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Visual Narrative in Watchmen

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Čestné prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci na téma „Visual Narrative in Watchmen“ vypracoval samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedl jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

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Abstract

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This bachelor thesis analyzes “Watchmen” by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons in great detail, focusing on its unique use of visual narrative, which enriches and complements the overall narrative of the graphic novel. This thesis through Multimodal Discourse Analysis analyzes how the graphic novel “Watchmen” enhances the narrative depth through use of a variety of image and panel features, including composition, use of color and facial expressions, as well as page layout and the combination of textual and visual elements. The thesis draws attention to “Watchmen’s” excellent narrative techniques. The findings position “Watchmen” as a foundational work and argue for the acceptance of graphic novels as a sophisticated and valid literary form, highlighting the fact that graphic novels should be treated with the same level of seriousness as books.

Anotace

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Tato bakalářská práce analyzuje grafický román Watchmen od Alana Moorea a Davea Gibbonse a podrobně se zaměřuje na jedinečné využití vizuálního vyprávění, které obohacuje a doplňuje celkové vyprávění tohoto grafického románu. Tato práce prostřednictvím multimodální diskurzivní analýzy analyzuje, jak grafický román Watchmen zvyšuje hloubku vyprávění prostřednictvím využití různých vizuálních prvků, včetně kompozice, použití barev a výrazů tváře, a také rozvržení stránky a kombinace textových a vizuálních prvků. Tato práce poukazuje na vynikající vypravěčské techniky grafického románu Watchmen. Závěry staví grafický román Watchmen do pozice zásadního díla a obhajují přijetí grafických románů jako sofistikované literární formy a zdůrazňují skutečnost, že ke grafickým románům by se mělo přistupovat se stejnou vážností jako ke knihám.

I deeply appreciate the support I received from my supervisor, Mgr. Ph.D. Elizabeth Allyn Woock. Doctor Woock made sure that her doors were always open to me whenever I needed help with anything, and her supportive documents were extremely useful for my work.

Abstract.....	2
Anotace.....	3
1. Introduction.....	6
2. Visual as a part of narrative in Graphic novels.....	11
2.1 Panel and Image.....	11
2.2 Sequence, Page Layout and Gutter.....	16
2.2.1 Gutter.....	17
2.2.2 Page Layout and Time and Space.....	20
2.3 Speech Balloons and Narrative boxes.....	24
2.4. Narration and Dynamic Relationship.....	27
3. Analysis.....	29
3.1. Reading Images.....	29
3.1.1 Composition.....	29
3.1.2 Establishing the scene.....	31
3.1.3 Facial Expressions.....	32
3.1.4 Color.....	33
3.2 Page Layout.....	34
3.3 Words and Balloons.....	38
4. Methods.....	42
5. Literature Review.....	48
6. Conclusion.....	56
7. Resumé.....	60
8. Bibliography.....	64

1. Introduction

Within the graphic novel category, “Watchmen” by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons is a great achievement, acclaimed for its innovative use of visual narrative techniques, as well as its deep philosophical foundations and complex plot. In order to create a story that is both visually stunning and greatly written, “Watchmen” utilizes the special qualities of the graphic novel format, which is the central theme of this thesis. This bachelor thesis employs Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) to analyze the visual aspect of narration in “Watchmen” as well as relationship between the visual aspect and textual aspect in “Watchmen,” explaining the complex ways in which these components come together to create a narrative experience that goes beyond traditional formats.

With its use of a wide range of visual elements that support narrative or narrate on their own, including panel layout, use of color, symbolic imagery, and visual metaphor, to narrate or deepen the narrative, “Watchmen” is a testament to the graphic novel’s ability for narrative innovation. The graphic novel also stands out for having a wide variety of narrative levels, the text and the images which on frequent occasions convey entirely different narratives, although none can be definitively interpreted as being more dominant than the other, which shows and establishes the visual narrative being as important for the narrative in the “Watchmen” and graphic novels as text is for novels.

In addition to captivating readers and reviewers alike since its serialized publication in 1986–1987 and as a single book in 1987, “Watchmen” has established itself as an important work that critically explores the very basis of superhero archetypes. In addition to being an exceptional example of superhero deconstruction, Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' work offers a deep analysis of the social concerns of the time, perfectly capturing the spirit, hopes, and worries of the Cold War. “Watchmen” explores the ethical difficulties and complexities of power through its narrative.

The graphic novel “Watchmen” presents a complex narrative that connects together individual stories with the larger picture of a world on the edge of nuclear annihilation. The story is set in an alternate history in which the introduction of superheroes in the mid-20th century has drastically changed the course of world events, resulting in the United States winning the Vietnam War and securing an extended presidency for Richard Nixon. In

addition to providing a setting for the complex plot of the book, this alternate reality poses questions for readers about the nature of heroism, the morality of power, and the influence of individual actions on the fate of humanity as a whole.

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the intricate visual narrative techniques used in “Watchmen” in order to engage readers, convey story through visual elements, and also demonstrate how visual elements may influence the rhythm and pacing of the narrative. Fundamentally, “Watchmen” goes beyond traditional comic book storytelling by heavily using visuals to communicate a story and draw readers into the narrative. This thesis aims to provide an analysis of the graphic novel’s images, composition, color usage, page layout, visual aspect of text, and interaction between text and image using the analytical lens of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA). Through an analysis of these elements, this thesis seeks to better understand the complex narrative techniques used in “Watchmen.” By using these visual storytelling strategies, “Watchmen” creates visually interesting characters in addition to telling an engaging story. By demonstrating how “Watchmen’s” unique use of visual storytelling techniques has through the narrative complexity taken the comic books and graphic novels to a new level. This thesis aims to further expand the understanding of the work’s significance within the medium.

To conduct a thorough analysis of the visual storytelling of “Watchmen,” this thesis refers to the works of Scott McCloud, Thierry Groensteen, and Neil Cohn. Their influential works provide valuable perspectives on the principles and effects of visual narrative in comic books and graphic novels. The various visual narrative approaches used in “Watchmen” can be analyzed via the distinct lenses of each of these scholars, providing an in-depth understanding of the graphic novel’s storytelling techniques that go beyond the conventions of standard textual storytelling.

In his investigation of the comic book medium, Scott McCloud emphasizes the crucial role that panel transitions and the gutter, the area in between panels, play in establishing the narrative pace and rhythm that are so vital to the reading experience. Scott McCloud is a comics theorist and artist, renowned for his expert analysis of the comics medium and visual storytelling in his books. McCloud’s idea of “closure,” which refers to the reader’s instinctive act of completing the blank spaces between panels,¹ is particularly suitable for the analysis of “Watchmen.” This thesis explores how different panel transitions, such as

¹ Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, U.S., 1994), 63

moment-to-moment or action-to-action, which are introduced by McCloud,² are used by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons to subtly lead readers through the story.

The theories of Thierry Groensteen, who focuses on the “system of comics”—the interconnected net of pictures that support the story overall—further enhance this thesis. Groensteen’s concepts on the spatio-topial system—which includes the panel arrangement and layout on the page—and the “braiding” of visual themes provide insightful guidelines for analyzing how “Watchmen” constructs a unified and compelling narrative. Using Groensteen’s techniques, this thesis investigates how the novel’s intricate page layouts and use of visual motifs contribute to its visual narrative.

By introducing the ideas of the “visual lexicon” and “narrative grammar,” Neil Cohn’s research on the visual language of comics highlights the mental processes required in reading and comprehending comics. Cohn’s studies on readers’ perceptions and comprehension of comic book image sequences offer an essential basis for diving into the visual narrative of “Watchmen.” Additionally, they support Scott McCloud’s claims simultaneously. This thesis draws on Cohn’s theories in order to analyze how Moore and Gibbons create a visual narrative that involves readers as active participants in the creation of the story’s meaning rather than merely as passive observers.

Through the analysis of the graphic novel using the views of McCloud, Groensteen, and Cohn, among others, this thesis sheds light on the intricate methods “Watchmen” uses to create its visual narrative.

This thesis employs a methodological approach that integrates the close reading technique of thorough investigation with the multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) approach to explore the intricate narrative structure of “Watchmen.” With a focus on capturing the complex interactions between the textual and visual elements of the book, this approach delves deeply into how authors Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons use the unique abilities of the graphic novel medium to create a narrative experience.

A framework for analyzing “Watchmen” as a multimodal text that communicates through a combination of semiotic resources, such as written language, images, and spatial layout, is provided by multimodal discourse analysis, which allows it to methodically analyze how these different modes of communication interact to create meaning. It focuses on elements like the panel arrangement on the page, the interaction between the textual and visual dialogue, and the function of text stylization in expressing emphasis and tone. The way

² McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 70

that “Watchmen” uses words and images to guide reader interpretation will be analyzed in this thesis.

In order to support this, a close reading of this graphic novel in this particular context focuses closely at visual components including panel composition, character expressions, and background features in addition to the literary material. The complex details of “Watchmen’s” narrative can be appreciated thanks to this comprehensive analysis, which touches on topics from the emotional resonance of color schemes to the importance of recurrence of other visual elements. This thesis aims to emphasize the significance of the graphic novel’s visual element by examining how each panel adds to the overall narrative of the “Watchmen” and so reveals levels of meaning that should not be overlooked.

Using this methodological approach, the research attempts to explain how “Watchmen” creates its narrative by a precise use of visual elements. This detailed analysis will draw attention to the importance of visual storytelling in “Watchmen,” showcasing the creative way in which the graphic novel employs the comic book medium to create a rich narrative experience. Through an in-depth analysis of the visual narrative structure employed by Moore and Gibbons, this thesis points to the crucial role that visual storytelling plays in “Watchmen,” and approaches the analysis of graphic novels as intricate, multimodal works that challenge traditional narratives.

The thesis is organized into several chapters that explore the various components of visual narrative after this introduction. This structured approach allows a close analysis of each element, demonstrating how they fit in the intricate narrative of the graphic novel. The thesis will first explain a number of crucial elements that are essential to visual narrative, such as the concept of panels and images, their sequence, the page layout with an emphasis on the gutter, followed by the visual element of the textual plane and the collaboration of text and images.

Then the analysis will focus on the foundational elements of panel and image composition in “Watchmen.” Then the focus will shift on establishing shots and character’s facial expressions then on the strategic use of color in “Watchmen,” exploring how it is employed to support the story and enhance the narrative’s meaning. Another chapter explores the page layout of the graphic novel, looking at how the placement of panels on a page influences the narrative’s flow. This contains a discussion of how page layout might affect the narrative’s progression of time or be utilized for emphasis. And the final analytical chapter investigates the dynamic interplay between text and image in “Watchmen.”

“Watchmen” is a groundbreaking work of art that defies the conventions of the graphic novel and demonstrates the narrative capability of the comics medium. The work of Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons skillfully blends textual and graphic components to create a rich narrative with amazing depth and complexity. “Watchmen” demonstrates how graphic novels can effectively communicate complex stories. With the help of a multimodal discourse analysis lens, this thesis seeks to analyze the depths of “Watchmen’s” visual narrative and show how Moore and Gibbons use the interaction between text and visuals , as well as each plane on its own, to enhance their storytelling.

2. Visual as a part of narrative in Graphic novels

Graphic narrative is a crucial part in comics and graphic novels. It is a unique and dynamic kind of storytelling that breaks down traditional barriers between words and images. Graphic narratives drive stories forward by combining visual components of the comics and graphic novels, such as individual panels and images they contain, shape of the frames, panel sequences that form a page layout, and the interaction of words and images, immersing readers in immersive diverse narrative experiences. The following chapters look at how these visual components work together to support the narrative in graphic novels, transporting readers to rich and imaginative worlds. From the blank space between panels, which too are an important part of the visual plane, known as the gutter, in which the readers' engagement and imagination is needed to fill in the gaps between the panels, to the intentional use of page layout to influence pacing and rhythm, graphic narrative utilizes the power of visual storytelling to engage, question, and shock. Furthermore, the visual parts of speech balloons and narrative boxes, including their colors, shapes, and placement within the panels, are critical components of the narrative structure, communicating emotions, dialogue, and internal monologue with remarkable clarity and complexity. By breaking down these distinct parts of graphic narrative, we obtain a better grasp of how comics and graphic novels engage readers in complex and evocative storytelling, pushing boundaries of narrative expression.

2.1 Panel and Image

The most important and basic element of graphic narrative are panels. As Scott McCloud, a comics theorist and artist, renowned for his expert analysis of the comics medium and visual storytelling in his book *Understanding Comics*, calls them, they are the “comic’s most important icon”.³ Panel consists of frame, image and optionally speech balloons or narrative boxes. Frame is also defined in the *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, which is a comprehensive guide that defines and explores foundational concepts and terminology of comic book studies and is co-authored by scholars of comic book studies Simon Grennan, La Erin Cour, and Rik

³ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 98.

Spanjers. They describe the frame as the black line that outlines the panel, however frame and panels are often used interchangeably as synonyms.⁴

If a graphic novel's page was divided into units, the panel would be the basic unit. Eric Berlatsky, an academic specializing in narrative theory and comics studies, in his article *Lost in the Gutter* in which he focuses on the function of the gutter, braiding and draws from the theories of Thierry Groensteen says that, one panel cannot exist without other juxtaposed panels around it,⁵ usually preceding and following panels. Then they are organized into page layout. McCloud and Hillary Chute, who is an expert on comics and graphic narratives and in her article *Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative* she argues for the recognition of comics as a legitimate literary form and also focuses on the narrative aspects of comics. McCloud and Chute argue that there is a division of space and time, as the panels show,⁶ because they not only divide space on the page, but also space and time in the narrative in which they capture moments.⁷ It can be further said, according to McCloud and Chute, that the panels, which are always found in the presence of other panels, are better characterized by the blank spaces between them, which are called the gutter.⁸ As the meaning of one panel needs to be connected to the meaning of other panels, but only moments are captured in one panel, the reader has to use their imagination to make a sense of the panels and the moments that are happening between them.⁹ The gutter will be further discussed in its own chapter.

Image is the most prominent feature of the panel, as well as the crucial element of graphic narrative. Image is the essential bearer of the narrative information and is therefore essential for the graphic narrative. Henry John Pratt, a scholar in the field of comics studies in his article *Narrative in Comics*, in which he defines comics as sequences of images with text, argues that, since comics are primarily composed of pictures, it would be strange if the images had no bearing on the stories they tell.¹⁰ He then adds that if a comic could be communicated entirely via words, then there would be no need for it to exist in the first place.¹¹ Thus comics heavily rely on the images, because images can exist without the

⁴ Simon Grennan, La Erin Cour, and Rik Spanjers, *Key Terms in Comics Studies* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 117-118.

⁵ Eric Berlatsky, *Lost in the Gutter: Within and between Frames in Narrative and Narrative Theory*, *Narrative* 17, no. 2 (May 2009): 162-87, 171.

⁶ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 99.

⁷ Hillary Chute, *Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative*, *PMLA/Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 123, no. 2 (March 2008): 452-65, 454-455.

⁸ Chute, *Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative*, 162-163.

⁹ Chute, *Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative*, 162-163.

