



**Revue de recherche en civilisation
américaine**

5 | 2015

**Roman graphique : transferts, correspondances,
echos**

Crime, Adaptation and Collective Guilt: Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's *From Hell*

Ruth-Ellen St. Onge



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/rrca/684>

ISSN: 2101-048X

Publisher

David Diallo

Electronic reference

Ruth-Ellen St. Onge, « Crime, Adaptation and Collective Guilt: Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's *From Hell* », *Revue de recherche en civilisation américaine* [Online], 5 | 2015, Online since 02 February 2016, connection on 19 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/rrca/684>

This text was automatically generated on 19 April 2019.

© Tous droits réservés

Crime, Adaptation and Collective Guilt: Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's *From Hell*

Ruth-Ellen St. Onge

- 1 The series of murders committed in the fall of 1888 in Whitechapel by the so-called "Ripper," immediately seized upon the public's imagination in England and abroad. The reporting, fictionalization, and mythologization of the crimes of "Jack" and the deaths of his female victims have continued unabated, and remain problematic as more often than not, these adaptations echo the same sensationalism and misogyny that characterized the crimes they commemorate. The latest example of this tendency occurred in late July 2015, when, as *The Guardian* reports, "a new museum originally billed as a celebration of East London women and the suffragettes [was] branded a 'sick joke,' by local residents as it opened as a venue dedicated to the crimes of Jack the Ripper." One re-visioning of this bloody mark on London's history can be argued to stand apart from the body of texts, images, and commemorations surrounding the historical murders committed in the East End. The author of one of the first reviews of the graphic novel *From Hell*, written by Alan Moore and illustrated by Eddie Campbell, judges that it will endure

[...] as an enduring work of art, a fully realized look backward at a human trauma that rocked Western civilization and changed beyond measure the way we view sex, society, and the very theory of progress. Reading it is like reliving that trauma; it inflicts the same wounds, on a personal level instead of a cultural one (Rodi 1991, pp. 46-47).

- 2 *From Hell*, which appeared in serial form between 1986 and 1996 and finally in a collected edition in 1999, stands out for both the dark and kinetic style of Eddie Campbell as well as the characteristically dense, complex and overwhelming script by Alan Moore. On one level, the graphic novel dissects and analyses a series of murders; on another, it accuses and eviscerates a whole society for being complicit in the historical crimes committed in the Whitechapel neighbourhood of London, England, in the fall of 1888. This accusation is

made possible by Alan Moore's deployment of an unusual type of adaptation, which serves as a means to re-live and re-interpret a traumatic historical event.

