

FIDELITY POLITICS AND ADAPTATION NETWORKS IN GRAPHIC NARRATIVE

ADAPTATIONS OF PAUL AUSTER'S *CITY OF GLASS* AND

MARY SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN*

by

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This research is an examination of the graphic adaptations of Paul Auster's *City of Glass* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. I use medium-specific theory in conjunction with adaptation theory to work toward entering graphic narratives into adaptation scholarship.

City of Glass shows how complex written narrative structures can be adapted in a visual medium using an interpretive approach to story-driven adaptation. Reading the paratext across multiple editions of both the written and graphic texts reveals how fidelity politics manifest in the presentation of text. To counteract this, a comics-theory-driven reading of the graphic adaptation reveals how the interpretative mode of adaptation creates a graphic narrative structure that encompasses the chosen interpretation, producing a text which can function outside of its adaptation position and serve as its own palimpsest text.

The four graphic adaptations of *Frankenstein* further the understanding of what an adaptation is, focusing on a character-driven adaptation that incorporates more than one source text. Each new version of the Creature not only draws intertextual inspiration from the *Frankenstein* texts produced before it, but also reveals the shifting cultural perception of the Creature. From Dick Briefer's two polar opposite versions, to Marvel's mainstream adventure, to Niles and Worm's gritty sequel, each iteration expands upon the growing network of texts

available to it and uses the conventions of the graphic form to complicate both the Creature and the meaning of adaptation.

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INTRODUCTION: WAS THE BOOK BETTER?

People love adaptations. This year alone has already seen five novels or children's story adaptations reach the top ten highest grossing films, followed by a film based off a video game character, and topped off by Marvel Comics' *Black Panther*. Television and stage have also never been shy to the adaptation game, expanding upon familiar names such *The Lion King* and *Wicked* or *Game of Thrones* and *Gotham*. The conversation around adaptations focuses mainly on written text to acted media, largely film, and is often discussed in a manner that places the written text as a sacred source that can only ever be reproduced in poor simulation.

Even among adaptation scholars who try and avoid fidelity politics and who seek to expand the scholarly definition of adaptation, the approaches and terminology used often slip into this text to film/television binary; ignoring film to written text, film to video game, toy to television show, television show to board game, and especially written text to graphic text. All the essays in Albrecht-Crane and Cutchins' *Adaptation Studies* focus on films, and the terms "comic book" or "graphic novel" do not make a single appearance (298-306). Linda Hutcheon almost makes a connection when applying Gotthold Lessing idea of literature as "art of time" and painting as "art of space," but only recognizes the "stage and screen's" position to be both (35). Graphic narratives are ignored despite being constructed of both "literature," or written narrative, and "painting," or visual narrative in this case.

As such, while providing valuable progress towards a theorized approach to adaptation, the current scholarship leaves gaps in the theoretical approaches, a problem Rainer Emig assesses stating that, "adaptation needs theory, but at the same time adaptation cannot and must not rely on one theory or even one clearly prescribed sets of theories [...] its multi- and interdisciplinary status also determines its multi-, inter- and transtheoretical attachments" (14).

The urge to create an all-encompassing theory that draws definite approaches appears to lead scholars into the text/film binary or fidelity politics. Albrecht-Crane and Cutchins' introduction to *Adaptation Studies* slips into referring to the source being adapted as "literature" and the adaptation as "film" (11-22). The essays that make up the rest of the text follow such a pattern in content by exploring the relations of only written texts to acted media. Entire mediums are ignored. Linda Hutcheon's seminal, *A Theory of Adaptation* avoids this text/film binary, but contains a dismissive attitude toward comics, even while expressing excitement about the "participatory" element within which comic books are positioned. That is, the network of "live-action movies, televised cartoons, and even actions toys" inspired by superhero comics that encourages consumer consumption on multiple levels is rightfully positioned as an exciting phenomenon. However, Hutcheon builds this position while reducing graphic narrative's status to an economic tool meant to sell films to studios as a sort of storyboard or as more franchise merchandise to sell to children (88).

Even comics theorists are dismissive of comic adaptations of written texts and thus avoid talking about them; David Wolk for instance writes in *Reading Comics* that, "comic adaptations of movies are pointless cash-ins at best [...] Likewise, comic adaptations of prose books are almost uniformly terrible [...] and they end up gutting the original work of a lot of its significant content" (13). Series that expand on and help develop more complex universes, such as the *Aliens* or *Star Wars* comic series, or that provide entertaining and unique crossovers, such as *Army of Darkness v Marvel Zombies*, are ignored as though they were *Classics Illustrated*—abridged and illustrated texts designed to introduce early readers to classic text—by theorists concerned with leaving the impression that comics are not serious works. Graphic adaptations of literature that are meant to appeal to a more mature audience have also been largely ignored. The

hesitance towards graphic adaptations from both directions seems to arise from two distinct factors. The first appears to be a lack of understanding of how to approach a graphic narrative critically; the film medium has a longer critical standing and thus the narrative structures and devices are more familiar among scholars. Secondly, the idea persists that the graphic narrative form is less complex and therefore meant for children or less advanced readers. My aim is to enter graphic narratives into the adaptation scholarship while producing a new positioning of the texts that avoids fidelity-driven readings by approaching the graphic adaptations with medium-specific narrative theory.

I begin my study with an examination of the graphic adaptation of Paul Auster's *City of Glass*, whose surface "story" hides a multitude of interpretations. On this surface, there is the story of writer Daniel Quinn, who has been living a life of solitude and writing detective novels since his wife and child died years ago. One night Quinn gets a phone call looking for a detective by the name of Paul Auster. After brushing off the first call Quinn decides to become involved in the case. Meanwhile, he is interviewed and then hired by Peter Stillman to keep Peter safe from his father, Professor Stillman, who locked Peter in a state of sensory deprivation as a child in hopes that he could learn the language of God. Professor Stillman is now being released from prison, and Peter and his wife fear he may look for revenge. Quinn tails Professor Stillman for several weeks and has three conversations with him before the professor disappears entirely. Quinn then tries to get in touch with the real Paul Auster, but instead finds an academic writer, who has the success and family that Quinn used to have. After talking with Auster, Quinn decides to take drastic measures and goes off the grid in 24/7 surveillance of the Stillman house in hopes that Professor Stillman will try to contact his son. After an undetermined length of time, Quinn tries to get in contact with Auster again, only to discover that everything pertaining to the

Stillman case has vanished and his former life is displaced by a new occupant of his apartment. Quinn then finds his way into the empty Stillman house and confines himself to a room. He does nothing in this room but write in his notebook and eat the food that appears for him for an undetermined length of time. The narrator eventually loses track of Quinn entirely, at which point it is revealed that the narrator is a friend of Auster who has pieced together the narrative from Auster's accounts and Quinn's notebook.

The 1994 adaptation by Auster, David Mazzucchelli, and Paul Karasik uses the "story" method of adaptation, in which the overall story is the core element that is carried over. Different formal elements that contribute to the diegesis, such as characterization and setting, are selected, and equivalences are found in the new narrative form (Hutcheon 10). In this method the surface story would remain largely the same, as is the case with *City of Glass*; Quinn's narrative in relation to the case remains the same, what changes is the interpretive element. As Kamilla Elliot notes in her chapter in *Teaching Adaptations*, adaptation can serve as an act of critical engagement in a narrative and offers several benefits such as the way it "illuminates [the act of] adaptation as a *process* in ways inaccessible to rational, empirical, philosophical and ideological modes of criticism" and also helps provide an engagement of "critical and theoretical insight" in a cross disciplinary way (76). That is, the act of adapting a narrative from one form to another helps reveal new critical insight into both narratives and their narrative form, especially as this process is an interpretative act, one that selects an interpretation of the first text in order to find equivalences in the new narrative's structure (Albrecht-Crane and Cutchins 18). The graphic adaptation of *City of Glass* chooses the interpretation of Auster's novel that deals with concerns of narrating and ontology and finds ways to make the highly textual form of these concerns work in a graphic narrative by exposing and breaking down the graphic structural elements.

The second set of texts I examine are various graphic adaptations of *Frankenstein*. Where *City of Glass* offers a direct one-to-one textual adaptation, the cultural status that *Frankenstein* has developed through two centuries of adaptations creates texts that are not just interacting with Mary Shelley's novel, but the chain of adaptations which have preceded them. This expansion of adaptation to a larger network of texts has been only briefly touched upon by adaptation scholars. Hutcheon for instance explores the intersections of adaptations across multiple mediums but is largely concerned with the economic implications behind the adaptations, harkening back to her position that comics are mainly tools for selling other adaptation (30). While the relationship between comics and consumerism may be symbiotic on some level, this does not warrant their dismissal from other adaptation approaches. Adaptation theorists are not alone in ignoring the contributions of graphic narrative. *Frankenstein* scholars also have largely ignored the insight into cultural perspectives of the Creature that graphic *Frankensteins* offer.

Graphic *Frankensteins* provide a case of character-driven adaptation, which as the term implies, is focused on adapting a character instead of a story. Characters are a product of the narrative they appear in, to an extent, so many adaptations include portions of the Creature's story, with sections omitted or altered to produce various, influential environments. Removing the Creature's time with the De Lacey family, for example, takes away the Creature's exposure to the kinder side of humanity, leaving him with only experiences of humanity's fear and hatred towards him, which he returns in like. Other adaptations rely on a collective cultural understanding of the basic background of the character, positioning their place as a *Frankenstein* text through a character's green skin and head-bolts. A mention of the name "Frankenstein" is sometimes even enough of a signifier for texts that do not want the Karloff-inspired version of

the Creature, as is the case with *I, Frankenstein* or *Monster & Madman: The Secret History of Jack the Ripper and Frankenstein's Monster* (which is one of the *Frankenstein* texts I explore).

Frankenstein texts in general also often draw upon the range of adaptations that precede them, integrating selections of the *Frankenstein* mythos into the popular comic forms of the time. Dick Briefer's dual horror and comedic Creatures pay homage to Shelley's novel while incorporating the staple visuals of James Whale's Creature, creating one creature that spawned the horror genre of comics in a manner similar to Shelley's novel, and the comedic, kindhearted Creature whose echoes can be felt in such adaptations as *The Munsters*. Marvel's *Frankenstein* uses the framing of its universe to place the Creature in their world of Inhumans and Mutants, offering a community of understanding only available in a universe filled with accidentally enhanced and mutated bodies. The updated setting makes the story feel modern. Whereas a story-driven adaptation would place the entire narrative back in time, updating the narrative's placement in time aids in introducing the trauma of Shelley's narrative into a medium that has its own share of trauma of dead parental figures, accidental mutations, and unusual bodily transformations. In other words, the Creature's origin story feels at home in the form commonly used for superheroes.

Niles and Worm's *Monster & Madman* also finds a new exploration of the Creature's trauma in its depiction, using color coding to manifest the Creature's internal state onto his environment, while still drawing upon Shelley's text and Whale's and Branagh's films. A nod is even made towards Alan Moore's graphic adaption of the Whitechapel murders, *From Hell*, as the Ripper shares Moore's surname. Placing the Creature back in close, but still anachronistic, time to that of his conception manifests the Romantics' fear of urbanization infecting and corrupting the self onto the terror of the Ripper.

Both the story-driven and character-driven adaptation approaches reveal that adaptation is never mere transcription; even in an intermedial form like graphic narrative, interpretative adaptation is happening. Whether this manifests in the *City of Glass* graphic adaptation through the decision to have the visual narrator present Quinn's ontological crisis in a structural form, or in the jagged patchwork of *Monster & Madman's* panels and layouts that resemble the skin of the Creature, graphic adaptations provide another narrative form that can contribute to the conversation surrounding both graphic texts and adaptation theory.

