Peter Waites

On the Boundaries of *Watchmen*

Paratextual Narratives across Media

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Abstract
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This dissertation is an intervention into the ongoing revisions of Gerard Genette's concept of paratexts. Increasingly used in discussions of artifacts other than the literary novels that were Genette's object of attention, the concept of paratexts has given rise to intense debates regarding the nature and functions of paratextual elements across media. One area of contestation is the relation of paratext to narrative. While Genette's original paradigm complicates the possibility of a narrative paratext, I show that the liminal zones usually occupied by paratexts—what I call *paratextual space*—are commonly used for narrative purposes, particularly as popular narratives extend across media. In this dissertation, I analyze the different embodiments of *Watchmen* with a focus on such a use of paratextual spaces. I argue that studies of narratives presented in these spaces—what I refer to as *paratextual narratives*—will not only shed light on these narrative strategies, but also give new insights into how popular narratives extend across new media platforms.

My first analytical chapter concerns the material that frames the *Watchmen* graphic narrative, and its roots in the media specific history and paratextual phenomenon known as lettercols. I show how this paratextual space was repurposed in the creation of *Watchmen* to present narrative material that worked to establish and augment the history of the storyworld and the characters presented in the graphic narrative of the *Watchmen* comics. I argue that the functions of these materials are influenced by the tradition established by the lettercols and the paratextual spaces in which they are situated. In my second analytical chapter I turn to the *Watchmen* adaptation, focusing in particular on the digital narratives framing the cinematic premiere of the film. I show how the paratextual nature of these materials occluded their narrative functions, causing them to be excluded from what is regarded the adaptation of *Watchmen*. I argue that the materials framing the *Watchmen* film are paratextual narratives that should be seen as integral parts of the *Watchmen* adaptation. In my conclusion I address the *Watchmen* prequel-series *Before Watchmen* and raise questions regarding how paratextual narratives function for media franchising.

Keywords: Paratexts, Watchmen, comics, graphic novels, transmedia storytelling, media franchising, new media, adaptation.

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For Malin, Ewa, and Thomas Waites

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Told on the Threshold:
Narrative and Paratextual Space

One of the few things critics agreed on in their reviews of the *Watchmen* film was its effective use of the opening credits sequence to introduce the *Watchmen* storyworld. Set to Bob Dylan's "The Times they are a-Changing," a five-minutes long montage of slow-motion photography led the audience through the most crucial aspects of the twentieth century history of the *Watchmen* alternate universe: the first appearances of masked avengers such as Nite Owl, Silk Spectre, and Comedian in the late 1930s; the formation of the story's first group of vigilantes—the Minutemen—and their downfall following the end of WWII; the emergence of the superhuman Dr. Manhattan and the escalation of the Vietnam War; the subsequent intensification of the Cold War and Nixon's third reelection; and finally presenting a new generation of vigilantes in Rorschach, Silk Spectre II, Nite Owl II, and Ozymandias, the film's main cast of characters. In his review for *Time Magazine*, Richard Corliss' celebrated the cleverness of having the *Watchmen* film's opening credits summarize decades of vigilante history, and Antony Lane of the *New Yorker* called the opening montage "the highlight of the film." Lane particular enjoyed its brisk delivery of references to iconic images such as Da Vinci's "The Last Supper," Alfred Eisenstaedt's "V-J Day in Times Square," and Andy Warhol's pop-art portraits, and was delighted to see the *Watchmen* heroes implicated at famous events such as the Kennedy assassination, the moon landing, and fraternizing with David Bowie and The Village People in front of Studio 54.

By showcasing scenes from the long history that precedes the story told in the movie, this credit sequence diverges from the jumbled chronology characterizing the *Watchmen* graphic narrative to demonstrate how the existence of masked adventurers influenced *Watchmen*'s alternate reality. At the same time, the sequence underscores the importance of this alternate history for the events depicted in the *Watchmen* film, not least concerning the conspiracy at the heart of its finale. These opening credits exemplify a broader set of practices of utilizing spaces such as cinematic credits sequences—spaces usually designated as paratexts, external to and therefore not considered part

of the text—to advance the narratives framed by those spaces, a practice that has been largely overlooked by critics and scholars working to expand the concept of paratexts for other media than the literary print novels it was developed to address.[1] This study is an intervention into the ongoing revisions of the concept of paratexts. I will argue that we need to complement the concept of paratext with that of *paratextual space* to account for the cultural practice of using such spaces for presenting narrative content that extends, augments or in other ways adds to the texts that these spaces purportedly frame.

I analyze how paratextual spaces are used for narrative purposes, whether within the protocols of a particular medium or when narratives are extended across media. An exemplary test case for this investigation is *Watchmen*, since its narrative recurrently spills over into paratextual spaces. The different incarnations of *Watchmen*—the 1986 limited series of comic books, the graphic novel published in 1987, and the transmedia adaptation in 2009— allow me to bring into focus a number of questions about the concept of paratexts: how do the concept of paratexts and paratextual space translate from the print novel to serialized comic books and graphic novels, and into cinematic and new media embodiments of popular narrative? How are *Watchmen*'s paratextual spaces redrawn and the narrative segments presented therein—what I will refer to as *paratextual narratives*—reconfigured? How do these transformations challenge what we perceive as the boundaries of the *Watchmen* text? What are the implications of these transformations for our understanding of how paratextual spaces are used for narrative purposes outside the traditions of literary print novels? I argue that studying the practice of situating narrative segments in paratextual spaces will not only heighten our understanding of these particular kinds of narrative designs but also provide us with new ways of thinking about how various paratextual factors can circumscribe as well as open up our readings of popular narratives.

A discussion of this nature will inescapably cut across various academic areas and debates. As expected, most pertinent for my investigation are the ongoing deliberations regarding the concept of the paratext. Also important are the discussions at the heart of the emergence of graphic narrative studies, debates that are central for the first chapter of this study. Equally significant

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[1] Examples of similar uses of opening credits sequences for narrative can be seen in, for example, Marvel's *The Incredible Hulk* (2008), which mimics the late 1970s TV-show to recap the origin story of that superhero in a suitable way for this particular adaptation; in HBO's *Game of Thrones* (2010–ongoing), in which every episode's opening sequence guides the viewer across a map of the fantasy world in which the series takes place; or in Pixar's *Wall-E* (2008), in which, conversely, the end credits sequence documents what happens following the events portrayed in the film. To view these and many other examples, visit www.artofthetitle.com.

to the discussion of the different embodiments of *Watchmen* are theories of new media and the emerging studies of transmedia storytelling, areas that are key concerns in my second chapter. Overall, my work participates in current discussions concerning textual media and comparative media studies, a field of inquiry spearheaded by N. Katherine Hayles and Jessica Pressman in the introduction to their co-edited volume *Comparative Textual Media: Transforming the Humanities in the Postprint Era* (2013). Below I survey debates about the paratext, graphic narratives, and new media and transmedia storytelling in order to provide the theoretical context needed for my investigation into the use of paratextual spaces for narrative purposes in the various embodiments of *Watchmen*.

The Paratextual Paradox

The concept of paratexts was introduced by Gerard Genette in *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (1997) and expanded in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (1987). Genette describes the various relationships between a text and artifacts such as titles, prefaces, headings, and footnotes, defining these artifacts as paratexts. Paratexts, Genette proposes, are partly designed to *present* the text to the reader, but also responsible for *making present* the text as a book, and for ensuring that it is spread and consumed. Building on how the prefix *para-* establishes both proximity and distance between the text and the elements that surround it, Genette develops the concept of the paratext to address what he calls the "heterogeneous group of practices and discourses" residing on the boundaries or borders of a text (*Paratexts* 2). To further elucidate these boundaries and discourses, Genette distinguishes between paratextual elements that are physically attached to a published text as *peritexts* (meaning elements such as covers, prefaces, and footnotes), and others as *epitexts* (meaning material such as adverts and reviews). He emphasizes the importance of the time and place in which a paratext appears, what he calls the "characteristics of [the paratext's] situation of communication" (8).[2] With this paradigm in place, the concept of paratexts becomes a way of identifying and discussing the specific artifacts found on the boundaries of literary texts, the artifacts which frame and mediate between the text and the surrounding discourses and contexts.

Since its inception, Genette's concept of paratexts has proven to be a valuable tool in the analysis of the traditional novel as well as other kinds of

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[2] This completes the formula *paratext = peritext + epitext*. However, as Genette explains, temporal variables may cause a paratext previously categorized as an epitext to become a peritext in the event of a future publication of a text. An example of this would be any scholarly edition whose publication includes reviews or critical essays that were originally published separately from that text (5).

print literature. For instance, Koenraad Claes looks at paratexts in Victorian periodicals, and utilizes Genette's theory as a prism to better understand the various uses of the literary supplement during this period. Similarly, in an analysis of Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* (1852–1853), Emily Steinlight employs the concept of paratexts to untangle the role of magazine advertising for the serially published Victorian novel. Further, Rune Graulund employs the concept in his discussion of *House of Leave*s (2000) to demonstrate how the extreme paratextual experimentation of Mark Z. Danielewski's debut novel emphasizes the uncanny elements of that narrative. Moreover, the concept of paratexts is vividly discussed in conjunction with inquiries into our increasingly convergent and digitized media ecology. Scholars such as Steve Jones, Jason Mittell, and Gavin Stewart, among others, have successfully developed and employed the concept of the paratext to describe artifacts such as film trailers, commercial websites, social digital networks, as well as the kind of opening credits sequences discussed above, all of which are elements that in different ways frame texts, whether cinematic, televisual, or transmedial.

A particularly important work (if not unproblematic) for my investigation is Jonathan Gray's *Shows Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (2010). Gray adopts the concept of paratexts in order to address how "hype, synergy, promos, narrative extensions, and various forms of related textuality position, define, and create meaning for film and television" narratives (3). Through the terms "*entryway-*" and "*in medias res paratext*," Gray makes a compelling case for the importance of paratextual materials such as film trailers, tie-in videogames, prequels, sequels, and DVD bonus features to how narrative meaning is created (35-45). Crucially, Gray's study does an important job in underscoring that, while these kinds of materials are frequently dismissed, they are "anything but peripheral." Instead, as Gray demonstrates, "they often play a constitutive role in the production, development, and expansion of the text," particularly so, as I will demonstrate in relation to *Watchmen*, when employed to extend narratives across platforms and media (175).

Another significant contribution to the development of the concept of paratexts for new media is the essay "Paratext and Digitized Narrative: Mapping the Field" (2013), in which Dorothee Birke and Birte Christ take up the development of the concept of paratexts to address digitized version of previously published cultural texts such as e-books or films on DVDs. While it is not their primary focus, they briefly comment on how deleted scenes on DVD often tell "additional stories," making "the status of such elements" problematic to define "with regard to the boundaries of the text." They explain that because of "their fictional status, such elements could be considered part of the main text, yet one could also claim that they are paratext, since they must be accessed separately" (73). Although they do not address this paradox directly, Birke and Christ maintain that employing a

paratextual framework to address these and similar situations provides a "treasure trove of questions" which can unlock deeper understanding regarding the ways in which new forms of narrative "really depart from the earlier paradigm of the narrative medium, the printed book" (66, 81). At the same time, Birke and Christ caution against endless expansion of the concept of paratexts. They argue that if text and context are brought too close together, the concept of paratexts "loses its analytic value" and the "'thresholds,' paratextual elements that negotiate the space between text and context, become increasingly difficult to isolate and identify" (80).

Birke and Christ also discuss how the cross-disciplinary reconceptualization of paratext is complicated in part due to Genette's use of print literature as the sole medium of reference in outlining his paratextual typology. This, they say, has resulted in uncertainties regarding how far the concept of paratexts "should be associated with the text and how far with the book" (69). George Stanitzek too has detailed this complication and how it manifests in relation to paratextual terminology, particularly Genette's definition of the literary text. Genette defines the text as "a more or less long sequence of verbal statements that are more or less endowed with significance," and paratexts as "verbal or other productions such as an author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations," and other common elements of book publishing (*Paratexts* 1). However, as Stanitzek argues, the term *paratext* "suggests that *text* is both something implied by *paratext* and simultaneously a superordinate concept," making it very difficult to distinguish "beyond a doubt" between text and paratext. Including *text* in the term *paratext*, claims Stanitzek, implies "at least a moment of readability and hence textuality," further complicating the conceptualization of "the paratext as an 'external' form," separate from the text yet simultaneously responsible for its existence and readability (30, emphases in original).[3] It is important to note, however, that Genette is aware of this seemingly paradoxical relationship between text and paratext, and that he follows his initial definition by remarking that, "although we do not always know whether [paratextual] productions are to be regarded as belonging to the text, in any case they surround it and extend it, precisely in order to present it [and] ensure the text's presence in the world" (*Paratexts* 1). This remark pinpoints the paradox that arises when negotiating the practice of using paratextual spaces for narrative purposes: if the paratext is what frames and presents the text, how can it also constitute a part of that text?

This paradox can be illustrated via Genette's discussion of fictional notes, that is, footnotes or endnotes where the sender is a character from within the text. Genette relates the use of such fictional notes to how authors have

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[3] The problems these issues raise for the application of paratextual theory in the discussions of paratextual narratives are discussed below. For a longer examination of the limitation this formulation puts on the core concept of paratexts, see Stanitzek.

utilized literary prefaces in order to fictionalize themselves as editors, "responsible in detail for establishing and managing the text [they claim] to have taken or been given custody of" (340) An example of this is seen in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Custom-House" introduction to *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), in which he explains the circumstances under which he happened upon the story of Hester Prynne. Genette points out how authors employ fictional personas in notes to similar effects of offering faux-editorial commentary on the origin or content of a text, or to deflect statements made in the text as not their own. However, the "slipperiness" of the fictive actorial note—that is a note whose sender is also a character in the text—reveals what could be seen as a typological paradox in the relationship between the paratext and what is commonly regarded the literary text. In most of his examples of fictive actorial notes, Genette sees their semblance to regular footnotes as "part of the fiction—and therefore, [the note is] indirectly, of the text" (340-342). The formulation is problematic, however, as it suggests that the separation that occurs when fictional material resides in a paratextual space is inconsequential, regardless of what functions the narrative content of that paratextual space performs.[4] Genette is aware of this paradoxical claim and offers the following remarks:

> [I]f the paratext is an often indefinite fringe between text and off-text, the note—which, depending on type, belongs to one or the other or lies between the two—perfectly illustrates this indefiniteness and this slipperiness. But above all, we must not forget that the very notion of paratext, like many other notions, has more to do with a decision about method than with a truly established fact. "The paratext," properly speaking, does not exist; rather, one chooses to account in these terms for a certain number of practices or effects, for reasons of method and effectiveness or, if you will, of profitability. The question is therefore not whether the note does or does not "belong" to the paratext but really whether considering it in such a light is or is not useful and relevant. The answer very clearly is, as it often is, that that depends on the case—or rather … that that depends on the type of note. (343)

Through this acknowledgment of the "indefiniteness [and] slipperiness" of the paratext, Genette turns what could have been a typological paradox into a methodological opportunity. While at first glance seemingly discounting

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[4] The term "function" is meant to signal what the content of a paratextual element brings to the text to which it relates. As Genette argues, in contrast to more easily identified paratextual characteristics (such as the place and time of publication of any given paratextual element), the "functions of the paratext … constitute a highly empirical and highly diversified object that must be brought into focus inductively, genre by genre and often species by species." The job of the critic, then, is to "establish [the] relations of subordination between function and status and thus pinpoint various sorts of *functional types* [of paratexts, so as to] reduce the diversity of practices and messages to some fundamental and highly recurrent themes" (*Paratexts* 13; emphasis in original).

narrative material residing in paratextual space as simply belonging to the text, therefore judging their paratextual position as inconsequential, Genette's clarification cited above suggests that the concept of paratexts should be regarded as more of a method of discovery and analysis than a strict typology for categorizing fixed phenomena. Moreover, this reasoning underscores that investigation of paratextual practices cannot be limited to the classification and study of already established types of paratexts. Rather, as the paratext evolves into a method of inquiry into practices that diverge from the paradigms of the print novel, the concept must be allowed to grow and develop, particularly so if it is to enable comparison between the traditions of print publishing and emerging modes of framing texts across other media and platforms. Ultimately, investigations of emerging paratextual practices has become a process of exploring and examining the liminal material that frames texts across all kinds of media, as well as the practices of utilizing the spaces in which they appear for other means. Consequently, there is a need to address the differences between what we regard as traditional paratexts and the spaces that they create to untangle the effects that alternative uses of such spaces might have on our reading and interpretation of the text they purportedly frame.

Throughout his work, Genette speaks of paratexts as "thresholds" or "vestibules," as an "undefined zone" or as the "airlock[s]" that help readers pass "without too much respiratory difficulty from one world to the other" (2, 408).[5] Paratexts at once create and straddle these liminal zones that simultaneously joins and separates the text from the discourse that surrounds it, all the while enriching that zone with commentary and meaning. According to Genette, this "'undefined zone' between the inside and outside" of the text is what offers audiences the opportunity of assessing and engaging with that text (2). This dissertation takes as its primary interest the practice of using these liminal zones for the purpose of presenting narrative content. This requires distinguishing between peritexts such as covers, prefaces and footnotes, or epitexts such as adverts or reviews, and the spaces they create and populate—what I call *paratextual space*. I argue that when we encounter narrative segments in places that have previously been designated as spaces for paratexts, those particular narrative segments are invariably framed as what I call *paratextual narratives*. This means that the conventions of distinguishing between texts and paratexts still shape our interpretation of those narrative segments, and thus the texts they purportedly frame. The conse-

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[5] Many thanks to Maria Lindgren Leavenworth for directing my attention to Genette's use of the "airlock" metaphor. While Genette's phrasing captures the way in which narratives in paratextual spaces can guide the reader into a text, the airlock is a telling metaphor of the way in which paratexts are often thought of as isolated from the texts they frame and the contexts they navigate, and exemplifies one complication I mean to address through the concept of paratextual space.

quences of using paratextual space for narrative purposes—as I show in the following discussions of *Watchmen*—is that certain elements or functions are overlooked or ignored in readings of the texts to which the paratextual space relates, either because the paratextual narrative is believed to not be part of the text, or conversely, because the paratextual nature of the space in which that paratextual narrative resides is obscured by its narrative content.

My introduction of the concepts of paratextual spaces and paratextual narratives should be seen as taking part in the development of the theory of paratexts for media other than the printed novel. I suggest that the study of paratextual narratives opens up for a number of questions, not only regarding how new media platforms depart from the traditions of the literary novels, but also concerning how the ideas of paratextual spaces and paratextual narratives play out in *both* print *and* non-print embodiments of texts. By investigating and comparing the different embodiments of *Watchmen*, this thesis attends to how paratextual narratives move between the printed page of the comic book and the graphic novel, to the film screen and into digital media. Additionally, by distinguishing between traditional paratexts such as covers, prefaces or footnotes, and the paratextual spaces they create and populate, this project takes into consideration Birke and Christ's warning regarding the dangers of stretching the concept of paratexts too far, while simultaneously opening up for the study of the practices of utilizing such paratextual space for presenting segments of narrative.

This thesis operates on the notion that paratextual theory can be the guiding principle through which the functions of paratextual narratives across media can be untangled and clarified, without it being necessary to specify, label and describe those narratives segments as paratexts. Genette states in his conclusion that, "if we are willing to extend the term to areas where the work does not consist of a text, it is obvious that some, if not all, other arts have the equivalent of our paratext … all of [which] could be subjects for investigation paralleling" his own (407). I follow Genette's suggestion to study paratextual practices as a means of detection and examination of liminal phenomena across media. By introducing the ideas of paratextual spaces and paratextual narratives, I aim to contribute to the ongoing debate of the concept of paratexts and its functions in artifacts other the print novel.

Literary Study of Graphic Narratives

My contribution to the ongoing revisions of the concept of the paratexts takes as its starting point questions regarding paratextual space in the various forms of graphic narrative publication. The many similarities between the form of the graphic novel and the print novels the paratext was developed to address make paratextual analysis of graphic narratives an exemplary testing ground for the "treasure trove of questions" that Birke and Christ link to how

paratexts operate across various paradigms of narrative media. And as one of the most influential graphic narratives to date, the complex textual constellation of *Watchmen* provides abundant opportunities for interrogating the graphic narrative form, particularly the genre's various paratextual spaces.

Critical appreciation for graphic narratives was most firmly established with Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1986) and its sequel *And Here My Troubles Began* (1991).[6] Together with Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (1986), *Maus* and *Watchmen* are often referred to as the trinity of titles that ushered in the graphic novel during what can be seen as the coming of age of the form in the second half of the 1980s.[7] The following decades saw the genre thrive. For example, when comic artists Paul Karasik and David Mazzucchelli worked together with acclaimed author Paul Auster to adapt the latter's successful novel *City of Glass* (1987) into an eponymous graphic novel (1994), it not only signaled the genre's critical and popular credibility but underscored the jointly influential relationship between graphic novels and other forms of narrative genres. Further graphic novels presenting compilations of influential comics such as Neil Gaiman's innovative series *The Sandman* (1989-96, on-going), with works by graphic narrative auteur Will Eisner, acclaimed writer Harvey Pekar and critic Scott McCloud, have all contributed to substantiate the artistic validity and literary quality of the graphic narrative form.

Writing for *Modern Fiction Studies* in 2006, Hillary Chute and Marianne DeKoven confirm that it is "largely—if not entirely—because of *Maus* that graphic narrative is now gaining widespread acceptance in the academy and in the press" (770). However, describing how studies of graphic narratives have grown to "become part of an expanding literary field, absorbing and redirecting the ideological, formal, and creative energies of contemporary fiction," Chute and DeKoven note that theoretical work on the formal aspects of comics and graphic novels tended to lag behind the critical readings of specific texts. Pointing to the lacking "critical apparatus for graphic narrative[s]", they count "80-plus entries on *Maus* listed in the MLA International Bibliography" only finding a few significant entries "about any other graphic narrative work." They conclude that "from a literary perspective—as regards critical works by professional academics—there is little rigorous

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[6] Published the same year that *Watchmen* made its serial debut, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and its sequel have won several awards, including a Pulitzer Prize.

[7] Popularized by Will Eisner with the publication of *A Contract with God* (1978), the origin and meaning of the term graphic novel is still being debated. The most accepted definition of the concept focuses on what separates the diverse collection of works described as graphic novels from the traditionally serialized comic books or cartoon strip. Contrary to these comics, graphic novels usually contain longer stories within one single publication. As such, their texts can run up to several hundred pages and tend to present dense thematic content and longer and more complex narrative structures, lending to the genre a more adult or mature profile (Gravett 8-9, Hatfield 29-30).

critical apparatus for any genre of comics" (770). Chute's coverage of comics criticism and theory in the same journal repeats this lament, arguing that while "academic publishing on comics is on the rise, the most useful recent texts are still, by and large, anthologies that are yet spotty" ("Decoding" 1015).[8]

In the years following this survey, sentiments regarding the low status of comics research and the scarcity of innovative critical and theoretical engagement with graphic narratives have continued to preoccupy researchers working within field. Echoing Chute and DeKoven (and citing noted comics scholar Charles Hatfield), Hannah Miodrag describes how, because "the comics form is widely perceived as inherently lowbrow," scholarship on graphic narratives "has been riddled with 'status anxiety.'" This in turn has led critics who work with comics to "overreact to perceived slights against the medium," often resorting to "the sort of 'justificatory' strategies that lead critics into dating the medium's genesis at the very dawn of civilization" instead of "responding analytically to the exigencies of the corpus itself" (Miodrag 3-4). Jared Gardner and David Herman presented a similar view in a 2011 special issue of *SubStance*, describing how comics studies, specifically in the United States, has historically "been defined by a defensive relationship to the academy at large—the need to define and defend the object of study from negative assumptions about its cultural and aesthetic value." They claim that this trend spawned two strains of comics scholarship, the first of which resembles Miodrag's discussion of a field dominated by researchers "defining the object of study formally and defending its importance historically." Another and somewhat delayed consequence of the field's defensive relationship with the academy, Gardner and Herman show, has been the "need for U.S. comics scholars to claim alliances with other, more recognizable fields: autobiography studies, sexuality studies, postcolonial studies, etc.," often resulting in mutually beneficial research relationships that have "opened the doors … to conversations about graphic narrative that are no longer limited to debating its formal definition and historical legacy." However, they argue, such approaches to the study of graphic narratives have also exposed "the limits of applying tools and methods developed for the study of prose narrative to the comics form" (4-6). Like Gardner and Herman, I believe this methodological problem could be profitably remedied through combining graphic narrative study with the advances made through narrative theory "in foregrounding and theorizing the differences that medium-specificity (and multimodality) makes to storytelling" (6). It is also worth noting that Gardner and Herman's objectives

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[8] An important exception to Chute's characterization is the long tradition of comics criticism and theory emanating out of the French cultures. For an introduction to the field, see Ann Miller and Bart Beaty's introduction to their edited volume *The French Comics Theory Reader* (2014).

overlap with Miodrag's call for comics scholars to "focus on formalism," as exemplified by her application of "semiotics [as a] tool for explicating the mechanics of the mixed medium," an approach she promotes by arguing that "it is precisely in the conception of comics' formal structures that the field's greatest critical weak spots lie" (Miodrag 11-13). I see the lack of critical engagement with the use of paratextual spaces for narrative purposes in comics and graphic novels as an example of such a "weak spot." My concepts of paratextual space and paratextual narratives can fill this gap in the critical engagements with the media-specific aspects of graphic narratives, providing the field with the tools for further investigation which focuses on the history and development of the paratextual spaces of comics and graphic novels, as well as the various functions and discourses provided by the paratextual artifacts that create and populate those spaces.

Acclaimed for its complex and self-reflexive engagement with graphic narrative forms and traditions, *Watchmen*, as I show in chapter I, lends itself exceptionally well to discussions of paratextual spaces. For instance, while most print publications use images on their covers to simultaneously advertise, categorize, and signal something about the content therein, *Watchmen* doubles down on this paratextual space. Besides functioning as traditional paratexts, each of *Watchmen*'s twelve covers utilizes its illustrations as the de-facto first panel of the story presented in the issue. These images initiate a zooming-out effect that continues through the following panels, inviting the reader to look very closely at how various details in each panel is positioned and framed in the scene that emerges as the narrative slowly develops. Contrary to how images on the covers of novels or other print narratives may illustrate or evoke passages that are then described in more detail at a later point in the narrative, each of *Watchmen*'s twelve covers functions as original parts of the narrative they introduce, as such exemplifying one way in which paratextual spaces can be used towards narrative ends. While comics have often included narrative elements on their covers (see for example the cover of Marvel's *Fantastic Four* issue 1, which functions to introduce the characters and their relationships, point out their superpowers and foreshadow their first battle with the villainous Mole Man), rarely do they constitute actual segments of the narrative presented within the issues they adorn, and even more seldom do they provide such distinct narrative functions as demonstrated in *Watchmen*. Already with its first cover, on the boundary between the advertorial and the narrative, *Watchmen* demonstrates how differently cover illustrations can function for comics in relation to the traditions of other kinds of narrative publications such as novels or short story collections: a difference that underscores the importance of paying attention to the "issue of form that graphic narrative makes so manifest in its hybrid composition" (Chute and DeKoven 774-75). Media-specific aspects of the graphic narrative form such as this use of cover illustrations to present narrative content are the focus of chapter I of this dissertation. My investiga-

tion of the complex textual constellation of *Watchmen* invariably explores various media-specific aspects of the graphic narrative form as such.