¹⁰ Henry John Pratt, *Narrative in Comics*, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 67, no. 1 (February 2009): 107-17, 110.

¹¹ Henry John Pratt, *Narrative in Comics*, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 67, no. 1 (February 2009): 107-17, 110.

presence of text, but on the contrary text cannot exist without the image. Sara J. Van Ness, an author of the book *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel*, in which she explores the depth of *Watchmen* as a literary work through its narrative structure, symbolism, and thematic complexity says that, in contrast to traditional prose, which uses words to create mental images, graphic novels provide readers with intricate details through visual representations and it can further convey some emotion visually through the use of color¹² which can also impact the tone and mood of the story. However, readers must still interpret each image¹³ with their own imagination.¹⁴ This claim is also supported by influential comics scholar Thierry Groensteen in his book *The System of Comics*, and subsequent book *Comics and Narration* in which he expands on previous research on the “word and image” and looks at the distinctive way comics use a variety of elements to convey a narrative. Van Ness says that the image inside of a panel consists of the character's facial expression, composition and point-of-view, all of which carry some meaning on their own,¹⁵ but combined together they provide a complete picture,¹⁶ as also supported by Groensteen.

Composition in the graphic novels is defined in *Key Terms in Comics Studies* as a way how the elements are arranged within the panel, including position of object or characters, use of foreground and background as well as point of view, from which the content of the panel is shown.¹⁷ Will Eisner, cartoonist and author of *Comics and Sequential Art*, a foundational book for formal comics studies in English, in which he discusses the principles and practices of visual storytelling through comics, in this book says that through the use of these elements, the comics are “medium of control”.¹⁸ There are essentially two different kinds of composition found within the panel. The main object or character of the panel is either put in the center of the image, or off-center. McCloud says that The readers tend to perceive the object or the character placed in the center of the image¹⁹ as the most important element of the given panel. On the contrary, when there is no specific object or character in the center and is placed off-center, it gives the reader, in McCloud's words

¹² Sara J. Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 2010), 42.

¹³ Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel*, 24-25

¹⁴ Thierry Groensteen, *The System of Comics* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 9.

¹⁵ Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel*, 24-25

¹⁶ Thierry Groensteen, *Comics and Narration* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 12

¹⁷ Simon Grennan, La Erin Cour, and Rik Spanjers, *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 71

¹⁸ Will Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art: Principles and Practice of the World's Most Popular Art Form, Expanded to Include Print and Digital* (Tamarac FL US: Poorhouse Press, 1985), 40.

¹⁹ Scott McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels* (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 2006), 25.

“license to wander”.²⁰ So the reader can look around the scene and understand, for example the settings of the scene. This technique is often used for panels, which establish the setting to give the readers the sense of place in which the story takes place. McCloud call these an “establishing shots”²¹ and they are crucial for graphic narrative, as they supplement the novel’s description of place or scene and quickly and effectively pass information to the reader on the story’s whereabouts.

Crucial part of the image and panel is point-of-view. McCloud says that a good metaphor is that the panel functions in a similar way as a camera for the readers, as it shows the readers the scene from a specific angle and therefore it can influence how the reader perceives the scene, which emotion the panel evokes,²² or it can also influence the reading flow. McCloud then presents 3 different points of view, or viewing angles. The first one is the basic eye-level,²³ in which the characters, objects or scenes are depicted from the characters point of view and the readers can look through the eyes of the character. Then there is the worm’s eye view,²⁴ which is the view from a low angle which can create a feeling that objects or characters are large, majestic or powerful. On the other hand, the bird’s eye view²⁵ is great to show the settings of the scene and to get the readers acquainted with the surroundings, or to get above the current situation or relationship between the characters and have some emotional high ground and see it from above emotionally.²⁶ Berlatsky emphasizes that it is important to say that these different angles are often used in contrast with other juxtaposed panels in the sequence or to reinforce each other.²⁷

The use of foreground, midground and background can also be used to influence the reading flow or to give emphasis to a specific object or character and it also gives the panel the illusion of the three-dimensional space,²⁸ as described by Van Ness. Additionally in comics and graphic novels the close-ups are widely used. They foreground the given element and it subsequently fills most of the panel. Van Ness further explains that it is used to put emphasis to elements which are important for the narrative. Or close ups can be also used to highlight the characters’ facial expressions,²⁹ as it is defined in *Key Terms in Comics Studies*.

²⁰ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 165

²¹ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 22

²² McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 24, 34

²³ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 21

²⁴ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 21

²⁵ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 21

²⁶ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 21

²⁷ Berlatsky, *Lost in the Gutter: Within and between Frames in Narrative and Narrative Theory*, 174-175

²⁸ Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel*, 36

²⁹ Simon Grennan, La Erin Cour, and Rik Spanjers, *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 54

Facial expressions are likewise important for the graphic narrative, as they can effectively convey a character's emotion, or their attitude towards other characters, without the need of using words. According to McCloud in his book *Making Comics*, facial expressions are crucial for graphic narrative and to quote:

Expressions aren't something we can opt out of as easily, as with words. They're a compulsive form of visual communication all of us use. We all know how to "read" and "write" them with our faces but few of us can consciously reproduce them in art with as much style and grace as we do in life.

And there's no stronger conduit to your readers' emotions than through the emotions of the characters you create for them.³⁰

McCloud also mentions, that facial expressions are usually linked with body language³¹ and they usually work together. However, they might not always be shown together in graphic narrative, for example in close-ups, which are usually focused on the character's face. Van Ness also adds that the readers may also learn a lot about a character's temperament, mood, degree of confidence or lack thereof, desires, and much more from their facial expressions.³²

Image, composition, color, point of view and use of depth together form *mise-en-scene*³³, as described in *Key Terms*. *Mise-en-scene* produces a visual narrative that evokes meaning, feeling, and mood. While graphic novels are unable to control depth of field in real time, they substitute for it by carefully planning panel composition and page layout to create effects that are equivalent. Jan Baetens, a Professor of Literary and Cultural Studies in his article *Abstraction in Comics*, which he explores the role and effects of abstract art within the comic medium says that, it is important to emphasize that these elements not only function for depiction in graphic novels, but they are mainly a feature that supports narration.³⁴ Readers can learn more about the goals and interpretations of the story's writers by dissecting these elements,³⁵ as mentioned in *Key Terms*.

2.2 Sequence, Page Layout and Gutter

As part of the graphic novel's formal apparatus, a sequence in comics is a collection of sequential panels that show connected or cohesive information. As explained in *Key Terms*,

³⁰ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 81

³¹ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 103

³² Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel*, 42

³³ Simon Grennan, La Erin Cour, and Rik Spanjers, *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 203

³⁴ Jan Baetens, *Abstraction in Comics*, *SubStance* 40, no. 1 (2011): 94–113, 95.

³⁵ Simon Grennan, La Erin Cour, and Rik Spanjers, *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 203

narrative progressions are formed by sequences.³⁶ A sequence might be the most important feature of comics, as they are the main function of how narrative meaning is created in graphic novels. In fact, the sequence is so important for graphic narrative, that Will Eisner characterizes them as “sequential art”.³⁷ Neil Cohn, an cognitive scientist and researcher who focuses on visual language, comics and linguistics with focus on cognitive processing, in his article *Visual Language Theory and the scientific study of comics* says that a single image can in fact “narrate” or convey some narrative information, but sequence is the main narrative feature of graphic novels,³⁸ because the sequence of images is what is needed to convey narrative information. Furthermore, not even the presence of words is needed and a sequence of images is sufficient,³⁹ as supported by Groensteen. It can therefore be said, and is also mentioned by Berlatsky, that it is hard to distinguish a “frame” in and of itself without at least two juxtaposed frames.⁴⁰ The mention of sequence also appears in the definition of comics by Scott McCloud in his book *Understanding comics*. He labels comics as “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence.”⁴¹ The sequence also appears in the definition by a scholar of comics, who focuses on the topic of semiotics in the comics narration in her article *Draw a Thousand Words: Signification and Narration in Comics Images*, Barbara Postema: “Comics images rarely stand alone. It is fundamental to the form of comics that images are joined together in sequences to produce narration.”⁴² Groensteen in his book *Comics and Narration* compares reading sequences to the way kids use the “and then... and then... and then...” technique⁴³ to create stories, because a graphic novel likewise follows this sequence of events: after finishing one panel, readers jump into the next, and so on.⁴⁴ At the core of the reading process is a beat that is established by this irregular and rhythmic action.⁴⁵

Groensteen further says that the organization of panels in a sequence and their relationship can produce a beat.⁴⁶ Beat subsequently creates a reading rhythm. According to *The Routledge Companion to Comics*, a comprehensive book which covers various topic related to comics studies, edited by Frank Bramlett, Roy T. Cook, and Aaron Meskin, the beat

³⁶ Simon Grennan, La Erin Cour, and Rik Spanjers, *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 289

³⁷ Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art: Principles and Practice of the World's Most Popular Art Form*, 40

³⁸ Cohn Neil, *Visual Language Theory and the Scientific Study of Comics*, *Empirical Comics Research*, July 3, 2018, 305–28, 7.

³⁹ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 9

⁴⁰ Berlatsky, *Lost in the Gutter: Within and between Frames in Narrative and Narrative Theory*, 171

⁴¹ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 9

⁴² Barbara Postema, *Draw a Thousand Words: Signification and Narration in Comics Images*, *International Journal of Comic Art*, 9(1), 487–501. 2007 9, no. 1 (2007): 487–501, 487-488.

⁴³ Groensteen, *Comics and Narration*, 136-137

⁴⁴ Groensteen, *Comics and Narration*, 136-137

⁴⁵ Groensteen, *Comics and Narration*, 136-137

⁴⁶ Groensteen, *Comics and Narration*, 135

is a distinct rhythm that emerges when the reader realizes that a certain basic unit⁴⁷—like the panel sizes, for example—is repeated in an organized way.⁴⁸ Which means that the graphic novels with regular structure are more likely to produce a strong beat, than comics whose panels in sequence change on a regular basis. The beat can be further amplified or supported by color.⁴⁹ For example, when the color of the panel changes regularly. However, color is not the only feature that can affect the beat. Any regularly occurring element within the panels can also influence the reading rhythm.⁵⁰ This claim is further supported by Groensteen, who also highlights the strong rhythm of the regular sequence,⁵¹ in this case the regular page layout known as “waffle-iron” grid and mentions three ways, by which the rhythm is reinforced and those are “repetition, periodic alternation, and progressivity.”⁵²

2.2.1 Gutter

Visual parts of the graphic narrative, such as images, speech balloons, panels and frame sizes are a crucial part of the narrative in the graphic novels and comics. However the blank space between the panels, which contain “nothing”, just a blank space is as much important as all the other mentioned elements. It is not just a blank space, but rather a space where most of the graphic novel’s narration take place, as it can represent both short and long time periods.

The definition of the gutter is, according to *Key Terms*: “material space visible between two juxtaposed comics panels.”⁵³ In fact, Berlatsky claims that the gutter is what defines the frame, because the frame in graphic novels and comics has to occur in the presence of two other juxtaposed frames and the blank space, or the gutter between them is what defines it.⁵⁴ However, this space between panels is not just a dividing line or space as it has a quite specific function in the graphic narrative. McCloud explains and is further supported by Berlatsky that the main function of the gutter is to create an activity and engagement for the readers, where they have to employ their imagination and connect two or

⁴⁷ Frank Bramlett, Aaron Meskin, and Roy T. Cook, *The Routledge Companion to Comics* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 306-307; Groensteen, *Comics and Narration*, 154

⁴⁸ Frank Bramlett, Aaron Meskin, and Roy T. Cook, *The Routledge Companion to Comics* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 306-307; Groensteen, *Comics and Narration*, 154

⁴⁹ Frank Bramlett, Aaron Meskin, and Roy T. Cook, *The Routledge Companion to Comics* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 306-307; Groensteen, *Comics and Narration*, 154

⁵⁰ Frank Bramlett, Aaron Meskin, and Roy T. Cook, *The Routledge Companion to Comics* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 306-307; Groensteen, *Comics and Narration*, 154

⁵¹ Groensteen, *Comics and Narration*, 147

⁵² Groensteen, *Comics and Narration*, 147

⁵³ Simon Grennan, La Erin Cour, and Rik Spanjers, *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 142-143

⁵⁴ Berlatsky, *Lost in the Gutter: Within and between Frames in Narrative and Narrative Theory*, 171

more separate images into one single idea.⁵⁵ Or in other words, as specified by Van Ness, the readers need to make sense of how each panel is connected to the following panel.⁵⁶ The notion of gutter is not exclusive to fictional graphic novels,⁵⁷ as Chute proves in her article *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form*, where she proves that comics are an effective tool for visually observing and recording historical tragedies. Chute shows, that gutter is also used in non-fiction comics,⁵⁸ where it functions the same way as in fictional comics. Which further proves its existence.⁵⁹

The importance of gutter for the graphic narrative and its role in the visual narration is also discussed by Groensteen in his book *The System of Comics*. He claims that the blank space between the panel, the gutter is as important for the production of meaning as the images are.⁶⁰ Groensteen then continues this debate and discusses that the meaning of a single image can be interpreted in more than one way, however, the images that are found in sequence subsequently narrows this open interpretation into a more specific scope.⁶¹ Therefore the gutter, which on its own is meaningless,⁶² gains a crucial role and the panels are not only divided by the gutter, but more importantly they are united, as the meaning of one image overflows into the meaning of the following panel.⁶³

In order to understand that a sequence of images is connected and one panel relates to the following panels, the readers must perform an action where they connect these panels and understand that they are part of one. According to *Key Terms* this action has been popularized by McCloud⁶⁴ in his book *Understanding Comics* and he named it the “closure”.⁶⁵ McCloud explains the function of closure by saying: “In our daily lives, we often commit closure, mentally completing that which is incomplete based on past experience.”⁶⁶ McCloud then continues and claims that the closure is the grammar of comics.⁶⁷ Pratt also support this notion that the closure is essential for the graphic narrative, because artists cannot exactly

⁵⁵ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 66; Berlatsky, *Lost in the Gutter: Within and between Frames in Narrative and Narrative Theory*, 162-163

⁵⁶ Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel*, 56

⁵⁷ Hillary L. Chute, *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 35-36

⁵⁸ Hillary L. Chute, *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 35-36

⁵⁹ Hillary L. Chute, *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 35-36

⁶⁰ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 112

⁶¹ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 112

⁶² Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 114

⁶³ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 114

⁶⁴ Simon Grennan, La Erin Cour, and Rik Spanjers, *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 55

⁶⁵ Simon Grennan, La Erin Cour, and Rik Spanjers, *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 55

⁶⁶ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 63

⁶⁷ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 67

show the passage of time, however they can hint through panels containing clocks or sun setting or rising, and therefore they have to rely on readers to perform closure⁶⁸ in the gutter to understand. Cohn in his book *Who Understands Comics?* in which he explores the mental processes involved in comprehending comics talks further about closure and says that the closure could not be performed, if the readers did not recognize that the characters and the object, which appear in one panel are the same characters and objects, that appear in the following panels.⁶⁹ Cohn continues that in each image, the reader must recognize that the same characters are repeated across different depictions,⁷⁰ rather than portraying different characters. This is called “continuity.”⁷¹ The closure was further discussed as a part of visual narrative processing by Cohn in “The Visual Language of Comics”.⁷²

