *Understanding Comics*, little research had been done on the history of comics – especially the history before the 19th and 20th centuries. While there is a vast amount of material on comics in the 20th century - mostly consisting of commercial literature aimed at collectors and comic-book artists - comics history prior to that, and the advent of comics as we know it today, has so far been largely ignored. McCloud touches on the subject and offers several interesting examples and ideas where the early history of comics is concerned. But he still states that it is not the aim of his works to examine the origins of comics in detail, and that others should do research on the matter.

To examine the history and origins of comics, we first need to define what constitutes comics in order to see what works actually qualify as far as this paper is concerned. Scott McCloud's definition as mentioned on page 11 is adequate for this purpose.

McCloud indicates that comics differs from film due to the fact that the pictures in comics are juxtaposed, and pictures in films – while also in deliberate sequence - are projected on the same space (i.e. the screen). This is also where the above-mentioned loophole in McCloud's definition becomes relevant as some digital comics do not include juxtaposed pictures. The adjective "pictorial" is relevant because as McCloud points out, the letters of the alphabet are basically nothing but juxtaposed images put into deliberate sequence. This definition differentiates comics from other media, yet is broad enough to encompass a wide range of different works encountered both in the distant past and in modern everyday life.

Comics, according to McCloud (*Understanding Comics*, p.14, panel 1), has appeared at least as far back as on a painting of the Egyptian culture in the tomb of Menna, 32 centuries ago, displaying scenes from agricultural practices as juxtaposed images in order to explain how they were performed. Another historical example McCloud mentions is the Bayeux Tapestry, a 70 meter long tapestry that was assumedly produced in the 1070s in France, depicting the Norman Conquest of England. This tapestry was allegedly commissioned by the half-brother of William the Conqueror and depicts scenes from the conquest in chronological order from left to right, much like modern-day comics would.

As with the written word, the history of comics changed greatly due to the invention of printing. With the ability to cheaply and quickly reproduce written words and pictures alike, art forms that had been a privilege of a rich upper

class were now accessible for a far larger number of people. The production of books - and works that must be classified as comics by the parameters defined by McCloud - flourished. Woodcuts of the tortures of saints were common from the 1400s onwards. The stories and physical abuse of these saints was depicted in sequential order and in gruesome detail. The development of comics as roughly outlined by McCloud (UC 10-17) then mentions such individuals as the 18th century artist William Hogarth and his works "A Harlot's Progress" and "A Rake's Progress" and moves on towards the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century with Swiss artist Rudolphe Töpffer - known for his satiric picture stories, which were immensely popular in his time. McCloud also mentions Frans Masereel with his woodcut stories and Max Ernst's "collage novel" *A Week of Kindness*.

### 3 Theoretical Framework

In the following chapters, the concepts which are used to analyse the graphic novel adaptations discussed in this paper are described in detail. There is an initial explanation of how and why comics as a medium needs different quoting guidelines than traditional texts, and an explanation of several relevant technical terms which are necessary to comprehend these abstractions. The concepts of time, frame, image, word and flow are also explained. An overview of the Gothic as a literary genre is then given, which is followed by a brief look at adaptation theory. This should serve to equip the reader with the necessary topic-specific terminology and an elementary knowledge of the technical building blocks that constitute the basis for comics, as well as the type of story and world the works in this paper deal with. The analyses of the works then follow a step-by-step approach examining commonalities and innovative features of adaptation, the focus of the story in the adaptation and the depiction of featured characters.

#### 3.1 Time

The passing of time and its representation in comics appears to be problematic at first given that the pictures, though sequential, are static images and can be looked upon at the reader's preferred pace. Unlike a book or short story, comics can afford only a limited amount of space for descriptive text, which raises the question how a sense of time can actually be conveyed in this medium. The concept of Time, or Timing as Eisner (CASA 23) calls it, while McCloud (MC, p.39, panel 2) relates it to the Choice of Moment, is a relevant factor for storytelling, as human perception of the world requires us to understand the temporal relations of events and differences in the pace at which events take place. Eisner (CASA 24) emphasizes the importance of this concept:

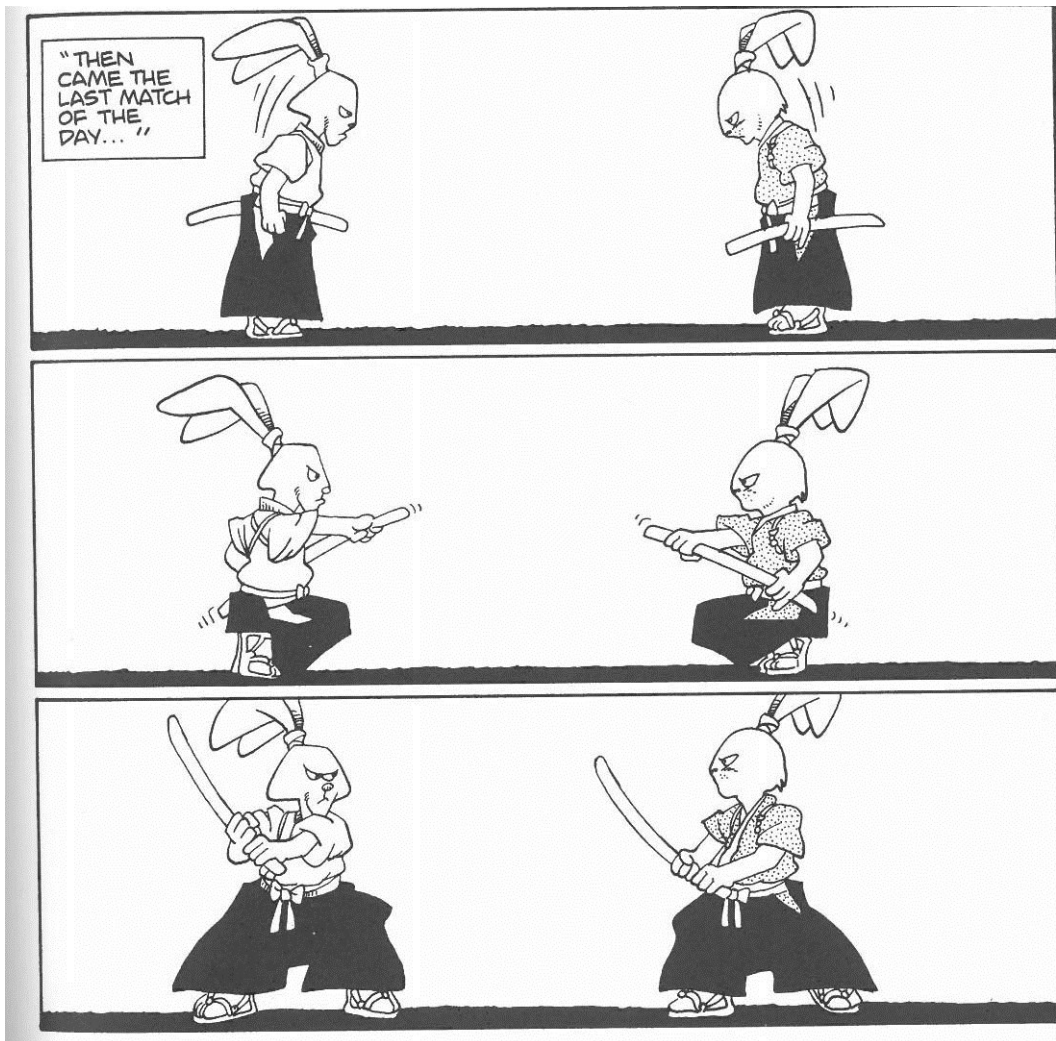
Critical to the success of a visual narrative is the ability to convey time. It is this dimension of human understanding that enables us to recognize and be empathic to surprise, horror, terror and the whole range of human experience. In this theatre of our comprehension, the graphic storyteller plies his art. At the

heart of the sequential deployment of images intending to convey time is the commonality of its perception. But to convey “timing”, which is the manipulation of the elements of time to achieve a specific message or emotion; *panels* [emphasis added] become a critical element.

According to Eisner (CASA 24-37) we have several elements that can contribute to the presentation of time in comics – the balloon, the frame and the content.

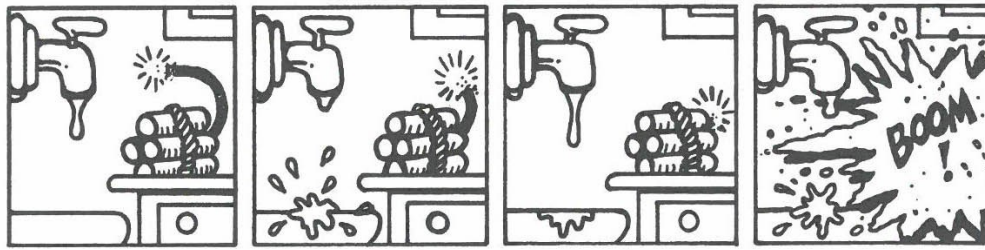
The balloon is the pictorial representation of sound and one of the typical features of comics. Eisner suggests that the shape of the word balloon may have developed from the way steam from warm air looks when expelled from the mouth during conversation. Different sizes and shapes of balloons can then indicate the passage of time. By reading the balloons in the correct order, it is clear which character speaks first in a given panel. The convention in the Western World is to read the balloons in sequence from top-left to bottom-right. By having each character speak several times, or just having one character speak per panel, a sense of the passage of time can be created.

Panels usually frame the action of comics and as such define the reader’s position as well as encase single moments in time. Depending on how many individual panels are used, a sequence of events can appear longer or shorter, a concept which McCloud later analysed in greater detail. Not only the number, but also the size of panels is relevant for the portrayal of time. Narrow panels seem shorter, while broad panels seem longer as can be observed in Stan Sakai’s *Usagi Yojimbo Book 2* (p.43, panels 4-6)



As Sakai skillfully demonstrates, the great width of the panels shows the action to be slow - a long angry stare, deliberately slow drawing of swords and then the preparation for a fight. Had there been small panels of the characters drawing their swords, the reader would have taken them in quickly and the panels would have let the action appear swift.

The third factor mentioned by Eisner - the content - is the most powerful tool available to the comic's creator when trying to express the passages of time in a clear and relatable way. By depicting actions we are familiar with from everyday life, thus knowing how long they approximately take, the artist can create a sense of time passing as Eisner (CASA 30) shows in this simple example:



**ABOVE:** The reader's orientation, the knowledge of how long it takes a drop of water to fall from the faucet, modified by the number of panels, helps measure the time elapsed. This reinforces the burning down of the fuse. In fact, one could comprehend the time element without depicting the fuse.

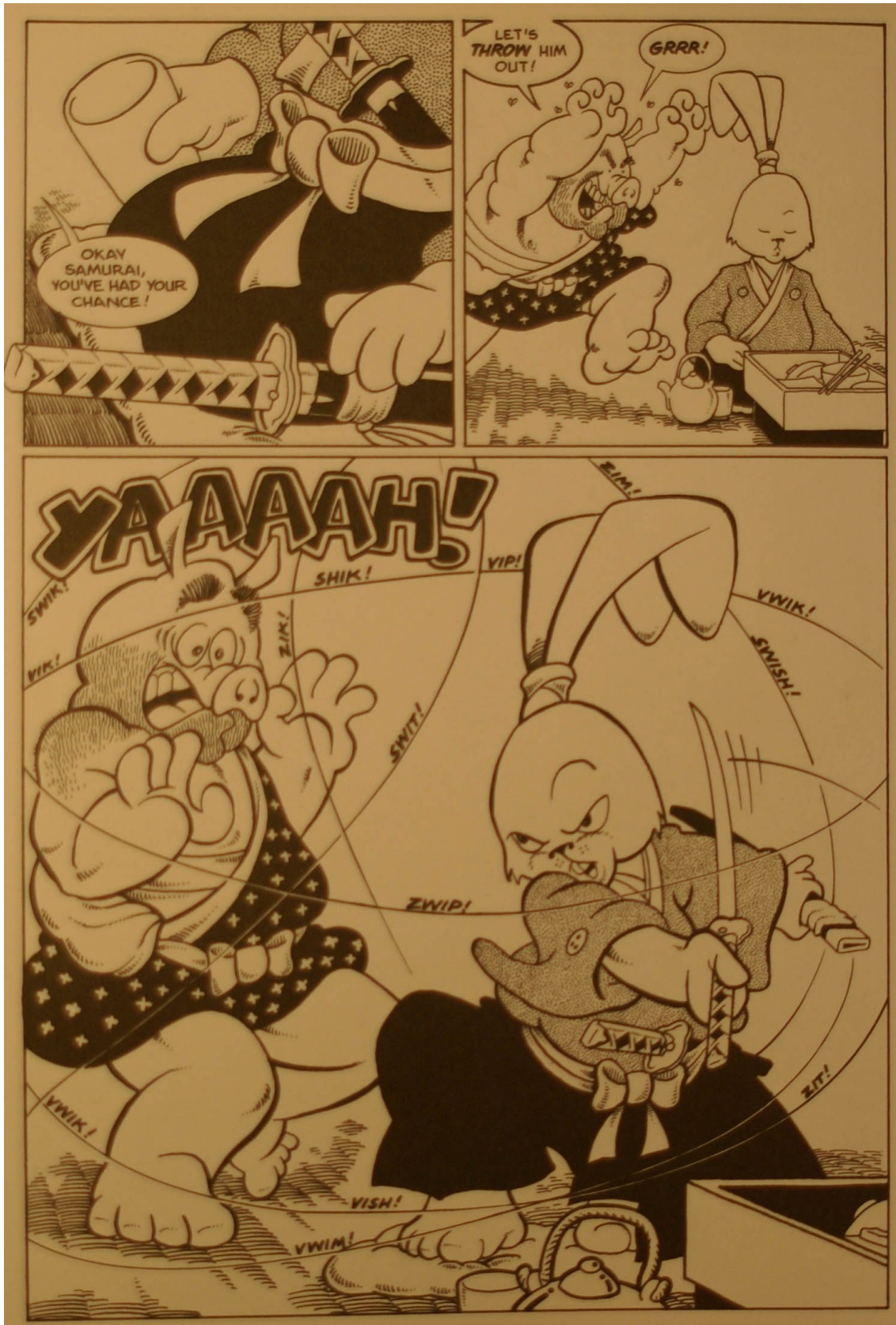
The dripping faucet moves in contrast to the rapidly burning fuse, both of which are actions known to the majority of readers from either personal experience or films. By using such simple, yet familiar devices as a dripping faucet in the background, the reader gets a very clear impression of how much time has passed and how fast other actions take place. For ease of comparison with the above example of panel width, the following example from Sakai (Usagi Yojimbo Book 1, p. 92, panels 2-3. – p.94, panels 1-3) demonstrates how time can be created by the content of the panels.







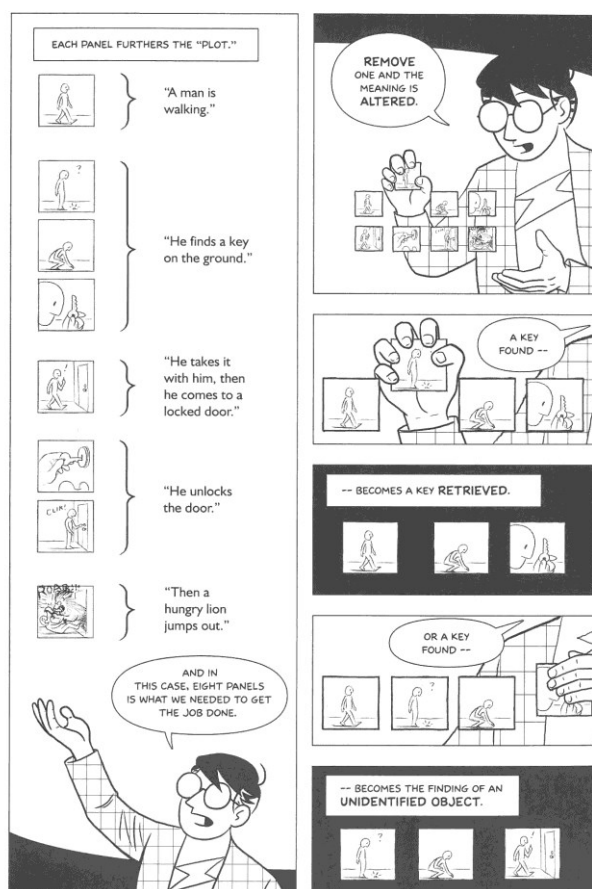




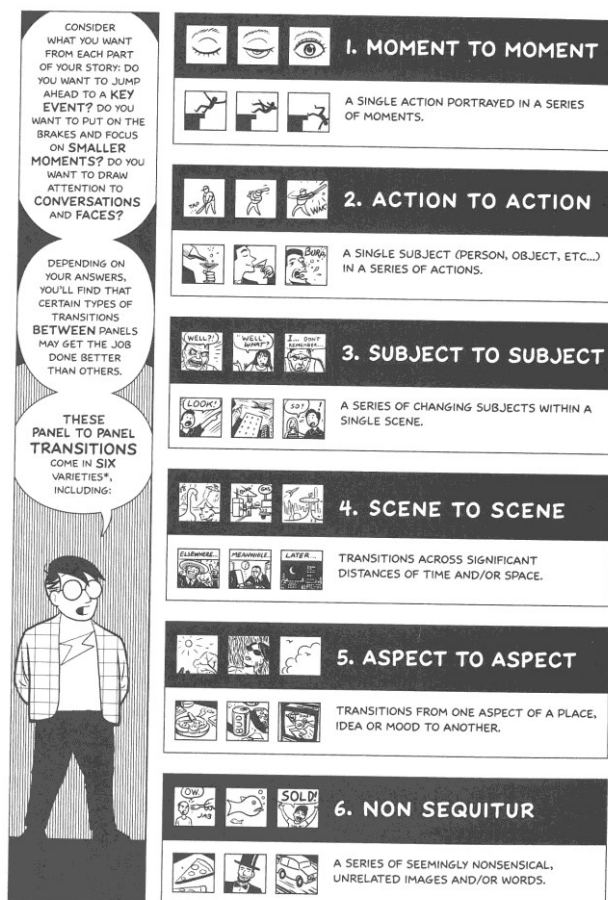
Here the main character Usagi is eating lunch when a group of drunken patrons starts bothering him. He does not react at all, but keeps on eating until he

finishes his meal. The content here enhances the effect of the wide panels, as we are all familiar with how long it takes to eat a meal, so the panel width compliments the narration of the story. As the action changes and Usagi is attacked, the panels used are suddenly much smaller, displaying a harsh break after the long series of wide panels, thus showing the drastic and immediate change in pace. This is then concluded with one large picture in which a lot of sword-motion is visible, indicating that the protagonist is doing a lot of movement in a short period of time. Thus, content can have a much stronger impact on how time is conceived than panel-width alone.

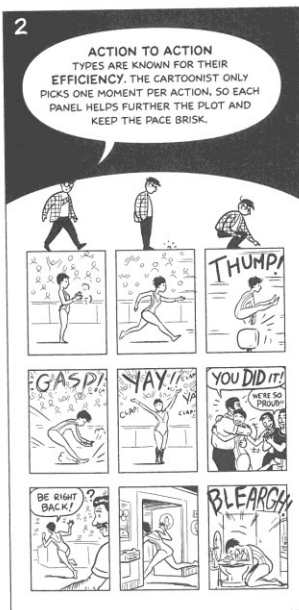
McCloud (MC 10-18) elaborates on timing by introducing the concept he calls “the choice of moment”. When telling a story in comics format, he argues that we have to choose which moments are essential for the way we want to tell that story and must thus be depicted. If we have a selection of pictures to tell a story and reduce their number by just one picture, their meaning is altered, as he points out in detail (MC 13, panels 1-6):



If a greater emphasis is placed on a certain part of the story, a greater number of pictures can be dedicated to it in order to clearly display details that are important for the narrative. The moments in time that are picked to be displayed thus play a very important role in how time and the story itself are experienced by the viewer. Eisner (CASA 108) proposes that a certain moment in time (e.g. a particular point in a movement) is picked because “[...] the viewer knows (and can supply imaginatively) that there could not have been any other set of postures possible in order to arrive at this point. The postures that follow immediately are also assumed and it is unnecessary to depict them unless the next panel depends on the outcome of the movement.”. McCloud analyses the concept in more detail and suggests a more complex concept that it based on comics-narratology rather than aesthetics and readability. According to McCloud (MC p. 15, panels 1-7, - page 17, panels 1-3) the important factor in the choice of moment is the type of panel transition:



\* SEE UNDERSTANDING COMICS PAGES 70-89 FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIX TRANSITIONS.



\* ALTHOUGH THEY PRIMARILY RELATE TO CHOICE OF MOMENT, TRANSITIONS THREE AND FIVE ALSO TOUCH ON THE UPCOMING TOPIC CHOICE OF FRAME.

16



17

Transitions can thus be chosen based on the narratological needs of the story. Of course these transitions are not mutually exclusive, and combinations of transitions are possible and will commonly be used in most cases.

For the purposes of this paper, McCloud's framework of transitions is used to examine why specific choices of time or moment are made in the works analysed, while also taking into consideration Eisner's view of the clarity of the depiction of dynamic motion in respect to both readability and aesthetics.

### 3.2 Frame

The frame in comics defines what is shown within a panel, steering the viewer's perception of the depicted action. It is clear that "[...] the limit of the human eye's peripheral vision is closely related to the panel as it is used by the artist to capture or "freeze" one segment in what is in reality an uninterrupted flow of action."(Eisner, CASA 40) An apt term McCloud (MC 34) uses to refer to frames is "the reader's camera".

The frame defines how close the reader is to the action depicted in the panel and from what angle they look upon the panel's contents. It also adds meaning to the contents of the panel itself by using different kinds of panel borders. The creation of the frame is therefore a medium of selection by which the comics creator decides which elements are necessary or at least important for the action and which ones are unimportant and can be kept outside the frame. According to Eisner (CASA 43) - depending on how close the reader's camera is to the action, the reader may or may not have to supply some of the action depicted in a panel. The closer the camera gets, the more the reader needs to deduce from memory and experience. It is due to this attribute of comics that the creator(s) of comics need to guess at how much prior knowledge the reader may possess on a given subject, which is simple enough to do when considering such a thing as the shape of the human body, but becomes more difficult when taking into consideration such features as different styles of clothing, technical machinery, anachronistic items and basically anything that is not likely to be part of the reader's personal experience. Of course the media are helpful by extending a person's experience. Thus seeing a close-up picture of a knight wearing a helmet, a reader from the Western world can probably re-construct the image of a suit of armour in their mind - even if they have never seen such a thing in real life - because they have seen the like in films or illustrations. This however shows another important factor when considering what can be left outside the frame, as the prior knowledge necessary to re-construct the rest of the picture before one's mind's eye is based on prerequisite knowledge, often dependent upon culture and age-group. One simple way around this is first showing a character or object in full, so that the



reader can get acquainted with the way the character or object looks and can then reconstruct the rest of that character or object from memory when the frame is closer, showing only part of him/her/it. This concept is often used for an overall theme of the story in what Eisner calls the “Splash Page” and for introducing a new location in what McCloud refers to as “establishing shot”.

The Splash Page sets the scene and mood for the story that is to follow, creating a rough frame of reference for the reader. It is not simply a first page, but actually designed to prepare the reader for the story to come, as shown in these examples of Eisner’s (CASA 64) work:

#### THE SPLASH PAGE

The first page of a story functions as an introduction (see FIGURE 52). What, or how much, it contains depends on the number of pages that follow. It is a launching pad for the narrative, and for most stories it establishes a frame of reference.

Properly employed it seizes the reader’s attention and prepares his attitude for the events to follow. It sets a “climate.” It becomes a splash page proper rather than a simple first page when the artist designs it as a decorative unit.