Principles of New Media and Transmedia Storytelling

The combination of texts with images that make up the hybrid graphic narrative form is often cited as one of the reasons that film adaptations of comics and graphic novels have grown into a staple genre of contemporary cinema.[9] This is particularly true when it comes to adaptations of superhero comics: the genre delivers visually striking imagery suitable for the large cinema screens as well as large pre-existing audiences always eager to pay to see the next installment of featuring their favorite heroes. This is probably why the superhero genre has proven ideal for the kind of blockbuster films that have taken over our multiplex theatres over the last few decades. As part of this trend, the *Watchmen* adaptation not only featured lavish images suitable for the silver screen, but also involved a transmedia storytelling campaign that repurposed online marketing spaces for the translation, re-mediation and re-materialization of—among other things—the paratextual narratives found in the *Watchmen* comics.

   The emergence of these kinds of transmedia storytelling strategies should be understood in relation to what Lev Manovich describes as the digitization of the vast majority of cultural production, distribution, and consumption brought about by the "meta-medium" of the personal computer. As Manovich demonstrates, the digital revolution and the shift of virtually all forms of cultural production and consumption to computer-mediated forms inevitably entailed a transformation in the substrate of media materiality that affected cultural products in all stages of acquisition, manipulation, storage, and distribution. These developments raised pertinent questions regarding the mediation and materiality of all culture. Manovich argues that, because the digital environments of the personal computer now intersects with the bulk of our cultural engagement, mediating between the production, storage, distribution, and experiences of culture through repeated sampling and manipulation of variable modules of digital code, it is only reasonable that "the computer's ontology, epistemology, and pragmatics [will] influence the cultural layer of new media, its organization, its emerging genres, its con-

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[9] Although movies and film serials featuring comic book superheroes have been made for as long as the two mediums have existed, recent years have seen a surge in film adaptations of comics collections and graphic novels outside the superhero genre. Notable examples include Harvey Pekar's *American Splendor* (2003), John Wagner and Vince Locke's *A History of Violence* (2005), Frank Miller's *Sin City* (2005) and *300* (2007), and Bryan Lee O'Malley's *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* (2010), as well as *From Hell* (2001) and *V for Vendetta* (2005), both of which were based on works written by Alan Moore.

tent" (46). Enumerating what he calls the "five principles of new media" that have affected this transformation, Manovich lists "numeric coding" and "modular organization" as the processes through which content is now digitally created, stored and transmitted, and "automation" and "variability" as the ways in which digitized storage has affected the organization, distribution and accessibility of that content. With the final principle of "cultural transcoding," Manovich described what he argues is be "the most substantial consequence" of the new media revolution:

> Because new media is created on computers, distributed via computers, stored and archived on computers, the logic of a computer can be expected to significantly influence on the traditional cultural logic of media; that is, we may expect that the computer layer will affect the cultural layer. (Manovich 46)[10]

Exemplifying how this principle of cultural transcoding operates, Henry Jenkins' influential *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006) explains how much of contemporary American popular culture is defined by a media convergence brought on by precisely the digitization and networking of cultural communication that Manovich describes. According to Jenkins, convergence culture involves "the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want." Echoing Manovich, Jenkins explains that while the forces behind these developments are largely technological in nature, convergence should not be "understood primarily as a technological process bringing together multiple media functions within the same devices." Rather, he distinguishes between a medium as a "technology that enables communication" and as the sets of "associated 'protocols' or social and cultural practices that have grown up around that technology." Convergence culture is not primarily related to the technology but to how all media protocols have been affected by these developments: how "their functions and status are shifted by the introduction of new technologies" (Jenkins, *Convergence*, 2-14).[11]

  A central tenant of his work—and a crucial component in the discussions to follow—is Jenkins' concept of transmedia storytelling. First introduced in *MIT Technology Review* in 2003, Jenkins' definition from *Convergence Culture* is repeatedly quoted:

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[10] For a more detailed account of Manovich's five principles of new media, see 27-48.

[11] A useful example of such a shift is when the "television displaced radio as a storytelling medium," the protocols for how radios transceivers functioned within our cultural system were challenged, which is what eventually enabled them "to become the primary showcase for rock and roll" (Jenkins, *Convergence*, 14).

A transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole. In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best—so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics; its world might be explored through game play or experienced as an amusement park attraction. Each franchise entry needs to be self-contained so you don't need to have seen the film to enjoy the game, and vice versa. Any given product is a point of entry into the franchise as a whole. (97-98)

However, this early definition of transmedia storytelling has also been critiqued for idealizing the possibilities of media convergence instead of describing the realities of how popular culture has evolved with the coming of new media platforms (as exemplified by Jason Mittell's reservations, summarized below). Hence, Jenkins has returned to the concept of transmedia storytelling to acknowledge alternative takes on the phenomenon, often referring back to how convergence culture indicates a "significant shift in the underlying logic of commercial entertainment," which "aesthetic potentials we are still trying to understand" (Jenkins, "Revenge", n.pag.). Still, the idea of transmedia storytelling captures many of the trends characterizing popular culture production over the last decade, and media scholars and cultural critics alike have adopted the concept to describe the potential resident in new and digital technologies for the production, distribution, and consumption of serialized or otherwise segmented popular narratives. Moreover, Jenkins' concept of transmedia storytelling captures the essence of Manovich's principle of transcoding, as it embodies the consequence of how a vast majority of cultural content is now digitized, modular, and variable: digitized because of our overwhelming reliance on computer technologies to create, store, and communicate cultural content; modular in the sense that components of large cultural objects (such as any segment of entertainment franchises) can now be accessed individually in the contexts and order the user or audience prefers; and variable by way of the customizable experience these modular structures provide.

One important reservation against Jenkins' definition of transmedia storytelling comes from television scholar Jason Mittell—whose influential essay on "Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television" was published the same year as *Convergence Culture* and takes up many of the same issues as Jenkins' book, such as the increase in heavily serialized narratives and audience participation via digital media. Mittell's most recent work on *Complex TV* (2015) calls for a distinction between Jenkins' "ideal of *balanced transmedia*, with no one medium or text serving a primary role over others," and what he argues is "the more commonplace model of *unbalanced transmedia*, with a clearly identifiable core text and a number of peripheral transmedia extensions that might be more or less integrated into the narrative whole" (*Complex TV*, n.pag., emphases in original). While a transmedia narrative that makes equal use of its various elements spread

across media platforms might be a more aesthetically pleasing composite, Mittell maintains, the economic realities of creating and sustaining a popular transmedia narrative dictates that each installment in a franchise is economically sustainable on its own. This in turn demands that the most expensive component of a transmedia story be the most accessible to the widest possible audience, often relegating the more intricate details of interconnected transmedia narrative networks to the "peripheral extension" of the franchises.

Mittell describes unbalanced transmedia narratives by following Gray's distinction between entryway- and in medias res paratexts; he discusses how certain paratextual elements work to promote and introduce texts while other paratexts "function as ongoing sites of narrative expansion" of the storyworlds created and maintained by popular narratives.[12] Moreover, Mittell adds a third category of "orienting paratexts" to the development of paratextual terminology for new media. The concept of "orienting paratexts" is primarily meant to describe "how viewers make sense of complex serial forms through practices of orientation and mapping," often resulting in the creation of additional paratextual material. Thus orienting paratexts differ from how transmedia paratexts "explicitly strive to continue their storyworlds across platforms," instead existing "outside the diegetic storyworld, providing a perspective for viewers to help make sense of a narrative world by looking at it from a distance." Mittell further develops this difference between audience-created material and what could be called "official" paratexts with the labels "What Is" and "What If?" transmedia. Mittell's understanding of "What Is" transmedia aligns with Jenkins' definition of the concept, and evokes the kind of paratextual narratives investigated in this study, as they also "seeks to extend the fiction … with coordinated precision and hopefully expanding viewers' understanding and appreciation of the storyworld." The latter kind, "What If?" transmedia "poses hypothetical possibilities [and invites] viewers to imagine alternative" versions of stories similar to the way in which an alternate ending to a film presented as extras on DVD sometimes contradicting the rest of the text.[13] Importantly, as these

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[12] Throughout this thesis, I use the term storyworld to denote the cognitive construct that emerges from engagements with recurring narrative elements such as details regarding setting, characters and events, regardless of their medium of representation. As Marie-Laure Ryan and Jan-Noël Thon maintain, "[t]hinking of storyworlds as representations that transcend media not only expands the scope of narratology beyond its 'native' territory of language-based narrative … but also provides a much-needed center of convergence and point of comparison to media studies (2). For a detailed discussion of how the concept of storyworld figures in the development of narrative theory for transmedia storytelling and worldbuilding across media, see the introduction to their edited volume *Storyworlds across Media: Towards a Media-Conscious Narratology* (2014).

[13] While the structurally and thematically dense *Watchmen* narrative has inspired much audience-created material akin to Mittell's concepts of "what if?" transmedia, as well as a

and other models for structuring narratives across new media constantly evolve, Mittell cautions that we should see "balanced" and "unbalanced," as well as "what is" and "what if" transmedia storytelling techniques "as vectors or tendencies rather than distinct categories, with fluidity and blur between the dual approaches" (*Complex TV*, n.pag.).

The distributed narrative of the *Watchmen* adaptation displays several of the kinds of tensions that Jenkins and Mittell's discussions of transmedia storytelling are trying to grapple with. The online components of the *Watchmen* adaptation explored in detail in chapter II are all "official" material created by—or in collaboration with—the producers of that adaptation, and the timeline in which these materials were made available of the adaptation aligns with Jenkins' ideal for how a transmedia narrative "unfolds across multiple media platforms." However, the organization of those online materials leans closer toward the vectors of what Mittell describes as an unbalanced transmedia narrative. Thus my investigation into how the *Watchmen* transmedia adaptation repurposes the paratextual narratives from the comics for various digital platforms engages with a number of important questions, not only regarding what constitutes the boundaries of this particular transmedia adaptation, but ultimately, what the drawing of such boundaries does to our understanding of the narratives they seem to frame.

Methodological Considerations and Chapter Overview

Transmedia storytelling is only one example of the "deepening complexities of the media landscape" that—as N. Katherine Hayles and Jessica Pressman point out—has "made mediality, in all its forms, a central concern of twenty-first century." Introducing *Comparative Textual Media: Transforming the Humanities in the Postprint Era*, Hayles and Pressman advocate a "comparative and media focused" approach to these new media conditions. Arguing that the fact that print is a medium "tends to be obscured by its long dominance in Western culture," they maintain that "textual media constitute a crucial aspect" of new media studies. Textual media are rarely treated from a media studies perspective; instead "print-born assumptions linger and intermingle" with new approaches to media studies, perpetuating a "highly diverse and heterogeneous social–technical–economic–political amalgams rife with contradictions and internal inconsistencies."[14] In this context it is

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host of "orienting paratexts," such materials are beyond the scope of this investigation. For one example that particularly resonates with Mittell's new paratextual term, see Jessica Furé and Stuart Moulthrop's website *Watching the Detectives: An Internet Companion for Readers of Watchmen*.

[14] As Hayles and Pressman explain, bibliographic studies and textual studies "remain relatively small subfields within humanities disciplines" (ix-x).

not only possible but preferable "to see print in a comparative context with other textual media," as well as in relation to "born-digital forms such as electronic literature and computer games." Hayles and Pressman's approach demonstrates convincingly how a comparative media studies perspective not only lets us contextualize the complexities of new media and digital technologies "in ways that do not take for granted the assumptions and presuppositions of any one media form (or media culture)" over another, but also enables us to "recognize that recursive feedback loops between form and content are not only characteristic of special cases … but are the necessary ground from which inquiry proceeds" (vii-x).

I maintain that paratextual theory constitutes one area where the assumptions carried over from its original print-oriented formulation have created a host of "contradictions and internal inconsistencies" that complicate its use outside of the literary print culture it was originally meant to address. As demonstrated in Birke and Christ's discussion cited above, the problems involved in using paratextual terminology for the categorization of digitized version of previously printed material constitutes just one example of the inconsistencies and tensions that arise once the concept of the paratext is used to untangle the relationships between various artifacts of new media products. Approaching paratextual spaces and paratextual narratives from a comparative media perspective provides opportunities to address and untangle such complications. Moreover, this comparative approach follows Genette's example to employ the concept of the paratext as an analytical methodology rather than a categorical typology. Through such a methodological use of the concept of paratext, my study accounts for the "recursive feedback loops between form and content" by pointing to similarities and differences between how certain paratextual spaces, practices and effects take shape across media.

Due to the multifaceted textual constellation of the *Watchmen* graphic narrative, as well as the distributed narrative of its adaptation, the different embodiments of *Watchmen* provide an excellent test case for employing this kind of comparative media studies perspective to investigate the contradictions and tensions that arise when the concept of paratexts is carried over from the literary tradition into other print as well as non-print media. I examine *Watchmen* in order to bring into focus a number of questions regarding the boundaries of the text and the reconfiguration of paratextual spaces that are revealed when the concept is used to address material other than the printed book. As the *Watchmen* narrative finds its embodiments in different media, how are its paratextual spaces redrawn, and how does that transformation reconfigure the boundaries of what we perceive as the *Watchmen* narrative? What are the implications of these transformations for our understanding of the *Watchmen* adaptation, and what can insights into the *Watchmen* adaptation tell us about how popular culture is utilizing paratextual spaces for narrative purposes across media?

The works of Alan Moore, particularly in *Watchmen*, constitutes a crucial component in the development of the American superhero comics tradition.[15] Although not exclusively an American phenomenon, the history and development of superhero comics is tied to a point of domination to the poplar culture that emanates from United States. And, as demonstrated by Geoff Klock in *How to Read Superhero Comics and Why* (2002) and discussed in chapter I of this dissertation, the entire narrative of *Watchmen* is designed to deconstruct the American superhero genre that preceded it, and is consequently layered with references to a variety of canonized American graphic narratives as well as the American literature and history that inspired them. The resulting graphic narrative was instrumental in ushering in a new era of American comic books and graphic novels, not only of the superhero variety. Consequently, despite the fact that Alan Moore and illustrator Dave Gibbons both began their careers in Great Britain, their collective effort in *Watchmen* constitutes a fundamental contribution to the development of what is an overwhelmingly American tradition: the superhero graphic narrative.[16]

My first analytical chapter takes up how the addition and format of the narrative material framing the *Watchmen* graphic narrative was rooted in the media-specific comics phenomenon known as lettercols. I show how this paratextual space, usually reserved for comments and discussion regarding the content of the graphic narrative, was repurposed in *Watchmen* to present narrative material that worked to establish, problematize, and comment on the history of the storyworld and the characters presented in that graphic narrative. In my second analytical chapter I discuss the paratextual spaces of the *Watchmen* film adaptation. I focus in particular on the transmedia story-

[15] As Chris Murray has highlighted, Moore was an early member of the first wave of the flow of British comic talents into the US in the 1980s, what has come to be known as "the British Invasion" of American mainstream comics. As Murray shows, Moore and the other "writers who formed the British invasion" not only shared a strong "familiarity with American comics and the superhero genre," they also "possessed a degree of critical distance and ironic detachment from them that allowed these creators to deconstruct the superhero as a projection of American mythology." Coming "from a different comics culture, where superheroes were only one small part of the equation," Moore and his contemporary expatriates could use their medium to "deflate the myth" of the superhero in what Murray reads as an "attack on the conservative values that seemed entrenched in British and American politics." Political or not, this deconstruction and inevitable reconfiguration of superhero archetypes was in place even in Moore's earliest writing for *Marvelman* as well as in his 3 year run on *The Swamp Thing* (1984-1987), but would find its most distinct and influential output in *Watchmen* (Murray 34-37).

[16] Several scholarly volumes have chronicled the development of the superhero genre, including Paul Gravett's Graphic Novels, which describes the genre's development from the "Golden Age" of the late 1930s and 1940s, through its revisionist phase in the 1960s and 1970s, with the introduction of serial continuities (dubbed by others as the "Silver Age"), and finally the "Dark Age" as introduced by *Watchmen* and *The Dark Knight Returns* in the mid-1980s (74-7).

telling campaign that prefigured and played out consecutively online and on various digital releases following the cinematic premiere of the film. In demonstrating their intricate relationship to the narrative of the feature film, I propose that the paratextual narratives resulting from this transmedia strategy should be regarded as a component of the *Watchmen* adaptation. In my conclusion I suggest that paratextual narratives similar to those found on the thresholds of the different incarnations of *Watchmen* have become staple ingredients in media franchising. I demonstrate this point using a few examples of contemporary media franchises, including the 2012 prequel-series *Before Watchmen*.

Watchmen Bound:
Comic Books, Graphic Novels, and the
Question of Paratextual Narratives

The original *Watchmen* twelve-issue limited comic book series was a commercial and critical success. Coupled with the trend towards the publication of graphic novels discussed in the introduction, a single-volume paperback print was not long in the making. The resulting 1987 *Watchmen* graphic novel is now regarded as instrumental in ushering in the genre of graphic novels as a more sophisticated form of graphic narratives different from the newspaper cartoons and genre comics from which it originates. But the original design and publication of *Watchmen* as a twelve-issue limited series of comics left unmistakable marks on the form and content of the trade paperback that collected the narrative into an over four hundred pages long graphic novel.

   This chapter deals with one of those unmistakable marks: the passages in black and white that were placed after the graphic narrative in the original serialized comic books. These passages resided in paratextual spaces, which were usually occupied by readers' letters, advertorials, and editorial commentary. I show how these paratextual spaces—traditionally referred to as lettercols—were repurposed in *Watchmen* to present material that worked to establish and augment the history of the storyworld and the characters presented in the main graphic narrative. With the binding of the *Watchmen* serial installments into a graphic novel, these materials were repositioned from what are clearly paratextual spaces into spaces embedded within the body of the work, raising the question in what way they can be seen as challenging Genette's paratextual paradigm. To address this question, I account for the development and publication of *Watchmen* as a limited series comic book turned graphic novel, and trace the relation between the origin and design of the paratextual narratives in question and the tradition of lettercols. I then discuss how the binding of *Watchmen* both obscures and reaffirms the paratextual nature of these narratives, in the process making us question Genette's classifications of paratexts as "preludial" (coming before)

or "postludial" (following) the text. Finally, I illustrate these theoretical issues through a reading that focuses on the narrative functions of the first three of *Watchmen*'s paratextual narratives, collectively known as the autobiography "Under the Hood."

Three caveats are in place at this point. First, the wide variety of descriptive terms which critics have used to refer to what I call the *Watchmen* paratextual narratives signals uncertainty as to the character, form, and difference of those materials from the graphic narrative. Stuart Moulthrop employs the term "fictional documents" ("See the Strings," 300), Geoff Klock calls them "prose inserts" (69), Sara J. Van Ness writes about them as "expository materials" (30-32), and Jon Cormier simply refers to them as the "text pieces ending each chapter" (94-95). To maintain focus on the narrative nature of these paratextual materials, I will hold to my proposed term "paratextual narratives" throughout this study. Second, I follow Stuart Moulthrop's method of citing *Watchmen*. Congruent with the original pagination of the serialized *Watchmen* publications, it also refers to the trade paperback edition of the graphic novel. References to the graphic narrative are given by issue/chapter, page, and panel number, using a top to bottom, left to right order: I.26.7 thus refers to the seventh panel on the twenty-sixth page of issue/chapter I. References to the paratextual narratives are given by issue/chapter, "Doc," and a number signaling which page in that sequence is being cited: II.Doc.3 thus refers to the third page of the document following issue/chapter II of *Watchmen* ("See the Strings," 300, note 3). Third, I use the terms "issue" and "chapter" interchangeably when referring to one of the twelve installments of *Watchmen*.

Envisioning the Revisionary: Alan Moore's *Watchmen*

Presenting an alternative version of American twentieth century history where costumed heroes are an everyday reality, the main plot of Alan Moore's *Watchmen* plays out in New York City in October of 1985.[1] The story opens with an image of a bloodstained smiley-button: a soiled version of the iconic emblem of masked adventurer Edward Blake (aka Comedian) whose death initiates the investigation that constitutes the main plot of the

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[1] Although usually credited as written by Moore and illustrated by Gibbons, with coloring provided by John Higgins, I will throughout this chapter generally refer to Moore as the author of *Watchmen*, unless a specific detail or reference suggests otherwise. As comics writer and artist Grant Morrison writes, "Moore became notorious for writing immense scripts filled with pages of detailed panel description in which every stray matchbook or record sleeve would be described, along with the precise angle of its placement in the picture as well as its color, shape, state of wear and tear, and symbolic meaning … not to downplay Gibbons' hard work, but he was very faithful to Moore's immensely detailed scripts" (Morrison 202-205).

graphic narrative. The investigation into Blake's murder is led by the idealist Walter Kovacs (aka Rorschach), the only active vigilante after the 1977 "Keene Act" outlawed the practices of costumed heroes. Rorschach's inquiries into Blake's murder reunite him with retired second-generation masked avengers Dan Dreiberg (aka Nite Owl II) and Laurie Juspeczyk (aka Silk Spectre II). Together they uncover an apocalyptic scheme masterminded by masked hero turned successful businessman Adrian Veidt (aka Ozymandias). With benevolent aims but horrifying methods, Veidt plans to destroy downtown New York through a mock-alien invasion, designed to shock the United States and Soviet Union into ending the increasingly unstable Cold War and uniting against a common (while false) threat.

Meanwhile, a romance is kindled between Dan and Laurie, as her relationship with *Watchmen*'s only real super-being Jonathan Osterman (aka Dr. Manhattan) finally fails. Grown cynically detached from the world due to his all-knowing "atomic" superpowers, Dr. Manhattan leaves Earth and goes to Mars to contemplate what he perceives as the aimless randomness of human existence. He eventually brings Laurie to join him, and a debate regarding the futility of life culminates with Laurie recalling childhood traumas and finally realizing that the murdered Edward Blake was in fact her real father. The peculiar coincidence of this past chain of events sparks Dr. Manhattan's fascination and he realizes that meaning can be found in the random chaos of life. With a rekindled a compassion for humanity, Dr. Manhattan brings Laurie back to Earth in order to help Rorschach and Nite Owl II try to stop Veidt. But the heroes arrive too late. Veidt's scheme of destruction has already been carried out, and watching newscasts from all over the world they are all reluctantly forced to accept the fact that—despite his ghastly methods—Veidt's plan succeeded in getting the US and the Soviet Union to relax their escalating conflict and unite in the disastrous aftermath of the destruction of New York. Only the obstinate idealist Rorschach protests the cover-up that the others agree to maintain, resulting in his immediate (and voluntary) death at the hands of Dr. Manhattan. *Watchmen* ends on a sharp note of irony, however, as the last panel shows how Rorschach's journal (containing most of the story, including details of Veidt's plot) arrives at the offices of the radically conservative magazine *The New Frontiersman*, risking widespread publication. If the information contained within the journal is made available to the public it would undo all that Veidt's scheme has achieved, and thus the *Watchmen* universe again stands on the brink of impending doom, as the graphic narrative closes on the ever present and constantly soiled blank face of Comedian's smiling icon.

Underneath this quasi-apocalyptic narrative, *Watchmen* is designed to critique the nature of the superhero archetype. Moore's characters are all haunted by various personal issues, problems which are only heightened by their past lives behind masks, or which spur on their continued activities, as in the case for the psychologically scarred Rorschach, whose childhood

traumas underpin his identity as the ultimate neo-conservative vigilante. Similarly, the remainder of the *Watchmen* cast of characters has failed in their struggle to find purpose with their lives as retired costumed crime fighters. Veidt's successes in business are unfulfilling, and Dreiberg and Juspeczyk have trouble adapting to an existence without the thrill of the nightly hunting for lawbreakers (a famous sequence in issue/chapter VII demonstrates how their desire for one another can only be fulfilled after they first put on their old suit and return for a night of violent hero-service). As mentioned, Dr. Manhattan is suffering from alienation brought on by his godlike superpower to see across all of space and time, giving him an omnipotent-like view of history and causality. Rounding out the main cast is the cancer-weakened elderly villain Edgar William Jacobi (aka Moloch), and the late Edward Blake, depicted exclusively in analepses as an "amoral mercenary" symbolizing the "less salubrious elements of American foreign policy in general," and who only in the last moments of his life realizes the many evils his career has perpetuated (Morrison 196-97).