Now that the notion of closure and continuity is introduced, another crucial feature of the gutter can be discussed. So far the gutter was discussed in the sequence, which connected panels which contained the same characters, objects or environment. These transitions between panels are classified into 3 different categories⁷³ by McCloud and these would be the moment-to-moment, action-to-action a subject-to-subject transition.⁷⁴ In these transitions, the gutter functions as a link between panels which are really closely connected and depict the same characters or objects, usually in the same environment. Additionally, Berlatsky says, when a movement is depicted in the graphic narrative it usually happens between the panels, in the gutter,⁷⁵ because in this case the panels function more as photographs, where just a moment in time is captured and readers’ involvement, through their imagination and use of the closure, is needed to fill in the movement and understand that the objects or characters are not stuck in one place.⁷⁶ Also, the action depicted in the panels should be transparent so the readers are able to figure out what is happening. As mentioned by Cohn, events of action do not need any formal education and are therefore perceived,⁷⁷ so it should not be difficult to understand the notion of motion. However, in graphic novels and comics, the transition from one panel to another often contains much bigger changes. The gutter between panels can change, or transition, to another setting and change where the story takes place, for example

⁶⁸ Pratt, “*Narrative in Comics*,” 112

⁶⁹ Neil Cohn, *Who Understands Comics?*, 16

⁷⁰ Neil Cohn, *Who Understands Comics?*, 16

⁷¹ Neil Cohn, *Who Understands Comics?*, 16

⁷² Neil Cohn, *The Visual Language of Comics: Introduction to the Structure and Cognition of Sequential Images* (London etc.: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 68-69

⁷³ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 70-71

⁷⁴ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 70-71

⁷⁵ Berlatsky, “Lost in the Gutter: Within and between Frames in Narrative and Narrative Theory,” 174-175

⁷⁶ Berlatsky, “Lost in the Gutter: Within and between Frames in Narrative and Narrative Theory,” 174-175

⁷⁷ Neil Cohn, *Who Understands Comics?*, 2-3

from one character to another, or it can travel through time. Either forward to the future, or into the past through flashbacks. As mentioned by Groensteen, when the readers see a character in one panel and in the following panel the character became significantly younger or older, the reader, through the use of closure understands that some time shift, either forward or backward has happened and the character just did not change his appearance and age in the moment.⁷⁸ Similarly, the environment does not magically change, but readers understand that shift in the space has been done. This shift is usually supported by establishing shots. These kinds of changes McCloud categorizes as scene-to-scene⁷⁹ and aspect-to-aspect⁸⁰ transitions. McCloud also presents a non-sequitur transition, where there is no logical relationship between panels,⁸¹ which could also fit into this category.

2.2.2 Page Layout and Time and Space

The notion of sequence and blank space between panels, the gutter, has been discussed, but these individual elements connect to create page layout. *Key Terms* characterizes comics and graphic novels as essentially fragments, which spread over time and space.⁸² It is not only important to produce these fragments, or link them into sequences, but it is needed to link them into something greater. And in the case of comics and graphic novels, these fragments, according to Groensteen, are linked and arranged together to form page layout.⁸³ The page layout therefore arranges panels and sequences and helps readers to orient themselves on the page and additionally guides them from one panel to another,⁸⁴ supporting the graphic novel's narrative nature. Cohn expands on this and claims that readers therefore understand what they should read next in order to fully understand the narrative.⁸⁵

The page layout, however, is not a standalone feature of graphic novels, but it has to serve the story,⁸⁶ as mentioned by McCloud in *Making Comics*. This is also further supported by Groensteen who says that page layout does not consist of blank panels, but must also consider what images they contain.⁸⁷ Page serves as the guide for the readers, so they know how to move through the panels to comprehend their content.⁸⁸ On the contrary, Cohn says

⁷⁸ Groensteen, *Comics and Narration*, 39

⁷⁹ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 71

⁸⁰ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 72

⁸¹ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 71-72

⁸² Grennan, et. al., *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 116-117

⁸³ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 21-22

⁸⁴ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 34

⁸⁵ Neil Cohn, *Who Understands Comics?*, 26-27

⁸⁶ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 33

⁸⁷ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 92

⁸⁸ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 92

that layout of the page was identified in segregation to the contents of the panels.⁸⁹ Cohn also says that page layout serves as the external compositional structure of a page,⁹⁰ which means it refers to the compositional framework that is “external” to the panel, therefore it does not correlate with the composition inside of the panel, but arranges panels into the page’s composition.⁹¹ *Key Terms* add that page layout and its visual composition, together with gutter and panels are formed through page architecture.⁹² This term can also refer to the depiction of buildings, which are frequently a key component in identifying a story’s setting within comic book visual narratives, as explained by professor of English Catherine Labio in her article *The Architecture of Comics*, in which she focuses on the page architecture and settings of comics. Because many comics stories are set in cities, she says that architectural representations have “long been a prominent fixture of the comics page.”⁹³ This section focuses solely on the architecture of the page.

Key Terms says that the page layout could also be referred to as a “grid”.⁹⁴ This is usually the case of western comics, because they tend to have panels of the same size and shape in the sequence,⁹⁵ which creates a visual grid on the page. A grid, which consists of panels that are all of the same size and are organized in sequences of three rows, of which every row consists of three panels is also called, according to Groensteen, “the waffle-iron grid”.⁹⁶ This waffle-iron grid is very frequent in western comics and it is also referred to as one of the fundamental panel arrangements in graphic novels and comics page layouts⁹⁷ by Neil Cohn and Kaitlin Pederson in their article *The Changing Pages of Comics: Page Layouts across Eight Decades of American Superhero Comics*, in which they dive deep into comics’s page layout. It has an impact on the entire reading experience since, according to *Key Terms*, comics are understood both by the spatial dimension of the layout⁹⁸ and by the sequential continuity of the panels.⁹⁹ Bramlett supports this notion and also comments on the irregularity of the grid:

⁸⁹ Cohn, Magliano, “Editors’ Introduction and Review: *Visual Narrative Research: An Emerging Field in Cognitive Science*,” 206

⁹⁰ Cohn, “*Visual Language Theory and the Scientific Study of Comics*,” 13

⁹¹ Cohn, “*Visual Language Theory and the Scientific Study of Comics*,” 13

⁹² Grennan, et. al., *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 23

⁹³ Catherine Labio, *The Architecture of Comics*, *Critical Inquiry* 41, no. 2 (January 2015): 312–43, 312.

⁹⁴ Grennan, et. al., *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 140-141

⁹⁵ Grennan, et. al., *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 140-141

⁹⁶ Groensteen, *Comics and Narration*, 44

⁹⁷ Kaitlin Pederson and Neil Cohn, *The Changing Pages of Comics: Page Layouts across Eight Decades of American Superhero Comics*, *Studies in Comics* 7, no. 1 (July 1, 2016): 7–28, 8-9.

⁹⁸ Grennan, et. al., *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 140-141

⁹⁹ Grennan, et. al., *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 140-141

The more irregular the panel grid, and the more unusual the layout, the more likely a reader will deviate from the linear path and shift their attention to the page as an overall image.¹⁰⁰

This notion is also further supported by Paul Gravett, English writer and journalist, in his book *Graphic Novels: Everything you need to know*, in which he focuses on graphic novels' development and importance as a storytelling medium. Gravett says that the reader may see the precise progression of several stories moment by moment thanks to a grid of nine identical panels on each page.¹⁰¹ He says that comics and graphic novels are like a time bomb or metronome and the panels flash by.¹⁰² The regular grid therefore supports the narrative by guiding the readers from one panel to another and creating a "Z-path",¹⁰³ as mentioned by Cohn, where readers go from the first sequence to the second and then to the third.

However, not all comics or graphic novels use regular page layout or grid. Even those who do, do not strictly adhere to it. As already mentioned, McCloud says that the page layout should provide for your story,¹⁰⁴ not the contrary. The deviations from the grid can change the rhythm of the story and also slow down or speed up the time, either through more panels in a sequence, or through a large panel which takes place of several panels. Nevertheless the notion of time and space in comics and graphic novels have to be introduced first.

Since graphic novels are a visual art form, space is essential to the practice and definition of the medium. *Key Terms* explains that space affects a panel's layout, size, and form, in addition to how the panels are arranged, composed, and distributed on the page¹⁰⁵ as well as how they link to one another.¹⁰⁶ Since comics are a narrative art form as well, time is also a crucial feature. Graphic novel's narrativity is what gives them their sense of time. There are three ways to describe time: with words, with visual cues like clocks or the rising sun, and with signals that indicate pace. Time is also portrayed by the sequence of events,¹⁰⁷ which can be either chronological or a random order, as is the case with all narratives. The quantity and configuration of the panels may also indicate how quickly time goes by.¹⁰⁸ Seymour Chatman in his article *Towards a Theory of Narrative*, in which he argues for the necessity of a thorough theory of narrative that takes into consideration the story itself and the discourse of a narrative and draws on works of Gerard Genette, Tzvetan Todorov, and

¹⁰⁰ Bramlett, et. al., *The Routledge Companion to Comics*, 341

¹⁰¹ Paul Gravett, *Graphic Novels: Everything You Need to Know* (New York: Harper-Collins Design, 2005), 82.

¹⁰² Paul Gravett, *Graphic Novels: Everything You Need to Know* (New York: Harper-Collins Design, 2005), 82.

¹⁰³ Neil Cohn, *Who Understands Comics?*, 28

¹⁰⁴ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 33

¹⁰⁵ Grennan, et. al., *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 301

¹⁰⁶ Grennan, et. al., *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 301

¹⁰⁷ Grennan, et. al., *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 325-326

¹⁰⁸ Grennan, et. al., *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 325-326

Roland Barthes says that it is also important to distinguish between diegetic time and reading time, however in comics, these two types are often connected.¹⁰⁹ E. H. Gombrich, art historian and scholar, in his article *Moment and Movement in Art*, which highlights the significance of comprehending how time functions in visual representation says that it is necessary to decode the image's representation of the event in order to understand the time period it depicts.¹¹⁰ But these events are often supported by the size of the panel.

As already mentioned, even a single panel can depict a certain period of time. These periods of time can be changed in relation to the panel's content, for example speech balloons, which, if they contain a lot of text, can make the duration of the panel longer. However, as mentioned by Bramlett, et. al. in *The Routledge Companion to Comics*, even in these cases the diegetic time and reading do not have to correlate,¹¹¹ but generally, the more the panel contains, the longer diegetic period it occupies.¹¹² The time cannot be measured precisely in comics, but the mentioned features can help the readers to at least approximately understand the passage of time in the story.

It could be better understood on the level of a sequence or entire page, where it can be further supported by the size and shapes of the panels. Bramlett et al. discusses this speed management in the book *The Routledge Companion to Comics*:

Despite the difficulties to measure it, speed is definitely an important characteristic of comic art. And speed management, i.e. the production of a certain impression of acceleration or deceleration of time, is something that can be achieved through visual and medium-specific means. At the level of reading time management, some examples are panel and frame enlargement, on the one hand, and richness of information, on the other hand. The horizontal stretching of a panel, certainly in the case of a comic book that otherwise divides its strips into different panels, will almost inevitably slow down the reading pace. It is easy to imagine that readers will tend to scan the whole surface of the image, looking for relevant information, rather than have a quick glance at the whole panel and move ahead to the next one.¹¹³

It can therefore be said that the size of the panels influences and supports the reading flow, where larger panels tend to slow down and smaller panels conversely speed up both the diegetic and reading time. This claim is also supported by McCloud, which says that the grid

¹⁰⁹ Seymour Chatman, *Towards a Theory of Narrative*, *New Literary History* 6, no. 2 (1975): 295–315, <https://doi.org/10.2307/468421>, 315.

¹¹⁰ E. H. Gombrich, *Moment and Movement in Art*, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 27, no. 1 (January 1, 1964): 293–306, 302.

¹¹¹ Bramlett, et. al., *The Routledge Companion to Comics*, 304-306

¹¹² Bramlett, et. al., *The Routledge Companion to Comics*, 304-306

¹¹³ Bramlett, et. al., *The Routledge Companion to Comics*, 304-306

helps readers understand the significance of the full-page panel.¹¹⁴ This is also further supported by Groensteen, who says that: “The frame is always an invitation to stop and to scrutinize.”¹¹⁵ So the larger the panel, the more information it usually contains, therefore the larger panels slow down the reading. On the other hand, sequences of more panels have the tendency to speed up the time. Groensteen mentions that the story advances with each new panel,¹¹⁶ so the more the panels in the sequence, the faster the time passes. This is also supported by McCloud, who mentions that the size of the panels change the readers’ perception of time, where larger panels seem to be slower than the smaller panels.¹¹⁷

2.3 Speech Balloons and Narrative boxes

In graphic novels, words, speech balloons, and narrative boxes play a crucial role in visually supporting the narrative, adding depth, context, and dimension to the story. Through strategic placement, design, and typography, these textual elements interact with visual imagery to convey dialogue, narration, and internal monologue. Groensteen discusses speech balloons as Word balloons serve as a component which records sound¹¹⁸—spoken word sound, in this case. Because it takes time to prepare a speech, they additionally generate the panel’s duration.

According to Cohn, speech balloons and thought bubbles are an element of the “visual lexicon”¹¹⁹ of graphic novels. Because the lexicon is founded on convention, which Postema emphasizes further, readers need to learn to understand them. Which requires readers to go through a learning process in order to completely understand their meanings and consequences within the story.¹²⁰ Cohn further supports this claim by saying that according to research, people from cultures where this representation of speech is not common is said to be unable to understand the meanings of speech balloons and thought bubbles.¹²¹ Cohn also says that speech balloons are part of the visual language.¹²²

¹¹⁴ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 51

¹¹⁵ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 5

¹¹⁶ Groensteen, *Comics and Narration*, 133.

¹¹⁷ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 101

¹¹⁸ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 68-69

¹¹⁹ Neil Cohn, *Who Understands Comics?*, 8

¹²⁰ Barbara Postema, *Draw a Thousand Words: Signification and Narration in Comics Images*, 489

¹²¹ Neil Cohn, *Who Understands Comics?*, 13

¹²² Neil Cohn, *Comics, Linguistics, and Visual Language: The Past and Future of a Field*, *Linguistics and the Study of Comics*, 2012, 92–118, 93.

The shape of the speech balloons can vary depending on the situation. According to Grennan et. al. in *Key Terms*, the traditional shape of speech balloons is a circle with a tail pointing in the direction of the speaking character. Readers of comic books and graphic novels will recognize this form immediately since it separates narration¹²³—which is usually contained inside square caption boxes—from conversation.¹²⁴ A speech balloons lack of a tail denotes that the conversation belongs to the character nearest to it or to a character outside of the panel,¹²⁵ which highlights the significance of spatial arrangement. Pratt adds that these characteristics are similar to the “he/she said” in literature.¹²⁶ Van Ness says that word balloon shapes can also represent conversational characteristics like whispering or yelling,¹²⁷ which might influence how readers interpret the spoken words.

