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Monsters, Magic, and Mayhem--From the chapbooks' thematic, societal exposures, creations that use Gothicism into a mutation of Pearry Teo's post-modernistic American comic book, *The DNA Hacker Chronicles*.

Definition

The oral traditions of several ethnicities around the world shared their histories and folktales from generation to generation to engrain youthful minds with their tribal importance. So when the world found civility, tribes were either defeated or absorbed. The perspectives of the writers altered both their histories and tales, as with Beowulf. Scripted by Catholic monks "She greeted the Geat-prince, God she did thank" (*Beowulf* X 62), these holy men, be it all with good intentions, injected a monotheistic deity into the polytheistic society. However, the practices and errors that changed the original writings did not damper the oral traditions as they continued through the ages with added embellishments and changing adventures maintaining the crux of the heroic sagas that were of grand scale in both action and deed. When the printing press gained its freedom from the Catholic Church's censorship, these long told tales of many nations' peoples came into print; the social elite were gifted with the rich cultures of long gone races and their heroes, the exotic Other, and the doppelgangers that existed in them all. Subsequently, the beautiful illustrations, societal commentary, general production, and massive circulation of both respected and revolutionary ideas began in chapbooks. Using this information, both the 'shilling

shockers' and the twentieth century comic book, *The DNA Hacker Chronicles*, assimilate in their thematic storylines, their narratives, and the truth emerges in the illustrations.

The seventeenth century evolved the emergent bourgeoisie, world exploration, scientific advancement, and capitalism. It was common for print inaccuracies to occur in all forms of genres. "The seventeenth century has a lively tradition of expression and circulation of general ideas" (Cochrane x)." Therefore, a massive passion made publishers begin to print affordable books on popular topics in plagiarized forms. The many names disguise them such as chapbooks, bluebooks, penny dreadfuls, and broadsides. According to Tessa Watt, "We may be frustrated with the inability of printed artefacts to help us distinguish between the views of the gentry, the 'middling sort' and the labouring poor. But this idea that the broadsides and chapbooks were aimed at and consumed by a specific social group may be a myth. The audience presupposed within the cheap print itself appears to be inclusive rather than exclusive" (*Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* 8). It did not matter if the reading subjects were about the most horrible historical occurrences in the city or about children's morality lessons; the 'shilling shockers' sold at an enormous rate to all society members.

If we begin this analysis with a simple chart (see Table 1), the similarities of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' chapbooks and twentieth century comic books are extremely comparative. Glaister defines chaps as "a paper-covered booklet costing a penny or so as sold by travelling hawkers (chapmen) who included bundles of them with the buttons, threads, and laces and so on which they carried from village to village. Chapbooks were usually about 6 in. by 4 in. had up to twenty-four pages illustrated with crude but lively woodcuts and had a decorated cover title." (*Glossary of the Book* 92). They offered medieval romance to adults, and later, the English legends and folklore became children's moral lessons, fairy tales, and nursery rhymes.

“The word *chapbook* will be used flexibly enough to include pamphlets of over 24 pages, of more than one printer's sheet, and with colored frontispieces. But in both simple and elaborate chapbooks, the purpose of production was the same, to simplify, cheapen, and diffuse works among the poor and less literate readers” (Parsons 181). Coleman Parsons creates a list of chapbook commonalities found in Scott’s “borrowed” *Waverly Novels*: folding colored front-pieces; illustrations that may or may not be colored; storyline is clear and my use difficult transitions; titles illustrate its contents; and lastly, it purpose it to gain tens of thousands of new readers (*Chapbooks Versions of the Waverly Novels 189-221*). Hence, the aforementioned traits find their way into several other genres such as nickel and dime novels, comic books, graphic and romance novels of twentieth century America. This is another definite connection between these seventeenth and eighteenth century broadsides as the predecessors to the twentieth century’s American graphic comic book, *The DNA Hacker Chronicles (THC)*. The books may be small, but powerful, sharing many of the same attributes, presenting societal ills, and voicing fears of societies to generate necessary changes. According to Harthan, “the upper classes and rich financial families (who did not come from the hereditary aristocracy) developed a taste for finely produced, elegant books which diverted rather than edified their owners-- novels, fables, plays, and verses with small/scale illustrations made playful by erotic undertones” (*The History of the Illustrated Book* 141). Print culture was constantly evolving since capitalism drove both the production and demand for different types of printed materials. McKitterick believes, “[Printing was]driven by cost (no least the rates of pay for compositors) and by a new awareness in an industrialized world of the relationship between production and increased demand and consumption, a revived interest in speed, in the technical possibilities of new inventions and in their social and interpretive implications” (*Manuscript, and the Search for Order: 1450-1830* 9);



Fig 1. Kohse, Lee. *First Impression of Michelle*. 2007. Sketch. Pencils on 11×17 Bristol; LeeKohse Gallery. Los Angeles

wherein, the first comic strip had its beginnings. Thus, the same economic and historic problems during the seventeen and eighteen hundreds continue into mid-twentieth century America except the small inexpensive books become the pulp magazines and later comic books.