- 3 Most criticism around graphic novels and comics has focused on literary and filmic adaptations, those that, to borrow the framework proposed by Linda Hutcheon (2012), move either from "telling" to "showing", or "showing" to "performing" (p. 35). Indeed, the well-known, though somewhat uneven, film adaptations of Moore's work (*From Hell*, d. Albert and Allen Hughes, 2001; *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, d. Stephen Norrington, 2003; *V for Vendetta*, d. James McTeigue, 2006; *Watchmen*, d. Zach Snyder, 2009), have provided much fodder to the emerging body of criticism on graphic novels and adaptation (Oxoby 2003, Figueiredo 2010, Wood 2010, Rehak 2011, Manivannan 2011, Petrovic 2011, Kohns 2013). This article will not address the problematic film adaptation of *From Hell*, but rather how the graphic novel itself is a form of adaptation, in which Moore brings together and reinterprets a whole body of ephemeral, procedural, pseudo-historical writings on Jack the Ripper in order to recreate his revisionist "melodrama in sixteen parts" (*From Hell: Being a Melodrama in Sixteen Parts*). With reference to the graphic novel's visual and narrative techniques, as well as ancillary materials such as commentaries, interviews and the separately published scripts, we will focus on how Moore implicates society, himself, and the reader in the crime whose history he adapts.
- 4 The real Jack the Ripper has never been found, and yet a whole literature of "Ripperology" has grown up and bartered theories on the identity and crimes of one of the first modern serial killers. Alan Moore himself was first inspired to write about the Whitechapel murders after reading *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution* written by Stephen Knight in 1976. Moore follows Knight's example constructs his own revisionist version of the history according to which Sir William Gull, the doctor of the Royal Family, was the culprit¹. In the graphic novel *From Hell*, the Ripper's murders of London prostitutes are not part of a random spree, rather, they are the methodical steps of a vast Masonic ritual that reaches through space and time. While Gull has been tasked with removing a group of women who seek to expose the illegitimate child of Queen Victoria's grandson, Prince Albert Victor, his aim is much grander: to strike at the threat of the resurgent maternal, feminine element, restore the supremacy of the patriarchy, and in turn, metamorphose into a "divine subject" (Miettinen 2012, p. 89). Gull carries out his crimes with the tacit agreement of the Royalty, the medical establishment, and the police force, thus implicating these representatives of social and political order in the slaughter of five women.
- 5 We can call *From Hell* an adaptation, for Moore seeks to reinvent, reinterpret and recreate his own version of one story, a story that happens to be based on historical fact. However, Moore complicates the traditional binary of adaptation: source text and adaptation. He draws from a multitude of sources from speculative histories to the purported letters of Jack the Ripper to the original crime scene photographs that are recreated in turn by Eddie Campbell. Moore's "mutilation" of Victorian texts and images is analyzed at length by Ali (2005), who argues that Moore's intertextuality and appropriation can shed light on the relationship between the text and the comics critic. Though intricate and provocative, Ali's argument is tangential to our goal. Rather, we can simply state that *From Hell* embodies the intertextual nature of the adaptation as signalled by Hutcheon in her theory of adaptation. In the coda to the graphic novel, the second appendix titled "Dance of the gull catchers," Moore and Campbell depict the interweaving, contesting accounts of Jack the Ripper, including the one proposed in *From Hell*. Moore refuses to call

his version of the tale the truth. The question of fidelity, as has been noted by Hutcheon, is often the criterion of quality for any adaptation. However, Moore's goal is not to reveal the truth of Jack the Ripper, but rather to examine how the events of 1888 and their subsequent mythologization reveal a truth about us, the readers, and the society in which we live and participate. Though his appropriation, citation, and mutation of historical texts and images are of interest to any scholar adopting a narratological, semiotic or textual approach, they should not distract from the message underlying Moore's method. Or, to echo one reviewer in *The Comics Journal*: "*From Hell* is a masterpiece because it's an audacious polemic, not despite it" (Anon. 1999, p. 65).

- 6 A close reading of Moore and Campbell's graphic novel exposes the motivations driving their rewriting and re-visioning of a bloody event, and shows that *From Hell* speaks to us of the dark wound at the heart of Western culture and society that also festers, as Moore reveals, within our own psyches. The author himself does not escape this accusation. The literary representation of historic trauma is a complex topic, but here it will be proposed that recreations or adaptations such as that of Moore serve as a form of reconciliation towards the victims of trauma, an accusation of a society that participates actively or complicity in their abasement, but which reveals at the same time the author's inability to escape implication in the original violent act. By revealing and representing the ultimate act of violence – murder – the author is marked, and so too is the reader.