While some of these ideas and character types might seem stereotypical in today's popular culture, *Watchmen*'s critical deconstruction of the genre of superhero comics was revolutionary for its time, and was one of the reasons that the production of a single-volume paperback print of *Watchmen* did not take long. In *Watching the Watchmen* (2008), a retrospective look at the process of creation and subsequent success of the *Watchmen* graphic narrative compiled by graphic artist Dave Gibbons, which includes images and comments on everything from Gibbons' conceptual artworks to Moore's actual script pages, Gibbons recalls how, "graphic novels were suddenly THE happening thing and publishers, both comic book and mainstream, scrambled to be in the game" (240; emphasis in original):

> *Watchmen*'s narrative certainly had the weight and complexity of a prose novel, and it was, after all, indisputably graphic in its presentation. In addition, it was a complete story, needing no prior knowledge and requiring no further reading to be a satisfying experience. … Looking back, it seems almost inevitable that *Watchmen* became one of the first graphic novels. (237)

As Gibbons' explains, publishing *Watchmen* as a graphic novel signaled its sophisticated content, and the new format led to even more accolades. Over the years, critics have scrutinized the graphic novel's rich tapestry of characters for all kinds of themes and arguments: Mark Bernard and James Bucky Carter have contemplated the "post-Newtonian, relativistic philosophy of time and space" according to Dr. Manhattan; Gene Philips has questioned the psychological profile of Rorschach; and Matthew Wolf-Meyer has analyzed the political perspectives of both Rorschach and the villainous Veidt. Further, Iain Thomson has examined the graphic novel for its deconstruction of the figure of the hero in relation to the theories of Heidegger,

Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard, while Roger Whitson has investigated *Watchmen* for its allusions to the mystical romanticism of William Blake.[2]

More important for this study, however, is *Watchmen*'s constant conversation with the history and form of the genre of superhero comics, since it was the history of American superheroes that inspired the content of the paratextual narratives which frame the *Watchmen* graphic narrative. The superhero genre was born in the late 1930s, and during what is usually referred to as the "golden age" of action comics, iconic heroes like Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, and Captain America could be seen in their earliest battles against naïve gangsters and petty crooks on the pages of cheap pulp magazines. But this golden age did not last, and after WWII came a period of general decline in both sales and production of these action comics. Instead, the cold war menace inspired a slew of sci-fi and horror magazines that for a while eclipsed the older pulp magazines. During what is referred to as the "silver age" of comics, covering the late 1950s through to the 1970s, influences from science fiction and the pop-art movement (among other things) revitalized the superhero and instilled the genre with a tint of the fantastic. DC Comics rebooted the origin stories for their most famous heroes and Marvel Comics created new titles such as *The Amazing Spider-Man*, *The Fantastic Four* and *The X-Men* that all enjoyed unprecedented successes. Also, as William Proctor explains, "[u]nlike the disparate, episodic narratives of the Golden Age, the Silver Age introduced the concept of seriality into the [superhero] universe and an interconnected and interrelated narrative universe was created" (n.pag.). This "principle of continuity," as Henry Jenkins calls it, "operates not just within any individual book but also across all of the books by a particular publisher so that people talk about the DC and Marvel universe." Heightened production eventually led towards more intricate serialization and cross-pollination between titles, in turn leading to the dense character mythologies and complex narrative continuities that in many ways are part of the genre's distinct formal features today ("Just Men in Tights," 20).[3]

In *How to Read Superhero Comics and Why* (2002), Geoff Klock discusses how *Watchmen*—together with Frank Miller's examination of an aging version of Batman in *The Dark Knight Returns* (1986)—established

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[2] As many *Watchmen* studies are tangential to my investigation, they are not explicitly dealt with here. Van Ness briefly summarizes the main issues examined in these and a few others publications, for a longer list of *Watchmen*-related publications, see her "Selected Annotated Bibliography of *Watchmen* Scholarship and Related Sources" (203-207).

[3] Many critics, including Jenkins, see the silver age of the superhero comics industry as a precursor to and source of inspiration for the vast mythologies and worldbuilding strategies that define much of the cult fiction that have flourished in the recent decade's turn towards convergence culture and transmedia storytelling. For more information on this development, see Jenkins *Convergence* and "Just Men in Tights."

what is commonly referred to as the third-, or "dark age" of American superhero comics. Both titles took a step back from the fantastic elements and complex mythologies of the silver age comics, imagining instead what it would be like if superheroes existed in the real world. This resulted in darker, grittier and more multifaceted works that infused the genre with a greater sense of political and psychological realism, and as Klock argues, in a sense gave the superhero narrative its "first sense of memory" (2-3, 26).

Moore and Miller's thoughtful approach to their genre instigated what Klock calls the "revisionary" superhero narrative: a term he employs "not in the sense of a revisionary history … not 'revise' but 'visionary.'" Klock argues that since the publication of these titles, "the phrase *revisionary superhero narrative* has been used by the comic book reading community to denote any superhero story that attempts a critical reworking of given characters or concepts" (emphasis in original). As Klock explains:

> Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (1986) and Alan Moore's *Watchmen* (1986) are the first instances of a kind of literature [that can be defined] as the revisionary superhero narrative: a superhero text that, in Harold Bloom's words, is a "strong misreading" of its poetic tradition, a comic book whose "meaning" is found in its relationship with another comic book. … Together, they mark a first phase of development, the transition of the superhero from fantasy to literature. (25-26)

Unlike *The Dark Knight Returns*, however, *Watchmen* is not distinctly based on existing characters or an already furnished and recognizable world. Rather, as Klock demonstrates, *Watchmen*'s revisionary thrust results from how its characters "resonate certain comic book archetypes in such a ways as to suggest other established superheroes." For example, the "optimism, confidence, and Antarctic headquarters" of the hero-turned-villain Adrian Veidt "invoke Superman and his Fortress of Solitude," while his "wealth, intelligence, birthday (1939), and perfect human physical prowess recall Batman" and his "role in his corporation suggests Bruce Wayne." Meanwhile, Nite Owl II's "wealth, gadgets, costume, mode of transportation, and basement equipment room—and the fact that his predecessor, Hollis Mason, began fighting crime in 1939—also suggest Batman and the Batcave," while the graphic representation of Dan Dreiberg "visually suggests an impotent, middle-aged Clark Kent." Comedian is "a kind of Captain America if Captain America had gone to Vietnam," and Dr. Manhattan, "as the only super-powered being," is described as "aloof, almost alien, and never aging," thus suggesting Superman (even Wally Weaver, once Dr. Manhattan's colleague and only briefly referenced in the *Watchmen* narrative, is read as a nod to "Jimmy Olson, Superman's Pal") (65-66).

But for *Watchmen*'s revisionary approach to work, Moore had to first establish the history and the world of the characters that the narrative was designed to revision. This meant creating an entirely new alternate reality in

which the formation and downfall of two consecutive generations of masked heroes could be established, each corresponding to the golden- and silver ages of superhero comics' history, and in the process relating how their existence both shaped and was determined by a slightly askew version of American twentieth century history. Having had a long-held desire to write a self-contained comic book, "so that one writer could document the entire world without worrying about how his plans could be fitted in with the creators of the other titles his characters were currently appearing in," the opportunity to create a new world appealed to Moore. He relished the idea to control a "whole cast of characters in a self-contained world," so as to side-step the problems inherent in the rigid "principle of continuity" supposed to safeguard inconsistencies among character development across publications and series of comics. According to Moore, this demand for continuity "present[ed] a lot of annoying limitations to the creator[s]" of superhero narratives, the worst of which was "that nothing can ever happen in any individual story that has any lasting effect on the world [in which the story takes place], since it is the same world inhabited by every other character in the company's line" of superheroes (418).

To avoid these problems, Moore initially intended *Watchmen* to restore "The Mighty Crusaders," a then defunct line of superheroes developed by MJL-Archie Comics in the 1950s and 1960s. When that proposal fell through, *Watchmen* was adapted to fit another out-of-use line of superhero characters recently acquired by DC from Charlton Comics, including iconic heroes such as Captain Atom and The Blue Beetle. In the end this idea too was discarded, "probably because DC planned to feature them in new comics, while Moore envisioned a closed story arc where some major figures would die" (Moulthrop, "See the Strings," 288).[4] Moore was initially disappointed that he had to forego using the already established lines of superheroes from Archie and Charlton Comics, which meant he would loose the "poignance [sic] of the idea that went with having a long established continuity to lend nostalgic weight to the concept." Instead, Moore and Gibbons designed original characters to replace the Archie and Charlton casts. But in his effort to create "the appearance of a continuity stretching back years" for this new group of characters, Moore found that he "couldn't discuss [them] without discussing the world that had shaped them." It was not enough to "describe the particular circumstances in the life of [any given character] without considering [that character's] politics, their sexuality, their philosophy and all the factors in their world that had shaped those things." The greater his grasp of these "subliminal background details" became, "the

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[4] As Moulthrop shows, Moore included hints to these origins in the final version of *Watchmen* (the airship is called Archie and one character grew up in the Charlton home for orphans. "These might be 'fan-boy' details," argues Moulthrop, "but they also indicate how deep the texturing of allusions runs in [Moore's] work" ("See the Strings," 288).

more those details became integrated with the storyline, acting as a sort of meta-continuity that eventually equaled the plot in its importance to the finished work" (Moore 418-19). Realizing the importance of this "meta-continuity" for his revisionary themes to work, Moore decided to use the space in the back of the comics usually reserved for the lettercols to unfold the broader aspects of the *Watchmen* alternate history.

The Lettercols Tradition and *Watchmen*'s Paratextual Narratives

Dave Gibbons' *Watching the Watchmen* (2008) contains images of the first *Watchmen* script sent to Len Wein, longtime writer at DC and Moore and Gibbons' editor for duration of the production of the *Watchmen* comics. A note from Moore that accompanied the script suggests how the *Watchmen* paratextual narratives came about:

> Dear Len … As far as the text pages on the inside front and back cover go, assuming letters won't start coming in until [issue] #3 or 4, Dave and I would like to use the space for the first three issues to present illustrated excerpts from the fictional autobiography of Hollis Mason; "Under the Hood." This will fill in the fine points of the background in an interesting and unusual way. (64)

As signaled in the note and confirmed by the editorial comments from Gibbons, the *Watchmen* paratextual narratives were "originally planned to occupy only the early inside covers and then, later, to make way for readers' letters" (64). The letters referred to above were a commonplace feature of superhero comics and other popular magazines, appearing among ads and short news pieces from the publishers on the last few pages of most monthly comic books published at the time of *Watchmen*'s serial debut. Matthew Pustz explains how the lettercols tradition came about: what was originally a "text page mandated by postal regulations" eventually grew into an early form of audience participation that for decades was a staple of the comics form. As comic books grew in popularity in the early 1950s, publishers replaced the "infrequently read short story" usually published on these mandated pages "with a compilation of readers' comments" sent to the editors' offices. In these letters pages (referred to as "lettercols," short for letter columns), fans could "make announcements about clubs, advertise for pen pals, comment on stories, argue with other fans, and participate in con-tests to see who could invent the most disgusting pun along the lines of those offered at the end of the stories" in their favorite (Pustz 166). As such, the lettercols grew into a communal forum and a space for advertising, not primarily intended to offer new information about the stories told in the

comics, but through which fans would correspond with and debate amongst each other about the content of those stories.[5]

Daniel Stein's examination of the lettercols tradition in superhero comics underlines that, while these kinds of "paratextual transactions have been prominent in American serial narration since at least the nineteenth century," their function as "productive contact zones between producers and consumers, authors and readers" have had particular importance for the superhero genre (160). In part, Stein focuses on discussing the authorizing functions of these comic book paratexts, describing the lettercols tradition as exemplary of how American superhero comic books have employed this paratextual space to offer instructions on how to read serial comics. Naturally, these functions recall Genette's discussion of the literary preface, and how authors have used the preface to guide the reader toward a certain perspective or understanding of a novel or short story, in short, "to ensure that the text is read properly" (197). From one perspective, as I demonstrate in detail below, the *Watchmen* paratextual narratives function similarly to Genette's model of how the preface provides reading instructions, particularly as they provide background information necessary to fully grasp every detail in the story being presented in the graphic narrative. Contrary to the literary preface, however, the comic book lettercols system developed into a way of providing readers with opportunities to "ask questions about a plot development or character trait and make suggestions about future installments he or she wishes to see." Stein maintains that it is the seriality of comics in particular that triggers these kinds of reader-engagements, arguing that serialized storytelling means serial reading, which in turn "entails a heightened … engagement with ongoing stories and expanding storyworlds" (Stein 160-61). Because of the prolonged tradition of serialized storytelling within the American superhero genre, and the complex continuities this mode of story-

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[5] These kinds of lettercols were eventually included in most regularly published superhero comics, and by "the early 1960s, letters pages had become a central part of comic book culture and constituted a crucial ingredient in the origins of an organized comics fandom" (Pustz 167). Arguing that "letters pages occupy an important place in comic book culture," Pustz describes how lettercols "exist at the boundary between fans and creators, readers and content; the fact that it is an official and public forum makes the interaction there unique" (177). However, with the advent of the internet, e-mail, and the rise of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, these letters pages were all but rendered obsolete, and they gradually vanished not only from DC's publications, but from those of other companies as well. But as Pustz shows, the tradition lives on "in contemporary independent and alternative comics," serving to "establish and nurture a sense of community among readers," and letting creators "rant about their lives, political and cultural issues, and the comic book industry" (168). Pustz argues further that, while comics "may be a marginalized form of popular culture … their fans have one distinct advantage over those of other forms of popular culture. In comic books, there is always the potential for fans to interact in sites published, and hence made official, by the creators responsible for the production of the texts themselves. This [is the] kind of interaction [that] takes place in letters pages" (166).

telling generated, the superhero comic book lettercols grew into a forum in which readers and authors could gather to scrutinize, debate and clarify the details of the intricate storyworlds, character arcs and narrative continuities that the genre and its tradition fostered. As Stein explains:

> These paratextual spaces not only allow for, but actually necessitate, ongoing and indeed serial debates about plot developments, the gestation of complex narrative universes (or storyworlds), specific aspects of setting (from Metropolis to Gotham in DC Comics), the evolving characterization of superheroes and villains, and themes from the rather simple good vs. evil stories of the genre's early years to the morally conflicted narratives of the darker graphic novel period since the 1980s and 1990s. (161)

But *Watchmen* never featured lettercols. Len Wein has described how the *Watchmen* comics' unknown cast of characters and unusual subject matter made it a difficult sell to advertisers. DC therefore found themselves "with an extra eight or nine pages" left to fill for each issue, pages they initially thought to use for "house ads and a longer letter column" (Amaya, "Len Wein," n.pag.). However, feeling that it would be unfair to the readers who sent in letters towards the end of the series' limited run that would probably never be published, rather than invite submissions and create a lettercols forum for *Watchmen*'s readers, they opted to fill these space with materials that, as indicated in Moore's note, would develop the backstory of the *Watchmen* setting and its cast of characters (n.pag.). Consequently, Moore and Gibbons continued to create narrative material that would fill these paratextual spaces for the rest of *Watchmen*'s serialized publication. But while letters from readers never appeared in *Watchmen*, thus removing the participatory aspects of the lettercols from the publication, several other characteristics that Stein attributes to the traditions of letter columns are mirrored in the way the paratextual narratives function in relation to the graphic narrative of *Watchmen*.

As indicated in the quote from Moore above (and discussed in detail in my reading below) the paratextual materials following the graphic narrative in the first three issues of *Watchmen* present sections from Hollis Mason's autobiography "Under the Hood," which chronicles Mason's life leading up to and including his career as one of the first masked heroes, Nite Owl. Made to look like a reprinting of Mason's autobiography, these three sets of paratextual narratives consist almost exclusively of typeset text, only occasionally supplemented by inserted drawings representing newspaper clippings or photographs from Mason's childhood and his crime fighting career as both a policeman and a costumed vigilante. Each following set of paratextual narratives (comprised of four pages in issues four to eleven, none in the final issue) gives readers access to other documents that are intradiegetic to the *Watchmen* storyworld, and that have often been referenced or discussed in the graphic narratives that preceded the material.

Following the graphic narrative of *Watchmen*'s fourth issue is an essay entitled "Dr. Manhattan: Super-Powers and the Superpowers," which debates the consequences of having a real live superhero with seemingly godlike powers appear in the midst of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union. The fifth issue of *Watchmen*, entitled "V: Fearful Symmetry," is well known among comics scholars and fans alike for its dense and mirror-structured narrative and its play with symmetrical images. Here, the paratextual narrative presents a 1984 issue of a faux comics journal called *Treasure Island Treasury of Comics*, which detail how in the *Watchmen* storyworld, where masked heroes are an everyday reality, pirate-themed comics grew into the dominant genre of comic books. Issue six, in which prison psychologist Dr. Malcolm Long interviews the recently arrested Walter Kovacs/Rorschach, the paratextual space presents a collage of what looks like photos or scans of the content of Kovacs police file, including a record of his arrest, as well as his history of psychological problems, and a few example of his childhood writings taken from his time at the Charlton Home for orphans.

With issue seven—in which Dan Dreiberg and Laurie Juspeczyk return to their masked personas as Nite Owl II and Silk Spectre II—comes another essay. Written by Dreiberg, the 1983 essay from the "Journal of the American Ornithology Society" is entitled "Blood from the Shoulder of Pallas," and relates Dan's longstanding passion for owls while arguing for the value of poetic language for ornithological study. In issue eight, the reader is presented with a draft issue of the subversive right-wing magazine "New Frontiersman," as seen being assembled for print in the preceding graphic narrative. The draft features an editorial titled "Honor is like the Hawk: Sometimes it Must Go Hooded" which rallies for the virtue of hooded vigilantism (and against New Frontiersman's competitor, the magazine "Nova Express"), as well as a conspiracy story about a number of artists conspicuously gone missing (a throwback to a similar article in "Treasure Island Treasury of Comics"). Issue nine contains pages from Sally Jupiter's scrapbook that offer insight into her career as the first Silk Spectre, including an interview from 1976 in what appears to be a gossip magazine, in which she speaks to her relationship with her costumed colleagues, her daughter, as well as her complex history with Comedian. Issue ten gives the reader a look at the content of Veidt's desk that Rorschach and Nite Owl II search in the preceding graphic narrative, offering up documents that contain, among many other things, vague hints towards his apocalyptic plans. The final paratextual narrative follows the graphic narrative of issue eleven, in which Veidt reveals that his plan is already executed. Presented here is a long magazine interview with Veidt from a 1975 issue of the magazine "Nova Express" entitled "After the Masquerade." The interview relates why Veidt became a costumed crime fighter, why he chose to quit, his opinion of his fellow vigilantes, and his thoughts on what the future holds, all of which

contributes to illustrate the philanthropic aspects of a philosophy that—as the reader now knows—would eventually manifest in his devastating scheme to save the world from World War III.

While not all of these narrative materials look or function exactly like the letters pages they replaced, their black and white designs invariably recalls the aesthetic of the lettercols, as does much of the layout and visual presentation of the materials. Moreover, the black and white aesthetic and wide use of typeset texts across all paratextual narratives inevitably put them in stark contrast to the colorful graphic narrative they follow and precede. They often feature illustrations that are made to look like reprinted photographs, which make them easily distinguishable from the graphic narrative. In addition, like "Under the Hood," several of the paratextual narratives follow their own pagination which is separate from that of the graphic narrative, and some paratextual narratives feature full-page titles, like the cover sheet Dreiberg's essay on ornithology, or the cover of the essay on Dr. Manhattan that presents a drawing of him in a pose similar to Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man. Unlike "Under the Hood" and these essays on ornithology and nuclear superpowers, however, other paratextual narratives break with the pattern of reproducing single texts. For instance, the content of Kovacs' police file presented in issue six appears more scattered, leaving the reader to fill in the blanks in the picture these various documents paint of Kovacs' tragic background. The same is true for the materials following the graphic narratives of issues eight through ten. The draft issue of the magazine *New Frontiersman*, the content of Sally Jupiter's scrap book, and the papers from Veidt's desk, are all documents that the characters are seen handling in the preceding graphic narratives, and are all made to look like as if they are photographs of documents, surrounded as they are by handwritten notes and comments, pieces of scotch tape, crop-marks, paperclips and the like.

The foreignness of the paratextual narratives from the graphic narrative is heightened by how some of them are introduced via notes made to look as if they are attached with paperclips to the pages of the comic book. This is especially clear for the three installments of "Under the Hood," where the notes are printed in a typewriter font, the first of which states:

> We present here excerpts from Hollis Mason's autobiography, UNDER THE HOOD, leading up to the time when he became the masked adventurer, Nite Owl. Reprinted with the permission of the author. (I.Doc.1)

The two following installments of "Under the Hood" are introduced in a similar way, each note outlining the content of the coming sections and stating that the texts are "reprinted with the permission of the author." Of the other eight sets of paratextual narratives, only those following the graphic narratives of issue five and seven are announced via similar typed notes, in both cases explaining the origin of the content but only in one instant citing

permission from the author and publisher.[6] Finally, a handwritten note addressed to "Sal" (Sally Jupiter) is attached to the scrapbook collection in issue nine.

Referring to them as "expository materials," Sara J. Van Ness is one of the very few critics who engage in some kind of critical reading of what I call the paratextual narratives. Starting by trying to find out what the sporadic placement of introductory notes might reveal about the narrator of *Watchmen*, she claims that "[a]ny light that these paper-clipped notes shed on the mysterious identity of the narrator or narrators concurrently obscures it" (62). Van Ness nevertheless interprets the use of the "royal we" in some of these introductory notes as a signs of an intradiegetic narrating entity. She argues that this contributes to underscoring the authoritative voice of the documents they present, marking them as "a sort of public record or proof—in that the materials are reproduced in their 'original' form" (62, 72). Moreover, Van Ness overlooks the history and importance of the lettercols tradition for superhero comics in her argument that the extensive use of typeset texts in the paratextual narratives serves to augment their authenticity, claiming instead that the purpose of these notes is make the *Watchmen* paratextual narratives "appear 'real,' as if torn from the pages of the actual [sources] and inserted at the end of the chapter." She cites Will Eisner's seminal *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985), in which he explains how "attempts to 'provide dignity' to the comic strip" have involved using "set-type or computer-generated type instead of the less rigid hand lettering" (31). While Eisner is referring to the use of typeset texts in speech balloons, where he claims it stand out as "asynchronous" intrusions "on the personality of freehand art," Van Ness suggests that when used in material intradiegetic to a graphic narrative, as is the case in the *Watchmen* paratextual narratives, the "inherent authority" of typesetting lends credibility to the content it presents, making readers "feel as If they are holding the artifact in their hands … reading from [the text] just as [the] characters do in the narrative" (31).

Van Ness argues that the distinct form of the paratextual narratives and the use of notes to introduce them works to authenticate the materials presented there, which, by extension, lends them an immersive quality. But even if the paratextual narratives are understood—as Van Ness' discussion suggests—as documents intradiegetic to the *Watchmen* storyworld, authenticated by a number of notes and their extensive use of typeset text, we still need to address the question of their position in relation to the graphic narrative. How are they reconfigured with the publication of the graphic novel?

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[6] The two other typeset notes "paper-clipped" to the page introduce the excerpts from the "Treasure Island Treasury of Comics" journal following the graphic narrative in issue five, and Dan Dreiberg's essay from the "Journal of the American Ornithology Society" that follows the graphic narrative in issue seven.

Visual Markers of Paratextual Space

When the first issue of *Watchmen* was published in September 1986, it came with two sections from Hollis Mason's fictional autobiography in the place where the lettercols would have been situated. The rest of series' twelve installments followed (almost) monthly until October 1987, everyone including narratives materials instead of letters, with the exception of the twelfth and final issue, which extended the graphic narrative to cover all thirty-two inside pages of the comic. Also, as mentioned in the introduction, the covers of each issue of *Watchmen* simultaneously functioned as the first panel of the graphic narrative. Finally, each issue contained a page displaying copyright information (inside front cover), another offering writing and artist credits (inside back cover), and a black back cover page featuring a half-hidden doomsday clock that—with each issue—stands one minute closer to midnight and is increasingly covered in blood.[7] With its republication as a trade paperback, the division of *Watchmen*'s narrative into twelve serialized comic book issues was carried over and became the twelve chapters of the graphic novel, which meant that what used to be narratives residing in a paratextual space was now enclosed within the covers of a single volume.[8] However, several details featured on the opening and closing pages of each issue/chapter emphasize both the links and the differences between the *Watchmen* graphic narrative and the paratextual narratives.

First and foremost, functioning as the first panel of any given issue's graphic narrative, the front page of each serial installment of *Watchmen* was adorned with a black banner running vertically along the left side of the page. When these covers were carried over into the graphic novel most of their design elements and their place in the narrative were retained, but now they functioned as something akin to chapter headings. In the serially published issues, the banner contains the title of the comic as "WATCHMEN" and a small emblem of the publisher's imprint (DC), and a version of the doomsday clock. In addition, there are details such as the price of the issue and the month in which it was published. With the publication of the graphic novel these banners were altered: here they contain the number of the chapters they introduce (as, for example, "CHAPTER I"), and the DC Comics logo is removed in favor of the small version of the doomsday clock. Similarly, the countdown of the doomsday clock from the back-covers of the

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[7] This doomsday clock is referred to sporadically throughout the graphic narrative of *Watchmen*, where it signals the proximity of an all-out nuclear war between the Soviet Union and the United States. Naturally, on the back cover of the first issue the clock stands at twelve minutes to midnight, and at the close of the story with the twelfth issue, midnight is struck.

[8] While several different editions of the graphic novel have been published since *Watchmen* first appeared in collected form—some of which use different covers and contain added materials in the form of commentary, sketches, and notes from Moore and Gibbons—all future editions present the paratextual narratives as they appeared in the first graphic novel.

serialized issues was preserved within the graphic novel, but now appeared as the last page of every individual chapter.

These banners are less significant in distinguishing the paratextual narratives in the serialized issues of *Watchmen*; rather, they function more or less like book cover titles, a standard example of a traditional paratext. But when they are incorporated into a graphic novel, they are akin to chapter headings: they function just as much to signal the end of one chapter as to gesture to the start of the next one. As such, the banners also indicate that the preceding paratextual narratives should be understood as "belonging" to the previous chapter. Moreover, the small images of the doomsday clock on the banners are important because, together with the titles of each chapter detailed below, they have consequences beyond the chapter-dividing function of the banner itself. Like their full-page counterparts, these smaller images of the doomsday clock progressively count down to midnight with each chapter. The images of these clock-faces are then repeated in the very last panel of each chapter, where they give the same time as they did in the banner introducing that chapter. This systematic repetition creates a sense of opening and closure for each chapter of the graphic narrative that—in contrast to the sense of totality and comprehensiveness offered by the graphic novel form— emphasizes a distinction and separation between every issue/chapter and the paratextual narratives that surrounds them.

Finally, each of *Watchmen*'s issues/chapters features its own title. In contrast to the systematically repeated banners, however, these titles do not appear in a regular manner. Some chapter titles are placed a few pages into the graphic narrative, while some appear on the first numbered page of the chapter (they never appear with the banner on the cover page). In the last panel of every issue/chapter, together with the repeated image of the doomsday clock, these titles are then revealed to be part of a quotation. The quotations stem from a variety of sources including song lyrics, poetry, the writings of scientific and philosophical thinkers, and the bible. Like the paratext Genette discusses under the title "epigraphs," these quotes most often serve to underscore some aspect or theme of that issue/chapter, as, for example, with the title of the second chapter, centering (as discussed below) on Comedian's funeral. The chapter's title is revealed on the third page of the graphic narrative as "Absent Friends," and is then repeated on the last panel of that graphic narrative as part of a longer quote from one of Elvis Costello's songs called "The Comedians": "And I'm up while the dawn is breaking, even though my heart is aching. I should be drinking a toast to absent friends instead of these comedians," a clear reference to the retrospective theme and structure coloring this particular chapter (II.28.8).

Together, the repetitions of the doomsday clock-face and the titles of the issues/chapters create a circular structure that serve to summarize and bookend each chapter of the graphic narrative much like traditional paratexts such as literary texts employ chapter headings or a blank page to frame and

delineate chapters in a print novel. However, in numbering, counting down, and titling sections of graphic narrative, several of the repeated elements underline how that graphic narrative is the "main text" of *Watchmen*, in turn signaling the liminal nature of the space that surrounds that main text and accentuating the paratextual nature of the narrative materials such as "Under the Hood." Consequently, not only are the narrative functions and visual design of the materials that frame the *Watchmen* graphic narrative indebted to the paratextual nature of the lettercols tradition, but the way in which they are separated from that main graphic narrative rely on established paratextual markers to clearly emphasize the paratextual nature of the spaces which the paratextual narratives occupy.