FIGURE 52

The establishing shot as presented by McCloud (MC, 22), can serve a somewhat different purpose. It is one (or in some cases several) long-shot panel intended to give a wider view and offer the reader a sense of place for a new scene. Combined with the other variations in distance McCloud mentions below, a film-like zoom effect is created. (MC, 22, panels 4-8).

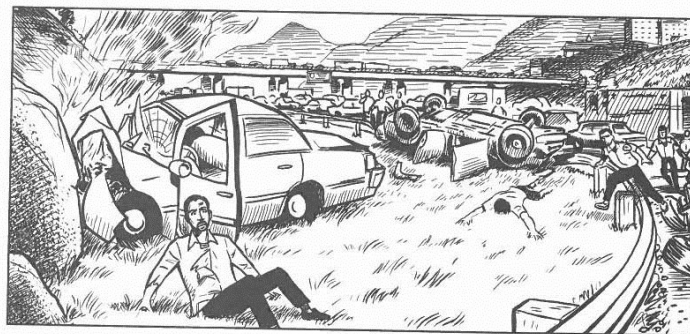
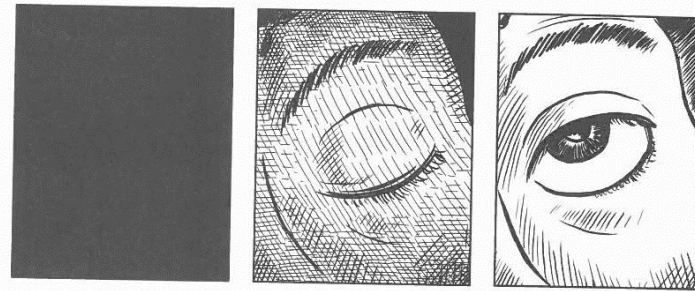


Of course, knowing that the reader will most likely expect an establishing shot of the surroundings before the action happens, the author or artist can then reverse the order to create suspense or to reflect a character's own disorientation as McCloud (MC, 23, panels 2-8) describes and illustrates with the following example:

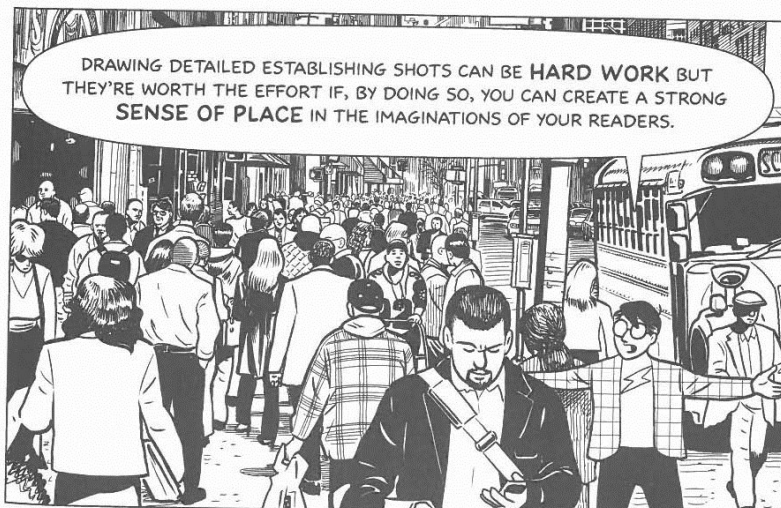


ON THE OTHER HAND, BECAUSE READERS **WANT** AND **EXPECT** THAT SENSE OF PLACE, A CLEVER STORYTELLER CAN CHOOSE TO **DELAY** THE ESTABLISHING SHOT TO INCREASE **SUSPENSE** --

-- OR TO MIRROR THE THOUGHTS OF A CHARACTER WHO'S TEMPORARILY **UNAWARE** OF HIS OR HER SURROUNDINGS.



DRAWING DETAILED ESTABLISHING SHOTS CAN BE **HARD WORK** BUT THEY'RE WORTH THE EFFORT IF, BY DOING SO, YOU CAN CREATE A **STRONG SENSE OF PLACE** IN THE IMAGINATIONS OF YOUR READERS.



LOOK FOR MORE ON THIS TOPIC IN **CHAPTER FOUR**.



The focus of the viewers' attention lies with the center of the panel, which is then used by the creators of comics in order to focus the attention on a

character or object, an action taking place between characters, to create a feeling of absence because nothing of interest is happening at the focal point, or for numerous other purposes.

The perspective of the frame also has a strong impact of how a scene is perceived; or rather how the author or artist intends the scene to be perceived. By using a worm's eye perspective, characters, building or items will look towering and majestic, while a bird's eye perspective can give an overview and can emotionally distance the viewer from the scene.

The different kinds of panel borders are another factor that can influence how comics are perceived. The panel border literally "contains" the action within a defined, manageable unit, used in order to define the temporal relations of different actions, as well as helping to organize the *flow* of reading. The panel borders can also take on different shapes which will then carry different meanings. Though there is no unified code for panel border shape, Eisner (CASA 44) points out that they speak for themselves.

## THE PANEL AS A CONTAINER

The most basic panel layout is one in which both the shape and proportion of the box remain rigid. The panels act to contain the reader's view, nothing more. This type of "panelization" is more commonly seen in comic strips than in comic books or digital comics because it is a natural extension of the format requirements of the newspapers in which they appear (see FIGURE 28).

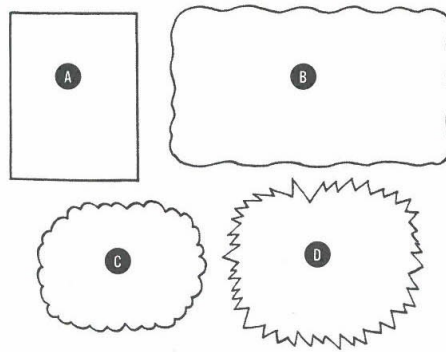


FIGURE 29

## THE "LANGUAGE" OF THE PANEL BORDER

In addition to its primary function as a frame in which to place objects and actions, the panel border itself can be used as part of the non-verbal "language" of sequential art.

For example (see FIGURE 29), rectangular panels with straight-edged borders (A), unless the verbal portion of the narrative contradicts this, usually are meant to imply that the actions contained therein are set in the present tense. Flashbacks—a change in tense or shift in time—are often indicated by altering the line which makes up the frame. The wavy-edged (B) or scalloped (C) panel border is the most common past time indicator. While there is no universally agreed upon convention for expressing tense through the outline of the frame, the "character" of the line—as in the case of sound, emotion (D) or thought (C)—creates a hieroglyphic.

The non-frame speaks to unlimited space. It has the effect of encompassing unseen but acknowledged background. The following from a *Spirit* story, "The Tragedy of Merry Andrew" (first published February 15, 1948), is an example of this (see FIGURE 30).

This paper uses Eisner's description of panel borders, of which seven different types are recognized. The first five are based on Eisner's example and descriptions above. The other two expand on these examples by taking into account other kinds of panel borders mentioned by Eisner, and creating more concise categories.

Type A: straight-edged border.

The straight border usually indicates that the action takes place in the present of the story told, unless contradicted by the contents of the narrative.

Type B: wavy-edged border

This type of border is often used for flashbacks, indicating the past.

Type C: scalloped border

This is often used for flashbacks, indicating the past, like type B. However, it is also used to express thought.

Type D: spiked border

This type is often used to express loud sound.

Type E: non-frame

With its lack of borders, the non-frame encompasses an unseen, but acknowledged background and creates an effect of unlimited space.

Type D: broken frame (also referred to as “fourth wall break” by McCloud, 33)

Sometimes artists allow characters or items to break the frames that hold the action, creating dynamic action while leaving the rest of the panel framed.

F: Integrated Frame

In some cases, the frame itself becomes part of the action in the panel. As shown in the following examples: (Eisner, CASA 49)



**FIGURE 34:** The absence of a panel outline is designed to convey unlimited space. It provides a sense of serenity and supports the narrative by contributing atmosphere to the narrative.



**FIGURE 35:** The “panel” here is actually the doorway. It tells the reader visually that the actor is confined in a small area within a wider one—the building.



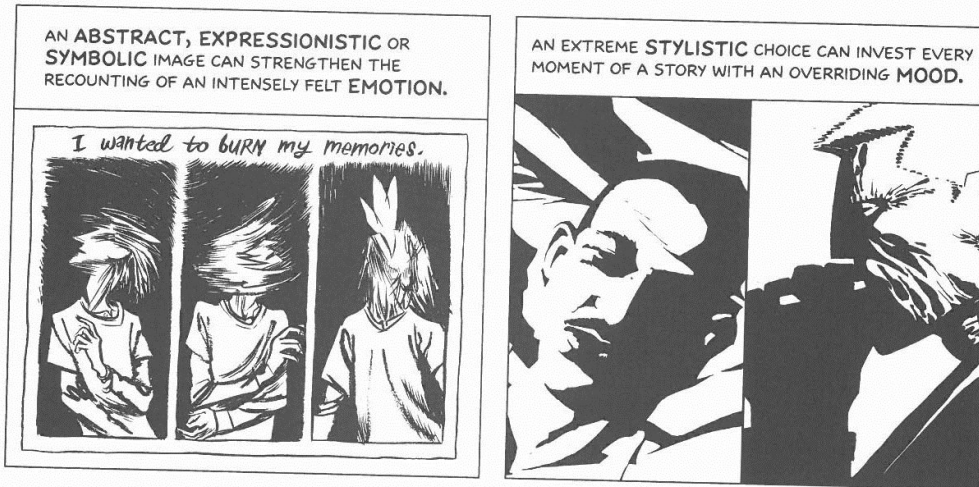
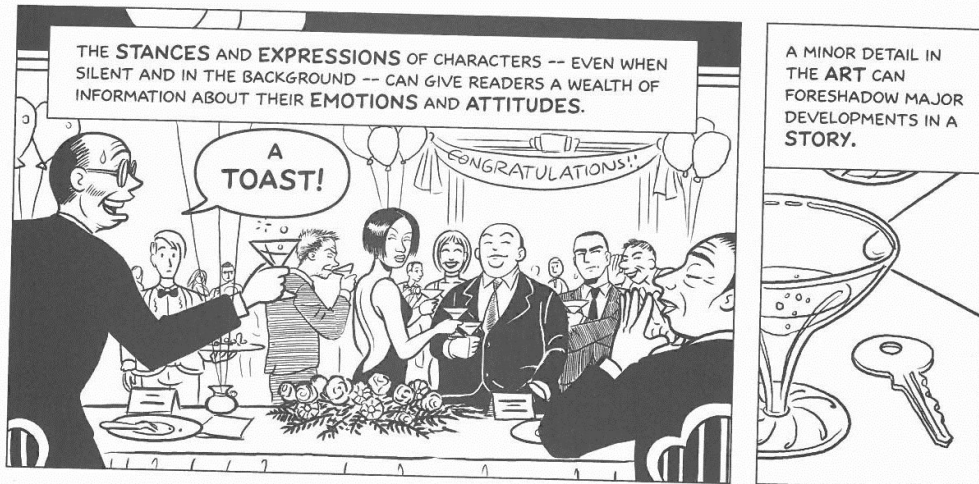
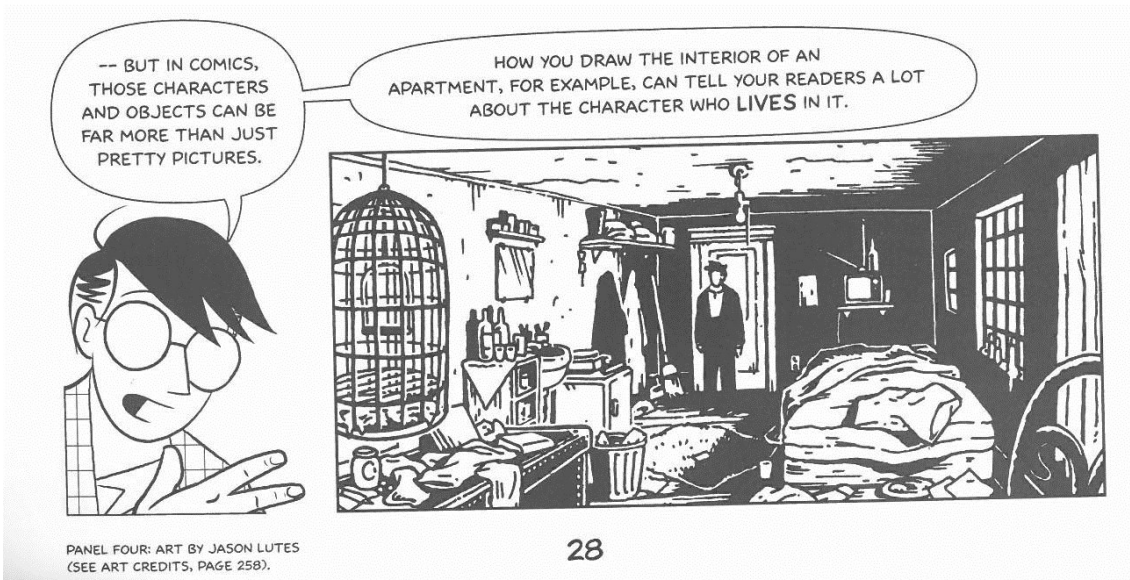
**FIGURE 36:** The cloudlike enclosure defines the picture as being a thought or memory. The action would be read as actually taking place if there were no panel or a hard outline.

### 3.3 Image

Once the appropriate time and frame have been chosen, comics artists can begin to draw the actual images that will fill the panels. What style of image is used depends on the artist’s preferences, skill and its purpose for the narrative in question. Image in this context is used as both story category and a discourse category, as both style and content of the images are important.



McCloud (MC p. 28, panels 4-5, p. 29, panels 1-4) mentions some intriguing ways in which style and choice of image affect the way the story is narrated:



McCloud only mentions these points in passing, but the implications are very useful when viewed in regard to their analytical relevance. As McCloud points out, the skillful depiction of a place can tell the reader about characters who frequent or inhabit it. One of the main strengths of comics is that – staying with the aforementioned example - a detailed description of a room which would take up pages of description in a traditional text can be described in the space of a single panel.

The characters in the pictures, even those in positions of lesser importance and thus removed from the panel's main focus, can also be of relevance for the plot. Their expressions and stances can give indications of their emotions and their general attitudes, as well as of an underlying mood of a scene and possibly also of their personal disposition towards other characters present, as pointed out by McCloud (MC, 29). This meta-information carried by the panel in addition to any main action that may take place is useful for analysis.

Minor details in the artwork used for foreshadowing are frequently encountered in comics and can be more subtle than in written text. A hint in written form is part of the text and will be read and likely noticed by the reader, while a detail in the artwork may be overlooked or disregarded at first glance and revisited later once its meaning becomes clear. The expression of emotion through pictures is often more complicated in comics than in traditional texts, as space is limited and therefore the written text usually has to be kept short. Pictures alone can express feelings like grief or anger well, but may be less clear where mixed emotions such as sad smiles, mock anger or feigned sadness are concerned. In these cases, the interplay of text and picture is important. Stylistic choices can create a mood, but can also be expressive themselves. While a cartoony style uses exaggeration to create familiarity, a super-hero style can demonstrate power and differentiate the heroes and villains from everyday people in the story - mostly due to their body type and look. Comic noir style can create a dark and brooding world, while a realistic style can bring to mind experiences from everyday life.

An important feature for choosing in what way an image is displayed is what Eisner (CASA 103) refers to as “expressive anatomy”. According to Eisner, body posture and gestures hold more important positions in comics than text.

A GESTURE generally idiomatic to region or culture, tends to be subtle and limited to a narrow range of movement. Usually, it is the final position that is the key to its meaning. The selection process is confined to the context within a sequence. It must clearly convey intended meaning. The reader must agree with the selection. The reader decides whether the choice is appropriate.

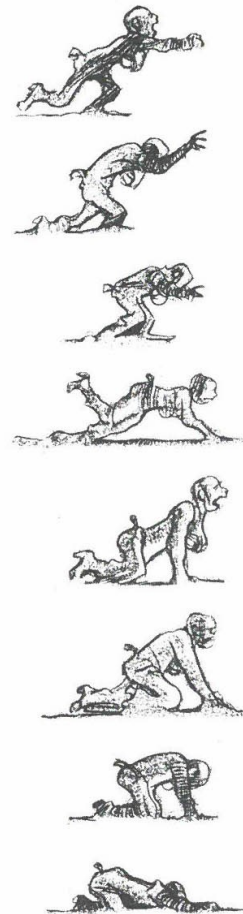
A POSTURE is a movement selected out of a sequence of related movements in a single action.[...] In a panel selected from a series, the frozen posture tells its story – giving information about the before and after of the event. (Eisner, CASA 106-107)

The aesthetic and sequential choice of image in regards to gesture and posture is connected to the concept of time and the choice of moment. It is not enough as an artist to find a moment that is appropriate for the narrative and clearly communicates the action. One must also aspire to pick an aesthetically pleasing depiction of gesture and posture that illustrates the dynamics of movement of characters or objects. Ideally, a middle-ground between these two aims is chosen. Of course, some artists intentionally use uncommon aesthetics and alienating postures, gestures and styles for certain effects. Regarding comics analysis, seeing where one has taken precedence over the other can give additional information on where the focus lies at a particular point. Eisner (CASA 110, panels 1-4) illustrates the concept of posture:





## INTERMEDIATE ACTION



Of the series of pictures that depict the man's movement on the right-hand side, only three were deemed essential for this narrative sequence and thus chosen for the actual panels. The angle changes several times, at first, being used to show motion, with the side-view and the character at the panel center, then to show the man looking back at the viewer, his face visible to us. The perspective then turns by almost 90 degrees for the third panel, to show that the character has crossed a distance already while crawling (the tracks of a crawling man extend beyond the panel border and thus go on indefinitely) and also lets the reader see that the man buries his face in the sand – a fact that would be hidden from the viewer if the prior angle from panel 2 had been used in panel 3. It is thus clear that several important considerations are made when choosing a picture. This choice is of great relevance for the construction of the narrative,

not merely serving aesthetic ends. The meta-information, given by such details as the tracks in the sand or the bags (of money?) left behind in the above example, can quickly give the reader additional information necessary to develop a detailed picture of a scene and create a deeper understanding of the story.

### 3.4 Text

Pictures can communicate a great level of detail at a glance, as the last chapters have shown, yet the unique feature of comics is that pictures and words are combined to form a new medium of communication. While images carry meaning and many things and concepts can be represented by graphical depictions alone, that is not always possible, as McCloud (MC p. 30, panels 3-8) explains:



Pictures are limited, as they can only show the reader what is visible, while they struggle or are unable to concisely convey information about the invisible, such as underlying motivations of a character or metaphysical concepts. When we see a crying character at a funeral for instance, we assume that the character knew the departed and is grief-struck at their passing, while in truth the tears could be feigned and the character could secretly be happy that the person in question has passed away. Words can also give specific and detailed additional information such as names, complex concepts or very specific terms, none of which can expressed by images alone.

Words are often used to help with scene to scene transitions. In order to explain the nature of the transition, they inform the reader where or when the action in the new scene is taking place. Another obvious, yet important use of words in comics is conversations. Here words can give information, show what a specific character is like through their choice of words and create drama or comedy. Words as we know them from traditional writing are not the only kind of text usually used in comics though. A very common use for text in comics is the simulation of sound, which is usually displayed by using an onomatopoeic transcription of real world sounds known to the reader, often with a disregard to spelling. Such expressions of sound are frequently found in superhero comics and were also well-known for their appearance in the Batman adaptation TV Series with Adam West from the 1960s. That adaptation included comic panels drawn into the film clips, with spiked panel borders that contained such “words” as “POW!” or “BAM!” when Batman hit an enemy. These were used in order to omit showing actual violence on television. Other examples include the sound of a ringing phone often displayed in such a form as

“RIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIING!”, electric currents displayed by a “BZZZZZZZZZZZ!” sound, or “BOOOOM!” sounds for explosions.

The most interesting point for analysis is how picture and text work together and which of these two factors is dominant at a given time. For the sake of clarity, the following categories, created by McCloud (UC, p.153, panel 1- p.155, panel 8) will be used:

FIRST,  
WE HAVE THE  
**WORD SPECIFIC**  
COMBINATIONS,  
WHERE PICTURES  
**ILLUSTRATE**, BUT  
DON'T SIGNIFICANTLY  
ADD TO A LARGELY  
**COMPLETE**  
TEXT.



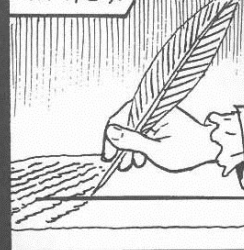
WE STUMBLED BACK TO THE  
APARTMENT SHORTLY BEFORE  
DAWN, **VOMITING** EVERY 20  
YARDS.



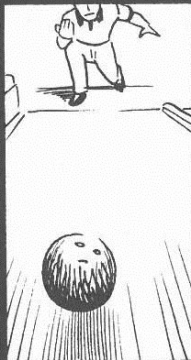
JUDY GAVE ME HER  
KEYS AND SMILED.



THE **UNITED STATES**  
**CONSTITUTION** WAS  
ADOPTED BY THE  
**SECOND CONTINENTAL**  
**CONGRESS** IN 1787  
AND PUT INTO EFFECT  
IN 1789.



THEN  
THERE ARE  
**PICTURE SPECIFIC**  
COMBINATIONS  
WHERE WORDS DO  
LITTLE MORE THAN  
ADD A **SOUNDTRACK**  
TO A VISUALLY  
TOLD SEQUENCE.



AND,  
OF COURSE,  
**DUO-SPECIFIC**  
PANELS IN WHICH  
BOTH WORDS AND  
PICTURES SEND  
ESSENTIALLY  
THE **SAME**  
**MESSAGE**.



**GRIM-FACED**,  
GEORGE LIFTED  
HIS LOLLYPOP.

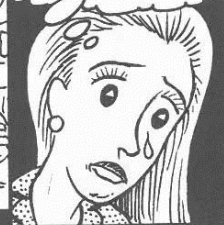


**BUT THE CAPTAIN'S MIGHTY**  
**BLOW MISSES ITS INTENDED**  
**TARGET!**

**BLAST!** HE  
DODGED MY PUNCH AND  
I STRUCK THIS **BRICK**  
**WALL!**



HA! I  
DODGED  
YOU!



...THOUGHT AMY.



ANOTHER TYPE IS THE **ADDITIVE** COMBINATION WHERE WORDS **AMPLIFY** OR **ELABORATE** ON AN IMAGE OR **VICE VERSA**.



MY HEAD FEELS  
LIKE A *SMASHED*  
*PUMPKIN!*



IN  
**PARALLEL**  
COMBINATIONS,  
WORDS AND PICTURES  
SEEM TO FOLLOW  
VERY DIFFERENT  
COURSES--WITHOUT  
*INTERSECTING.*



A cartoon illustration of a brick wall. A sign is mounted on the wall, featuring the text "TALKED TO BILL YET?" in a stylized, hand-drawn font. The sign is rectangular with a thick border. To the right of the sign, there is an arched opening in the wall, revealing a set of stairs leading down into a dark, tunnel-like space. The drawing style is simple and sketchy, typical of a comic book or a quick-drawn cartoon.

"SALLY DID.  
WHY?"

"THE TEST RESULTS CAME BACK. ALL NEGATIVE."

"REALLY? THAT'S GREAT!"

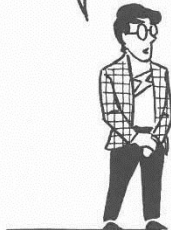
WELL...

"REALLY? THAT'S GREAT!"

WELL...

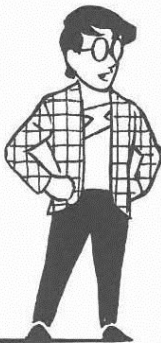
LIGHT BULBS.

STILL  
ANOTHER  
OPTION IS THE  
**MONTAGE**  
WHERE WORDS  
ARE TREATED  
AS INTEGRAL  
**PARTS** OF THE  
PICTURE.



