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## NEIL GAIMAN'S *SANDMAN* AS A GATEWAY FROM COMIC BOOKS TO GRAPHIC NOVELS

CYRIL CAMUS

The use of the words “graphic novel” has become pervasive everywhere comics are sold or talked about. Thus, changing this catch-all phrase into a rigorously defined and intellectually fecund concept is a crucial matter for comics criticism. Studying Neil Gaiman’s works is a promising approach for understanding what should, or should not, be called a graphic novel. Indeed, one of his major works, the comics series *Sandman* (1988–1996), is widely regarded as a publication that was instrumental in ushering in the current, seemingly endless “wave” of graphic novels, or the so-called “rise” of the graphic novel. All the discourse heretofore produced about them seems to suggest that a graphic novel can only be defined in opposition to a comic book. Either phrase, “graphic novel” or “comic book,” refers at the same time to a narrative approach and to publishing practices. In both of these regards, *Sandman* clearly debuted as a monthly series of comic books. It was devised, understood, and marketed as such. However, it then evolved into being devised, understood, and marketed as a cycle of graphic novels, and thus contributed to a radical change in the face of mainstream comics.

According to Jean-Paul Gabilliet, the phrase “graphic novel” appeared for the first time in a 1964 fanzine. Then, in 1976, the man who coined it, Richard Kyle, published a book version of the heroic fantasy comics narrative *Beyond Time and Again*, by George Metzger—which had previously been published as several short pieces in various underground publications. The volume was called *Beyond Time and Again: A Graphic Novel*. Two years later, a more famous work was published directly in book form and called a “graphic novel” by its author: *A Contract With God And Other Tenement Stories*, by Will Eisner (see Gabilliet, §17-§18). It is after the mid-1980s that “graphic novel” began to refer to a “phenomenon” rather than a few individual experiments. Gabilliet dates the beginning of the phenomenon to 1986, which saw the publication of two very unusual superhero stories, pre-published as comic book miniseries

and then reprinted in trade paperbacks and marketed as graphic novels: Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons's *Watchmen*, and Frank Miller, Lynn Varley, and Klaus Janson's *The Dark Knight Returns*. It was also the year the first volume of *Maus* was published. Art Spiegelman's report of his father's Holocaust survival was pre-published one chapter at a time in Spiegelman's periodical comics anthology *Raw*, then collected in a single book (see Gabilliet §20). As Gabilliet notes, "At the dawn of the 21st century, it became clear that the comics market was evolving towards a regular decrease in sales for periodicals and just as steadily growing sales for hardback or paperback volumes. It's only since the beginning of the 1990s that the publishing industry has begun to adapt to this deep-set trend" (Gabilliet §9, translation mine).

With such diverse origins, it is all too expectable that the phrase "graphic novel" should come to mean several different things. For one, it is often used to express aesthetic judgement. In this sense, it is supposed to refer to comics narratives that are rather long, "intelligent," "complex," and intended for an adult, sophisticated audience, as opposed to "comic books," a phrase which is supposed to refer to short, "naive" narratives intended for a teenage audience. The use of the word "novel" obviously aims to associate comics with literature in a quest for socio-cultural recognition for the former medium, even though it amounts to an amalgamation of works of art primarily based on the use of words<sup>1</sup> with works of art primarily based on the use of juxtaposed pictures.<sup>2</sup> In an interview with Hy Bender, Gaiman relates an anecdote that epitomizes this subjective use of the words "graphic novel," and his sarcastic comments perfectly express the vacuity perceived in such use of the phrase:

Once, while at a party in London, the editor of the literary reviews page of a major newspaper struck up a conversation with me, and we chatted pleasantly until he asked what I did for a living. "I write comics," I said; and I watched the editor's interest instantly drain away, as if he suddenly realized he was speaking to someone beneath his nose.