Paratextual Space and the *Watchmen* Graphic Novel

While the paratextual narratives are clearly influenced by the lettercols tradition, the publication of the *Watchmen* graphic novel inevitably shifted and unsettled their position, relocating them from that liminal paratextual space to places interspersed in between the chapters of the *Watchmen* graphic narrative. And since the graphic novel is the only version of *Watchmen* readily available today, most readers never encounter these materials in their original and distinctly paratextual space. Conversely, as described above, the distinct design of the materials signal the paratextual nature of their original mode of publication, that is, as elements with an origin in the paratextual apparatus of the serially published *Watchmen* comic books. If "Under the Hood" and the rest of these materials are defined as paratextual narratives that in different ways augment and provide support for the graphic narrative of *Watchmen*, are they parts of that graphic narrative or are they all together separate texts? How can we account for their distinct visual and generic difference from the *Watchmen* graphic narrative using paratextual theory?

Genette's original work on the paratext does offer some suggestions how to approach this situation. In introducing his concept, Genette underlines that it is crucial to specify which edition of the text is used for understanding its paratextual apparatus. In the case of *Watchmen*, this entails deciding how to deal with there being both a serialized and a graphic novel version of that text. Genette states that he adopts "the date of the text's appearance—that is the date of its first, or original, edition" as his point of reference in making distinctions between various kinds of paratextual spaces and their functions for the text (5). Strictly following this principle, the *Watchmen* paratextual narratives should be understood to function in relation to their place in the first publication of the text as a limited series of comic books. However, Genette redefines what he means by the "first, or original" edition several times throughout his work, starting by amending his introductory statement with the clarification that he will disregard what he calls the "pronounced

technical (bibliographic and bibliophilic) differences among first trade edition[s], original [limited] edition[s] … and so on," deciding to "summarily call the earliest [edition of a text the] original" (5, note 9). This clarification contrasts markedly with a later and more elaborate discussion of how discrepancies between the original publication of any given work and the first appearance of its contents relate to how he defines its associated paratexts, specifically the literary preface:

> [S]ome original editions may be published later than the first public appearance of a text: this is the case with plays performed before they are printed; with novels published first in serial form (in a newspaper or magazine); with collections of essays, poems, or stories, whose components first appeared in periodicals. In all these cases the original edition may, paradoxically, be the occasion for a typically later preface. (174-75)

Following this line of reasoning, and paying attention to Genette's statement regarding "novels published first in serial form," it seems that the graphic novel version of *Watchmen* should be regarded as what Genette refers to as the "original" edition. This would entail that the complete version of *Watchmen* takes precedence over the serialized comics that preceded it as the point of reference in relation to which the position of its paratextual narratives should be understood. But Genette also allows for the relationship between a text and its paratextual apparatus be determined by the earlier appearances of that text, as suggested by how an "original edition" can "be the occasion for a typically later preface" (that is, a preface written after the first appearance of a text and often commenting on the reception and critique of that text). In other words, Genette allows for a previous publication of a text to influence our understanding of the paratextual spaces that appear in later publications, even one that is regarded as that text's "original edition."

If the relationship between a text and its paratextual spaces can be influenced by the time of previous publication or appearances of that text, it seems reasonable that paratextual spaces in an "original edition" are also subject to the publication history of the text in question. Consequently, I propose that the tradition of the paratextual spaces in which narratives such as "Under the Hood" appear in the serialized publication of *Watchmen* should inform our reading of the function of those narratives in the graphic novel version of the *Watchmen* text. This means taking into consideration the fact that, in the serial comics, these narratives were situated in the liminal paratextual space usually reserved for lettercols, making them "postludial" according to Genette's terminology. This term not only signals how a paratext follows the text, but it also denotes its opportunity to offer clarification and provide commentary on that text. And as my reading below demonstrates, "Under the Hood" expands on details from or clarifies distinct themes presented in the sections of graphic narrative that precedes the auto-

biography. This aspect of the *Watchmen* paratextual narratives is distinctly related to the clarifying and commentary function of the postludial paratext, as exemplified in the above discussion of the lettercols tradition.

Conversely, because their republication in the graphic novel also puts these paratextual narratives in close proximity to the sections of graphic narratives that follow them, "Under the Hood" and the other paratextual narratives could also be seen as performing "preludial" functions: they also function in a prefatory manner by introducing forthcoming sections of text to the reader. This aspect of how the paratextual narratives function is also visible in the reading below, which shows how "Under the Hood" introduces the history of the *Watchmen* storyworld to the reader, providing contextual information that benefits any reading of the story presented further on in the graphic narrative.

Analyzing "Under the Hood"

To further develop these issues and the consequences of the binding of *Watchmen* for the function of its paratextual narratives, the following reading focuses on the comic's first three paratextual narratives, collectively known as "Under the Hood." I choose to focus on "Under the Hood" because, as the first sets of paratextual narratives in the comic, they establish a pattern for how the rest of the paratextual narratives relate to the sections of graphic narratives next to which they are placed. Moreover, the visual presentation of the material as typeset texts and the use of black and white illustrations made to look like photographs is representative of the look of much of the other paratextual narratives following the rest of the chapters of *Watchmen*. However, there are a few aspects specific to "Under the Hood" that are important to mention. Unlike the other paratextual narratives, Mason's autobiography is depicted and discussed by the characters in the *Watchmen* story. The first three sets of paratextual narratives included in *Watchmen* represent five chapters of the autobiography: chapters "I" and "II" appear following the graphic narrative of issue one, chapters "III" and "IV" follow in issue two, and chapter "V" in issue three. This means that, unlike the other of *Watchmen*'s paratextual narratives, "Under the Hood" is a serialized paratextual narrative. As such, the material contains a number of elements that underline that these three paratextual narratives are installments of the same autobiography. Primarily, the pagination of the autobiography continues throughout each paratextual narrative and binds "Under the Hood" together into fourteen pages of continuous prose text. Likewise, the notes that present the three narratives, stating their origin and briefly summarizing their content, also function to signal how the second and third installments of "Under the Hood" tie into the preceding one. Together with

numbered headings, these signals suggest that the three paratextual narratives should be considered as one textual unit.

However, the fact that "Under the Hood" is serialized gives the autobiography an opportunity to provide contrast for the *Watchmen* graphic narrative in different ways. For one, because each installment is directly juxtaposed to a certain issue of the graphic narrative, every one of those installments is in a position to bring up and relate directly to specific scenes, events, or lines of dialogue presented in those issues. Conversely, when read alongside the full length of the *Watchmen* graphic narrative, "Under the Hood" is revealed as a site for commentary on the story, the themes, and character developments presented throughout that entire graphic narrative. Therefore, while my reading below initially focuses on the explicit moments where each of the three installments from Mason's autobiography point specifically to the graphic narrative in the issues that directly precede them, I go on to show how these key moments of juxtaposition underscore the way in which the full text of "Under the Hood" forms a vital part of the overall narrative of *Watchmen*.

The first issue and/or chapter of *Watchmen* includes several explicit references to how the year 1985 in the *Watchmen* universe differs from our own. This is accomplished via lines of dialogue that tell us Gerald Ford is still Vice-President (I.2.8), through visuals of newspaper headlines declaring that Vietnam has been named the 51st American state (I.4.3), or even by way of such necessary images as futuristic cigarettes, cars, airships, and the like (I.3.6, I.4.5, I.5.1). Apart from establishing these peculiar cultural and political features of the *Watchmen* universe, however, the chapter also offers intricate allusions to the history of masked heroism. Early on it is discussed that even if the "Keene Act was passed in '77," banning unsanctioned vigilantism, some costumed avengers like "Rorschach never retired," a fact that seems to be conspicuously unnerving to the local detectives investigating Edward Blake's death in the opening pages of the story (I.4.5-8). When Rorschach later examines the same crime scene and uncovers the fact that Edward Blake was in fact the governmentally sponsored costumed hero known as Comedian, he discovers a group photograph of the first vigilante team, the "Minutemen." The members of the Minutemen appear to be the *Watchmen* universe's equivalent of the naïve heroes of the golden age of superhero comics, and this photograph features in a number of key scenes throughout the narrative. Acting as a link between the many characters and events that have shaped the history of that first group of masked avengers, the frequent reappearance of the Minutemen photograph underlines how the many "background details" informing the "meta-continuity" that Moore developed for his story constitute a significant part of the *Watchmen* universe.

Through a visual transition similar to cinematic cutting techniques, close-ups of the Minutemen photograph connect Rorschach's discovery with the

following panel, which introduce Hollis Mason (aka Nite Owl I) reminiscing about his crime fighting days to Dan Dreiberg (aka Nite Owl II) in frames teeming with both spoken and visual references to Mason's history as part of the Minutemen. For example, during their conversation (again referencing the 1977 Keene Act) two copies of a book with the title *Under the Hood* can be seen in the foreground of one of the panels, while a statuette of Nite Owl I with the engraving "Gratitude" is clearly visible at the bottom left of the frame (I.9.4-5).

Indicative of how this introductory chapter works to set up a historical contrast between *Watchmen*'s dismal present day and the more optimistic times that preceded them, the early references to the history of vigilantism establish an important theme that will infuse the rest of the narrative. Repeated references to the Keene Act banning masked vigilantes, combined with the police detectives' disgust at the mere mentioning of the vigilante Rorschach, signal how there are no wholesome and helpful heroes of the classic superhero comics variety in *Watchmen*'s 1985 version of New York City. Instead, as the only working vigilante, Rorschach seems to cause feelings of unease rather than security. These allusions to how masked heroes have worn out their welcome are contrasted by the emblem of gratitude that shows how Mason and his fellow Minutemen provided a service for their community that was at least received with some appreciation and social recognition.

This idea of a moral deterioration among costumed heroes and of a waning public appreciation for vigilantism is continued and developed in Mason's "Under the Hood." Following the graphic narrative of *Watchmen*'s introductory issue/chapter, the first installment of Mason autobiography clarifies that it was his grandfather's work ethic and rural values that first drove him to join the NYC police force, inspiring in him a sense of right and wrong that would eventually encourage his venture into masked adventuring. He explains how, when he was a child, he was moved from his grandparents' farmland in Montana to the urban decay of New York, where the "pimps, the pornographers, the protection artists" confirmed the image his grandfather described of "cities [as] cesspools into which all the world's dishonesty and greed and lust and godlessness drained and was left to fester unhindered" (I.Doc.4). Regularly escaping this harsh reality with the aid of "pulp adventure fiction," but discomforted by their subtext, loaded with "repressed sex-urge[s]," Mason makes it clear that he was quickly drawn to the "basic morality [without the] darkness and ambiguity" of the first *Superman* stories. These comics of "bright primary colors" reminded him of the rural ideals and moral absolutes he inherited from his grandfather. His final decision to dress up as an owl and fight crime was spurred by one of these pulp super-heroes "escap[ing] from their four-color world and invad[ing] the plain, factual black and white of the headlines" in the form of Hooded Justice, the

first of several masked vigilantes who would eventually form the Minutemen (I.Doc.5-6).

Together, all these hints signal the ethical motives behind Hollis Mason's decision to undertake a career as a masked crime fighter. But as the rest of "Under the Hood" emphasizes, Mason has cause to question whether his Minutemen colleagues shared this wholesome inclination towards the vigilante vocation, and the texts from his autobiography that follow the second issue of *Watchmen* tell specifically of the formation and immediate deterioration of the Minutemen. However, it is important to note that in between these two intradiegetic excursions into the past, the second issue of *Watchmen* supplies a host of references to—and amplifies the importance of—certain aspects of the history of the *Watchmen* universe only sporadically alluded to in the first section of "Under the Hood." Specifically, an event only briefly mentioned in that first section, but expanded upon in the second, is Edward Blake's sexual assault on one of his female colleagues, Sally Jupiter (aka Silk Spectre I). This event will play a crucial part not only in the second issue of *Watchmen* and the sections of "Under the Hood" that follow, but also in the overall narrative of *Watchmen*, as it launches the important series of events that will culminate in Sally's daughter Laurie Juspeczyk's (aka Silk Spectre II) realization that Comedian was actually her father.[9]

Centered on Edward Blake's funeral, the second chapter/issue of *Watchmen* presents a number of analeptic sequences that explain how certain events in the history of the *Watchmen* universe differ from our own, and elucidate the role of Comedian in that context, establishing his character as the anti-hero of two generations of masked avengers. The issue opens by juxtaposing scenes from Blake's funeral with a conversation between Sally Jupiter and her daughter Laurie, eventually leading up to the first of the analepses. Recalling her relationship with Comedian, Sally reveals how her "perspective" on his attempted rape has changed over time, and claims that "[w]hat happened, happened forty years ago … 'it's history'" (II.2.1, II.1.8-9). While Laurie is distraught at this dismissal and her mother's relaxed attitude toward her assailant, Sally stares at her copy of the Minutemen photograph, pondering how "life goes on … [e]very day the future looks a little bit darker [while] the past, even the grimy parts of it … well, it just keeps on getting brighter all the time" (II.2.4, II.4.5-6). Again the photo of

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[9] Blake's assault on Jupiter is mentioned by Laurie when Rorschach visits her and Dr. Manhattan at the Rockefeller Military Research Center to tell them about the death of Comedian. Interestingly, in this scene, Laurie and Rorschach discuss Mason's "Under the Hood," clearly expressing different opinions regarding the level of truth (and relevance) of what Mason writes in his autobiography. The conversation not only raises the first indication that Comedian might not have been the exemplary avenger his government sponsorship suggests, but also calls into question the validity of Mason's perspective in "Under the Hood," simultaneously underlining the important role this autobiography plays in the overall narrative of *Watchmen* (I.21.5-8).

the Minutemen acts as a gateway between scenes, and what follows is an analeptic sequence focalized through Sally, depicting the day when the iconic group photograph was taken, only to move on to illustrate the assault that followed. Painting a wholly different picture of Comedian than she chooses to emphasize in her conversation with Laurie, Sally's memory of the attempted rape introduces an aggressive and brutal Edward Blake, who employs excessive violence to subdue his victim until he is interrupted by their colleague Hooded Justice. But the digression does little to explain the causes or consequences of that attempted rape, and the scene ends abruptly with a juxtaposed image of a pornographic cartoon featuring Sally.

With the next insight into Comedian's history, story time has skipped ahead about twenty-five years to the formation of the second group of masked vigilantes. Focalized through the perspective of Adrian Veidt (aka Ozymandias), this analeptic scene depicts Comedian (in a new outfit) as an unwilling participant in the meeting, and the only other remaining member of the original Minutemen is the aging Captain Metropolis, who attempts to spur a new generation of masked avengers into action under the name "Crimebusters" (II.9.5).[10] This analepsis gives insight into the growing cynicism of Edward Blake, the effects of a worsening international political condition for the idea of organized vigilantism, and perhaps even serves as a comment on how all superhero narratives—even *Watchmen*—repeat themselves. However, the sequence does little to address the space of time that has passed between the two scenes, what happened to the original members of the Minutemen (or even why Comedian now appears in a different costume). Neither do any of the following analeptic sorties into Comedian's past (several times in different costumes) provide any real insight into how the organization and excursions of the Minutemen progressed. Instead, the next two analepses jump even further, showing how Comedian and Dr. Manhattan worked together to end the war in Vietnam, and how he and Nite Owl II collaborated in the police strikes that heralded the Keene Act of 1977. Ending the chapter is a final analeptic sequence showing Blake as an aging and broken man, confused and ranting about a joke he does not understand to his old enemy Edgar Jacobi (aka Moloch).

Yet none of these analeptic sequences give any detail concerning the context of the events they portray; rather they act to show how the focalized

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[10] All the analeptic sequences that appear in the second chapter of *Watchmen* are signaled as emanating from a specific character's memory of a certain event that they experienced together with Comedian. This is done by way of framing and zooming effects (again reminiscent of cinematic camera movements) that focus on the face of the character who is recalling that particular scene. Examples of this effect can be seen throughout the chapter: Adrian Veidt remembers the first meeting of the second generation of masked avengers (II.9.1-4); Dr. Manhattan calls to mind the time they spent together in Vietnam (II.12.2-4); and Dan Dreiberg recalls their work together during the police strikes (II.16.3).

characters respectively recall Comedian's violent character, growing cynicism and dwindling disrespect for authority. Only the final flashback offers up tiny details of his career, such as him having started off as a masked vigilante "cleanin' up the waterfronts" (II.22.2), and foreshadows events that will be important to the development of the rest of the plot, such as the fact that there is an "island" where "writers, scientists, artists" are "doing" something that will have horrific consequences (II.23.4).

While the amalgamation of analepses that make up the second chapter emphasizes certain aspects of Comedian's personality and his relevance to the *Watchmen* history, it is only in the following sections of "Under the Hood" that these scenes and their central character are placed in a broader context of how the Minutemen were formed, the situation surrounding Blake's assault of Sally Jupiter, and what became of him and the other Minutemen in the years that followed this event. After describing the process of finding a fitting name for his vigilante alter-ego and designing a suitable costume for crime fighting, the second set of texts from Mason's "Under the Hood" recounts the rise and demise of the Minutemen in a much more detailed and coherent fashion than any of the vague hints or analeptic sequences in the preceding chapter manage to convey. Specifically, as part of his account of the various masked avengers instrumental in the formation of the group, Mason discusses Comedian's role leading up to and including his time in the Minutemen, as well as what happened to him after he left. As one of the first people to dress up to battle crime, Blake is described as a "particularly vicious and brutal young man in a gaudy yellow boiler suit [who had been seen] cleaning up the city's waterfront under the name of the Comedian" (II.Doc.1-2). This confirms many of the characteristics that were attributed to Edward Blake in the preceding analeptic scenes, including the fact that he started out fighting crime on the waterfront. As Mason moves on to establish that it was Captain Metropolis who initially suggested—by way of Sally Jupiter's agent—that all masked avengers form a group and collaborate, he also suggests that there was trouble brewing within the group from the start. Having already explained how some of them "were politically extreme … [had] sexual hang-ups … [or] were unstable and neurotic," Mason attests that "dressing up in a costume takes a very extreme personality" (II.Doc.2-3), a fact which he especially attributes to Comedian:

> The worst of [the group] was the Comedian. I'm aware that he's still active today and even respected in some quarters, but I know what I know, and that man is a disgrace to our profession. In 1940 he attempted to sexually assault Sally Jupiter in the Minutemen trophy room after a meeting. He left the group shortly thereafter by mutual consent and with a minimum of publicity. [Her agent] had persuaded Sally not to press charges against the Comedian for the good of the group's image, and she complied. The Comedian went his way unscathed … even though he was badly wounded in an unconnected stabbing incident about a year later. This is what made him decide to change his flim-

sy yellow costume for the leather armor he wears at present. He went on to make a name for himself as a war hero in the Pacific, but all I can think of is the bruises along Sally Jupiter's ribcage and hope to God that America can find itself a better class of hero than *that*.

After that, things deteriorated. (II.Doc.4; emphasis in original)

Compared to the analeptic sequences from the graphic narrative of issue two, the purpose of this section of "Under the Hood" texts is quite clear. After quickly summarizing Comedian's career in the Minutemen as "a disgrace," and confirming and contextualizing the violence of the attempted rape that was depicted in the preceding chapter, Mason underlines Comedian's aggressive nature, and gives him a military background that provides a context for his time in Vietnam (and even explains at least one costume change).

The remainder of this section of "Under the Hood" outlines the steady demise of the Minutemen in the years that followed Comedian's departure, describing how, one after another, members either resigned or were killed. The period of time that was skipped in the series of analeptic scenes of the preceding chapter is at least partially accounted for, as the slow but inevitable dismantling of this first group of vigilantes is explained as resulting from a lack of interest in fighting the now prevalent drug dealers and financial crime that slowly replaced the "flamboyant criminals" of the Minutemen's early career, as well as the fact that when the women had left the group, inspiration quickly fled the aging men left "in a meeting hall that smelled like a locker room" (II.Doc.4).

The declining vigor of the original Minutemen is further described in the third text from "Under the Hood" that follows the graphic narrative of issue 3 of *Watchmen*. Here Mason goes into further detail in describing what happened to his fellow costumed avengers in the 1950s, and continues to emphasize how the innocence of the early days of masked crime fighting was passing. He writes that in "that particular decade" the mood "first started getting *serious*," and "the more serious things got, the better the Comedian seemed to do" (III.Doc.1; emphasis in original). He stresses how the "arrival of Dr. Manhattan would make the terms 'masked hero' and 'costumed adventurer' as obsolete as the persons they described … [this] was the dawn of the Super-Hero" (III.Doc.3). Culminating in his decision to hang up his costume for good, Mason's autobiography wraps up the history of the first generation of masked vigilantes, accepting that "the game has changed and that the stakes are different and that there isn't necessarily a place for [him] in this strange new pantheon of extraordinary people. The World has moved on," Mason concludes, "the super-hero has become a part of American life … For better, or for worse" (III.Doc.4). With these final sentimental lines, Mason's autobiography bookends the Minutemen as *Watchmen*'s equivalent of the "golden age" of American superhero comics, setting the stage for the "silver age" to come.

From the above it is clear that the paratextual narratives of "Under the Hood" serve several purposes. First, Mason's autobiography contextualizes certain aspects of the fictional universe in which *Watchmen* is played out. While the few vigilantes still active in the version of 1985 in which *Watchmen* takes place are clearly seen as a menace, "Under the Hood" develops the notion that the *Watchmen* universe used to be a place where masked vigilantes were well liked, respected, and congratulated for their efforts. This is first evident in Hollis Mason's statue presented in the graphic narrative, and then supported by the motives Mason suggests were behind his dressing up and fighting crime in the first place. The account of the failing validity of masked vigilantism is continued in the next selection from "Under the Hood," wherein the history of the formation as well as the quick deterioration of the Minutemen is detailed, all of which provides insights into how what once seemed an innocent collection of morally wholesome heroes fighting naively theatrical villains steadily revealed itself to be a group of flawed and unstable individuals, whose personal problems more often than not overshadowed their good intentions.

Second, "Under the Hood" also fulfills a chronicling function, providing a sense of chronology to the often temporally and subjectively fragmented plotting of the graphic narrative the autobiography frames and comment on. This is especially noticeable in how "Under the Hood" provides coherence for several historical events that are alluded to throughout the first two chapters. For example, Mason's explanation of the more immediate consequences of Comedian's attempt to rape Sally Jupiter gives a linear account of several events only briefly alluded to in the graphic narrative.

Third, Mason's texts contribute a host of additional information for the graphic narrative, as is evident in the many detailed descriptions in "Under the Hood" of the various masked avengers that made up the original Minutemen, such as Captain Metropolis, Hooded Justice, Mothman, and The Silhouette. While these characters might not be essential to the main plot of *Watchmen*, Mason's descriptions of everything from their exaggerated costumes and distinct personalities, to their ultimate ironic, sad, or twisted fates, function to flesh out and provide a framework for the history of the Minutemen as an important part of the *Watchmen* narrative. Consequently, besides chronicling the back-story of the fictional universe of *Watchmen*, an important function of this paratextual narrative is to augment aspects of that history only alluded to in the graphic narrative. "Under the Hood" thus situates the events of the *Watchmen* graphic narrative within the broader perspective of the history and practice of vigilantism that defines the *Watchmen* universe, while simultaneously elucidating the complex relationships between the characters inhabiting that world.

Finally, initially mimicking how the first heroes of the original pulp action magazines were depicted as strong and morally superior men who mainly fought naïve bank robbers, the career of the Minutemen spans the

decade (1939-1949) in which the golden age superhero was at its most popular. Mason's account of the rise and fall of the Minutemen both reproduces and critiques that first period in the development of the genre of American superhero comics, so that when the complete texts of "Under the Hood" are juxtaposed with the full length of the *Watchmen* graphic narrative, Mason's autobiographical history of the Minutemen is revealed as providing the *Watchmen* universe with its own version of that "golden age" of superheroes. Furthermore, Mason's description in the final section of his autobiography how the 1950s seemed a "sordid and depressing and quite often blood-chillingly horrible" decade could be read as a reference to the horror comics that during this decade overshadowed the superhero pulps. And as the last page of "Under the Hood" recounts Mason's impressions of meeting Dr. Manhattan and Ozymandias for the first time, and how he agreed to let a young Dan Dreiberg repurpose his hero persona "Nite Owl," the mantle finally is passed to a new generation of heroes that—in the graphic narrative—will come to represent the *Watchmen* universe's equivalent of the superheroes of the "silver age:" a connection that is most explicitly detailed in the Dr. Manhattan's origin story, and which is depicted in the graphic narrative following the last section of texts from "Under the Hood" (III.Doc.3-4). Accordingly, as a consequence of the contextualizing, chronicling, and augmentative functions that the autobiography provides for the graphic narratives in the issues that surrounds it, the complete fourteen pages from Mason's "Under the Hood" is in many ways responsible for *Watchmen*'s strong resonance with the historic development of the genre of American superhero comics.

Similar functions could be ascribed to many of the rest of the paratextual narratives. For example, *Watchmen*'s fourth issue, which, as mentioned, portrays the origin story of Dr. Manhattan, is followed by an essay written by a "Professor Milton Glass" and entitled "Dr. Manhattan: Super-Powers and the Superpowers." The essay puts forth a debate of the consequences—both benefits and drawbacks—of having a superhero with seemingly godlike powers appear in the midst of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union. Suggesting among other things that Dr. Manhattan's presence has acted as a deterrent against Soviet actions, the essay underscores and augments Dr. Manhattan's role in distinguishing the history of the *Watchmen* alternate reality from our own, while at the same time contextualizing the representation of his experience of becoming and living as a super-being that was presented in the graphic narrative that precedes the essay. In raising the issue that Dr. Manhattan's presence has influenced the stakes of the Cold War conflict, the essay takes what in American superhero comics has become a stereotypical silver age superhero archetype and asks—just like "Under the Hood" examined and exposed the underbelly of the heroes of the golden age of action comics—what would happen if a character with super powers emerged in a world beset by the same problems facing the reality in

which comics like *Superman*, *Wonder Woman*, *The Fantastic Four*, or even *Watchmen*, are being written and read.

When read in this way, these paratextual narratives are revealed to perform significant work to support and even augment *Watchmen*'s critical approach to the genre of American superhero comics. Moreover, although the paratextual narratives are not reader-generated and thus eschew the participatory aspects of the lettercols, they provide contextual material regarding the *Watchmen* storyworld, chronicle plot details and deliver additional information regarding the fates of its less prominent heroes and villains in ways that recall how this kind of information that would be exposed, scrutinized and debated by readers, editors and sometimes even comic book authors on the letter pages.