CHAPTER ONE: TEXTUAL TO GRAPHIC NARRATIVE ADAPTATION IN PAUL AUSTER'S *CITY OF GLASS*

In Paul Auster's novel *City of Glass*, the name Auster multiplies throughout the text, finding itself attached to a variety of persons. Likewise, the title, *City of Glass*, can be found attached to an unexpected number and variety of other medium productions. Some, like Cassandra Clare's young adult novel or the Indie Rock band from Vancouver, share nothing but the name. Others, however, are doppelgangers of Auster's novel, doubles across mediums; there is a German radio drama, a play that ran in the 2017 season at the Hammersmith Theater, and a graphic novel that, due to an unusual publication history, has a doppelganger of its own. The nature of Auster's text, the hyper-awareness of its textuality—the concern with creation of language, narrative, and authorship—makes the novel a complicated choice for adaptations outside the textual realm, especially visual adaptations. While some of the mediums it has been adapted into, such as modern drama, have often explored self-awareness in their own narrative structures, the graphic novel medium does not have as long a history of engaging in complex narrative structures that explicitly explore awareness of their own textuality. Despite this lack of precedent however, the graphic adaptation of *City of Glass* was met with both critical acclaim and, after a brief period out of print followed by a shift in paratextual presentation, decent commercial success. I suggest that this graphic adaptation of Auster's text has seen this success due to an approach focused on producing an interpretation of the novel which blurs and breaks down the visual narrative in the same manner that the novel's protagonist, Quinn, is blurred and broken down.

Auster's novel has a sizeable body of scholarship with several chapters of critical text specifically focused on Auster's writing and over six hundred journal articles which span

disciplinary fields, published in multiple languages. The graphic adaptation, by contrast, has a much smaller body of scholarship compared to other graphic texts that have gained scholarly attention such as *Maus* or *Fun Home*; the graphic text appears more often in articles about comics and graphic novels in general than in articles specifically about the text itself. The few pieces of scholarship on the graphic adaptation produce valuable close readings of the graphic text in comparison to the written text but leave gaps in the scholarship due to a general lack of comic theory and adherence to the written text as primary, an approach Linda Hutcheon terms “fidelity criticism” (6). These gaps in the theoretical approach are an issue because using a different medium’s language in critical analysis of comics is to treat graphic texts “as if they were particularly weird, or failed, examples of another medium all together,” and as such, scholarship on graphic narrative benefits from using narrative approaches that apply specifically to its medium and not that of literary texts or films (Wolk 13). This concept carries over to the foundational concepts of adaptation theory. In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Hutcheon writes that though the process of adaptation involves seeking equivalences in “different sign systems for the various elements of the story” this does not mean that the adaptation should be read only as secondary in its relation to the text from which it is adapted; “an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative—a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing” (9). In other words, mediums have different narrative structures which require their own theoretical approaches and should be evaluated based on their execution of their own narrative devices. This holds true even when talking about adaptations, as not all narrative devices and structures can cross mediums. The theoretical approach I utilize here is a blend of these methods, treating the graphic adaptation of *City of Glass* as a text not secondary to Auster’s novel, but one

in conversation with it, using both narrative and comic theory to explore how the questions of narration, ontology, and authorship manifest themselves in both texts.

The Case of the Vanishing Cover

As previously mentioned, the graphic adaptation of *City of Glass* has its own doppelganger that, like its protagonist, has been almost completely dissolved in assuming a new identity. The copyright page of the edition currently in circulation lists 2004 as the date of copyright, which makes the label of “New Introduction by Art Spiegelman” confusing, as the 2004 contains no mention of a prior edition. However, reviews dated prior to 2004 were sparse, despite these later dated reviews stating that the adaptation is from 1994 (Publisher’s Weekly 36; Newsweek par. 7; Guardian par. 2). Anthony D. Barker’s entry on *City of Glass* in the *Encyclopedia of Comic Books and Graphic Novels* verifies this 1994 publication date, stating “Paul Karasik and David Mazzucchelli collaborated with novelist Paul Auster to adapt Auster’s 1985 prose novel, *City of Glass*, and produced this groundbreaking graphic novel, originally published 1994 as *Neon Lit: Paul Auster’s City of Glass*.” When placed in contrast with the covers of the novels and 2004 graphic novel print, the cover of the 1994 text reveals an interesting tension of paratextual genre between the editions which reflects the narrative’s own genre tension as the Stillman case fades out of the narrative, and Quinn’s struggle to reorient himself becomes the new focus.

As Spiegelman states in his “new introduction” in the 2004 edition of the graphic *City of Glass*, the concept behind the *Neon Lit* project was to approach well-known novelists and ask if they would consider writing stories for graphic novels as he was “tired of seeing my *Maus* volumes surrounded by fantasy and role-playing manuals” (Auster, Karasik, and Mazzucchelli,

CoG i). He continues on to explain both how Auster's novel and Karasik and Mazzucchelli came to be involved in the project. At no point does he mention the *Neon Lit* project or the one other graphic adaptation, based off Barry Gifford's *Perdita Durango*, which was produced in the series. He also does not mention, as Martha Kuhlman does in her article for *Indy Magazine*, that the graphic novel was out of print for years (par. 1).

While most reprints see changes in the art and design of the cover, few undergo changes to the registered copyright title of the text. The first edition is registered with the copyright title *Neon Lit: Paul Auster's City of Glass* whereas the 2004 edition lists *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel* (US Lib. of Congr.). The graphic adaptation of Gifford's novel still bears the *Neon Lit* title, but like the protagonist Daniel Quinn, *Neon Lit* has vanished from *City of Glass* and with it, the noir aesthetic of its paratext. An examination of the shifting paratexts will show, the erasure of the first graphic print is extensive enough for the 2004 print to be considered something other than a mere reprint as paratext can impact perceptions of a text.

The *Neon Lit* cover for *City of Glass* bears multiple elements that signify the graphic novel as a work of detective fiction. *Neon Lit*'s logo incorporates a smoking gun—strongly suggesting that the series was meant to be detective fiction and not “literary” despite what Spiegelman's introduction in the 2004 print suggests. The shadow of a figure dressed in a long coat with a popped collar and fedora, à la Dashiell Hammett inspired films, is cast on a brick wall while tall, dark buildings fill out the skyline. A black banner with red lettering at the bottom also labels the text as “A Graphic Mystery” thereby placing a stated genre in a highly visible location that reinforces the genre heavy visual signifiers (Auster, Karasik, and Mazzucchelli, *Neon Lit*). In contrast, the title on the first hardcover edition of Auster's novel is printed in a medium yellow serif across a photograph of glass skyscrapers in evening light. This cover art

signifies the setting of the novel without suggesting any of the detective genre elements of the text; though these types of glass high rises are often associated with corporate America, the image of the buildings juxtaposed with the text's title suggests more of an association that plays with the visual element of the title *City of Glass*. The first edition paperbacks for both the United States and United Kingdom also abstain from the detective imagery.

The U.S. cover displays two damaged and upside down photographs of the Empire State Building which pulls from both the New York setting and a plot point for one of the characters, while the U.K. edition has Auster's initials in large letters over a deep orange background, a cover that reveals nothing about the story elements but, like the 2004 graphic text's cover, provides a hard to ignore reminder of the author's name, placing the multi-diegetic presence of Auster front and center. None of these covers hint towards the text's narrative layer that is concerned with end of the world conspiracies and vanishing, would-be detectives. Taking Gérard Genette's theory of the paratextual in consideration, wherein one of the roles of paratext is to "assure its presence in the world, its 'reception' and its consumption," the first printing of the graphic *City of Glass* is framed to appeal to the pulp fiction and mystery-comic reader audience with its genre signifying elements, not the "literary" fiction audience to whom the covers of Auster's first editions would be trying to attract (*Introduction to the Paratext* 261).

The reprints of both texts could have bridged the gap in genre signifiers between the novel and graphic adaptation covers but instead undergo an almost reversal of genre projection. The 2006 collected edition of the novels is illustrated by Art Spiegelman, the spearhead of the *Neon Lit* project and, like the *Neon Lit* cover for the graphic *City of Glass*, does not shy away from the detective genre imagery. A possibly lifeless hand protrudes from the bottom right corner of the cover, while a pair of men's dress shoes across the top suggests someone, either the

gumshoe or the murderer, is taking a survey of the scene. There are three red splotches on the green carpet which is patterned with an image of an eye. The eye image plays upon the pun of “private eye,” a profession whose purpose is often to “watch” people and observe the small details; both texts contain scenes that play with this pun and draw comparisons between the actions of a detective and actions of a reader, pulling together the detective genre narrative and the “literary” narrative. The red spots appear to be ink from the fountain pen that has rolled out of the fallen hand. Their splatter pattern suggests a struggle, while their similarity to blood spots paired with red ink’s association with editing alludes to the trilogy’s repeating theme which equates the end of writing with the death or disappearances of characters. Three books are spread across the carpet between the two persons as well, each with a distinct cover for the three novels in the collection. *City of Glass* and *Ghosts* both have male figures wearing the trench coat and fedora ensemble from popular depictions of detectives, and the same eye from the carpet pattern is present somewhere on each of these smaller covers. The cover representing *The Locked Room* does not have a private eye on its cover however. Instead it presents a replica of the lifeless hand on the larger cover, sans the observer of the scene, suggesting that the final narrative and character death not only occurs in the final novel but is also the narration of the scene into which the observer or “reader” has now intruded. This cover also uses the visual association of the eye, continuing the genre based pun. Even the short descriptions for each novel on the inner right flap reinforce the genre reading, covering only the content of the detective story, providing short blurbs concerned with missing persons and suspicious deaths.

The back cover of the 2006 novel also incorporates the setting and plot with a map of Manhattan streets and a caption that informs the reader these are the streets the characters in *City of Glass* walked. Another plot point is manifested in a realistic painting of a spiral building

which appears on the bottom right labeled “The Tower of Babel.” In addition to being a plot point, The Tower of Babel draws upon the subgenre of detective fiction that incorporates stories or elements from ancient cultures into conspiracy theories, and thus is another visual signifier for the detective genre. Continuing the genre-based imagery, an illustrated portrait of Paul Auster (based on a photograph of an Auster who is younger than the illustration) appears on the spine of the book and the back inner flap. In this portrait Auster is dressed in a dark jacket with the collar raised, similar to the figures seen on the *Neon Lit* cover and smaller covers on the collected trilogy. A fountain tipped pen, that bears a likeness to the one on the front cover of the trilogy and the one that the character of Auster uses in both the novel and graphic text, is poised in his right hand, and a magnifying glass held up to his eye (which is similar in graphiation to the one patterned throughout the front cover) with his left hand. These visual elements in the author’s portrait all play with, or magnify, the genre signifiers on a metafictional level while also adding another ontological level of Auster’s presence and relationship with the text. The only overt suggestion that this novel is not genre fiction is the author’s biography which includes essays, memoirs, and poetry among the list of other works. An unfamiliar reader could read the paratext of this reprint as that belonging to a straight work of detective fiction.

The 2004 edition of graphic *City of Glass* contains no paratextual suggestions that it is on one level a detective narrative, choosing a more abstract approach similar to the covers of the novel’s first prints. The *Neon Lit* brand, with its smoking gun and dark city alley, is no longer present. Instead the new design places emphasis on the text as an adaptation. The new title of the book places Auster’s name larger than both the adaptor’s (Karasik) and the artist’s (Mazzucchelli) names, which appear the same size as Spiegelman’s though his involvement in the project was more administrative. The larger depiction of Auster’s name could be meant to

continue to present Auster as the primary author of the written text, a decision that appears to be grounded in a limitation placed on the project as Karasik explained at a *Comic Arts Brooklyn* panel in 2013. Karasik stated that Auster's one request in the adaptation was that "He wanted nothing included in the graphic novel that didn't come from the original text" (par. 3). However, this decision creates a paratextual reduction of Karasik and Mazzucchelli's roles to ones of abridgement editor and illustrator instead of creators of an independent narrative. This treatment does not acknowledge the distinct written and visual narrative tracks of the comic form which require those adapting the text to "bring their own innovations to their adaptation" (Bolton par. 3). The continual main billing of Auster as primary author and Auster's limitations for the project also suggests that somewhere in the production process there were fidelity concerns, an issue that is rooted in iconophobia and logophilia (Stam 58). Hutcheon explains this phenomenon, stating that in regards to works adapted from literature, many scholars hold the belief that, "literature will always have axiomatic superiority over any adaptation of it because of its seniority as an art form;" thus the written text will almost always be given primacy (4). This logocentrism would contribute to the concern that a graphic narrative adaptation cannot achieve literary acclaim without explicit ties to a pre-existing literary work, which might partially explain the lack of larger billing for the graphic narrative's authors. The paratextual focus is attracting a literary readership to graphic narrative, not attracting a comic book readership to literary works, which mirrors the iconophobia inherited from the tension between novels and films, the written and the visual (Elliot 1-10). The perception is that the visual is too elementary to be considered by readers who are capable of reading text consisting entirely of written narration (McCloud 10-21). Because written texts have, for much of history, been accessible to only the affluent, they developed a high place of status. Even as written texts became more readily available, the status

of the least accessible texts (most expensive or hardest to understand) continued to rise, keeping iconography marginalized despite its position to include those with less education opportunities or the neuro-atypical (Fleckenstein 915). “Popular” fictions, such as the detective story, are viewed as lower forms of texts due to their use of straightforward language and easy to follow stories. This hierarchy carries over into graphic texts. As such, a graphic text that is also in a “popular” fiction genre holds a rather low status in this culturally perpetuated system.

