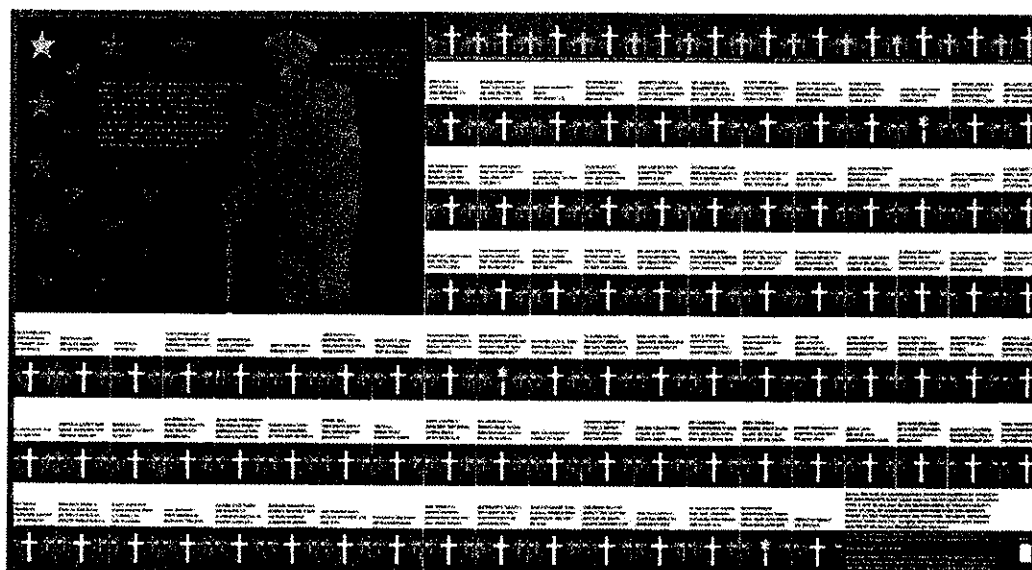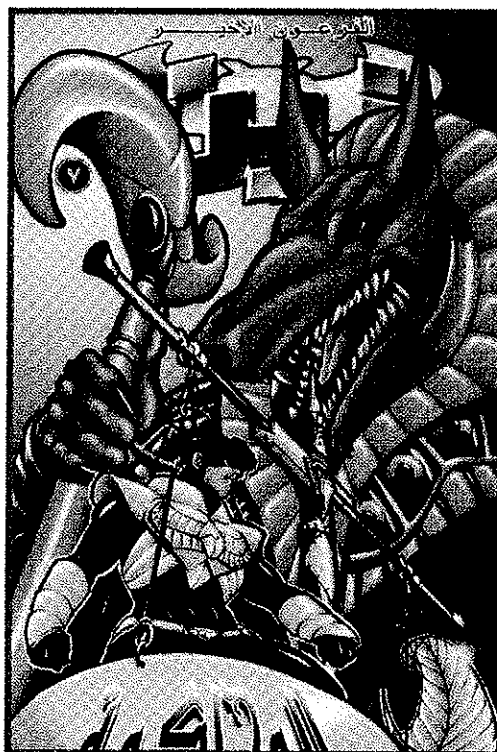# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
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# Visual Perspective and Narrative Voice in Comics: Redefining Literary Terminology

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It will come as no surprise to the average comics reader (if such a thing exists) that the kind of narratology required by this medium is radically different from that of other media. As such, and although we are so often restricted to analyzing comics using terminology taken from literary criticism or visual media, neither seem completely suited to the task at hand. The work of those comics scholars who are seeking to establish new critical and linguistic models must therefore be applauded. However, and despite what may be perceived as a misapplication of the same, it may nonetheless be that comics can be used to aid the evolution of critical models drawn from other media.