Conclusions

The multitude of visual element distinguishing the graphic narrative as the "main text" of *Watchmen* puts emphasis on the difference between that main text and its paratextual narratives. At the same time, as my reading above shows, there are many elements that link them. Moreover, the publication of the graphic novel simultaneously reconfigures and reinforces the paratextual nature of the spaces in which the *Watchmen* paratextual narratives reside, sustaining their postludial position from the serial comic books while also augmenting their preludial functions for the sections of the graphic narrative they precede. And still, because these paratextual spaces clearly present narrative content related to the storyworld of the graphic novel, they are unmistakable parts of the overall text of *Watchmen*.

As I explained in my introduction, Genette's original formulation of the concept of paratexts is problematic due to his exclusive focus on the literary novel. As Genette himself notes, it may very well be necessary to interrogate and modify the specific dynamic between text and paratext that underlines his paradigm once it is used to analyze material that breaks with the traditions of the printed literary works the concept of paratexts was originally developed to describe. As I have shown above, "Under the Hood" and the other materials framing the *Watchmen* graphic narrative represent instances when this text-paratext dichotomy is complicated: for one, these materials are clearly parts of the *Watchmen* narrative created to occupy the paratextual spaces of the comics; moreover, the paratextual nature of these spaces is both revised and reinforced with the publication of the *Watchmen* graphic novel.

If, like Birke and Christ suggest, the virtue of paratextual investigation is to bring "into view the question of how readings are circumscribed by factors that are usually seen as marginal (or even external) to the text, and [supply] a vocabulary to talk about these aspects," our understanding of

paratexts and paratextual spaces must first be divorced from the restrictions of the strict either-or of the original text-paratext paradigm (66). Rather than considering paratexts a category for specific kind of material that is supplemental to the text, we must accept that, as Genette himself states, the paratext "properly speaking, does not exist." Instead, the concept of paratexts should be seen as a method of accounting for "a certain number of practices or effects" (*Paratexts* 343). This reassessment of paratextual theory is vital for the continued usefulness of the concept beyond the literary novels it was developed to address: only when rethought to account for the distinction between paratexts and the spaces they create and populate can paratextual investigation genuinely work to emphasize how "an abstract entity like a text is always presented in a specific form, which is affected by historically and socially determined modes of production and reception" (Birke and Christ 66). If opened up to a wider range of practices and effects surrounding texts regardless of their medium of presentation, investigations into the practice of utilizing paratextual spaces for narrative purposes such as the above can facilitate a broader understanding of the multitude of paratextual factors that circumscribe as well as open up our readings of texts regardless of media or platforms.

As I have shown above, focused investigation into these different print embodiments of *Watchmen* and their paratextual apparatus calls attention to the fact that—to paraphrase Birke and Christ—the abstract entity that we refer to when we talk about the *Watchmen* text is actually presented across a number of components, that is, as a serialized graphic narrative that follows the style of the American superhero comic book genre, as well as a collection of narratives situated in paratextual spaces usually reserved for the phenomenon of lettercols. The chief functions of these paratextual narratives are to contextualize, chronicle, and augment the graphic narrative; functions that, as I have shown, are related to the historically and socially determined modes of production and reception established by the phenomenon of lettercols. Only by examining *Watchmen*'s paratextual narratives through the lens of their position in paratextual spaces can the relationship between the function of those narratives and the traditions of the spaces they occupy be revealed. More specifically, in this case it is revealed that the *Watchmen* paratextual narratives are conditioned by the tradition of lettercols to provide explanations of the complex storyworlds, character arcs and narrative continuities fostered by the tradition of serially published American superhero comics. Via these functions, the paratextual narratives perpetuate and strengthen *Watchmen*'s celebrated meta-commentary on the superhero archetype, as demonstrated by how "Under the Hood" underscores the thematic connections between the history of the *Watchmen* storyworld and development of the genre of American superhero comics through its golden- and silver ages.

Watchmen Unbound:
Paratextual Narratives, Adaptation,
and Transmedia Storytelling

With the success of the *Watchmen* comics, it is no surprise that a film adaptation was in the works almost immediately following the publication of the graphic novel in 1987. But even though a *Watchmen* movie script was completed in September of 1988, it would take over two decades for *Watchmen* to reach the silver screen. Adapting *Watchmen* was a troubled process that ended up involving the comings and goings of (at least) four different directors, five producers, nine writers, and legal exchanges between four major Hollywood studios. The complications peaked in 2008, when 20th Century Fox sued Warner Bros. for copyright infringement, threatening to delay the then almost finished film even further.[1] But even though the dispute was settled in time for the film to premiere as planned on March 6, 2009, by that time the *Watchmen* adaptation had already been unfolding in various online spaces for nearly two months.[2]

This chapter examines the network of digital narrative materials that prefigured, framed, and complemented the feature film version of the *Watchmen* graphic narrative. The cinematic premiere of the *Watchmen* film was preceded and accompanied by a storytelling campaign that utilized various commercial websites, online social networks, and a DVD-release, to spread narratives that anticipated, led up to, and accompanied the story presented in the film. This means that, while *Watchmen* was canonized as a graphic novel that bound the serial comics into a single volume, the adaptation unbound the *Watchmen* narrative by spreading its content across a number of media platforms. My discussion of the *Watchmen* adaptation takes as its starting

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[1] While the complex processes behind the production of the *Watchmen* adaptation is an interesting area of study in itself, they will not be dealt with in detail in this study. For a survey of the first decade-and-a-half of *Watchmen*'s slow journey to the cinemas, see Hughes.

[2] The agreement regarding the copyrights dispute between Fox and Warner was announced on January 15, 2009. Meanwhile, the transmedia campaign was kicked into gear a week earlier, around January 8, two whole months before the film's premiere (Fleming and McNary).

point a number of questions: how do the transmedia marketing materials relate to the *Watchmen* film? Does their distribution across media relate to the textual distribution of the *Watchmen* story across the paratextual spaces in the graphic narrative? How do these materials impact our understanding of what constitutes the adaptation of *Watchmen* within the context of how contemporary popular cultural products saturate and spread across new media platforms?

That reviewers and critics of the adaptation largely—if not completely—ignored this vast worldbuilding and storytelling campaign is not surprising. Rather, it is in line with the lingering tendency in mainstream criticism as well as scholarly investigations into contemporary popular culture to treat products such as the *Watchmen* feature film as complete and finite adaptations when in fact they are often only one part of what are usually serialized, transmediated, or otherwise segmented and distributed narratives. The paratextual narratives common to these practices are often regarded as promotional fluff or as simple means of creating additional revenue. I want to show that they cannot be reduced to these marketing tasks alone.

I will argue that *Watchmen* adaptation cannot be limited to the *Watchmen* feature film alone, but should be thought of as a transmediated story, that is, as a story distributed across media, which involves employing various kinds of paratextual spaces to present narrative segments that complement and expand on the story told in the film. This transmedia storytelling strategy creates numerous overlaps between the paratextual narratives and the narrative of the *Watchmen* feature film, intersections which recall the relationship between the graphic narrative and the paratextual narratives of the *Watchmen* comics.

I begin my investigation with an overview of the reception of the *Watchmen* film in mainstream reviews as well as in the scholarly community. I show how a focus on issues of fidelity haunted these discussions, most of which overlooked the narrative thrust of the paratextual materials framing the *Watchmen* film. I relate this omission to a general lack of transmedia awareness in considerations of contemporary cultural production among critics and scholars alike, an absence that is particularly noticeable in discussions of adaptations of previously popular and established texts. Therefore, in my readings below, I trace the differences between the *Watchmen* graphic novel and the transmedia storytelling materials associated with the *Watchmen* adaptation not in the name of fidelity, but in order to emphasize how attending to such differences accentuates the need to think about how the paratextual narratives as inextricable parts of the *Watchmen* adaptation. I detail the way in which the paratextual narratives were distributed across media platforms, creating a transmedia storytelling campaign that simultaneously promoted as well as participated in relating the narrative of the *Watchmen* adaptation. Discussing what it means to approach the various materials framing the *Watchmen* film through a paratextual paradigm, I

propose that, because their digital forms and modes of distribution are far removed from the literary paratexts Genette's theory was meant to address, these materials cannot be accounted for using any but the most rudimentary distinctions outlined in his original framework. A more productive approach to contemporary paratextual practices is offered by Jonathan Gray, whose work I use as a springboard to discuss the paratextual nature of the spaces in which these transmediated narratives emerge, and to argue for their significance as constitutive parts of the *Watchmen* adaptation.

I then investigate selected paratextual narratives and their relationship to the narrative of the *Watchmen* film. While it is often seen as uncomplicated to discount materials presented via what are commonly considered promotional spaces, as I demonstrate below, investigation into these kinds of narrative and the details they communicate can often yield interesting and even contradictory interpretations. I begin by discussing how certain crucial elements of the transmedia storytelling campaign that preceded the cinematic premiere of the *Watchmen* film served to introduce, augment, and provide additional thematic resonance for the narrative presented in that film. I then analyze the 35-minute short film "The Culpeper Minute," presented as a companion-piece to *Watchmen: Tales of the Black Freighter*, itself a direct-to-DVD release made available only weeks after the premiere of the *Watchmen* film. Via analyses of key moments from this short film—presented as an intradiegetic TV-special—I show how "The Culpeper Minute" builds on vital paratextual narratives from the original comics to remediate the layered meta-narrative and self-reflexive critique of the superhero genre that made the *Watchmen* graphic novel such a celebrated work.

Approaching the Adaptation: Zach Snyder's *Watchmen*

The *Watchmen* film premiered to a decidedly mixed reception. Several reviewers and critics focused on details such as the film's altered ending, and on how the images of New York skyscrapers toppling under the pressure of a massive explosion were difficult not to relate to the events of 9/11. The greatest question in most reviews, however, was if the film could live up to the legacy of the original text. When Zach Snyder—famous for his stylistic adaptation of Frank Miller's comic book limited series *300* (1998/2006)— took over the *Watchmen* director's chair in 2006, he did so with the expressed interest to do justice to the graphic narrative and the expectations of its many fans (Boucher). Snyder successfully solicited *Watchmen*'s co-creator David Gibbons to draw conceptual artwork for the film, consult on script revisions, and produce storyboards mimicking the original comics pages to illustrate the adaptation's reworked ending. While Gibbons' involvement was a boon to fans of the original comics, the film's change in the story's finale sparked a brief controversy known to *Watchmen* fans as

"Squidgate," a debate that played out across various online forums and *Watchmen* fan-sites leading up to and continuing after the release of the film. The screenwriters removed the giant alien squid that causes the demolition in New York at the end of the graphic narrative. Instead, the film ends with a plot-twist that has the villain Adrian Veidt make it look like Dr. Manhattan's atomic superpowers caused the destruction of downtown Manhattan. Thus the film version of the story remakes the only real superhero of the *Watchmen* narrative into the final global menace which unites the world's warring countries against a common enemy and end all threat of worldwide nuclear annihilation: a plot function originally fulfilled by the giant fake-alien squid.

In a roundup of both online and newspaper articles assessing the film, Ben Childs of *The Guardian* argued that the *Watchmen* adaptation "polarised critics in a way not seen since Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy." Referencing "Squidgate" and how online fan communities had been "all over the movie ever since it became clear Snyder was planning a version faithful to the original comic book," Childs maintains that most reviewers were "left utterly nonplussed" by the finished film. Writing for Associated Press, Christy Lemire found director Snyder's adaptation "hugely disappointing, faithful as it is to the graphic novel," while Roger Ebert of *Siskel & Ebert* and *Ebert & Roeper* fame thought *Watchmen* was "a compelling visceral film" that for him evoked "the feel of a graphic novel." *Wired Magazine* published two reviews of the adaptation. In one Hugh Hart asked why "moviegoers not steeped in the original source material … should … care about this sprawling cast of characters?" In another Scott Thill called the movie "two-and-a-half hours of homage [to the graphic novel] that too often lapses into camp and whose main theses are lost in gory translation," yet argued that "if it brings more people to Moore and Gibbons' original, then mission accomplished." Thus, while reviewers might have disagreed whether Snyder's adaptation of *Watchmen* succeeded in doing justice to the source material, it is evident that the film's fidelity to the graphic novel was a major concern in its evaluation.

While this kind of fidelity criticism is common for popular reviews of adaptations that are based on well-known texts, critics working on theories of adaptation have tried to steer the field away from a focus on the issues of fidelity. As Sarah Cardwell notes, in order to better answer questions regarding the relationship between an adaptation and its source text, early theorists of adaptations "aimed to resist the intuitive, untheorised positions exemplified in much critical writing, and to establish firm conceptual, theoretical and methodological basis for their work" (41). However, since academic discussions of adaptations emerged in an environment that privileged literature over other arts such as film or television, critics working in the field sought to valorize literary arts over audio-visual media. Cardwell describes how theorists of adaptations tried to counter this tendency by promoting the distinctiveness of film as an art form, but this early media-specific approach

too "proved extremely problematic," particularly when it comes to identifying and discussing equivalences between a source text and the result of its adaptation (72-73).

One response to the problems of this early focus on media-specificity was the so-called comparative approach, which drew on recognized theories of narrative and semiotics to structure a more coherent theory of the processes of adaptation. Representative of this approach, Brian McFarlane argues in *Novel to Film* (1996) that the "insistence on fidelity has led to a suppression of potentially more rewarding approaches to the phenomenon," and claims that the fidelity issue inherently involves overvaluation of the source medium, which ignores "the idea of adaptation as an example of convergence among the arts, perhaps a desirable—even inevitable—process in a rich culture" (10). Instead, McFarlane urges scholars to "take into serious account what may be transferred from novel to film as distinct from what will require more complex processes of adaptation," to draw out other "production determinants which have nothing to do with the novel but may be powerfully influential upon the film" (10). Another, pluralist approach to adaptations is represented by Linda Hutcheon, whose *Theory of Adaptation* (2006) builds in part on what Robert Stam introduced as intertextual dialogism to propose three interrelated perspectives on the concept of adaptation. Beginning by delineating an adaptation as "a formal entity or product," Hutcheon argues that because most adaptations involve a shift in medium, they are in fact "re-mediations … transpositions from one sign system (for example, words) to another (for example, images)." She then distinguishes between the processes of creating adaptations and consuming them, describing the former as a process of "(re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation" and the latter as an "extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work." Hutcheon's three perspectives result in a pluralist definition of adaption as "a derivation that is not derivative—a work that is second without being secondary," the result of a dialogical process that becomes "its own palimpsestic thing" (6-9). Using Stam's intertextual dialogism approach as a starting point, Costas Constandinides' work on "post-celluloid adaptation" is representative of the emerging models that are being developed to address the need for "new paradigms of adaptation processes" that can examine and engage "in a dialogue with the source text not only in terms of narratological signification, but also in terms of medium signification." Constandinides builds on Manovich's understanding of digital cinema to argue for a "specific focus on the uses of new media objects" and how "their manifestation creates meaningful associations that can differ from or complement the source text" (5). Using examples of "film to digital cinema" adaptation such as Peter Jackson's 2005 remake of the classic 1933 *King Kong* to address how computer generated images are employed to retell filmic source texts, Constandinides seeks to construct an understanding of adaptation that is "not restricted to the interconnectedness of two texts" (24). Rather, his work

emphasizes the fact that many contemporary cultural products—particularly adaptations of serialized popular texts such as *Watchmen*—often consist of a "multiplicity of texts" that function "across collaborative media," deliberately building and communicating stories that complement each other "in terms of signification and narrative for commercial purposes" (24). Additionally, Constandinides references the websites and online videos that prefigured the release of Jackson's *King Kong* as "paratexts," distributed materials that "function as supplementary diegetic or non-diegetic narratives of the main text," further inviting paratextual examination to address how adaptations, just like many other forms of popular culture, are increasingly segmented and distributed across media platforms (116). However, despite these efforts to develop the field of adaptation theory for emerging cultural practices, questions of fidelity still haunt many critical engagements with adaptations, often obscuring other fruitful approaches to the phenomenon of adaptation, as the responses to the *Watchmen* adaptation attest.

Out of the three scholarly engagements with the adaptation, only Sarah J. Van Ness mentions the online transmedia campaign that prefigured the *Watchmen*'s cinematic release. And all fail to mention the *Watchmen: Tales of the Black Freighter* direct-to-DVD release that appeared only weeks following the film's premiere. In fact, as the only scholar who engages with the narrative materials framing the *Watchmen* movie, Van Ness' brief rundown of the film's "variety of website tie-ins" is emblematic of the tendency to downplay or simply ignore the narrative potential of these kinds of materials (177). While she does describe the main website of the transmedia storytelling campaign and mentions a few other online destinations, Van Ness chooses not to discuss how the content presented there might contribute to or be read in juxtaposition with the movie itself, or in response to reviews of the film, nor how that online content impacts our understanding of the ways in which the adaptation makes use of the material of the graphic narrative. Rather, approaching these websites solely as marketing spaces, Van Ness claims that even if moviegoers did visit the sites, that "did not guarantee [they] would find and read information that would suggest *Watchmen* as something other than simply another comic-book superhero film" (178). Instead, she concludes that Snyder's aim to be faithful to the graphic narrative was the reason the film failed with the critics, and reiterates the most common critique of the movie: the attempt to put every frame of the comic on the screen made it impossible to watch the film without discussing how, despite its fidelity to the graphic narrative, it could never measure up to the original.

While Van Ness' analysis represents the fidelity-oriented tradition, Bob Rehak's reading of the *Watchmen* adaptation is closer to McFarlane's comparative approach. Describing the *Watchmen* film as an "ambitious experiment in hyperfaithful [sic] cinematic adaptation," Rehak's discussion of the adaptation focuses on the film's altered ending, explaining how the changes

to the finale were a constant issue in the writing of the *Watchmen* script, predating director Zack Snyder as well as the events of 9/11 (154). Rehak argues that this change to the story should be understood not as a reaction to events of the past decade, but as part of the long and complex process behind bringing any film to the cinemas:

> The long and detour-riddled journey of *Watchmen* from page to screen embodies the many paradoxes of contemporary blockbuster film production, so capable of outré visualization yet so constrained in its operations. It would be simplistic—and, given the historical record, inaccurate—to conclude that the reimagined ending was prompted solely by the events of 9/11; multiple concerns converged to motivate the change, from the desire to streamline an unruly narrative to the fear of alienating potential audiences. (158)

He concludes that the "ineradicable stamp of 9/11 on *Watchmen*'s cinematic incarnation may be less about what is absent or altered than about how difficult it has become to read the film otherwise" (159). Rehak's article is instructive in its emphasis on the "matrix of factors" and "complexly overdetermined mutation of texts across time and intermedial borders" that produce adaptations like *Watchmen* (158).

Stuart Moulthrop too considers the film's ending in a reading that compares the reworked cinematic finale to the ending of the comic book, and argues that the film version actually improves on the giant squid from the *Watchmen* graphic narrative. In the original version, in which the final image threatens the "publication of [Rorschach's] journal," it also threatens to destabilize "Veidt's balance of terror by starting an investigation that could unravel the threads of his fraud," according to Moulthrop; if or when "the phony alien in New York is debunked, there will be no threat from beyond the stars to constrain nuclear brinksmanship." However, because the film uses Dr. Manhattan as origin of the catastrophe and its lingering threat, claims Moulthrop, "no matter what befalls Adrian Veidt, any future geopolitics must account for [Dr. Manhattan's] possible return" ("*Watchmen* Meets *The Aristocrats*," n.pag.). Moreover, like Rehak, who stresses the "production paradoxes" behind the *Watchmen* adaptation, Moulthrop offers a brief aside that spotlights the gains of approaching popular texts with some knowledge of their context and circumstances of production. Referring to Veidt's plot to force the world's "superpowers to end nuclear conflict in the interest of planetary defense," and the plotline's similarity with an episode of 1960s television series, *The Outer Limits*, Moulthrop comments in a footnote:

> Moore apparently arrived at his plot independently, having learned about "Architects of Fear" well into the writing. He included the reference to the TV series as a tribute. … However, those who think Veidt's plot stretches plausibility may find this detail more functional than decorative. If one does

not know about Moore's belated discovery of the show, the allusion may suggest Veidt himself drew his inspiration from TV melodrama, a reading that seems consistent with Veidt's self-description as a non-linear, video-inspired thinker. If anything, this reading deepens the satiric impact of *Watchmen*. ("*Watchmen* Meets *The Aristocrats*," n.pag.)

As we can see, Moulthrop's insights into the contexts of production of the *Watchmen* comics both contributes to and complicates his readings of the narrative. All the more curious then, that while both he and Rehak argue for the value of considering contexts of production in their discussions of the *Watchmen* adaptation, neither of them account for the equally important context of the distributed narratives framing the *Watchmen* film. Only by ignoring this context can Moulthrop critique the adaptation for lacking thorough engagement with the self-referential aspects of the graphic narrative: while "Snyder's film [is] a technical achievement, remarkable for its frame-to-panel fidelity," Moulthrop writes, it is "not deeply engaged with the best virtues of the original, such as its notoriously non-linear narrative and its relentless interrogation of all media, including its own." Rather, Moulthrop suggests that the film should be "considered as much for its significant departures from Moore and Gibbons as for its uncanny ability to translate their conception to the IMAX Experience," indicating there is "something more substantial at stake" in its "careful attempt to translate a notably difficult work into a powerful, rapidly evolving medium" (Moulthrop "*Watchmen* Meets *The Aristocrats*"). Hence, despite the fact that he never addresses the transmedia storytelling strategy framing the film, Moulthrop's final comment closes in on how the fidelity issue might have obscured more fruitful approaches to the adaptation. I propose that investigation into the use of paratextual narratives to frame the *Watchmen* film sheds light on what is a an attempt to translate *Watchmen* into the powerful, rapidly evolving age of new media.

Below, I follow Constandinides' approach to adaptation as a "multiplicity of texts" in combination with Hutcheon's understanding of adaptations as remediations and McFarlane's suggestion to "take into serious account what may be transferred from novel to film as distinct from what will require more complex processes of adaptation." I combine these three perspectives in order to address questions regarding how the processes of adaptation and remediation create paratextual spaces, and how paratextual narratives make it necessary to re-adjust our understanding of what constitutes an adaptation. I argue that when read together with the transmedia storytelling campaign and the narrative material on the *Watchmen: Tales of the Black Freighter* direct-to-DVD-release, the *Watchmen* adaptation does engage with its source material in much more substantial and sophisticated ways than simply translating the panels of the comic for the cinematic screen. The way in which these paratextual materials frame the *Watchmen* cinematic release is compa-

rable to the relationship between the graphic narrative and narratives segments in the paratextual spaces of the comics. Importantly, when the TheNewFrontiersman.net website and "The Culpeper Minute" are understood together with the film as integral components of the *Watchmen* adaptation, the adaptation can indeed be said to interrogate and play with several forms of mediation, including the "notoriously non-linear narrative" and a "relentless interrogation of all media, including its own" which Moulthrop identifies as the virtues of the original *Watchmen* comics.

Material Boundaries of Paratextual Space

As discussed in the previous chapter, several visual markers simultaneously separate and link the paratextual narratives of the *Watchmen* comics from the graphic narrative that they frame, creating an ambiguity that is heightened with the binding of *Watchmen* into a graphic novel. With the adaptation, *Watchmen* is unbound and spread across a number of media platforms, making the relationship between its various narrative segments particularly complex to account for. On the one hand, the various media platforms that frame the *Watchmen* film are clearly distanced by the material boundaries that separate these media forms. On the other hand, the paratextual narratives presented on these media platforms are powerfully linked to the story presented in the *Watchmen* feature film. Below, I account for these various platforms to make clear how the *Watchmen* adaptation was unbound and distributed across media.

The online campaign leading up to the *Watchmen* film's premiere was primarily communicated by way of its distinct website, TheNewFrontiersman.net. The first piece of narrative content was presented on this site on January 19, 2009, and over the following two and a half months leading up to the *Watchmen* film's cinematic debut on March 6, 2009, every piece of the narrative communicated through the transmedia campaign was posted on the site. Each post consisted of a link to a video clip or one or a couple of images, complete with short texts summarizing the content of each piece of media. Moreover, all posts were replicated on the social network Twitter via a special account created for "The New Frontiersman" campaign (with the handle "@NewFrontiersman"). For example, an intradiegetic ad for the "Veidt Method" (discussed in detail below) was simultaneously posted on the dedicated TheNewFrontiersman.net website as well as on Twitter, both posts featuring the tag-line "A New You! THE VEIDT METHOD," along with a link to the image of the ad. Similarly, the images produced the transmedia storytelling campaign were also published on the "The New Frontiersman" page on the social network Flickr.com, where the audience could comment on and share individual photos or groups of images. Also offering opportunities for interaction and sharing, each of the four video clips posted

on TheNewFrontiersman.net was also presented on the YouTube account created for the "The New Frontiersman" campaign.[3] Importantly, besides offering links back to the main website created for the campaign (using the slogan "Integrity in journalism … subscribe today!" to underline that website's focus on exposing hidden truths from the *Watchmen* alternate history), these social media accounts only presented narrative materials produced for and communicated via "The New Frontiersman" transmedia storytelling campaign. Because they never published traditional promotional materials such as trailers or posters for the film, these social media accounts work in similar ways to TheNewFrontiersman.net website, which only offered minimal information about the studios involved in the making of the *Watchmen* film. This exclusive focus on communicating narrative segments for the transmedia storytelling campaign is a strong indication that the website and social media accounts should be regarded not only for their promotional function, but also as parts of the overall narrative of the *Watchmen* adaptation.

While TheNewFrontiresman.net website and its linked social media accounts represent a commonly used strategy of repurposing online paratextual spaces for presenting narrative segments that tie into a feature film or TV-show, the *Watchmen: Tales of the Black Freighter* DVD presents a rather unusual method of transmedia distribution even by today's elaborate transmedia storytelling standards. As mentioned above, this direct-to-DVD release was made available on March 24, 2009, only weeks after the *Watchmen* film debuted in the cinemas (March 6), and a full four months before it was made available for purchase (July 21). This means that, unlike conventional DVD-supplements such as directors' commentaries or deleted scenes which usually arrive together with the film, the *Watchmen: Tales of the Black Freighter* DVD was as an altogether separate product. The packaging of the DVD works hard to establish its links to the *Watchmen* film, and the use of the name *Watchmen* in the title of the release establishes a relationship between the DVD and the film in a similar way to how a cinematic sequel would build on the name of a preceding release.[4] Moreover, beside

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[3] The dedicated website TheNewFrontiersman.net is no longer online. However, fortunate for this project, the social media accounts mirroring the content posted on that website are still available, making it possible not only to view the content of the campaign and trace the chronology in which they were posted, but also to read comments documenting some of the reactions to that content. For a number of examples, see *www.twitter.com/NewFrontiersman*, *www.flickr.com/photos/thenewfrontiersman*, and *www.youtube.com/user/thenewfrontiersman*. While there are traces of a Facebook page for "The New Frontiersman," the account seems to be deactivated.