Illustrations

Wood engraving allowed for finite detail that could be replicated infinitely, something that was impossible for the hand illustrators. Woodcut illustrations create descriptive strength, character, and texture producing compelling pieces on fantasy, monsters, and high-defined settings that the viewer sees as luxurious and vivid. Figure 1 is Lee Kohse's pencil-brush sketch of his first impression of Michelle, *THC's* protagonist, whose portrait appears very similar to a woodcut illustration found in chapbooks. (See Fig. 2). This image manipulates mood and tone of a story; hence, the images have the capability to move readers into a fantasy world. (Mainardi *Popular Prints to Comics*). Master French printers Durer and Dore transformed popular prints into the comic strips for educational purposes in the form of political cartoons and social criticism. Mainardi details the indistinct path to comic strip production in four stages. The first of the single-image in broadsides; second, sequential narration in religious genres; third, secular subjects narration; however, the fourth combines both religious imagery and secular narratives into what Mainardi speculates "popular imagery and comic flow together. This final transformation of the subject matter of popular prints is most pertinent for, at this moment, the artist is no longer adapting models already established by

previous artists and writers, but, has created a new art form celebrating the smaller moments of daily life: the comic strip as we know it. Just as genre painting had become over the course of the nineteenth century, the most popular form of high art, so did comics become the popular art equivalent of genre painting into one mighty stream” (*Popular Prints to Comics*). New stories with illustrated narrative gave readers anecdotes, political criticism, and moral lessons in the mutation of sequential narratives. These later become defining characteristics in the final morph of the modern-day comic books in both narrative and illustration.

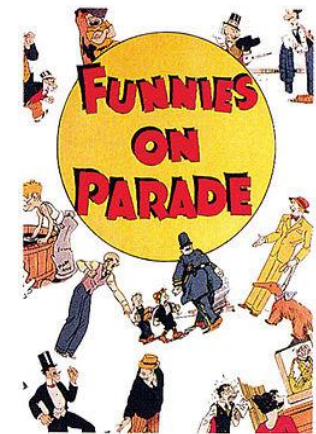
Comic Books

As Realism swept the intellectual world, America’s Realism established in the dime novels written during the 1800s. The ‘dimes’ compare in price, content, and illustrations to the chapbooks and are the first emulations on the American literary scene. “The ephemeral publications in the form of woodcut-prints and cheap engravings, they manifest a major aspect of Gothic visual culture” (Jones *Dark Successions: Gothic sequential art*). New hero types, wild landscapes, gunfights, and exploration created world interest and curiosity; hence, the dime novel’s subject matter fed the frenzy with renewed sublimity and a hero that only American standards define by their actions and adventures. These cheap books morphed in the 1950s as pulp magazines, and later, the comic book, which incorporates both chapbook and pulp magazine characteristics in its illustration, narrative, and graphic design. Dialogues in the twentieth century’s genres carry most of the story while the images carry the rest of the narrative. The language of the penny dreadfuls included an “extraordinary coarseness of language” [sic] along with poor spelling and unacceptable grammar. The three genres share, not only that quality, but they also present the storyline in an episodic manner and create narratives through using Gothic tenets to create afterworlds and realms of transcendence. “The gothic chapbook reveals in all its

convolutions the persistence and continuing power of the supernatural in the social imaginary” (Hoeveler 194). The chaps, dime novels, and comic books derive from human thought and experience. They illustrate moral lessons, social criticism using graphic art forms, along with an inadequate amount of language. The chapbooks may have disappeared, and the pulp magazines filed away, but the comic book genre remains popular into modern time and offers intellectual enlightenment that leads to psychological epiphanies, a quenched curiosity, and an expanded awareness.

Chapbooks, pulp magazines, and comic books print “on the cheapest possible paper for inexpensive mass distribution” (Gonick 122). All three genres feature suspense, adventure, fantasy, and action. “In 1933, Harry Wildenberg and Max C. Gaines folded a traditional tabloid-size comic, *Funnies on Parade*, in half to create the first four-color, saddle-stitched newsprint comic that would become the structure of modern comic books. Working with Eastern Color and Dell Publishing, Wildenberg and Gaines successfully sold this new design at newsstands, leading to the creation of the newsstand as the main distributor of comic books until the 1990s” (Mainardi), making the comic books as long lasting as the chapbooks. Looking at McCloud’s ideology of the comic book, “At its simplest, a comic book is a series of words and pictures that are presented in a sequential manner to form a narrative that may or may not be humorous” (*The Comic* 22) that sold originally sold for twenty-five cents. Even though the American comic book begins production during the late 1800s, its vernacular, slang, and idioms, as well images, conjoin their production with common themes that mark the economic, social, and psychological realms that reach multiple markets. The American serials

Fig 2. *Funnies on Parade*. Eastern Color Printing. One shot. One issue. Sp 1933. Library of Congress.



compare and emulate the chapbooks of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries continuing horror, terror, and heroic feats that save the downtrodden or expose some dark, hidden truths. Thus, prior to comic books, societies read six pence chapbooks and dime novels, small, crudely cut pages printed cheap paper that people around the world read.