Just to be polite, he followed up by inquiring, "Oh, yes? Which comics have you written?" So I mentioned a few titles, which he nodded at perfunctorily; and I concluded, "I also did this thing called *Sandman*." At that point he became excited and said, "Hang on, I know who you are. You're Neil Gaiman!" I admitted that I was. "My God, man, you don't write comics," he said. "You write graphic novels!"

He meant it as a compliment, I suppose. But all of a sudden I felt like someone who'd been informed that she wasn't actually a hooker; that in fact she was a lady of the evening.

This editor had obviously heard positive things about *Sandman*; but he was so stuck on the idea that comics are juvenile he couldn't deal with something good being done as a comic book. He needed to put *Sandman* in a box to make it respectable. (Bender 4)

This "conditionalist"<sup>3</sup> vision of graphic novels as comics that have "risen" to the status of "literature" thanks to their merits can also lead to terminological

inconsistencies. For example, the famous comics writer Alan Moore has sometimes disputed the legitimacy of postulating an organic link between comics and literature and suggested such a move is pointless.<sup>4</sup> Yet, at other moments, he has seemed to contradict that statement by suggesting that such associations would be legitimate and relevant in some cases, while illegitimate and irrelevant in other cases.<sup>5</sup>

Rather than irrationally handing out “good marks” to some comics by suggesting they are not really comics but literary works, while others are looked down upon for being perceived as mere comics, a more advantageous approach from a theoretical point of view is a combination of two major perspectives. One sees graphic novels as a phenomenon pertaining to the history of publishing practices, whereas the other considers graphic novels as a particular category of fiction created in the visual and spatio-topical language of comics but with its own, defining aesthetic features that make it distinct from comic books. In both cases, there is still the idea that graphic novels are generally more complex, more innovative, and less childish than comic books. Yet, in both cases, these subjective aspects are not the crucial factor that determines what a graphic novel is, or what a comic book is. Instead, these two perspectives allow us to understand this difference in quality as a potential consequence of what differentiates graphic novels from comic books in more concrete terms: the periodical and therefore episodic nature of the latter, as opposed to the narrative and structural unity that seems to be the staple feature of the former.

The idea of graphic novels as a new chapter in the history of publishing practices is epitomized by Gabilliet’s previously quoted article “Du Comic book au graphic novel: L’Européanisation de la bande dessinée américaine.” Per Gabilliet, the phrase “graphic novel” refers to the physical format of a product of the comics industry. Graphic novels thus appear as more or less thick hardback or paperback volumes, which are sold in comic shops and mainstream bookstores. Comic books, on the contrary, are very thin, usually twenty-four-page-long issues of a cheap periodical publication, for the most part sold exclusively in comic shops, with some exceptions that are also sold at newsstands or in newspaper stores (see Gabilliet §7, §9).

This definition should be used carefully. More precisely, in a study which is not about social and economic aspects of comics publishing, but about the fiction the comics contain, “graphic novel” should not be used to refer to everything that is sold under that label. Indeed, just as Alan Moore accused DC Comics of doing in his rant against his own work *The Killing Joke* (see note 5), mainstream comics publishers tend to market anything and everything as “graphic novels” (because they feel that this prestigious label sells particularly well, inasmuch as it appeals to comics fans and non-comics fans alike). Gabilliet offers telling examples:

Critics and aesthetes understand the words “graphic novel” as they would the word “novel”: in the literary perspective of a work produced by an author, as the result of a fully personal and autonomous creative process. For the U.S. book market, though, the category “graphic novel” actually covers three different realities: 1) volumes collecting pre-published newspaper comic strips, 2) volumes collecting pre-published mainstream comic book series (usually about superheroes or similar characters), 3) independent publications containing one complete story, pre-published or not, with no ties to mainstream genres....