The spatial arrangement of speech balloons is further discussed by Groensteen who points out that the speech balloons really represent a “zone of opacity”¹²⁸ that sits on top of the clear plane of the panel, rather than a physical area inside the scene that is being portrayed. Which suggests that the speech balloons are part of the panel, but not part of the image. According to this viewpoint, speech balloons function on a separate visual plane,¹²⁹ enriching the story without hiding the underlying images. He further says that speech balloons are “subordinate to the panel”,¹³⁰ because the panel can exist without the speech balloon, but not vice versa.¹³¹ The time of the narrative can also be affected by the placement of speech balloons. According to Groensteen, balloons positioned in the panel and on across the gutter form a visual link between panels¹³² that directs the reader’s attention and suggests a flow of speech. This method may make a scene seem longer than it actually is.¹³³ Which further supports the McClouds notion of the speech balloons giving the panels time duration. Bramlett et. al. also discusses the positioning of speech balloons inside the panels, pointing out that one major benefit of the comic format is its capacity to depict simultaneous speech within the same panel,¹³⁴ something that prose can only do sequentially.¹³⁵ Because of its capacity to create a dynamic narrative flow and provide readers with the opportunity to

¹²³ Grennan, et. al., *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 303-304

¹²⁴ Grennan, et. al., *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 303-304

¹²⁵ Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel*, 26,

¹²⁶ Pratt, *Narrative in Comics*, 110

¹²⁷ Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel*, 27-29

¹²⁸ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 71

¹²⁹ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 71

¹³⁰ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 68-69

¹³¹ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 68-69

¹³² Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 81

¹³³ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 81

¹³⁴ Bramlett, et. al., *The Routledge Companion to Comics*, 233

¹³⁵ Bramlett, et. al., *The Routledge Companion to Comics*, 233

experience various views or events at once,¹³⁶ comic books and graphic novels are the only media that can portray simultaneous speech.¹³⁷

Narrative boxes have most of the same features as speech balloons, according to Van Ness, but narrative boxes lack tails and usually adopt a rectangular or square shape,¹³⁸ as opposed to being oval or round. They contain the narrator's narration or character's narration.¹³⁹ Additionally, according to Van Ness, the narrative balloons do not necessarily need to contain spoken word, but can also contain narration in form of a written word,¹⁴⁰ such as journals, or passages from a book.

Text inside of the speech balloons or narrative boxes can additionally convey meaning through its stylization. In *Key Terms* it is mentioned that it is possible for different styles to convey different personalities, indicating that the choice was made on purpose to represent the tone, atmosphere, and character traits in the narrative.¹⁴¹ Renowned comics artist Will Eisner highlights the special nature of hand lettering, saying it gives the text a “recognizable ‘human’ quality”.¹⁴² Which is also supported by Van Ness, who says that typography adds a layer of visual importance to words that goes beyond their literal meaning¹⁴³ to improve and compliment storytelling. Pratt adds that the text can differ in its color, shape, and boldness.¹⁴⁴ Cohn emphasizes the importance of speech balloons in the fusion of text and image¹⁴⁵, seeing them as necessary components that come together to form a coherent and significant whole. This viewpoint emphasizes how crucial typography is to the narrative framework¹⁴⁶ of graphic novels—not simply as a means of supporting it, but as an active participant in it.¹⁴⁷

¹³⁶ Bramlett, et. al., *The Routledge Companion to Comics*, 233

¹³⁷ Bramlett, et. al., *The Routledge Companion to Comics*, 233

¹³⁸ Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel*, 29

¹³⁹ Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel*, 29

¹⁴⁰ Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel*, 29

¹⁴¹ Grennan, et. al., *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 336-337

¹⁴² Will Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art: Principles and Practice of the World's Most Popular Art Form*, 26, 24.

¹⁴³ Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel*, 25

¹⁴⁴ Pratt, *Narrative in Comics*, 108

¹⁴⁵ Neil Cohn, “Beyond Speech Balloons and Thought Bubbles: The Integration of Text and Image,” *Semiotica* 2013, no. 197 (January 25, 2013), 37.

¹⁴⁶ Neil Cohn, “Beyond Speech Balloons and Thought Bubbles: The Integration of Text and Image,” *Semiotica* 2013, no. 197 (January 25, 2013), 37.

¹⁴⁷ Neil Cohn, “Beyond Speech Balloons and Thought Bubbles: The Integration of Text and Image,” *Semiotica* 2013, no. 197 (January 25, 2013), 37.

2.4. Narration and Dynamic Relationship

In graphic novels the narration is not strictly feature exclusive to words or images, but both words and pictures work together to create a graphic novel's narration. Chris Gaevaler, in his article *Three of a Perfect Pair: Image, Text, and Image-Text Narrators*, where he draws on Groensteen and provides a thorough theory of comics narration that takes into consideration the textual plane and images in the medium, says that words and images create so-called "dual narration".¹⁴⁸ According to literary scholar Suzanne Keen, in her book *Narrative Form*, in which she focuses on the wide topic of the numerous narrative styles and literary structures, says that the narrator is "the entity from whom the discourse comprising the story emanates".¹⁴⁹ As already discussed in previous sections, the image in graphic novels, and specifically images in sequence create narration on their own, which is also supported by scholars Jan Baetens and Hugo Frey in their book *The Graphic Novel: An Introduction*, in which they argue that the graphic novel is a distinct medium for literary and visual communication that calls for a particular method of comprehension and interpretation, says that the stories themselves are created by image.¹⁵⁰ With the exception of wordless comics, according to Gaevaler, there are three different kinds of narrating agencies in comics: text, picture, and hybrid narrators that combine the first two to create new effects,¹⁵¹ so it can be said that the narrative elements of comics are both literary and graphic,¹⁵² as supported by Pratt.

It is important to emphasize that words and images in comics are more like partners which take turns in leading the narrative.¹⁵³ McCloud further supports this in "Making Comics" by claiming that to achieve the best narrative potential in graphic novels, it is needed that the relationship between words and pictures is dynamic.¹⁵⁴ This claim is also supported by Groensteen¹⁵⁵ and Chute.¹⁵⁶ Scott McCloud in "Making Comics" presents the 7 different types of word and picture combinations.¹⁵⁷ Word Specific combination, where

¹⁴⁸ Chris Gaevaler, *Three of a Perfect Pair: Image, Text, and Image-Text Narrators*, *Image & Narrative* 20, no. 1 (April 3, 2019): 67–84, <https://www.imageandnarrative.be/index.php/imagenarrative/article/view/2076>, 68-69.

¹⁴⁹ Suzanne Keen, *Narrative Form* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 34.

¹⁵⁰ Jan Baetens and Hugo Frey, *The Graphic Novel: An Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 164.

¹⁵¹ Gaevaler, *Three of a Perfect Pair: Image, Text, and Image-Text Narrators*, 68-69

¹⁵² Pratt, *Narrative in Comics*, 107

¹⁵³ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 156

¹⁵⁴ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 128

¹⁵⁵ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 6

¹⁵⁶ Chute, *Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative*, 452

¹⁵⁷ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 130

pictures illustrate, but do not significantly add to, a largely complete text.¹⁵⁸ The images serve more as a visual accompaniment to the words,¹⁵⁹ which carry the narrative weight. Picture Specific,¹⁶⁰ where the images essentially tell the story and the words just give minor background information that doesn't significantly change the meaning the pictures portray. Duo-Specific¹⁶¹ where essentially the same message is communicated by both words and images. The story can become more comprehensible by using this repetition to emphasize certain points. Intersecting¹⁶² when words and images are combined, communicate the same message, but also add some information. Parallel¹⁶³ refers to two distinct storylines or messages conveyed by words and images without immediately colliding. Together, words and images may express a concept that neither could express on its own is called interdependent combination and finally montage, where words are part of the image.¹⁶⁴ Montage could be also referred to as imagetext,¹⁶⁵ which is a term coined by theorist W. J. T. Mitchell,¹⁶⁶ to make clear how tightly representation and discourse are woven together, in his book *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, where he focuses on the visual representation in literature.

¹⁵⁸ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 130

¹⁵⁹ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 130

¹⁶⁰ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 130

¹⁶¹ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 130

¹⁶² McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 130

¹⁶³ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 130

¹⁶⁴ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 130

¹⁶⁵ Mitchell W. J. T., *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 83.

¹⁶⁶ Mitchell W. J. T., *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 83.

3. Analysis

3.1. Reading Images

The graphic novel “Watchmen,” penned by Alan Moore and illustrated by Dave Gibbons contains complex images, which are found in panels. Panels are always arranged in sequence in the graphic novel, which is serving as one of the primary vehicles for storytelling, alongside words. This chapter looks into how images and panels convey meaning in Watchmen. The analysis includes various aspects of visual storytelling, including how images function as a tool for description, composition of individual images, depth, point-of-view, color, facial expressions and body language. Each of these elements contributes to how images convey meaning and the reader’s interpretation of the story.

The composition and visual effect of images in “Watchmen” are carefully examined, and special emphasis is given to how well they express the tone and mood of the story. In addition, the intentional use of depth, perspective, point-of-view, as well as facial expressions and body language, is examined to understand how these visual techniques support the story of Watchmen. The chapter also looks at sequential storytelling’s structural elements, emphasizing panel size and framing. I aim to clarify how the sequential arrangement of panels produces meaning and narrative coherence through an analysis of the panel arrangement.

3.1.1 Composition

Firstly, the panel, which contains an image, will be discussed in isolation. Despite the fact that in comics and graphic novels panels are always found in sequence with images that precedes them and follows them. However, as mentioned by Groensteen, even one image can convey a certain meaning.¹⁶⁷ The distinctive feature of an image is its composition, as mentioned in *Key Terms*¹⁶⁸ which is the arrangement of the visual elements in the panel.

¹⁶⁷ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 127

¹⁶⁸ Grennan, et. al., *Key Terms in Comics Studies*, 71

Composition uses various techniques to guide the reader's eye through the panel and emphasize certain objects or characters in the panel. According to McCloud, when an object or character is placed in the center of the frame, the readers tend to perceive it as an important element of the panel.¹⁶⁹ In *Watchmen* this composition is not used very often, but it occurs. Usually in the scenario where the character is speaking and his or her head fills most of the frame. For example in Chapter II, 21 when Rorschach confronts Moloch. His head and face are in the center, because the function of this panel is to show his fear of Rorschach. The same instance occurs in Chapter III, 4 where in the first three panels the face of Laurie Jupiter is in the center.

Watchmen in most of the graphic novel pages utilizes an "off-center" composition, where character or object are not placed in the center of the frame and the reader's eye has, in McClouds' words, a "license to wonder".¹⁷⁰ Chapter I, 13 contains a panel where the Nite Owl costume is shown next to the Dreiberg. The center of the panel divides the panel into two parts and shows both of his identities. This is also frequently used in conversations of two characters which both are set off-center and the center of the panel divides the characters with invisible lines. McCloud also mentions different points of view, including "worm-eye view"¹⁷¹ and view "from above".¹⁷² The first mentioned worm-eye view is in *Watchmen* usually used for showing the size or height. It first occurs in Chapter I, 5, when Rorschach prepares to enter the crime scene of Comedian's murder to indicate the height of the building. In the same chapter on page 20 this technique is used to show the size and subsequently the power of Dr Manhattan. The similar panel occurs in Chapter VI, 20. The view from above is used mainly for showing the surroundings of the scene, as seen in Chapter I, 6 when Rorschach enters the Comedian apartment or in Chapter III, 12 to show the TV studio in which Dr Manhattan is being interviewed.

Watchmen also utilizes the use of foreground and background to convey more information or guide the reader to a certain object, show relationships between characters and transition from one character to another. In Chapter II, 19 one of the panels shows a handshake between Dr Manhattan and Dreiberg and a figure in the background can be seen leaving the cemetery. The focus of previous panels is Dreiberg and Dr Manhattan and after this the following panels follow the figure leaving - Rorschach.

¹⁶⁹ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 25

¹⁷⁰ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 165

¹⁷¹ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 21

¹⁷² McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 21

Further foreground can be used for conversation between characters. In Chapter VI, 11 in the interview with Walter Kovacs, Walter's back is shown and just a part of Dr. Long's face is shown, which shows him being shocked. This composition suggests to readers that he is shocked by the information Walter told him, even without the need of reading the text. Similar composition can be found in Chapter I, 14 in conversation with Dreiberg, however in this case Rorschach is facing towards the reader with his back to Dreiberg and the panels contain their conversation. The composition might suggest the relationship between Dreiberg and Rorschach, because Rorschach is standing backwards to Dreiberg over 3 panels, showing that Rorschach does not perceive Dreiberg as a threat. Subsequently in Chapter I, 18 one panel shows Veidt and his desk is shown with newspapers on it which foreshadows the upcoming events of the story.

3.1.2 Establishing the scene

Another prominent feature of one image that conveys meaning and helps the narrative move forward is its function of establishing the scene. McCloud refers to these panels as "establishing shots".¹⁷³ Their use in the *Watchmen* is quite frequent and they help the readers to orient themselves in the story and could supplement the novel's description of the scene or the change of the scene. As mentioned, there are many establishing shots in the *Watchmen* and a couple of examples can be found in Chapter I. In Chapter I, 6, the upper half of the page is occupied by one large panel which shows the reader the new setting of the scene. The previous pages show Rorschach as he climbs on the outside of the building and this specific panel follows. The reader is shown that the window is broken and Rorschach is entering the crime scene through the window. Additionally, the panel shows drops of blood and the city's skyscrapers on the outside of the building. This panel not only establishes the new setting, in which the story takes place, but also provides readers with information, that it is the same apartment from previous pages, where the crime, the murder of Comedian was committed. The buildings outside of the apartment further tell the reader the approximate height of the apartment window, so it is clear for the readers that it is many floors up.

There are two more examples of establishing shots in this chapter, which have a slightly different function. One can be found on the upper part of page 14. This establishing panel has a little bit different function than the previous one from page 6. The difference is that the panel from page 6 is preceded with panels that lead up to that panel. The establishing

¹⁷³ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 160

panel on page 14 is new to the reader, as the narrative moves from the hideout of Nite Owl to the city's rooftops. The readers see the wider skyline of the city and for the first time the story gives the readers a cue about in which city the story takes place. Very high buildings of rectangular shape, water containers and part of the ladder, which resembles the fire escape are quite characteristic for the city of New York. The reader is then assured of this assumption in the following panels, where Rorschach, through his narration boxes, says that Comedian was murdered in New York. Furthermore this panel also tells the readers the passage of time. In the previous panels the story takes place at night and now the colors are mainly orange and yellow and the sun can be seen relatively low in the sky. This panel therefore conveys the notion that some time has passed since the last panel on the previous page. A panel with similar function can be also found in Chapter I, 24.

Generally establishing shots occur in the upper part of the page so the reader understands the setting, as the story moves forward with a series of smaller panels. However Watchmen utilizes the establishing shots in the reverse order. On the very first page of Chapter I, the readers are presented with smaller panels which are more detailed and then an establishing shot is on the lower part of the page, which shows the height of the building and the window from which the victim fell. Similar choice can be also found in Chapter III, 1, where establishing shot is also preceded by smaller panels which show details of the scene, before it zooms out.