Thus, in order to “elevate” the status of a medium that combines the visual and written, the appeal for readership must be made to the audience of the “more advanced” medium, who are in this case the novel readership. An emphasis on Mazzucchelli’s role would have had the opposite effect and drawn in more of the comic readership as his past works include *Batman* for DC and *Daredevil* for Marvel Comics, as well as several projects with Frank Miller (*Sin City* and *300*). But the paratextual framing of the reprint shies away from elements that would attract mainstream comic book readers, nesting Mazzucchelli’s name in a block of bylines.

In addition to deemphasizing the role of the adaptation artists, the images on the cover also lack detective genre signifiers. Both the front and back cover have images pulled from the text of the graphic novel, but they are from ambiguous or abstract panels. The image on the front is a fractured panel with the same howling face drawn multiple times in a variety of styles that regress in detail as they progress from left to right. While this does mirror the way the textual narrative multiplies and unravels it does not incorporate the genre level, choosing instead to nest this image between two blocks of horizontal color broken up by a vertical white bar, resembling the style of a later Piet Mondrian piece. In other words, the cover of the graphic reprint has more in common with the covers of the novel’s first editions. The back cover depicts Quinn walking in front of a cityscape silhouette. The silhouette is split by two vertical and two horizontal white

stripes running parallel to each other in a manner which divides the back cover into the nine panel grid utilized in the text, while the polyptych content of the grid creates the impression that the reader is viewing Quinn through a window as he wanders the streets at night. This use of the polyptych varies from the more common usage, which imposes multiple sections of time over a stationary setting; instead a single section of time, Quinn's single step, is imposed over and transcends multiple blocks of space (Berlatsky 262-4). Though the physical setting is sparse in detail, the temporal setting is signified by yellow blocks placed at random on the building outlines. Unlike the cityscape he walks through, Quinn's image does not appear under the panel division. While his body is largely contained in the space of a single panel, both his shadow and one of his legs are superimposed over the gutters, placing him in a level of existence above that of graphic narrative's formal elements. The presence of this paratextual page refutes the reading of Quinn's disappearance in which he has vanished into nothing after he runs out of space to write in his notebook as David Coughlan suggests; "Quinn is so completely a textual creation, so bound to his own text, that his end coincides 'with the dwindling pages in the red notebook'" (842).

Instead of returning to the level of "primary diegesis," or dissolving alongside the narrative's epistemological certainty, Quinn has escaped to the highest diegetic level possible (McHale 117). Instead of emphasizing Quinn as narrative device that vanishes alongside the story's detective pretense, the back covers opens up a space for Quinn to escape to after using narration to break through the level of the paratext as the result of a long-coming realization. It is important to note that in using this device the visual narration of the graphic text favors an emphasis on the ontological concerns of the novel. This is a necessity in the creation of the text as adapting a narrative from one medium to another often requires favoring an interpretation in

order to embed “equivalences [...] sought in different sign systems” (Hutcheon 9). Such a task could prove especially complicated for a text that Hazel Smith in “*A Labyrinth of Endless Steps*”: *Fiction Making, Interactive Narrativity, and the Poetics of Space in Paul Auster’s “City of Glass”* describes as “comprised of a network of narratives which interweave and work allegorically in several directions at once [...] there [is no] conventional one to one relation between sign and concept” (34). In order for an adaptation to cover all these convergences of meaning, the graphic text would have to expand to an unwieldy length; so while Auster’s request that nothing be added in the adaptation was followed on a technical level, the telling of the narrative in a different medium creates a “new” story through interpretation.

The written narration on the back cover, the text’s “blurb,” serves as one such example of how, through selective exclusion in the act of incorporating Auster’s written narration with the visual narration, the graphic narrative selects an interpretation:

New York was a labyrinth of endless steps, and no matter how far he walked, it always left him with the feeling of being lost. Each time he took a walk, he felt he was leaving himself behind. All places became equal, and on his best walks, he was able to feel that he was nowhere. This was all he ever asked of things: to be nowhere. (Auster 4)

This text is an abbreviation from a longer passage in Auster’s novel. As an example of the repurposing of written narration, the clipped passages alone do not match the complete feeling of being lost that Quinn experiences. The written narrator’s emphasis is on Quinn’s desire to be outside of space, foreshadowing his disappearance towards the end of the narration. But the middle section of Auster’s paragraph in the novel, which explains Quinn’s purpose in his movement, is cut from the narration. This shifts the “lost” and the “nowhere” to a physical space,

especially as the center panel only contains the text “all *places* became equal” (emphasis mine); whereas Auster’s inclusion of misplaced time in Quinn’s aimless wanderings points towards a metaphysical lostness. Quinn is chasing the sensation of no longer existing. Since Quinn’s physicality is a creation of the visual narrative, and the narrative exists in the physical object of the text, if Quinn has already broken through the graphic narrative form to the level of paratext, the possibility then exists that he can break through that unbreakable ontological barrier of being narrated and reach the diegetic level of author (McHale 121). He might then actually dissolve and find the lack of existence he is chasing. Thus the paratext here serves not only as a signifier for the literary level of the narrative, but also points towards the interpretation of the text employed in its cross-medium rebirth.

As previously mentioned, this interpretation is necessary because written narration of text does not have the space to support a direct transcription of Auster’s novel. Even if there were, such a project would be more akin to illustration than graphic narrative as the act of narration would be in the control of the written narrator instead of the written and visual working together as a “homogenized” narrative (Round 319). In other words, in addition to helping establish the sign system of equivalencies, the visual narrator also takes on an ever fluctuating burden of narration. Mazzucchelli describes his process of redistributing the narrative responsibility in an interview with *Indy Magazine* saying, “I thought of it not so much as adaptation, but as a translation from one language to another. In that sense, finding the structure (which Paul did brilliantly) was very important. All the ‘aesthetic’ choices augmented that structure, or were intended to be visual analogues to the text—especially to the large portions we were leaving out” (par. 4). The visual narration discussed above provides an example of this in practice; equivalents are present for most of the elements of Quinn’s lostness, but the interpretative side of

adapting left out the loss of time, an aspect that should be easily included in a medium that relies heavily on visual temporalities in its narrative structure. Both the lights in the buildings and Quinn's shadow are common visual signifiers of time, specifically a range of time stretching from late evening to break of dawn. And while the blankness of the background signifies a vagueness of place, or a physical "nowhere," the inclusion of the light elements does not allow the image to be in a temporal "nowhere." This should not be considered a failure of the adaptation however, but rather an instance which shows how the adapted text can use an interpretive approach to circumvent the fidelity politics of logophilia and produce a narrative that offers a new or more focalized perspective on a story.

While the 2004 edition of the graphic narrative's covers produces paratext that matches its interpretative adaptation, the novel's narrative holds onto the ruse of the Stillman case and the detective genre for as long as possible and thus shifts towards paratextual visual signifiers of the detective genre. Meanwhile, the graphic narrative abandons the pretense and no longer finds the need to engage in surface level visual signifiers of genre in the paratext as the visual narrator never engaged with them to begin with.

The Usual Suspects

Returning the focus to the method of adaptation and the limitation Auster placed on Karasik and Mazzucchelli, the graphic depiction of characters is a challenging field to navigate. Auster provides sparse descriptions of characters in *City of Glass*, leaving aspects of setting, characters, and the way that characters move physically through their space open for interpretations not entirely based on the novel's narration. For a text that claims the reader of detective fiction "sees the world through the detective's eyes, experiencing the proliferation of its

details as if for the first time,” both its protagonist and narrator are shockingly bad at recalling details unless they are so blatant they cannot be missed (Auster 9). Thus while the graphic text’s written narration does not expand the novel’s narration beyond changing the tense of some sections to match the forward linear progression of the visual narrative, the visual narrator, by necessity of its form, has to expand upon the novel’s narration

The section detailing Quinn’s remembered description of Virginia Stillman, a memory is one “he could never be sure of... The woman was thirty, perhaps thirty-five; average height at best; hips a touch wide, or else voluptuous, depending on your point of view; dark hair, dark eyes, and a look in those eyes that was at once self-contained and vaguely seductive. She wore a black dress and very red lipstick.” (Auster 13). Every element in this description is either a vague, general guess, open to individual interpretation, or could be conflated with some other detail from Quinn’s life. In order of appearance: Quinn is himself thirty-five so his romantic interest in Virginia could cause him to assume her age is close to his own; average height only suggests the subject is neither unusually short nor tall and is therefore too vague; her hips are either wide or voluptuous a description that varies depending on the individual; dark is not a specific color when the darkness could be a result of contrasting against Peter Stillman’s albino likeness, especially as this description is only recalled later. A look in the eyes is open to interpretation by the viewer of said eyes, and Quinn may be remember it as seductiveness due to both Peter’s suggestions that Virginia frequently takes up with lovers and thus might sleep with Quinn and the kiss she plants on Quinn before they part. The black dress is more specific and concrete than many other details but Quinn provides no further clarification regarding the cut or style; the color description alone is therefore not detailed enough for a specific graphic depiction. Lastly, the “very red lipstick” is even less useful than the black dress as the modifier “very” is

both subjective and vague. The lipstick's pigmentation might be "very red" in shade, tone, or just appear so in contrast against the blackness of her dress and darkness of her hair. Also, red is a reoccurring color throughout the narrative with Quinn's notebook which becomes the most important object to him also being red. Pairing the narrator's constant sparsely detailed descriptions and the way the reader is often informed that Quinn "would remember later" or "would later forget," it becomes apparent that Quinn's visual memory is unreliable. Thus a visual narrator attempting to "disappear," to be an objective conveyor of the events, would need to either forgo Quinn's interpretation for its own, or choose to encompass the vagueness in the graphiation as much as possible.

While Mazzucchelli's minimalistic, black and white ink style allows him to use the vague details provided, his depiction of Virginia utilizes the above description to produce a standardly attractive femme fatale, and one that fits the noir narrative Quinn is trying his hand at (Auster, Karasik, and Mazzucchelli, *CoG* 13). However, this interpretation of Virginia's characterization misses a chance to play with Quinn's unreliable perceptions. In the same way that Quinn's image changes to that of a private eye whenever he is trying to embody Detective Paul Auster, the opportunity to show shifting visual perceptions of Virginia has been put aside in pursuit of a more singular interpretation of the narrative. The opportunity was present in both form and layout as several panels depict Virginia from Quinn's point of view and Quinn's reimagining of her is already established in the panel where he visualizes her naked (Auster, Karasik, and Mazzucchelli, *CoG* 26). This element of narrative uncertainty present in the novel is not selected to be a narrative concern in graphic narration, as the method of interpretative story adaptation requires the plethora of interpretative paths to be reduced.