During the 1950s, horror comics became new Gothicism. They indulged readers' imaginations through Gothic tropes but also delved into a new genre, science fiction. Fears evolved into space and other futuristic fear and anxieties. Jim Trombetta, a comic book historian, claims, the 1950s horror comics "slap[ped] the raw archetype on the reader's plate, in a word, the comics were Gothick" (*The Horror!* 34). It seems no one historian or critic defines science fiction in the same manner; however, Gonick offers this example: "Science fiction is the search for a definition of man and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science) and is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mode" (*Cartoon History of the United States* 247). In *Billion Spree: The History of Science Fiction* author, Brian Aldis contends "outgrowth of gothic fiction-- pointing to Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* as an example" (122). Studying the new genre establishes its tenets in Gothicism and utopia ideology. Jim Trombetta believes "Anti-utopia is one of Gothic horrors" (*The Horror!* 34) creating yet another link to the Gothic past. Thus, the defiant, rebellious era presents a new alternative to the large printing houses that ruled what could and could not be printed for the good of society. Therein, from political commentary to comic books, a new wave of publishing mirrored the cultural and political unrest of a nation, political discourses where the Gothic past was synonymous with the heroic fight against a new authoritative power in a multidimensional time and space. Subsequently, both the chapbooks and the twentieth century comic book, *THC*, fill their pages and venues with heroes, heroines, mystery, and intrigue, using

Gothic motifs while their societies continue solving their individual problems. This establishes verifiable anomalies with the chapbooks and their era.

Comic Book Historical Importance in Post-Modernism

Traditionally occupying the fringes of pop culture, the comic book acts a valuable historical text that comments on how young people and adults both identify with political and cultural issues. If this is true, the comic book is not just a series of word blurbs and illustrations, it serves a commercial role and depicts a complex one (Gonick 2010). As an explanation, the “comic book raises an amalgam of theoretical debates about sequence, narrative, image, text, genre, and art as well as its relationship to other genres, such as children’s literature” (Meskin 2007). By not looking at the genre through those perspectives, it is at least a result of the historical forces that pressured artists and consumers. “Much more than just a form of entertainment for kids, comic books are a serious and sophisticated art form that both feeds off of and creates cultural formulas and historical constructs”[sic]. Pearry Teo’s comic book presents societally risqué subject matter, similar and dissimilar rebellious characters, and exposes American fears about globalization, over-population, climate change, and genetic engineering while questioning the morality and reality that overwhelm the space of the individual psyche. Therefore, as the books merge into the American facsimiles, they delve into an unknown future in the science fiction genre. Consequently, the criteria that defines chapbooks in Gothic tradition, motifs, materials, production, distribution, illustrations, themes, psychology, and characterizations also distinguishes their prevalence in the American comic book series, *The DNA Hacker Chronicles*, as the modern day comic concentrates in the Gothic chapbooks. Todorov presents, “the structure of the Gothic is more valuable for its general discussion of the literary themes of self and other, life and death, and the "hesitation" between reality and unreality” (*The Fantastic*). Hence being

a human in changing centuries, evolving societies and the world develops physical and mental societal and individual frustrations.

Many comic book critics generally use the concept of “ages” to identify periods of comic book history that shares concerns, storytelling techniques, and marketing strategies, styles of art and writing, and approach to genre conventions (Hayman 269) to form to the ideals, values, and conflicts of society. However, looking at the form itself, understand the plethora of conflicting definitions of science fiction. In fact, “Science fiction seems to be the most difficult genre to understand for those who are not fans of the genre” (*Genreflecting* 2004). That would contend, “that [science fiction] is above nature or belonging to a higher realm or system than that of nature” (*A Billion Spree* 33). Teo’s comic book then becomes a cross-breed of the Gothic chapbooks; moreover, it adds a new twist to the distinction of the American comic book genre as it emulates the aforementioned penny dreadfuls. Since Pearry Teo’s *THC* transcends the seventeenth and eighteenth century Gothic, both view the terrifying allegory of human existence in their respective times to question humanity and societal ills. Berlin believes dark romanticism continues that reasoning: “no matter what we do, there is some canker, there is a worm in the bud somewhere, there is something which dooms us to perpetual frustration, whether it be human beings whom we must exterminate, or impersonal forces against all effort is useless” (*The Roots of Romanticism* 108). Both genres obscure the lines between righteous and evil demanding answers for the search for final truth.

A Defining Shared Chapbook/Comic Book Gothic Theme: the Superhero Byronic Hero/Villain

Early 1960s war-torn America demanded a new type hero. Society demanded the writers and artists to show hamartia and hubris or a deformity or defect; therefore, the writers characterized

the classic Aristotelian dramatic theories and incorporated a Gothic trope, the Byronic Hero. The new heroes were The Other, the decadent, the arrogant, the misunderstood, and lastly, the revolutionaries against standardized and accepted systems. At the time of the Viet Nam War, consumers grasped them with new vigor since they depicted public rebelliousness. The comics did not dispose of good and evil; they developed complexities in “virtuous villains and reluctant, selfish, or bickering heroes” (McCloud 192). Thus, if we look at the definition of the past centuries’ Byronic hero and compare it to Michelle in *THC*, the two are synonymous and symbolic for their audiences and their eras.