3.1.3 Facial Expressions

Facial expressions,¹⁷⁴ as discussed by McCloud, are also an important part of graphic narrative, as they convey information of the characters emotions, mood and relations to the other characters,¹⁷⁵ which is further supported by Van Ness. In novels, these emotions need to be specifically described, however in graphic novels they are most of the time depicted on the faces of the characters in the manner that readers can “read”.¹⁷⁶ They usually go hand in hand with body language.

Because the story of Watchmen is conveyed through quite realistic art in the graphic novel, the facial expressions are as well very realistically depicted. When the facial expressions are particularly important they take up a big portion of the panel, so they can be noticed by the reader and therefore assigned some importance. As Watchmen is a

¹⁷⁴ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 81

¹⁷⁵ Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel*, 42

¹⁷⁶ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 81

post-apocalyptic story which is quite depressing, the characters are mostly depicted with the negative emotions such as fear or anger and rarely they show positive emotions of happiness. In Chapter I, 15 when Rorschach enters the bar, the bartender is clearly terrified by him. On three separate panels his facial expressions are always different, but always show the terror he is experiencing due to Rorschach presence. In Chapter III, 4 in the first two panels depicts the face of Laurie Jupiter, which is the rare case, where some positive emotions are shown as she feels the hands of her boyfriend, Dr. Manhattan on her face. However on the third panel she is clearly scared, terrified and shocked, as a third hand touches her. This fear or shock is also supported by her body language in the following panel, when she sees two versions of Dr Manhattan. In Chapter III, 16 after Dr Manhattan is confronted by the journalists, the entire panel is filled with his face which shows his anger and frustration. However, there are some cases where neutral facial expressions can also convey some emotion, or no emotion at all. For example Moloch in Chapter V, 24 is shown to be dead. The hole in his forehead is a clear signal, but it is also supported by his neutral facial expression. In Chapter VI, 1-2, 5 where we see the interviews with Rorschach, or his alter ego Walter Kovacs, on these pages he has neutral facial expression, which shows his resignation after he has been arrested.

3.1.4 Color

The significance of color in “Watchmen” is explored in this subchapter. The aim of this chapter is to find out how color affects the narrative’s thematic depth and visual impact by closely examining how color is used. The aim is to reveal the subtle storytelling strategies used by the authors to improve reader comprehension and support of the visual narrative by analyzing the symbolic meaning of color selections.

McCloud states that superhero comics usually used primary colors to stand out and attract the attention of potential readers and additionally to make clear distinction of character, who were often associated with one prevailing color.¹⁷⁷ However, that is not the case in Watchmen. Under a closer inspection, it can be seen that Watchmen do not use primary colors exclusively, but also heavily rely on the use of secondary colors, which are quite muted and subtle. This is the reason why Watchmen does not appear bright and light, but rather dark and gloomy, which adds to the overall mood of the post-apocalyptic story.

As previously mentioned, Watchmen tend to use more muted, secondary colors. However, there are several occasions where bright colors are used. As McCloud said, the use

¹⁷⁷ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 188

of a given primary color was often associated with one specific superhero. Most of the characters and vigilantes in the *Watchmen* use mentioned secondary colors, except for one. Dr. Manhattan is always pictured in bright blue color. This might indicate his dominant status in the world of *Watchmen*, as well as his incredible power. Blue color is not only the color of the character of Dr. Manhattan, but it also penetrates into his speech balloons, further pointing to his extraordinariness. The use of color in speech balloons will be analyzed in a chapter concerning speech balloons.

Watchmen also uses color on the level of the whole panel. There are two distinct yet complementary approaches, which both express the mood of the narration. In the first case, the graphic novel employs a palette of “realistic” colors, which are mostly used for everyday scenes and depiction of conversations between characters, as can be seen in Chapter II, 4 and also in flashbacks in Chapter II, 5. In contrast, *Watchmen* also employs a very bright red color, which is the same color that is used for depiction of blood in *Watchmen*. This red tint is very dominant and takes over the whole panel. As Van Ness says “color greatly impacts nuances in mood and tone for an image.”¹⁷⁸ This red tint of the scene in the given panel, which is the same color as the color of blood in the *Watchmen* indicates incoming or imminent danger, or death. This can be seen quite often, for example right in the beginning of the novel in Chapter I, 2-4, where the reader is first acquainted with the Comedian’s death. Comedian’s death is shown repeatedly over the course of the graphic novel, and always in this red tint. Another example is when two characters are ambushed by thugs on the street in Chapter III, 13 and right before and during the scene, where Rorschach is set up and subsequently arrested by police Chapter V, 23-28. The incoming danger is also indicated before Rorschach enters the apartment in V, 23, where color is the only indicator of upcoming danger, foreshadowing to the reader events about to happen.

3.2 Page Layout

In “*Watchmen*,” the page layout becomes clear as a key component of the work’s visual narrative ability. The narrative flow of the graphic novel is organized by Dave Gibbons using a variety of layouts, which influences the reader’s involvement and sense of immersion in the narrative. Each page is carefully constructed to maintain a balance between textual and visual components, leading the reader’s eye through a carefully constructed panel sequence. One

¹⁷⁸ Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel*, 42

can comprehend the significance of page layout for graphic narrative by analyzing grid structure and page layout. This chapter analyzes page composition, panel arrangement, and grid dynamics in detail, shedding light on how these components affect the graphic novel's narrative rhythm and pacing.

The fundamental and most frequently occurring page layout in *Watchmen* is regular page layout, which consists of a nine-panel page organized into a three-by-three grid pattern, which is called by Groensteen "the waffle-iron grid".¹⁷⁹ The regular layout carries many advantages. In the *Watchmen*, the regular page layout supports the linearity of the story. Furthermore, the regular page layout influences the beat and the rhythm of the narration which is in the case of *Watchmen* on most of the pages also regular. The regular page layout, in this case the waffle-iron grid, enforces regularity of the reading, as it keeps the same rhythm and supports smooth reading. Subsequently, when this regularity is violated, it creates different effects.

Nonetheless, *Watchmen* on some pages breaks from the regular grid and introduces a panel or sequence of panels of different sizes. The first of these irregularities that occur are larger panels that take the size of either two, three or six panels at once. McCloud argues that a regular page layout that consists of nine panels prepares the reader for the impact of a full page panel.¹⁸⁰ Therefore it can be said that larger panels have greater impact on the reader and they subsequently slow down the reading speed, because readers assign bigger importance to them. Groensteen in his book *The System of Comics* says that: "The frame is always an invitation to stop and to scrutinize."¹⁸¹ This implies that the larger the panel, the more scrutinizing is needed. This claim is also supported by Van Ness, she suggests that the reader spends more time with larger panels, and reading actually slows down as they get larger.¹⁸²

Examples of two of these irregularities in the grid are seen in Chapter II, 13. The larger panel, which takes size of 2 "regular" does not slow down the reading pace significantly, but contains and conveys more visual information than a panel of regular size. Panels of this size could supplement short descriptions. However, the first panel shown on the page has the size of three regular panels. This panel occurs right after a transition from funeral to memories of Dr. Manhattan. The panel shows us the change of the scene and subsequently invites the reader to slow down and through visual cues shows the new settings and also the characters which will be present in subsequent panels. It is important to note, that

¹⁷⁹ Groensteen, *Comics and Narration*, 43

¹⁸⁰ McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 51

¹⁸¹ Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 54

¹⁸² Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel*, 80

the visual does not show the reader exactly where the characters are now, but the reader must look for visual cues, such as signs, which are not even entirely in the panel and are cut out. It can be said that the larger the panel is, the more visual information it contains.

There is another example of a large panel. In the previous page in Chapter II, 12 there is a panel, which takes approximately two thirds of the page. As previously mentioned, McCloud claims that regular layout prepares for the impact of the full page panel. This claim can be transferred to this frame as well, even though it does not necessarily take the form of a full page panel. In the previous pages, the reader is familiarized with the shared history of Comedian and other members of the Minutemen and then comes this mentioned panel in Chapter II, 12 which shows Comedian's funeral. This panel therefore creates emotional impact. Additionally, the characters that were present in the flashbacks from previous pages are depicted in color and other character's are grayed out.

Conversely, there are some sequences, where the break from regular nine-panel is not executed in a form of larger panels that takes up space of several panels, but there are more panels than three in a sequence, usually four. This violation has the opposite effect to large panels and therefore they do not slow down the narrative, but speed up. As mentioned by Groensteen,¹⁸³ each panel drives the narrative forward, so it can be said that when more panels occur in the same space, the narrative speeds up. The size and number of panels and the effect it has on a reading speed is also supported by McCloud.¹⁸⁴

Despite the fact that this irregularity from the regular grid is not as common as larger panels, it occurs on several occasions. The first time readers encounter it is in Chapter I, 6. Just after Rorschach enters the Comedian's apartment to investigate the crime scene, the sequence of images shows us Rorschach's first actions, as he approaches and enters Comedian's bedroom. The rest of the investigation on the following pages obeys the regular grid. On that account the faster sequence has a role to show the reader the Rorschach's intentions and in faster sequence shows the start of the investigation. Another quite distinctive example is in Chapter VII, 16 which depicts erotic dream sequence which is wordless and each panel contains only one character or two standing close to each other. Panels in this page are even narrower and six in a row. The whole sequence ends with an explosion and Dreiberg waking up. The last panel is again of standard size, to slow down the sequence to regular speed. Another very prominent example is in Chapter XI, 28. Last page of this chapter shows explosion and characters in fear and dread. However there seems to be

¹⁸³ Groensteen, *Comics and Narration*, 133

¹⁸⁴ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 101

violation of previously stated speed as the narrative seems to slow down with each subsequent frame. The first row of panels could be perceived as fast, but then the second row depicts action very slowly from one panel to the other. The whole page ends with a large panel, which only consists of white, which creates a sort of feeling of time stopping.

One last deviation from regular layout when panels are formed into three rows but divided only into two panels in each row in which one panel always takes more space. This layout is used for parallel narration, when two different scenes are shown. One of them is the present of the narrative and the other one is either flashback or it shows different places and characters in it. However it does not mean that these scenes are completely separated and each does its own. On the contrary, these scenes are usually connected and one is leading the narration and one is silent. And words spoken and situations depicted connect across the two scenes. The example can be found in Chapter III, 11-16. Dr Manhattan is about to be interviewed on television and Laurie and Dreiberg are picked by mugs and about to be attacked. Laurie's and Dreiberg's fight breaks out at the same time Dr. Manhattan starts to be interviewed by the press which asks quite unpleasant questions implicating that Dr. Manhattan might be responsible for the lives of people just because they lived close to him. He verbally, but the parallel fist fight shows the inner fight of Dr. Manhattan.

In this section, it was analyzed how time functions on the page level in *Watchmen*. Therefore it can be said that time is among other things expressed through space.¹⁸⁵ This claim is also supported by McCloud,¹⁸⁶ Van Ness¹⁸⁷ and Chute.¹⁸⁸ However there is one quite special feature in *Watchmen*, that furthermore helps to transfer the passage of time and that its use of the grid and color. There are some occasions, where color change is applied to every other panel, which creates a ticking feeling and on the level of the page it creates a checkerboard. This specific feature was also mentioned by Groensteen.¹⁸⁹ He assigns a beat to this structure called A-B-A/B-A-B/A-B-A, which is how the panels alternate in the grid. It is used in two different ways in *Watchman*. Either to depict the passing of time, creating sort of ticking in the narrative, as for example in Chapter II, 22-23, in the flashback, when Comedian visited Moloch in his apartment and every "A" panel has orange tint, which is supposed to mimic flickering light from the street and also in the Chapter II, 1-2, where it is used for parallel narration jumping from the Comedian's funeral and conversation between Laurie

¹⁸⁵ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 100

¹⁸⁶ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 100

¹⁸⁷ Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel*, 80

¹⁸⁸ Chute, *Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative*, 452

¹⁸⁹ Groensteen, *Comics and Narration*, 154

Juspeczyk and her mother. As mentioned before in the section about parallel narration, here too in one of the scenes, the funeral is silent but the speech intersects its panels.

3.3 Words and Balloons

Words are a crucial part of graphic narrative as they give the voice to the characters.¹⁹⁰ The basic functions of words and how they convey meaning will not be discussed, but this section focuses on the visual part of words, their stylization, speech balloons, their organization within panels and narrative boxes.

Van Ness says that words convey meaning not only through their connotative and denotative meaning, but also through their stylization,¹⁹¹ which conveys some visual meaning. Despite *Watchmen*'s text being hand lettered in the whole graphic novel, the text itself stays constantly the same and does not undergo significant changes. What can be analyzed as violation, where text is stylized a bit differently can be seen in Chapter II, 20 and Chapter V, 27. In both of these examples, the text inside the speech balloon is an interjection which shows the scream of the character. In both of these examples the letters are not in line but rather vertically offset which resembles the sound of screaming. Some words in almost every speech balloon are in bold which indicates emphasis on the given word and supports the rhythm of the narrative. The only exception in whose speech balloons the words are not in bold most of the time is Rorschach. This violation creates a monotonous and whispering effect in his speech.

As already mentioned, the text usually occurs in speech balloons or narrative boxes, which do not only function as a means for the text to be anchored in the panel, but they themselves carry a visual meaning. Neil Cohn further supports this claim by saying that they are part of the “visual lexicon”.¹⁹² There are not many different variations of speech balloons in *Watchmen*. Throughout most of the novel *Watchmen* sticks to oval shaped speech balloons with white background and tails, which visually indicate to which character the speech belongs to. One of the few exceptions, when speech balloons are of a different shape, as also mentioned by Van Ness, when a panel features speech which is supposed to indicate that it is electronically modified and the speech balloon has “spiky” edges,¹⁹³ in the case of these

¹⁹⁰ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 146

¹⁹¹ Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel*, 25

¹⁹² Neil Cohn, *Who Understands Comics?*, 8

¹⁹³ Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel*, 27-29

examples, when Dreiberg speaks through a Owl Ship's megaphone in Chapter II, 16-17 and Chapter VII, 23-26. Additionally, the speech balloons of Dr. Manhattan features a blue background, which matches Dr. Manhattan's body color. As already mentioned, Dr. Manhattan is almost god-like being, so the blue background supports his uniqueness and could potentially suggest that his voice is somehow different from regular humans.

Interesting feature of speech balloons, which is not possible to accomplish in literature, is that the speech balloons can be pictured as simultaneous and therefore show a simultaneous speech in the graphic novel. This can be seen in Chapter V, 28, when Rorschach is being arrested by the police. The images show the reader that there are many police officers present and the even placement of the speech balloons further supports the effect of the speech being produced at the same time. Another prominent example is in Chapter XII, 19 where there are many televisions on the wall and all of them are on at the same time and in each panel there are many overlapping speech balloons, indicating that they are speaking simultaneously.