This article explores the application and relevance of current literary criticism to comics by applying a critical model drawn from the work of Gérard Genette to examples taken from *The Sandman* (Neil Gaiman/various) and *Preacher* (Garth Ennis/Steve Dillon). After establishing the tenets of comics' narratology, it defines the comic book panel as a hybrid signifier, a narrative morpheme that uses space to represent time and whose existence creates the hyperreal. It proceeds to explore the effects of comics' hyperrealism on narrative identity, whereby the literal pictorial view assigned to readers, together with their narrative input, contrasts strongly with their notion of their own identity as observer. It also considers the role of fictional truth in sustaining homodiegetic narrative and the effects of comics' visual elements upon our understanding of this. Ultimately, it argues for a revaluation of literary terminology and proposes a new taxonomy that combines Gérard Genette's heterodiegetic/homodiegetic framework with the grammatical terms of first-, second- and third-person narration.

## A Semiotics of Comics

The three main elements underlying a semiotics of comics may be defined as the depiction of time-as-space, the construction of an open narrative that relies upon the reader's contribution, and the creation of the hyperreal. This is, of course, only an overview: multiple visual and textual strategies are also used to limit and structure the text into issues, chapters, and so forth; however, these are additive techniques rather than integral to the medium's narratology. I would argue that many of the narrative features of comics stem from these three underlying processes.

In his seminal work *Understanding Comics*, creator and theorist Scott McCloud makes some extremely incisive comments concerning the representation of time as space within comicbook panels, concluding that: "In learning to read comics we all learned to perceive time spatially, for in the world of comics, time and space are one and the same" (1993:100). For example, panels containing conversation (where remarks and replies are portrayed in speech bubbles reading from left to right/top to bottom) portray a period of time, be it five seconds or five minutes, whereas some panels portray a single moment and nothing more, for example an impact shot as part of a fight scene. The size of a panel may also indicate its duration, as do the events within it; as McCloud comments further: "it's not hard to make an educated guess as to the duration of a given sequence, so long as the elements of that sequence are familiar to us" (1993:100) and a pause in a conversation, for example, will be perceived as a few seconds. Will Eisner also comments that "There is an almost geometric relationship between the duration of dialogue and the endurance of the posture from which it emanates" (1996:60), and I would extend the implications of this statement to non-dialogic panels: the pose a character holds will directly affect the length of time the panel is perceived to last.

Although both the use of space and the panel content provide a basis for translating space into time, ultimately the reader must interpret this. Since most of us have never been involved in many of the dramatic situations we experience in comics we also rely on intertextuality -- movies, books, and so forth -- to provide us with a sense of timing. However, the role of the reader becomes of most importance in between panels, when they must fill in the gutters. Above two sequential panels (the first of which shows an axe-wielding maniac chasing down a victim at close quarters; the second simply the shout of "EEYAA!! " over a city skyline), McCloud famously writes "I may have drawn an axe being raised in this example, but I'm not the one who let it drop or decided how hard the blow, or who screamed, or why. That, dear reader, was your special crime, each of you committing it in your own style" (1993: 68). Each reader fills in the gutter in his/her own way – although similar, no two interpretations can ever be identical. This process applies to all comics and the gutter is often the site of major events. The reader works alongside the creators as a kind of contributory author, both by interpreting the panel content, and by filling in the gaps.

Traditionally, the hyperreal is evoked through a notion of the original. However, contemporary comics exist in no original state; from the initial written script to the final pencilled, colored pages which exist in various stages -- or perhaps just digitally -- there is no original entire comic book to be duplicated and distributed. By overtly denying the concept of the original and existing in such multiple forms, the comic becomes a postmodern artefact that instead evokes the hyperreal through its excess of style. This is achieved through the

inconstant audience perspective (in terms of both literal view and narrative identity, both of which are in constant flux), and an overtly stylized aesthetic. This aesthetic of overly stylized art also contributes by blurring the lines between the signifier and signified -- to create a comic is not a way of telling a story with illustrations replicating the world it is set in, but a creation of that fantastic world from scratch.

The idea of the panel as a single, discrete signifier is essential to this conception of the hyperreal, and I'd like to pause for a second here to establish this.