1888-1988: From Inspiration to Adaptation

- 7 Around 1988, Moore conceived of the project of writing the story of a single murder – to explore all of the reverberations of an act of violence, and to examine how this crime touches a network of individuals much more vast than the original duo of the murderer and the victim. According to Moore, by singling out and analyzing a universally known historical murder, the author can follow all the threads that lead from the heart of the crime and thus, nearly resolve "an entire culture." The interest lies, then, less in the murder itself than in what it has to say about the wider social world: as Moore admits, "[i]t was the behaviour of the culture that fascinates me and still does [...]" (Millidge 2011, p. 178). The year 1988 happened to be the centenary of the Whitechapel murders, which proved to be an apt subject for Moore. He plunged into the mass of literature, representations and speculations surrounding the Ripper to construct his own narrative. Thus, drawing from the social imaginary² that has formed around the Ripper, Moore creates a new revisionist version of the event. Interestingly, Moore evokes the same comparison between adaptation and Darwinian evolution used by Linda Hutcheon when comparing the myriad conspiracy theories that sprung up around the Ripper in his "Dance of the gull catchers." Inspired by both the Charlie Kaufman film *Adaptation* (2002), and Richard Dawkin's Darwinian theories, Hutcheon posits that stories, "like genes, [...] adapt to [...] new environments by virtue of mutation – in their 'offspring' or their adaptations. And the fittest do more than survive; they flourish" (2012, p. 32). After drawing up a long list of the competing theories as to the identity of the killer, the most recent being, at that time, the hoaxed "Ripper diary" that emerged in 1992, Moore ironically states: "Some stories just don't have what it takes. The yarn that eventually survives to be accepted as history will do so by brute Darwinian mechanics" (p. 21) The panel illustrating this survival of the fittest stories depicts, through Campbell's pen-work, a room filled with all of those historical figures accused of being the Ripper, fighting with

guns, knives, and fists: "We'll lock all the suspects in a room together. They can fight it out." (p. 21) In this coda to the graphic novel, Moore reflects on the fact that there is no one solution to the crimes of Jack the Ripper, no one explanation or story that truly beats out all the others to fully explain what happened: "Murder, a human event located in both time and space, has an imaginary field completely unrestrained by either. It holds meaning, and shape, but no solution" ("Dance of the gull catchers," p. 22). He judges that the "greatest part" of any murder is not the act itself but "the field of theory, fascination and hysteria that it engenders. A black diaspora. Our tireless, sinister enthusiasm" (p. 22). His conclusion ties in with the definition of adaptation itself, according to which every text is but a rewriting of an original whose initial meaning is irrevocably removed from the present³.

Skirting Sensationalism through Adaptation

- 8 The graphic novel is dedicated to the Ripper's five victims: Polly Nicholls, Annie Chapman, Liz Stride, Kate Eddowes and Marie Jeanette Kelly. Although certain critics have described Moore's depiction of the five women and their deaths and the recurring problematic of violence against women in his other works as misogynistic⁴, Moore explains that from the outset, as he was conceiving *From Hell*, he wished to represent the lives of the five women killed in the autumn of 1888 in a truthful and respectful manner. In the copious notes that accompany the graphic novel, he indicates that he and Campbell consciously sought to represent the women as neither tantalizing femme fatales nor hideous whores. These characters are complex human beings, not stereotypes. In an interview given to *Comics Journal* at the beginning of the series' publication, Moore explains that with the help of Eddie Campbell, he sought to offer to readers a rich and truthful representation of fictional characters based on historical figures:

I've researched the characters and the backgrounds of the women as much as is possible (not a lot is known about them). It's very seldom that people in films or books or comics ever even mention the women's names. We've gone a bit further than that. We've found out where they were born, how they came to be in England at that time, what their circumstances were, whether they were married, whether they were living with anybody, where they were living, what their fortunes were like, how much money they had, their trouble with the police, their immediate family. We've tried to make them three-dimensional creatures, not just ciphers for Jack the Ripper to bump off (1991, p. 33).

- 9 The author wants his reader to understand that these characters are based on human beings who lived and died, rather than the nameless and story-less prey of a killer. This treatment of the women is in direct opposition to the often sensationalist texts that proliferate in the body of "Ripperology." By depicting the women as complex agents subject to societal injustices like poverty, prejudice, and sexual oppression, Moore constructs a revisionist take on the history of the Whitechapel murders that foregrounds the historical and ongoing oppression of women by patriarchal Western society.
- 10 In this same early interview, conducted before *From Hell* was completed, Moore brings up another possible interpretation of his graphic novel: as a depiction of the war of the classes – the aristocracy against the lower classes –, but indicates that this is only one element of a much deeper problematic. The murders are of interest because they were, and remain, "such terribly misogynistic acts." The crime has several levels, and threads that implicate more actors than the killer who murdered and mutilated five women. As