Though Quinn's unreliability may not be strongly played upon, the graphic narrative finds other areas in which it can amplify the narrative play of the novel that emphasizes the chosen interpretation. One of these elements that the graphic narrative brings a new level of complexity to is the presence of doppelgangers. When Quinn returns to his apartment after being absent for months and discovers his landlord has already rented it out to a young waitress, the novel's narration states that Quinn wonders if this is not the same woman who was reading his novel in the train station months earlier (Auster 121). The visual narration embeds this suggestion in the character's appearance, but subtly enough that the question of them being the exact same woman remains unanswered. Given the passage of time, the acne covered, curly haired girl from the train station could very well be the frizzy haired young lady with the pockmarks now renting Quinn's apartment (Auster, Karasik, and Mazzucchelli, *CoG* 49, 121). Quinn's dead son, who is shown in a photograph near the beginning of the text, is another visual doppelganger. He makes an approximate visual resurrection through Paul Auster's (the character) smiling and energetic son; an interpretative addition on the part of the visual narrator as the novel's narration does not describe either child, but instead states that Quinn feels Auster (character) is "taunting him with the things he had lost" suggesting that Quinn cannot help but draw associations between Auster's (character) family and his own (Auster, Karasik, and Mazzucchelli, *CoG*, 5, 94; Auster 100). The other implied doppelganger in the novel's narrative is not overlooked in the graphic text either; two panels are devoted to the revelation that Auster's child—his prodigy one could say—and Quinn share the name Daniel. The large billing of Auster's (author) name on the cover helps enhance this doubling as the reader may assume Auster is author of the text; or rather the text they are reading is the author's progeny. The character of Auster and his child are a reflection of Auster the writer and his creation, Daniel

Quinn. Thus, like the multiplying of Auster across the paratext, the narrative multiplies Auster's progenies throughout ontological layers.

Auster (author) also has doubles in the visual narration. The detective Auster whom Quinn imagines himself as has the same facial profile as the Paul Auster whom Quinn visits. Auster the detective, as the visual narration imagines him with no reference from the novel's narration to draw upon, has a face that lacks the finer definition and details found on other characters, but the brow, jaw, and nose lines match those of the visual narrative's Auster (Auster, Karasik, and Mazzucchelli, *CoG* 47, 88). If the image doubles are followed to a further ontological layer, Mazzucchelli's Auster has the same facial structure as Spiegelman's illustration of Auster on the Penguin Classics edition of *The New York Trilogy*, which, as previously mentioned, is based off a photographic portrait of a young Paul Auster (author). Mazzucchelli's Auster also incorporates details from the novel's narration, "he was a tall dark fellow [...] with a two day beard" (Auster 91). While the descriptor "dark" lacks a specific referent to modify, the visual narration incorporates the rest. Mazzucchelli's Auster stands a head taller than Quinn and the shading on his jaw is drawn in short lines, not dots or smudged shading of five o'clock shadow, suggesting there is more than a day's worth of growth but not enough for it to be depicted as a short beard (Auster, Karasik, and Mazzucchelli, *CoG* 88). Neither of these features are present on Spiegelman's Auster or the source photograph of Auster (author) making Mazzucchelli's Auster the doppelganger on which all other Austers converge and creating another visual that operates on multiple diegetic levels. This re-imagining of one of the novel's narrative tricks works even when read exclusively within the context of the graphic novel, and brings the visual narration into play among all the transworld identities of Auster, further complicating Auster's role in the text.

Turning from the physical depictions of characters towards their placement and movement in the panels, Quinn's framing shifts as his interiority also shifts from divisiveness and indecision towards a singular purpose. This change is reflected in the visual narrator's use of physical space. Each major movement in Quinn's journey is spatially marked by page layouts that break from the nine panel grid division and punctuate the movement with a full page panel. The first of these full page panels is also the first "story" page of the narrative. Its single panel is all black except for the line, which is the first line of the novel as well, "It was a wrong number that started it..." in a white, typewriter font (Auster, Karasik, and Mazzucchelli, *CoG* 1). This page is later bookended by the typewriter on the final page of the graphic novel as a visual signifier for the possible fictionality of what the narrators relate of Quinn's tale and the conflation of narrator and author. However this conflation functions less transparently in textual form than visual as literally seeing the typewriter on the page, even uncontained by a panel, still creates a distance between the image and the reader. Where the third person narrator of a written text is more easily misaligned with the voice of the author, the abstraction and fractured form of the graphic narration in comic visuals reminds readers that at all times the narrators are a creation—a fiction. The last pages of the text suggest that Quinn is created and then dissolved by the text through both the visual burning of his notebook pages and the objects from the panels of Peter's speech, an action which takes place within a panel at the bottom of the page while the typewriter narrates above, sans panel. However, the written narration seems to forget or ignore that due to several earlier paneling choices, Quinn has already ascended to the same level of narration as the typewriter; a depiction that can be only suggested in written narration.

However, before the visual narrator allows Quinn to transcend this narrative level, Peter has to show him just what the structural imprisonment of the visual narrator looks like. The

second and third full page panels are put to this purpose. These pages occur during the monologue Peter delivers upon meeting and hiring Quinn. The first of these is another black background, broken up into the nine panel grid by white cage bars with a keyhole in the middle right panel. Peter's dialogue bubble snakes up behind the bars of the bottom two rows before emerging to the front of the bars in the top row, creating a visual incarceration of Peter's dialogue (22). Since Peter's speech is full of vital exposition and clues for interpretation of the text but is largely verbal in nature and runs the length of almost a whole chapter in the novel's text, several pages of impressionist interpretation are paired with this written narration. Neither flashbacks nor additional pages of Quinn and Peter in conversation would fit the temporal effect of the scene as both options would impose either a continuation of current narrative or an external analepsis of Peter's narrative, providing a still fixed narrative time instead of the loss of a whole day that Quinn experiences as only the length of Peter's monologue (Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 49).

The abstract nature of the visual narrator's break from the synchronicity with the written narrator leaves these pages of narration open to incorporating more of the novel's interpretations than other portions of the graphic text. David Coughlan, for instance, reads this nine panel grid and the break from it at the graphic novel's conclusion as possibly representing current language and the universal "Ur-language" Professor Peter Stillman dreams up (845). This analysis plays slightly into fidelity politics by approaching the graphic text with an interpretation formed from reading the novel first, and carrying that reading over to the graphic narrative as though they were exactly the same, while also producing a reading that devalues the complexity of graphic narration by equating the panel grid with a window peering into a visual that is "more transparent, more immediate, more true than the non-visual" (845). This not only implies that

visual narratives lack a comparable complexity to written narrative, but also reduces the role of visual narrator to one of passivity, forgetting that the visual narrator is still filtering the story and thus has the ability to control what the reader is told, or offer a partial truth or even outright lie. As such, a reading of these pages that treats the visual narration as a narrator would be produced by using them as the primary text, while also keeping in mind that both levels of narration are a manipulation meant to produce a certain effect. Therefore, as the nine panel grid is commonly used to set the pacing, the breaking of a regular grid more likely serves as a disruption of the narrative time and structural breakdown that allows Quinn to wear down his ontological barrier.

The next full page panel faces the previous one and contains the last dialogue bubble of Peter's speech. This page is not divided into pseudo-panels but contains the single image of a marionette doll at the bottom of a pit. Peter's dialogue bubble rises up from its point directly in the mouth of the marionette (Auster, Karasik, and Mazzucchelli, *CoG* 23). The scene serves as both an abstract representation of Peter's analepse as he tells his life story, and his physical characterization. The marionette has the same fair hair and sunken cheek bones as Mazzucchelli's depiction of Peter, making it another doppelganger. The novel's narrator also describes Peter's movements as "broken down into its component submovements, with the result that all flow and spontaneity had been lost" (Auster 15). Or, to quote the metaphor the graphic narrative draws inspiration from, "It was like watching a marionette trying to walk without strings" (Auster 15). The doll also implicates Quinn into this trapped feeling as he, in his initial triangled identity of Daniel Quinn, pen name William Wilson, and fictional character Max Work, feels like the shell of "the dummy" that his other two parts control. While the marionette physically resembles Peter, the analogy developed by the visual narrator ties the two men together, creating a parallel between the two men's emotions which is later furthered when

Quinn pretends to be Peter in conversation with Professor Stillman. In either case, the hypnotic lasting effect Peter's story has on Quinn is reflected in the next full page panel.

In this image Quinn sits naked at his desk writing in his newly purchased notebook. The background is once again all black and the pages Quinn is writing in his notebook float in the five panels above him, while his own body is divided into four panels (Auster, Karasik, and Mazzucchelli, *CoG* 37). Four also happens to be the number of fake names Quinn assumes throughout the text: his pen name for his detective fiction William Wilson, Paul Auster the absent detective he impersonates, Peter Stillman the son, and Henry Dark the scholar Professor Stillman invented. This visual split follows on the left facing page of a final panel in which Quinn writes his own name on one of his notebooks for the first time in "more than five years" (Auster, Karasik, and Mazzucchelli, *CoG* 36). The act of writing out his name should help him unify his identity, but the left facing page shows that the act of writing in the notebook only continues the split of identity, as the uncertainty haunts him in the pages he writes with such questions as, "who are you? And if you think you know, why do you keep lying about it?" (37).

This crisis of identity reaches a visual turn in the scene where Quinn finds two Professor Stillmans and is forced to make a snap decision as to which Stillman is the real Professor Stillman. The narration of Quinn's predicament takes the space of six panels before climaxing in a borderless, backgroundless panel in the moment Quinn is forced to make a decision or lose sight of both men. In this panel the two Stillmans each head toward opposite sides of open white space, while Quinn stands in the distant, center page with an almost comical thought bubble above his head, "Do something now, you idiot" (Auster, Karasik, and Mazzucchelli, *CoG* 53). The lack of an exclamation point makes Quinn appear more flustered than frantic even though this is the second thought bubble he has had while trying to coax himself towards a decision. The

written narration states, “Whatever choice he made would be a submission to chance,” but if this were the case the visual narration for this panel would not be open to the “borderlessness of possibility” through the lack of defined and visible panel borders and backgrounds (Eisner 93). The written narrator seems to be in disagreement with the visual narrator here, trying to force Quinn into submission while the visual narrator is once again showing Quinn a pathway out of the narration’s control. The next page slips back into synch with the written narration, however, as, in three long horizontal panels, Quinn starts to follow one Stillman but looks over his shoulder and changes his target as the text in the narration box relays, “There was no way to know: not this, not anything” (Auster, Karasik, and Mazzucchelli, *CoG* 54). This scene is the moment when Quinn first takes action on a gut feeling while only later double guessing himself, “For no reason, he went to his left, in pursuit of the second Stillman. After nine or ten paces, he stopped. Something told him he would live to regret what he was doing. He was acting out of spite, spurred on to punish the second Stillman for confusing him” (Auster 56). This passage implies a much larger role in the decision making for Quinn than the whim of chance. He analyzes the motivation for his action, recognizes that the choice was made during an irrational moment, and amends his action. Since, as previously noted, the visual narration keeps the reader much more aware of its textuality, having Quinn’s appearance of control be made on the written narration’s level only would not work as the visual narrator would still be literally boxing in the scene, limiting Quinn’s directions to the presumed continuation of the setting. By opening up the panel structurally, Quinn is offered a fullness of possibility; not just to the right or left in pursuit of the Stillmans, but the opportunity to stop and walk out of the visual narrative’s confinement. His decision to follow the shuffling, ragged looking Stillman is then, at this point, not just a decision regarding the case, but also to allow the narrators to continue his narration for him.

The visual representation of having and making a choice, even a second-guessed one, starts a visual shift for Quinn. The next polyptych page in which Quinn is spatially divided only uses three panels, and his body is contained in only two of them with his dialogue bubble confined to the third panel (Auster, Karasik, and Mazzucchelli, *CoG* 68). As with the last polyptych bodily split, it occurs after he feels the urge to use his real name. In this instance he speaks his own name aloud when introducing himself to Professor Stillman. This scene is actually the first time that he introduces himself to someone by the name Daniel Quinn. Following this scene, Quinn uses two other names while in conversations with Professor Stillman on their second and third encounter, before he loses track of Stillman entirely.