**H  
P  
P  
Y!**

PERHAPS THE MOST COMMON TYPE OF WORD/PICTURE COMBINATION IS THE **INTERDEPENDENT**, WHERE WORDS AND PICTURES GO **HAND IN HAND** TO CONVEY AN IDEA THAT NEITHER COULD CONVEY ALONE.



MEANWHILE...

DID ANYONE SEE YOU?



THIS IS ALL I NEED TO STOP HIM!



I ASK YOU, DOES THIS GUY LOOK LIKE A C.E.O. TO YOU??



"AND JUST **GUESS** WHO DROVE UP IN BOB'S TRUCK AN HOUR LATER!"



HE'S LYING.

UH-HUH.



"AFTER COLLEGE, I PURSUED A CAREER IN **HIGH FINANCE**."



INTERDEPENDENT COMBINATIONS AREN'T ALWAYS AN **EQUAL BALANCE** THOUGH AND MAY FALL **ANYWHERE** ON A SCALE BETWEEN TYPES ONE AND TWO.

**P**  
—  
**W**



GENERALLY SPEAKING, THE MORE IS SAID WITH **WORDS**, THE MORE THE PICTURES CAN BE FREED TO GO **EXPLORING** AND **VICE VERSA**.

**W**  
—  
**P**

For ease of reading, a summary of the category names of picture/word combinations follows:

1. word-specific combinations
2. picture-specific combinations
3. duo-specific combinations
4. additive combinations
5. parallel combinations
6. montages
7. interdependent combinations

While a wide variation of different weight on either pictures or text is possible, depending on the intention and style of the creator(s) of comics, the most important factor is that picture and text work together well and can be used in conjunction in order to enable them to communicate clearly with the reader.

### **3.5 Flow**

The choice of time, frame, image and text define the contents of the panel, but the panel alone does not yet create comics. A single panel is simply a picture, while by our definition the images must be put into deliberate sequence to create comics. It is this deliberate sequence that requires the aspect of flow to be considered. As has been pointed out before, one of the main features that set comics as a medium apart from traditional text-based media such as books is the fact that several juxtaposed images can be seen at the same time and that their meaning can be grasped very rapidly in most cases. The quantity of text per page in comics is far smaller than in traditional media, which allows for very fast and detailed communication. This advantage of comics is also one of the greatest challenges in their creation, as there is no way to prevent the reader from reading the last panel first, which will communicate its information just as rapidly and thus give away part of the story that should be read later in the sequence of the narrative. This can happen easily with comics, as visual stimulants such as pictures can draw a reader's attention far more easily than written words.



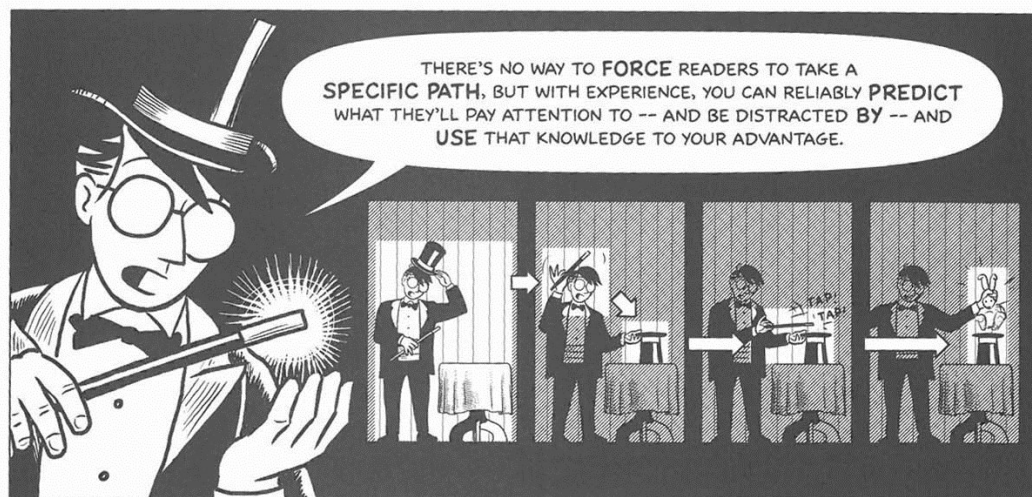
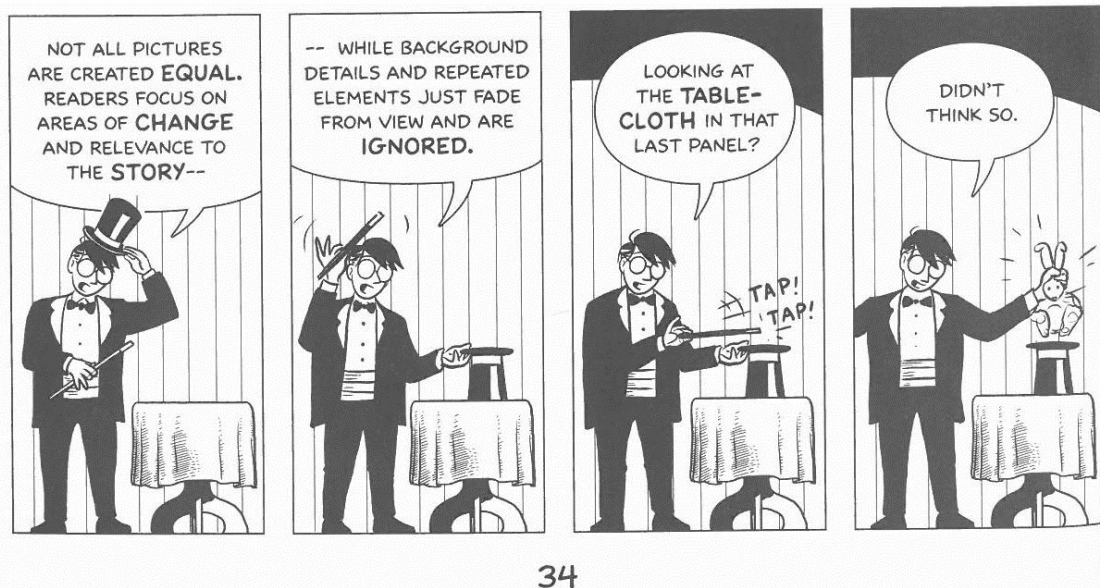
Comics should therefore be designed with this in mind and strive to guide the reader's attention so that the narrative is read in the intended sequence. Eisner writes at length about the problems resulting from this fact as well as the potential for using it to enhance narratives:

"The most important obstacle to surmount is the tendency of the reader's eye to wander. On any given page for example, there is absolutely no way in which the artist can prevent the reading of the last panel before the first. The turning of the page does mechanically enforce some control, but hardly as absolutely as in film." (Eisner, CASA 40)

Encouraging the reader to follow the correct sequence is relevant for the narrative to unfold sequentially and for the reader to be able to follow the story and not be confused by misguiding elements that leave doubt as to which panel should be read next, which will then distract from the contents of the narrative. The shape and arrangement of panels is essential for the way the flow of reading in comics is established and can either help or hinder that flow by influencing in what sequence the reader "reads" the individual panels.

Certain arrangements of panels can hinder or stop the flow of reading, because it is unclear to the reader which panel is next in sequence, or encourages them to leave certain panels unread. According to McLeod (MC, 33) that split-second of confusion is long enough to negatively influence the reading experience as readers are "yanked out" of the world of the story for a moment, while they try to figure out which panel to read next. Another feature of comics that may cause problems to the reader according to McCloud is too frequent use of 4th wall breaks, leading to confusion as to what is taking place in which panel. The aforementioned choice of frame can also cause confusion, as frequent and/or extreme changes of perspective can have a disorienting effect on the reader.

The readers' attention within panels is focused on areas of change and relevance to the story; McCloud (MC, p.34, panel 8 – p.35, panel 1) points this out to prospective creators and students of comics.



The way the readers' focus is used in order to serve the narrative is one of the most relevant factors in comics studies where the topic of flow is concerned. While changing only a single aspect of a panel and leaving all other features unchanged can put strong emphasis on that action, changing several features of a panel can create a stronger sense of action but also broadens the focus. Features that slow, hinder, or even stop the flow of reading can be used on purpose by comics creators for specific effects, such as making the reader pause, confusing them concerning the correct sequence of events to reflect a character's confusion within the story, or similar expressions of emotion.

For our analysis, the way reading flow is created, how it is used to give an impression of time and where it helps or hinders the understanding of the

narrative will be taken into account. Such features as 4th wall breaks will be analysed as to their frequency and impact on flow will be examined.

## 4 Gothic Features

To understand why the Gothic is such a popular genre for adaptation, a quick overview of its typical features shall be given here. According to Paul Poplawski (331) the term 'Gothic' referred to the 'medieval' or 'Dark Ages', and thus the barbaric, irregular or disordered. The term was later appropriated for works that did not take place in medieval settings. Horace Walpole's *the Castle of Otranto* is often considered the first gothic novel, and Poplawski claims that: "Otranto, with its southern Mediterranean setting, its aristocratic and patriarchal villain Manfred, its persecuted heroine Isabella, its castle, garrulous servants and supernatural events, set the pattern for future novels." And indeed many of these features can be found in the works analysed in this paper.

Other features typical of the Gothic, according to Hans Ullrich Seeber (280) include strange, threatening space; the conflict between malicious tormentor and hero, revolving around an innocent heroine who has fallen into the clutches of the villain; the flight-pursue structure of the plot; death, decay; underground dungeons, inexplicable events and terrifying encounters.

The supernatural often plays an important role, as does the conflict between science and morality, progress and its cost. The reader gets a very close view of the protagonist's emotional torment, and their fears, be they of death, loss of loved ones, physical pain, or - as will be the case in some of the works discussed below - their own guilt. The gothic landscape often shows a decaying world, bare of hope and full of unknown horrors lurking in the darkness. These pictures however lie on the surface of the Gothic, which essentially deals with the darker sides of humanity. It is often laden with repressed sexuality or anger, hidden fears and critical questions about human nature. The strong pictures inherent in the Gothic as a literary genre offer numerous possibilities for the adaptation in visual media and has inspired painters, filmmakers, playwrights and comics artists alike since the emotions it carries and questions it raises hold a timeless fascination.

## 5 A Brief Look at Adaptation Theory

Before examining the individual adaptations in this paper, a brief look on adaptation theory shall be taken in order to sum up a few key-points. Adaptations are sometimes still regarded with contempt for not being “true to the source”. This often stems from a misconception regarding the nature of the adaptation. In her highly-acclaimed book, *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon (4) explains the workings of adaptations:

[Adapters] use the same tools that storytellers have always used: they actualize or concretize ideas; they make simplifying selections, but also amplify and extrapolate; they make analogies; they critique or show their respect, and so on. But the stories they relate are taken from elsewhere, not invented anew. Like parodies, adaptations have an overt and defining relationship to prior texts, usually revealingly called “sources.” Unlike parodies, however, adaptations usually openly announce this relationship. It is the (post-) Romantic valuing of the original creation and of the originating creative genius that is clearly one source of the denigration of adapters and adaptations. Yet this negative view is actually a late addition to Western culture’s long and happy history of borrowing and stealing or, more accurately, sharing stories.

Adaptation therefore is not a new concept, nor a denigrating force. It is in fact an age-old tradition, deeply rooted in human storytelling tradition and it could be argued that it is a necessary tool to uphold the vitality of stories, lest they fall victim to stagnation induced by anachronistic representation and therefore, in time, may be forgotten. According to Hutcheon (*Theory of Adaptation*, 8) adaptations can be viewed from three perspectives:

- “An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works
- A creative *and* an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging
- An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work”

Hutcheon’s approach shows that Adaptations are far more complex constructs than just copying and pasting a work to another medium or even the same medium in more modern wording. On the contrary, they can be complex creative works of their own.

Hutcheon mentions four categories of Adaptation Theory:

- Forms
- Adapters
- Audiences
- And Contexts

‘Forms’ describe what type of work is being adapted into what medium (it need not necessarily be adapted into a new medium). This point is rather obvious with the adaptation discussed in this paper, as two of the source texts are novels, while the third is a short story and all three of them are adapted in the form of comics.

‘Adapters’, the second category, is harder to define in this case. This category seems simple at first, as it describes who creates an adaptation. As can be seen in the bibliography, this question cannot be answered as simply with comics as it could with novels. If one person writes new text, one creates the drawings, another inks them and two more add colour to them while yet another person draws in word balloons and hand-drawn text, then all of them together create the adaptation. There is no one single mastermind behind the adaptation effort anymore. This is true for the majority of comics adaptations as they usually are the result of collaborate efforts.

The third category, ‘Audiences’ describes who the adaptation is aimed at, as audience reception is relevant in the creation of any adaptations. Hutcheon differentiates between knowing and unknowing audiences, depending on whether they are aware that what they are reading is adaptation or not. In our case, the intended audiences are, most likely knowing audiences, given how famous the originals are. Though a good adaptation should cater to both knowing and unknowing audiences, it is safe to assume that in this case the adapters knew they would mostly deal with knowing audiences. Such audiences usually have certain expectations that stem from knowing the source, which may then influence the way it is adapted. As Hutcheon points out on several

occasions, part of the fascination of adaptations stems from the familiar being presented in new and interesting ways, which is even more important for knowing audiences.

Lastly 'Context' is a relevant factor for an adaptation. Depending during what time and in what culture the source and the adaptation were created, differences in reception will arise. Fashion, language and social norms all change over time and are different in different cultures. The works discussed in this paper were all written in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain and adapted in the United Kingdom in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.



## 6 How the Adaptation Will Be Analysed

The differences in representation that naturally arise from the differences between the medium of the source text and comics, and the features unique to comics as a medium for adaptation, express themselves mostly in three categories:

- the effect of Time, Frame, Image, Text and Flow on the adaptation,
- the narrative mode,
- and the changes to the story and characters.

Each of the three source texts is explored in turn. First, a brief overview of common interpretations of the source is given and main themes of the narrative are mentioned. Then the comics concepts of Time, Frame, Image, Text and Flow as described above are examined for each of the adaptations. The narrative mode of the source and how it has been implemented in the adaptation is then described. The narrative mode describes the methods the author uses to convey the story such as narrative point of view, narrative voice and narrative time. Lastly examples of significant changes from the source to the adaptation and/or features resulting from the transition to the unique medium of comics are given. Graphic examples from the adaptations will be used where appropriate to illustrate such features as merit more than solely verbal description. In order to give a clear overview of the changes and remarkable aspects of the adaptation, they are given in chronological order of their appearance in the respective books and their position within the chapter structure.

## 7 Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

### 7.1 The Source: Robert Louis Stevenson: *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886)

Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is a classic example of Gothic literature and has been the source of many adaptations in film, theatre, musical and comics. The story's dark and brooding setting of 19<sup>th</sup> century London, and the fact that the majority of the story takes place at night, lends itself to a rich and interesting representation on visual media such as films, computer games or comics. The story itself is timeless and has as much to offer to the audience of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as to that of the 19<sup>th</sup>. The characters, while engaging and described in enough detail as to allow for strong visual representation, also leave room for interpretation, thus being well-suited for any form of adaptation in the visual media. Interpretations of the story vary, as is to be expected with a work as well-known and highly esteemed as this. Therefore several different views on the story shall be examined briefly.

One common conception, possibly based on film or musical adaptations is that Stevenson's short story is about the concept of duality. This is compounded by the fact that Dr. Jekyll, after drinking his near mystical, chemical concoction, turns into someone else – namely Edward Hyde, his distilled evil side, separated from the good by science. But as Irving Massey (57) points out:

A common version of the "double" story presents a character who harbours an alien evil self, or who turns uncontrollably from good to bad. In dealing with a group of stories of this kind, *Dracula* (1897), *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), and Prosper Merimee's "*Lokis*" (1866), I would like to shift the emphasis from the familiar areas of discussion of the double (such as split personality, or the sup-pressed natural man) to what might be called a discussion of the "single." I want to suggest that the problems in these situations arise from the unity rather than from the duality of character.

The duality, according to Irving, is an illusion. The important factor here is that the creation of Hyde was no accident. Hyde was created by Jekyll of his own volition, so that he could put on the guise of Edward Hyde in order to give in to

his darker desires and celebrate his vices without being blamed for them, or face the consequences of his deeds. The dark desires that Edward Hyde helps fulfil are in themselves not new, as Jekyll, when speaking about his life before the creation of Hyde, writes in the last chapter (Stevenson 42): “[...] I concealed my pleasures; and when I reached years of reflection and looked around me, and take stock of my progress and position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life.” Jekyll had thus clearly pursued many of the same pleasures as Hyde, even before he created the latter to be the vehicle for his nightly outings and ventures to the disreputable parts of town. As Colin Davis (11) puts it

[...] importantly there is no radical moral polarization in Stevenson's story. Rather, in the final part of the story Jekyll makes it clear that Hyde distils the evil that is already within him. [...] There is, then, no opposition between the 'good' Dr Jekyll and the 'evil' Mr Hyde, for Jekyll contains Hyde's evil within himself, and indeed his experiments were intended to separate out that part of his own being so that the two sides of his nature could exist without conflict.

Knowing that Hyde is merely a part of Jekyll that is used to fulfil his hidden desires, without ever having to worry about his own good name being tarnished in society, it is of little surprise that Jekyll chooses to become Hyde more and more often, following a pattern of addiction. Daniel L. Wright (1) even goes so far as to suggest that Jekyll's addiction is the focal point of the character, implying that the transformation itself is more a state of mind comparable to the effects of psychoactive drugs than an actual mutation :

The reduction of Jekyll's character to one of simple duality, however, is to oversimplify and misapprehend the enormity of the psychological affliction of Stevenson's tortured physician, for Dr. Jekyll is not so much a man of conflicted personality as a man suffering from the ravages of addiction. [...] [Jekyll is] a man victimized by a chemical dependency that is aggravated both by a pre-existing psychopathology and maladaptive behaviors [sic!] which follow his repeated consumption of the undisclosed psychoactive substance that turns him into Edward Hyde.

According to Wright, the Doctor actually shows the signs of a true addict. A theory which he strengthens by pointing out that Jekyll is in denial when he claims that he can get rid of Edward Hyde whenever he chooses, as every addict believes they are in control of their addiction and can stop at any time.

This theme of addiction can be seen up until Jekyll's (and thus Hyde's) demise as Wright demonstrates:

It is only in Jekyll's final moments, forever deprived of the elixir which both feeds and destroys his life, that we witness Jekyll approach some small measure of truth in assessing his condition; yet even in the extremity of his dejection, anticipating either suicide or the horror of arrest and execution, Henry Jekyll clings to an unrepentant fondness for his monstrous self [...] Jekyll's inability fully to renounce and take responsibility for Hyde, even on the brink of death, is indicative of the magnitude of his dependence. His belligerent refusal to surrender to self-recognition reveals that, for all his protests to the contrary, he loves being Edward Hyde.

The dimension of addiction as presented by Wright goes beyond the obvious concept of duplicity, which in itself is nowadays questioned and criticized by such scholars as Colin Davis, Irving Massey and Wright. Addictive behaviour is also a good explanation for the way Jekyll acts towards his friends as he apparently recovers from his brooding solitude and distances himself from Hyde after the Carew Murder Case. He tries to do acts of kindness and virtue and then suddenly reverts to being a solitary creature and indeed reaches a state of even greater isolation. This in turn brings him back to giving in to his desires and calling forth Edward Hyde once more. The portrayal of addiction becomes apparent from Wright's argumentation.

Stevenson's tale of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is, for the most part, told as a series of recollections of different characters in the book, describing what they have witnessed or found out. Doctor Jekyll, for his part, puts his own recollections into writing. Because Stevenson uses several unreliable narrators, Edward Hyde's appearance remains elusive. It is never clearly stated what he looks like, it is only said that he is young, short and slight. The fact that something is wrong with his features, that something made people hate him or at least resent him when first laying eyes on him, is mentioned several times in the form of recollections, but always in combination with a statement of not being able to say what exactly it was that was wrong with his features. This leaves the reader with a very vague notion of the actual appearance of Mr. Hyde. Ann C. Colley (220) suggests that

Perhaps it was Stevenson's sensitivity to this condition of recollection that made him more than usually attentive to the images that surfaced in his dreams and that often gave birth to his fiction. The vividness of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde emerged from the night. His fiction, as well as his past, came from a recollection that was often born in darkness.

This darkness is also very much present in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, as the recollections of encounters with Mr. Hyde usually describe events that occurred during the night. This adds to the obscurity of both Mr. Hyde and the events and acts, which are hinted at, but never described in full. This obscurity, born from vague descriptions, is necessarily altered in a medium such as comics, which relies heavily on visual depiction, thus adding another dimension to the analysis.

Another effect of this obscurity is that some features of the story can be interpreted in vastly different ways. Antonio Sanna (27) for instance suggests a different view of the story:

In a certain way, Jekyll is ashamed of such pleasures and desires, thus partly agreeing with the society that abhors them. He apparently suffers a sense of guilt for his double life. Could we not argue that his duplicit life is a representation of the double life many homosexual men were obliged to conduct in the last decades of the nineteenth century? Could we not also argue that what Jekyll refers to as morbid pleasures are actually the secret encounters many homosexual men indulged in, in the very same foggy streets of London described in Stevenson's novel?

Indeed the exact nature of Jekyll's and later Hyde's nightly ventures, nor the deeds that led to Jekyll having a double life in the first place are never given in the text, nor is Jekyll's or Hyde's sexual orientation in any way mentioned. This could be arguably due to the fact that at the time Stevenson wrote the story, society at large would have assumed a default heterosexual preference and the topic of homosexuality had become a taboo since the Oscar Wilde trials. On the other hand, Sanna's notion that homosexual subtext may be included in this manner is a viable interpretation for those same reasons. Sanna strengthens this interpretation by the following argument:

Is the terror (chief of sinners, etc.) Jekyll refers to of being exposed for his sins and then disgraced by law? Could we not think of Jekyll as referring to his own homosexual nature and asking his friend not to reveal it, to be silent about it? This argument could be validated by the fact that, in his last letter to Utterson,

Jekyll also describes his status as a “nameless situation”, that is a condition that cannot be spoken of, something that, not having a name, is confined to silence. (Sanna 28)

Jekyll describing his status as a “nameless situation” here might be a reference to the poem “Two Loves” by Lord Alfred Douglas, quoted by Oscar Wilde during his “gross indecency” trial referring to the love between two men. That particular piece of poetry was well-known at the time Stevenson wrote his short story. The notion of possible homoerotic undertones reminds of the fact that great parts of the lives of Jekyll and Hyde are only hinted at, allowing the reader to insert their own ideas and images of what exactly it is that those two men who are one did. How those parts of the story are adapted by a visual medium where it is harder to omit certain kinds of information offers interesting material for analysis.

## **7.2 The Effect of Time, Frame, Image, Text and Flow on the Adaptation: Alan Grant, Cam Kennedy and Jamie Grant: *Robert Louis Stevenson's Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (2008)**

This adaptation was released as part of the Edinburgh Citywide Reading Campaign. The 40 page long graphic novel by Grant, Kennedy and Grant was financed by the Scottish Arts Council, The City of Edinburgh and UNESCO. 10000 free copies of the books were given to residents of Edinburgh in 2008. The book's cover bears a badge saying “a graphic novel in full colour”, using the prestigious term to show that this is indeed a ‘proper’ work of literature. Due to the very limited space, brevity was very important in the creation of this adaptation.

### **Time:**

The depiction of time in the adaptation of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is rather simple in most cases. The work uses panel to panel transitions that generally depict immediately sequential actions, without usually using a greater or smaller number of panels in order to depict faster and slower actions.