> **hybrid** ▼ **A** *noun.* 1 An animal or plant that is the offspring of individuals of different kinds (usually, different species) [...]
> ▼ **B** *adjective.* 1. Of mixed character, heterogeneous; derived from unlike sources [...]
> **hybrid vigour** = HETEROSIS [...] 2. GENETICS. The tendency of a crossbred individual to show qualities superior to those of both parents [...]
> (*OED*, hybrid; heterosis)

In the light of these definitions, I have no hesitation defining the panel as hybrid. This is primarily because I believe that the panel as signifier is a unified single entity, which rules out definitions such as plural and multiple. Furthermore, the word hybrid seems particularly apt, firstly since the panel is intentionally created as a combination of elements and secondly because these elements are "unlike."

In *Understanding Comics*, McCloud comments on the differences between pictures and words by treating the two as "icons" (visual symbols that represent a meaning), and concluding that they are diametrically opposed: whereas pictures work on the basis of realistic representation, "words are totally abstract icons" (1993:28). That the typography and style of comics comes near to reversing these definitions (text appears to be hand-drawn while art is heavily abstracted and stylized) does not change their opposition. Will Eisner draws on the development of hieroglyphics and Chinese and Japanese pictographs (whereby ongoing simplification and abstraction of communicatory pictures resulted in the formation of a language) as one explanation for the highly stylized art used in comics, comparing artistic execution to a kind of calligraphy "if one considers the effect the cartoonist's style has upon the character of the total product" (Eisner, 1990:14). Eisner sees both words and pictures as distinct languages, which are welded together in comics.

Conversely, McCloud objects to the notion of the panel as a combination of words and pictures, seeing this as reductionist: "it's a mistake to see comics as a mere hybrid of the graphic arts and prose fiction" (1993:92). However, it seems to me that this confuses issues of plurality with hybridism, hence my inclusion of the biological term "hybrid vigour" within the dictionary quotation above. "Hybrid" implies anything but reductionism, referring as it does to the

creation of a new entity that often surpasses the sum of its parts.

In *Understanding Comics*, McCloud instead postulates six different panel types, based on the way in which word and picture are combined. All these function at the level of signification and, hence, fall under my perception of the hybrid signifier: as in no instance is either word or picture rendered useless or separate from the other. McCloud believes otherwise, however, commenting that in his picture-specific combinations (**Fig. 1**) "words do little more than add a soundtrack to a visually told sequence" (153). I would disagree with this: it seems integral to my notion of the hybrid signifier that all elements of the panel are essential to it *as signifier*. Considering this example, it seems to me that the shout of "*HE DID IT!*" does more than add a soundtrack: it tells us that the bowler is a man; that someone else is there rooting for him; that the throw was important (or else why such jubilation?), and so forth.



Fig. 1. A picture-specific combination. Extract from *Understanding Comics* (McCloud, 1993:153).

By focusing on the ways in which word and image are combined, McCloud's combinations actually hold these two lexicons separate from each other. However, if we instead examine the panel at the level of signification, all elements may be analyzed together. This approach is implicitly supported by Roland Barthes's deconstructive process for press photographs, in which he examines text and image separately due to their being "contiguous" (having "separate defined spaces" on the page), rather than "homogenized" (as in forms such as the rebus -- and, in my view, the comic-book panel -- which fuse words and images in a single line of reading) (1977:16). Various physical attributes of the panel such as borders, colors, and so forth, prevent the separation of word and image by creating an association even if, in terms of content, there is no overt relevance (as, for example, in McCloud's parallel combination). Again this returns us to reader involvement as the inclusion of two elements in the same panel (and therefore within the overall context of a story), no matter how unalike they may be, forces the reader to combine them

in whatever way they think best and draw their own conclusions as to the meaning of the scene signified.

The combination of McCloud's that seems closest to my notion of the hybrid signifier is his interdependent combination, where "words and pictures are like partners in a dance and each one takes turns leading. When both partners try to lead, the competition can subvert the overall goals [...] But when these partners each know their roles -- and support each other's strengths -- comics can match any of the art forms it draws so much of its strength from" (156). I would postulate that all of his types fall under this definition: although the distinctions he makes are useful tools, they refer to little more than the degree to which either words or pictures lead the story.

It therefore seems that McCloud's combinations only reflect greater or lesser degrees of interdependency, while often overlooking the fundamental unity of the panel -- his referral to the types as "combinations" testifies to this. By contrast, Will Eisner does identify the mutual reliance of words and pictures within the panel: "When the two are 'mixed' the words become welded to the image and no longer serve to describe but rather to provide sound, dialogue and connective passages" (Eisner, 1990:122). I would argue that this welding of words and pictures creates a single, hybrid signifier. However, Eisner fails to take this any further, stopping short of exploring the effects and nature of this mix.

