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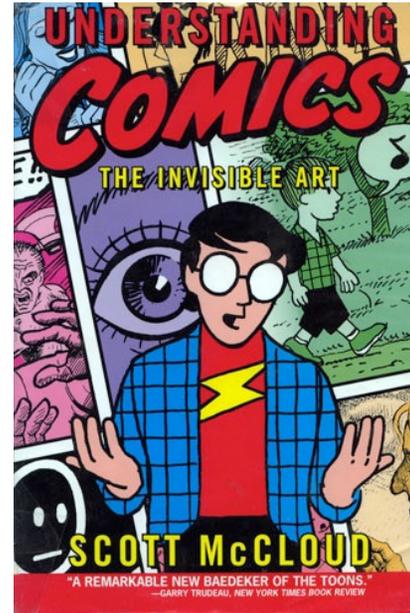
SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

WEEK 4

▶ Watchmen

Winter 2021

Prof. Michael E. Sinatra



“Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” ([1993] 19)

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- ▶ The use of quick succession of panels to underscore the action
 - ▶ The gutter
 - ▶ The contrast between the text and the images in various scenes
 - ▶ Will Eisner argues that the reader of comics is compelled to engage as an **active participant** in the interpretation of the text; indeed this is the first point most critics working on comics underscore, that the reader is the one who brings closure into their interpretive reception of graphic novel. In contrast, the film audience is largely passive, forced to watch at the **pace imposed by the editor**.

The debate between general accessibility and cultural authenticity is usually based on the concept of cultural authenticity in the sphere of the literary: comicbooks are measured against the narratives and characterisation found in the novel or are measured against a set of cultural values derived from literature. ../..

Mila Bongco, Reading Comics: Language, Culture, and the Concept of the Superhero in Comic Books (2000) 25

../.. Given this criteria of evaluation, comics are naturally almost always found wanting. This attempt to designate the particular, historical specific modes of representation which have characterised the novel as a guarantor of the worth of all cultural forms cannot be impartial.

Mila Bongco, *Reading Comics: Language, Culture, and the Concept of the Superhero in Comic Books* (2000) 25

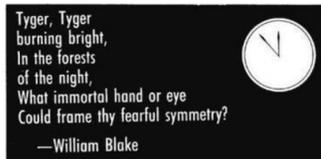
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- Doomsday clock
 - Notion of time (yours and a character like Dr. Manhattan)
 - Use of colour, transitions, frame-within-a-frame [graffiti] but also story-within-story [Tales]
 - Close-reading of the first page of the first issue

• On the Use of Doubles

Daniel's decision to dress up as a masked crimefighter, not only with childhood fantasies and mid-life crises of the idle rich, but also with the more disturbing and interesting issue of sexual fetish.

Geoff Klock, *How To Read Superhero Comics And Why* (New York & London: Continuum, 2002) 87

- On the inevitable decline of leaders and empires
- Rorschach as symptomatic of multilayered story
- An exercise in close reading I: chapter V (“Fearful Symmetry” [Blake’s poem])



- Holly Manson’s Autobiography (cf. chapter II: “Yes, we were crazy, we were kinky, we were Nazis, all those things that people say. We were also doing something because we believed in it.”) and Tales of the Black Freighter
- **On Superheroes and Super villains**
- On the Panopticon, Foucault writes that it was designed to “induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la Prison 201)



Any film in which people intermittently burst into song is obviously theatrical, stylized, and patently unreal.

Paul Roen, *High Camp* (1994) 11

There's no doubt that the superhero has become one of the staples of popular entertainment and, through that, of mass consciousness.

Danny Fingeroth, *Superman on the Couch* (2004) 18

Many [of these YouTube performances] are ephemeral tokens that speak of the ease of production in the age of social media rather than reflective responses to philosophically nuanced and dramatically powerful texts. But a number of these clips bring fresh ways of looking at canonical texts[.]

Sean McCarthy, "Giving Sam a Second Life",
T.S.L.L 51, 1 (Spring 2009) 106-7

Contemporary popular culture [...] is fundamentally different from older forms of folk culture in that it is mediated. The (media) literacy needed to partake in contemporary popular culture underscores this.

Joke Hermes, *Re-Reading Popular Culture* (2007) 140

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- Evil League of Evil (cf. "Dr." Horrible and Bad Horse [literal])
 - Humour of Moist (and idea of Henchmen union)
 - Stereotype of love interest / idea of destiny (cf. Penny's song dressed as Snow White)
 - Structure of the three episodes (mood in 3 opening scenes / 2nd Act as saddest one / irony of 3rd one ["It's a good day to be homeless" / "I hate the homeless"])

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- Penny's Social work vs Super-heroes (cf. "My saving expertise")
 - Hyper-masculinity (cf. "love you to death" & "I'm in pain") vs hyper-shyness
 - Homophobic comments ("If you're not a freaking tart" and newscast)
 - "Brand new day" (cf. past battles in 1970s shot)
 - "So they say" (cf. fans, "There's no happy ending for me")

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- "Everyone's a hero" (cf. "It's not enough to bash in heads, you've got to bash in minds")
 - Loss of innocence (cf. change of outfit) and consequences (cf. Penny's death "Country mourns what's-her-name")

"I've killed myself so many times I don't even exist anymore", states Phil Connors (Bill Murray) in Groundhog Day. In the course of one repeated day he jumps off a building, is hit by a car, electrocutes himself in the bath and drives off a cliff taking an innocent groundhog with him. Regardless of that every morning he wakes up without a scratch; everything he did in the previous loop is erased. The paradox however is that Phil Connors did experience everything and it all stays in his memory. He then has memories of events that happened in other realities.

Linda Lahdenperä, "Live - Die - Repeat". The Time Loop as a Narrative and a Game Mechanic", *International Journal of Transmedia Literacy* 4 (December 2018) 158