In comics and graphic novels, words can also occur as sound effects and in these instances they occur freely in the panel and not in a form of speech balloons or narrative boxes. Their visual representation usually further supports their sound and emotion. However, in the whole graphic novel of *Watchmen*, there are no sound effects used. Lack of sound effects helps to show the story as grounded and realistic.

Van Ness characterizes narrative boxes as another layer of graphic narrative, which provide space for words to appear in.¹⁹⁴ Narrative boxes in *Watchmen* appear quite frequently. They are usually rectangles with white background. Nevertheless, Rorschach is one of the characters, in whose presence narrative boxes appear quite often, but their visual representations are distinctively different from others. Not only do his narrative boxes have a yellow background instead of white, but their shape is not most of the time by any means rectangular or regular. The edges resemble torn paper and together with the yellow background they look like ripped out of his journal. Because narration of Rorschach's case is always through his journal entries. However his narration boxes change when he is not his alter ego, but Walter Kovacs and they then look like narration boxes of other characters. As in the case of speech balloons, Dr. Manhattan's narrative boxes are of usual shape, but their background is blue.

¹⁹⁴ Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel*, 29

The last feature of a graphic novel in which words and pictures combine is called the montage.¹⁹⁵ This term was introduced by McCloud and refers to words, which are part of the image.¹⁹⁶ Therefore the words are not presented in speech balloons, narration boxes or sound effects, which float above the image, but are integrated into the image. The montage supports the realistic settings of the graphic novel and can additionally help readers to orient themselves in which setting the narrative takes place. For that reason they are frequently used in the establishing shots, panels which present the reader the given location in which the following narrative takes place and it is also used for foreshadowing of upcoming events.

In Chapter I, 9 after Rorschach leaves the crime scene of Comedian's murder, a sign can be seen in the last panel which says "fix em". It might look insignificant at first but the same sign can be seen in Chapter III, 17 after Laurie and Dreiberg survive the fight. This helps the reader to navigate in the world of the story and shows that Dreiberg is in the same place as Rorschach was in Chapter I. Another example of the montage functioning as an element of establishing shot in the Watchmen also in Chapter I, 14 where Rorschach is headed into a bar called "Happy Harry's" with words "bar" and "grill" beneath the name. Readers could be unsure, if it is the same place of which interior can be seen in the following panel, but mirrored word "grill" can be seen in the windows, ensuring the reader that it is indeed the same place. The reader is never explicitly told where the story takes place until Chapter III, 1 in the panel with newsstand, where in the background can be seen an apple with the letter "NY" on the truck.

The time setting of the story is told either through Rorschach's narrative boxes which imitate his journal, or also through the montage. In Chapter I, 10 where Rorschach and Dreiberg meet for the first time, one panel shows part of the calendar which is opened in the month of October.

Presence of newspapers in the story also functions as a tool for visual narrative combined with text. However, Walter Kovacs, an alter ego of Rorschach can be seen carrying a sign with "The end is Nigh." Then in Chapter I, 18 a newspaper can be seen on Veidt's desk with a headline, which is unreadable as whole, but parts can be read and those words are "doomsdays clock" and "warn experts". This is the first suggestion that the man with the sign is not just some conspiracy theorist, but something is truly going on in this world. Which foreshadows Veidt's plan. Additionally flashbacks in Chapter II, 5, 9-10 newspapers reveal

¹⁹⁵ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 154

¹⁹⁶ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 154

that this story is of course fictional, but takes place in alternate history, which is most likely alternated by the presence of supernatural people and masked heroes and vigilantes.

Very prominent use of montage is in Chapter III, 1 where signs and words “fallout shelter” can be seen. In this chapter Dr. Manhattan is accused of killing people just with his presence, as journalists accuse him of giving people cancer and by the end of the chapter Dr. Manhattan escapes to Mars which symbolizes the fallout shelter, but in reversed meaning, where people do not hide from the catastrophe or nuclear weapon, but the “nuclear weapon” in this case Dr. Manhattan is hiding from humanity in order not to hurt them.

4. Methods

This thesis focuses on the topic visual narrative of the complex visual story of Alan Moore's and Dave Gibbon's groundbreaking graphic novel "Watchmen." The graphic novel is known for its rich storytelling and rich visual language, "Watchmen" provides a rich field for analysis using Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) as the research method. MDA is a methodological approach that offers a thorough framework to evaluate texts that incorporate numerous forms of communication. It is based on the idea that meaning is generated through the combination of diverse semiotic resources. Within "Watchmen," these modes of communication include text, visual imagery, color, composition, spatial arrangement, textual plane and the interaction between text and images in the graphic novel's panels.

The motivation behind using MDA for this research is its ability to analyze and comprehend the multimodal structures that are crucial for graphic novels. This thesis focuses on getting a greater understanding of the storytelling techniques and thematic expression of "Watchmen" by examining how visual elements complement and enhance the narrative. Sara Zahid, in her thesis *Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Heroine's Identities in two selected Graphic Novels*, in which she focuses on applying a multimodal discourse analysis approach to analyze the identities of heroines in graphic novels, says about MDA that it enables it to examine in depth how meaning is created using both text and the visual mode,¹⁹⁷ including layout, illustrations, and the interaction between word and picture.

Multimodality is described by Gunter Kress, scholar in field of multimodality, in his book "Multimodality: A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication" in which he highlights the significance of looking at many forms of meaning-making and communication that go beyond language, says that: "Using three modes in one sign - writing and image and color as well - has real benefits. Each mode does a specific thing: image shows what takes too long to read, and writing names what would be difficult to show. Color is used to highlight specific aspects of the overall message"¹⁹⁸ This claim is further supported by researcher David Machin, who in his article *What Is Multimodal Critical Discourse*

¹⁹⁷ Sara Zahid, *Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Heroine's Identities in two selected Graphic Novels*, 2020, 47.

¹⁹⁸ Kress, Gunther. *Multimodality: A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication*. London: Routledge. 2010..

Studies?, in which he explains the significance of examining additional semiotic modes in addition to language analysis, claims that different genres, modalities, and semiotic resources are used to create and convey distinct discourses.¹⁹⁹ Kress further describes multimodality by saying that it is acceptable for music to represent activity or visuals to express emotion as common semiotic principles function in and across a variety of forms.²⁰⁰ Zahid adds that Multimodal Discourse Analysis concentrates on the process of giving meaning to any semiotic resources that are recognized as forms of communication and are accepted in society.²⁰¹

As already mentioned, the analysis was conducted through Multimodal Discourse Analysis which was used to analyze the visual narrative of “Watchmen” by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons. This strategy was selected because it enables a deeper understanding of the ways that visual components work together to build narratives and interest readers. Starting with a close reading of “Watchmen,” the analysis’s methodology allowed for a thorough examination of the literary and visual components of each panel. The concept of close reading—which is often connected to a thorough examination of literary texts—was modified to take into account graphic novels’ multimodal nature. In addition to text interpretation, this adaptation required methodically analyzing visual components to reveal narrative techniques.

Initially, the analysis focused on the composition of pictures inside the panels. Character placement, viewpoint, use of foreground and the background, and arrangement of space are crucial components of the visual narrative. This included examining how characters are positioned in relation to one another and the environment, how perspective impacts the reader's impression of the scene, and how foregrounded and backgrounded elements might highlight specific objects or characters. The spatial arrangement of components within panels was also analyzed to better understand how space can be used to direct the reader's eye.

The establishing shots were further analyzed using close reading and MDA. With focus on the importance of “establishing shots” in the graphic novel’s narrative structure. The analysis showed that these panels are essential for creating the story’s setting, providing a visual context to supplement the description which is presented in the novels. Establishing shots is an important tool for orienting within the visual narrative, offering a larger

¹⁹⁹ David Machin, “*What Is Multimodal Critical Discourse Studies?*,” *Critical Discourse Studies* 10, no. 4 (November 2013): 347–55, 347.

²⁰⁰ Leeuwen, Kress, *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*, 2

²⁰¹ Zahid, *Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Heroine’s Identities in two selected Graphic Novels*, 47

perspective that sets ground for the following panels. The analysis further focused on how these panels were distributed throughout the page layout. The analysis took into account the way these images are arranged usually in the upper part of the page usually followed by a series of detailed panels. Moore and Gibbons skillfully employed this technique, which generated a sense of tension and intrigue in the story by delaying the establishing shots that offer context.

After analysis of establishing shots I shifted my attention to facial expressions of characters. Again, the graphic novel was closely examined to identify the subtle ways in which the story is influenced by the characters' facial expressions, which serve as visual representations of their emotions. The first step was a thorough panel-by-panel analysis of the novel, with special attention paid to recognizing the variety of facial expressions. The approach, which recognized facial expressions as a crucial communication channel that interacts with text and other visual aspects to transmit meaning and emotion, was again based on the concepts of multimodal discourse analysis.

The analysis was conducted based on Scott McCloud's interpretation of facial expressions in comics and graphic novels in his book *Making Comics*,²⁰² in which he identified basic facial expressions and emotions they represent and many possible combinations. This analysis analyzed facial expressions to understand how they support the visual narrative and found out that they not are not only beneficial for understanding the character's emotional states, but also their relationship towards other characters. The analysis focused on how these facial expressions serve the narrative, because they visually supplement novel's descriptive passages. Through this analysis I revealed that graphic novels, in the case of this analysis the *Watchmen*, completely omit the narrator's descriptions which are usually found in novels. The characters can function as a narrator, however for the majority of the novel the visual is the main medium through which the narrative is conveyed.

Key narrative moments were analyzed, where facial expressions played a crucial role in expressing implicit meaning, highlighting the scene's emotional impact or supporting the textual element of the novel. In addition to closely analyzing the emotions themselves, this required analyzing how they interacted with the content of the surrounding panels, visual composition within the panel, other characters in the same panels as well as supporting text in speech balloons or narrative boxes.

²⁰² McCloud, *Making Comics Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels*, 83

Furthermore the analysis of images focused on the use of color in the Watchmen and its meaning in the narrative. Color enriches the story of the Watchmen, which is a highly symbolic and multilayered work that requires a sensitive approach to the analysis.

Firstly it was analyzed which colors or color schemes are used in the Watchmen, which in itself differentiates Watchmen from other superhero comics from that time, but it also contributes to the narrative's mood and themes. This revealed that Watchmen primarily uses secondary colors as opposed to primary colors in the contemporary superhero comics. Which further helps to underline and emphasize the post-apocalyptic mood of the story. Every usage of color was analyzed in context, taking into account its relationship to the panels' layout and narrative content.

Further through the method of close reading the recurring color motif and schemes were identified and analyzed how they influence and support the visual and overall narrative of the story. The panels which are primarily depicted in red color were analyzed in detail and in relation to the content of the panel as well as in relation to narrative events, which revealed that use of this color foreshadows that tragic events are about to happen.

Lastly the analysis focused on finding color deviations. As mentioned, the Watchmen uses primarily secondary colors. This analysis showed that most of the masked vigilantes are associated with some secondary color, or mixture of some. However it was revealed that one character used primary color, which supported his superiority.

Furthermore, I conducted a thorough analysis to determine how the panel layout on the page affects the rhythm and pacing of the narrative. This part of the analysis examined the usage of the regular grid layout and its various variations using Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) and close reading. It also investigated how these structural choices affect the reader's experience and the dynamics of the storytelling.

A detailed examination of the pages and their panel layout served as the basis for the analysis. That revealed that the structural decision made by "Watchmen" to primarily use a regular grid layout produces a dependable visual and reading rhythm and makes the story's progression flow more naturally. This layout uniformity not only makes it easier for readers to follow the plot, but it also reflects the novel's central themes of time and determinism and clockwork accuracy. The story's examination of fate against free choice is enhanced by the grid, which acts as a visual metaphor for the universe's control and predestination.

However, the analysis also focused on deviations from this regular grid pattern. I carefully considered the narrative consequences of layout transitions to bigger panels or series of smaller panels. It was found that these variations had a major effect on the rhythm

and pace of the reading; either by speeding up the reader's progress to express urgency or by slowing it down to emphasize a moment of emotional weight or narrative significance. Sequences of smaller panels may accelerate the narrative pace by representing the fragmentation of time or the escalation of action, while bigger panels frequently help to bring the reader's attention to crucial moments, allowing for a deeper engagement with the visual and verbal aspects. This led me to examine how changes in page arrangement impact how diegetic time is perceived inside the narrative. The way panels are arranged on a page affects not just how quickly a reader reads but also how characters experience and interpret time. The thematic depth and emotional impact of the story are enhanced by changes in time created by modifying page layouts.

The following phase of the analysis of *Watchmen* concentrated on the visual elements of the text in the graphic novel, such as the way words are stylized, how speech balloons and narrative boxes are arranged and designed, and instances of "the montage," in which text is incorporated into the imagery in a fluid and engaging way. In order to comprehend how these textual parts combine and support the visual narrative to provide storytelling experience.

The first part of the analysis focused on the word stylization in "*Watchmen*." The text's font selections, variations, and size changes were studied in order to determine how these stylistic components affect the text's emotional tone, thematic emphasis, and character voice, which reveal that subtle changes in the text stylization convey visual meaning which collaborates with other visual planes of the narrative.

Next, the arrangement of speech balloons within the panels was carefully examined. To determine how speech balloons affect the tempo and rhythm of the story by guiding the reader's attention around the panel and page, their location, shape, and color were examined, which revealed that speech balloons not only function as anchor for the text but their variations in shape and color convey narrative meaning as well as their location within the panel, which enables them to portray simultaneous speech in the graphic novel. Then my focus shifted to narrative boxes, which were closely examined. In the *Watchmen* they were revealed to serve two functions, one of which is character's speech when they are not present in the panel and the second one was Rorschach's internal monologue through his diary entries, which in itself hold visual meaning.

Lastly my analysis focused on the idea of "the montage," in which text is integrated into the image rather than being layered over visuals. By close reading the *Watchmen* I identified panels in which the text is part of the image and analyzed their descriptive properties.

The thorough examination of “Watchmen” by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons using Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) as a lens has revealed the nuanced ways in which text, page layout, and image work together to produce an engaging visual narrative. This analysis showed the complexity of graphic novels and Watchmen in particular, as a narrative form and emphasized the usefulness of MDA in examining the intricate interaction between text and picture by recognizing and evaluating the multimodal components through close reading

5. Literature Review

The work that I believe to be the most significant in the graphic novel and comic book fields was also one of the first secondary sources I studied for my thesis. It is Scott McCloud's book *Understanding Comics*. He gives the fundamental knowledge about comics and graphic novels in this book, and the majority of the other secondary materials I have utilized for my thesis have frequently mentioned him and his work.

Renowned author and comic book artist Scott McCloud is widely recognized for what he has contributed to the theory and study of comics and graphic novels as a distinctive form of visual art and storytelling. The 1994 book "Understanding Comics" examines the definition, history, vocabulary, and methods of the comic book medium. McCloud engages readers in a thorough examination of the comic book format's distinctive storytelling capabilities.