Taking all this into account, I define the hybrid signifier as follows:

> **hybrid signifier** -- multiple signifiers interact to create a single unified signifier (such as words and pictures within the comicbook panel).

The notion of interacting signifiers may appear problematic but can be related to Mark Currie's observations on the nature of language, where he comments that words too are not only "internally divided" due to their composition of alterable sequences of letters -- "it is only as part of a combinative sequence that the word accrues meaning, so that it is marked by the temporal process of the discourse of which it is part" (1998:81). Rhymes, alliteration, or personal memories can all contaminate the meaning of a word, simply by virtue of its reminiscence to another -- or its meaning (contextual or personal) to its various speakers or addressees.

Similarly, Jacques Derrida's poststructuralist work turned largely on his theory that "it is impossible rigorously to separate the poetic-cum-rhetorical dimension of the text (the level of the signifier) from the 'content,' message or meaning (the level of the signified)" (Lechte, 1994:108), due to the notion that context overrules all other constraints of language. Taking this into account, it seems that the panel can indeed be seen as a signifier, with its signified being a narrative morpheme -- a scene, moment, or gesture in a story, overwhelmingly dependent on context. Will Eisner's classic definition of comics

as "sequential art" also emphasizes the single panel's dependence on context and, in this light, I feel confident to proceed with my definition.

## The Literary Model

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| pause: | $NT = n$, $ST = 0$. Thus: $NT\infty > T$ | [NT is infinitely greater than ST] |
| scene: | $NT = ST$ | [NT is the same as ST] |
| summary: | $NT < ST$ | [NT is less than ST] |
| ellipsis: | $NT = 0$, $ST = n$. Thus: $NT < \infty ST$. | [NT is infinitely less than ST] |

(Genette, 1980:95). NT is narrative time; ST is story time.

Gérard Genette's *Narrative Discourse* broke new ground when it was published in 1980. This text coined modern criticism's heterodiegetic and homodiegetic labels; the former being "the narrator absent from the story he tells" and the latter "the narrator present as a character in the story he tells," whether as hero/ine ("autodiegetic") or secondary character ("homodiegetic"). As Genette explains further: "Absence is absolute, but presence has degrees. So we will have to differentiate within the homodiegetic type at least two varieties: one where the narrator is the hero of his narrative and one where he plays only a secondary role, which almost always turns out to be a role as observer and witness" (Genette, 1980: 244-245). This terminology has now in many ways replaced the tradition of describing narrative as first-, second- or third-person.

The book also offers the above narratological model, which seems particularly relevant to comics. It considers the various ways in which narrative time/*sju⬚et* (NT) relates to story time/*fabula* (ST) and uses the weighting of these two terms to define the text syntactically. This model has subsequently been modified by Christine Brooke-Rose in her book *A Rhetoric of the Unreal* (1981), where she redefines its asymmetry so that "NT=ST" becomes pure dialogue. This enables her to extend Genette's model to include the missing term "NT>ST," which she defines as a scene (due to the inclusion of narrative description) (315):

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| pause: | $NT = n$, $ST = 0$. Thus: $NT\infty > ST$ | [NT is infinitely greater than ST] |
| scene: | $NT > ST$ | [NT is greater than ST] |
| dialogue: | $NT = ST$ | [NT is the same as ST] |
| summary: | $NT < ST$ | [NT is less than ST] |
| ellipsis: | $NT = 0$, $ST = n$. Thus: $NT < \infty ST$. | [NT is infinitely less than ST] |

(Brooke-Rose, 1981:315)

Brooke-Rose's modification enables all scenes incorporating narration to be defined as the missing "NT>ST" (Brooke-Rose, 1981:315). To my mind, the medium of comics enhances this distinction: as panels with no

heterodiegetic narration most obviously epitomize a ratio where "NT=ST" while still remaining able to include visual or emotive elements such as expression, tone, and so forth. Panels with narrative may then be defined as "NT>ST."