Moore explains, publicity surrounding the murders provoked an unsettling, mass response: "the police received so many letters, hundreds of letters that started off 'Dear Boss' and ended 'Yours truly, Jack the Ripper' – all in different handwritings. These were men all over London that weren't Jack the Ripper, but who wished they were" (Moore 1991, p. 80). In the ninth chapter of the graphic novel, titled "From Hell," Moore and Campbell depict this collective act of misogyny, in which many men, from all classes of society, young and old, rich and poor, write falsified letters to the police just as Sir William Gull dictates his own message to his accomplice, Netley. Some laugh, some write compulsively, others masturbate as they put to paper their myriad missals all signed with the same name: "Jack the Ripper" (p. 36). While the Ripper's crimes are tacitly supported by the Royalty, and covered up by the police, they are celebrated and imitated in written form by these countless men. As critic Bridgley-Thomas (2012) has pointed out, "Gull represents the sexual domination of women not by isolated madmen, but by 'civilized' society in general" (p. 82). Moore goes further, however, than just denouncing all levels of Victorian society. Though he notes that "[...] in Victorian times misogyny was part of the structure of society," he adds that: "It still is to some degree. If there hadn't been a Jack the Ripper we may have had to invent him" (1991, p. 81).

A Crime Implicating Author and Reader

- 11 In *From Hell*, then, "[...] Moore and Campbell take on a nineteenth century crime to address a twentieth century issue" (Miettinen 2012, p. 91). This accusation of contemporary as well as historical forms of misogyny plays out in the graphic novel by the linking of Gull's crimes to a series of atrocities committed in the twentieth century. The dark rite enacted by Sir William Gull seeks to suppress the feminine and maternal element that he perceives as a threat to the Apollonian forces of order and reason – the Victorian establishment – but also unleashes all the horrors of the twentieth century, whether on a grand scale, such as the crimes committed by Hitler's Third Reich, or on the local scale of British serial killers like Myra Hindley, Ian Brady, and the Yorkshire Ripper, Peter Sutcliffe. The murders are linked to the conception of Adolph Hitler in Branau, Upper Austria, August 1888, as depicted in the opening pages of Chapter Five "The Nemesis of neglect," in which an unnamed Austrian woman and man's coupling is interrupted by the woman's vision of a cascade of blood that descends from the threshold of St. Paul's Cathedral and engulfs a group of Jewish men on the street. The meaning of the cryptic scene, namely that the Ripper's murders marked the conception of Hitler, is explained at length by Moore in his annotations (see Appendix I, p. 17). In Chapter Fourteen, "Gull, ascending," Gull's spectre hovers over the "Moors Murderers" Hindley and Brady as they watch a film about ... Jack the Ripper (pp. 13-14). During this same series of visions, Gull's head appears to Brady as a child, and greets him: "I know you, Ian... You shall know my works. You shall exalt me" (p. 18). Gull then observes Peter Sutcliffe in a banal living room somewhere in the North of England. On one level, the rite performed by Gull forms a sort of reverse adaptation, melding future events to serve his cause. On another level, Moore's linking of related, yet disparate historical events, represents his own manipulation of the historical record to suit the needs of his fictionalized adaptation.
- 12 The apogee of Gull's bloody rite takes place in the tenth chapter of the graphic novel, "The best of all tailors," in which Moore's script and Campbell's panels paint in a cold and

methodical manner the atrocious murder and mutilation of Marie Kelly by Sir William Gull. The chapter is highly disturbing, yet not sensationalist, or at the very least, seeks to avoid sensation for, as Moore put it in an interview, he and Campbell wanted to “do something which does not glamorize murder” (1991, p. 79). Both are against the “cosmetic, cinematic approach” of Ripper films or comics to the murders, which Moore describes as a “pornography of violence” (1991, p. 79). At each step of his ritual dismemberment of the woman’s corpse, Gull experiences arcane visions; he is able to pierce the fabric of time and reality just as he cuts through the flesh of his victim. One sight the doctor beholds is that of the technocratic twentieth century, represented by an anodyne and anonymous office. From the heart of the nineteenth century, Gull cries out to the office workers “With all your shimmering numbers and your lights, think not to be immured to history. Its black root succours you. It is INSIDE you [...] See me! Wake up and look upon me! I am come amongst you. I am with you always” (p. 21). But, the future workers ignore him, and he in turn deplores the alien culture he observes, as “[a] culture grown disinterested, even to its own abysmal wounds” (p. 22). The black work, the sacrificial rite is at the heart of so-called civilization and their remains for all time. The twenty and twenty-first century reader, unlike the banal office workers confronted by Gull, cannot look away, for Moore and Campbell make clear that both the author and the reader are caught in the web of influence and implicated in the crime committed by Gull.