[4] This is a common practice in the release of Hollywood franchise films, cf: *The Exorcist* (1973) and *Exorcist II: The Heretic* (1977), *Star Trek* (2009) and *Star Trek Into Darkness* (2013), or *The Fast and the Furious* (2001) and *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift* (2006).

the image from the animated film that titles the release, the DVD-cover features the black banner recognizable from the comics and the graphic novel running vertically up the left side, complete with the *Watchmen* title in bold yellow letters and as well as a small smiley-button. Likewise, the spine of the DVD gives the *Watchmen* title and the smiley-button the majority of the space, almost overshadowing the title. Towards the bottom of the cover it is spelled out that the DVD "includes Hollis Mason's tell-all: Under the Hood," and the reverse side of the packaging lists a number of features underlining how the DVD release relates to the *Watchmen* film. Large yellow letters proclaim how its content is adapted "from the graphic novel" but "unseen in the *Watchmen* Movie"; the blurb repeats that the material is adapted from "tales from the most celebrated graphic novel of all time that do not appear in the extraordinary *Watchmen* Theatrical Feature." Finally, although the DVD is titled after the animated short film *Tales of the Black Freighter*, the menu that appears once the disc is played makes no tiered distinction between that animated story and "Under the Hood." Instead, both films are presented as the two main features of the DVD, while a third option takes the viewer to a special features section featuring a documentary called "Story Within a Story: The Books of *Watchmen*," among other things.[5]

Taken together, these texts, logos, DVD menus, and other design elements all signal that the narratives of the two films on the DVD and the story portrayed in feature film are all components of the *Watchmen* adaptation. Not only does the cover repeat the specific design of the *Watchmen* logos and images of the smiley-button used to market the film, but the comment that the DVD includes Mason's tell-all "Under the Hood" is clearly designed to communicate how relevant that narrative is to the story in feature film. Moreover, the comments on the reverse cover work to establish how the content on the DVD differs from the narrative of the feature film, while at the same time underscoring the DVD's content as providing narrative components crucial for the overall adaptation of the *Watchmen* comics. The comment that "watching the *Watchmen* begins here" in the DVD's blurb is particularly telling, as it seemingly instructs prospective buyers to watch the *Tales of the Black Freighter* and "The Culpeper Minute" if not before, at least in close connection to seeing the *Watchmen* film. And since the DVD was released only a few weeks after the *Watchmen* movie appeared in the theaters, it was entirely possible to watch the DVD before or immediately following a screening of the *Watchmen* film.

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[5] Notably, this special feature documentary details and discusses the way in which the materials that were adapted for this DVD release, including "Under the Hood" and other the paratextual narratives, are crucial to the *Watchmen* graphic narrative. While the segment is short, it serves to further underscore the importance of these materials for the overall narrative of *Watchmen*.

Paratextual Space and the *Watchmen* Adaptation

While the narratives of TheNewFrontiersman.net and "The Culpeper Minute" adapt content from the entirety of the *Watchmen* comics, as I discuss in detail below, it is clear that they draw extensively from the paratextual narratives of *Watchmen* to perform functions that recall the contextualizing, chronicling, and augmentative functions that characterize those paratextual narratives. However, because they are spread over a number of digital platforms and releases, their textual relationship to the *Watchmen* movie is less clear. While Genette's original work acknowledges the paratextual nature of the kinds of promotional materials that characterize the book industry—including paratexts such as ads and poster which have affinities with the material described above—his focus on literary print publications cannot account for all the complexities of the transmediated materials of the *Watchmen* adaptation. Instead, I turn to Jonathan Gray's work on how the many different kinds of paratexts circulating in contemporary popular culture are involved in creating meaning for the texts they frame.

First, however, I would like to return to Genette's original work on the paratext. One of Genette's initial moves in outlining his concept is to address the importance of the location of any given paratextual element through the distinction between "peritext" and "epitexts." Peritexts are the more familiar kinds of paratextual elements presented "within the same volume" as the text, such as "the title or the preface and sometimes elements inserted into the interstices of the text, such as chapter titles or certain notes" (*Paratexts* 4). The epitext, on the other hand, is defined as "any paratextual element not materially appended to the text within the same volume but circulating, as it were, freely, in a virtually limitless physical and social space." While the epitext is not his primary focus, Genette devotes the last two chapters of his work to discussions of what he calls "public epitexts," that is, paratextual material overtly aimed at a public audience, and "private epitexts" such as an authors' journal, private letters or correspondence with his editor (344).

Crucial for my project is that, according to Genette's definition, all kinds of external promotional paratexts such as posters, ads, and TV commercials are included in the category of epitexts. Moreover, the fact that the epitext is external to the volume of the book is vital to the category, so while Genette maintains that the distinction between peritexts and epitexts is "in theory purely spatial," this spatial distance does involve some important "pragmatic and functional repercussions." Because they are not bound together with the text, epitexts are "constitutionally more ephemeral, destined to disappear when [their] monitory function is fulfilled." To Genette, this means that—in contrast to how a peritextual element (like a title, preface or footnote) is a permanent component of any given publication (at least concerning editions in which that peritext is retained)—the epitext exists in an inherently limited temporal relationship to the text, providing more of an "interim advertising

effect" than a permanent function (344). Genette relates this ephemeral and transitory nature of the epitext to the fact that the category actually "consists of a group of discourses whose function is not always basically paratextual (that is, to present and comment on the text)" (346). Rather, most epitexts appear as more or less independent and "complete" texts, often marking their paratextual relationship to—and influence over—the text as more of a by-product than their raison d'être. Consequently, Genette advises the para-textual critic to consider epitexts "as occasions capable of furnishing us with paratextual scraps (sometimes of prime interest)," providing more of a "paratextual *effect* (rather than function)" (345-46; emphasis in original):

> the epitext is a whole whose paratextual function has no precise limits and in which comment on the work is endlessly diffused. … If our study of the note made us aware of the paratext's lack of internal borders, our study of the epitext confronts us with its lack of external limits: the epitext, a fringe of the fringe, gradually disappears into, among other things, the totality of the au-thorial discourse … we would do well to bear in mind this potential for in-definite diffusion. (346)

This characterization of the epitext as an ephemeral and transient group of discourses certainly captures the complexities involved in trying to organize and understand the many different kinds of paratextual materials that circu-late across contemporary new media spaces, including the transmedia story-telling campaign that framed the *Watchmen* film. However, while Genette at first acknowledges the paratextual nature of the kind of promotional spaces and marketing materials that can be related to the *Watchmen* transmedia campaign, he quickly dismisses most kinds of materials presented in those spaces. At first describing promotional material such as "posters, advertise-ments, press releases and other prospectuses" as forming the category "pub-lisher's epitext," Genette discounts the entire category because, in his view, the "marketing and 'promotional' function [of such paratexts] does not always involve the responsibility of the author in a very meaningful way." Claiming that while "an author may participate in this type of production," he or she "does so anonymously and in the capacity (a paradoxical one, if you like) of assistant to the publisher." Consequently, Genette finds most publisher's epitexts "value-inflating hyperbole inseparable from the needs of trade" and of little interest to a literary critical community (347).

Still, a number of valuable insights can be drawn from Genette's discus-sion of the epitext. First, his inclusion of most kinds of marketing materials within the category of the "publisher's epitext" underscores the paratextual nature of spaces such as those in which the *Watchmen* transmedia story-telling materials emerged. This means that, even though promotional para-texts are uninteresting to the specifics of his literary project, Genette still considers the publisher's epitext a vital enough part of the paratextual appa-ratus to include it in his paradigm, which in turn invites discussions of the

Watchmen transmedia storytelling campaign as having played out in a para-textual space. Second, because of the spatial distance between text and epitext, the latter is vulnerable to the same kind of "indefiniteness [and] slipperiness" that characterized the fictional note (343). But while its position on the "fringe between text and off-text" sometimes deemed the note too close to the text to actually be counted as a paratext, the situation for the epitext is reverse. Because the epitext resides on what can only be described as the "fringe of the fringe" of the text, the danger here is that it "gradually disappears" into the surrounding discourse, loosing not only its paratextual status but with it, most importantly, its connection to the text (347).

Thus, when approached through Genette's paradigm, the narratives of the *Watchmen* transmedia storytelling campaign, particularly the website The-NewFrontiersman.net, can be described as a digital version of the publisher's epitext and thus a vital part of the new media paratextual apparatus that framed the *Watchmen* film. Moreover, Genette's reasoning also underscores that their epitextual position inherently obscures the relationship between the *Watchmen* transmediated narratives and the text of the *Watchmen* film: an observation that can be related to how the transmediated materials surrounding the *Watchmen* feature film was summarily disregarded in reviews and critical discussions of the adaptation.

Even more complex is the paratextual status of the *Tales from the Black Freighter* DVD. Because this stand-alone release represents an unusual narrative strategy even by today's standards, it is difficult to relate the DVD to any one of Genette's many paratextual categories. Instead, the DVD resides on the "fringe of the fringe," to use Genette's phrase, making it particularly susceptible to the surrounding discourse.

It is precisely this kind of potential for indefinite diffusion that is the impetus for Jonathan Gray's intervention into paratextual theory. Where Genette dismisses any kind of promotional paratext not immediately involving the author as uninteresting, Gray opens his influential *Shows Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers and other Media Paratexts* (2010) by arguing that the way in which contemporary popular media continually spread narratives across digital platforms increases the importance of studying these kinds of paratextual materials. Gray describes how, just like the *Watchmen* adaptation, "each and every media text is accompanied by textual proliferation at the level of hype, synergy, promos, and peripherals" that not only "tell us about the media world around us, prepare us for that world, and guide us between its structures," but crucially, "also fill it with meaning." He maintains that, because of the "extended presence" of these materials, the "cultural impact, value, and meaning" of "any filmic or televisual text" has to account for "the film or program's many proliferations:" each "proliferation, after all, holds the potential to change the meaning of the text, even if only slightly" (Gray 1-2). Gray explains that

> rarely if ever can a film or program serve as the only source of information about the text. And rather than simply serve as extensions of a text, many of these items are filters through which we must pass on our way to the film or program, our first and formative encounters with the text. (3)

Gray wants to avoid the negative connotations of marketing terms such as hype, synergy, and promotional peripherals, all of which are "situated in the realm of profits, business models, and accounting, which may prove a barrier for us to conceive of them as creating meaning." Instead, he builds on Genette's concept of paratexts to describe how new media promotional proliferations often function to "create texts" to "manage them" and "fill them with many of the meanings that we associate with them … a paratext constructs, lives in, and can affect the running of the text" (5-6). Gray argues further that "media, film, television, and cultural studies frequently stick solely to the films and television programs with a loyalty born out of habit." He calls for an "'off-screen studies" which would focus on "paratexts' constitutive role in creating textuality" (7-8). To that end, Gray proposes a framework of "entryway" and "in medias res" paratexts to differentiate between how various kinds of paratexts function to construct, co-create, and affect the dissemination of popular texts. Not unlike Genette's categorization of "preludial" and "postludial" paratexts, Gray's chief distinction between "entryway" and "in medias res" paratexts is grounded in structuring the temporal relationship between text and its paratextual elements. But because Gray goes beyond Genette's print-specific paradigm to consider how texts proliferate across media and platforms, these distinctions take on a heightened relevance for products such as the *Watchmen* adaptation.

For instance, whereas Genette's category of "preludial" paratexts defines elements such as the literary preface as functioning to introduce and guide a reader through a written text, Gray's broader approach via the "entryway" paratext is concerned with how paratextual elements such as poster, trailers, and other marketing materials, as well as concepts such as genres, media protocols, and advertising strategies, all function to set expectations and condition preconceptions for a reader or viewer's initial engagement with a film, video game or television show. Importantly, unlike Genette's dismissal of marketing function of the epitext, Gray's category of "entryway" paratexts perfectly describes the kind of promotional websites that framed the *Watchmen* adaptation and their potential to influence and condition audiences' reception and engagement of the texts they frame. Conversely, where Genette's "postludial" category primarily describes paratextual elements such as postscripts or bibliographies (or the lettercols discussed in the previous chapter) that follow and comment on the static printed text, Gray's category of "in medias res" paratexts is intended to signal that, because contemporary popular culture is often serialized, transmediated or otherwise segmented, the texts that are communicated are seldom static at all. In part,

Gray uses the "in medias res" category to address how paratextual elements such as the "'last week on …' or 'previously on …' segments that precede many television serials" not only "serve as entryway paratexts" for new viewers, but also "also act as reminders for returning viewers, designed to focus attention on specific actions, themes, or issues" (43). Gray uses Henry Jenkins' concept of transmedia storytelling to argue that "in medias res" paratext such as promotional websites, spin-off video games, DVD-releases with deleted or alternative scenes, or video-clips posted online, are all key ingredients in "the multiple ways in which many media texts are now both moving outward yet incorporating other texts inward" (41). For Gray, just like "entryway" paratexts such as TheNewFrontiersman.net transmedia campaign will "inflect our interpretations of texts" as we approach them for the first time, "in medias res" paratext such as the *Watchmen: Tales of the Black Freighter* DVD including the "The Culpeper Minute" short film will "inflect our re-entry" to those texts (42).

Gray's categories of "entryway-" and "in medias res" paratexts signal how the various kinds of materials that constitute, frame, and contribute to the proliferation of culture across old and new media technologies are taking part in creating larger textual, paratextual and intertextual networks:

> With texts alive interminably, forever open to toggling, paratexts may always work in medias res. Especially thoughtful reviews may cause us to reflect once more upon an already-seen film or television program; academic articles and close readings may open up whole new realms of texts for us; toys or games might place a text in a whole new setting, bit by bit shifting our understanding of it; and so forth. In other words, there is never a point in time at which a text frees itself from the contextualizing powers of paratextuality. (45)

To untangle the mechanics of the textual and paratextual networks, Gray draws on Roland Barthes' distinction between the text and the work, Michael Riffaterre's work on intertextuality, and Stanley Fish's reader response theory, demonstrating that his approach to the text-paratext dynamic distinguishes between "the work [as consisting] of letters on a page or images on a screen" and how "the text comes alive in the interaction between these letters or images and the reader" (30). This means that for Gray, paratexts not only play a "constitutive role in creating textuality," but because the text only exists as a "consequence of the meeting of work and reader" any paratextual element that the reader or viewer chooses to engage with could be seen as part of the text that this reader or viewer creates (32). Gray concludes that "as much as we may still use terms such as 'text,' 'intertext,' and 'paratext' for analytical purposes, in fact intertext and paratext are always constitutive parts of the text itself" (34-35).

In other words, for Gray the text-paratext paradox discussed in the introduction is never an issue. Genette's original theory endeavors to distinguish between text and paratext, and Stanitzek, as well as Birke and Christ, all

work to untangle the contradictions of Genette's original paradigm. Instead, Gray chooses to bypass the text-paratext issue to underscore how the concept of paratexts can be a useful tool in untangling the textual constellations that result from how popular culture is being spread across new media platforms, particularly so if paratextual theory and terminology is allowed to grow and develop with the emergence of new and increasingly complex new media narrative strategies. Crucially, while Gray's broadly defined categories only indirectly allude to the complex relationship between "The Culpeper Minute," TheNewFrontiersman.net and the *Watchmen* feature film, his intervention stresses the importance of studying these kinds of textual relationships and paratextual materials. Gray's approach to the paratextual paradox makes it clear that the paratextual narratives communicated through TheNewFronterisman.net and the *Tales of the Black Freighter* DVD—while separate from the *Watchmen* film—should be seen as constitutive parts of the *Watchmen* adaptation.

New Frontiers: Marketing *Watchmen* through Transmedia Storytelling

The intricate relationship between the narrative of the *Watchmen* film and the paratextual narratives presented through TheNewFrontiersman.net and on the *Watchmen: Tales of the Black Freighter* DVD becomes clearer when these materials are read in detail. In the following, I trace the play of similarities and differences between the *Watchmen* comics and the transmedia adaptation. This I do not in the name of fidelity but to emphasize how attending to such variances better illuminates the need to consider the paratextual spaces and narratives that framed the *Watchmen* film as inextricable segments of the *Watchmen* adaptation.

As I have already mentioned, the transmedia storytelling campaign prefigured the *Watchmen* film, emerging in online spaces two months before the premiere of the movie. Similar to how most major movie releases are preceded by an onslaught of paratexts such as poster and trailers, today it is a common practice to promote feature films through dedicated websites. These are online paratextual spaces, manufactured for the explicit purposes of promoting and building hype around a specific title. These kinds of websites can be considered a new generation of the traditional film poster that offers more expansive and interactive information than what is traditionally communicated, often using stylish imagery and short film clips, and sometimes offering a look behind the scenes of the making of a film, a TV-series, or the latest installment in a video game franchise, all created to build audi-

ences for a releases.[6] The marketing of the *Watchmen* movie was no exception to this new media paratextual practice; in fact, the film was advertised via a number of websites offering all kinds of promotional material such as character-biographies, downloadable wallpapers, trailers and clips from the film. However, the online marketing of the *Watchmen* adaptation took a new turn on January 8, 2009, when fan sites and news outlets covering the film received an email directing them to the website TheNewFrontiersman.net. Included was the following message:

> [In] the *Watchmen* comics, Rorschach is obsessed with conspiracy theories, and gets much of his information from a far right-wing magazine called the *New Frontiersman*. There is no content on the site right now but the seal will break early next week, and there will be a fair bit of content on the site leading up to the release of the film, including photos, documents and video. ("Viral Microsite Launches")

Unlike the more common promotional websites described above, TheNewFrontiersman.net barely referenced the fact that there was a movie coming out. Instead, the site was designed to appear intradiegetic to the storyworld and the narrative of the *Watchmen* film itself. Apart from a few links at the bottom of the webpage and small logos from the studios involved in the production of the adaptation, the site presented an image of the top-view of a work desk, on which could be seen a sealed folder placed on top of a copy of the *New Frontiersman* newspaper.[7] True to the message cited above, this "seal" was broken a few days after the website was announced, and from then on the site was updated regularly until the film premiered on March 6, 2009. The opened folder revealed a stack of documents, the top one providing a list of new updates. Each update was given the headline "Declassified" and the date of the post, marking the sites with a somewhat unconventional relationship to the diegesis of the film's 1985 alternate universe setting. (Naturally, there was no Internet in the version of 1985 in which the narrative *Watchmen* plays out, so the website masqueraded as an online exposé of the conspiracies that plague the history of the *Watchmen* alternate universe.)

The first image revealed on the website was a black and white group photo of a number of actors in costumes as the Minutemen, the first vigilantes to

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[6] Recent examples of these kinds of websites can be viewed at www.birdmanthemovie.com, www.blackmassthemovie.com, and www.fallout4.com.

[7] As mentioned above, the website www.thenewfrontiersman.com is no longer online, and many other promotional websites connected to the marketing of the *Watchmen* adaptation simply link back to Warner Bros. or Paramount Pictures home sites. The disappearance of these kinds of online materials is a huge problem for academic investigation into their relevance and content, and work is ongoing regarding ways of preserving various transmedia storytelling campaigns, online "alternate reality games" (ARGs), and narratives related through various kinds of "viral marketing" strategies. For examples, see Whalen.

appear in the *Watchmen* universe. While the release of photos of the cast members in character is common use of online paratextual spaces, this photo and the following materials released on the website displayed a clear narrative function as well. This particular image mimicked the photograph of the Minutemen employed numerous times in the graphic narrative either as a link between scenes or as an item signaling nostalgia for a period of innocence long gone; the photograph first seen on the website would go on to serve similar functions in the film.

Like this photo, some of the other materials presented on the website were eventually recognized as props from the movie. However, the bulk of the material appeared to be produced specifically for the marketing website and the transmedia storytelling campaign. Moreover, the order in which these materials appeared on the site outlined a roughly chronological history of the *Watchmen* alternate universe: from the first appearance of masked heroes in the late 1930s and their tragic downfall; through the escalating Cold War; the incident that spawned Dr. Manhattan; his presence at the moon landing and his work with Comedian in ending the Vietnam War; the repeated re-election of President Nixon and the passing of the Keene Act outlawing costumed vigilantism; to F.B.I.'s hunt for the vigilante Rorschach and Veidt's rise to corporate stardom after retiring his hero persona.

Similar to the paratextual narratives discussed in chapter I, much of the materials posted on TheNewFrontiersman.net consisted of images of typed or handwritten documents made to look like newspaper clippings or official reports from various government institutions. Much of this "declassified material" concerned important events from the *Watchmen* alternate history such as the official Vietnamese declaration of surrender, various Soviet acts of aggression, or the police strikes heralding the Keene Act to ban all masked vigilantism not sanctioned by the government. Other posts detailed the costumes of different *Watchmen* characters, showed characters on the covers of such well-known magazines as *Time* and *The New Yorker*, and a number of ads for products from various corners of Veidt Enterprises such as his "Nostalgia" perfume, "Veidt Air," "Veidt Hair Spray," a line of action figures, and a self-improvement course called the "Veidt Method." All these ads either echoed or were directly derived from materials featured in the graphic narrative. Moreover, these ads as well as much of the other materials on the website were designed to mimic the styles of the different time periods from which they supposedly originated, such as the post advertising the 1982 "Minutemen Arcade Machine" that looked like it belonged on the wall of an 1980s video game arcade, but which also linked to an actual playable side-scrolling beat-'em-up game in the style of genuine 1980s arcade titles such as *Kung-Fu Master* or *Double Dragon*.

If viewed in isolation, these paratextual materials might seem to only tangentially reference the *Watchmen* film. But when approached in their entirety, and especially when set in relation to how they draw on material from the

Watchmen comics, their function as part of the *Watchmen* adaptation begins to clear. For example, not only do these materials remediate the many ads already present in the graphic narrative for a dual time frame of the intradiegetic 1985 as well as the interactive internet age, but the very use of intradiegetic advertising materials to promote the film is laden with layers of self-reference. This is particularly true of the ads promoting the Veidt's *Nostalgia* perfume, Veidt Air, or the Veidt Method, all of which simultaneously invite and inform an audience of the alternate, fictional reality of the coming *Watchmen* film, while also poking fun at the characters in the film as well as its setting in much the same ways that the graphic narrative satirizes its futuristic dystopian New York setting, and the triumphs and hardships of its sprawling cast of characters' post-vigilante careers. Furthermore, the ads and the other documents presented on the website are promoting other, forthcoming texts, including but not limited to the feature film itself, in which some of these materials will reappear. Through this feedback loop of self-reference, each separate piece of material presented over the two-month period in which "The New Frontiersman" campaign unfolded constantly referred to all other pieces of narrative material, as well as back to the website itself. For instance, the website's version of the ad for the "Veidt Method," promising "bodies beyond your wildest imaginings," is a remediated version of a similar ad seen in the graphic narrative (see Moore et al. X.13.1, 3, 5). In the graphic narrative, the slogan of that ad functions as an ironic foreshadowing of Veidt's plan to bring destruction to New York, killing an unimaginable amount of bodies in the process. The website's version of the ad accomplishes this and more. As a piece of marketing material, its primary function is to build hype and create suspense for the *Watchmen* film. As a piece of narrative, however, the ad establishes the character Veidt and his corporate empire as part of the *Watchmen* world. Moreover, for audience members returning to the website after having viewed the *Watchmen* film, the ad for the Veidt Method and its slogan would yield the same ironic foreshadowing effect that the advertisement induced in rereading the graphic narrative.

Naturally, longtime readers of the *Watchmen* comics will recognize this ad even before they see the film and immediately understand its layered ironic message. But in the way the transmedia campaign remediates this image, "The New Frontiersman" website is revealed as more than only a marketing paratext. By using the paratextual space provided by the website to recreate the layered self-reference and juxtaposition of characterization and narrative foreshadowing imbued within the ad and slogan for the "Veidt Method," the *Watchmen* transmedia storytelling campaign invites readings that underscore a similar kind of self-referential irony readers find in the graphic narrative. This makes it possible for an audience not already familiar with the story to experience the many-layered self-referencing narrative style of the *Watchmen* source text, including the values of rereading that the

source text provided. Only this time, the irony is communicated through an actual piece of advertising, which means that already with these online materials, the adaptation demonstrates an interrogative relationship with its own form and mediation.

But the intricacy of the "The New Frontiersman" transmedia storytelling campaign does not stop with images of intradiegetic documents and ads; the website also premiered a number of original videos. The first of these was a three-minute clip labeled "NBS Nightly News with Ted Philips, March 11th 1970." The clip features a "special report from [co-anchor] Jim Sizemore" and highlights events from within the *Watchmen* world during the decade since the first appearance of Dr. Manhattan in 1960. In the segment's period-accurate images and video graphics, viewers learn of Dr. Manhattan's various powers and get a rundown of the technological advances "in the fields of renewable energy, national defense, and the space-race" enabled by "his abilities to manipulate and synthesize matter at an atomic level." They also hear of his membership in "a recently formed group of masked avengers" with a picture of costumed heroes Ozymandias, Comedian, Rorschach, Silk Spectre II and Nite Owl II, all posing in a photograph recalling the iconic Minutemen group picture from 1940. Three more clips appeared on the website and its related YouTube account. "Who Watches the Watchmen?" is a purported 1983 "Veidt Music Network (VMN)" TV special (sponsored by the perfume *Nostalgia*) which offers a countdown of the most well known costumed vigilantes, while also functioning as a crash-course introduction to the major characters in the *Watchmen* film adaptation. "The Keene Act & You (1977)" is an infomercial-style video from the "House Committee on Un-American Activities," which briefly details (in a severely deriding fashion and using Rorschach's recognizable visage as a cartoonish threat) the rise of vigilantism in the late 1930s, its dwindling public support in the 1970s, and Senator John Keene's 1977 "emergency legislation" to outlaw the use of "masks … capes … gadgets or experimental weapons," all in the interest of protecting the public from what by then had grown to be perceived as the dangerous "costumed menace." Most interesting, however, is the last video made available on the web, posted on March 6, 2009, the day of the cinematic premiere of the *Watchmen* feature film.