**Fig. 2. Deconstructing visual perspective. Extract from "When the Story Began"** (*Preacher* #9) (Ennis, 1997:44, full page). Jesse's narration of his past.

The structure of this model further supports a view of the panel as signifier. The comic book panel is narrative time (NT), a hybrid signifier that represents a varying amount of story time (ST). I would argue that panel's time-as-space arrangement of pictorial elements indicate the story time it represents, which its dialogic and narrative content (if any) further clarifies. However, the panel's pictorial elements can also indicate NT as either less than ST (through the use of summary shots, as for example the final panel of **Fig. 2**), or greater than ST (when considering the amount of extraneous description conveyed by the composition and detail of a panel).

To summarize briefly, then, we may define comics narratology as based on an open half-narrative that relies on the reader both to interpret the panel contents and fill in the gutters. The panel itself is a hybrid signifier that represents a varying amount of story time and the method of this representation leads me now to a discussion of the hyperreal.

The blurring between representation and the real which creates the hyperreal is achieved in comics through use of a deliberately stylized aesthetic and a constantly varying perspective that creates a tension between narrative identity and visual view. I would argue that this tension has a dramatic effect on literary terminology. This may be demonstrated by close analysis of **Fig. 3**, which is taken from "Collectors," *The Sandman* #14.

As here, the switch from a heterodiegetic (or external) perspective to the homodiegetic perspective of the victim, halfway down the page, jumps us into an apparent immediacy; a heightened representation. For all intents and purposes we are Philip, and the pictures accomplish this in a way no text can. Even a traditional first person narrative ("they loom in front of me") is remote in comparison since "me" is not the reader. Perhaps the closest textual equivalent would be a modernist second person narrative ("they loom in front of you"); however, this prescriptive narrative voice still detracts from any immediacy. The visual element transcends this.

Where, then, is the reader? Although we have Philip's perspective, we are not Philip in any sense. Perhaps the question, then, may inform discussion of narrative identity. Lyotard's theory of the formation of the social bond through language games implies an incorporation of the formation of personal identity, but it is Mark Currie's narratological model that focuses primarily on this. Currie posits that narrative founds identity in that we construe our identity against that of others, via difference, and externalize our conception of it by using narrative methods; by telling our own story (Currie, 1998:17). However, he also raises the question of view, of vision, commenting on the "tension between seeing and writing [...] in contemporary narratology" (127) since seeing overrules the authority of verbal narrative.

Bearing in mind this undermining of narrative control and the fluctuating positions of the creator and reader, the evocation of the hyperreal can be described as a side effect of the multiple points of view that are created by