The DNA Hacker Chronicles reveal a skillful running parade of Gothic tropes where the Byronic heroine lives in the smog-filled space or exotic, Gothic wasteland witnessing real horrors and experiencing dreadful terror in a cyberpunk futuristic dystopia. She lives through hair-raising battles crushing her rivals with powerful samurai-warrior skills, and fights horrible adventures against an authoritative scientific entity to find peace. Her younger brother, Jackie, and she abide in a Gothic multi-floored, decaying apartment tower with winding steps and gloomy hallways. The dark alleys are an undiscovered maze that appears to lead nowhere. In these thematic elements, the graphic comic book can arguably trace back to the chapbooks in form, function, distribution, themes, and societal commentary. The post-modernistic *The DNA Hacker Chronicles* explicitly draws on the iconography of the woodcut illustrations and use of Gothic motifs. Michelle as the heroine echoes the vulnerabilities that afflict past Byronic heroes such as Lewis’ Ambrosio and Matilda. Teo’s comic contains all the Gothic conventions of the chapbooks in that it is homoerotically-charged, conveys sexual attraction, and fights societal injustices. The 1930s through the 1940s influence an enormous amount of the themes and motifs in science fiction. These stories were adventure stories featuring futuristic technology,

technological utopias and contemplated the impact of machines on human society and evolution. In the 1960s with the advent of the “New Wave” movement in Science Fiction, novels began to focus more on sociological and human sciences than on science and technology (Palmeri, *Genreflecting*, 2004). Coogan emphasizes, “Michelle’s character embodies modern archetypes that include Friedrich Nietzsche’s Übermensch and Tarzan, the pulp übermensch” (*Superhero* 68). The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’ Gothic imagination then becomes the artistic process of post-modernistic science-fictional cyberpunk *The DNA Hacker Chronicles* that defines, follows, and molds to the trappings of Gothicism.

Hence, Michelle is an embodiment the Gothic Byronic hero motif of a temptress in the scanty, leather attire of a sadomasochistic queen, but she is not entirely aware or responsible for her temptation. This binary includes the fact that she does not leave society with any other thoughtful recourse other than she is a warrior fighting for their freedom. At the same time, she wreaks pure sexuality in men’s eyes and thoughts. She challenges normalcy of sexual temptation but communicates power thru this characterization. Pearry Teo literally and figuratively characterizes the heroine to fight societal emulations of sex and power in her gaze and occupation. She begins introspection as she questions her reasoning to kill hackers but confuses herself when she focuses on self-mortality. As her character’s weakness for love and freedom becomes apparent, Michelle then becomes the villain or anti-hero, experiencing her own existential crises as the narrative allows both the men she loves to die horrid deaths.

Comparison of Lewis’ illustration and one from Teo and Kohse’s comic book

The production of audience frustration, which the chapbooks and comics pose, is in the panels of *the Bleeding Nun* (Fig. 3) and *The DNA Hacker Chronicles (THC)* (Fig. 5). Looking at the graphic comic book, *THC* is an expression of the threshold in a similar way in the set-up of the

comic book page. The pages view as not only the visible container, the vehicle for the transmission of ideas, but as a medium which conveys meaning on itself, as well. Bonnie Mak explains this in *How the Page Matters*, what the role of the page is, and how this has come to be throughout the ages. In literary history, the importance of the physicalities of the page hide behind the focus on the text itself, yet it is essential to remember the actual material of the page (papyrus, paper) strongly influences the way in which a reader experiences the reading of the page. Designers, writers and, in the case of the comic book, artists can make conscious decisions about -and apply aesthetic variations to the design of- the page suggesting that the layout of a page bears significance. Bonnie Mak also states that the aim of the page (e.g. a novel, a codex, a chronicle) sometimes predetermines the lay-out and the material of the page to such an extent that the designer must follow with fixed rules for creating the whole of a book (14). The shape of the letters, images and structures on the page can have certain effects on readers, and it can influence the way in which the readers understands the text is understood (Mak 17). The spacing between characters, as well as the borders and line breaks on a page, are also critical aspects of how a reader approaches the text. Even more so than the comic, where the architecture of the page backgrounds the text that occupies it, the comic book uses the possibilities what the structure of the page has to offer on many different levels because its medium requires it.

Comic books are sequential art—and define as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence"(McCloud 9). They institute the sequentiality of the page where the author of the novel puts pictures into a certain order to create a narrative. The comic uses pictures in a usually linear order, reflecting the common Western reading method: to meet with the expectations of the reader; the page divides into an even amount of panels of equal size; surrounded by a white background that allows no particular panel emphasis. Yet these books

often use these expectations of both linearity and genre-specific lay-out to support the narrative or bring out a certain element of the narration even more. By changing the order of the panels, foregrounding or back grounding, a panel, or element used in an unexpected way or allowing the panels to overlap, the reader can easily get lost within the narrative.