The only relevant exceptions to the rule can be found on pages, 8, 9 and 34. On

page 8, a quick succession of small pictures is used to show Mr. Hyde running, bumping into a child and leaving her behind. The next example on page 9 lets us see time passing as described in the panel text, showing the same place at several different times of day, and on page 34 we have a depiction of time passing in one place by a series of borderless panels, depicting the transformation of Mr. Hyde into Dr. Jekyll. It is noteworthy that there are almost no time transitions within chapters. These do however occur between chapters. The exception is jumping from the perceived present time given by the current narrator (such as Mr. Utterson and Mr. Enfield) to the time they narrate. The fact that these features are rarely used gives the whole story a very steady style of narration, while enhancing the effect of the few times faster or slower sequences of panels are used to add an additional level of drama and put a greater focus on the action.

#### **Frame:**

Framing in this adaptation is very characteristic, as aside from standard, straight-edged borders (Type A); this work contains a lot of Type D panels, allowing for 4<sup>th</sup> wall breaks on most pages. The choice of perspective is usually limited to the eye-level of the characters in the pictures, with a few exceptions allowing for bird's eye or frog's eye perspective, but generally avoiding more extreme angles.

Two of the most important examples for perspective in this adaptation can be found on page 15 in panels three and four. The woman in panel three is depicted from a bird's eye perspective, showing her in a fragile state as she lies on the ground after fainting. This in combination with Hyde standing in aggressive poses in the bordering panels to the top and top-right gives her an air of weakness, while adding an aura of strength and power to Hyde. The frog's eye perspective in panel 4, on the other hand, puts the viewer on a level with the corpse of the murder victim, bringing them emotionally closer to the action and allowing even the short form of Mr. Hyde to tower over them as a result of the perspective, showing again his power and physical superiority in this scene.



**Image:**

Expressive anatomy as described by Eisner is used in several key scenes of the adaptation such as on pages 14 and 15, as well as page 34, depicting Jekyll assaulting Mr. Carew and Hyde's transformation respectively. The choice of extreme poses adds to the action and dynamics of the scenes, enhancing the illusion of movement created by static pictures. A good example of the artists' choice of image can be found on page 40, in panel number four, depicting a glass bottle with a label that clearly says "poison". It is very unlikely within the world of the narrative that Dr. Jekyll would label a bottle like this, as it is not intended as a warning sign, but simply as a label informing about the contents of the vessel. Its purpose is to communicate to the reader that the item depicted is a bottle of poison, which otherwise would be impossible to guess unless descriptive text in a textbox was added. The imagery is thus very clear as a single glance is enough to understand what the item is.

**Text:**

The adaptation is very balanced in the use of both pictures and text, thus mostly relying on interdependent and additive combinations of word and picture. The adaptation does not use any onomatopoeic depictions of sound, even though they are a common feature often used for the medium. This adds a more serious and dark atmosphere to the narrative. The majority of text used in this adaptation consists of abridged quotes from the original text, shortened in order to take up less space and convey the key contents of the original.

**Flow:**

The reading flow of the adaptation often suffers from an overabundance of 4<sup>th</sup> wall breaks. These are confusing to the reader and hinder the flow just as described by McCloud (MC, 33). While these fourth wall breaks can add depth to a picture, as on Grant, Kennedy & Grant page 9, panel 1 or page 22, panel 3 they can also create confusion such as on page 19, which includes so many

fourth wall breaks that the reading flow is hampered and it can seem unclear what should be read next.

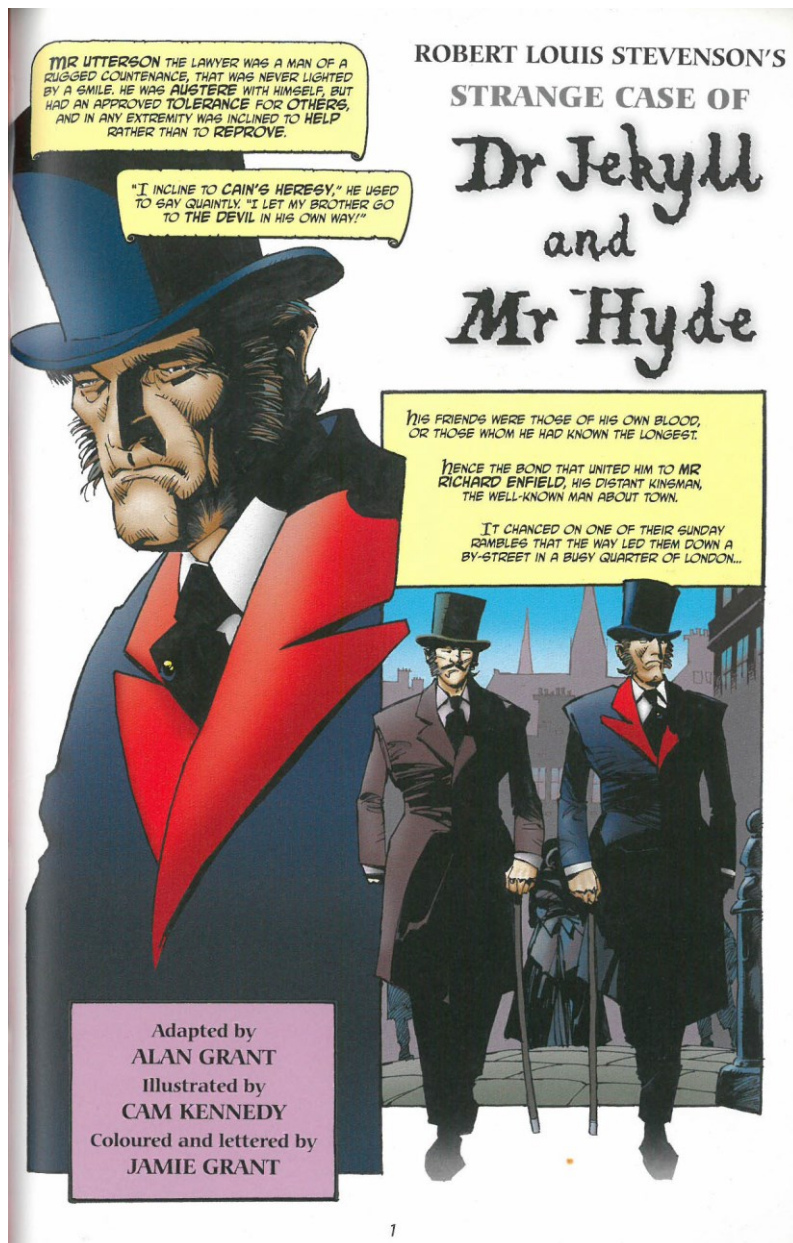
### 7.3 Narrative Mode

*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* uses multiple narration and epistolary modes of storytelling. The story is told in large part by Mr. Utterson, but also includes the story of Mr. Enfield, the account of the maid in the Carew murder case, Dr. Lanyon's story and Dr. Jekyll's confession, the latter of which is represented in letter form. The different narrators and modes of storytelling have little influence on the adaptation, which uses a traditional comic style throughout the book. The changes in narrator are mentioned briefly in textboxes, which are then written from the perspective of the respective narrator and mostly consist of abridged original text. The medium's potential for different graphic depiction of story parts given by different narrators or the graphic representation of letters (as we will see in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* in a later chapter) remains untapped in this adaptation. The traditional comics approach used here allows fast and unobstructed reading, while rendering the changes in narrators and modes of storytelling hardly noticeable.

## **7.4 Changes to Plot and Characters in the Adaptation**

For the sake of clarity and organization, the changes in plot and representation will be examined by chapter, following the chapter structure presented in the adaptation (as opposed to that in the source text). Before starting with the analysis of plot and representation in detail however, a few general features of the adaptations should be observed.

The adaptation's text remains very close to the original, often using original text or mixed text passages from the source that were put together in so that they focus on the most important information necessary to understand the story, while often omitting information which is not absolutely necessary for understanding. In many cases, boxes of descriptive text taken from the source are included in the panels, their content mirroring (and elaborating on) what is depicted in their panel. One such example can be seen on the first page of the adaptation, depicting Mr. Utterson and his associate Richard Enfield:



While the pictures could give a certain impression of the character, the metaphysical content, describing Utterson's character would in part have been hard to depict visually and if so would have taken several pages worth of panels, showing Utterson in the past and having him use direct speech in speech balloons saying such things as: "I incline to Cain's heresy..." and so on. Since a prolonged depiction of that episode would not have enriched the story, and the short descriptive text in addition to the pictures contained the same information, this artistic choice seems logical. As was stated above in chapter 3.5, there is some content that cannot easily (or at all) be represented by pictures alone and thus the usage of text was necessary.

## Chapter 1 – story of the door

The first difference of note can be found in the first chapter, as we hear Enfield's tale of how Edward Hyde ran over a small girl in the street one night. Enfield states in the original text (Stevenson, 3): "I gave a view halloo, took to my heels, collared my gentleman and brought him back to where there was already quite a group about the screaming child." In the adaptation however, the scene is depicted as follows (Grant, Kennedy and Grant, 4):





Enfield does not collar Hyde, nor does he indeed touch him at all. All he does is shout at him, at which Hyde turns around and comes back, to where Enfield and

the assembled group are waiting. "Quite a group" refers to Enfield and three others here, which seems to be a rather small number of people to warrant such a description. This latter aspect is likely due to the fact that space in comics is rather limited and drawing additional characters takes additional time and effort which results in increasing costs. The incident thus becomes more secret, smaller and less significant in the adaptation as there are only few witnesses, rendering the scene less public than it appears in the original text and therefore the risk of social scandal is minimized. However, the fact that Enfield does not collar Hyde, but just shouts at him, at which the latter turns around and comes back, influences the way Enfield and Hyde are portrayed in the story. In the original text, Hyde is stopped by physical force, as he would otherwise have tried to get away. Enfield physically grabbed the man, held him and "brought him back", the whole description giving an undertone of Hyde's unwillingness to be brought to justice, for as we later learn, he knows no remorse. The adaptation portrays Hyde as a force that cannot be touched, while showing Enfield as a more passive character than in the source text, as he neither runs after Hyde nor grabs him. The power relation between Hyde and Enfield is thus shifted. Hyde comes back of his own volition in the adaptation and is without fear, while in the original text he is actually referred to as "my prisoner" by Enfield, and slightly afraid. This shows Enfield's superior position of power, as he is backed up by a group of people and public opinion, thus endangering Hyde's reputation - which at that point is not tarnished. The adaptation then makes mention of how a hundred pounds were withdrawn from the bank by Hyde and paid as compensation to the girl's family, but does not go into detail as to when or how the money is withdrawn and paid. The original text includes an episode where Hyde, the doctor, the girl's father and Enfield himself spend the night at Enfield's to go to the bank the next day and make sure the cheque is valid. That scene is entirely omitted in the adaptation, thus ending Enfield's encounter with Hyde directly after getting the cheque from, the at that point unnamed, Dr. Jekyll. Spending the night at Enfield's, going to the bank, and so on holds no relevance for the story and could therefore easily be omitted.

## Chapter 2 – Search for Mr. Hyde

In the second chapter, Mr. Utterson encounters Mr. Hyde and “[he] touched [Hyde] on the shoulder as he passed.” (Stevenson, 9) In the adaptation, Mr. Utterson does not touch Hyde (like Mr. Enfield in the first chapter) but calls out to him, without any physical interaction. When asked to let Utterson see his face Hyde hesitates in the original text, while in the graphic novel he immediately looks at Utterson defiantly. When Hyde accuses Utterson of lying a moment later, the latter protests saying “Come, that is not fitting language” (Stevenson, 10) and it is only after that protest that Hyde leaves. In the adaptation, Utterson does not utter any such protest, thus again showing similar power structures as between Hyde and Enfield. Hyde is empowered in the adaptation by being untouchable, beyond Utterson’s (and the reader’s) grasp and fully unafraid. He does not hesitate, does not hide his face, but immediately reacts to Utterson’s request with bold defiance. When Utterson is gravely insulted by Hyde he does not even protest, accepting the latter’s superior power.

## Chapter 3 – Dr. Jekyll was quite at ease

The third chapter has little differences in plot or representation. The only mentionable change is the way the relationship between Jekyll and Lanyon is described. In the original, Jekyll at first labels Lanyon as “that hide-bound pedant” but immediately makes clear that Lanyon is “an excellent fellow” and that he would like to see more of him. The comics version omits that second part which shows the friendship between Lanyon and Jekyll. This leads to a far more distanced relationship than they have in the source text, which later lets Jekyll’s confidential conversation with Lanyon appear somewhat out of place.

## Chapter 4 – the Carew murder case

In this chapter we find a change from indirect to direct narration from the source text to the adaptation. In the source text, the maid watching the murder describes how Hyde and the victim have a short verbal exchange. She at first



assumes it must have been a matter of little importance, saying that it had appeared as though he had only been asking for his way, before suddenly attacking. In the adaptation, the same scene is depicted not as seen through the eyes of the maid, but as from an invisible spectator on street-level, witnessing both – the violent act and the conversation before it in clear detail, adding direct speech (Grant, Kennedy and Grant, 14):



Soon after the murder case, Utterson is called to the police station, because the victim had been carrying a letter addressed to him. Therefore he would have a look at the body the next morning. The comics adaptation omits the fact that the victim had been carrying a letter addressed to Mr. Utterson, who then goes to the police station to see the body in the middle of the night for no apparent

reason.

Utterson in the adaptation then tells the policeman to come with him and share his cab, which he does not do in the source text. Here again the power structures change. Utterson takes the initiative, leading the investigation and the police do not question his authority. This is also shown when he arrives at Mr Hyde's house and is immediately admitted, while in Stevenson's text the grounds keeper protests and it is not until Utterson points out that the man in his company is Inspector Newcomen of Scotland Yard, that he is admitted. The groundskeeper herself is portrayed as a monstrous, ogre-like being of no discernible gender in the adaptation. This renders the episode at Hyde's house obscure and confusing, as a second monster suddenly pops up for no apparent reason and it looks far more frightening than Hyde.

#### Chapter 5 – the incident of the letter

In the original text we find a long and detailed description of Jekyll's laboratory, for it is the place where the means for his transformation were created and thus a place of importance for the narrative. In the adaptation the laboratory is only shown in two panels at this point, both of which are not very descriptive: (Grant and Kennedy, 18)

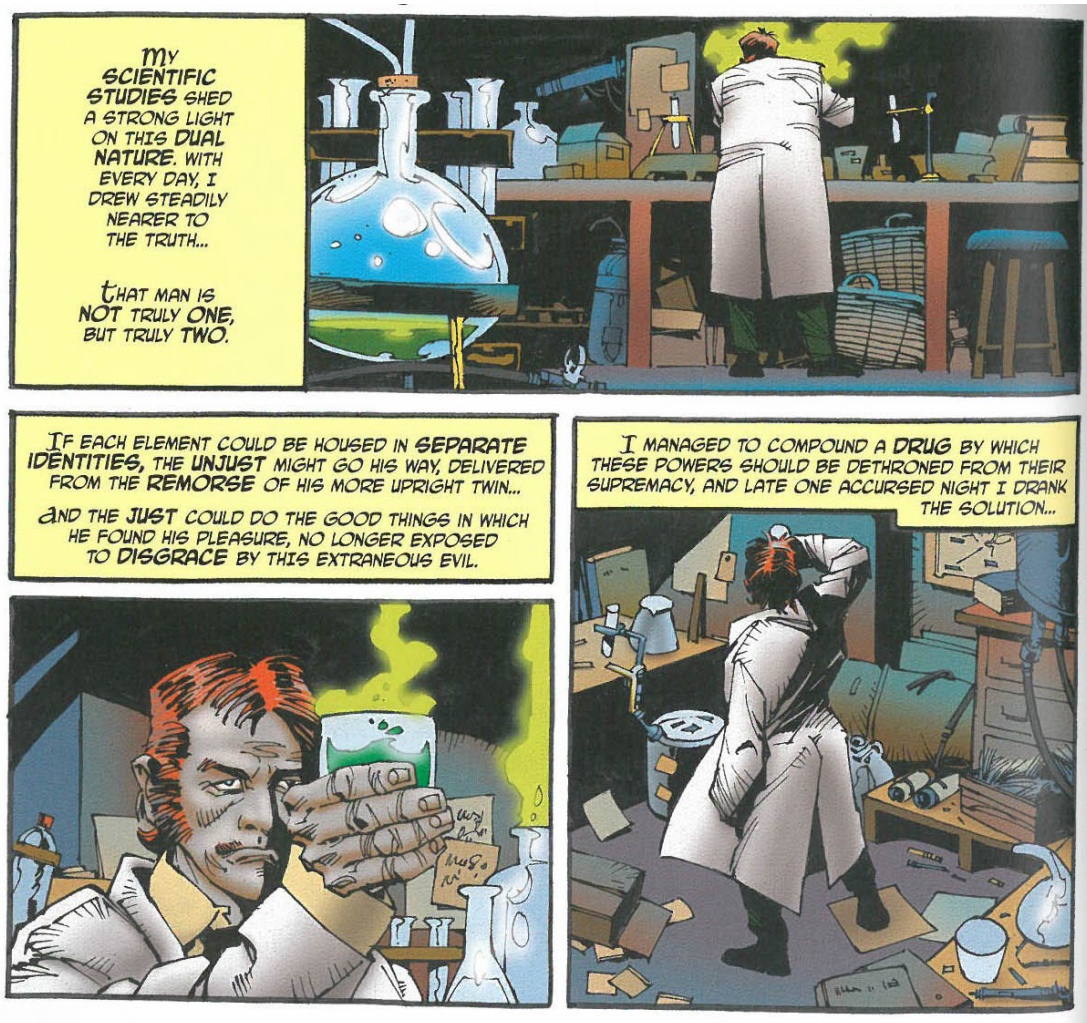




The laboratory is, however, visually revisited in the last chapter, giving a clearer



visual impression in the form of a detailed depiction over the course of three panels: (Grant and Kennedy, 36, panels 3-5)



While there is less of a focus on the laboratory in the graphic novel than in the source text at this point, the focus in the last chapter is greater, putting an emphasis on the importance of the room during the creation of the concoction which in turn creates Edward Hyde. The minimalistic depiction in chapter 5 however lets the reader focus on the characters instead.

In the adaptation it is Jekyll, and not Utterson who then brings up the topic of the Carew murder case. This lets Jekyll appear as though he utters a silent cry for help, or as though he wants to be caught, so that his addiction ends. When asked whether it was Hyde who had dictated the terms of his will, Jekyll hesitates before answering in the affirmative in Stevenson's text. In the graphic

novel, he again answers immediately and without a moment's hesitation, reaching out to Utterson in hopes of salvation.

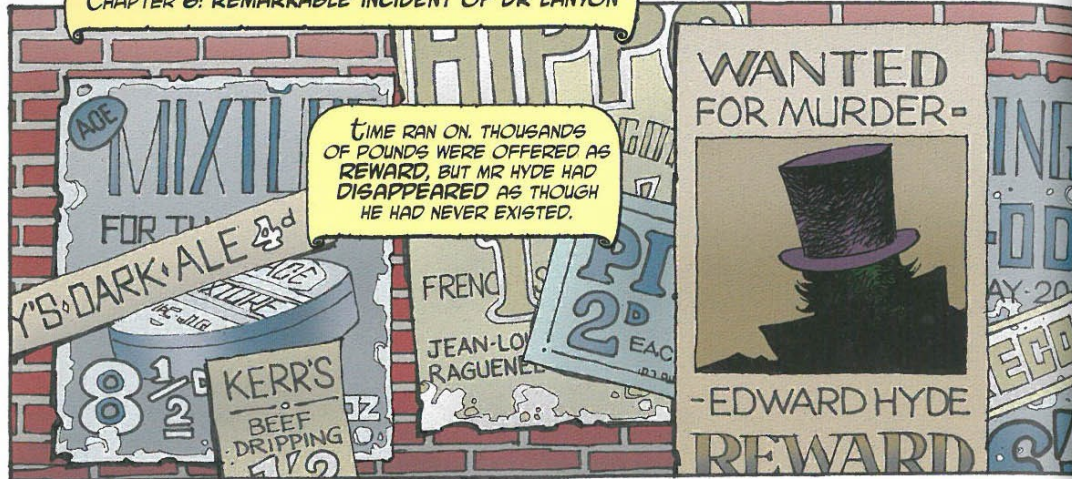
Later that evening, Mr. Utterson talks to his trusted clerk Mr. Guest about his visit to Dr. Jekyll's house and shows him the letter Mr. Hyde allegedly sent there. Just as they are examining the letter, a servant comes in; bringing a letter from Dr. Jekyll. The clerk politely asks if he may see it, because Hyde's handwriting looked familiar to him. They then compare the letter and realize that both were written by the same person. In the graphic novel Utterson immediately places both letters on the table, as though comparing them was an idea that he had had all along and he just wanted Mr. Guest to confirm his suspicion. Utterson again is in power, not truly needing Guest, and practically rendering their meeting meaningless. In the source text, they are basically at the same level of power and solve the mystery of the letter together, inspired by Guest's idea.

#### Chapter 6 – The remarkable Incident of Dr. Lanyon

In this chapter of the adaptation we find the depiction of a scene narrated in the last chapter of the source text: "Once a woman spoke to [Hyde]. Offering, I think, a box of lights. He smote her in the face and she fled." (Stevenson, 52) We find the depiction in the graphic novel, illustrating how the vile tales about Hyde are spreading throughout the city: (Grant, Kennedy and Grant, 22)



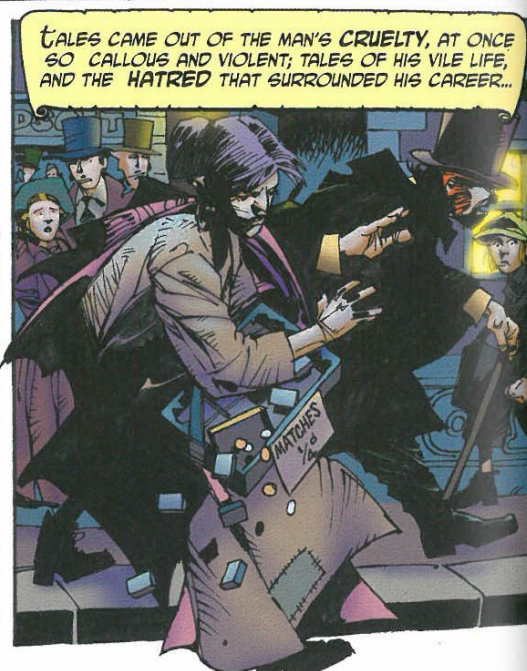
CHAPTER 6: REMARKABLE INCIDENT OF DR LANYON



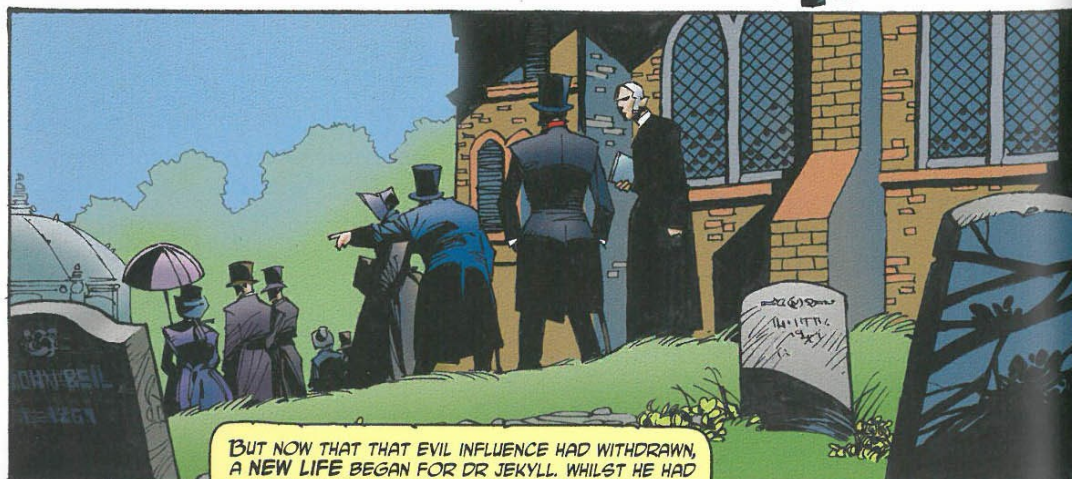
TIME RAN ON. THOUSANDS OF POUNDS WERE OFFERED AS REWARD, BUT MR HYDE HAD DISAPPEARED AS THOUGH HE HAD NEVER EXISTED.