juxtaposition. The literal pictorial view assigned by the panel (which is often a homodiegetic character view) and the narrative input granted to the reader are set against the strongly contrasting notion of our own identity as observer. This role of onlooker is further emphasized by controlling devices (such as a heterodiegetic narrative voice or constant shifts in visual perspective) within the text. It is at this point that the hyperreal first begins to trouble us, and is then continually evoked through other methods.
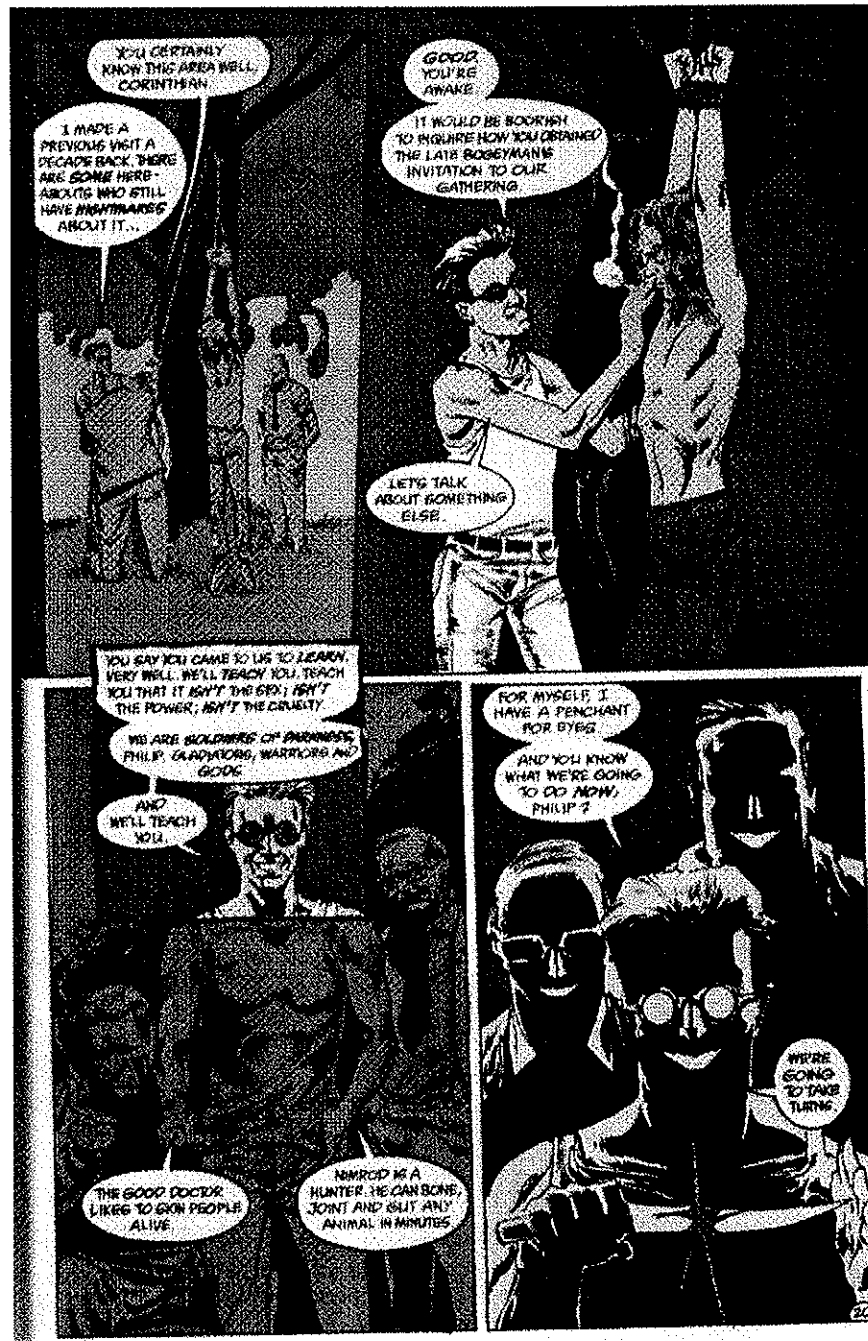


Fig. 3. Deconstructing narrative voice. Extract from "Collectors" (*The Sandman* #14) (Gaiman, 1990:5.20, full page). Set at a convention for serial killers, three of the genuine killers have discovered an undercover reporter named Philip in their midst and are disposing of him.

Currie comments that seeing is generally taken to overrule writing and reading, not only due to notions of the sign and its origin, but also as a consequence of the realistic medium seeing generally requires: as in filmic narration, where the camera will "reveal the truth of past events as a reliable contrast to their narration in words" (1998:126). The reliability of the medium itself is seldom compromised, since "film can only deceive through the use of implausible rubber masks and improbable doubles" (126). However, comics' use of overtly stylized art subverts this (as there is no truth or realism inherent in the mode (drawing) or style (which is generally non-realistic)), and seeing in comics is therefore elevated to the same fictional status as writing within this medium. If "postmodern art is not so much ambiguous as it is doubled and contradictory" (Hutcheon, 1988:87), then comic book art is postmodern in the extreme as it denies notions of realism and, as noted, the notion of the original via its status as an overtly reproduced copy. In this way, contemporary comics illustrate the notion of art in the age of mechanical reproduction (Walter Benjamin) as they exist in no original, complete state.