- 13 Due to its depiction of extreme violence, the tenth chapter of *From Hell* provoked censure in Australia and elsewhere upon publication⁵. Moore has admitted that it was a challenge to write. In his introduction to the first edition of the script of the graphic novel, he explains his reaction when, during the writing of *From Hell*, he received more details on the murder of Marie Kelly from a “Ripperologist”:

The surge of excitement I felt on receiving the offer of yet more details of the hideous things that were done to this woman was frankly as close as I’ve come to pure horror throughout this whole exercise. Not a revulsion at what has become of Marie Jeanette Kelly, her purely physical disfiguring, but a nausea predicated on myself, on all the Ripperati, fumbling elbow deep in pools of ancient blood (Cited by Campbell 2013, p. 213).

- 14 The author hesitates between his desire to expose and highlight social crime, violence, and the darkness centered around the figure of Gull, and the repercussions that this representation incur. Furthermore, the reader is implicated in this ambivalence surrounding the literary and iconic depiction of a violent crime. We are the banal office workers witnessed by Gull in his exalted vision, who are ignorant of the bloody crime that gave birth to our century. This complicity of the reader and the author in the crime they witness and recreate is represented visually throughout the novel. In the most violent scenes of the graphic novels, Campbell’s panels adopt the perspective of Gull, forcing the reader, or viewer, to see through his eyes. This technique is not deployed to represent the viewpoints of other characters. The reader contemplates the secrets of nature through Gull’s eyes, when as a small child he dissects a rat, revealing his aptitude for the medical sciences and the wielding of the scalpel (Chapter Two, p. 6). Later in the narrative, during the murders of the five women, this perspective is maintained. The eyes of Gull, and at the same time, those of the reader, are fixed on the bloody hands and the scalpel (see Chapter Five, pp. 4-5). Finally, in Chapter 14, during Gull’s nightmarish travels through space and time, this shared view shifts to regard historical figures like William Blake (p. 16) and the future serial-killers Ian Brady (p. 17) and Peter Sutcliffe (p. 18). In the encounter with Blake, Gull’s hands become scaled and monstrous as they reach towards

the visionary artist, who explains to his friend that he has seen a ghost with a face “worthy of a murderer” (p. 16). In his encounter with Sutcliffe, his hands reach forwards into the panel, seizing an ashtray, much to the amazement of the other figures within the frame. This insistence on the hands of Gull, depicted as if they were the readers own, highlights the pictoriality of the graphic novel and its ability to communicate complex realities through showing, rather than telling⁶.