Similar to the way in which Gothic uses space within the narrative (the castle, the mansion, the city) to create an environment for the problematic breaching into the secluded space, the graphic comics use the expectations of the reader and the possibilities within the physical space of the page to express this same idea of breaching into the audiences 'safe space. The comic book shows that the page is indeed not only a vehicle for the narrative, but it also functions within the narrative itself. One of the most powerful agents of the narrative in the genre facilitates the use of the space of the page called framing. Jeff Bezemer and Gunther Kress in the *Multimodality Glossary* offer a concise definition of framing: "Framing is the principle by which, on one hand, any semiotic entity (any meaning-entity) – such as a 'text' or an 'event' – is given internal unity and (the possibility of) internal coherence; and by which, on the other hand, it is clearly marked as distinct from other units or events of the same kind and at the same 'level' in a larger unit or event." Framing then becomes the device deciding what is separated and what is and should view as harmonious. Framing can be the explicit seclusion of specific elements in a picture, but it can also be implied by line breaks in the image (so-called pictorial framing devices - boundaries formed by the edge of a building, empty space, discontinuities of color). The lack of framing suggests a group identity while framing unites or individuates. Not only does framing include and exclude, it also uses the correspondence of the varying levels of social distance the reader keeps with others in everyday interactions. When people interact with each other, the physical distance defines two elements: 1) the distance between both inter-actors, and, 2) how

much of one participant the other participant can see. Two close acquaintances will stand closer to each other and, due to the smaller distance between the two subjects; they will see less of each other. Therefore, viewers can say that the size of the frame used corresponds to a level of social intimacy. Just as real-life distance between two people suggests a certain social order, a close-up, for example, suggests personal interaction while a picture that shows a torso or even a long shot of the entire body suggests observation or a distant relationship between the viewers and viewed.

In the comic book, framing is essential; it is precisely this mechanic that the medium relies to exaggerate the illustration on the page. As McCaffery and Nichol point out in *Rational Geomancy: Kids of the Book-Machine*, the panels in a graphic novel "[...] placed in a discrete sequence [...] form a grammatical block analogous to a conventional sentence, changing the sequence of frames changes the meaning of the total strip. However, unlike words, frames can interact in more complex syntactical forms: superimposition, interlocking and transmuting the panel where speech bubbles become the frame and vice versa, or where a group of frames form a window into a complete scene" (129). In the comic book, the frames not only work on a sociological level, showing what is included and excluded, defines social territories and the space in which the narrative occurs; therefore, the use of frames in the comic book strongly reflects the use of space within the Gothic.

Very much like the Gothic space, framing can indicate what is self and what the Other is. Within the comic book, the space of the page expands into the secluded space of the panel. If Gothic uses the separation of safe and unsafe space, we can for instance also say that this same division occurs by the comic book. The panels of the comics constitute the unsafe space while the readers occupy the safe seclusion. The separation expressed through the framing within these panels suggests safety from the numinous world that takes place within the panels.

However, an extremely pertinent issue with framing that also struck the space in the Gothic is that, when there is a separation, there is always a separator, a threshold, of which the nature (albeit numinous or safe) is not clear. In the case of the comic book, this is the gutter - the term describes the blank space that exists between the panels, (see Fig. 4). The gutter shows that not only does framing indicate separation; artists use it to indicate sequentially and create reader engagement because it implements the concept of closure. In Fig. 3, the illustration's space is white and the sequential narrative is at the bottom of each panel; however, in Fig. 4 & 5, *THC*'s space is ragged, black frames while the narrative tilts in different spaces on the page. Scott McCloud explained closure as "observing the parts but perceiving the whole" (Goggin 63), and this closure takes place in those blank spaces between the panels of a comic. The human mind, when seeing two separate pictures placed together, will always try to find a connection and will always assume a sequentially; wherein, the brain will automatically believe that the connection is not arbitrary, which is precisely "the kind of cognitive operation on which the comic depends" (Goggin 14). In the comic book, the "narrative diegesis [...] is generally located in the margins of the images, in a position understood being "outside" the present moment of depicted action, scenes, and bodies" (Mitchell 92). If readers see one panel of a man holding a gun to woman's head and the next panel shows the words "BANG," we automatically assume the man shot the woman. According to Scott McCloud, we, as a reader, are essentially murdering the woman because we are filling in the blanks and deciding that that is what is happening (*The Comic* 68). The gutter demands reader engagement because it forces the reader to fill in the blanks by taking the two separated images and turning them into one single idea. The form of the comic book uses this idea of closure by forming the panels into a larger narrative together; however, readers need to be careful. The image does not stop at the edge of the panel, but essentially continues

via the gutter into the next. This narrative then creates the necessary connection through the reading of an implied sequentiality. The writer and artist may decide the sequence of the elements, but the connection between them leaves the reader interpreting the page.

Then, consider the panels within the comic book as being the numinous space of the Other and the outside world where these panels contain the safe space. Then the gutter becomes the threshold between those worlds and becomes the liminal space of comic book and chap's illustrations. By forcing the reader into a mental process of closure, that engages the process of imaginative reconstruction and reproductive imagination, the reader subconsciously acknowledges the threshold between the two worlds and by this acknowledgment, the reader crosses the threshold via the gutter and the world contained in the panels. The presumed safe space is no longer secure, and the reader becomes part of the numinous world within the panels, see Fig. 3. The overlay of the nun overlapping the panels under it, hide the spaces between the other four panels creating a thriving void for reader anxiety and fear. The panels on the page suggest a sense of control because what they depict within those panels is in not safe. The readers have an inescapable obligation of mentally processing these panels within the gutters that forces them to give up control over the panel to whatever it is that occurs within their imagination within the gutter. The gutter is necessary to give the comic book its form, and through it, the reader loses all sense of control as they do in Fig. 3 in the overlay of the nun that hides the inner frames' boundaries.