In light of this, we can see how the illustrative elements of the comic reinforce and sustain the excess of the medium. In Fig. 2, the use of color in panels 3 and 4 is in stark contrast to the muted, indistinct illustrations of panels 1 and 2. The blandness of color in these first panels emphasizes the sudden use of red -- a great deal of red -- for the face-on shot of the three killers. The use of a separate, smaller panel in contrasting purple around the Corinthian's head (he with the sunglasses) in panel 3 similarly heightens the sensation -- he is the focal point of the scene, both for us and for his victim. The move from this heightened sensuality to the stark, menacing silhouettes is again disorientating: the single red glint from the knife draws our eye (making us uncomfortably conscious of the Corinthian's "PENCHANT"), and hence the panel also provides the reader with personal closure -- we can be sure that there is no escape for Philip.

The way that the colors play with our senses while the pictures play with notions of perspective produces a heightened sense of representation, while the typography of the language provides a similarly exaggerated reproduction of realism. As there is no narration, the equation of narrative time with story time further aids the hyperreal by providing a similar reproduction of "real time." The manipulation of these interlocking elements takes the scene into hyperrealism: exposed as *a facsimile with no original* the whole becomes the ultra-real, a signature of the real in excess. Through the interaction of multiple elements, comics enter the hyperreal.

# Redefining the Literary Model

In this way, the visuality of comics collapses many of the barriers between reader and author, and in so doing invokes the hyperreal. Comics' verbal construction also contributes to this merging of roles. Pre-1980s, narratives and stories were often overwhelmed by the overt presence of authorial control over these elements as authors manipulated obviously in order to make the points they felt necessary (Currie, 1998: 23). This is also observable in earlier mainstream comics which didactically addressed their perceived child audience, whereas now the contemporary trend in narrative is to veil authorial control.

However, I believe this apparent absence of narrative is also due to the evocation of the hyperreal through over-stylized art and text: by exposing the layers we are distracted from the notion of a unified vision driving the work. Even in *The Sandman*, which is overwhelmingly narrative-driven despite its medium, this illusion persists. Conversely, throughout the entire 66 episodes of *Preacher*, writer Garth Ennis barely uses third-person heterodiegetic narration. Excluding some issues which have the briefest of introductions stating time or place (which are deliberately vague, such as "NOW" (1997:7.1), or "SIX MONTHS LATER" and "SIX MONTHS EARLIER" (1999:3.1; 5.1)), there are maybe five instances of this kind of authorial narration, none of which runs for more than a few pages.[1] Homodiegetic first-person narration (from the point of view of one of the characters) occurs a little more, but overall, Ennis chooses to tell his story predominantly in dialogue.

In this respect, comics' hybrid language alerts us to an often-overlooked point of literary terminology. As mentioned, the trend of describing narrative as first-, second- or third-person has given way to modern criticism's homodiegetic and heterodiegetic labels. However, comics display the inadequacy of both systems *if used alone*. The adaptability of comics' narrative boxes provides for first-, second- or third-person narrative, that may be either heterodiegetic or homodiegetic (my use of which term includes Genette's autodiegetic category, which is essentially "the strong degree of the homodiegetic" [Genette, 1980:245]). In this way, comics reveal the need for a critical terminology that combines both methods.

For example, narrative boxes may offer a first-person homodiegetic narrative, as for example, when the character Barbie comments in *The Sandman: A Game of You* "I FELT LIKE BILBO IN *MIRKWOOD*, IN THAT BIT WHERE THE GIANT SPIDERS GET THEM°" (1993:6.14.3). But they may just as easily use third-person homodiegetic narrative, as for example in *The Sandman: Worlds' End*, where the character Petrefax's narration contains multiple stories ("SHE TRAVELLED A WAY SHE HAD NEVER BEFORE GONE°" (1994:5.20.3)). Slides and complex transitions are also possible; as in the narrative on page 12 of "Collectors" which, although it begins as third-person heterodiegetic ("HE

DIDN 'T THINK THERE WOULD BE SO *MANY* OF THEM"), proceeds to use the second-person homodiegetic ("PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER [°] YOU 'RE THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CONVENTION COMMITTEE"), and by the final panel, has become first-person homodiegetic ("LAUGH YOU BASTARDS LAUGH AT MY JOKE LAUGH OR I'LL°"") (Gaiman, 1990:12.1; 12.6).