- 15 By consulting Moore's almost compulsively detailed script, we learn that this adoption of Gull's perspective and implication of the reader and the author was a conscious decision made by the author. This is most evident in the final scene of the graphic novel, which represents the possible triumph of the forces of “life” – represented by Marie Kelly and the children she protects – against the destructive rite of Gull. In his final vision, which occurs at the end of his life long after the crimes of 1888, Gull ascends towards his Masonic, patriarchal gods; this apotheosis is made possible by the rite he has enacted, but as he nears his goal, he feels himself suddenly pulled back down, towards a small cottage somewhere in the Irish countryside. He sees a woman and children. The woman, unlike the office workers of the future, sees him, and damns him. It is none other than Marie Kelly, who Gull believes to have been sacrificed in the final act of his rite, but who, in fleeing London, escaped the fate of being the last known victim of Jack the Ripper. Kelly, however, does not accuse only Gull. Her eyes break the fourth wall of the comic panel and seek another object. Moore's script for the panel repeatedly uses the pronoun “us” to describe this additional target of the woman's defiance:
- 16 Same shot as last panel, only here, with electrifying effect, the woman raises her eyes and stares directly at us. Her eyes are full of anger and a fierce defiance. The children also glance towards us [...] They look reproachful as they stare towards us, while their mother just looks coldly angry as she stare straight at us, eyes filled with a frightening maternal strength and will (cited in Campbell 2013, p. 277).
- 17 While her eyes accuse the reader, the author and the artist – the “us” – repeated almost compulsively in the Moore's script, her words address the spectre of Gull: “And as for you, ye auld divil. I know that ye're there, and ye're not having these. Clear off now wit ye. Clear off back to Hell and leave us Be!” (Chapter Fourteen, “Gull, ascending,” p. 23). Gull's spirit is unable to ascend to whether higher sphere he seeks and he dies, his soul dissolving into a white and blank space. By presenting a revisionist conclusion to the series of murders committed by Jack the Ripper, according to which his final victim, Marie Kelly, survives (although another woman dies in her stead), Moore indicates that there can exist, in opposition to the patriarchal order of both Victorian society and contemporary society, “[...] another mode of being where women are not subject to violent, oppressive domination” (Brigley-Thompson 2012, p. 83). Nevertheless, though Gull dies in Moore and Campbell's adaptation, they make clear that the repercussions of his crimes remain, in the form of future horrors and contemporary injustices. Marie Kelly, through her gaze and her words, accuses at once her fictional tormentor, the author and the artist who have adapted her story, and the reader.
- 18 In the final panels of the annex to *From Hell*, Moore concludes: “[...] Truth is, this has never been about the murder, nor the killer nor his victims. It's about us. About our minds and how they dance. Jack mirrors our hysterias. Faceless, he is the receptacle of each new social panic” (“The Dance of the gull catchers,” p. 22). The recurring use of the first person plural in the final words of the novel and in the final words of the script is eloquent. If Moore posits Gull as the perpetrator of a social rite that seeks to subjugate

women and the feminine, a rite committed in the Victorian age but whose roots lie deep in ancient history and whose tracings reach out to the contemporary age, the reader is equally guilty of a fascination for the wound and its source: the hatred and fear of women. A particularly complex version of a revisionist adaptation, *From Hell*, makes clear that the human mind, literature, and society never cease turning around, reliving and seeking to understand singular events such as those that occurred in the fall of 1888.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ali, Barish. 'The Violence of Criticism: The Mutilation and Exhibition of History in *From Hell*' in *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 2005, vol. 38, no. 4, pp. 605-630.
- Anon. 'The Top 100 (English-Language) Comics of the Century' in *The Comics Journal*, 1999, no. 210, pp. 36-110.
- Brigley-Thompson, Zoë. 'Theorizing Sexual Domination in *From Hell* and *Lost Girls*: Jack the Ripper versus Wonderlands of Desire,' in Comer, Todd A. and Joseph Michael Sommers (eds). 2012. *Sexual Ideology in the Works of Alan Moore* (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers), pp. 76-88.
- Campbell, Eddie. 2013. *The From Hell Companion*. With a foreword by Charles Hatfield and Craig Fischer (Marietta, GA, Top Shelf Productions).
- Dean, Michael. 'From Hell to Australia' in *The Comics Journal*, 2000, no. 229, pp. 12-14.
- Deppey, Dirk. 'The Eddie Campbell interview' in *The Comics Journal*, 2006, no. 273, pp. 68-109.
- Ferguson, Christine. 'Victoria-Arcana and the Misogynistic Poetics of Resistance in Ian Sinclair's *White Chappell Scarlet Tracings* and Alan Moore's *From Hell*' in *Literature Interpretation Theory*, 2009, vol. 20, pp. 45-64.
- Figueiredo, Camila. 'Tunes Across Media: The Intermedial Transposition of Music in *Watchmen*' in *International Journal of Comic Art*, 2010, vol. 12, issue 2/3, pp. 543-551.
- Halsall, Alison. 'A Parade of Curiosities': Alan Moore's *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* and *Lost Girls* as Neo-Victorian Pastiche' in the *Journal of Popular Culture*, 2015, vol. 48, issue 2, pp. 252-268.
- Hatfield, Charles. 2005. *Alternative Comics. An Emerging Literature*. (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi).
- Hutcheon, Linda, with Siobhan O'Flynn. 2012. *A Theory of Adaptation*, second edition. (London and New York: Routledge).
- Kalifa, Dominique. 2013. *Les Bas-fonds. Histoire d'un imaginaire* (Paris: Seuil).
- Khomani, Nadia. 'Museum billed as celebration of London women opens as Jack the Ripper exhibit' in the *Guardian*, Wednesday 29 July 2015, URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/jul/29/museum-billed-as-celebration-of-london-women-opens-as-jack-the-ripper-exhibit> (page last accessed on the 21st of December, 2015).