A number of terms that are essential to the study of comics and graphic novels are introduced by McCloud. Notably, he emphasizes the significance of sequencing in delivering information and story by defining "comics" as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence."²⁰³ He goes into further detail on "closure," which is the process by which readers bridge the narrative gaps between panels to create a seamless whole. The concept "iconicity," which describes the use of iconic pictures for simplified people and locations to communicate their essence, is also important. McCloud discusses further on the crucial role that text plays in comics, especially when it comes to speech balloons. He emphasizes the ways in which language and visuals may work together to produce deeper meanings than any medium could on its own. McCloud also divides several kinds of panel transitions into categories. He highlights the way in which these shifts manage the story's progression. Finally, McCloud notes that a page's panel layout plays a critical role in shaping the reading experience.

A book on the topic of comic book studies, "Understanding Comics" by Scott McCloud, offers a thorough and understandable introduction to the fundamentals of comics as a unique visual medium. The reason for its influence is its detailed examination of the comic book medium, which allows readers with various levels of experience to better understand

²⁰³ McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art*, 8

complicated ideas related to visual narrative. This material comes from an academic tradition that considers comics to be a distinct genre of literature and art that deserves extensive research and analysis. He regularly references and expands upon Will Eisner's "Comics and Sequential art" in his work. Although McCloud's work is foundational, it can be criticized for its simplified interpretations of specific comic book problems. McCloud occasionally overgeneralizes complicated text-image relationships that might benefit from a closer look. However, most of the fundamental ideas are covered in his work and can be further examined in detail. Furthermore, I agree with McCloud's claim that comics are a sophisticated, multimodal medium with complex narrative depths. My analysis of the visual narrative in "Watchmen" is significantly supported by his framework for comprehending comic book mechanics, such as the idea of "closure" between panels.

Based on McCloud, comics are a rich, adaptable, and unappreciated art form with a profound emotional resonance and capacity for nuanced expression. He argues that comics are able to communicate a wide range of thoughts and feelings in a way that no other media can because of the interaction between text and images and the way closure encourages readers to engage actively. Using a comic book style, he presents his points and insights in a unique manner. Through the use of the comic book format itself, he is able to illustrate many of the ideas he covers. McCloud's "Understanding Comics" offers a basic framework for dissecting Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' visual story in "Watchmen." When analyzing how "Watchmen" uses visual elements to convey story his notions of closure and panel transitions are especially relevant. McCloud's examination of the ways in which text and image may cooperate to produce meaning greatly influences the Multimodal Discourse Analysis approach used in this thesis, particularly when examining the way in which text and image interact to convey the story of "Watchmen." The richness of "Watchmen's" plot is further supported by McCloud's observations on the unique storytelling qualities of the comic book medium.

Another important secondary source is "The System of Comics" by Thierry Groensteen. The work of renowned French comics scholar Thierry Groensteen has made a significant contribution to the academic study of comics as a distinct type of visual literature. In "The System of Comics," Groensteen lays forth a thorough theoretical framework for comprehending the complex nature of the structure of comics and the way in which its elements combine to produce meaning.

Groensteen introduces the term "arthrology" to describe the system of connectivity that links panels together. This concept highlights how crucial it is to view the comic as a

cohesive whole, with each panel being related to the others. He further introduces the term spatio-topia which refers to the spatial arrangements of panels on the page, including their size, shape, and distribution. He contends that it is essential in determining the comics' rhythm, pace, and reading path. The term "hyperframe" describes the edge of the page or the frame that contains the panel arrangement as a whole. Groensteen investigates how the hyperframe interacts with panel content to produce significance at the edge of the comic's narrative space in addition to defining the boundaries of the narrative space.

According to Groensteen, comics are a sophisticated system with their own language in which meaning is created not just by the individual panels but also by the way they are arranged and linked together. He concentrates on the structural elements that support the medium's distinct narrative possibilities. Groensteen elaborates on how the different components of his theoretical framework—such as arthrology, spatio-topia, and the hyperframe—function inside comics to produce narrative through a thorough theoretical explanation backed by examples from the spectrum of comics.

Analyzing "Watchmen's" intricate narrative structure requires an understanding of Groensteen's theoretical background. He establishes a framework for analyzing how Watchmen employ panel connection and layout to create a complex visual narrative employing his theories of arthrology and spatio-topia. How the story makes use of the comic book page's spatial qualities is shown by the concept of the hyperframe. Through the application of Groensteen's analysis, my analysis explores the systemic elements that make "Watchmen" a groundbreaking narrative usage of the comic book medium.

"The System of Comics" by Thierry Groensteen is an influential book that has introduced an advanced theoretical framework to evaluate the complex system within comics, and it has had a profound impact on comic studies. Rather than just integrating theories from literature or film studies, Groensteen's goal is to integrate comics studies into the study of semiotics and create new ways for interpreting comics as a distinctive medium. Although Groensteen's work provides an enormous quantity of information about the structure of comics, it could be criticized for relying too much on uncommon Franco-Belgian comics and not enough on examples from other comics. Furthermore, Groensteen takes quite a bit of space to deconstruct earlier theories on comics. That being said, I agree with Groensteen's opinion regarding the importance of spatial relationships in comics, which supports my analysis of the visual storytelling in "Watchmen."

Important secondary source for my thesis was the book “Who Understands Comics?” by Neil Cohn. Neil Cohn is an American researcher who is well known for his studies in visual language, narrative structure, and the cognitive science of comics. In “Who Understands Comics?” Cohn uses linguistics, psychology, and cognitive science to provide a thorough examination of how individuals perceive and understand the visual language of comics. His work provides insight on the complexity and depth of the comic book medium while offering a fundamental knowledge of the thought processes involved.

Cohn presents the idea of “visual language” to refer to the ordered, methodical way that images are used in comics to communicate ideas, just how words are used in spoken or written languages. This highlights the concept that comics are sophisticated forms of communication that follow grammatical structures and rules, rather than just being a basic succession of pictures. He further introduces the term “visual lexicon” which describes the lexicon of recurrent visual patterns and symbols in comics that have particular implications or meanings. Cohn examines how readers come to understand these symbols in the context of the comic's visual language in his examination of the visual lexicon. Cohn further highlights the significance of sequential images in comics storytelling, pointing out that the panel layout and flow provide a narrative rhythm and pace that directs reader interpretation and interaction.

According to Cohn, the mental processes underlying the comprehension of comics are just as complex as those behind English comprehension. According to his theory, viewers learn to “read” comics as a distinct kind of visual language via exposure and practice, just like they would learn to speak or write. By employing empirical research techniques such as eye-tracking studies and psychological examinations, Cohn presents proof of the cognitive processes via which comic book readers decipher visual language. His multidisciplinary approach makes a strong case for comics as a sophisticated visual language system by combining ideas from cognitive science, linguistics, and comic studies.

Neil Cohn's examination on the cognitive foundations of reading comic books provides important new perspectives on how readers interpret and comprehend “Watchmen's” complex story and visual techniques. Analyzing how “Watchmen” uses sequential images and visual themes to produce narrative experience requires an understanding of his theories on visual language, narrative grammar, and the visual lexicon.

In order to gain an understanding of how readers comprehend comics, Neil Cohn's book "Who Understands Comics?" incorporates theories from cognitive science. Working from the perspective of cognitive psychology, Cohn explores the "visual language" of comics and suggests that the cognitive processes associated with reading and comprehending written and spoken language are similar to those needed for understanding comics. Because of this viewpoint, Cohn's contributions made a significant impact, particularly in extending academic conversations about comic book analysis. Regarding the structured nature of visual narratives, I agree with his approach, as it is consistent with my analysis of the visual narrative in "Watchmen." In my thesis, I analyze how "Watchmen" narrates through the graphic novel's visual elements using Cohn's concepts. His book's concepts are essential to my interpretation of Watchmen.

The article "Three of a Perfect Pair: Image, Text and Image-Text Narrators" served as another important secondary source. Author and scholar Chris Gavalier has made a substantial contribution to the subject of comics studies, specializing in the narrative structures and methods used in the comic book medium. His paper "Three of a Perfect Pair: Image, Text, and Image-Text Narrators" makes the case for the presence of a hybrid image-text narrator that results from the manner in which texts and images work together to create narrative meaning in comics. It provides a thorough examination of these processes.

The image-text narrator, a key concept in Gavalier's thesis, is the distinct narrative voice that results from the combination of textual and visual elements in comics. This idea emphasizes how the interaction of words and visuals produces a unique narrative viewpoint that is not exclusively linked to textual or visual storytelling. He separates the term even more into "dueling narrators" and "dual narrators."

According to Gavalier, the story in comics arises from the collaborative connection between text and visual components, which is expressed in the idea of the image-text narrator. Using the advantages of both textual and visual formats to enhance the story, this hybrid narrator provides readers with a distinctive perspective on the story as a whole. Gavalier illustrates how image-text narrators work in the comic book medium by analyzing a variety of comic examples and utilizing theoretical frameworks from narrative theory, such as the Thierry Groensteen framework discussed earlier. His method offers insights into the complex structure of comic book narration by combining a close study of comic books with an examination of more general narrative and linguistic ideas.

The work of Gavalier is especially relevant to my thesis on "Watchmen," as it offers a theoretical framework for examining the intricate interaction between text and pictures that

defines the graphic novel. My analysis is enhanced by the idea of the image-text narrator, which situates “Watchmen’s” storytelling strategies within the larger framework of comics as a multimodal genre. By employing Gavalier’s observations, it is possible to analyze how authors Dave Gibbons and Alan Moore create their narratives, using the unique capabilities of the image-text narrator to express intricate narrative experiences.

The article “Three of a Perfect Pair: Image, Text, and Image-Text Narrators” by Chris Gavalier offers a thorough analysis of the complex relationship between the textual and visual narratives in comics, demonstrating how these elements come together to produce a unique narrative style. By drawing on ideas from visual narratology and comics studies, Gavalier advances the understanding of multimodal storytelling by highlighting the complex relationships that give comics’ narratives complexity. I completely agree with his concept of the “image-text narrator” as a hybrid narrative agent that enhances comics’ storytelling abilities. This idea is essential to my analysis of “Watchmen,” particularly when it comes to analyzing how Moore and Gibbons skillfully use words and images to create an intriguing narrative. Both text and image narrators frequently drive the narrative, nevertheless occasionally each narrator tells a distinct narrative. I take his ideas a step further in my analysis, showing how “Watchmen” uses these narrative techniques to both captivate readers and challenge their assumptions about the comics medium in general.

Lastly, the secondary source which was of a great importance for this thesis is “Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel” by Sara J. Van Ness. Scholar Sara J. Van Ness specializes in comic studies, and her work offers a comprehensive scholarly interpretation of “Watchmen.” The book written by Van Ness explores the intricate narrative techniques, deep thematic analysis, and cultural relevance of “Watchmen,” making a strong case for its status as an important piece of literature.

The book delves into the many intertextual connections found in “Watchmen,” emphasizing how Moore and Gibbons use and twist themes from other books, comic books, and historical events to provide nuance and complexity to the narrative. Particular emphasis is placed on the ways in which “Watchmen” uses visual narrative techniques to explain challenging ideas and feelings, so strengthening its literary value, which was particularly important for my thesis.

According to Van Ness, “Watchmen” breaks out from the confines of its genre to become a ground-breaking piece of writing deserving of critical study. She argues that “Watchmen” pushes and redefines the graphic book genre with its deft use of narrative, thematic exploration, and visual storytelling. Van Ness analyzes “Watchmen’s” narrative

techniques, thematic themes, and cultural critique using a literary analysis framework based on textual analysis. Her technique, which places “Watchmen” into the larger literary and cultural debate, is based on close reading and comparative analysis.

Van Ness’s thorough analysis of “Watchmen” as literature serves as an essential secondary source for my thesis, providing in-depth knowledge of the narrative complexity and thematic diversity of the graphic book. Her examination of visual narrative techniques and intertextuality supports my analysis of “Watchmen,” especially in light of the way the graphic novel builds a multilayered narrative, which can be analyzed through Multimodal Discourse Analysis. My study gains an academic perspective by addressing Van Ness’s claims, which affirm “Watchmen’s” status as an important contribution as well as encourage a deeper understanding of its significance to the graphic novel genre and literature in general.

Sara J. Van Ness’s book “Watchmen as Literature: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel” has an important effect on comic book studies since it views “Watchmen” as a sophisticated literary work that needs a thorough analysis. Van Ness’s approach incorporates literary criticism and visual narratology, and uses a close reading in order to analyze the narrative structure, symbolism, and thematic complexity similar to that used in traditional literary studies. Van Ness pays more attention to textual analysis in her book than to the visual elements. However, I agree with her in-depth examination of the story complexities and thematic depths of “Watchmen,” which supports my approach of analyzing the multimodal components of the graphic novel. Van Ness’s in-depth analysis of “Watchmen” as a multi-layered narrative not only supports but also improves my analysis by providing a solid foundation for analyzing the techniques used in graphic novels. Through integrating Van Ness’s analysis with my own analysis of the visual narrative techniques employed in “Watchmen,” this thesis may contribute to the current conversation about the literary significance of graphic novels and their place in academic discourse.

All of these secondary sources were important for this thesis and analysis of “Watchmen”, which was the primary source for this thesis. “Watchmen” is a graphic novel written by Alan Moore, drawn by Dave Gibbons and colored by John Higgins. Superheroes appeared in the middle of the 20th century and had an impact on historical events in this parallel timeline. The story revolves around a group of retired superheroes who look into their own member's murder and discover a deep conspiracy. “Watchmen” is well known for its intricate character development, critical examination of superhero clichés, and intricate narrative structure. The themes, narrative techniques, and visual strategies employed by

Moore and Gibbons provide a rich foundation for analysis through Multimodal Discourse Analysis and other theoretical frameworks.

Alan Moore, the creator of the graphic novel “Watchmen,” takes a similar approach to writing as other writers do, but he goes much further. His aim is to convey as much detail, mood, or atmosphere to the artist as possible, which is why his scripts are characterized as “hyper descriptive” and extremely detailed.²⁰⁴ As a result, his writing is far more detailed than that of other authors. It further demonstrates Alan Moore’s commitment to producing true literature and elevating the comic book format to the status of a novel that he himself admits he gets most of his inspiration from novels and occasionally from films rather than comic books.²⁰⁵

Furthermore, it’s essential to understand that Alan Moore is not the primary author of “Watchmen.” As much as Moore is the author of “Watchmen,” so is the artist Dave Gibbons. Moore stated that although he provides the artist with a very detailed script, the artists are free to experiment if they have a better idea. In this sense, the artists are considered co-authors of the graphic novel. This lends additional support to the notion that the graphic novels’ is crucial to the narrative.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Annalisa Di Liddo, *Alan Moore: Comics as Performance, Fiction as Scalpel* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 32.

²⁰⁵ Di Liddo, *Alan Moore: Comics as Performance, Fiction as Scalpel*, 28

²⁰⁶ Di Liddo, *Alan Moore: Comics as Performance, Fiction as Scalpel*, 34

6. Conclusion

In summary, “Watchmen” by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons is a groundbreaking work that reimagines the possibilities of visual narrative, in addition to being an outstanding work in the graphic novel genre. This graphic novel offers a critical reflection on the socio-political setting of its period while exploring complex topics outside the conventions of the superhero genre. Its innovative use of visual storytelling techniques matches, if not surpasses, its captivating narrative. These methods challenge and enhance the boundaries of the graphic novel medium in addition to enhancing the storytelling experience.