So what *Publishers Weekly* described in the early 21st century as the tidal wave of graphic novels is a publishing phenomenon in the context of which Japanese comics get the lion’s share, while superhero stories rank second and are followed by more sophisticated narratives published by both mainstream and independent publishers. The aesthetic reality of this phenomenon is therefore very different from its economic reality: the unity underpinning the phrase “graphic novel” in its marketing context does not correspond to the de facto diversity of works published under that label. (Gabilliet §9, §24, translation mine)

Obviously, the mere fact that it is marketed as such should not be the crucial reason for calling a work a “graphic novel” in studies about the fiction it contains. The commercial use of the phrase is far too inconsistent to serve as the basis for its academic use. Ideally, the phrase should be used only regarding comics created in the English-speaking world (which would exclude the Japanese comics mentioned by Gabilliet). Within these limits, the words “graphic novel” should be applied to narratives that are clearly distinct, in their structural unity, from those designed as mere episodes in the perpetual accumulation of twists and turns that constitute a mainstream comic book series like *Superman* or *Batman*. The category could thus still include fantasy or superhero stories, as well as realistic or experimental stories. However, a narrative arc that is clearly part of an identifiable series, and that clearly aims to enable this series to be kept running, would not be entitled to be called a “graphic novel,” even if it is then collected in a trade paperback with the words “graphic novel” on the cover. On the contrary, a finite narrative, which was designed from the start to be more or less disconnected from comic book continuities, will clearly be eligible for the status of “graphic novel,” even if it was pre-published as a miniseries (which is more or less systematically the case with mainstream publishers).

For instance, as far as superhero comics are concerned, Marv Wolfman’s *Crisis on Infinite Earths* (1985–1986), Alan Moore’s “Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow?” (1986) and *The Killing Joke* (1988), and Neil Gaiman’s “Whatever Happened to the Caped Crusader?” (2009) are clearly groups of comic books published within the framework of comic book series. On the contrary, Alan Moore’s *Watchmen* and Frank Miller’s *The Dark Knight Returns* are graphic novels (even though they were pre-published as miniseries).

Outside the mainstream, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* is definitely a graphic novel published in two volumes (its pre-publication was modeled on serialized novels rather than mainstream comic book series). Harvey Pekar's *American Splendor*, though, works exactly like DC's or Marvel's comic book series, as it could have been endless had Pekar not died in July 2010.<sup>6</sup>

It is, however, perfectly reasonable to use the term "graphic novels" for some narratives with plots located in the DC Universe or the Marvel Universe (such is the case of *The Dark Knight Returns*, which takes place in the DC Universe). The same can be true outside the mainstream, and if *American Splendor* is a comic book series, then Harvey Pekar and Joyce Brabner's 1994 *Our Cancer Year* is clearly a graphic novel taking place in the autobiographical "American Splendor Universe."

Andrés Romero-Jodár is probably the critic who explores the "aesthetic reality" alluded to by Gabilliet in the most interesting manner. His paper on this issue offers an effective conceptual tool for determining, in more aesthetic terms, if a particular comics story is an "episode" or a "narrative arc" out of a comic book series (whether reprinted in a collection or not), or if it is a graphic novel or a cycle of graphic novels (whether serially pre-published or not). This tool is Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of "chronotope," a word which means "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin 84)—or, more generally speaking, in cinema, comics, literature, or any other medium allowing the creation of a fictional narrative.

According to Romero-Jodár, "The graphic novel can be defined in contrast to the comic-book in terms of a radical opposition of chronotope perception that is similar to the differentiation between the Greek romance and the adventure novel of everyday life" (Romero-Jodár 104). The first of those two types of long narratives from ancient times, the "Greek romance" (which Bakhtin also calls "adventure novel of ordeal" and which is epitomized by Achilles Tatius's second century work *Leucippe and Clitophon*), relates a temporal sequence of events that is, in fact, atemporal. In Bakhtin's words,