Kohns, Oliver. 'Guy Fawkes in the 21st Century: A Contribution to the Political Iconography of Revolt' in *Image (&) Narrative*, 2013, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 89-104.

Manivannan, V. 'Interplay amidst the Strangeness and the Charm: Under-Language and the Attenuation of Meaning in the Film Adaptation of *Watchmen*' in *ImageText: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies*, 2011, vol. 5. URL: http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/archives/v5_4/manivannan/

Miettinen, Mervi. "Do you understand how I have loved you?" Terrible Loves and Divine Visions in *From Hell*, in Comer, Todd A. and Joseph Michael Sommers (eds). 2012. *Sexual Ideology in the Works of Alan Moore* (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers), pp. 88-100.

Millidge, Gary Spencer. 2011. *Alan Moore: Storyteller* (Lewes: Ilex).

Mitaine, Benoît, David Roche et Isabelle Schmitt-Pitiot. 'Introduction : adapter les théories de l'adaptation à l'étude de la bande dessinée' in Mitaine, Benoît, David Roche et Isabelle Schmitt-Pitiot (eds). 2015. *Littératures. Bande dessinée et adaptation (littérature, cinéma, tv)* (Clermont-Ferrand : Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal), pp. 11-38.

Moore, Alan. 'Alan Moore Last Big Words' [interview], in *The Comics Journal*, 1991, no. 140, pp. 74-87.

Moore, Alan & Eddie Campbell. 2009 [1999]. *From Hell. Being a Melodrama in Sixteen Parts* (Marietta, GA: Top Shelf Productions).

Oxoby, Marc. 'The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen' in *Film & History*, July 2003, vol. 33, issue 2, pp. 77-79.

Petrovic, Paul. "The Culturally Constituted Gaze: Fetishizing the Feminine from Alan Moore and Dave Gibbon's *Watchmen* to Zack Snyder's *Watchmen*" in *ImageText: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies*, 2011, vol. 5, URL: http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/archives/v5_4/petrovic/

Rehak, Bob. 'Adapting *Watchmen* after 9/11' in *Cinema Journal*, Fall 2011, vol. 51, issue 1, pp.154-160.

Rodi, Rob. 'Cruel Britannia' in *The Comics Journal*, 1991, no. 142, pp. 41-47.

Rutherford, Lara. 'Victorian Genres at Play: Juvenile Fiction and *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*' in *Neo-Victorian Studies*, 2012, vol. 5, issue 1, pp. 125-151.

Wood, Daniel. "The Times They Are a-Changin': The Passage of Time as an Agent of Change in Zack Snyder's Film Adaptation of *Watchmen*" in *Colloquy: Text Theory Critique*, 2010, vol. 20, pp. 104-120.