Entitled "World In Focus: 6 Minutes to Midnight," this final online clip is introduced as a panel discussion program focused on the emerging geopolitical crisis and the rising threat of nuclear war. About a minute into the clip, however, the video starts switching between programs as if someone was channel-surfing their television set. We see brief glimpses from programs from other stations featuring, among other things, an interview with Dr. Manhattan's former colleague, Wally Weaver, commercials for various Veidt products, and a news segment regarding a "breakthrough" in "free energy" spawned by the Veidt Corporation in collaboration with Dr. Manhattan. An on-screen logo and label at the beginning of the video says that

the clip was recorded by "Veidt Industries Video Retrieval," gives the date as "10/11/1985," and cites its source as the "Karnak Video Bank" on the authorization of "A.V." Some of this information is repeated in the following on-screen label, where "Karnak Automated AV Service" gives the same date, identifies the "Video feeds" as coming from the "UK and East Coast US," lists the numbered IDs of the stations, and defines the "rotation" as "user controlled," again by "A.V." Overlaying the image for the rest of the clips is the line "Veidt Indst. Karnak 10/11/1985," coupled with a time-code that runs from 22:30:00:00 to 22:33:15:07 at the end of the video. Taken together with the fact that "Karnak" is the name of his Antarctic re-treat/research facility (also the setting for the climax to the *Watchmen* story), this information clearly suggests that the "A.V." who has authorized this video stream is the criminal mastermind Adrian Veidt. And while this was the final clip of the transmedia storytelling campaign, posted online the day of the film's appearance in the cinemas, it was reportedly "recorded" on October 11, 1985 (from 10.30 to roughly 10.33 pm.). This puts Adrian Veidt in front of the TV at his Karnak facility on the evening before the *Watchmen* story begins: a fact that, depending on how it is interpreted, could be seen as a substantial departure from the graphic narrative.

The first page of the *Watchmen* graphic narrative shows a progressive "zooming out" from a close-up of the recently deceased Comedian's iconic bloodstained smiley. These panels are narrated by way of overlaid texts, beginning "Rorschach's journal. October 12th, 1985" (Moore et al. I.1.1-7). The first images we see in the *Watchmen* film show a similar zooming out from an extreme close-up of the famous smiley button, this time, however, without the bloodstain. Instead, the button is attached to a bathrobe worn by an old and weary but still very much alive Comedian. He is flipping between channels just like Veidt does in the last online clip when suddenly the door to the apartment is kicked down, and a black-clad assailant is silhouetted in the doorframe. A heavy struggle follows, and after a final crash of head-against-kitchen-counter, Comedian is hurled by through the window to meet his fate on the sidewalk several stories below, followed closely behind by the now bloodstained smiley button.[8] The button lands next to its deceased owner in a pool of blood, and the camera dives into the stained black eye of the smiley face, darkening the screen and creating the blank canvas for the opening credits (as described in the introduction). The credits ends with an explosion providing the flash of orange and yellow needed for a transition from the opening montage back to the face of the smiley button.

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[8] Comedian briefly passes MTV (not Veidt Music Network, but the real-world network) and a news report on said Soviet aggressions, before he lands on a sentimental commercial using Nat King Cole's classic recording of "Unforgettable" to promote the Veidt perfume "Nostal-gia." These are all details that could be used in arguments that either support or refute Veidt as the assailant and his motives for killing Comedian.

Only here, about eleven minutes into the film, do we get the long slow zoom out from a close-up of the blood-smeared button. But the overlaying narration from Rorschach's journal is still missing. Moreover, even though Comedian's murder is shown in the graphic narrative, it is only depicted in "flashback-panels," spliced into the opening pages of the comic and a scene showing two detectives investigating his apartment after his death (Moore at al. I.3-4). In the film, the police-investigation follows the opening credits in a somewhat shortened form, but while the graphic narrative shows the detectives examining the crime scene during daytime (presumably the day after the murder), the film version of this scene has been adjusted to take place at night. The opening narration from the graphic narrative is heard in the following scene, when Rorschach is making his way into the apartment to do some investigating of his own. His voice-over narration begins just like in the comic, "Rorschach's journal, October 12, 1985."

This difference between the film and the graphic narrative is important because, as many in the *Watchmen* audience would have known, the assailant that attacks and kills Comedian is later revealed to be Adrian Veidt. His complicity is exposed in the next to last issue/chapter of the graphic narrative, when Rorschach and Nite Owl II confront Veidt at his research facility Karnak, and Veidt responds in classic super-villain fashion by explaining his entire plan, only to shock his accusers by revealing that the plot is already carried out (Moore et al. XI.24-26). The film contains a similar admission, in which Veidt confirms he is indeed the black-clad attacker that hurls Comedian to his doom in the pre-credits sequence (a fact that is substantiated via flashbacks that shows his face).

The difference raises questions for our understanding of the adaptation: if—like in the graphic narrative—the murder takes place at night before October 12, 1985 (that is sometime in the evening of October 11), the final online video would have us believe that at that time Veidt is still at his Antarctic retreat "Karnak." This suggests that he is lying when he admits to having killed Comedian. However, since the film's opening shows the detectives investigating the crime scene at night, tightly followed by a scene also set at night, in which Rorschach gives us the date "October 12," the *Watchmen* film seems to have altered the date of the murder to the night of October 12, 1985. This suggests that the detectives show up on the scene of the crime on the same night that Veidt kills Comedian (rather than the day after), followed immediately by Rorschach conducting his own investigation the same, very busy, night of October 12. A number of details seem to point towards this reading. For example, while both Veidt and Comedian are watching television on or around the eleventh or twelfth of October, as suggested by various parts of the material, it cannot be the same evening, as both are seen channel surfing but not once coming across the same TV-shows. However, another way to read this information is to look at that online clip as a planned prank or teaser on behalf of the creators of the

transmedia campaign, constructed to deliberately confuse those *Watchmen* fans with the most meticulous knowledge of details from the graphic narrative. This approach would have to take into consideration the fact that such audience members would have seen the clip immediately when it first appeared online on March 6th, 2009, in which case they would most likely not yet have seen the film. If so, these *Watchmen* fans have immediately figured out that Veidt couldn't have been watching TV on October 11, 1985, when, as they know, he is supposed to be in New York preparing to assault and kill Comedian. When these fans eventually saw the film, the movie's opening scenes would have revealed the prank, and reassured the fans that Veidt did in fact kill Comedian, only on October 12 instead of October 11. Yet another way of interpreting the information presented in the labels overlaid in the online clip is to see them as purposely misleading evidence: Veidt is repeatedly described as the world's smartest man in both the graphic narrative as well as in the film, which suggests that he could easily have manipulated the labels dating the video, providing himself with an alibi if he were to be caught and accused of murdering his aging costumed colleague.

The point here is not to promote one reading over another, but rather to stress that such incongruences encourage several ways of approaching these transmedia storytelling materials as vital parts of the narrative of the *Watchmen* adaptation, including multiple scenarios in which they could alter our understanding of how the adaptation utilizes, interprets, or in other ways make use of the materials available in the graphic narrative. Even though these online materials appeared as parts of a marketing campaign perpetuated through a promotional website, the narratives they present cannot be reduced to those marketing functions alone. While TheNewFrontiersman.net most certainly presented materials created to market the film in ways similar to paratext such as movie posters or newspaper ads, the way in which they use narrative material to preform those marketing tasks differs substantially from such traditional paratexts.

When conducting readings of popular cultural texts like *Watchmen*, it is often seen as unproblematic to disregard these kinds of materials and the minute plot details they provide, especially when they are presented in what is commonly considered promotional content or other kinds of marketing material often seen as only masquerading as some sorts of ancillary texts. But investigation into such details can often produce crucial details that have the power of altering previous readings of the text—in this case, playfully raising the question whether Veidt did or did not kill Comedian, which, despite the rejection of this question in the movie's finale, can still be seen as a significant departure from the graphic narrative. Depending on how this departure it is interpreted, it can constitute a substantial modification of the plot of *Watchmen*.

The collection of materials presented through "The New Frontiersman" website can be seen to provide an immediate contextualizing function for the

narrative of the feature film through its explication of the many details of the history of masked vigilantism that pervades the *Watchmen* universe. However, unlike the way in which the initial paratextual narratives of the comics ease the reader into the world of *Watchmen* via the long-form prose narrative of Mason's "Under the Hood," the material revealed throughout "The New Frontiersman" moves rather quickly through the careers of the earliest costumed heroes, only briefly alluding to how The Minutemen initiative dwindled over time. Instead, the website focuses on providing the narrative elements most crucial for the plot of the movie, such as the emergence of Dr. Manhattan and his work with Comedian in ending the Vietnam War, the emergence of the Keene act to ban the new generation of crime fighters, the post-vigilante career of Arian Veidt, and the escalated conflicts between the US and the Soviet Union. The reveal of this material over a two month period offered a broadly accessible opportunity for newcomers and *Watchmen* fans alike to acquire the information needed to appreciate—or as the case may be—be able to make sense of the film once it appeared in the cinemas. Moreover, for as long as TheNewFrontiersman.net was online, viewers could revisit the material and experience the same kind of ironic effects induced in rereading the graphic narrative. From this perspective, it is clear that "The New Frontiersman" website and its accompanying videos were designed to do more than simply promote the *Watchmen* film: first; they indicated that the adaptation was respectful of its source material (as evident in the many allusions to minute details from the *Watchmen* comics that have little to no bearing on the overall narrative plot); and second, they worked to introduce and familiarize an uninitiated audience with the most important characters and themes of the *Watchmen* diegesis before the film's premiere in the cinemas.

Crucially, the contextualizing function of "The New Frontiersman" campaign provided important narrative components in support for the many-layered investigation into—and critique of—the superhero genre that made *Watchmen* one of the most celebrated graphic narratives of all time. If considered in isolation, the minute details of each piece of material revealed through "The New Frontiersman" website might only concern the most passionate *Watchmen* readers. But as demonstrated above, the characterization of Veidt that emerges through the many different ads promoting his products—as an idealist turned capitalist, exploiting his past vigilante-persona for financial gain—can only be gained when those materials are reviewed as a whole. Only as parts of the *Watchmen* adaptation as a whole can the narratives these transmedia materials communicate be understood as providing the kind of self-referential critique of the main characters in the *Watchmen* story that made the graphic narrative such a significant text.

The materials produced for the transmedia storytelling campaign are overwhelmingly based on the many paratextual narratives that frame the graphic narrative. The way in which those documents, articles, and inter-

views are remade and incorporated into "The New Frontiersman" transmedia storytelling campaign provide the adaptation with a distinctly layered and nuanced media-critical angle. For example, as the first video clip posted via "The New Frontiersman" website and its connected YouTube account, the "NBS Nightly News with Ted Philips" from "March 11th 1970" derives much of its content from the article "Dr. Manhattan: Super-Powers and the Superpowers" by Dr. Milton Glass, including the catch-phrase "The superman exists, and he's American" (Moore et al. IV.Doc.3). Appended after issue/chapter four in the *Watchmen* graphic narrative, everything from its visual presentation to its language and tone marks this document as an article (or perhaps editorial) from an academic publication. The video of the news broadcast and its "Special Report" on Dr. Manhattan, however, takes the information provided in that article and reformats it dramatically as a 2-minute long news segment celebrating Dr. Manhattan as a "true American hero." Skirting the article's relatively complex discussions of Dr. Manhattan's role as a nuclear deterrent, his effect on international politics, and the Cold War problems ahead, the producers of the online video instead create a period-accurate portrait of television news media as it looked in 1970, emphasizing the more spectacular and entertaining facts of Dr. Manhattan's powers and influence on society in a video complete with aged and jittering images, primitive computer graphics, and man-on-the-street interviews. The result is information from an analytical article getting deliberately summarized and circumscribed to make its content more entertaining. In other words, the transmedia storytelling campaign adapts three pages of densely written text and reworks the information they provide to be more accessible for the YouTube audience of 2009. This results in a remediation of information for an audience not familiar the *Watchmen* character Dr. Manhattan, while at the same time representing and commenting on how the information in this scientific article and other *Watchmen* materials would have circulated in the wider *Watchmen* diegesis.

Adapting "Under the Hood"

But the transmedia storytelling campaign framing the *Watchmen* movie was not over with the premiere of the film. Towards the end of the final video posted on TheNewFrontiersman.net, the channel-surfer revealed to be Arian Veidt stops for a moment to watch an interview with an older gentleman. Never identified in that video, this is Hollis Mason, aka Nite Owl I, one of the founding members of the Minutemen. The footage is lifted from an interview that is part of a short film called "The Culpeper Minute," included on a direct-to-video title titled *Watchmen: Tales of the Black Freighter*. This DVD was released on March 24, 2009, only 18 days after the *Watchmen* film's cinematic premiere and four months before the film itself was availa-

ble for purchase. The DVD is titled after *Watchmen*'s pirate-themed comic-within-the-comic, which is also the source of the animated story included on the disc. As the DVD cover proclaims, *Tales of the Black Freighter* was one of two stories originally in "the graphic novel and unseen in the movie," the other being "Hollis Mason's tell-all: *Under the Hood*."

The animated *Tales of the Black Freighter* tells roughly the same story as its source material, *Watchmen*'s intradiegetic pirate comic "Marooned." However, unlike that comic-within-the-comic, Mason's memoir "Under the Hood" covers about 50 years of *Watchmen* history in fourteen pages of prose text accompanied only by a few illustrations. Eric Matthies, the director responsible for the adaptation of "Under the Hood," has described how he always imagined the material as a DVD bonus feature, where it could provide a way for fans to gain a deeper understanding of the *Watchmen* film. Matthies decided to expand on what happened within the world of *Watchmen* when Mason's autobiography was published, focusing on how Mason "would appear on talk shows and the book would be discussed in the mainstream media" (Thill, "*Watchmen* Back Story," n.pag.). The result is a close to 35 minute film that takes the form of a 1985 episode of a TV-show called "The Culpeper Minute," a news program in the style of PBS's *Frontline* or CBS's *60 Minutes*.[9] The film opens with the host Larry Culpeper's welcome:

> Good evening, and welcome to *The Culpeper Minute*. It's been nearly a decade since the best-selling autobiography *Under the Hood* revealed secrets of the original band of masked adventurers, The New Minutemen. In 1975, when *The Culpeper Minute* was new to the airwaves, we profiled the author of *Under the Hood*, Hollis Mason, the former adventurer known as Nite Owl.

The dual timeframes created by this 1985 retrospective look at an episode from 1975 are sustained throughout the short film. The bulk of the film consists of materials from 1975, however, which contain—among many other things—the aforementioned interview with Hollis Mason, which is in turn based on his autobiography "Under the Hood" from the *Watchmen* comics. As I show below, in building on Mason's autobiography and several other paratextual narratives from the *Watchmen* comics, "The Culpeper Minute" works to frame the narrative of the *Watchmen* feature film in ways

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[9] Although billed as "Under the Hood" on the cover of the DVD and in the menus that appear once that DVD is loaded—when played (following logos from Warner Bros., Paramount, Legendary Pictures, and D.C. Comics), the name of the news program and its host Larry Culpeper references the "Culpeper Minutemen," a pro-independence militia group formed at the onset of the American Revolutionary War in the area around Culpeper, Virginia. While the short film does provide the history of *Watchmen*'s first group of masked heroes—known in the comic and throughout the adaptation as the Minutemen—neither the Culpeper Minutemen or the town and county of Culpeper, Virginia are referenced in the comic or in the cinematic feature film, marking this connection as invented by the writers and producers of the adaptation of "Under the Hood."

similar to how its source material functions to contextualize, chronicle, and augment the *Watchmen* graphic narrative. Additionally, by taking advantage of its kinetic form, "The Culpeper Minute" short film is able to emphasize and augment a mass-media-critical angle only hinted at in its source material. This is particularly perceptible in how "The Culpeper Minute" depicts the early years of the Minutemen through period-accurate footage that—while building on texts and images from the comics' paratextual narratives—provides for the adaptation a heightened sense of presence while at the same time satirizing and critiquing the careers of the Minutemen as more of a mass-media phenomenon than as actual costumed heroes.

After Culpeper's introduction, the first part of the film consists mainly of the interview with Mason, roughly retelling the narrative from the first chapters of "Under the Hood" following issue/chapter I of the graphic narrative. As in that text, Mason compares the pastoral ideals of his rural upbringing with the "disgusting" moral decrepitude of the big city, while viewers are presented with faded stills of various countryside lifestyles, a portrait of the actor in police uniform that eerily mimics the illustration of Mason from the graphic narrative, and later, with footage from depression-era New York City (notably featuring the "Owl Hotel"). Mason describes how he escaped the harshness of the big city through "pulp fiction novels," and images of covers from classic pulp publications such as *Black Mask* and *Detective Novels Magazine* accompany Mason's account of how their "world of absolute values" reassured him all was not lost. Mason's story of why he decided to dress up as an owl and fight crime comes next, in a segment that continues the narrative from "Under the Hood." Mason describes how he was introduced to *Action Comics* by the kids he met on his daily patrols, how he was immediately drawn to the issue from 1938 featuring the debut of Superman. He tells Culpeper, "it all changed when I opened the newspaper one day, and I saw that these characters had escaped from their four-colored world and they were now in the factual, black-and-white world of the headlines."

This reference to Superman, and the self-reflexive hints towards the link between *Watchmen* and the history of superhero comics are more or less lifted straight from the comics. In the following segment, however, the adaptation starts taking advantage of its kinetic form. For example, when Mason's autobiography describes the first reported sightings of the masked hero known as Hooded Justice, the event is accompanied by a simple black-and-white drawing representing a newspaper clipping. In "The Culpeper Minute," however, Mason's spirited rendition of Hooded Justice's first appearance is intercut with footage of the masked avenger made to look like an old newsreel, complete with dramatic music and bold headlines describing how "HOODED JUSTICE FOILS ROBBERY AGAIN!" With footage such as this, "The Culpeper Minute" conveys what the events described in "Under the Hood" would have looked like in the broader context of the *Watchmen* universe, recalling the sensationalism of the period. The footage

establishes a pattern of how "The Culpeper Minute" continually plays on and satirizes the blatant sensationalism and simplified morals that colored the golden age of superheroes that inspired this period of the *Watchmen* alternate reality: a mode of satire and critique that develops throughout the short film.

Another example of this form of satire follows shortly after the footage of Hooded Justice. The first segment of "The Culpeper Minute" ends with a near quote from the autobiography "Under the Hood," with Mason proclaiming that upon hearing about this "first masked vigilante," he "made up [his] mind right then, [he] was gonna be the second." But where the first section of the autobiography gives way to the second issue/chapter of the graphic narrative, "The Culpeper Minute" cuts to the 1985 studio and host Larry Culpeper: "We have to break for our sponsors now, but when we come back, more form our 1975 story on masked adventurers." What follows is an overtly sentimental commercial for the perfume "Nostalgia" manufactured by Veidt Industries. The segment features slow motion images of a woman staring longingly into the distance, and uses dimmed camera focusing and romantic elevator music to set the mood before an on-screen logo asks "where is that essence that was so divine?" Much like the footage of Hooded Justice discussed above, the clip is clearly made to look like a period-accurate TV-commercial, but here it recalls the mid-1980s in which the *Watchmen* film narrative plays out, poking fun at contemporary advertising while at the same time providing links between "The Culpeper Minute" and the very first scene of the feature film, where Comedian comes across a similar commercial before he is attacked by Veidt.

Furthermore, these kinds of intermissions and commercial breaks from the 1985 studio are a recurring element in the film, through which Larry Culpeper summarizes and comments on his interviews with Mason or other characters, and offers brief opinions on developments within the *Watchmen* society between the 1975 era in which the program first aired and its 1985 repeated broadcast. Through such summaries and comments, the film works to contextualize and explain the sometimes seemingly incoherent details discussed in the 1975 interviews for viewers not already fully informed of the complex history of the *Watchmen* alternate reality, while at the same time reminding viewers of the residual conflicts and interests characterizing the "present moment" of the *Watchmen* narrative, that is the alternate version of 1985 in which the narrative of the film plays out.

After this first commercial break, Larry Culpeper returns to his "retrospective look at *Under the Hood*, and what these men and women mean to us today." Much like "Under the Hood" functions in the *Watchmen* comics, Mason's interview works to establish the intertextual relationship between *Watchmen* and the history of American superhero comics. As Mason outlines the origin of his hero persona, viewers are presented with what looks like faded photographs and archive footage from his career as Nite Owl. Mason's origin story features two images of comic book covers, specifically

an issue of the golden age staple *All-American Comics* (1939-1948) depicting an early version of the superhero Green Lantern on the front page, and a copy of *Blue Beetle*, number 53, from 1965. This Charlton Comics' *Blue Beetle* cover might at first seem out of place in relation to Mason's "golden-age of comics" inspired narrative. But the silver-age comic book makes more sense when considered in relation to the processes that led to the creation of the *Watchmen* graphic narrative. As discussed in the previous chapter, the two generations of the Nite Owl persona were specifically based on the dual careers of the Blue Beetle character: the original golden-age version of the Blue Beetle character was published by Fox Comics between 1939 and 1950, and featured Dan Garret as the titular hero. Fox Comics went under in the mid-1950s, and sold all rights to their character to Charlton Comics, and while Charlton tried and failed to revive the Blue Beetle on the spot (1955), they had some success with a revamped silver-age publication in the mid-1960s, featuring a new character, Ted Kord, inheriting the Blue Beetle moniker from Garret when the latter passed away.[10]

It is important to note that the complex history of the Blue Beetle is mirrored within the *Watchmen* narrative. Mason originally began fighting crime as the Nite Owl in 1939 and retired with the Minutemen in 1950, only to be superseded by Dan Dreiberg as Nite Owl II in the 1960s groups of costumed heroes called "Crimebusters" in the graphic narrative (renamed "The Watchmen" in the feature film). These kind of conscious nods to the history of the superhero genre are what gave the *Watchmen* graphic narrative such power and weight. Although none of this information is necessary to grasping the main plot of the narrative, the brief glimpse of the Blue Beetle cover in this adaptation provides attentive readers with a link that pays homage to the origin of the various Watchmen characters, demonstrating that the creators of the short film are as deeply engaged with the source material as the fans, and respect the mythos created with its intertextually dense narrative.

Having related his own story, Mason goes on to describe that after "twelve moths of Hooded Justice's dramatic entrance, there were at least seven other costumed vigilantes," listing among other, Silk Spectre, Dollar Bill, Mothman, The Silhouette, and Comedian, and discussing their various hero personas. Mason's descriptions of his fellow vigilantes are very close to the text of "Under the Hood," sometimes even repeating it word for word. But the images illustrating his narration are nonexistent in the graphic narrative. In "The Culpeper Minute, viewers see what looks like archive footage of the earliest masked adventurers and their adversaries in action, posing for photos wearing extravagant yet primitive costumes, and fighting bank robbers and petty thieves. More than anything, these snippets of film call to

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[10] Fittingly, this handing-over of the Blue Beetle cape occurred within the pages of a publication called *Captain Atom*, featuring another Charlton Comics hero that would go on to be the blueprint for the *Watchmen* narrative's only real superhero: Dr. Manhattan.

mind the superhero film serials of the early 1940s such as *Superman*, *Zorro*, or *The Phantom*, as the period-accurate jerky images and sensational events they depict lovingly play on the history of cinematic portrayals of super-heroes.

Importantly, by remediating the static print form of the graphic narrative into moving images resembling newsreels, movie serials, and period-accurate photography, this first third of "The Culpeper Minute" presents these costumed adventurers as mass-media sensations, pursued by news crews and cameramen, and willingly posing for photos. This mass-media focus is even clearer in the next section of "The Culpeper Minute." The 1985 version of Larry Culpeper intervenes again, stating that because little of what Mason told him in the interview "was not already in his book, [he] turned to some of the other figures from [Mason's] world to find out more." Following this acknowledgment that the preceding interview principally repeats the narrative of "Under the Hood," the short film segues into a new section that covers materials from several of the other paratextual narratives that frame the *Watchmen* graphic narrative. First up is Sally Jupiter: the original Silk Spectre and mother to Laurie Juspeczyk, aka Silk Spectre II, both of whom are character who play more vital roles in the *Watchmen* graphic narrative as well as the feature film than does Hollis Mason. Like with the Mason inter-view, Culpeper's questions and Jupiter's comments are initially based on another collection of materials from the *Watchmen* comics, namely the photos, letters, and the interview with Jupiter from 1976 included among the scrapbook material featured in the paratextual space following issue/chapter IX of the graphic narrative.

Soon a new face appears on the screen, identified as Lawrence Shexnayder, a character marginally known in the comics as Jupiter's agent and first husband and only seen in passing (and never named) in the feature film. Throughout the rest of "The Culpeper Minute," however, Shexnayder is given recurring room to voice opinions and comment on everything from the forming of the Minutemen to his and Jupiter's failed marriage, asserting both pragmatic, self-congratulatory, and sometimes contemptuous points of view that provide sharp contrast to the more dramatic and sentimental narra-tives put forth by Mason and others. This is especially explicit in the section that follows, in which Shexnayder steps out as the man behind the Minute-men. Arguing that since America "was founded on entertainment," and that masked adventuring is "all about commerce anyway," Shexnayder claims that he and Jupiter conspicuously exploited her image and "status as a cos-tumed hero to make lucrative deals of every kind … movie deals, image licensing for pinups, comic books, everything." He proudly explains how his and Jupiter's original idea became a "business strategy that corporations picked up on almost immediately." Expressing "what a great idea" the Minutemen proved to be, and wishing he "could take credit for it," he ex-plains that the suggestion of collaboration actually came via a letter for Sally

Jupiter from Captain Metropolis. Shexnayder initially thought Metropolis was "using the idea" of the Minutemen to get Sally "into bed," but after "a little research" he learned that his "concerns were unfounded," signaling rather overtly to Captain Metropolis closeted homosexuality. After a quick cut to Sally, who argues that Shexnayder's "knack for publicity [is what] made the Minutemen," Shexnayder describes how he "realized that without the occasional gimmick to revitalize flagging public interest, the fad of costumed heroes would eventually fade." He explains that it was his idea to "take a large ad out" in a newspaper, "asking for more mystery men to come forward. And that's how the Minutemen came to be."

Contrary to the earlier sections, these parts of "The Culpeper Minute" represent a significant departure from the format of the paratextual narratives from the *Watchmen* comics. While not altering any crucial events described in the graphic narrative or in Mason's "Under the Hood," this section of "The Culpeper Minute" emphasizes a very different and more commercially oriented perspective on the formation of the Minutemen. By giving Sally Jupiter and—most significant—Lawrence Shexnayder the task of relating those events, the short film characterizes both Sally Jupiter and especially Shexnayder as opportunistic entrepreneurs exploiting the Minutemen initiative in ways never raised by Mason's autobiography. Some elements of these characterizations can be traced back to the previously mentioned interview with Jupiter following issue/chapter IX of the graphic narrative. But as the sections featuring Shexnayder involves a character that is never given voice in the source text, the attitudes, body language, and tone conveyed in these segments of "The Culpeper Minute" should all be seen as examples of the way in which the adaptation underscores the critique of the mass-media phenomenon of superheroes found in the *Watchmen* comics

Thus, "The Culpeper Minute" not only augments the narrative of the formation of the Minutemen with moving images and behind-the-scenes footage, but in partly handing that story over to Jupiter and Shexnayder, the short film communicates an alternative to Mason's idealized perspective on the "why" and "how" of the origin of the first group of masked heroes, simultaneously inventing a new persona around the character Shexnayder and expanding radically on his vague role in the graphic narrative's version of events.