This technique affects narrative identity as it may also be employed to immerse the readers in the story and address them through the panels. At the end of *The Sandman* #72, the narrative is initially homodiegetic, as when Morpheus says: "**They are awake. All but one°** "(Gaiman, 1997:92.1), referring to the reader. However, this slips seamlessly into second-person heterodiegetic as we are then addressed directly by the narrator/Gaiman (1997:92.4). The mobility of narrative techniques available to comics makes these sorts of changes not only possible, but discreet.

In "The Castle" (the prologue to *The Sandman: The Kindly Ones*), a dreamer is given a tour around Morpheus's castle. From a linguistic view, the narrative is initially first-person homodiegetic, as a fictional dreamer muses before falling asleep, before the story becomes purely dialogic, as characters in the story introduce themselves to the dreamer. Visually, however, the perspective of the panels transforms their dialogue into a kind of second-person homodiegetic narrative, as they appear to be addressing themselves directly to us (1996:"Prologue," 8.1). We have become the dreamer in the story.

This new taxonomy does not have to be limited to textual voice, as similar use may also be made of changing visual perspectives, for example to allow analysis of silent panels. In *Preacher: Until the End of the World*, Jesse's story of his childhood is illustrated with pictures of the past and the present as he narrates (**Fig. 2**). Although this is narrated as first-person homodiegetic (by Jesse), the panel perspective is constantly changing. We can see the effects of this as the story cuts twice between the past and the present in the space of six panels. Initially (in the present) while panel 1 is heterodiegetic, panel 2 appears to be Tulip's perspective of Jesse. This is indicated both semantically (by her sidelong glance in panel 1, which trains her eyes directly on the profile picture of Jesse in panel 2), and syntactically (by the overlap between the two panels). Further down the page, in a scene from Jesse's past, the visual narrative changes from Jesse's perspective (panel 3), to Jody's perspective (in panel 4), to a heterodiegetic perspective (panels 5 and 6).

It is obviously more difficult to classify silent panels in terms of mode of address -- that is, as first-, second- or third-person -- and it may well be that a framework drawn from art or film criticism will prove more helpful than applying literary terminology in this context. However, I would tentatively argue that, perhaps, such a panel could be classified either in terms of the relationship between the panel and the hyperrealist comicbook world, or with reference to its relationship to a specific character's perspective. Panels that show a view

distinctly personal to one of the characters (whether this is literal point of view, hallucination, dream sequence, or similar) might thereby be defined as a first-person address, where that which is depicted is unique and personal to a single perspective.

In **Fig. 2**, then, the majority of panels appear to be third-person, as they display the comic book world from a perspective that might best be defined as neutral. The exception is, of course, panel 5, which has a plain white background. As such, it may be that the visual mode of address here can be defined as second-person; as it solely contains the image of Jesse narrating his tale. Panel 6 then returns us to a third-person visual perspective of the story being told that may nonetheless be defined as heterodiegetic since it is not obviously assigned to any character.

However, the story is being told by Jesse, from his memory, and so should be drawn entirely from Jesse's perspective. That switches to heterodiegetic perspectives and even other homodiegetic perspectives (such as Jody's) fit smoothly into the sequencing of panels is evidence of the power of the medium to sustain these sorts of contradictions and excesses. In this way the hyperreal invokes the tension between seeing and hearing and disrupts narrative identity by providing multiple points of view.

In conclusion, I would argue that the mobility of narrative voice and visual perspective in comics alerts us to new classificatory possibilities within the realm of literature and other media. As a hybrid signifier, the comic book panel merges both visual and verbal narrative strands together and, in so doing, invokes the tension between seeing and hearing. In so doing, it creates the hyperreal. The reader is thereby given multiple perspectives and situated both within and without the story; effecting a postmodern conception of narrative identity as multiple and even contradictory. As such, it seems that a revaluation of literary terminology may be required in order to more accurately reflect the relevance of literary theory to postmodern media.

## Endnote

[1] In some trade paperbacks, pages are renumbered sequentially. In these instances I shall cite references as here, where 7.1 refers to page 7, panel 1. In trade paperbacks, where numbering is retained from individual issues, I shall cite references in a three-digit form (for example 6.14.3 corresponds to part 6, page 14, panel 3).

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