MUCH OF HIS PAST WAS UNEARTHED, AND ALL OF IT DISREPUTABLE...



TALES CAME OUT OF THE MAN'S CRUELTY, AT ONCE SO CALLOUS AND VIOLENT; TALES OF HIS VILE LIFE, AND THE HATRED THAT SURROUNDED HIS CAREER...



BUT NOW THAT THAT EVIL INFLUENCE HAD WITHDRAWN, A NEW LIFE BEGAN FOR DR JEKYLL. WHILST HE HAD ALWAYS BEEN KNOWN FOR CHARITIES, HE WAS NOW NO LESS DISTINGUISHED FOR RELIGION...

After his meeting with Lanyon in this chapter, Utterson writes a letter of

complaint to his old friend Dr. Jekyll, asking why he was banned from the house and what had caused the break with Lanyon. This letter is omitted in the adaptation. Later as Lanyon dies, he leaves Utterson a sealed envelope to be opened upon his death, with another sealed envelope inside it that is not to be opened until Dr. Jekyll's death. Of these two envelopes and the above-mentioned letter, only one – the letter to be opened upon Jekyll's death - is mentioned in the graphic novel. This decision is helpful where clarity is concerned, since the visual depiction of 19th century envelopes in a graphic novel does not allow for much room for interpretation and seeing three envelopes in short succession could easily be confusing, and thus distract from the story. Neither the letter of complaint, nor the envelope within an envelope are essential for the story, but could cause confusion to the reader. Their omission improves the clarity of the narrative.

#### Chapter 7 – Incident at the window

In this chapter as Mr. Utterson is taking a walk with Mr. Enfield and spots Dr. Jekyll at his window, he initiates a conversation. Dr. Jekyll does not want to come out and as Mr. Utterson says the next best thing would be talking through the window, he agrees, and then a look of horror crosses his face before he slams the window shut. In the adaptation Jekyll does not agree with Utterson, but instead immediately slams the window shut. The scene thus lets Jekyll appear less torn than he appears in the source text, as he single-mindedly ends the conversation without a doubt or second thought. There also is an error in the graphic novel at this point as the artist placing the speech balloon obviously confuses Utterson with Enfield by showing the following remark of Enfield: (Grant, Kennedy and Grant, p. 27, panel 3)

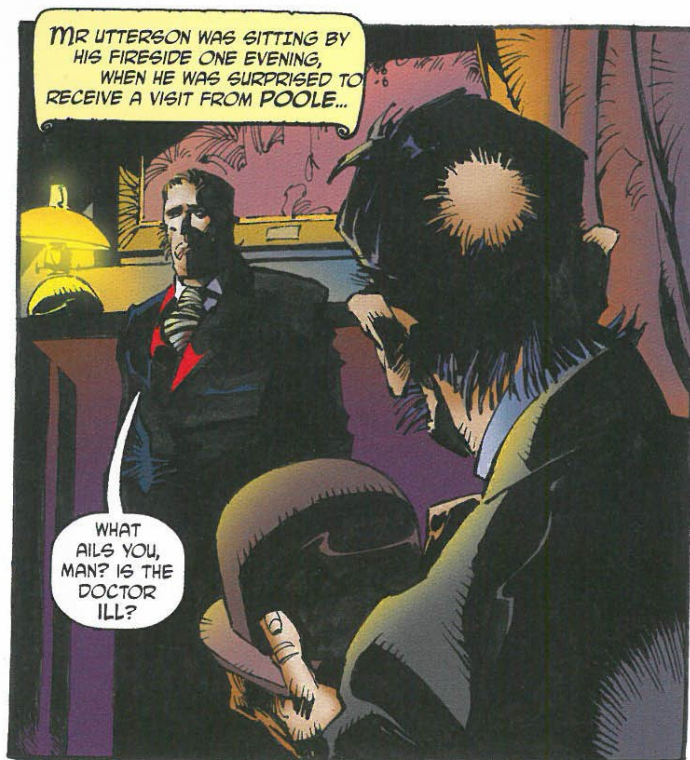




The gentleman with the red collar is Utterson, while the other is Enfield. The latter is thus talking to himself in this panel. Originally it is Utterson who speaks in this scene and he just says “God forgive us! God forgive us!” (Stevenson, 26). The reason for this change of text is unclear and in combination with the mix-up of the characters it creates confusion and interrupts the flow of reading at this point.

## Chapter 8 – The Last Night

In this chapter it may seem as though Utterson follows Pool without any explanation of what is going on, as we see Pool asking Utterson to come and in the next panel, they are already on the move (Grant, Kennedy and Grant, 28)



MR UTTERSON WAS SITTING BY HIS FIRESIDE ONE EVENING, WHEN HE WAS SURPRISED TO RECEIVE A VISIT FROM POOLE...

WHAT AILS YOU, MAN? IS THE DOCTOR ILL?



WILL YOU COME ALONG WITH ME AND SEE, SIR?

I THINK THERE'S BEEN FOUL PLAY!

### CHAPTER 8: THE LAST NIGHT

IT WAS A WILD, COLD SEASONABLE NIGHT OF MARCH, WITH A PALE MOON LYING ON HER BACK.



THE WIND MADE TALKING DIFFICULT, AND FLECKED THE BLOOD INTO THE FACE.

STRUGGLE AS HE MIGHT, THERE WAS BORNE IN UPON UTTERSON'S MIND A CRUSHING ANTICIPATION OF CALAMITY.

We must not however forget that time passes, and things happen between panels and the conversation of the two men is implied. It is logical that Utterson will ask Poole what is going on and in the next panel we see that he has decided to go with him.

Later in this chapter, Utterson is taken to Jekyll's house and then ventures to the laboratory building. The change of buildings is not mentioned in the adaptation and is not clear in the visual representation, which results in a feeling of Jekyll/Hyde being close to where the servants are, simply hiding upstairs. This then lets the character appear less isolated and does not incite a fear in the servants of the unknown horror stalking the darkness in the far corners of the house. Rather, it creates a more direct sense of danger from Hyde being physically very close by. The episode with the servant Bradshaw taking position in the house together with a boy in order to stop Hyde should he try to escape is thus omitted. Hyde's virtual closeness eradicates his chances of escape and the scene would no longer serve a purpose in this version of the narrative.

At the end of the chapter, Hyde's quarters are thoroughly searched in the original text, revealing some clues and providing Utterson and Poole with three documents that explain what has happened. In the graphic novel however, this thorough search is omitted and the documents are instead found conveniently lying on the floor next to the recently deceased Mr Hyde. A prolonged search of the room would have taken several panels of drawings and ultimately led to the same outcome – finding the documents. This representation however gives the impression that Hyde himself was holding the documents at the time of his demise in a wish to explain to Utterson what had happened – a sinner ready for confession, which could be interpreted as a symbol of reconciliation of Hyde and Jekyll in their last moments.

## Chapter 9 – Dr Lanyon’s Narrative

Dr. Lanyon’s search for chemicals in Hyde’s/Jekyll’s room appears far more rushed in the adaptation than it does in the original text. Instead of having to break open a door, he simply enters the room and instead of taking the box home and examining it carefully in peace, he takes a look at the contents right there and then. Hyde, whose physical appearance is described solely by second-hand accounts in the source text, is again clearly visible during Lanyon’s encounter with him. Another important factor of change in the adaptation can be found in the dialogue in which Hyde asks Lanyon whether he wants to watch as he drinks his concoction. In the adaptation Lanyon is never clearly given the option to withdraw - to not bear witness of what is to happen. The scene therefore does not show that Lanyon chooses to stay there of his own volition, eager to learn more of the forbidden knowledge Hyde has to offer. Again the adaptation focuses on the most vital parts of the narrative, often omitting scenes that are not absolutely necessary for the story.

## Chapter 10 – Henry Jekyll’s Full Statement of the Case

In this chapter, the adaptation features a pictorial representation of the following sentence from the original text: “Hence it came about that I concealed my pleasures; and when I reached years of reflection, and began to look around me, and take stock of my progress and position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life.” (Stevenson, 42) The sentence is shortened and displayed in the following fashion: (Grant, Kennedy and Grant, p. 36, panels 1-2)





As we can see in the second panel that depicts the darker side of Jekyll's life, he is in the company of what would have been considered an indecently dressed woman in Stevenson's day, and in a room filled with smoke and faceless people. The company of the woman wearing such an outfit in 19th century England implies Jekyll's had interacted with prostitutes, while the glasses on the table and in the woman's hand can be interpreted as symbols for heavy consumption of alcohol. The smoke that fills the room then is symbolic for opium dens as a popular vice of the 19th century for those who could afford visiting them. It is noteworthy that despite the fact that neither Jekyll's nor Hyde's sexual preferences are ever mentioned in either text, the picture depicting the "darker" side of the duality Jekyll speaks of, shows a woman as his partner of choice, thus conforming to traditional gender norms of both the 19th century and the early 21st century during which the adaptation was created. There is not even hint at the possibility of homosexuality. While the story can be read to carry homosexual connotations as pointed out by Antonio Sanna (27), the creators of the adaptation clearly do not agree with this interpretation. This depiction of Jekyll in a traditional male role suits the way he is portrayed throughout the adaptation.

The character of Dr. Jekyll changes from the source text by taking on the role of a victim – a man who has made bad choices and is silently crying for help, in a quest to redeem himself, while in Stevenson's text Jekyll is an addict who revels in the ability to become Hyde and act out his dark desires, while being filled with regret and disgust at his own actions and urges. The difference between the original and the comic becomes clear in such scenes as described above like the lack of hesitation when Utterson asks whether it was Hyde who had dictated Jekyll's last will and the fact that Jekyll generally appears less torn and doubtful. This may be a direct result from comics as a medium usually having to be briefer than traditional texts. That often economically motivated need for brevity naturally leads to omission of scenes or actions that are not considered absolutely necessary for understanding the narrative. Several examples for this can be found throughout the adaptation, such as omitting some of Jekyll's doubts and moments of hesitation, which in turn however leads to a change in character portrayal. Another factor that has been above is that during his nightly exploits, Jekyll is depicted as being accompanied by a woman as his implied sexual partner. His posture and the perspective chosen for that panel show him in a traditional, strong and hyper-masculine role prior to his downfall, thus increasing the later victimization of the character.

The depiction of Mr. Hyde also changes the way the character is perceived in the story. The fact that he is clearly shown at all, instead of just being depicted as a shadow or image in the distance, allows the reader to see Mr Hyde directly, which does not happen in Stevenson's text. As mentioned above, Stevenson only shows Mr. Hyde through descriptions given by several unreliable narrators and thus adds to his mystery, allowing the mind of the reader to create a picture of a vile villain. In Stevenson's narrative Hyde has about him an undefinable wrongness of features that makes people instantly dislike or even hate him. The depiction in the adaptation clearly shows Hyde several times, but not as a normal human being whose features are somehow "wrong", but as an obvious, disfigured monster, that can hardly be part of the human race. This version of Hyde is short, but never young nor slight and none who behold him would have any difficulty in describing what was wrong with his features. Hyde then becomes an obvious monster, a foul beast to be despised

from the moment he is seen, which again serves to let Jekyll appear more like a victim by comparison. The subtlety of the evil appearance of Hyde in the original text is lost and replaced by a more striking depiction of pure evil. Jekyll and Hyde become personifications of strictly bi-polar concepts in the adaptation.



## 8 Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein – or The Modern Prometheus*

### 8.1 The Source: Mary Shelley: *Frankenstein – or The Modern Prometheus* (1818)

Another well-known example for the Gothic, *Frankenstein* picks up on a similar theme as does *The Strange Tale of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* - at least on the surface - in so far as that it is concerned with a scientist putting his own ego and desires over ethics and morals, which in turn brings about his downfall. The differences between the two characters of Dr. Jekyll and Dr. Frankenstein however soon become apparent on closer examination. Due to the sheer length of Shelley's book as compared to Stevenson's, the plot and characters have more time to develop in a more complex fashion. As Kurt W. Back (329) puts it in his essay *Frankenstein and Brave New World: Two Cautionary Myths on the Boundaries of Science*:

Mary Shelley's plot was extremely intricate, contrasting Frankenstein's relation to his monster with other family constellations. In the creation and nature of the monster itself, the story stresses two questions: should man presume to be able to create human life and what is the position of the monster, alone of its kind, rejected by its creators and unable to enter any community? These two questions are connected: the creation of a new kind of organism puts the burden on its creator to design also a new kind of community or at least satisfactory relationships for his creation. Victor Frankenstein arrogates the knowledge of the physical relation, but fails in the social relationships.

The questions raised in *Frankenstein* thus deal with a larger scale of circumstances, while those questions we encounter in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, are mostly focused on human nature and how to deal with the "monsters" within ourselves. While these questions, as well as other aspects of the story (which will be discussed below) give the story great philosophical depth, later adaptations and the general reception of *Frankenstein* changed and

have left a vastly different impression than the source itself. The fact that *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* is by now considered part of a classical literary canon and has been adapted into several different media including film, computer games, plays, songs, paintings, books and comics has drastically changed the way the story is told nowadays. Back (329) points out that:

The transformation of the original story into social consciousness (which may give it mythical characteristics) throws a curious light on the progress of early technological society. The questions raised in the novel simply fade away. The scientist becomes mad or a caricature and the monster become monstrous. The emphasis, especially in the numerous film versions, turns more and more on the shock value. The ethical questions that could concern mainstream scientists or engineers fade away; the story concentrates on deviant creatures that should be eliminated at any cost. Alternatively the whole issue gains distance by the story becoming grotesque and ridiculous. The threat of individual creativity going to excess is absent or repressed.

This focus on shock value is clearly evident in many modern adaptations and need not even be pointed out to most people living in Western society, since the myth is so established as a part of popular culture that the tropes of the mad scientist, a caricature of an insane researcher that originates from Dr. Frankenstein, is well known. The monster itself however is often wrongly referred to as “Frankenstein” and is often represented as a dumb, slow, strong and evil creature. One of the most interesting aspects in analysing the comics adaptation of *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* will thus be the representation of the monster and Dr. Frankenstein - physically, mentally as well as philosophically - and examining whether the focus lies on modern tropes that are part of the Frankenstein myth, or the questions and topics raised by the source text. In many modern representations, the depth and philosophical dimension of Shelley’s work is completely lost and the focus lies on the aesthetics created by early film adaptations such as the 1931 Universal Pictures movie *Frankenstein – The Man Who Made a Monster* and its 1935 sequel *The Bride of Frankenstein*.

One relevant factor in these adaptations, which seems to be strongly connected to the otherness of the monster and is also responsible for making it appear such a despicable being, is the sheer visual ugliness of the creature. This

ugliness allows the creature to appear more real and is in itself an affront to the viewer's (or reader's) eye. In her paper *Facing the Ugly: The Case of Frankenstein* Denise Gigante (566) argues that

Unlike the ghostly figments populating the *Fantasmagoriana* which Shelley originally set out to emulate on the shores of Lake Lemman, Frankenstein's Creature (sic!) is only *too* real. He is, like the blood and guts oozing from the fissures in his skin, an excess of existence, exceeding representation, and hence appearing to others as a chaotic spillage from his own representational shell. While this portrayal might seem analogous to that of the Kantian sublime object, in which the representation of the thing [*Vorstellung*] in empirical form can never adequately present the Thing itself [*Ding an sich*], we must be careful to distinguish the ugly from the sublime object in order to explore a category not sufficiently accounted for by aesthetic discourse.

This "chaotic spillage from his own representational shell" is one of the factors that adaptations in the visual media have focused on the most. This is not surprising, as the impact of the ugly on a psychological level is strong and intense and thus triggers a strong emotional reaction in the viewer. As Gigante (566) elaborates:

Both the uncanny and the ugly fall under the rubric of the fearful; the crucial distinction between them is that while something may be uncanny for one person and yet not so for another, the ugly is universally offensive. The uncanny finds its being in whatever object serves to trigger an intrusion of repressed childhood complexes into the mind of the subject; hence nothing is intrinsically uncanny. The Creature's ugliness, on the other hand, constitutes a return of the repressed not linked to any particular childhood fixation. Instead the Creature appears as a return of what is universally repressed, or what Freud's precursor, F. W. J. Schelling, considers the horror at the core of all existence.

The ugly as a universally offensive concept helps understand in part why Victor Frankenstein turns away from his creation in the first place. While the creature is still inanimate, still a fantasy of scientific success that will bring glory and fame, the extent of horror the creation holds once it comes alive is not clear to the Doctor. The above-described "horror at the core of all existence" then takes hold of Frankenstein and it is that same horror that prevents the creature from being accepted by its creator or into society. Concerning the construction of the two creatures' bodies, gender plays an important role in the perceived architecture of monstrosity. As Bette London (256) argues:

[...] Frankenstein's account of creating monstrosity sustains the visible paradox that supports masculine identity; for it is only when Frankenstein speculates on female monstrosity ("she might become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate") that he considers the threatening presence of the monster's male sexuality ("a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth" [163]). It is thus the spectacle of woman's un-controllable materiality (the figure of what cannot be seen) that gives distinctive shape to the already constructed male body.

In the creation of the monster and the depiction of its monstrous nature, woman is then needed to point out the threatening sexuality. Without her appearance in the text, the idea of the monster's sexuality cannot sufficiently be related. London (256) also points out that: [...] Frankenstein creates a being "complete in all the parts of a man," the absence of the markers of sexuality leaves the creature incomplete, facilitating its installation in the feminine economy-the traditional locus for "the monstrous" and "the body." The female is then used in a biblical sense as a symbol for the body and physicality as well as in conjunction with the monstrous, just like Eve in the Genesis myth. As Theodora Goss and John Paul Riquelme (444) put it: "the future integrity and safety of the human species is threatened in the eyes of some because a new kind of female may mate with human males or with the frightening creature." Jeanne M. Britton (3) suggests that

The monster's artificial body creates artificial circumstances that isolate sympathy's physiological or visual elements which, by their absence, force him as well as the novel's other characters to seek alternatives. These compensatory models of sympathy involve telling the story of another in either oral or written form.

Since the monster is physically repelling by nature, it is this telling of the stories of others by which sympathy is created throughout the novel.

The starting point of the story and indeed a focal point of the narrative is Frankenstein's application of science without ethics, in order to achieve fame and glory. This fear of the ill effects of science if done without a conscience became a popular topic in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Goss and Riquelme (435) describe it:

The science that Frankenstein practices is a dark, Gothic

science, motivated by the technological imaginary's imperative to overcome death[...] Rather than serving humanity, the denial of death contributes to the scientist's effort to control life and death. Frankenstein attempts to metamorphose from a human into a superhuman by creating a superhuman being who worships him.

The purpose of Frankenstein's research thus is neither science nor a humanitarian urge to heal or find wisdom as a legacy for future generations, but a simple, egoistic desire for power and glory. Frankenstein however does not, cannot or does not want to see the impurity of his own intentions. Goss and Riquelme (440) state that

Frankenstein would cross the boundary between the human and the divine, the creature he animates crosses a number of other boundaries. It is living but formed from parts of dead bodies; it emerges as an adult physically but initially its knowledge of language and the world is that of a child; its features are essentially human, but it possesses the strength of a wild animal. Although the scientist in *Frankenstein* believes himself to be well-intentioned, the boundaries he has in view violate accepted norms.

This crossing of boundaries that are apparently unalterable is one of the main features of the story and Frankenstein's lack of morals and reflexion contributes to the crossing of boundaries. Lars Lunsford (174) even argues that

Victor Frankenstein doesn't value life in the absolute. Instead, he places a higher worth on his reputation. He wants to join the new class of learned men that has replaced the landed gentry as the upper society in Europe. [...]Frankenstein's desire to enter this ruling class at the expense of others plays as a major theme throughout the novel. Outside his own closed social group, consisting of his family and a single friend, Clerval, Victor has no real friendships. Victor, "who had never been surrounded by amiable companions," finds himself "alone" when he goes to university and begins his quest for enlightenment.

It is this very disregard for life, which is at the heart of Frankenstein's hubris and downfall. It is what makes him ignore or run away from problems. Thus he endangers others and brings ruin upon those close to him. Frankenstein's lack of friends, which Lunsford mentioned, may serve as an explanation for why he did not develop a healthy regard for life, yet the fact that he does not have such a regard is what leaves him alone and friendless in the end, thus forming an endless cycle.

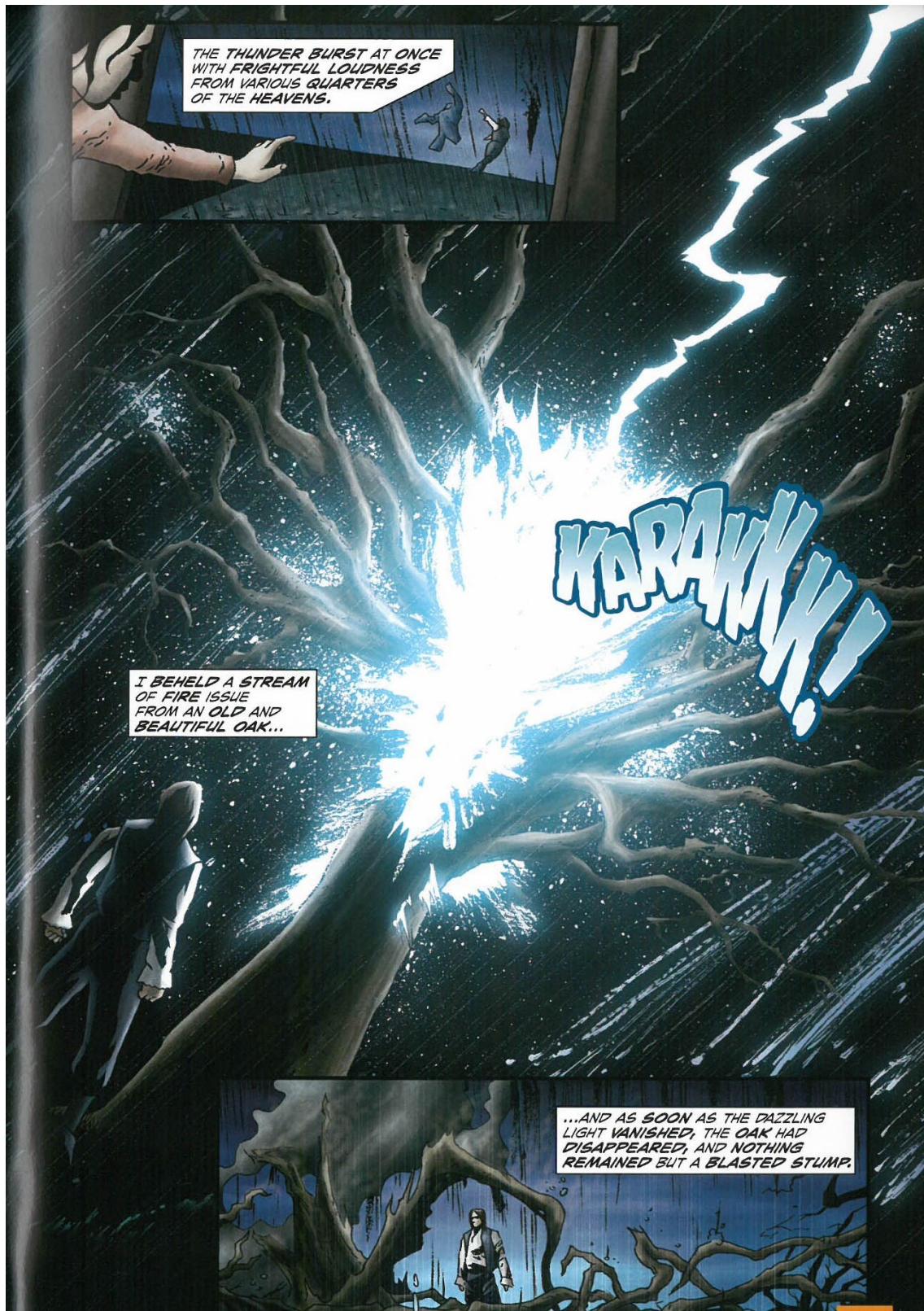
## **8.2 The Effect of Time, Frame, Image, Text and Flow on the Adaptation: Cobley, Jason, Declan Shalvey, Jason Cardy, Kat Nicholson, Terry Wiley, Jon Haward, Jo Wheeler and Jenny Placentino. *Frankenstein the graphic novel*. (2008)**

*Frankenstein the Graphic Novel* was published by Classical Comics, a publisher focusing on adapting classical works into comics form, with the aim of making classical literature appealing to all audiences, starting with younger readers and in educational institutions. The title already contains the prestigious term 'graphic novel' and the cover states that this is „The classical novel brought to life in full colour!“. The cover also states that it uses original text (albeit abridged, as we shall see below).