At this point Quinn decides to try and get in contact with the real detective Paul Auster, hoping to come clean about his identity impersonation and get a second “eye” on the case. Instead he receives encouragement to continue from Auster the character. Auster’s introduction into the text is mixed with imagery that suggests this Auster is one of what McHale would call author Auster’s (author) “transworld identities” and might share author Auster’s financial reasons to encourage Quinn to see the case to end and thus finish the narrative so it can be sent for publication; though as noted before, this aspect is removed down a level in graphic form as Auster is no longer the only author of the text (35). The Auster in the graphic novel first appears as a hand grasping the same type of fountain pen as the Auster in the novel’s author picture and the pen on the novel’s cover. The hand and pen float over a blank panel, a space within the graphic novel for Auster to narrate, and is partially explained away on the next page after Auster reveals he is not a detective but a writer. The next three panels depict Quinn’s transition through shock and then resignation as the strangeness of his situation finally dawns upon him. He holds his head in his hands, saying “If that is true, then there’s no hope” (89). The next panel has a

stone faced Auster telling Quinn he has no idea what he is talking about, followed by a panel showing the typewriter that appears at the end of the text with “Quinn told him the whole story” typed onto a piece of paper. This panel breaks the narrative diegesis to imply that the visual Auster is the person in control of the textual narration, which of course he partially is, as all the textual narration in the graphic text is derived from the novel of which Auster is the sole author, and fictional Auster allegedly relays Quinn’s story to the unnamed written narrator. As such, fictional Auster has to keep his possible knowledge of Quinn’s narrative trajectory in check but cannot resist the ability to skip over the recap. However, he cannot remove the signs of his manipulation of the written narration to the same extent of the visual narrator due to the previously mentioned inability for a narrator to bridge the conflation-with-reality-gap inherent in the comic form.

Either way, Auster’s influence as a character, narrator, or author displaced by proxy triggers another change for Quinn. On the left page facing the last panel of his visit with Auster, the written narration, through repetition, drives home the nothingness that Quinn is feeling (Auster, Karasik, and Mazzucchelli, *CoG* 97). The word “nowhere” appears in the first panel followed by three “nothings” in the span of three panels. Quinn is slowly picking up the speed of his stride each panel, with the panel after the final “nothing” becoming borderless. Once again, Quinn could run straight off the page and break free of the visual narration, but the written narration over this borderless white continues to narrate him, stating, “He had been sent so far before the beginning that it was worse than any end he could imagine.” In the novel this line refers to Quinn’s perception that he has arrived back at the state of being he was in at the start of the novel, fearing that someone pushed the reset button on his plot and character development. By having these lines floating over Quinn on an open, backgroundless panel, Mazzucchelli

incorporates a visual “back to beginning” in blankness which serves not only as an adaptation of this scene from the novel but turns the meaning towards the graphic text. This panel lacks not only any background details but Quinn’s face or, rather, the profile of his face has no features. Quinn has been sent so far “before the beginning,” he exists as only a character motion sketch for the duration of this panel. Quinn of the visual narration could stay in this space of partial erasure forever. What still seems to be holding him back is his presence in the textual narration.

After Quinn decides a continual pursuit of the case is the right decision, the final full page image of him appears. The image is one page-sized panel. Quinn’s body does not get cleaved asunder by the gutter, and his image is imposed over a map of the city, the streets forming hundreds of smaller panels Quinn has ascended and is emphasized in the next full page panel. After spending months on a bizarre, self-destructive stake-out Quinn is forced to return to society only to discover everything is gone. He has no money (nothing) and has been evicted from his apartment (nowhere). He returns to the Stillman house out of resigned desperation and the full panel of the dark, empty sitting room reduces the spatial possibilities of the current visual narration forever (Auster, Karasik, and Mazzucchelli, *CoG* 124). Escape was visually opened to him several times in a way not present in the novel, but instead of escaping upwards in ontological levels, Quinn slips into a deeper level, vanishing into the pages of his notebook and self-narration.

Whatever medium, fidelity, or genre politics influenced the paratextual changes for both texts, their current iterations open up the text to even more multiplicity, convergence of diegetic levels, and transworld identities than would have been present in either text by itself. Applying medium-specific readings opens the conversation between the texts in both directions through an exploration of differences. Once fidelity concerns are no longer the primary mode of criticism,

these differences become the element that makes adaptations a new lens through which the source material can be understood and opens up an understanding of adaptations as their own unique texts.

CHAPTER TWO: GRAPHIC *FRANKENSTEIN*

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a cultural icon that has inspired stories across a range of mediums. Dr. Frankenstein's Creature appears in everything from short fiction to novels, comics to graphic novels, children's cartoons to film and television, and has even entered our colloquial language as metaphorical shorthand for the unnatural. Much has been written academically about the pervasiveness of the *Frankenstein* mythos; however little work has been done on *Frankenstein* in comics, and what has been written about it so far has not utilized comics or adaptation theory as an approach to these texts. In this section I seek to rectify this gap in scholarship by approaching four different comics inspired by Shelley's Creature spanning the latter half of the 1900s into the new millennium—Dick Briefer's *Frankenstein* (1940 and 1945), Marvel Comics' *Frankenstein's Monster* (1973), and Niles and Worm's *Monster & Madman* (2014). I have selected these texts as I believe they contribute new material to the *Frankenstein* mythos while still acknowledging Shelley's text. Analyzing aspects of the graphic adaptations of Shelley's story as the graphiation of the Creature and dialogue text, the presentation of panel time, panel closure, and narrative layers, I show how each comic encompasses the evolution of the perception and understanding of *Frankenstein* in graphic narrative from the slapstick "horror" comics of the 40s and 50s, to the campy but morally grey comics of the 70s and the dark crossovers of the 00s.

Frankenstein adaptations have a history of veering away from their source text, as Lester E. Friedman and Allison B. Kavey point out, if a *Frankenstein* adaptation "demands strict adherence to Shelley's novel, then no quintessential model exists" (146). Some of the most well-performing adaptations have broken from the narrative and themes of Shelley's novel almost completely, shunning the "story" method of adaptation (Hutcheon 10). What has often emerged

in place of the story method is “character” adaptation (Hutcheon 11). While this method is not unusual—Gregory Maguire and Disney have both done well using this method—what is unusual about *Frankenstein* character adaptation is that many are a blend of Shelley’s text and James Whale’s film. Whale’s visual icons tend to usurp Shelley’s written depictions of the Creature in popular culture. As such, many texts do not even need to pay lip service to Shelley’s text, the bolts and scar across the forehead, long, green limbs, or even the animation of a monster on a table by lightning is enough for a text to be recognized as a *Frankenstein* one. If a one-to-one adaptation is a text in the “second degree,” then *Frankenstein* texts are in the third, fourth, or higher degree (Genette, *Palimpsests* 5). Each adaptation has no qualms about incorporating elements from any previous *Frankenstein* work they like. Graphic narrative of *Frankenstein* are in a unique position wherein their dual narrators can more easily blend the needed exposition from Shelley’s novel with any number of preceding visual icons, allowing a blending of narratives and thematic tones to produce a uniquely new text every time.

Dick Briefer’s *Frankenstein* (1940 and 1945)

Dick Briefer is an artist who became almost as iconic and surrounded by urban legends as the characters he depicted. In the foreword to *Frankenstein: The Mad Science of Dick Briefer*, one of the more complete volumes of Briefer’s pre-Comic Code series, John Arcudi relays some of the rumors he heard from fellow industry artists. All these rumors depict Briefer as the “mad artist,” akin to the mad scientist. These legends range from Briefer working in “same size” (creating the comic at print size instead of industry 150% standard), to working straight from ink with no outline sketches, to the idea that he created the whole series on the same roll of butcher paper. Legends even persist on the final print, as one scholar reports that the first issue of the

series originally titled *The New Adventures of Frankenstein* was attributed to a “Frank N. Stein” (Evans 97). All these legends frame the comic as new, mad creation in which Briefer plays our Victor Frankenstein.

However intriguing it may be to cast a man whose large output consisted almost entirely of *Frankenstein* in the role of mad creator, Arcudi writes that the inspection of surviving original pages shows these rumors to be false, “Briefer was neither a prodigy nor careless at his job. He was a methodical, careful artist” (Arcudi 7). Once removed from this frame of mad creator animating in the throes of passion, Briefer’s work can be examined as the intentionally constructed narrative it is. Though comics of this time period are much more conservative in their presentation due to it being a narrative form people were still learning to read, there are still unique graphic choices and framing devices to be found.

Briefer’s text places the reader in an position requiring extended intertextual knowledge as a large element in reading a comic is based off recognizing established signifiers, but as comic historian Lawrence Watt Evans points out, Briefer’s text, which first appeared in the superhero title *Prize Comics*, seems to be “the first real horror series” (18). This is further complicated by the dual nature of Briefer’s comics as he published two versions of his creation. The first, published in 1940, aimed to be mainly horror while the later iteration, appearing in 1945, was largely comedic with some situations borrowed from the horror films of the time (Briefer, 1940 15). The most effective way to sum up the graphiation differences between the two is through the title covers for the issues of both wherein the Creature is created, as one of paratext’s roles is to place the text within a specific conversation (Genette, *Introduction to the Paratext* 261). The cover for the horror rendition draws from the artwork that could be found on the cover of “terror” pulp magazines, casting the Creature as the agent of violence (that will not be found

within the magazine itself) which a male protagonist must rectify. Where it varies from the pulp and draws itself back into the world of comics is that the image draws the eye back to the title character actively engaged. The cover for the comedic rendition also places the Creature at the center of action, but where the previous rendition was menacing, this new version is closer to *Archie Comics* than *Terror Tales*. Both covers depict a towering creature with unnatural proportions and features, and both depict settings that signify horror—the graveyard and the mad scientist’s lab—yet one set of visuals signifies danger and the other hijinks.

In *Understanding Comics* McCloud presents a series of various lines and asks, “In truth don’t **all** lines carry with them an **expressive potential?**”[Emphasis his] (124). That is, are lines themselves capable of guiding the reader toward a specific emotion? I would argue not alone, perhaps, but as the two versions of Briefer’s creation show, they can help carry the desired reaction to its full potential. While it may be a phenomenon which can only be expressed through the visual, there is something in the line work that creates different effects. The uncertain, more sketch-like lines in the horror cover certainly come closer to more realistic portrayal and are thus arguably more capable of inciting fear, than the strong, well defined lines of the more comedic rendition. The sketched lines create an incomplete feeling where each object blurs into the next one. In contrast, the thick, well-defined lines create a feeling of completeness, each element an object of its own. Both covers are also helped along by the depiction of the Creature himself. The Creature on the horror cover towers over the humans while the knobs of his bones stick through his white skin. Red scars are visible across his chest and face and he has the flat-topped head and stringy hair of the Boris Karloff portrayal. His nose has been sliced off and migrated up directly between his eyes, and one vertical scar between one of his eyes and upper lip leaves one half of his faced pulled into a position that Briefer can manipulate to appear as a snarl or a grin

depending on the drawn angle (Briefer, 1940 21). The comedic version undergoes just a few changes in graphiation and becomes a figure no more exaggerated than any other character within the comic. All scars except one vertical crease on the forehead are removed. The nose, though, remains between the eyes and is given a tip. The cleft lip is removed, and his skin is now flesh-colored, making a much more human looking creation. As humor requires a certain level of comfortability, and, as another *Frankenstein* inspired character once said “you people are more comfortable interacting with your own kind,” the humanization of his appearance removes tension and creates a level of sympathy towards him and against the antagonist of the comic (*Prometheus*). With the genre signifiers between the two delineated, other layers of narration can be explored.

After the genre and graphiation, another significant difference between Briefer’s two versions is that of the intertextual framing of the comic as it relates to Mary Shelley’s novel. Briefer’s first creation, the horror version, informs the reader that it is “suggested by the classic of Mary Shelley” before it begins to create its own tales set in 1930s New York (21). The first three pages of issue one play out as a summary of the monster’s creation. In a usage often seen in early comics when readers were still learning how to read the medium, the written and character narrators largely restate what the visual narrator has already shown. In other words, they have a duo-specific relationship (McCloud 153). As Frankenstein assembles, brings to life, and loses the Creature in a laboratory that looks as though it were straight out of James Whale’s film, the written narrator adds clarification to every scene while the characters narrate their emotions verbally, a device not entirely out of use in modern comics. This transparent usage of the written narration helps emphasize how a cold, unattached distance is created between Frankenstein and his Creature.