Rather than just an empty space, the gutter becomes an active signifier that delineates the existence of a world beyond with the possibility of crossing over into readers' real world. As Julia Moszkowicz states, "Despite the apparent absence of content, the gutter signifies in spite of itself. Paradigmatically speaking, for example, it serves as evidence of what the panel is not,

what the illustration is not, and what the word is not. In this sense, the gutter itself can be read in terms of a substitution: what is not there and what could have been there" (*Dis.* 6). Then the gutter is the liminal space where what is invisible becomes visible and the reader only operates within that space. The gutter, in essence, opens up the possibility of the Other crossing into the world. What is somewhat terrifying about the gutter is the fact that the format of the comic book necessitates the existence of it. The comic book considers as sequential art because it uses those juxtaposed images in deliberate sequence and by requiring framing and thus separation, the gutter – the separator - will always exist. Much like the numinous world in the Gothic, the irrefutable existence of the threshold and the threat of the breach that accompanies it perhaps terrifies us most of all. The form of the comic book forces readers to remove the story out of itself and into the gutter, making it dangerously close to their own, safe world. The gutter then becomes the Gothic liminal space of the comic lies in the distinction between what is the Other and what is self and its impossibility to separate the two creates reader fear and anxiety. By entering the gutter, defining its contents and the panel's material, readers become the Other also.

The breach of the Other into the real world expresses literally by a technique called bleeding, meaning that instead of containment by a frame, the image of the panel seems to run to the end of the page, crossing the non-existent edges of the frame. Harold Love states that this highly used technique draws attention to the mood, and to let the scenery linger (*The Book History Reader* 103). Through those so-called bleeds, the already problematic status of the panel as a secluded space becomes clear, for not only does it emphasize that the existence of the gutter as a threshold opens the possibility of the breach, it also reveals that the gutter is sometimes contained by the panel itself. This eliminates the apparent separation in its entirety. Through the act of bleeding there will always be frames, but the gutter now floods with the contents of another panel, such as

a dark, vast corridor in a gloomy mansion haunts readers by the presence of a ghost of the past. The use of the gutters requires a specific form of reader engagement, making the terrors and fears that haunt the comic book even more terrifying. By closure, the mind reconstructs everything missing within the panels; the comic is, thus, a so-called mono-sensory medium that constructs the visual to express itself.

Yet what occurs within the gutter - an empty place where on a visual level, there is a void - the readers' senses do not engage. Through the closure, readers' senses directly engage with the action in the preceding panels. Hence, the gutter symbolizes a fall - or perhaps a deliberate jump - into readers' imaginations where they lose control and incorporate their senses in the separate pieces that try to create a coherent whole. The page, the panels, and the gutter reflects, echoes, or expands the turbulence of the human mind, having the genre of the comic book extend into the gothic universe into its own physical form. Very similar to the crenulations and labyrinthine sequences the architecture of the page mirrors or emulates a certain mental state. For example, by creating a page in which the panels do not follow each other in a logical order, having one specific panel bleed into the gutter, or by allowing the panels to overlap, (see Fig. 3), the reader falls into a certain state of mind (in this case of Jackie and Randall's pain), engaging the reader even more. This leads to another interesting issue, which is present in the form of the comic that parallels the Gothic use of space, and that is the possibility of the reader's eye to wander the page. Although sequential art is a medium, comic book creators will always direct the eye in a certain direction. It is vital to remember that the eye of the reader does and will wander in the specified direction the artist and writer desire them to go. Although this suggests a sense of freedom to do with the panels what the reader likes, it also reveals a sense of powerlessness. When the eye wanders, the reader may no longer be able to make sense of the whole, the space

of the page, and its contents will engulf the readers while their grip on the narrative will slowly perish. Just like the labyrinthine sequence in the Gothic novel, the numinous world may or may not lurk in the dark or hide in recesses of alleys, but the very nature of the comic book entails the possibility of losing self in the page, the narrative, and the void of the gutter.