Aside from the adaptation of the source text, the book also contains a short biography of Mary Shelley, as well as information about other adaptations of the source. It also includes a short history of *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* and its creation and offers a brief glimpse at the process of creating the graphic novel, thus showing the educational aim of the publisher.

**Time:** The depiction of time in the adaptation uses different colour themes to divide periods of time or emotionally connected series of events from one another, as will be examined in more detail below. Other than that we find some uncommon depictions of time in the fact that many large, single panels are being used in a rather unique way. These panels in some cases fill a whole page or the greater part of a whole page, yet depict events that only take an instant of time. One such example is lightning striking the tree (Shalvey, Cobley et al., p.15, panel 2).





Others are the monster breaking loose and attacking Victor (p.24, panel 1)





and the monster leaping away (p.129, panel 2).





The graphic novel makes comparably frequent use of full- (or almost full-) page panels for short, as well as for long events, adding to the drama of the story. These large panels also serve as an expression of force and power and are thus used in conjunction with primal forces of nature and emotions.

**Frame:**

The frames throughout the story are always either of type A (straight-edge border) or of type E (non-frames). The arrangement usually consists of a type E panel in the background and one or several type A panels in the foreground.

Interestingly, the graphic novel contains just a single type D border (4<sup>th</sup> wall break), though they are typical for action-scenes, of which this work contains many. The 4<sup>th</sup> wall break can be seen in the page quoted above and shows the creature jumping towards the reader, breaking the 4<sup>th</sup> wall and reaching out for them at the end of the story.

**Image:**

Due to the sheer number of pictures this work contains, the complexity of drawings and number of colours used in each picture is comparably limited. This then leads to an interesting effect: Those pictures that are of lesser importance also have less graphic detail and depth, while those pictures more dramatic or relevant to the narrative are more detailed, often include more complex poses, more different colours and more depth. The depictions on page 48 are rather vague, giving only the most important information necessary to discern the different characters, while the single-panel picture on page 45 (mountain summit scene) shows a far greater level of detail.

**Text:**

Text and pictures are very balanced in this adaptation, though in one rare passage, during the destruction of the second creature, pictures are slightly more relevant for carrying the plot. The use of onomatopoeic transcriptions of sound is limited and mostly used for loud sounds such as screaming (both the monster and Elizabeth), laughter, the clanking of chains, thunder, etc.

The limited usage of this traditional feature gives special emphasis to those occasions where it is used and draws the reader's eye. It lets the scene in question appear more intense as such "sounds" rarely appear in this graphic novel.

**Flow:**

Due to the almost complete lack of 4<sup>th</sup> wall breaks and the use of only type A and type E borders, the flow of the story is very clearly structured and no confusion concerning the sequence of panels can arise. Large panels however are used to slow down the reader's eye at some points – often after a series of smaller panels, to put emphasis on the larger ones that slow the flow, like during the summit scene (p.45) or the creature's history lesson (p.65).

**8.3 Narrative Mode**

*Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* is constructed as a frame narrative, consisting of three different diegetic levels, woven into each other. Like a set of Russian Babushka dolls, one narrative is enclosed within the other as different narrators appear within the narrative of others and take over.

The adaptation adds an additional narrative level, as on the second page, we see the ship Robert Walton – the narrator of the top-most narrative level of the story - is sailing with. We therefore get a third person view of the ship, seen through the eye of a disembodied beholder; before the frames zoom in on Mr Walton over the course of the following two panels (page 3, panels 1 and 2). The established levels thus are:

1. the disembodied mute narrator showing the ship's passage in the beginning and the end of the adaptation,
2. Mr. Walton,
3. Victor Frankenstein and
4. Frankenstein's creature.

The film-like usage of an establishing shot, showing the ship leaving the harbour, immediately introduces the theme of the sea-journey and creates a sense of leaving the known world behind. The panel with the sailing ship is

accompanied by select passages from Walton's first letter, explaining where the ship is headed and introducing Walton before the reader gets to see him after the turn of the page.

Victor Frankenstein then takes over as narrator on page 12, panel 3. He asks Walton to listen to his tale in panel 2 and we then get a close-up view of Frankenstein's face, lying half-hidden in shadow. The back of his head merges with a scenic view of misty mountains, presumable in either Switzerland or Italy and he begins to tell his tale. This depiction visually takes the reader on a journey into Frankenstein's mind and thus into the world of his memories and feelings as he recounts events as he experienced them. Both the reader and Walton are drawn into the world of Frankenstein's story. The visual representation thus brings the reader very close to Frankenstein and makes for a more strongly-felt change of narrator than in the source text.

Frankenstein remains the narrator until the monster takes over on page 56. The layout here is remarkable, as the whole page consists of a meta-panel depicting a mountain, with the shadowy shapes of the monster and Victor on top and the subsequent panels embedded in the mountain. The monster's tale is therefore told in darkness, under the weight of the mountain and within its confines, provided with anonymity and shelter. The depiction also strongly increases the notion that both Victor and his creature are far from civilisation and have entered a world of their own in which the story unfolds. Unlike the other narrators' stories, the creature keeps returning from the fourth level to the third, showing him talking to Frankenstein and getting mournful or agitated in turn, while he tells his tale. (pages 62, 63, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 81 and 82)

Walton and the creature appear again as narrators towards the end of the book, shortly before and after Frankenstein's demise respectively. Walton's narrative is again depicted in form of a letter to his sister shown as a textbook in the corner of the panels, which is then replaced by direct dialogue when he encounters the creature. When the creature takes over as narrator again, this is marked by another change of colour to red. As mentioned before, this marks this adaptation's change of scenes or moods.

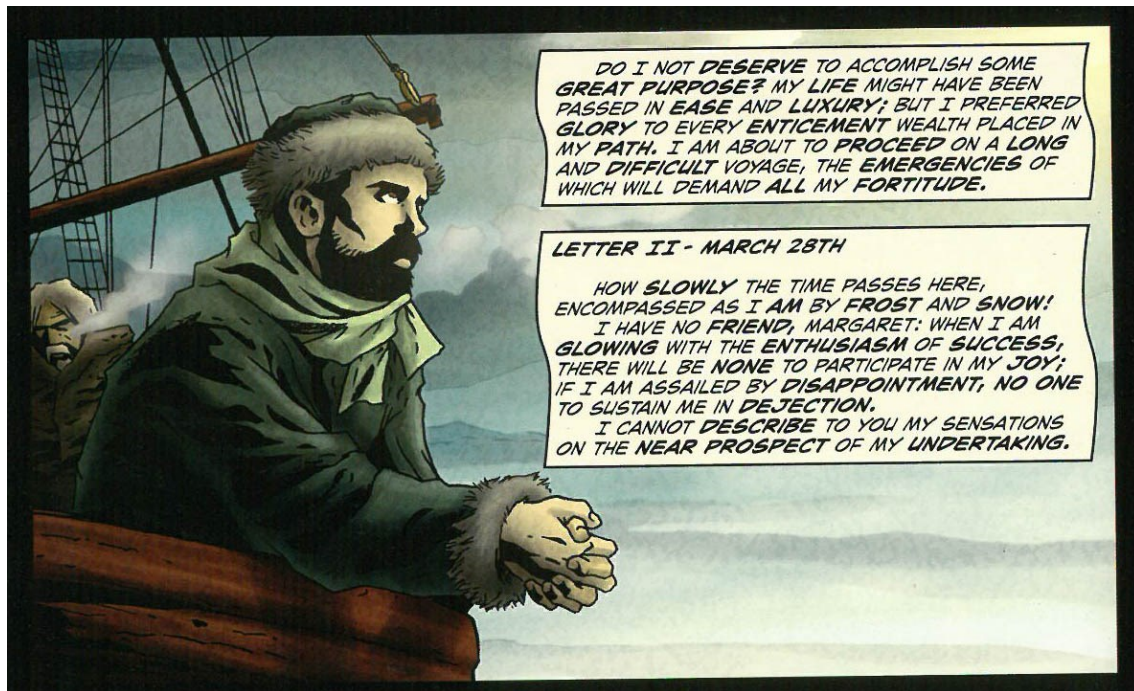
The changes of narrators are very clear and their depiction supports the narrative by creating strong moods and immersing the reader in the story, while not breaking the flow of reading. There is never a question as to who the current narrator is, since the visual cues enhance the indicators already included in the source text.

#### **8.4 Changes to Plot and Characters in the Adaptation**

##### Letters 1-4

The first relevant factor that comes to mind when examining the adaptation of letters 1-4 in *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* is their brevity. Compared to the source text (in which some of them are full-length letters) they are condensed and limited to a length of only one to three panels per letter, with the exception of the fourth, which stretches over 15 panels (p.9, panel 1 –p.12, panel 2) and gives a more detailed account of the action. A main reason for this seems to be that the first three letters do not lend themselves to detailed graphical representation. Though the graphic novel uses only original text (onomatopoeic depictions of sound aside), that text is abbreviated and cut to give only the most vital information needed to understand the story. It is important to point out that the organisation of the panels and their content do not reflect the fact that the letters were written at very different times (December 11<sup>th</sup>, March 28<sup>th</sup>, July 7<sup>th</sup> and August 5<sup>th</sup>). The panels do not depict those jumps in time, but rather relate the story as though the narrative was one ongoing tale, happening at the same time, without months passing between one event and the other. This goes so far as to two letters merging in a single panel, in which letter one ends and letter two begins (Shalvey, Cobley et al., p. 8 panel 2). The full extent of this merging can well be observed on page 8 as follows:





This lets the journey appear shorter than it does in the original text. On the other hand however, this very casual passing from one point in time to the next creates a strong effect of sameness of the journey, depicting how one day blends into the other on a sea journey such as this, or as Walton states in the third letter (Shelley 23): “No incidents have hitherto befallen us that would make a figure in a letter.” It is this very fact above all that explains why the journey is kept short in the graphic novel and why the depiction of the events thus far does not seem worthwhile. Such abstract concepts as not having a friend or desiring company do not lend themselves well to visual depiction, and arguably do not serve the story beyond showing the parallels between Walton and Frankenstein.

## Chapter 1

The narrative level changes as the story goes from Walton’s perspective to that of Victor Frankenstein. That change also finds clear visual representation as we see Frankenstein in a large split panel consisting of the doctor and an establishing shot displaying part of either Switzerland or Italy (the exact location is not clear from the picture or the text that goes with it) on page 12, panel 3. This chapter is kept very short however, depicting only Victor at two age stages

– once as a little child and once as a young boy - as well as his parents and in one picture, Elizabeth Lavenza.

## Chapter 2

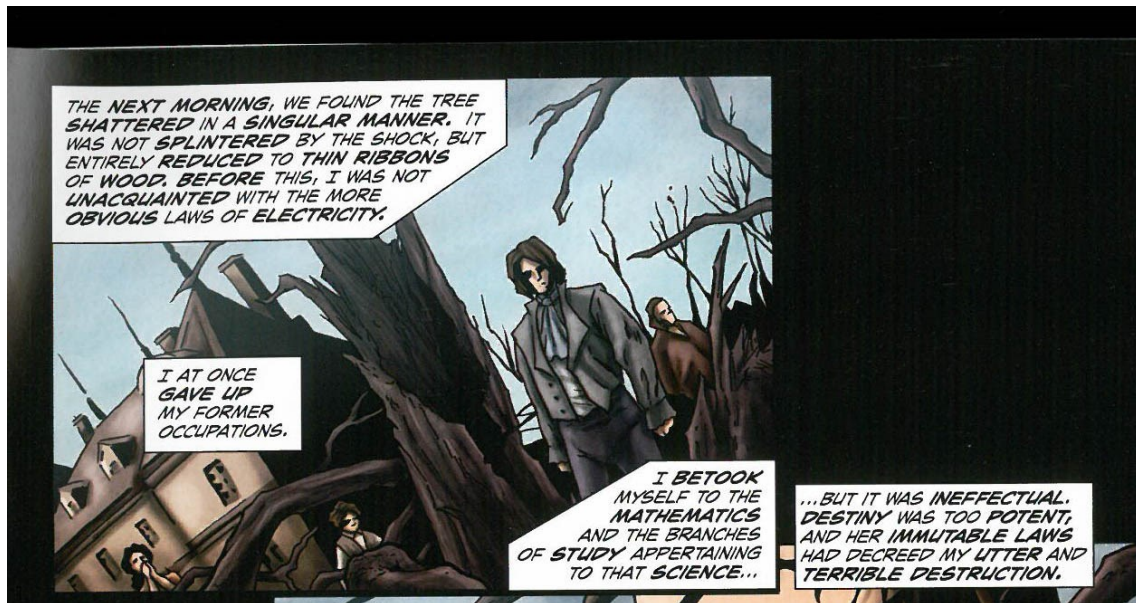
In this chapter we find the first visual depictions of adult Elizabeth, who is shown as a dark-haired woman, who, as we shall later see, has brown eyes. This description is at odds with her description given in the the source text, which describes her as follows (Shelley 36):

She appeared of different stock. The four others were dark-eyed, hardy little vagrants; this child was thin and very fair. Her hair was the brightest living gold, and despite the poverty of her clothing, seemed to set a crown of distinction on her head. Her brow was clear and ample and her blue eyes cloudless.

The colour of her eyes and hair and their distinctiveness play a role for the story in so far as they are the reasons the Frankensteins are first attracted to the child in the source text. No reason for that special attraction is given in the graphic novel. The distinguishing factor of being the daughter of a nobleman remains, yet why the Frankensteins took an interest in the child in the first place and then found out about this relation remains unclear. The only other remarkable difference in the story is that Victor gives up his former occupations and without outside help or recommendation, takes up *“Mathematics and the branches of study appertaining to that science...”*

In Shelley’s text (42) *“a man of great research in natural philosophy”* was with them and explained his theory about electricity and galvanism, which in turn led to Victor’s change of studies. This short encounter however does not carry great importance for the narrative, and was omitted in the adaptation. An unknown man depicted in the background of the panel in question may however hint at that scholar who is mentioned in the source text.

(Shalvey, Cobley et al., p.16, panel 1)



### Chapter 3

Victor's grief about his mother's death is very well portrayed by a picture of his and Elizabeth's hand. She tries to hold his hand, but his hand is hardened into a fist (Shalvey, Cobley et al., page 17, panel 3)



While the text is about Elizabeth's grief, the picture's subtext clearly speaks more strongly of Victor's own. This panel is a good example for comics' ability to convey a wealth of information with a single picture in combination with text.

## Chapter 5

The representation in chapter five is again very different from the novel. What is a short description of one page about the actual animation of the creature in the original text stretches over three and a half pages in the graphic novel, putting a greater emphasis on animation as the final act of creation. This depiction seems to draw inspiration from past film adaptations. The monster cries at the moment of creation, foreshadowing the dark fate that awaits both the creation and the creator. This then is followed by an action sequence as the monster breaks the chains that hold him and physically assaults Victor, who runs away in terror and later falls asleep, utterly exhausted. This far more violent depiction of the scene establishes the monster as a physically threatening entity. The monster does not appear as the ugly and grotesque being, disgusting and pathetic in his otherness that is described in the original text. Victor does not turn away and flee from his creation because he is disgusted and shocked at what he did. He flees from a gigantic monster that is physically threatening him and may otherwise kill him violently. The monster himself is not disgusting as in the descriptions, but follows the American superhero comics tradition. He is depicted as a tall, hyper-masculine, V-shaped muscular man. The only aspects that mark him as monstrous are the colour of his skin and some rather inconspicuous scars and lines to indicate where the body parts were sewn together, as well as a few screws protruding from his joints in a neat fashion. The monstrosity is thus created by the violent outbreaks of the creature rather than the primal terror that the ugliness creates.

## Chapter 6

The adaptation strongly focuses on the letter from Elisabeth and on Victor and Henry's tour to the country, while completely omitting their visits to the professors. This chapter is used to paint a picture of an idyllic past and a close relationship with Justine, which is then contrasted by Victor's grim look on the last panel of page 36, foreshadowing the events to come and following his decision to return to his family as soon as possible. We also see Victor deciding to enter the studies of oriental language, depicted as him flying in front of a blue, obscure background surrounded by floating Arabic letters and seeming at peace with the world. That image is immediately replaced by the grim-looking depiction of the countryside and the information that his journey must be postponed. The visual narrative creates a stark contrast in colour and theme of these two pictures, mirroring Victor's disappointment. The depiction thus supports the ebb and flow of short periods of joy broken by more bad news and negative developments. The omission of the trip to the professors in the adaptation leaves Victor without the feelings of guilt, regret and shame he feels in the original text. In the adaptation, Victor's self-denial remains far stronger at this point due to the lack of that encounter.

## Chapter 7

In the adaptation, Victor arrives in the dark, yet there is no mention of the doors being closed to him. He rather decides to go out to find the place where his brother died for the sole reason that he is restless and needs to see it. This gives the character a more active personality, portraying him more like a hero eager to act instead of re-acting to circumstance and bemoaning the fact that fate throws such hardships on him as he does in the original text. Victor's fear of being considered insane if he told his tale at court is also omitted in the adaptation and postponed until the beginning of the next chapter.

## Volume 2

### Chapter 1

This chapter is related in a very rushed fashion, and thus moves along the story quickly to the next major plot point and the next chapter. The excursion Victor's father takes the family on is omitted and we only see Victor leaving because he cannot bear his own despair. This again lets Victor appear even more solitary and lonely than he already is in the original text.

### Chapter 2

Having left in the previous chapter of the adaptation, Victor continues his journey, making the two chapters blend together more than they do in the source text and rendering the story more action-oriented.

The approaching creature is again portrayed in a very aggressive way, making it at first appear as though he would attack Victor, thus putting him in a position where he has to attack the monster in order to defend himself. This lets Victor appear like the victim, which supports the pure evil impression we have of the "monster". It is noteworthy that the creature is depicted in very calm, passive, even gentle poses after this – setting the mood for his own story, which is to follow in the next chapter.

### Chapter 3

Echoing the visual representation of Victor's tale in the first volume, the creature's tale also uses strong iconography and changing colour moods in order to alternate visually between scenes of serenity (or at least more bearable times) and scenes of grief or dramatic action. The monster is depicted in a rather gentle fashion in the beginning as he has not learnt of sin yet. There is even a bird sitting on his shoulder, implying gentleness and harmony with nature. The depictions of the monster change slowly over the course of the narrative, for after he has been attacked and driven from a village, the depiction



becomes less gentle and instead filled with bitterness, reflecting the emotional development of the character.

#### Chapter 4

In this chapter, we see a visual return to the creature's and thus the current narrator's actual location – the hut in which he is talking to Victor. Tears are running down his face as he tells his story, showing that re-telling his tale is emotionally taxing and painful for the creature and thus emphasising his humanity despite his monstrous exterior.

The depiction in the mirror looks more monstrous than the depictions before, which is in part due to the mirrored image being blurry and in part due to the fact that the abdomen looks torn and withered, thus enhancing the ugliness of the monster at the moment when he first sees himself. The creature's own self-perception is thus reflected by the visual representation, just as his face is reflected by the pool of water.

#### Chapter 5

As the monster learns the language and in the process also learns about world history, his face grows darker and bleaker. This chapter is dominated by a coming of age theme, as the creature realises what sorts of dark deeds humanity is capable of. (Shalvey, Cobley et al., 65)



This impression is further enhanced by the following page that takes the narrative once again back to the hut with Victor and shows the creature staring at his own claw-like hands in frustration and disbelief, towering over Victor - who



raises his hand as to console the one he created, yet not quite daring or wanting to. At the same time images of Victor's own family float at the edge of the page (Shalvey, Cobley et al., 66)



The monster is depicted as physically powerful, yet the initial aura of power is mitigated by the family images pushing their way to the foreground, their backs always turned on the monster, which is doomed to be alone forever. Victor's



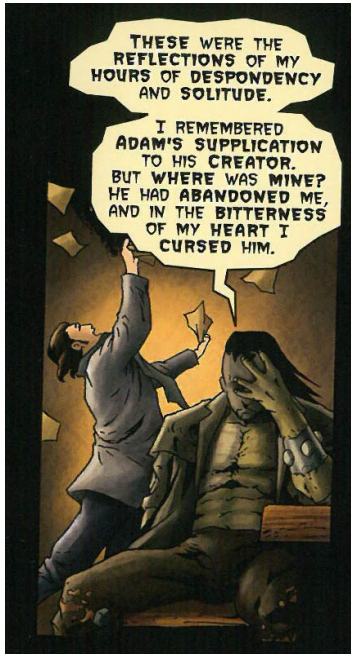
inner struggle is clearly apparent in this single image that has no further explanation than the creature's monologue.

## Chapter 7

Again the narrative in the graphic novel returns to the hut and Victor takes hold of a copy of *Paradise Lost* and throws it into the flames while the creature continues his tale. This act does however not trigger any reaction and seems more symbolic of Victor's own fears of the parallels that story may have to his own, or maybe even fears of hell itself. The creature reads *Paradise Lost* and sees parallels between himself and Lucifer in the source text and at a later point in the adaptation. Victor's burning of the book can be interpreted as an act of trying to undo what the creature has learnt. The creature then does not narrate, but faces Victor and bursts out "accursed creator!" etc. (Shalvey, Cobley et al., p.69, panel 5)



This outburst illustrates the monster's grief. It is immediately followed by Victor trying to pick up the pages of his journal and the creature sitting down and continuing his story in a more resigned fashion (Shalvey, Cobley et al., p. 70, panel 1)



The roles and power structure change here from one panel to the next. During the outburst the monster is aggressive, angry and Victor shrinks back in fear and maybe regret, yet in the very next panel Victor starts collecting the pages of his journal again. It is as though he has learnt nothing, and the creature sinks back into a sad, resigned posture.

## Chapter 9

The colour theme changes once more in this chapter as soon as the monster leaves the house and promises Victor that he will never see him again once he has his mate. The change goes from the reddish hue that often accompanies aggressive, passionate scenes in this book to a soft blue, mirroring Victor's contemplative mood, now that he has been left alone once more.

In the adaptation, there is no mention of the monster being worried concerning Victor's sincerity or the certainty of his decision. No allusion to "Saying this, he

suddenly quitted me, fearful, perhaps, of any change in my sentiments.” (Shelley, 150) The trust in his creator thus appears far stronger in the adaptation, rendering the creature more naive.