As the Creature awakens, Frankenstein declares “**Alive!** You’re **living!** I have given you **life!**” while the narrator describes the panel in a narration box above as simply “Frankenstein comes face to face with his creation” (Briefer, 1940 23). If this version of Frankenstein feels any repulsion or regret towards the creation he has brought to life there is no time for any one of the narrators to show it as Frankenstein is knocked unconscious accidentally by the Creature in the next panel. The Creature then proceeds to wander away in the next few panels, “dazed and scared;” the final panel of the page shows Frankenstein now awake and gazing out a window, wondering aloud “What will happen to him in **civilization?**” suggesting that Frankenstein is as emotionally distant from loosing the Creature out into the world as he was over succeeding in bringing him to life (Briefer, 1940 23). The Creature, now wandering out alone undergoes a larger emotional range than Frankenstein. But due to the short span in which the panels depicting such events are executed, the change from confused creation to vengeful monster does not endear the reader towards the Creature’s perspective.

Though the written narrator uses some temporal labels, such as “one day” to suggest a passage of time between the panels of the Creature’s learned hatred, these transitions are easily missed. Paired together with the written narrator’s suggestion that the Creature already has higher cognitive processing through description such as, “The harmless monster does not understand why people hate him, will not accept him as an equal,” the written narrator makes it appear as though two out of three bad encounters in the span of a day turn the Creature from “harmless” into “a murderous monster, killing them all, swearing to destroy all mankind in revenge against his maker!” (24). This sudden change is animalistic; it dehumanizes the Creature through lack of complex emotions while still granting him enough intelligence to be a more interesting adversary for the “hero” of the comic. The visual narrator in the last panel of this page

supports this view of the Creature as “murderous,” showing him grasping one of his pursuers about the throat in order to dash him to the ground. This framing of both the Creature and Frankenstein allows Briefer to reimagine the Creature as an unstoppable force of destruction, more akin to monsters seen in creature-features of the time than Shelley or Whale’s imaginings. In contrast, Frankenstein is allowed a distance from the responsibility of the Creature’s action, allowing Frankenstein to step into the role of hero.

The end of issue one provides an excellent example of the Creature and Frankenstein’s narrative roles. The Creature has found his way from the isolated place of his creation into New York, where he smashes and kills indiscriminately before making his way to the Statue of Liberty where Victor Frankenstein is on a date, enjoying the view from Lady Liberty’s crown. The Creature begins to scale the statue, and upon reaching the top, grabs two people in his fists and drops them “to their death!” (27). These panels further place the Creature within the realm of monsters as the resemblance to the titular character of the popular *King Kong* film, which had premiered a few years prior, is hard to miss. Here Frankenstein is allowed his opportunity to act the hero and throw himself out of a window declaring, “I’ll die! But you’ll go with me fiend!” (27). As this is a comic book however, the devices of seriality demand that both creator and creature fail in their goals. Frankenstein misses the Creature landing in the crooked arm of the Statue of Liberty. The Creature in turn escapes to the sea, but not before placing the again unconscious Frankenstein back in a safer spot. Briefer makes use of this confusing action of the Creature to establish the motive for future issues in the last three panels. “That night, at Frankenstein’s home,” Frankenstein has presumably finished explaining the tale to his date as he states in the third to last panel, “That’s the **whole story** of [the Creature’s] creation! But **why** he **saved me** at the cost of his **own life**, I don’t understand!” (Briefer, 1940 28). In the next panel,

the Creature bursts his head through Frankenstein's window, and speaks for the first time. The graphiation of his dialogue text is wavy in contrast to the straight text in all the other dialogue and thought bubbles. The Creature explains in these last two panels that his plan for revenge involves Frankenstein having to “**watch and see the suffering and grief**” which the Creature plans to bring upon the whole human race (28). And so Briefer concludes, unleashing his own version of terror unto a comic universe populated with other laboratory created monsters, mobsters, and supernatural beings.

Five years after releasing his monstrous *Frankenstein*, Briefer's second adaptation, *Frankenstein's Creation*, was published. Along with all the previously mentioned differences in graphiation and use of visual signifiers, this comedic version also has a different intertextual relation to Mary Shelley's novel. While the horror version is presented as a reimagining, this version places Shelley's text within Briefer's comedic world. The first page introduces a scene of cartoonish villainy. A mad scientist sulks around an “evil looking, half dilapidated, weather-scarred, becobwebbed, old castle,” complaining about how he is so bored he does not feel like working “even on something wicked.” and asks for “a hint of some terrible thing” to be revealed (Briefer, 1945 46). His inspiration arrives when a black cat knocks over a copy of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. He declares that the book is “mere fiction,” but he “shall make fiction a reality” (47). This framing of the source text within the narrative offers a somewhat contradictory reading of the Creature's nature in the text versus the images that could be found in popular media at the time.

This second version of Briefer's work continues to draw inspiration from Whale's film (1931), depicting the Creature as the mummy-wrapped corpse among the electric balls and coils reanimated by lightning. But Briefer varies from previous iterations, including his own. The evil

scientist creates a serum which is intended to intensify the evil side of the Creature, suggesting that the evil scientist does not recognize the Creature in Shelley's novel as evil. His interpretation of the Creature's nature is contradicted later however as the serum causes the Creature, literally christened-with-a-bottle Frankenstein by the evil scientist, to be a timid, nature loving individual. The mad scientist proposes that his formula "effected a change opposite to the original nature" (56). This never gets put to the test, however, as in the next page the castle catches fire and blows up killing the evil scientist as Frankenstein (the Creature) is carrying his animal friends to safety. This quick disposal of his ties to Shelley's text leave him free to become a blundering but kind-hearted hero in further hijinks.

Perhaps it was not the nature of Shelley's Creature that Briefer was commenting on but that of his own creation. Briefer's dual creations mirror both sides of human catharsis; production on the more horror-driven iteration started a year after World War II, while the comedic one appeared the same year the war ended—offering a safe place to process the real world horror and afterwards, the relief and distraction of humor. Unfortunately for Briefer's readers, both sides of his creation were killed, along with most of the horror comic industry upon the implementation of the Comic Code Authority in 1954. Mainstream published comics would not be allowed to depict these sorts of monster horror stories again until the code was updated in 1971.

Marvel Comics' *The Monster of Frankenstein* (1972)

The revisions to the guidelines of the Comic Code Authority in 1971 allowed for comic book creators to begin to develop more morally complex characters than had been allowed for the past few decades, opening up content to "sympathetic depiction of criminal behavior... [And]

corruption among public officials [...] as long as it is portrayed as exceptional and the culprit is punished (Thompson 44). The portrayal of supernatural creatures such as vampires and werewolves were also now permitted as long as they followed in the tradition of “high caliber literary works” (Thompson 44). A year later Marvel Comics began their adaptation of Shelley’s novel, originally titled *The Monster of Frankenstein*.

The cover for the first issue of *The Monster of Frankenstein* brings in visual signifiers from the horror side of the creature, while a text banner at the bottom of the page informs the reader that this is “The most famous, most fearsome monster of all!” (Friedrich and Ploog 4). Despite utilizing visual signifiers that suggest this revival of the Creature is a horror tale, the writers of the early issues of the series, Gary Friedrich and Mike Ploog, produce an adaptation that is close to what Matthew Bolton in his article “Fidelity and Period Aesthetics in Comics Adaptation” would call the analogical approach. Bolton writes that this approach to adaptation in comics “argues that an adapter can realize the facts of a source text as metaphors, gesturing obliquely at the original as a way of remaining faithful to it” (2). That is, an adaptation can include nods to the source material but take the material in a new direction. This embracing of themes, and sometimes of aesthetics, can be found in several of the narrative layers in *The Monster of Frankenstein*.

One of the subtler ways the Marvel adaptation chooses to keep the aesthetic of Shelley’s novel is the diegetic layers. *Frankenstein* is an epistolary text which lends itself to the suggestion that the text may or may not take place in the world of the reader. Marvel’s version of the creature, as Shane Denson points out in *Marvel Comics’ Frankenstein: A Case Study in the Media of Serial Figures* is set in the Marvel’s Earth-616 Universe (535). In Marvel’s multiverse the Earth-616 continuity is the version that is supposed to be the same world in which the readers

exist. Storylines in Earth-616 follow this to the extent where current events affect the storylines and characters within the series. Thus, both texts encourage the readers to accept the events as something that has happened in their own world instead of a constructed one.

Marvel's *Frankenstein* attempts to keep the layers of multiple character narrators and their accounts removed from the initial accounts through the use of flashback sequences, creating a level of unreliability. On the splash page (the first page of the comic which includes the title, writers, artists, and other paratextual information in addition to the story panels) the written narrator states that the man who is now exploring the Arctic is the great-great grandson of Robert Walton. This means that when Walton IV begins to tell Victor Frankenstein's tale to his crew, the events as he "knows" them are even less reliable than Walton in Shelley's novel. This also complicates the visual narrator of the flashback scenes narrated by Walton IV, bringing into question if they are from the usual external visual narrator or from the imaginings of Victor, Walton, or Walton IV. This usage allows for the narration to remain unreliable, and therefore unstable, even though the written and visual narrators are not contradicting each other.

As the written narrator's role has been displaced by the narration of characters, the portrayal of tone and emotions become the responsibility of the visual narrator. Though sometimes the written narrator of Marvel's *Frankenstein* shows tonal bias, calling the Creature "pathetic" and referring to his "animal instinct," most of the emotions are handled through the graphiation (Friedrich and Ploog 28). One of the best examples is the portrayal of Victor Frankenstein. While previous interpretations of Shelley's text may have been more interested in skipping over the creator to get to the creation, Marvel spends close to three issues depicting the Frankenstein role in the story, balancing the narrative so neither side appears wholly good or evil. Since Frankenstein is not alive in the Marvel version to relate his feeling of isolation and

guilt, the visual narrator does this for him by frequently sub-framing him in boxes within the panel. In the case of his supposed guilt over the execution of Justine, the shadow of her hanging is imposed over Frankenstein. A similar technique is used for the Creature when he watches the De Lacey family; he is within the long panel with them, but a shift in the coloration sets him apart (Friedrich and Ploog 32).

Two pivotal scenes were narratively altered to glean more sympathy for the Creature over Frankenstein in order to position the Creature as a character readers would have a continual attachment to in future adventures. First is the section with the De Laceys; the family is reduced down to the blind father, his daughter, and his son-in-law. This is important to the development of the Creature as he learns social roles from observing the family. In removing the De Lacey son's blood relation, the affections of the De Lacey father are focused almost entirely at the De Lacey daughter, thus the feminine traits of caretaker would be granted as much privilege as the masculine trait of protector and provider. This is reflected in the Creature's relationship with the blind man.

When the daughter and son leave, a wolf breaks into the house and attacks the blind man. The Creature kills the wolf then spends a total of five days nursing the blind man back to health and thus enacting both the feminine and masculine roles, something that is not depicted in Shelley's novel. As a counter to this, Frankenstein enacts more violence on the female body than in Shelley's novel as he completely reanimates the female creation before screaming out "For your **own** sake as well as mine...you must breathe **no more**," and stabbing the female Creature "again and again" (Friedrich and Ploog 41). The Creature may be a murderer, but Frankenstein is one as well.

Whether this adaptation of *Frankenstein*'s moral ambiguity is a result of trying to be true to the source text, explore the complication of the wars in Southeast Asia (as Susan Tyler Hitchcock suggests), or experiment within the newly permissible content, it struck something with readers, and the Creature became a presence in the Marvel universe for years, even interacting with fellow "unnatural" beings such as the X-Men.

Niles and Worm's *Monster & Madman: The Secret History of Jack the Ripper and Frankenstein's Monster* (2014)

Steve Niles and Damien Worm's 2014 three-issue iteration on Shelley's Creature has not only the benefit of four decades of technological advancements in printing and digital art, allowing for a finer and more detailed range of stylistic choices, but also benefits from the four additional decades of interpretations of the *Frankenstein* story to synthesize and incorporate into this disturbing and bleak sequel. Produced by IDW Publisher in a completely post-code industry, Worm's sketchbook-like lines overlaid with monochrome color matching the atmosphere of the panels pairs with Niles' blending of the longing of Shelley's intelligent creature, the grotesqueness of Branagh's female creature (1994), and the grimy fear of Whitechapel during the terror of the Ripper murders to produce a continuation of the Creature's story that encompasses an interpretation of the source which explores trauma, desire, and the monstrosity of humanity.