From here onward, "The Culpeper Minute" steers even further away from the graphic narrative and Mason's autobiography. As the short film makes use of—and goes beyond—the many pieces of paratextual narratives from *Watchmen* comic, it functions similar to the above described material, working to contextualize, augment, and comment on the narrative presented in the feature film and the alternate history of the 1985 setting in which that narrative takes place. The principal as well as several tertiary characters from the cinematic release appear towards the end of the short film, creating strong bonds of narrative continuity between "The Culpeper Minute" and the

Watchmen cinematic feature. By echoing the wide cast of characters that form the *Watchmen* alternate history, "The Culpeper Minute" becomes part of the *Watchmen* universe, and a sense of authenticity emerges from the well-planned and executed narrative synergy between the short film and the cinematic release. Though all these connections, the *Watchmen* film and "The Culpeper Minute" form a relationship closer to that of two episodes of a series or the connection between a film and its prequel or sequel than the supplemental nature of a DVD bonus feature.

Just like the paratextual narratives serve several purposes for the graphic narrative of the *Watchmen* comics, the paratextual narratives of "The New Frontiersman" transmedia storytelling campaign and "The Culpeper Minute" short film can be seen to fulfill numerous functions for the cinematic text of the *Watchmen* adaptation. But although both "The New Frontiersman" campaign and "The Culpeper Minute" short film provide contextual information about the fictional universe in which the *Watchmen* film plays out, they do so in different ways. For example, while "The New Frontiersman" transmedia campaign paints a rough linear narrative recounting the history of the *Watchmen* universe, the short film is much more detailed in its depiction of the emergence of the first costumed vigilantes, depicting their formation and exploits as The Minutemen and the decline of masked heroics in the 1950s in a coherent and retrospective fashion much like Mason's "Under the Hood." So while the final minutes of "The Culpeper Minute" works hard to set the scene for the *Watchmen* feature film, when viewed after the film, this DVD supplement takes on the chronicling and augmentative tasks fulfilled by the paratextual narratives from the comics, and becomes a cohesive record chronicling past events that led to the conflicts depicted in the cinematic text. Several of the masked heroes named by Mason in the interview and depicted throughout the footage are characters that are barely featured in movie, most only appearing in the opening credits montage or in the background of short flashback scenes set in or around this golden age of the Minutemen. Given their high degree of presence in the early parts of the short film, covering about half of the material from Mason's autobiography, the first sections of "The Culpeper Minute" function to augment the *Watchmen* feature film in similar ways that the text of "Under the Hood" functions in relation to the *Watchmen* graphic narrative.

By its end, "The Culpeper Minute" presentation has gone far beyond the content of Mason's "Under the Hood" and into the many other paratextual narratives presented around the graphic narrative, providing much of the kind of same augmentative information. Yet in appropriating the paratextual narratives for representation in period accurate kinetic media—as in the case where newsreels resembling film serials of the 1940s replace the drawings of black-and-white photographs that illustrate the paratextual narratives in the comics— "The Culpeper Minute" simultaneously signals an awareness in the process of adaptation to what the presence of masked heroes would have

looked like in other media outlets than through texts such as Mason's memoirs. Another example of this can be seen in how the short film foregrounds Shexnayder's opinions on the relationship between Jupiter and Comedian. While his perspective might not matter to the climactic end of the narrative in the feature film, his voice adds depth to that filmic universe. Similarly, and in accordance with his absence in the auxiliary materials framing the graphic narrative, Comedian is virtually nonexistent in "The Culpeper Minute," and his brief cameo and refusal to comment echoes the character's invisible but constant presence in the unfolding of events and relationships in the graphic narrative as well as in the feature film.

Accordingly, while much of the narrative conveyed in "The Culpeper Minute" is lifted from various parts of the comics, the format of the short film provides insights into the attitudes and sentiments of characters and events that—while not crucial enough to the main plot to foreground in the feature film—are complex and multifaceted, giving depth to the history of the *Watchmen* alternate reality. Thus "The Culpeper Minute" provides for the *Watchmen* history a sense of authenticity, while at the same time interrogating and poking fun at the characters and events of that history in similar ways to how the paratextual narratives augment the *Watchmen* comics' meta-critical take on the superhero genre.

Conclusions

The way in which "The New Frontiersman" transmedia storytelling campaign contributes to the building the fictional world of the *Watchmen* film alone underscores why these paratextual narratives should be considered inextricable parts of the *Watchmen* adaptation. Moreover, there is an overt engagement within that transmediated material concerning how the paratextual narratives framing the *Watchmen* graphic narrative are mediated and communicated to the audience of the *Watchmen* adaptation, including multiple situations in which those initial paratextual narratives are remediated in ways that not only communicate but augment the meta-critical take on the genre of superhero narratives that made the *Watchmen* comics such a critical success. These findings not only merit deeper investigations into the functions of paratextual narratives for popular narratives in general, but can also be said to demand the inclusion of the paratextual narratives in any reading of the *Watchmen* adaptation. Similarly, the strong relationship and many links between the narratives on the *Watchmen: Tales of the Black Freighter* DVD—particularly "The Culpeper Minute" short film—and the *Watchmen* feature film recall the functions that characterize the relationship between the graphic narrative and the paratextual narratives of the *Watchmen* comics discussed in the previous chapter. But while no critical discussion of the *Watchmen* comics would be complete without taking into account the narra-

tives of those comics' paratextual material, the *Watchmen: Tales of the Black Freighter* DVD was completely disregarded by critics and scholars in their assessment of the *Watchmen* adaptation. In contrast, I argue that, like the transmediated material of "The New Frontiersman" campaign, the narratives of the *Watchmen: Tales of the Black Freighter* DVD are constitutive parts of the *Watchmen* adaptation.

As this investigation of the paratextual spaces framing the *Watchmen* film reveals, the abstract entity that we refer to when we talk about the *Watchmen* adaptation is actually presented through a number of components made available across several platforms—that is, through a feature film in the style of what is traditionally understood as a cinematic adaptation, as well as through an elaborate transmedia storytelling campaign that utilizes paratextual spaces across several forms of digital platforms to contribute to the text of that cinematic film. Crucially, the occlusion of these transmediated materials in previous discussions of the adaptation demonstrates that, as paratextual spaces are repurposed towards narrative ends, the particular practices and traditions of those paratextual spaces are repeated and condition the narratives presented therein. The reason the narratives presented on TheNewFrontiersman.net and the *Watchmen: Tales of the Black Freighter* DVD were ignored by most journalists and scholars in their assessments of the *Watchmen* adaptation can be traced to how such advertising spaces or marketing materials are traditionally seen as "value-inflating hyperbole inseparable from the needs of trade" (*Paratexts* 347). The indefiniteness and slipperiness that characterized the paratextual spaces in which the narratives of the *Watchmen* transmedia storytelling campaign appeared is what causes them to disappear into the surrounding discourse.

Watchmen Rebound:
Paratextual Narratives and Media Franchising

In this dissertation I have analyzed the different iterations of *Watchmen* with a focus on the use of what I call paratextual spaces for the purpose of presenting narrative segments that extend, augment or in other ways add to the texts those paratextual spaces purportedly frame, a practice that has been largely overlooked by critics and scholars working to develop the concept of paratexts for other media than literary novels. I have described how the *Watchmen* paratextual spaces were redrawn and its paratextual narratives reconfigured as the *Watchmen* serial comics were bound into a graphic novel, and then unbound as a transmedia adaptation. I have studied *Watchmen* in order to point to the need to distinguish between paratexts and the spaces in which they reside. By making this distinction, I have been able to show how narratives presented in paratextual spaces are necessarily conditioned by the traditions of the spaces in which they emerge. Among other things, this means that when we encounter paratextual narratives, the conventions of distinguishing between texts and paratexts still shape our interpretation of those narrative segments, and thus the texts to which they relate. If we do not distinguish between paratexts and paratextual space, certain elements or functions go unobserved in readings of paratextual narratives: either narrative segments presented in paratextual spaces are glossed over or ignored as not parts of the text, or conversely, the paratextual nature of the spaces in which they reside is obscured by their narrative content. As I have shown in my readings of *Watchmen*, by distinguishing between paratexts and the paratextual spaces, we can better understand how processes of production and distribution may influence the moment of reception of narrative texts.

   I hold that my study of the *Watchmen* paratextual narratives reveals a set of practices and effects that reflect how narrative materials operate in paratextual spaces regardless of media. Although many of the examples from *Watchmen* discussed in this thesis reside on the extreme ends of the spectrum of those practices and effects, the functions of the various paratextual narratives framing *Watchmen* across its different embodiments are repre-

sentative of the way paratextual narratives function for the transmedia story-telling strategies characterizing much of contemporary American popular culture. Moreover, as both Jenkins and Mittell's investigations (among others) have shown, transmedia storytelling has become a common strategy through which popular narratives expand into media franchises, which of course are financially lucrative but, importantly, have also led to the development of new models of creative processes and collaborative productions. Further, complementing the traditional kinds of sequels, prequels, spin-offs, and other offshoots that signify the franchising of popular culture, the use of transmedia storytelling strategies for media franchising increasingly produces a great variety of paratextual narratives across media platforms. Therefore it seems only appropriate to end my discussion with some reflections on how paratextual narratives figure in contemporary media franchising.

As I argue in my second chapter, the adaptation unbound the *Watchmen* story by distributing narrative segments across a number of paratextual spaces on various media platforms. With subsequent releases of the *Watchmen* film on DVD, many (although not all) of these materials were collected in one package, in a sense re-binding the *Watchmen* adaptation much like the graphic novel first bound the serialized *Watchmen* comic books. Chief among these DVD-releases is the so-called *Watchmen: The Ultimate Cut*, a five-disc package containing an extended version of a previously released director's cut (which had already lengthened the film by roughly twenty minutes), which inserted the animated pirate-tale *Curse of the Black Freighter* into the film, adding another thirty minutes to the length of the movie.[1] Moreover, the package came with a number of features from previous releases, including "The Culpeper Minute" intradiegetic documentary. As I have shown, this short film was originally presented in an epitextual and "slippery" position as an extra feature on the *Tales of the Black Freighter* DVD, physically distanced from the *Watchmen* feature film, causing it to be overlooked in reviews of the adaptation. With this "ultimate" release, however, "The Culpeper Minute" was moved to a peritextual position more closely related to the main text of the *Watchmen* movie, which emphasized its relationship to that film and inevitably reconfigured the paratextual nature of the material. More extreme is the insertion of the animated version of *Curse of the Black Freighter* into the film itself, a very rare example of a previously paratextual narrative being lifted into the main text and thus completely obscuring its paratextual nature, even if the result more closely

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[1] The new scenes introduced into the *Watchmen* film with the director's cut constitute previously unreleased material and are therefore beyond the investigation into paratextual spaces and paratextual narratives that is the focus of this thesis. For a discussion of extended or otherwise enhanced cuts of films on DVD, as well as the many paratextual materials that such releases usually present, see Gray (81-115).

resembles the way in which the intradiegetic pirate tale was positioned in the original *Watchmen* comics.

The paratextual narratives included on the *Watchmen: The Ultimate Cut* DVD can be compared to similar material presented on the DVD releases of feature films based on characters from the Marvel Comics. Starting with *Iron Man* (2008), Marvel Studios have produced a great number of movies that all converge to build a joint narrative continuity termed the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). While subsequent films such as *The Incredible Hulk* (2008), *Thor* (2011), and *Captain America* (2011) are not sequels to *Iron Man* in the traditional sense (although there have been sequels to many Marvel films), they connect with the *Iron Man* films as well as each other through narrative threads which resemble the kinds of continuities that characterize the canonical narrative structures created by the traditions of superhero comics storytelling.[2] This means that anything that happens in one film can be—and often is—important for the characters and events in an upcoming movie with a different title and cast.[3] Moreover, several short films have been produced as parts of this narrative continuity and included as additional materials on DVD-releases of the feature films. These so-called "one-shots" (recalling the trade term for single-issue non-serialized comic book stories) most often feature one or two minor character from a previous cinematic release. They either tell short stories that in one way or another connect one of the cinematic releases to another—as is the case with the short films "The Consultant" (2011) and "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Thor's Hammer" (2011), both of which featured the character Agent Coulson and showed events connecting the feature films *Iron Man* (2008), *The Incredible Hulk* (2008), and *Thor* (2011). Or they show consequences resulting from the events in a previously released feature film, as seen in "Item 47" (2012), "Agent Carter" (2013), and "All Hail the King" (2014). Importantly, these films are explicitly produced and marketed as parts of the larger narrative continuity of the MCU created and maintained by the film (and television) releases, and they often provide backstories or contextual information that influence how viewers understand previously released films and future releases. In this sense, the Marvel one-shots function for the

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[2] "Canonicity" in relation to popular- and cult fictions signals the material established by the creators and accepted by the fans as the formal records of the "overall set of storylines, premises, settings, and characters offered by the source media text" (Parrish 28).

[3] This continuity extends into the paratextual spaces of the actual films as well, by way of Marvel's extensive use of mid- and post-credit sequences. Also called tags or stingers, these are short clips that appear during or after the closing credits of a film, often using that paratextual space to present narrative connections between the events in the movie with another, future release. For example, following the closing credits of *Iron Man* (2008), a post-credits sequence introduced the character Nick Fury, an important character in the MCU, eventually responsible for bringing together the superhero team known as the Avengers in the 2012 film of the same name.

Marvel cinematic films much like "The Culpeper Minute" or "The New Frontiersman.net" worked to introduce and augment the *Watchmen* film, while they at the same time recall the contextualizing, chronicling and augmentative functions of the paratextual narrative in the *Watchmen* graphic novel. And like "The Culpeper Minute," these short films are only available as bonus features on the digital releases of previously cinematic feature films, which clearly mark them as paratextual narratives.

But paratextual narratives are not limited to the superhero genre. In fact, in *Convergence Culture*, Henry Jenkins demonstrates how the producers of the TV-show *Dawson's Creek* (1998-2003) experimented with an early kind of narrative extension by producing a website that gave viewers access to the computer desktops of the characters in show. Between episodes the audience could read their favorite character's private journals, peruse emails the characters had sent to each other, and view materials on their hard drives. Moreover, because the website was updated daily, it grew into an outlet for contextual information that filled in narrative gaps between episodes of the television series much like the *Watchmen* paratextual narrative relate to the portions of graphic narrative that surrounds them (*Convergence*, 117-120). Also, discussing how transmedia storytelling relates to his concept of complex television, Mittell brings up the way in which the television show *Lost* (2004-2010) utilized several kinds of online narrative strategies for "storyworld expansion and exploration." Among other things, he mentions the *Lost: Missing Pieces* (2007-2008), thirteen short video clips that gave varying degrees of clues into the multifaceted mysteries and background information about the show's many characters. These so-called "minisodes" were only available as part of an online marketing campaign before being released as bonus features on subsequent DVDs (*Complex TV*, n.pag.). More recently, the TV-show *Fringe* (2008-2013) made extensive use of a number of intradiegetic websites, many of which were updated in-between episodes and seasons to offer up elaborate details and other narrative information through which fans could explore the mysteries concerning scientific anomalies characterizing the TV-show. These kinds of paratextual practices continue, as evident in the marketing campaign that heralded *Jurassic World* (2015), the most recent installment in the *Jurassic Park* film series. Featuring a website for the fictitious company Masrani Global, the marketing campaign presented a wealth of intradiegetic texts and video clips relating the history of the Jurassic Park storyworld, including information about old and new characters, details about Masrani's purchases of InGen (the company responsible for recreating the dinosaurs in the original film), and showcasing the new park "Jurassic World" which is the setting of the new film.

All of the examples discussed above show paratextual spaces being used for narrative purposes, often by way of dedicated websites that either double as advertising spaces for a film or a TV-show (as well as other shows on the same networks), or appear as official websites intradiegetic to the storyworld

of those films or shows. Moreover, many of these paratextual narratives are overtly presented and packaged via some kind of promotional collaborations, as with the *Lost: Missing Pieces* short films, which were initially only available to the customers of the American mobile network suppliers Verizon Wireless. Additionally, similar to how the visual aesthetic of the *Watchmen* paratextual narratives oftentimes recall the design of the letters pages they replaced, it is common to design online paratextual narratives as official corporate websites, complete with mission statements, contact information and lists of services and products provided, all made to look like marketing for various companies or organizations intradiegetic to the storyworlds of the TV-shows or movies which they both promote and extend.[4] In other words, just like the *Watchmen* comics' paratextual narratives were conditioned by the traditional functions and design of the lettercols they replaced, many of these online narrative extensions are defined by the practices of marketing and communication trends characterizing the digital spaces in which they reside.

These are just a few examples of the growth of paratextual narratives into staple ingredients in the franchising of popular films as well as television series. But while media franchises often expand by employing the transmedia storytelling strategies these paratextual narratives exemplify, the phenomenon of media franchising is not defined by such paratextual practices. Rather, media franchising is most often discussed through terms of large corporations buying and selling licenses for commercial exploitation, continually reproducing and perpetuating popular cultural products across media platforms as well as via merchandizing and other peripheral products. In *Production Culture* (2008), John Caldwell discusses how the concept of franchising entered the media industry and emphasizes the new business opportunities that emerged with the consolidated corporate structures of the late twentieth century. Because they own "a broadcast or cable network … or [have] an extensive Internet presence," large conglomerations were in an advantageous position to cross-promote their own feature films and television programs across various platforms (275). While the digitalization of popular culture "threatened many of the most central tenets that had made the industry profitable over the course of several decades, including the place and value of syndication rights," Caldwell observes, the entertainment industry quickly learned to adapt to and embrace emerging digital platforms like video games and the internet, filling them with "product placement" and

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[4] Sadly, as with the original *Watchmen* online paratextual narratives, many of these websites are no longer online. However, various fan-created websites exist that have worked to archive the materials presented there. For examples, see articles on "The Hanso Foundation" on www.lostpedia.com and "Massive Dynamic" on www.fringepedia.net. As of the publication of this dissertation, the "Masrani Global" website from *Jurassic World* can still be accessed at www.masraniglobal.com.

ancillary materials intended to "recoup income downstream from the prima-ry film or series in the form of merchandizing" and other media franchising strategies (277-79). In more recent years, online streaming services from companies such as Netflix, YouTube, and HBO have continued to erode the entertainment industry's economic models, particularly evident by the di-minishing sales of films and TV-shows on physical DVDs, thus making branded online presentations and digital cross-promotion even more im-portant components to the media franchising model.

Building in part on Caldwell's work, Derek Johnson's *Media Franchis-ing: Creative License and Collaboration in the Culture Industries* (2013) shows how media franchising is starting to emerge from its often derided origins as mechanical method of reproducing cultural products into a model for creative and collaborative expansion and exploration of cultural produc-tivity. Johnson investigates "discourses about franchising in 1950s business culture to the emergence and dominance of franchising logics in the produc-tion of contemporary media" (4). He explains how the "flexible, temporary labor arrangements" of post-Fordist media production led to "conglomerates frequently join[ing] with independent partners to develop and extend intel-lectual properties" across media channels (4-5). Combined with various forms of new media technologies and the evolving interactive and social character of media consumption, Johnson claims, the collaborative nature of media franchising has evolved into "a new way of thinking about networks of collaborative content production constituted across multiple industrial sites" (6). Naturally, one aspect of these developments is the phenomenon of transmedia storytelling as discussed by Henry Jenkins and analyzed by Jonathan Gray through his updated paratextual terminology. However, as Johnson shows, studying the longer history of franchising uncovers the cultural groundwork that enabled the contemporary media convergence of which transmedia storytelling is an example, while at the same time chal-lenging the conception of contemporary media franchising as restricted to new and digital media platforms.

As Johnson demonstrates with his analysis of Marvel Comic's *X-Men* franchise, the complex narrative continuities and intricate publication strate-gies of superhero comic books exemplify a model of media franchising that predates our contemporary media convergence.[5] And despite its origin as a purposefully limited series of comic books, *Watchmen* has not been immune to the superhero-franchising tradition. In February of 2012, DC Entertain-ment officially revealed their commitment to the long-rumored "prequel" project *Before Watchmen*, involving seven new mini-series of interconnected

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[5] Originally presented in "Franchise Histories: Marvel, X-Men, and the Negotiated Process of Expansion," a chapter in the collected volume on *Convergence Media History* (Staiger, Hake, eds.), Johnson's in-depth discussion of the evolution of the X-Men franchise is represented in the second chapter of *Media Franchising* (67-105).

comic books—each based on a separate character from Moore's graphic narrative—that would total almost 40 weekly published issues (Hyde).[6] Importantly, neither Moore nor Gibbons were involved in *Before Watchmen*. Instead, in a move that is representative of the collaborative nature of media franchising, a large group of comics writers and artists known for their work on other superhero-titles were brought in to create new comics featuring the iconic *Watchmen* heroes. As the first release in this new series of *Watchmen* comics, Darwyn Cooke's *Before Watchmen: Minutemen* drew heavily on the paratextual narrative "Under the Hood" to relate another version of the story of the formation and downfall of the first group of vigilantes. The series was framed through the lens of Hollis Mason's internal moral struggles and debates as he is about to publish his autobiography, and over the course of six issues, Mason's musing framed flashbacks to the early days of masked vigilantism, relating a revisionist narrative that put much of what was written in "Under the Hood" into question, raising the issue of the truthfulness of that autobiography that was signaled in the very first installment of the *Watchmen* serial comics. In this sense, Cooke's *Before Watchmen: Minutemen* could very well be read as providing hitherto unknown details about the characters, setting and themes of the original *Watchmen* story in ways similar to how its source material "Under the Hood" provides chronicling, augmentative, and contextual information for the plot of that graphic narrative.

This use of a paratextual narrative as a springboard for media franchising is not original to *Watchmen*. Rather, the strategy has been used in several other instances to expand single-media narratives into transmedia stories. A particularly apt comparison to *Before Watchmen: Minutemen* is *Agent Carter* (2015-ongoing), a TV-series based a supporting character introduced in *Captain America: The First Avenger* (2011).[7] Much like Mason's "Under the Hood" investigates the *Watchmen* past, this film digs into the history of the MCU, portraying Captain America's origin story as playing out during the American army's exploits in WWII. The end of the movie abandoned this setting and most of its supporting cast as the titular hero is frozen in ice after crashing into the North Pole, only to be resurrected 70 years later. But audiences got a glimpse into what had happened to a the character after her WWII adventures in the "one-shot" short film "Agent Carter" mentioned

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[6] Naturally, like most characters from the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Agent Peggy Carter was first introduced in the Marvel comics. However, unlike the more established heroes and villains of the MCU, the *Agent Carter* television series is based on the character's appearance in the MCU, complete with her British origin, and not as depicted in the Marvel comics, where the character is of American decent (Riesman).

[7] DC Comics eventually published two additional shorter *Before Watchmen* titles featuring other, less prominent characters from the original *Watchmen* story, one spread over just two issues and one so-called "one-shot" (single issues) comic. The planned "finale" to the series, paradoxically entitled *Before Watchmen: Epilogue*, was eventually scrapped.

above, one of the paratextual narratives hitherto only released as a digital bonus feature online and on DVD (*Iron Man 3*, 2013). The short was a big hit, receiving much critical acclaim for showing Carter, a strong female hero, continuing the fight against evildoers without the support of her superhero boyfriend. The positive reactions to the short led to a eight episode TV-series order from ABC, which focused on a Carter newly returned from the war, fighting bad guys and sexism in the 1940s New York, all the while uncovering the origin of mysteries that are raised in past as well as future feature films of the Marvel Cinematic Universe.[8]

As indicated here, the *Before Watchmen: Minutemen* prequel comics and the *Agent Carter* television series both present a number of details about characters, settings, and plots that in many ways functions to augment and contextualize the larger narrative constructs to which they belong, in a sense fulfilling narrative functions for those respective storyworlds similar to the paratextual narratives which served as the source materials for the two series. However, it is crucial to underline the fact that both series provide these contextualizing and augmentative functions by virtue of being prequels to other previously established popular texts, and not in the sense of paratextual narratives. As such, even though *Before Watchmen: Minutemen* might influence readings of the original *Watchmen* comics in similar ways to how paratextual narratives such as "Under the Hood" functioned for that graphic narrative, this prequel series is not presented in a paratextual space and therefore cannot be considered paratextual narratives, or indeed, paratexts in any sense. Similarly, while *Agent Carter* can function for the larger narrative structure of the MCU similar to the paratextual short film that served as its origins, the TV-series simply lacks any connection to the paratextual spaces that conditioned that short film. Instead, both the *Before Watchmen* as well as *Agent Carter* series are independent texts that simultaneously act as parts of the amalgamation of textual hierarchies which constitute their respective media franchises: structures that are too complex, widespread, and multifaceted to address only through the text-paratext paradigm, or explain solely via the idea of paratextual narratives and paratextual spaces.

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[8] One example of how *Agent Carter* serves to augment the cinematic films of the MCU can be seen in *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015). In this film, the Marvel heroes are hypnotized by the newly introduced character Scarlet Witch, triggering anxiety-filled visions into each character's personal fears. One such flash experienced by Natalia Romanova, aka Black Widow, was the subject of an online debate, as the scene and its consequences implied that Romanova had been sterilized in her young years as part of her training as a Russian spy. What few critics mentioned, however, was that in an already broadcasted episode of the first season of *Agent Carter*, one of the villains was revealed as having been trained at the same institute. While not addressing the sterilization-issue, the scene worked to set the context for the Romanova dream-sequence, while at the same time providing background information detailing the harsh upbringing and background that she is often described as having escaped.

It is important to reiterate that, like Birke and Christ maintain, we must be cautious not to extend the concept of paratexts so far as to erase its meaning. The *Before Watchmen* series as well as the *Agent Carter* TV-show both represent instances where there is a danger that the concept of paratexts is applied to material with little to no similarity to the kind of material that inspired Genette's original paradigm. Rather, as my investigation underscores, it is important to study the processes of production and distribution that generate these kinds of popular texts, as it is only through such investigation that we can gain the insights needed to understanding how those processes impact the reception of popular media franchises such as *Watchmen* or the many films and TV-series of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Consequently, we must distinguish between paratexts and the spaces in which paratexts reside, in order to be able to identify situations in which such paratextual spaces are used to present paratextual narratives. And as I show above, the trend towards transmedia storytelling and media franchising that characterizes American popular narrative production continues to produce paratextual narratives across all kinds of media platforms. While new modes of media franchising might utilize paratextual spaces and disseminate paratextual narratives in a myriad of different ways and toward innumerable ends, the paratextual narratives that emanate from these continually evolving storytelling practices will continue to be subject to the conditions and traditions of the paratextual spaces in which they emerge, much in the same ways that the paratextual narratives studied in this dissertation have been obscured, reconfigured, and reinforced with the binding, unbinding, and rebinding of *Watchmen*.

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