Finally, a look at a double-page spread from *The DNA Hacker Chronicles* that depict all of the elements of the Gothic space in his comic book at work. Kohse's illustrations (see Fig. 5) takes place in the comic's third issue. It peers down into an enclosed alley as Randall's goons horribly beat Jackie in the largest frame at the topmost part of the page; then the ensuing frames are close-ups of the blood splattering out of his mouth and nose. His attacker says, "If you have to teach someone a lesson, enjoy it" as they see Randall smiling. Readers visualize the horror and feel the fists, feet of the attackers between each frame in the ragged, black frames that are closed boundaries, and no escape is possible for Jackie or the reader. In the middle of these two pages, there is an instance of extreme closure, locking readers in while their minds fill in the gaps. Kohse's following page has three black-tilted frames in which the illustrations depict the action of placing The Transcoder on a man's hand then the next panel shows the blood curdling horror as he silently screams—no narrative. The gutter then, between this panel and the next, fills a larger panel that bleeds into the black background. It is evident that readers already see the blood spatters will enter the gutter; readers cross into the invisible threshold into a void. Hence, the audience assumes: Jackie's act of stealing The Transcoder causes everyone who possesses it will have horrid consequences. Minds fill in the gap between the panels, the gutter fills with blood, and they cross the threshold into the cyberpunk futuristic dystopic world of labyrinthine alleys. The panels reveal the horrendous machine as they view the machine; their minds automatically know The Transcoder takes the man's body over. The nature of the architecture of

the comic book page and the Gothic qualities that lie within the gutter make readers feel horror and terror. Readers enter the horrifying space of the Gothic, and what will always consider as the Other, has now become postmodern -twentieth century society.

The End...

Similarly, yet contrarily, if the Gothic reveals a way to represent the voiceless masses, and the comic book instigates the mechanic of the gutter, the genre leaves those hoards of people undeniably unrepresented (by having someone carry a sai blade in one panel, and in the next, a decapitated body lies next to a hand holding a bloodied blade. This pushes the actual murder in the gutter and within the mind of the reader). What the Gothic manages to do becomes difficult to attain; moreover, it becomes extremely successful when the comic book achieves it. Pearry Teo and Lee Kohse's comic book, *THC* utilizes the mechanic of the Denied; it is exactly the propelling feature of the genre and the chapbooks. Both the seventeenth and eighteenth century's 'shilling shockers' and the twentieth century comic book, *The DNA Hacker Chronicles*, are then efficacious mediums of representing precisely those features which define and create the Gothic terror, horror, and sublimity.

APPENDIX

Table 1—Comparative Chart

17th & 18th c Ideologies	20th & 21st c Ideologies	ChapbookProduct Format	Comic Book Product Format
Gothic	Science fiction	Gothic	Post-Modern Comic
Monsters	Aliens	Cover is made of paper/frontispiece	Same
Rainy dark seclusion	Wilderness/ other planets	Small in size – up to 15 cm x 10 cm	Same or 8.5 X 11 inches
Dependant women	Independent woman	8, 16, or 24 pages	Same
Heroes/heroines	Heroines take on masculinity of Byronic hero	Up to 46 pages if meets all other considerations	Flats of 16 pgs/broadsides
Maze	City streets/Alleys/Skyscrapers	Unbound, leaves are stitched (sewn)	Stapled or glued
Settings/sublime	Settings sublime and ephemereal	Illustrated by woodcuts (tinted/colored)	Artist-generated colored prints
Imaginary	Historical	Imprint between 1690 and 1880	Serialized monthly 1950's-?
Monsters	Artificial intelligence	Often undated	Always dated
Creatures	Cyborgs/androids/robots	Author usually un-named	Author always named
Occult	Technology and Science	Include religious tracts	Same
Utopia	No Place/Space	Advertising	Same
Vampire/Werewolf	Aliens/Other	Cheaply priced	Same
Specific Gender Roles	Androgeneous	Chapmen distribution	Markets and newstands
Mock epic <i>Rape of the Lock</i>	Sci-fi Parodies	<i>Glaister, G. A. Glaister's Glossary of the Book.</i>	
Inner space	Outer space		
Known beast	Unknown beast	Gothic Subgenres	Post Modern/New Wave Subgenres
Isolation	Estrangement	Romance	Adventure
Antiutopia is one of Gothic horror	Damsels in distress in faraway future	Atavism	Alternate history
Gothic romance	Gothic planetary romance	Death	Apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic
<i>Carmilla</i> –Romance w/Other & La	Gothic futuristic romance	Chapbooks	Comic
Classical beauty	Eugenics		Cyberpunk
Dreams	Virtual reality	Enlargened World	Dying Earth
Socialist reality	Anarchist capitalism	3 Revolutions	Military
Scientific study	Science fantasy	Romance w/The Other	Planetary romance
		Social Elite/emerging bourgeoisie	Social
Related Theories	Related Theories	Opera	Space Opera
Occult	Fantasy		Space Western
Scientific discovery	Fictional technology		Steampunk
Surviving tumultuous times	The future		Sword and Planet
Neo-Classicism-Victorian	Gothicism	Themes	Themes
Horror/Terror	Horror		Artificial intelligence-
Occult	Magic realism	Atavism	Black
One Universe	The Multiverse	Hermeticism	Extraterrestrials
Atavism	Robots/androids/cyborgs	Patriarchal	Feminist
Freakish literature	Speculative fiction	Colonialism	First contact
Byronic hero	Superhero fiction		Hyperspace
Travelogues	Time travel	Patriarchal	Libertarian
Atavism	Transhumanism	Subterranean	Parallel universes
Antiutopia is one of Gothic horror	Utopian and dystopian fiction	The Castles/Imprisonment	Planets
Freakish literature	Weird fiction	Three Revolutions	Political ideas
		Fetishism/Decadence	Sex and sexuality

Fig. 3 “The Bleeding Nun” wood-carved illustration black and white, quarter fold-out in *The Monk* that Dr. Franz Potter found in a copy of *The Monk* in London library.