Many other *Frankenstein* iterations signify their relation to either Shelley's text or Whale's film, whether through explicit identification, as in the case of other texts previously examined, or through visual association, presenting a Creature with the flat head, sutures, and stiff limbs of Karloff's performance, as is the case with Herman Munster from *The Munsters* or Sparky from *Frankenweenie*. *Monster & Madman* however, keeps these forms of association to a

minimum. The most explicit reference the text makes to its cultural forerunners is in the subtitle, “The Secret History of **Jack the Ripper** and **Frankenstein’s Monster**,” which appears only on the cover and title page in a font size much smaller and in a less well-defined style than other written elements on the pages. On the cover page the subtitle is dropped underneath the character image art into the place where a titular headline of the comic’s dramatic content might normally be placed. The subtitle on the title page is placed directly underneath the title, but in all three issues is superimposed over a blown up image of the story’s first panel. This placement would normally display the subtitle prominently, but the choice of a panel that is a monochromatic color that matches the shadows of the lettering causes them to blend into the panel’s background, reducing the outlining effect that can be seen on other lettering. While the reduced effect of these paratextual elements may be unintentional on the part of the layout designers, it inadvertently reflects the visual and verbal distance Niles and Worm’s story builds between their vision and the clichéd associations the name Frankenstein might conjure in the minds of readers.

Even though the narrative picks up shortly after the end of Shelley’s novel, depicting the Creature after he was “borne away by the waves, and lost in darkness and distance” walking through the icy tundra of the arctic, the name Frankenstein is avoided (Shelley 161). Frankenstein is referred to only as “the monster’s creator” and “Victor,” all within the first panel of the series, and is then only ever indirectly referenced through the Creature’s recounting of trauma. Robert Walton is the only other directly mentioned character from Shelley’s novel and, like Victor, is only referenced in the first panel as a means of transitioning from the end of Shelley’s narrative into Niles’. The written narrator of *Monster & Madman* states, “The Monster’s creator was dead [...] he could have burned with Victor on agged [sic] ice, but in the end, he did not as he had told Captain Walton,” recalling the last words the Creature uttered

before the end of Shelley's text, "I shall ascend my funeral pyre [...] my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds. My spirit will sleep in peace" (Shelley 161; Niles and Worm #1, 1). Not only does this reference position the text as a sequel instead of a reimagining, it allows the text to position itself in an intertextual frame without recapping the Creature's origin story and excuses away the often presumed death of the Creature in Shelley's text. This allows the narrative to introduce concerns about the Creature's soul which will continue to plague the text as "he was not sure death would have him" (Niles and Worm #1, 2). The narrator also draws from concepts earlier in the novel, specifically the maturity of a being with only a few isolated years of interpersonal experience at the most, "There was a deeper reason, of course, on the monster had not yet realized, educated as he was, his emotional growth was still hardly that of a youth" (Niles and Worm #1, 2). The Creature's recognition of his emotional flaws allows him to initially reevaluate his relationship with mankind, and seek passage out of the Arctic.

While normally it is the Creature's appearance that visually marks him as an "other," his form of a "filthy type of [man's], more horrid from its very resemblance" terrifying humanity into an animalistic frenzy before the Creature has the chance to speak, *Monster & Madman* removes a portion of this obstacle to the Creature's passing as human through Worm's nightmarish graphiation choices (Shelley 91). Eschewing the image of the Creature that has entered popular culture via James Whale's film, Worm depicts the creature with thin, taut features like that of a drying corpse. The skin is not pulled tight across the entire face like Karloff's but collects wrinkles below connective points to the bones, and the receding nailbeds of the Creature's hands display their length as each knuckle on the hand juts out emphasizing the thinness of the Creature. A length of stringy hair hangs off a thinning scalp like Lon Chaney's Phantom of the Opera, and as the creature shades his eyes from the whiteness of the snow in the

second panel, the staple sutures across the Creature's face create a network of scars that avoid the iconic horizontal forehead scar. Despite looking like a giant's walking corpse, the captain accepts the Creature onto his crew because humanity in Worm's depiction is no less grotesque than the reanimated.

A close-up on one sailor's face as he tells "tales of lust" and "carnal desires" depicts the man's mouth wide open, displaying a set of misaligned and cracking teeth as three different streams of saliva drip down his chin. One lazy eye wanders as his head is tilted to the side as though in ecstatic recollection while the firelight illuminates the weathering and scars on his face (Niles and Worm #1, 11). The captain's face also presents itself in a grotesque manner as he solicits the Creature into becoming his hired muscle. One side of his face droops creating a two faced effect which manifests itself in a metaphorical sense when he recants on his promise of forgiving the Creature for killing of one of his sailors. As the captain makes his demand of the Creature his eyes fog over yellow, matching his gap filled, ground-down mouth of teeth (Niles and Worm #1, 13). While these depictions project the moral failings of the men, the benevolent, or at least indifferent, characters the Creature runs into are no more visually pleasing. The villager the captain sends the Creature to kill, for instance, does not have the griminess of the sailors but presents a sort of near comic grotesque face, with an exaggerated egg shaped head with large tufts of hair sticking out the sides (Niles and Worm #1, 17). While none of these features alone would be cause to call an individual ugly, Worm's sketchbook like style often leaves the full range of details incomplete, while emphasizing the imperfections of the body, emphasizing flaws in the same way the Creature's body does. This makes the Creature's body no longer one out of place with humanity. Instead of emphasizing difference through the body, the Creature is allowed to visually "pass" among other characters while being othered for the reader

through structural elements. Specifically the black colorization of his dialogue bubbles, a characteristic that only the Creature and female creature share. This ability to superficially pass enables the narrative to focus on the Creature's interior state despite the visual medium.

As the written narrator suggests at the start of the run, one of the Creature's reasons for not ending his life upon Victor's funeral pyre was his the lack of real life experience. The Creature acknowledges that his emotional state is undeveloped and his actions rash because of this. *Monster & Madman* seems concerned with the Creature's development of two emotions in particular, his compassion and his desire, both in a companionship and romantic or sexual sense. Near the beginning of the first issue, as the Creature wanders across the waste of ice, he finds a lone polar bear cub and picks it up, cradling the cub in his arms until the grey and white expanse of the setting is disturbed by a puddle of red as the Creature finds the mother polar bear being disemboweled by one of the trapper/sailors (Niles and Worm #1, 2-4). Here the color is red is used in contrast to the monochrome color shading for the first time both for the literal blood and to signify an atmosphere of rage or trauma, tying the interior emotional state of the creature to that of the setting in a manner that reflects the Romantics' idea of "the self-absorbed in nature" (Punter 540). As the Creature stares at the sailor, the orphaned polar bear cub still clutched against his chest as though protecting the youth of nature against the violence of men, the red coloring of the mother bear's blood seeps through the gutter into the next row of panels.

While the Creature continues to stare, there are three panels of the sailor's face from the Creature's perspective as the sailor startles then notices him. In the first panel the sailor's face is in crisp detail, the second panel blurs with eyes that white over and teeth that become sharper, more animal like as though the Creature's view has warped him into a being more primal. The third panel continues the perspective of the previous two with the addition of the red seeping

through the panel's borders and filling the panel's background (Niles and Worm #1, 4). While the sailor advances and attacks the Creature the use of red is reduced back to an accent color painting the blood on sailor's blade, first from the polar bear then from the Creature's chest as he impales him. After the Creature pulls the blade from his chest and grabs his attacker by the head, red begins to accent the background again, first outlining the two as the Creature holds the sailor above the ground by his head, then the purple-grey monochrome is replaced by red monochrome in the next two panels where the Creature flings the sailor away and he hits the ground next to the polar bear mother, leaking a matching pool of blood from his skull. A third panel set inside the second of the two shows a close-up, or magnification panel (which serves the purpose of enhancing details of a scene without removing the temporal context of the panel it is enhancing) of the Creature's eyes void of emotion. The next panel turns black and white with red blood as the creature takes the dead sailor's coat. In the final panel on the page the monochrome color remains black and white as the Creature walks away from a splattering of red at the bottom of the panel, literally walking away from the imprint of his violence on the setting into the comparative blankness of the black and white (Niles and Worm #1, 6). Despite his complaint of emotional immaturity, the Creature does not take the opportunity to reflect on his actions, nor does he try to acclimate to socialization with his fellow sailors once he has taken passage.

The Creature's time aboard the ship is spent in brooding isolation, either "below, hidden within the rancid cargo" or hidden "in the dark conjuring images of the bride he almost had" as his shipmates tell raunchy stories (Niles and Worm #1, 10). Both instances compact his rage and desire further. As he reflects on his "brief history, and confusing mesh of reality" he experiences ghosts of memories that are not his own. The page with the panels of these memories turns red as visions that are a mixture of violence, the romantic, and familial relations the Creature has been

excluded from. A hanged body and first person perspective of an individual being strangled, reflecting the practice of selling the bodies of executed criminals to medical schools which Victor Frankenstein admits “furnished many of my materials,” force a sort of genetic memory of received and committed violence onto the Creature, while images of physical affection, walking with a lover on the beach, and seeing a newborn child taunt the Creature with the full lives his flesh has lived but his consciousness has not (Roach 37-57; Shelley 34). The pairing of the traumatic with the pleasant using the same coloration suggests the Creature still feels rage towards those who can engage in normal human relations, the sort of rage that enticed him to burn down the De Lacey’s house after rejection. Despite the bubbling anger in the Creature towards mankind, he still chases every offered possibility for companionship.

As the captain tries to blackmail the Creature into “taking care of” a debt for him, the Creature ignores the implied threats in the captain’s words, “I could make a lot of trouble for you...or we could be friends,” as he repeats the word “friends” with hanging ellipses (Niles and Worm #1, 13). The misunderstood possibility softens the creature’s features in a magnification panel as he weighs the feel of the word. The Creature cannot go through with the task however. As he walks through the small Norwegian village, colored in an earthy yet bleak brown monochrome suggesting a poor agricultural community, there is determination in his stature. After bursting down the door, a warm yellow emanating from the door frame competes with a red color framing the Creature’s form which takes over two of the bottom panels as the creature asks the man’s name, and the man, poising his body protectively over his wife stutters out an answer. The yellow from the doorway and an opposite window slowly encompass the scene, replacing the red around the Creature and returning the couple to the brown color of their setting as the Creature finds himself unable to kill the man. The implication is that the Creature is unable

to rob another of the companionship that Victor Frankenstein refused to him and instead turns away from violence towards the warm yellow of the doorway, a glimpse of humanity among the inhumanity. In the same way the loneliness of the Alps and the vast void of the Arctic reflected Victor Frankenstein's internal state, the color coding in Niles' text reflect the Creature's. Loneliness is reflected in white and grey, while red is associated with blood and rage, and the yellow in this scene at the cottage reflects the warmth of more natural light, and thus suggests that there is some hope or happiness awakening in the Creature.

This change is reflected in his final interactions with the captain. He returns to the ship in a state of uncertainty, perhaps hoping that the captain would follow through with his promise, "but he forgot the nature of men, he forgot how deceit came so easily to men" (Niles and Worm #1, 18). Faced with being lied to yet again, especially from someone who sought to rob another of the companionship the Creature desperately craves, he attacks the captain. Unlike his previous murders, this one is much more contained and controlled. No red chases the electric purple of the thunder storm; the Creature is calculated in his attack. He backs the captain onto the ship and sends it out to sea on the waves of the storm, leaving the rest of crew on shore and thereby reducing uninvolved casualties in what might be considered a more "emotionally mature" choice than his previous acts of vengeance. He also does not kill the captain with his own hands, choosing the less direct method of binding the man to the wheel of the ship and, like his arctic chase with Victor, forces the both of them to a possible death by exposure to the overpowering elements of nature. As a narrative choice, this plot point also allows the story to subvert the will of the Creature and shipwreck him into a new narrative.