NOTES

1. Moore, of course, is well-known for appropriating and re-shaping texts, including the reworked golden age comics heroes of *Watchmen* or the neo-Victorian heroes of *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. See Sylvie Kleiman Lafon's article, and Rutherford 2012 and Halsall 2015.
2. The concept of the social imaginary, though not discussed at length here, is an apt one for analyzing a text such as *From Hell*, which seeks to represent a social, cultural, and historical context in order to analyze and decry social realities. As Dominique Kalifa explains in *Les Bas-fonds*, the social imaginary is "[...] un système cohérent, dynamique, de représentations du monde social, une sorte de répertoire des figures et des identités collectives dont se dote chaque société à des moments donnés de son histoire. Les imaginaires sociaux décrivent la façon dont les sociétés perçoivent leurs divisions, élaborent leur avenir. Ils produisent et instituent le social

plus qu'ils ne le reflètent. Mais ils ont besoin pour cela de s'incarner dans des intrigues, de raconter des histoires, de les donner à lire ou à voir. C'est pourquoi l'imaginaire social est surtout, comme le suggère Pierre Popovic, un 'ensemble interactif de représentations corrélées, organisées en fictions latentes.' (Popovic, *Imaginaire social et folie littéraire*, 2008, p. 24)" (Kalifa 2013, p. 21). The emergence of the urban underworld, of which prostitutes were a key figure, is tied to the emergence of new industrial regimes by Kalifa, and of course, by Sir William Gull in *From Hell*.

3. As argued by Robert Stam who describes adaptation as: "[...] un 'hypertexte' dérivé d'un 'hypotexte' qui le précède et postule que les adaptations s'inscrivent 'dans un processus sans fin de recyclage, de transformation et de transmutation, sans point d'origine clair'" (cited by Mitaine, Benoît et al 2015, p. 28, as translated by the authors).

4. Ferguson (2009), for example, identifies *From Hell* as a part of a tendency she terms "Victoria-arcana", and claims the graphic novel is "the site of the most prurient and misogynistic depictions of the Whitechapel murder victims ever to appear in the history of Ripper representation, a tendency neglected in the genre's criticism out of deference to, among other things, its counter-cultural capital, deflected irony, and self-professed politics of opposition" (p. 46). Her article, however, reserves the harshest criticism for the Hughes brothers' 2001 film adaptation of Moore and Campbell's graphic novel.

5. *From Hell* was stopped at the border in Australia, according to Campbell, because of the scene of Marie Kelly's murder (Deppey 2006, p. 87). In addition, "imported volumes of *From Hell* have been confiscated in South Africa in 1996 and in England in 1997" (Dean 2000, p. 12-14)

6. See Hatfield's chapter on "The otherness of comics reading" (2005, p. 40).

ABSTRACTS

The shadow cast by Jack the Ripper continues to mark the social imaginary and forms the dark heart of the graphic novel *From Hell* (1999), written by Alan Moore and illustrated by Eddie Campbell. This article seeks to draw out the motivations behind the authors' re-visioning of the history of one of the first modern serial killers in the form of a graphic novel that adapts multiple texts, mythologies, and imaginaries. A revisionist adaptation, according to the criteria proposed by Hutcheon (2012), *From Hell* reworks the narrative of a traumatic historical crime in order to show that guilt lies not only with the killer, but with society, the author, and the reader.

L'ombre jetée par Jacques l'Éventreur marque toujours l'imaginaire social et figure au cœur du roman graphique *From Hell* (1999), écrit par Alan Moore et illustré par Eddie Campbell. Cet article cherche à comprendre les motivations qui poussent Moore à réécrire et à repenser l'histoire d'un des premiers tueurs en série modernes sous forme d'un roman graphique qui sert comme adaptation de plusieurs textes, mythologies et imaginaires. Adaptation révisionniste, selon les critères proposés par Hutcheon (2012), *From Hell* refaçonne l'histoire d'un crime historique et traumatique et montre que le coupable n'est pas seulement le tueur, mais aussi la société, l'auteur, et le lecteur.

INDEX

Keywords: From Hell, Alan Moore, Eddie Campbell, graphic novel, crime, trauma, adaptation, history

Mots-clés: From Hell, Alan Moore, Eddie Campbell, roman graphique, crime, trauma, adaptation, histoire

AUTHOR

RUTH-ELLEN ST. ONGE

Rare Book School at the University of Virginia (RBS)