The Four panels view left to right in sequential order following *The Monk*’ narrative.

Panel 1: The Death of Baptisite.

Panel 2: Raymond and Agnes discovered by Aunt.

Panel 3: The Bleeding Nun appears to Raymond.

Panel 4: Agnes with her Child in the Dungeon.

Overlay: Superimposed Nun in full habit looking left (imposing Devil) holding a dagger and a gas-lit lamp in her right. She insinuates a wicked woman as a murderess, prostitute, and loss of love, isolated in a dungeon with child. Superimposed picture of the nun depicts the importance of Church and its patriarchal power over the female object. Unknown London publisher on Belgium and Vergate Street.

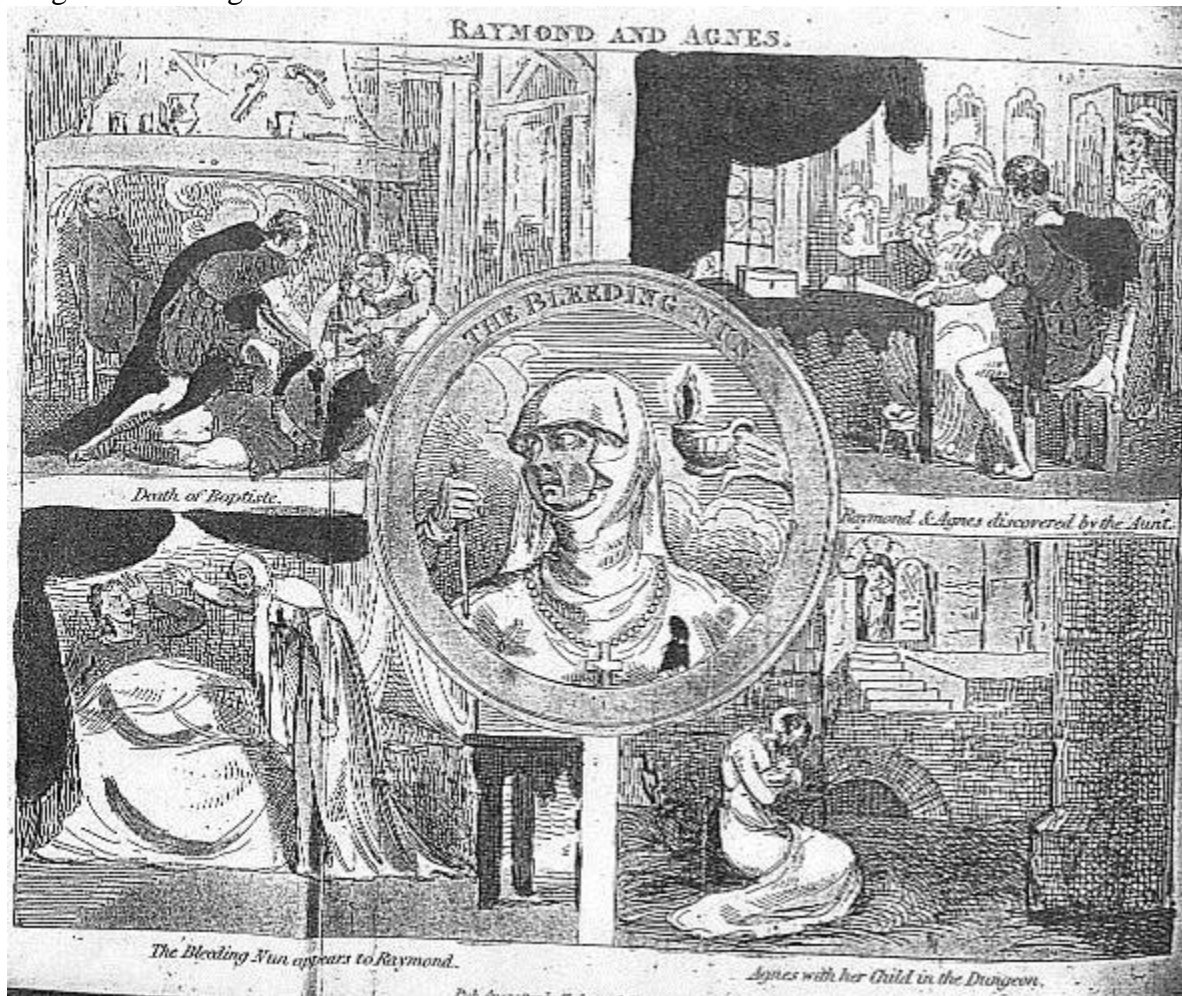




Fig. 4 Woodcut Illustration from *DNA Hacker Chronicles Issue 3.1* Kohse sketched and hand painted for mass production.

THC woodcut version 1. Kohse, Lee. *The DNA Hacker Chronicles* woodcut version, Issue 3.1. Personal archive, Los Angeles, CA.

Fig.5—*The DNA Hacker Chronicles* Issue 3.13 &14



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