The following two issues of *Monster & Madman* begin to produce the feeling that the Creature is now trapped; his fate is now being controlled by a different person. The open world

in the panels of issue one is left behind, backgrounds no longer extend to the edge of the panels in the white, blue, and purples of the limitless sky. They now box themselves in visually within their structural bounds. Brick buildings in the streets of Whitechapel fill the background of the panels to the edges of their frames, obscuring even the sky, as shades of brown and grey contrast the vividness of the natural world in issue one. Inside his rescuer's home, Jack the Ripper's home, red accents are scattered through the setting—the red cavity of a cadaver, red medical books, red curtains and chairs. As the Creature and the Ripper walk, the red fades in and out, overtaking panels as the Ripper first discusses his mortician work and again as the Creature agrees to allow the Ripper to examine his body and they discuss the possibility of making a companion (Niles and Worm #2, 11). The majority usage of red in this issue however is not reflective of the Creature's interior projected onto the setting but that of the Ripper's, as later, when soliciting a prostitute to her death, the underside of the Ripper's cape is a primary red, explicitly tying his character's power, lust, and willingness to murder to the use of color in this issue. As most of the tonal coloring is a manifestation of the Creature, the red on the Ripper's cape serves a device to manifest the Ripper's internal state onto some element of his being.

The Creature upon first waking in the Ripper's homes and hearing the sounds of the city through the walls, views the door to the street as red, fearful of more rejection and torment. But as he walks the streets and "nobody so much as looked his way" the red of his fear fades into the brown of the city. And as he watches a couple dancing in the street, they are outlined in muted tones of yellow, reincorporating the use of the color as a warming of the heart. Even his discomfort with the Ripper is slightly warmed by this hope. As he stares down the Ripper's offer with the promise, "if you betray me, I will destroy you," the Ripper's face blurs and becomes blank with only black tones, then focuses and changes color into a muted orange across the next

three panels as a grin spreads on the Ripper's face (Niles and Worm #2, 20). As the Ripper offers his hand to shake in agreement the two are silhouetted by a brighter orange with less red undertones. The orange tone mixes serve as a visual mixture of the Ripper's lust and the Creature's hope confronting each other and being intermixed in the setting. The violent nature of the Ripper causes a strong projection onto the setting around him, but the Creature's hope is strong enough to overpower the Ripper's.

The third issues starts with the Creature in a more emotionally passive state as he reads of the Ripper murders and comes to the realization that "Humans, it seems, were the harbingers [of violence] and I, simply one of its children" (Niles and Worm #3, 1). The muted tones of the city, of those not emotionally aware enough to notice him, take over the visual scenes of the Creature that are paired with written narration of the Creature's thoughts. The Creature has become inattentive to that right in front of him, while his benefactor haunts the city murdering women, reflected in the panels of violence colored red and interspaced among the brown panels, the Creature is reading in the Ripper's library.

As the Creature and the Ripper meet in the finished laboratory to start assembling the female creature, the Creature asks "You say the hospital donated these parts?" a hint of doubt taking hold (Niles and Worm #3, 7). The lab the Ripper works in pays homage to Whale's film. Various electric conductors and switchboards fill the lab with lightning like bolts as the Creature and the Ripper try to animate the female creature. Following in the tradition of *The Bride of Frankenstein*, she rises from the table wrapped in mummy-like bandages with a scream, tilts her head in one direction to look, than the other, and faints with a screech. Unlike Whale's bride however, Niles and Worm's bride screeches in protest at the creator and not the Creature. She also does not have the stunning beauty of Elsa Lanchester's character; she more closely

resembles the scarred and traumatized female creature of Branagh's film with her facial scars drooping cheeks, and eyes wide with trauma. More interestingly, this iteration goes against one of the limitations that Erin Hawley in *Female Frankenstein Monsters on Stage and Screen* identifies in popular depictions of a female creature, "her silence: she is never allowed to speak" (219). As the Creature pulls her close, assuring her that he will not allow anything to happen to her, he recognizes her face as one of the women he encountered in his brief exploration of Whitechapel. He then takes a few panels to piece together this information, but the bride wastes no time in calling the Ripper what he is, "Murderer!" (Niles and Worm #3, 15).

Like the Creature, her dialogue bubbles are black, serving as reminder of her not-quite human state. The color of the text within the dialogue bubble, however, is not simply a reversal of the black and white as the Creature's is, but is instead the red of rage of violence. Her speech is further marked with the violence done to the previous bearers of her flesh, or what Halwey terms the inhabitations of "the uneasy state between life and death," through her mix of the first person singular and collective, first person pronouns (224-5). She speaks of the present in the singular, "All I see is your blade and your face," and of the past in the collective "stabbing and laughing as you killed us" (Niles and Worm #3, 17). Her present consciousness is aware of its reanimated life but remains stuck in the final emotional state of the dead. This dual state of existence manifests itself in physical rage as the Ripper moves to destroy both creatures.

The Creature advances with an angry calmness while delivering a lecture on the monstrosity of humanity. He continues his verbal argument even as the Ripper stabs him through the chest. He reacts in turn by lifting the man by his head and tossing him across the room, mirroring his encounter with the sailor at the start of the narrative. The bride tires of this discourse however, and pulls the blade from the startled Creature's chest and beheads the Ripper

in an act of furious vengeance (Niles and Worm #3, 18). The two creatures then leave the Ripper's laboratory, but even in a cabin of their own, the trauma of the violence done to the bride's previous bodies remains.

The cabin the two try live in is the shaded brown of both the poor Scandinavian village and Whitechapel, but the skyline is visible in the panel for the first time since the end of issue one. Furthermore, the color green appears for the first time, its natural living color providing shading for the hill their cabin is built upon (Niles and Worm #3, 20). Inside the cabin however the color red invades, remaining present in the text of the bride's dialogue and outlining her body as she tell the Creature she "cannot bear this burden" (Niles and Worm #3, 21). The Creature then tells her he knows "just the thing" before walking with her to watch the setting sun. As she enjoys the moment, the Creature reaches his arm behind her like a lover, then breaks her neck, and places her body to rest beneath a tree. He then walks away into a bright, vertical patch of pale yellow light. The ending is disturbingly ambiguous; the final page is bathed in the yellow color of natural sunlight, but there seems to be little warmth in these final actions. Though the Creature recognized that his own emotional state needed time to mature, the bride is not allowed adequate time for her emotional trauma to heal; she is even still wearing the bloody bandages from her physical trauma upon her second death. The last words from the Creature are "Dead is better" but no indication is given that he has resigned to this fate again, creating a narrative that is almost cyclical, beginning and ending with a longing for death.

The answer to questions of the Creature's fate may be that he continued on for whatever extent of time after the events of the narration it required to narrate them to the reader, the use of past tense requiring that there be an undetermined amount of time between the living and telling of the action (Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 218). While the lack of first person enunciation and

flourishment of details on the part of the written narrator makes it at first appear as though the narration is that of a background neutral narrator, one that allows the visual narrator to lead the narrative without revealing feelings about the scene, there is a particular selectiveness in what the textual narrator chooses to help along (Groensteen 90-2). At no point across the three issues does the written narrator narrate a scene that the Creature is not present in, nor does he explain the interiority of any individual that is not the Creature. When the Ripper is out murdering women for the body parts, the written narrator does present any awareness of the Ripper's actions, stating the events from what would have been the Creature's perspective, "Some nights he would leave the monster attached to all manner of machinery and leave for hours at a time" (Niles and Worm #3, 2). The visual narrator fills in the hints of the Ripper's crimes with silhouetted panels, suggesting the Creature's imagined scene of the crime as he reads about the Ripper in the Newspaper rather than a literal visual depiction. As the written narrator and visual narrator weave together a case of probable deniability, the possibility arises that both narrators are the Creature.

As explored in detail previously, there is an extended use of color as the outward expression of the interior state manifested onto the setting, but there is another structural particularity in addition to the coloration that suggests the entirety of the tale is from the Creature's perspective; that of the panels and layout. Both the layout and panels shapes are in a constant state of jagged irregularity. Panel edges are never perfectly straight, sometimes the edges slant crookedly, other times their borders are like a torn edge. Their placement is just as sporadic, leaving irregular gutters—here too thin, there too wide—while also overlapping the edges of the panels or leaving a single panel resting alone in its row. The pattern, or lack thereof, resembles what the Ripper called the Creature as he examined his body, "a patchwork." Read as

the narrated memory of the Creature, that is what the narrative is, a patchwork of visuals and dialogue colored by feeling. And therein rests what Niles and Worm's *Frankenstein* story brings to the collective cultural story of the Creature; a version of the story that filters the Creature's emotions and representation through a whole nest of other narrators, but instead presents a range of all the elements that help construct a personal narrative.

As all four texts show the intertextual web of *Frankenstein* adaptations is in constant interaction and evolution. The graphic narratives especially are "multilaminated" in that each text would not have its own identity without the multifaceted elements (Hutcheon 21). And if, as Hutcheon argues, recognition of previous narratives and devices is part of the audience's pleasure in adaptation, then the graphic texts work towards this pleasure in more than just their story (20). Briefer utilizes the familiar character to bring the genre Shelley is attributed with starting to the realm of comics. Inclusion of *Frankenstein* in the 616 Universe situates Marvel's adaptation in the same realm of possibility as an epistolary novel. And Niles and Worm's use of mirroring the internal on the setting puts the Romantics' concepts of setting into a visual medium. Each expands the definition of an adaptation to not just of texts but of understanding of texts and their history as well.

CONCLUSION

These examinations of *City of Glass* and *Frankenstein* graphic adaptations provide a starting point from which graphic narratives can enter the conversation of adaptation while maintaining readings or interpretations that recognize the medium-specific narrative structures in the same way that the different structures of acted mediums have come to be recognized. Each set of texts also offers a different understanding of adaptation and the approaches taken.

The graphic *City of Glass* offers an example of the more common understanding of adaptation, the “converting” of a single text from one medium to another. However, by first reading the graphic novel using its own narrative devices before entering the written text into the conversation, this understanding of adaptation is proven to be more complicated. Story-driven adaptation requires interpretation of the “source” text, and thus any adaptation is a new text through this production of new understanding. This interpretative power is influential enough that even a complete change in paratext can influence an understanding of the text.

Frankenstein adaptations require a different approach that acknowledges the complication of evolving source texts. As a character that has been reimagined and reproduced for two hundred years, there is a collective yet varied understanding of the Creature that includes sources beyond that of Mary Shelley’s text. James Whale’s film has become just as much of a source text, in addition to wide range of other texts that differ depending on an individual’s media consumption. The attitudes towards the Creature have also changed throughout the centuries creating texts that cast the Creature in different genres, a choice in adaptation that is especially noticeable in genre-heavy graphic narratives. The graphic versions of *Frankenstein* explored here also do not leave off with an end that mirrors either Shelley or Whale’s texts;

though an interpretation of the Creature's creation is often essential to understand each incarnation, it is the Creature himself that is the focus of the adaptation.

I would suggest that the theoretical understanding of adaptation necessitated in these readings expands the ways in which adaptation is theorized while situating graphic narratives' place within the greater conversation. If adaptation is both interpretative and can be character-driven instead of story-driven, then the use of "reboot" might need to be reconsidered and enter the conversation, an idea that Marvel and DC writers have removed from their own medium by placing "reboots" in a different universe or timeline. Depictions of characters outside of their "source" narrative, such as Alan Moore's *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, might reveal just as much of a new understanding of the "source" as the story adaptation approach. And perhaps there is a position for "true stories" in the conversation as well, as in the case of Reinhard Kleist's graphic biography of Nick Cave, which presents each chapter through the perspective of characters from Cave's songs whose narratives often view the same life event from different perspectives, complicating the idea that biography is truth.

Finally, and what is perhaps most interesting, is the conversation that can arise once all the adaptations are put into conversation. The first text produced, or even a more direct "story adaptation of it," might no longer be the first encounter with a story or character for an individual, upsetting the established concept of "source text" (especially a written one) when this text may never even be read by people participating in the conversation. Order of exposure undoubtedly plays a role in reception of text, so we must ask what happens when the first exposure is several times removed. If further research follows these lines of questioning, perhaps someone will be able to answer the question, will I ever be able to hear *Ride of Valkyries* without Elmer Fudd's voice singing "kill the wabbit" in my head?

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