## Volume 3

### Chapter 1

Colour is again used to compliment the story's mood. Soft, bright greens and blues are used to show Victor's moment of respite as he puts off the creation of a female companion for his first creature. As he starts his journey to England and focuses on his problems with the creature once more, the background colour changes to orange hues. These strong visual cues help influence the reader's mood, since at this point their meaning within the narrative has been clearly established and they work like a piece from a film soundtrack heralding a change in mood, or in this case, foreshadowing dark things to come. Blues and greens are used in peaceful scenes, yellow is often used in neutral scenes, while orange, red or dark backgrounds usually accompany scenes of tragedy, violence or strong negative emotion. This chapter includes a depiction of Victor's fears. He is worried because he leaves his friends, who are unaware of their enemy, and he is afraid that some ill may befall them in his absence. His fear is illustrated in a picture of Elizabeth plucking flowers and Frankenstein's monster standing behind her, watching her. Yet the monstrous being is drawn as a mere shadow that does not even quite fit into the panel - a faceless presence, ever looming at the edge of Victor's mind.

### Chapter 3

This chapter features some of the most remarkable pictures in the whole adaptation. The focus on the visual starts with the first two panels, showing in detail the creation of the second creature. This is then followed by a full-page



picture of a female creature born of thunder and lightning before an obscure red background. The use of red once again signals tragedy and troublesome events. As Victor muses on the dangers of creating another creature, the depiction of the female is threatening and apparently evil, with glowing red eyes and a vicious snarl. This is immediately followed by a half-page panel of the first creature strangling the second. The latter looks monstrous and angry while the first cries bitter tears as he does the violent deed.

These incredibly strong images express Frankenstein's growing terror and emphasise his fear of the female as a creature even worse than his first creation.

While depicted as a hateful monster so far, in the panels that are based on Victor Frankenstein's fears, the actual female creature is painted as a beautiful woman, with proportions typical for American superhero comics. Her monstrosity is merely marked by lines running across her body, indicating where she has been sewn together, yet the clean and smooth transitions without rugged edges or discolouring, and without any displays of muscle and sinew leave little that can actually be considered monstrous. This unearthly beauty and the serene, calm face give the female body an aura of innocence, of helplessness and weakness. As we see how Victor violently destroys the creature with an axe over the length of five panels, and the male creature turns away in abject horror and disgust, Victor is shown to be in power. The violent destroyer of the helpless, driven to unspeakable gory deeds by his fears, is contrasted with the female creature's innocence and the male creature's terror and despair, letting both of them appear more human than Victor. This creates sympathy for the creatures almost exclusively through pictures, as hardly any words are used (Shalvey, Cobley et al., p.95 panel 3 – p.97 panel 1)









During the argument that ensues later at the shore, the creature actually treads on Frankenstein, his boot pushing the other down into the dirt. This again establishes the creature's dominance and gives emphasis to his calling Victor a slave beforehand, by putting him in the position of an inferior and it also lends weight to his threat about the wedding night.

#### Chapter 4

In chapter 4 we find another series of noteworthy visuals. As Victor stands accused of murder, we see the faces of the accusers looking scornful, while Victor is a tiny form in the darkness, kneeling on the ground and holding his hands over his head in a protective posture. Behind the accusers a shadow lurks and on closer inspection, the reader can recognise Frankenstein's own creation, who stands as one of the accusers. (graphic novel page 103, panel1)



The creature is not actually present during the trial. His position among the accusers is a metaphor for him being responsible for this new accusation against Victor. It also suggests that he accuses Victor of this crime, as well as the others he and not Victor committed. From his point of view, Victor forced his hand and is therefore to be held responsible. This strong picture is also the only one in this episode that is accompanied by the red background used in most emotionally dramatic scenes in the adaptation.

Another innovative visual interpretation can be found on the next page (Shalvey, Cobley et al., p.104, panel 2). Victor is blaming himself for Clerval's death and the death of William and Justine. The text is accompanied by a picture showing Victor himself in the act of strangling Clerval:





Here Victor has the same yellow eyes as his creation, implying that he can see himself through his creature's eyes and that he himself may be just as monstrous as the being he created. The picture shows that Victor wonders whether the creature is right and in the end it was himself who murdered those close to him. This scene is again accompanied by lightning as are several of the dramatic scenes in the graphic novel, including the summit scene near Geneva and the vision of the creation of the female creature.

## Chapter 6

A new background colour is used in this chapter – purple to show that the action is taking place at night. This theme changes to yellow, when Elizabeth lies dead and Victor mourns for her and turns to red again as he kneels down by her grave, full of guilt. The colour then changes once more to green, as Victor has

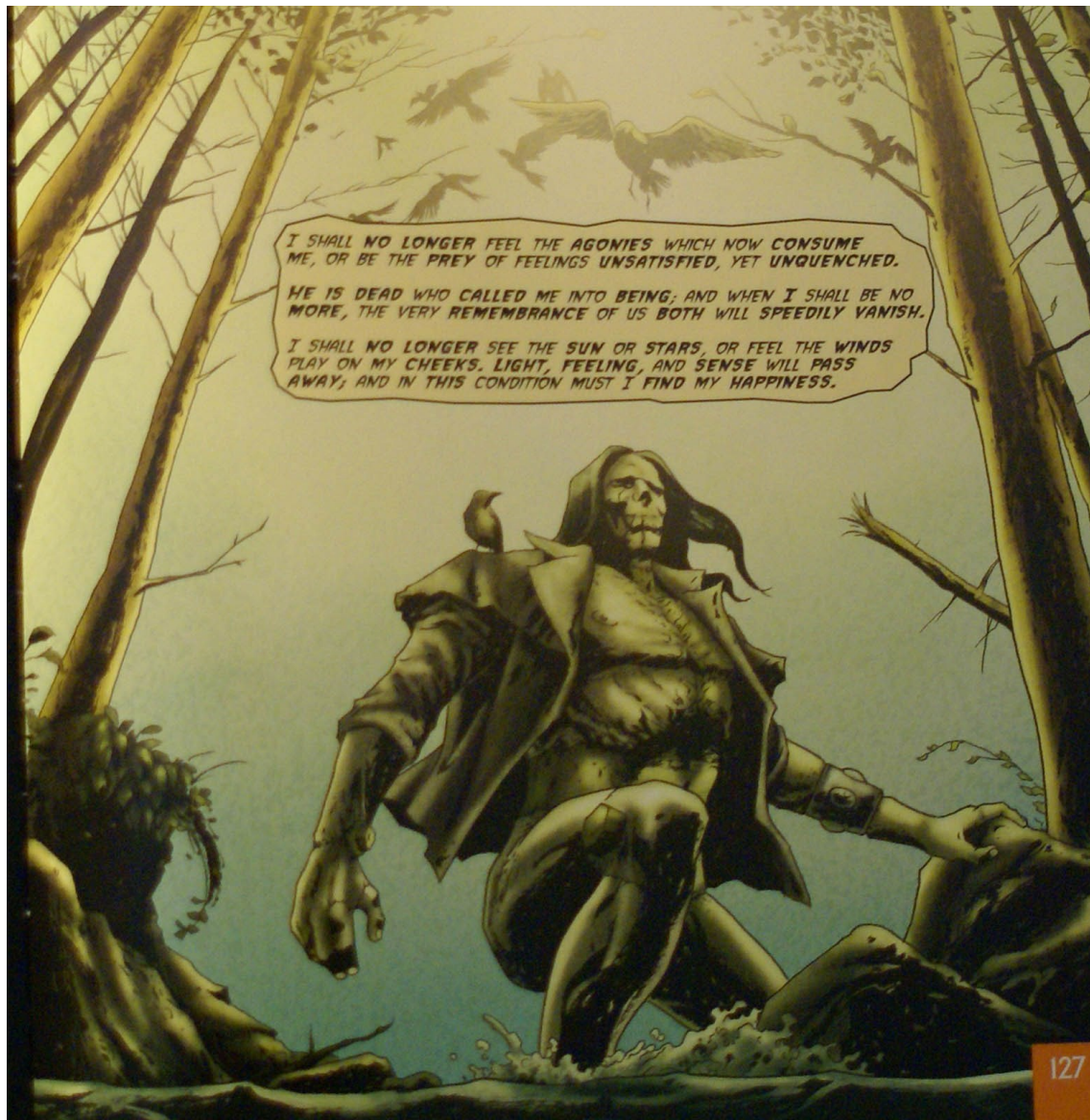


calmed down somewhat and tries to convince the judge of his story and get him to prosecute his creation. As Victor finds Elizabeth's dead body, she is drawn in an extreme perspective, her body stretching from the lower right front to the upper left of the panel, with Victor standing in the background. This perspective guides the eye, so the reader first notices Elizabeth and realizes what has happened to her, and then sees Victor's grief-stricken face. The effect is that the reader experiences the scene much like Victor does – to first see what has happened, feel shock and then be reminded of the presence of Victor himself.

### Walton's last letters

In Walton's letters we find two noteworthy visual depictions – one being a picture of Lucifer as he falls from the heavens, shown when the creature once again compares himself to the fallen angel that he knows from reading *Paradise Lost*. The angel in this picture is holding a sword that trails lightning, returning once more to the lightning theme that accompanies tragic events and primal power in this adaptation.

As the creature says that he will “[...] *no longer feel the agonies which now consume me [...]*” (Shalvey, Cobley et al., p. 127, panel 3)



he is once more depicted with a bird sitting on his shoulder which is reminiscent of Volume 2, chapter 3, thus returning to a state of innocence and peace.

(Shalvey, Cobley et al., p. 56, panel 4).



The creature is looking to complete the circle, to return to a time when he had not known such grief and pain and had himself been gentler and kinder than he has become over the years. In this vision of death, for the first time in the graphic novel, the creature looks happy and content.

The graphic novel then ends as it started – with a large picture of a ship. While the first picture shows the ship moving in full daylight towards the reader and to the left, the last picture shows the ship at sunset moving towards the reader and to the right, a shadowy shape in front of the setting sun. The setting sun here acts as a marker of closure as night falls and the story ends.

The visual depiction of Victor Frankenstein's creature changes the way that character is perceived by the reader. Though the character is somewhat monstrous in that we can see the seams where the skin was stitched together, and has glowing yellow eyes, the stitches are very subtle, and both markers of monstrosity are mitigated by the fact that the character otherwise looks like a very muscular, if overly tall, well-proportioned man. The hair hints at partial baldness, but in the way it is presented is more reminiscent of modern punk

hairstyles than of monstrosity. This representation takes out a lot of what Denise Gigante refers to as “the Ugly”, thus the character does not create the same sort of repulsive reaction in the reader as the creature in the original text. The result is that sympathy is more easily created with the creature, since he looks rather human. The effect is enhanced by the variety of gentle postures in which he is drawn, at least when not filled with rage and the lust for vengeance. These postures show that comics can subtly convey a concept such as gentleness without using words.

Victor Frankenstein is also depicted as very muscular, as is common in the American superhero comics tradition. Even when Victor is sick and weakened or exhausted from sleep deprivation or grief, he looks very fit and healthy due to this art style. This physical strength and vitality makes him appear less miserable than he does in the source text during some scenes, giving him a more heroic aura. In scenes where he hesitates and quarrels with himself, thoughts that question his own actions are frequently omitted, and Victor seems to possess a greater resolve than he does in the original text. This also leads to Victor appearing more ruthless and less tormented and guilt-ridden throughout the book, letting him appear more like the stock character of a mad scientist.

## 9 Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

### 9.1 The Source: Bram Stoker: *Dracula* (1897)

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is another example of a gothic novel that has found its way not only into the classic literary canon taught at schools and universities, but also into modern popular culture, becoming a myth and a part of Western cultural heritage. The character of Dracula is so well known that upon hearing the name, the majority of people living in the Western world will immediately associate the name with the concept of vampires and not with the historical persona the character was allegedly based on. The character of Van Helsing, though not as famous as Dracula, is also well-known and has become the epitome of vampire hunting just as Dracula has become the epitome of vampires. But while these characters and their stories are legendary, the story no longer has the frightening effect it had on the audience of Stoker's time on today's readers (or the audience of film, audiobook or computer-game adaptations of *Dracula*). In her article *Why Dracula no longer frightens us* Jenna Harris (1) gives reasons for that fact:

In 1897, *Dracula*'s realistic format enhanced the horror of the uncanny. Stoker presents a series of journal entries and newspaper clippings "placed in sequence" where "all needless matters have been eliminated, so that a history almost at variance with the possibilities of later-day belief may stand forth as simple fact" (5). Victorian legal courts used such journal entries and newspaper clippings as evidence in their trials. To Victorian readers, the novel was similar to a real case file in which they could examine the evidence like detectives searching for a murderer. The world of the text seemed to adhere to the rules that governed their reality.

What is acceptable as court evidence, however, has changed in the modern world. Written journals can be forged, individuals often lie, and newspaper stories like those in *Dracula* would be thrown out of court. [...] Modern readers no longer accept journal entries and newspaper stories as factual evidence, so *Dracula*'s format may actually interfere with rather than contribute to their acceptance of the novel's reality.

The kind of evidence given in the book indeed appears non-credible to the modern reader, who is used to investigators using DNA tests, high-tech



microscopes and the full scope of modern forensics to find evidence for a crime, as well as lawyers critically questioning every piece of evidence, no matter how obvious the guilt of an accused may seem. The modern reader will likely find it hard to believe that such dubious sources are this easily accepted as evidence in the book. This disbelief then stands directly opposed to suspense and destroys the illusion of the narrative.

Harris (2) goes on to point out that the very features that made the story thrilling and captivating for contemporary readers are what distances the modern audience from the story. Such features include references to everyday activities and contemporary music, as well as creating horror by describing the familiar and putting it into a new context by implying that dark things lurk behind the façade. These events hold no personal meaning for today's reader and the descriptions of past fashion and music render the story less real, rather than more so. The mass media have also changed the way we regard the story, for as Harris (3) points out: "The prospect of the new monster Count Dracula hiding within their society might have frightened Stoker's contemporaries; but given the stereotypes of vampires that have bombarded our popular culture since that time, the idea of a vampire in our society no longer has the same effect." With such adaptations as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Interview with the Vampire*, *True Blood* and *Twilight*, the medial over-saturation with vampires has clearly desensitised modern western society to the concept of vampires. Even though these features create distance between the reader and the story, it still holds great appeal and is read by many, even though almost two centuries have passed since it was first published. This begs the question - why does a story full of horrors that are no longer as frightening as they used to be still fascinate countless readers? Why are adaptations like the ones this paper examines created, if the horror built on descriptions of everyday life in Dracula no longer frightens us? For all the differences in culture and society, in media, science and technology, there are still many ideas and concepts in Bram Stoker's Dracula that are common to Western civilisation, and in some cases, to humanity in general.

One such factor is the concept of unity, which according to Paul Gutjahr plays an important role for the whole of the narrative. Gutjahr (1) says that

The emphasis on union and cooperation appears throughout the book. Perhaps it comes across most clearly in the way that Stoker chooses to tell the story, for Dracula has no single narrator. Instead, several points of view are knit together using letters, diary entries, ship's logs, newspaper clippings, and phonograph recordings.

Any reader of Dracula quickly notices that this strategy is often awkward, cumbersome, and disorienting. For instance, the author has trouble keeping accents and dialects straight. [...]With no omniscient narrator, there is never a sense that anyone, aside from the reader, knows all that is going on at any one time. Each character holds only a piece of the puzzle, a piece that is often useless until combined with information held by at least one other character. This narrative strategy underlines the need for unity and teamwork. Only when all the information concerning Dracula, all the story if you will, becomes unified is the count's disruptive influence able to be conquered.

Against this notion of unity stands the fact that Dracula preys on the lonely and alone. He seeks to separate and isolate people by attacking them and making them like himself.

This notion of having to work together to achieve a common goal that could not be achieved alone, or in this case, to work together to defeat a common enemy, is a universal concept we find throughout time and cultures. Strength in numbers and the safety of the community as opposed to the implicit danger of being weak when alone - especially in the dark - are timeless horror elements which are still widely used in all sorts of modern media for the horror genre. The selfish, jealous wish of Dracula to make others as lonely and miserable as himself, which we have already encountered above in the characters of Victor Frankenstein and his creation is also a very human concept and though morally corrupt, perhaps understandable on an empathic level. Yet while Frankenstein's creation is to be pitied – a troubled soul who was hurt and betrayed by its creator and looking for revenge, Dracula is less relatable, more distant and though less frightening in appearance than the sewn together, rotting carcass Frankenstein, he is more monstrous. For while Frankenstein's creation seeks revenge for the wrongs done to it, Dracula acts without such motivation as Gutjahr (2) points out:

The single characters in the novel--Mr Swales, Mr Hawkins, Mrs Westenra, and Arthur's father--all die within a week of Dracula's arrival in England. To be alone is to be open to Dracula's influence and attack. [...]

Dracula is a dire threat to the various unities in the book. Whether he is attempting to penetrate wives, fiancées, houses, rooms, harbours, or circles of friends, Dracula is bent on making others like himself--individuals doomed to live out their lives in isolation.

As the single characters fall to the cruelty of the vampire, working together becomes crucial for the story and the character of Dracula grows ever more threatening, ever more monstrous – an unholy creature that defies God and kills for pleasure. The role of religion in Dracula is important for understanding the relation between Dracula and Van Helsing. As Erin Newcomb (1) points out: “Dracula’s religiosity is neither arbitrary nor simply a plot device to forward different social messages. Indeed, the religious images are critical fodder for analysis precisely because they signify characters’ shifting ideologies about knowledge and the know-ability of the world” Looking at religion as a relevant factor of the novel then leads to an examination of Christian symbology within Dracula. Concerning the consumption of blood, Newcomb (2) claims that:

There are, of course, numerous parallels between Christian practices and vampirism, not least of which are blood drinking and an emphasis on the afterlife. But where Christians drink (literally or symbolically, depending on the theological frame) the blood that Christ willingly sacrifices as atonement for sin, vampires forcibly take victims’ blood to satiate their own lust. Where Christ’s blood leads to a peaceful life after death, the vampire’s blood perpetuates an “undead” state of agony, a parody lacking the fullness of life or the tranquillity of true death.

Again we see Dracula being portrayed as exceedingly monstrous, his position one of unequivocal evil. However, this immensely powerful evil must be counterbalanced for the sake of the narrative, and that again is where religion plays an important role. Newcomb (2) goes on to explain:

That Victorian Gothic anxiety surfaces in the realization of a vibrant, potent, and malicious supernatural world lurking in the margins of everyday existence. To combat that evil influence requires an equally dynamic and powerful, though benevolent, force—thus leading to the characters’ and the texts’ overall affirmation of the Christian God.

The conclusion here is of almost mathematical precision and simplicity – if a devilish being like Dracula exists, then God must also exist. And the viler the

monster is, the more present God must be in turn. The influence of God can be seen in many ways, such as the vampire reacting to the crucifix or forces of good - despite being physically inferior - rising up to stand against the coming darkness. These forces most strongly present themselves in the character of Van Helsing. Newcomb (3) even goes so far as to say: "Van Helsing's extensive use of the wafer but never the wine pits the body of Christ against the blood of Count Dracula."

Aside from these psychological, narratological and religious themes, the influence of the author's own life is also subject of consideration. One controversial article by Talia Schaffer assumes that Bram Stoker was a closet homosexual who had to hide his sexual preferences, and used *Dracula* as a means to express his hidden desires. She argues that Stoker and Oscar Wilde had an "intimate and varied history lasting for at least twenty years." (Schaffer, 1). She also points out that the Oscar Wilde trials, which showed the serious repercussions open sexuality could have, strongly influenced Stoker. Among other things, he uses the theme of the closet in his works, according to Schaffer.

*Dracula* explores Stoker's fear and anxiety as a closeted homosexual man during Oscar Wilde's trial. The novel is generally considered Stoker's only successful novel among many potboilers, as it constructed an enduring modern horror myth; regardless of the usefulness of this canonical distinction, its continuing acceptance does register a recognizably different affect provided by *Dracula*. This peculiar tonality of horror derives from Stoker's emotions at this unique moment in gay history. Oscar Wilde's trial set up a stark set of alternatives--safe concealment, or tempting revelation--yet forbade anyone to choose between the two. (Schaffer, 2)

According to Schaffer (2), that very same conundrum is carried over to *Dracula*'s characters, thus expressing Stoker's own interest and emotional investment in the topic: "Dracula's victims constantly negotiate between hiding or revealing their condition. *Dracula* seems to be structured by the anguishing choice between repressed helplessness and dangerous action, and it is the unconsciousness of the whole problem that gives the novel its mythic status." This hard choice then is present throughout the novel - and if interpreted as a

symbol for homosexuality, creates a very present theme over the course of the narrative. Regardless of one's agreement or disagreement with Schaffer's thesis, it is obvious that even today, long after the Oscar Wilde trials have been forgotten by the majority of people, even in this time of far greater acceptance of homosexuality, the concept of the closet still exists. The question whether one should risk social repercussions for revealing one's sexuality or rather keep it a secret is still common among homosexuals in most parts of the world. This may illustrate why *Dracula* still holds an appeal for us even after almost two centuries have passed. The very human themes and questions that are raised in the course of the narrative of the unknown and the supernatural are the same that are present in our own lives today. Next to the man-made monsters that cannot look upon their own reflection in a mirror we find ourselves mirrored in the story.

## **9.2 The Effect of Time, Frame, Image, Text and Flow on the Adaptation: Copley, Jason, Johnson Staz, James Offredi, Jim Campbell, Jo Wheeler and Carl Andrews: *Dracula the Graphic Novel* (2011)**

This adaptation was printed by

the same publishing house as *Frankenstein the Graphic Novel* above and therefore shares many of the same features concerning the information on the book's cover, the usage of original text, as well as the work's history and the author's biography at the end of the book. There are fewer pages dedicated to history and biography than there are in *Frankenstein the Graphic Novel*, but a longer section on the process of creating the graphic novel itself.

### **Time:**

The depiction of time in the adaptation is clearly structured due to the nature of the original text. The dates printed on every journal entry, newspaper article, letter or other source in the story give a clear frame of reference for the temporal relations within the narrative.



Panel to panel timing is otherwise comparably balanced, with no overabundance of either short-action panels or long full-page panels. A remarkable fact concerning timing is that a complete page is often dedicated to letters, telegrams and so on, lending weight to their contents and giving the reader time to read them carefully.

### **Frame:**

The adaptation almost exclusively uses Type A panels, with a straight panel border throughout the book. Rare exceptions include borderless panels such as on pages 70, 75, and 79 as well as fourth wall breaks in very few dramatic depictions such as of van Helsing on page 84 and Dracula on page 105.

A unique feature of the adaptation is the use of the aforementioned newspaper panels on page 77. Here we find newspaper snippets put next to basically borderless panels and arranged in such a way that they integrate into the flow of the normal panels. The division between these panels is clearly defined by the newspaper's edges, yet no additional panel border is used. Another such feature is the usage of full-page depictions of letters, telegrams and the like. These also do not use panel borders, as they are depicted in order to create the illusion of reading the actual item— be it a letter or a telegram - and thus do not need panel borders to frame them. The use of perspective is mostly focused on displaying power structures in a given moment, as will be discussed below when examining chapter 27. The same effect can be found throughout the book, albeit to a smaller and less spectacular effect.

### **Image:**

Despite the length of the adaptation and the great number of pictures it contains, the illustrations are very detailed, giving a lot of additional information. The style is very much influenced by the US superhero tradition, which is likely due to the fact that the British linework artist Staz Johnson, who helped create this adaptation, worked mostly for the two biggest US American superhero

comics publishers Marvel and DC. This results in character variety being strongly gendered. While male characters in the story can look vastly different, almost all female characters have the same face, especially where nose, eyes and lips are concerned. The only differences are in hairstyle, hair-colour and clothing, while the facial features remain essentially the same.

### **Text:**

Text has a special position in this graphic novel as the story is told via different forms of text (and audio logs), which were integrated into the story and used and displayed as an actual part of the story's world. The letters and telegrams in the graphic novel appear more real than the ones in the source text, as the additional dimension of the visual depiction creates the illusion of actually reading, say - a letter Mina wrote or a telegram Van Helsing sent. The letters use different handwriting, different hues and texture of paper and thus add to the illusion of reality, immersing the reader in the story. Onomatopoeic representation of sound is used regularly in this adaptation and can be found in the shape of screams, howling wolves, the flapping of bat-wings, sound effects during action scenes and in various other forms.