Through the methodological lens of Multimodal Discourse Analysis, this thesis has analyzed the varied relationships between the textual and visual elements of “Watchmen.” The depth of Moore and Gibbons’ narrative techniques, which carefully combine words and images to produce a narrative experience, has been analyzed in this thesis. The dynamic relationship between text and image, as well as the novel’s creative use of panel composition, color symbolism, and page layout, all combine to create a rich narrative structure.

A complex story that challenges the traditional idea of the superhero is beautifully constructed by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, who present characters that are morally questionable and deeply damaged. This excellent combination of textual and visual storytelling analyzes the definition of heroism and raises important questions about the use of power in an uncertain and scary setting. The superheroes are carefully deconstructed in the graphic novel, going from being a picture of unquestionable goodness to a symbol of the complexity and paradoxes that are a part of humanity.

“Watchmen” provides an engaging stage for the examination of these themes, set in an alternative historical setting in which superheroes have become important figures in the world’s politics and events. The alternate history shown in the graphic novel, one in which the United States won the Vietnam War and Nixon stays in office for a longer period of time, amplifies Cold War fears by showing a world on the verge of nuclear disaster.

“Watchmen” conveys the narrative by utilizing the graphic novel format on several levels. It uses a symbolic and detailed visual language that communicates just as much, if not more, than the text it is combined with. The application of Multimodal Discourse Analysis has made it possible to closely analyze the ways in which “Watchmen” uses several

communication modalities to tell its story. This method has made it clear how important it is to view graphic novels as multimodal works, in which words and images work together to produce meaning.

A close analysis of the panel and image composition in “Watchmen” reveals a story that is carefully and artistically constructed. Rather than simply putting together a bunch of images, Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons have created a visual language that conveys narrative much beyond text. The reader’s attention is drawn to characters or items in the panel that are crucial to the current panel by use of the image composition.

The “establishing shots” refer to the particular panels that were analyzed in greater detail since they play a crucial role in the visual narrative. Their frequent use in *The Watchmen* aids readers to orient themselves in the narrative and may serve to supplement the novel’s description of a scene or its transition. The area in which the narrative takes place, or shifts to, is shown in great detail in these panels which are typically found at the top or bottom of the page.

The intentional use of color in “Watchmen” increases the emotional impact and the complexity of the story even further. The use of color in “Watchmen” goes beyond simple aesthetics, it has symbolic significance that adds to the story’s depth of meaning. Vibrant colors are used sparingly against a mostly dark palette to highlight key elements, call attention to important details, and evoke specific emotions. It also subverts the conventional comic book superheroes’ vivid primary colors by portraying the characters in secondary colors that highlight their ambiguity. The moral ambiguities and complexity in the story are highlighted by this intentional color use, which enhances the impact of the narrative.

The subtle portrayal of facial emotions in the panels is equally important for the narrative, since it provides an understanding into the characters’ inner selves and might establish relationships towards other characters. Moore and Gibbons are artists at portraying the nuances of human emotion; they can communicate a lot with a single look or raised eyebrow. These visual clues enhance the story with a psychological depth that complements the textual narrative and takes the lead in communicating the characters’ emotions. They provide insight into the characters’ inner worlds, motives, tensions, and conflicts, as well as their connections with other characters.

The careful page layout arrangement serves as a further example of “Watchmen’s” unique narrative. Each page functions as a thoughtfully constructed part of the narrative puzzle, and the arrangement is not random, rather, it has been carefully put together in order to enhance narrative. The manner in which the panels are arranged and the way they

collaborate with the gutter are significant strategic choices which influence the narrative's overall flow and rhythm. While utilizing a regular grid layout, "Watchmen" also makes use of its deviations, such as larger panels that cover more space on the page or smaller panel sequences that goes contrary to the regular grid. Each deviation has a unique impact. This thoughtful choice of page layout enhances the visual narrative and makes storytelling easier while also guiding the reader's eye from one panel to another and highlighting the unique qualities of the graphic novel format.

In the end, "Watchmen's" dynamic interplay between the textual and visual planes perfectly captures how these components work together to create a multimodal narrative. The interaction, mutually beneficial relationships, and even disagreement between the textual and visual planes enhances the story by establishing a dialogue that is more than just a simple coexistence. Different speech balloon sizes, shapes, and colors, as well as text stylization, which itself can transmit speech nuances, can be used to communicate the meaning. Furthermore, simultaneous speech can be visually conveyed by arranging the speech balloons in panels in a way that is not possible in other written mediums. Like speech balloons, narrative boxes also transmit meaning through their visual components, such as the color, shape, and stylization of the text. Visual storytelling also benefits from the montage technique, which combines word and image. Text is incorporated into the image to support the graphic novel's realistic settings and to assist readers in locating the place where the story is set. Because of this, they are often used in the panels and establishing shots that show the reader the specific location where the story that follows is set. This interaction provides a variety of perspectives through which the story might be viewed, enabling an intricate analysis of the narrative. The graphic novel "Watchmen" demonstrates the ability to communicate complex narratives through a seamless integration of written and visual elements. These components work together to create "Watchmen's" intricately layered narrative.

This thesis emphasizes "Watchmen's" crucial role in highlighting the benefits of the comic book medium in order to look at the viewpoints on graphic novels and comics. This study emphasizes "Watchmen's" status as an essential work that goes beyond the traditional boundaries of graphic novels through an in-depth analysis of the usage of visual storytelling techniques, which supports graphic novels as a literary genre. The analysis that has been provided illustrates how graphic novels can dive into intricate narratives with a level of complexity and depth that can be compared to that of traditional literary forms. This approach to storytelling highlights the special ability of graphic novels to offer narrative experiences.

As a result, this thesis encourages graphic novels' wider acceptance and admiration in the academic world and sets "Watchmen" as a standard for both literary and artistic excellence.

This thesis emphasizes how important visual narrative is for deepening storytelling abilities, using "Watchmen" as a great example of how text and visual elements may work together. "Watchmen," an outstanding work by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, displays how well text and visual elements may collaborate to convey a wide range of complex concepts, themes, and emotions. The deep narrative experience is made possible by this integration. The graphic novel's clever use of visual components along with its textual narrative highlights the unique potential of comics and graphic novels to explore narratives in ways that are not possible with conventional text-based storytelling.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of how audiences perceive and interpret the narrative techniques used in "Watchmen," future research should investigate reader reception studies. Furthermore, comparative analyses that concentrate on "Watchmen's" adaptation into other media could provide helpful insights on how to translate its rich visual narrative into television and film formats. Another possibility is to perform a comparative analysis that contrasts Watchmen with other graphic novels which are rich in visual storytelling. This might examine how the complimentary works of Watchmen differ in their visual narratives.

To summarize, "Watchmen" is more than a graphic novel; it is a seminal work that shows the narrative potential of the comic book and graphic novel medium. Through its detailed analysis of the visual narrative of "Watchmen," this thesis aims to deepen understanding of graphic novels as a strong and rich form of literary expression, in addition to understanding the complex details of Moore and Gibbons' masterpiece. The fact that "Watchmen" still challenges and inspires readers and academics alike is evidence of the eternal importance and power of visual storytelling.

7. Resumé

Ve své bakalářské práci se věnuji rozboru vizuálního vyprávění v grafickém románu *Watchmen* od Alana Moora a Davea Gibbonse, který je přelomovým dílem, které představuje nejen nové možnosti vizuálního vyprávění, ale zároveň je vynikajícím dílem v žánru grafického románu. Tento grafický román nabízí kritickou reflexi dobového společensko-politického prostředí a zároveň zkoumá složitá témata mimo rámec konvencí superhrdinského žánru. Inovativní využití technik vizuálního vyprávění se rovná jeho poutavému příběhu, ne-li jej dokonce předčí. Využití metod vizuálního vyprávění rozšiřuje hranice grafických románů a navíc umocňují zážitek z vyprávění.

Prostřednictvím metody multimodální analýzy diskurzu tato práce analyzovala rozmanité vazby mezi textovými a vizuálními prvky grafického románu *Watchmen*. V této práci byla analyzována především důkladnost Mooreových a Gibbonsových vypravěčských technik, které pečlivě kombinují text a vizuál a vytvářejí tak působivý příběhový zážitek. Dynamický vztah mezi textem a obrazem, stejně jako tvůrčí využití kompozice panelů, barevné symboliky a rozvržení stránek, to vše dohromady vytváří bohatý příběh románu.

Tato vynikající kombinace textového a vizuálního vyprávění analyzuje definici hrdinství a nastoluje důležité otázky o využití moci v nejistém a děsivém prostředí. Superhrdinové jsou v grafickém románu pečlivě dekonstruováni a z obrazu nezpochybnitelného dobra se stávají symbolem složitosti a paradoxů, které jsou součástí lidství.

Grafický román *Watchmen* zprostředkovává příběh pomocí formátu grafického románu na několika různých úrovních. Grafický román používá symbolický a detailní vizuální jazyk, který vyjadřuje stejně, ne-li více, než text, s nímž je spojen. Aplikace multimodální analýzy diskurzu umožnila podrobně analyzovat způsoby, jakými *Watchmen* využívá několik komunikačních modalit k odvyprávění svého příběhu. Tato metoda jasně ukázala, jak důležité je nahlížet na grafické romány jako na multimodální díla, v nichž slova a obrazy spolupracují na vytváření obsahu.

V práci byla provedena podrobná analýza jednotlivých panelů, včetně jejich kompozice. Alan Moore a Dave Gibbons zde vytvořili vizuální jazyk, který zprostředkovává vyprávění stejně, ne-li více než text. Pozornost čtenáře je pomocí obrazové kompozice upoutána na postavy nebo předměty, které jsou pro daný panel klíčové. Ustavující panely je specifický druh panelů, které byly podrobněji analyzovány, protože hrají zásadní roli ve vizuálním vyprávění. Jejich časté využití ve *Watchmenech* pomáhá čtenářům se orientovat

ve vyprávění a mohou sloužit jako popis v románech. Záměrné použití barev ještě více zvyšuje emocionální dopad a komplexnost příběhu. Použití barev přesahuje rámec prosté estetiky, má totiž symbolický význam, který příběhu dodává hloubku. Stejně důležité pro vyprávění je i vyobrazení výrazů tváří postav, které umožňuje pochopit jejich vnitřní rozpoložení a jejich postoj či vztah vůči ostatním postavám. Tyto vizuální náznaky obohacují příběh o psychologickou hloubku, která doplňuje textové vyprávění a přebírá hlavní roli při sdělování emocí postav.

Pečlivé uspořádání stránek je dalším příkladem jedinečného vizuálního vyprávění. Každá stránka funguje jako promyšleně sestavená část vyprávěcí skládačky a její uspořádání není náhodné, naopak bylo pečlivě sestaveno tak, aby vyprávění ještě posílilo. Watchmen sice pravidelně využívají pravidelné rozvržení stránky, ale zároveň využívají i odchylky od dané normy. Například větší panely, které zabírají více místa na stránce, nebo menší sekvence panelů. Každá odchylka má jedinečný dopad. Volba rozvržení stránky umocňuje vizuální vyprávění a usnadňuje vyprávění příběhu, zároveň vede čtenářův zrak od jednoho panelu k druhému.

Dynamická interakce mezi textovou a vizuální rovinou grafického románu Watchmen dokonale vystihuje, jak tyto dvě složky společně vytvářejí multimodální vyprávění. Textová a vizuální složka mohou vyprávět příběh ruku v ruce, nebo mohou fungovat nezávisle na sobě, nebo mohou sdělovat protichůdné informace. K přenesení významu mohou být využity různé velikosti, tvary a barvy bublin i stylizace textu, která sama o sobě může přenášet různé emoce. Paralelní řeč lze navíc vizuálně zprostředkovat uspořádáním daných bublin v panelech, což v jiných psaných médiích není možné. Stejně jako bubliny i vyprávěčské boxy přenášejí význam prostřednictvím svých vizuálních složek, jako je barva, tvar a stylizace textu. Vizuální vyprávění příběhů těží také z techniky montáže, která kombinuje slovo a obraz. Text je začleněn do obrazu, aby podpořil realistické prostředí grafického románu a pomohl čtenáři lokalizovat místo, kde se příběh odehrává. Z tohoto důvodu se často používá v ustavujících panelech, které čtenáři ukazují konkrétní místo, kde se odehrává daný příběh. Tato interakce poskytuje různé perspektivy, skrze které lze na příběh nahlížet, a umožňuje tak složitou analýzu vyprávění.

Tato bakalářská práce zdůrazňuje status grafického románu Watchmen jako zásadního díla, které překračuje tradiční hranice grafických románů, a to díky využití vizuálních vyprávěčských technik. Provedená analýza ilustruje, jak se grafické romány mohou ponořit do složitých příběhů s úrovní komplexnosti a hloubky, kterou lze srovnávat s tradičními literárními formami. V důsledku toho tato práce podporuje širší přijetí grafických románů v

akademickém světě a stanovuje grafický román *Watchmen* jako měřítko literární i umělecké výjimečnosti.

Tato práce zdůrazňuje, jak důležité je vizuální vyprávění pro prohloubení vyprávění a jako skvělý příklad toho, jak mohou textové a vizuální prvky spolupracovat. Grafický román *Watchmen* ukazuje, jak dobře mohou textové a vizuální prvky spolupracovat při zprostředkování široké škály složitých konceptů, témat a emocí. Důmyslné využití vizuálních prvků spolu s textovým vyprávěním v tomto grafickém románu poukazuje na jedinečný potenciál komiksů a grafických románů zkoumat vyprávění způsobem, který není možný u běžného textového vyprávění.

Aby bylo možné hlouběji porozumět tomu, jak čtenáři vnímají a interpretují vypravěčské postupy použité v grafickém románu *Watchmen*, mohl by se budoucí výzkum zabývat studiem čtenářské recepce. Srovnávací analýzy, které by se soustředily na adaptace grafického románu do jiných médií, by navíc mohly poskytnout užitečné poznatky o tom, jak převést bohaté vizuální vyprávění do televizních a filmových formátů. Další možností je provést komparativní analýzu, která by srovnala grafický román *Watchmen* s jinými grafickými romány, které jsou bohaté na vizuální vyprávění. Ta by mohla prozkoumat, jak se komplementární díla liší ve svých vizuálních vyprávěních.

Závěrem lze říci, že grafický román *Watchmen* je více než jen grafický román. Jedná se o zásadní dílo, které ukazuje vypravěčský potenciál komiksu a grafického románu. Prostřednictvím podrobné analýzy vizuálního vyprávění grafického románu *Watchmen* si tato práce klade za cíl kromě pochopení složitých detailů Moorova a Gibbonsova mistrovského díla prohloubit porozumění grafickému románu jako silné a bohaté formě literárního vyjádření. Skutečnost, že grafický román *Watchmen* stále představuje výzvu a inspiraci pro čtenáře i akademiky, je důkazem síly vizuálního vyprávění.

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