### **Flow:**

The flow of the story is very clearly structured. Due to the rare use of 4<sup>th</sup> wall breaks and the almost complete reliance on Type A panels, the reading order is never put in question. A feature that is frequently used in this adaptation is overlapping panels, which are mostly used to mark transitions from one location to another as on pages 21 and 22. Due to the clear structure however, these do not break the flow of the narrative. The letters and telegrams do however slow down the flow somewhat, as the amount of text presented within them is far longer than what is commonly found in comics panels.

### 9.3 Narrative Mode

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is narrated in epistolary format, consisting of letters, telegrams and newspaper articles. As has been mentioned above, the letters, telegrams and so on have been given a visual representation in the adaptation. Several creative ways of depicting these fictitious sources have been used in the adaptation, yet three main types can be identified. These have been divided into the following categories:

1. full picture type
  2. textbox and panel type
  3. hybrid forms
1. The full picture type consists of a (usually page-filling) depiction of a letter or telegram. This creates the impression of the piece of paper being an artefact from the narrated world of *Dracula*. This form of depiction can be found several times in the adaptation: The prologue, a letter from Samuel F. Billington and Son, Letters from Dr Seward and Van Helsing, as well as all telegrams. These simulated artefacts from the narrated world are often used to break the flow, as they put an abrupt stop to panel-to-panel progression and clearly show that the information given in them comes from a completely different source. They also require being read in a different fashion, as they do not include additional pictures. As has been mentioned above, in many cases they simulate the imaginary source more closely due to their graphic depiction than the source text could.
  2. The textbox and panel type is the most common form encountered in the adaptation. This is the type usually encountered in superhero comics. In this type, letters or entries in journals or diaries are shown in rectangular textboxes in one corner of each panel and the panels themselves show the action that is described in the textbox, elaborate on what is said or add information. This type can be found in journal/diary entries from Harker, Dr Seward, Mina and Lucy and letters from Mina, Lucy, Sister

Agatha, Arthur and Van Helsing, as well as a newspaper entry from the Pall Mall Gazette.

3. In this type, the usual storyteller function of textboxes is altered slightly, by having the text displayed in letter (or telegraph etc.) form, which is reflected in writing style as well as visual depiction of the text, such as choice of font, background colour and shape of the textboxes.
4. In addition to the above mentioned types, a hybrid form can also be found on several occasions. Like the full picture type, these hybrid forms start with the depiction of an artefact from the narrated world, however unlike the full picture style; there is no change of narrator after the picture. While the narrator changes after the full picture type, in the hybrid type, the narrator remains the same, but narrative form switches to a textbox and panel type directly after the full picture. This form merges the full picture more smoothly with the subsequent text, as despite the change in forms of depiction, the same topic is continued without delay.

## **9.4 Changes to Plot and Characters in the Adaptation**

### **Chapter 1**

The first notable differences in the adaptation in the first chapter can be found during the scene where the other passengers in the carriage give Mr Harker small gifts and then make the sign to ward off the evil eye. This scene is omitted completely in the adaptation, as is the gesture to ward off the evil eye before the carriage ride. The foreboding effect of these gestures is therefore missing in the adaptation.

The strange coach driver who arrives to take Harker all the way to Dracula's lands is described in Stoker's book in the following fashion (19): "I could only see the gleam of a pair of very bright eyes, which seemed red in the lamplight, as he turned to us." The depiction in the adaptation as first seen on page 9,

panel 5 and in close-up on panel 6, however shows the coach driver with eyes of a blood-red colour. This colour is used for the rest of the encounter, regardless of lamplight illumination. Both in the original and the comics adaption, the colour of the strange coach driver's eyes already seems to reflect the essence of Dracula by creating the connection to blood.

## Chapter 2

The most remarkable feature of the second chapter (and indeed, of the book) is the way Dracula is represented. While in the original text it is clear that something is wrong with Dracula even at this point, we do not yet know what it is. The scene is filled with an uncanny sense of dread resulting from the strange behaviour of the count and the slightly uncommon features of his physiognomy. This at first subtle description stands in stark contrast to what we see in the graphic novel. Dracula does not only have the aforementioned blood-red eyes, or the pointed teeth and ears, as well as the pale skin that are described in the source text, but looks and moves like a monster. The skin looks rotten and his hands are so claw-like they can hardly be considered human even by the least perceptive observer. The shaving scene illustrates best how the odd behaviour of the count. It worries Harker in Stoker's text, yet shows Dracula as an outright monster in the adaptation (p15, panel 5):



Why this change from subtlety to blatant monstrosity? Would it not, from a narratological point of view, be recommendable to stick to the original's approach so the reader does not yet know that the count is in fact monstrous? The lack of subtlety in this case can be accredited to the mythical and cultural dimension Dracula has taken in modern society. There is simply no point in hiding from the viewer that Dracula is a vampire. Just about every reader in Western society knows Dracula's true nature from the start. So instead of pretending that Dracula's identity is a mystery – which would for most readers, be pointless - the creators of the adaptation instead exaggerated Dracula's appearance and monstrosity. Thus, the readers are in a position where they know what is happening, while Harker is oblivious to what is going on.

### Chapter 3

This chapter contains a good example of how women in comics (and especially within the US superhero tradition) are often depicted very one-dimensional and are reduced to their aesthetic appeal, based on current mainstream beauty ideals and aimed at male readers. The three women that come to visit Harker at night are described in the original text (Stoker 51) thusly: *"In the moonlight opposite me were three young women, ladies by their dress and manner."* The depiction we find in the adaptation (19) however draws a very different picture:





The dresses worn by the ladies in the pictures are far from anything a lady in the time the book takes place in would have worn, being both too short and far too low-cut. There is also no indication of the lady-like manner Harker describes. The depiction does bring the point of strong, passionate sexuality across due to the more modern depiction, yet fails to create the contrast that is

achieved in the source text. The original description mixes their fine dress and noble manners with their overt sexuality, which was considered most unladylike at the time. The lack of this type of bottled-up sexuality takes away from the gothic flair of the adaptation by robbing it of a typical feature of the Gothic.

## Chapter 4

The fourth chapter sees an interesting change in the way Harker's story is told. Up until now, Harker's journal entries have been displayed in the form of text boxes in the corners of the panels, quoting the original text. At the end of chapter 4 however, the usage of those boxes is replaced by thought balloons, making the journal entries his direct thoughts as he acts. The very last panel of the chapter even replaces thought balloons with speech balloons as he exclaims loudly (p.27, panel 4)





The change from the more passive, detached text boxes to the thoughts and speech of Harker at the moment they are created, accompanies Harker's own change from a passive victim role to that of a man of action, who takes fate in his own hands in order to escape. The change of this narrative device, as well as the more dynamic drawings of Harker then compliment the character development and create a mood of action and agitation.

## Chapter 5

The beginning of chapter 5 in the graphic novel reminds readers that what they are reading is an adaption of an epistolary novel. This is achieved by depicting both Mina and Lucy, each sitting at a desk, writing a letter. They each take up half the space of a page while the respective other halves contain the text of their first letters. After that, the chapter continues in a more traditional comics format, putting the content of the letters in text boxes (or word balloons in the case of direct speech) and visually depicting the narrated content. This form of representation helps to create the illusion of reading a series of letters by different authors and other accounts instead of having one narrator guide us through the whole story.

## Chapter 6

The adaptation puts a strong emphasis on the Renfield encounter of this chapter, as it offers many possibilities for spectacular visual representation. In contrast, the talks the ladies have with Mr Swales offer little chance for anything but static images, since the long dialogues take place in the same location without any remarkable outside events. As a result, their conversation takes up only three panels while the Renfield encounter goes on for ten.

## Chapter 7

In this chapter we are again reminded of the source's epistolary novel character. The textboxes have the same kind of semi-regular wavy edges as a newspaper has and the colours have been changed. To simulate the look of an old newspaper, all pictures - with three exceptions - are coloured in reddish-brown hues. The only exceptions to that limited choice of colours are on page 37, panel 3, which shows the ship Demeter at the beach - and the depiction of Dracula on page 38, whose eyes are again red, which ties in with the prior established blood theme. Another small exception to the limited set of colours

can be found in the word balloon of one of the crewmembers on page 39, panel 4. As the person shouts “SAVE ME!” the white word balloon has an additional red frame, again calling upon the blood theme as he fears for his life.

## Chapter 8

This chapter gives another example of how a letter can be portrayed in a comic book, showing the letter from Samuel F. Billington & Son as a 1-page panel looking like an old letter that once was sealed and folded. The presence of such a realistic model of the actual thing increases the level of the reader’s immersion in the story. Another notable factor in this chapter is the depiction of Lucy, in front of the window on all fours, looking out at the bat. (page 43, panel1).



Her pose suggests submissiveness and carries an undertone of sexuality, thus helping to illustrate the relationship between her and the vampire in a rather limited space.

## Chapter 9

In this chapter we see what has begun in the chapters before, but is now done in a far more exaggerated fashion – the depiction of Mina and Lucy as opposites. Mina is portrayed as extremely pious and respectable. Indeed the choice of colour and design used for her gown strongly reminds of that of the



nun, who is standing beside her, increasing the effect of Mina's portrayal as "good, pure and calm introvert". In contrast to her, Lucy is depicted in a red, low-cut dress, the colour in combination with her hair and the way she moves more seductively marking her as passionate, and far more sexual and affectionate than Mina and again tying her to Dracula by using the blood-red colour theme. Towards the end of this chapter, we again find fully drawn letters, This time however, we have the new addition of telegrams, one of which (page 53, panel 1) is actually shown to be held by the character reading it. We can see his fingers at the edge of the paper, which covers most of the page. This lets the reader look through Van Helsing's eyes, which establishes a certain level of identification with the new character who has just entered the story.

## Chapter 11

The wolves in this chapter are shown to be related to Dracula. While the artists had a lot of different possible colours at their disposal for the realistic portrayal of wolves, they chose to depict the wolves as rather dark – with black fur on their backs and grey on their legs and stomachs. They thus blend in perfectly with Dracula, who is dressed in monochrome blacks and whites and whose raven hair matches his outfit. Even the wolves' eyes are the same hue of red as Dracula's implying a relationship. In this context it is also notable that the side-view of the wolf (page 60, panel 3) is physically arranged so it will be at the same height as the side-view of Dracula's face (page 61, panel 3), thus giving an ideal, if wordless comparison as meta information in the subtext.





The effect is enhanced by Dracula's hard, wolf-like features and scruffy eyebrows, which are like the wolves' fur. The reader thus immediately sees the strange connection between Dracula and the wolves. It also lets the count himself appear more wolfish – a fearsome predator stalking the night.

Another interesting choice of representation is found in the depiction of the garlic flowers in Lucy's bedroom. While in reality these flowers range in colour from white over pink to purple, they are shown as a bright hue of turquoise in the adaptation. In the visual representation, the lack of red (which would be present in both pink and purple) sets them apart from the Dracula's symbolic colour as well as Lucy's ginger hair. The turquoise gives the flowers a slight glow effect, marking them as a thing of light and purity that stands in contrast and opposition to Dracula's darkness.

## Chapter 12

As Lucy wakes up from her slumber and tries to seduce Arthur, her eyes are shown to be the same blood-red as Dracula's and her hair is wild, as though moving of its own accord in a medusa-like fashion. Her teeth are bared and saliva drips all over her chin. This depiction is far stronger and less subtle than that in the source text. Her connection to Dracula, which was strongly implied before is thereby proven beyond any doubt and her monstrosity is made visible.

## Chapter 13

In this chapter, the artists find another way of creatively integrating the letters, newspapers and other such sources into the visual narrative. On page 77, snippets from the Westminster Gazette and actual depictions of the action described are pictured side by side blending into one another. In the middle of the page, this combination lets the vampire depicted in the newspaper attack and kill the man lying to the left:



This mixture of perceived reality and newspaper information blends smoothly into the flow of the story, while at the same time acting as another reminder of the implied sources of this narrative.

## Chapter 18

Another strong visual feature of the adaptation is shown as van Helsing explains to the other characters where vampires come from, what they do and what their weaknesses are. While van Helsing is telling his story, glass in hand, scenes from his story unfold behind him in tones of grey, red and muted blues.



At first he seems calm but as he tells about the terrible dangers and powers of vampires, he looks grim and the pictures change to more dreadful content all around him. As van Helsing muses about Dracula's origins, the background pictures show Vlad the third, prince of Wallachia, commonly known as "Vlad the Impaler" and the contemporary woodcuts of his impaled victims. Not all pictures are in the background though. For example on page 95, panel one:



The sailor on the bottom left is in front of van Helsing's shoulder and Dracula on the bottom right is climbing out of his coffin and onto van Helsing's his shoulder. Van Helsing thus stands surrounded by these images, as they circle forever in his mind. He is a driven man, possessed by his mission. His grim face shows his dire urge to destroy his adversary for the crimes Dracula has committed. The last panel on that page shows us that he keeps Dracula in the back of his mind at all times.

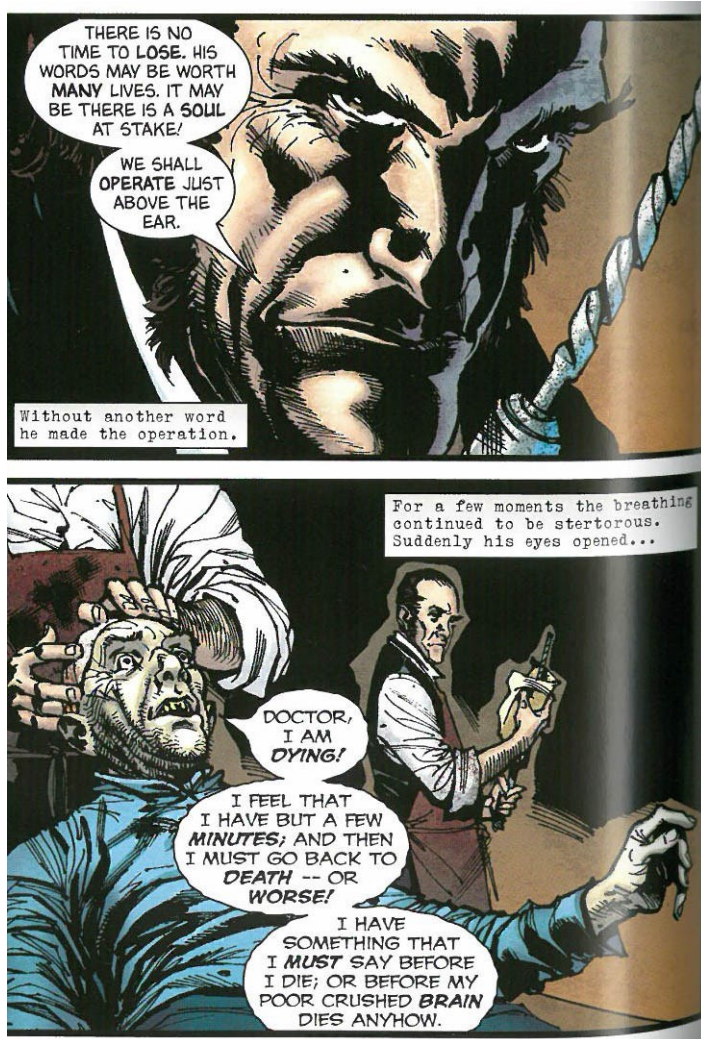
The scene in which Quincey Morris shoots at and misses a bat he sees at the window-sill startling the other guests, has been omitted in the adaptation. Instead, that scene is hinted at by Morris holding his pistol in hand as he urges the group to act swiftly. This then serves the same purpose as the bat-shooting scene would have – to portray Morris as a cliché trigger-happy American and a man of action, using only a single panel for that purpose instead of taking up a page or two for depicting the whole scene.

## Chapter 19

Another use of the colour red and the blood symbolism that is so prevalent in the adaptation can be found on page 100, panel 2-3. As Lord Godalming calls the hounds to attack the rats, the colour changes suddenly from cool blue/grey to an obscure, featureless red background as the dogs start killing the vermin. Instead of explicit display of the violence that ensues, the picture is kept symbolic and abstract without a detailed depiction of how the dogs kill rats. It is clear that there is bloodshed, as that is what the background implies. Blood fills the entire scene and renders the acts themselves obscure.

## Chapter 21

The Renfield operation scene stays very true to the original book in which the actual operation is merely described by the words “Without another word he did the operation.” (Stoker, 331). Though this description would have opened the door for all kinds of gory detail, the mood of the scene is exactly as in the book, which is illustrated as follows (graphic novel, p. 104, panels 3-4)



The determined look of the professor holding a drill in his hands saying that he will operate now and the cleaning of said drill in the next panel indicate what has happened, but leave the bloody details to the reader's mind rather than explicitly showing them, as they serve no purpose for the narrative.

As Renfield then tells the story about how Dracula tempted him, offering him the lives of countless creatures in return for his service. The depiction on page 105, panel 3 shows all that is offered to Renfield, yet Dracula himself stands in the background, his hands held like those of a puppeteer, manipulating the troubled soul.

## Chapter 27

In this chapter, the use of perspective to symbolise power is used with remarkable frequency, starting with the females vampires on page 132. They stand high and proud in their torn white dresses, rising like fallen angels above the humans who dare approach them. Yet as their fortunes are reversed and van Helsing starts killing them, the perspective changes, showing him from a frog's eye perspective, letting him tower over the now-defeated creatures. This then continues to page 134 as van Helsing holds the severed heads of all three female vampires in his hands, standing triumphant.

The same perspective is soon used for Mr Morrison (page 138) as he kills one of the Szgany and (page 139) as Dracula rises from his box just as the sun sets, certain that he will destroy his enemies:









In each of these cases the character or characters in power are beheld from a frog's eye view, making them appear tall and powerful, while making the reader

feel small and powerless by comparison. This simple psychological device is used very frequently in this chapter where the tide of battle keeps turning one way and the other, and helps communicate very clearly to reader who is in power at which given moment, without the necessity of additional words to point out power structures.

The same principle is used as the protagonists open the box containing the vampire on page 138. Here the purpose is foreshadowing the problems that are to come. The humans are shown from a bird's eye angle, making them appear weak and vulnerable in preparation for the appearance of Dracula - who looms over them forbiddingly.

The threatening rise of Dracula appears on a large panel and breaks the fourth wall. The position of that panel at the end of the page is important for what is to come. The whole series of making the humans appear small and weak and Dracula threatening and strong builds up dramatic tension, which is released in the next panel as Jonathan's knife cuts down the vampire. To get to that point, the page must be turned. Until then the reader's eyes cannot wander to see what happens next, or to look whether there is a good or a bad ending. At the end of the page, the situation looks very grim for the protagonists. The turning of the page is an important and useful device that the graphic novel as a medium has at its disposal.

The very last page of the graphic novel's narrative shows a bird's eye view of Dracula's crumbling castle. It thus gives the readers, who at this point have had a lot of time to identify with the story's protagonists, the victor's view over the lands of the defeated, adding a sense of closure to the reading experience.

## Conclusion

Comics as a medium offers a reading experience that is vastly different from that of reading a novel and just as different from watching a film, while it incorporates features of both media types. The fact that the reader can see the present, past and future of an unfolding story all at once and can – unlike a film - easily go back and forth between juxtaposed pictures offers new narratological possibilities. The deliberate juxtaposition of panels with related content can be used to guide the readers' attention to certain specific aspects of the story, to convey subtle meanings, or to give clues about certain events in an indirect way.

The adaptation of the Gothic in graphic novels can take vastly different forms where narrative structure and visual representation are concerned. Even among the few works examined in this paper, three completely different approaches and results have been achieved by their creators. There are however a few universal observations that could be made regarding the adaptation of the Gothic in the medium of comics. The Gothic world, with its dreary desolate landscapes, lonely night time streets, foggy evenings, hostile-seeming forests and decaying character can be presented very effectively in pictures. In fact, the visual depictions of these features can create a far stronger image than text alone could, as really detailed descriptions usually have to be so long that they interfere with the reading flow of a novel. The visual depiction of the gothic world thus offers a richer and far more immersive impression and thereby helps set the mood for a scene and creates a well-defined stage for the characters to act upon.

Contrary to the depiction of the world, the actual storytelling of gothic narratives can suffer from the medium's inherent feature of revealing different moments in a story at the same time. Even a cursory glance at a page can potentially give away the story and spoil the dramatic tension for the reader. However, this feature is often a necessary evil due to the limited amount of space in comic books and the resulting necessity of brevity. Given enough space, such spoiling



can be avoided using page-turning to reveal relevant information only at a certain point, as we see at the end of *Dracula the Graphic Novel*. A different problem is the difficulty artists can have conveying complex metaphysical concepts with only a handful of pictures and a few short words.

Some artistic conventions of comics art, such as exaggerating physical features to make characters visually engaging, can also cause problems for the depiction of the Gothic. All these common aspects of comics stand in direct contrast to the subtle horror of the Gothic. If we see a man with red glowing eyes and pointy teeth, it is obvious to the present-day reader that they are looking at a vampire. If Mr. Hyde is an obvious monster instead of a man, why do people within the world of the narrative actually interact with him at all? I argue however that these stylistic choices are not necessarily part of the medium itself, but adhere to certain conventions within comics culture. Much of the Gothic is now so rooted in popular culture that there is no point in 'hiding' the fact that Dracula is a vampire, or Hyde a monster, because in most cases a reader with ties to Western culture will know that beforehand.

These problems aside, comics has more to offer to the gothic novel than initially expected. The nigh endless possibilities of using real world references within the subtext of the page becomes clear in the comics adaptation of *Dracula* discussed above, such as the depiction of newspaper snippets, telegrams and letters. These examples help illustrate the wealth of possible ways a story can be told using comics.

As anticipated, the reading experience greatly changes with the comics adaptation of these classical works. During some passages it can seem as though one was reading a completely different book. It was surprising to find how the visual representation of characters, influenced by comics conventions – especially the wide-spread and highly popular US superhero style - had such a strong influence on how characters' personalities changed and were perceived. This visual aspect alone altered the stories. Other components - such as the turning of the page, panel design and depiction of real-world items - combined



with the easy-to-read format and brevity of text create a reading experience that can be exceptionally varied and immersive.

The medium is not more limited than traditional text, nor does it offer more possibilities – it is simply vastly different by nature and constitutes a new form of literature and art, which has its own rules, its own limitations and its own strengths. It is a comparably new medium and as such, at the time this paper is written, offers more “uncharted territory” than traditional writing does. It therefore presents a world of opportunity for the creation of new, unexplored representations of literature and undoubtedly merits further study.

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# APPENDIX

## Zusammenfassung

Comics als Medium sind in der literarischen Welt des frühen 21. Jahrhunderts nach wie vor mit Vorurteilen behaftet und werden oftmals als "niedere Form" von Literatur angesehen. Dieser antiquierten Sichtweise steht die Tatsache entgegen, dass es sich bei Comics um ein Medium handelt, das, wie ein Buch, jeden beliebigen Inhalt transportieren kann.

Um die Grenze zwischen Werk und Medium klar aufzuzeigen und zu wahren, werden in dieser Arbeit drei Bücher untersucht, die zu einem klassischen literarischen Kanon gehören und deren literarischer Wert daher nicht in Frage steht, nämlich Mary Shelleys *Frankenstein*, Bram Stokers *Dracula* und Robert Louis Stevensons *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Nachdem die literarische Relevanz dieser Werke gesichert ist, können ihre Graphic Novel Adaptionen neutral und rational analysiert werden.

Dies geschieht zum einen anhand der von Comics Studies Author Scott McCloud definierten Konzepte "Time", "Frame", "Image", "Text" und "Flow", zum Anderen anhand inhaltlicher und narratologischer Eigenschaften. Die Mediumspezifischen Vorteile und Einschränkungen werden dabei erläutert.

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