The gap, the pause, the hiatus that appears between these two strictly adjacent biographical moments and in which, as it were, the entire novel is constructed is not contained in the biographical time-sequence, it lies outside biographical time, it changes nothing in the life of the heroes, and introduces nothing into their life. It is, precisely, an extratemporal hiatus between two moments of biographical time. (Bakhtin 89-90)

This conception of fictional time is similar to that highlighted by Umberto Eco in his famous 1962 article on comic book series about Superman, and it is a typical feature of comic book series taking place in the DC Universe and the Marvel Universe:

In the sphere of a story, Superman accomplishes a given job (he routs a band of gangsters); at this point the story ends. In the same comic book, or in the edition of the following week, a new story begins. If it took Superman up again at the point where he left off, he would have taken a step toward death. On the other hand, to begin a story without showing that another had preceded it would manage, momentarily, to remove Superman from the law that leads from life to death through time. In the end (Superman has been around since 1938), the public would realize the comicality of the situation—as happened in the case of Little Orphan Annie, who prolonged her disaster-ridden childhood for decades.

Superman's scriptwriters have devised a solution which is much shrewder and undoubtedly more original. The stories develop in a kind of oneiric climate—of which the reader is not aware at all—where what has happened before and what has happened after appear extremely hazy. The narrator picks up the strand of the event again and again, as if he had forgotten to say something and wanted to add details to what had already been said. (Eco 114)

Of course, the two types of works are very different. In the case of Greek romances, the issue of the commercial necessity to keep a periodical publication running indefinitely is irrelevant. Yet, even though the reasons are different, the choices, in terms of chronotope, are the same. This is why Romero-Jodár can write: "I identify the Greek romance chronotope with the comic-book, and the changing time of the adventure novel with the graphic novel genre" (104). The second kind of narrative, the "adventure novel of everyday life" (epitomized by Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* according to Bakhtin), is indeed characterized by a relationship to time that is more dynamic than Greek romances'. Bakhtin describes time as it appears to the reader of an adventure novel of everyday life: "It is not the time of a Greek romance, a time that leaves no traces. On the contrary, it leaves a deep and irradicable mark on the man himself as well as on his entire life" (116).

Romero-Jodár shows how works like *The Dark Knight Returns* or *Watchmen* similarly pioneered the introduction of a more concrete, finite relationship to time in superhero comics, and how this contributes greatly to the specificity of those works (see 105). He also highlights the importance, in *Sandman*, of concrete time, precise temporal points of reference, and the consequences and irreversibility of actions and events. Indeed, in Gaiman's series, everything revolves around the protagonist's slow psychological transformation and his tragic journey towards death. The character, called Dream, Morpheus, and many other names, is a metaphysical being who rules over humanity's dream life. He is originally introduced as an immortal being: he and his siblings (Destiny, Death, Destruction, Desire, Despair, and Delirium) are actually called "The Endless." Moreover, the early narrative arcs of the series progressively reveal that his eon-encompassing life is lived in a constant state of almost pathological reluctance to change. To a certain extent, Dream seems to be, in himself, an allegory of comic books' representation of time

as frozen and life-unaltering. However, the successive narrative arcs of the whole series confront him, increasingly at each step of the overall plot, with experiences that upset his certainties and lead him to break with his habits, to question his own past decisions and beliefs. Eventually, he learns the hard way to open his mind to compassionate feelings and to be aware of his responsibility towards the victims of his decisions. This major change in his experience of the world crushes him so utterly that he decides to hand himself over to the care of his sister, Death. To put it in a nutshell, this character symbolizes all the typically unchanging comic book characters like Superman, but he has to face a fictional world which is subject to change, to entropy, to the irreversible course of time, of causes and consequences, and which is therefore typical of graphic novels. In addition to this main storyline and its clear and unambiguous chronology, *Sandman* is peppered with flashbacks that are set in protohistorical times, in classical antiquity, in the Middle Ages or in the Elizabethan period. Those asides give more historical depth to the series' linear representation of time in the main, 1990s-set storyline, and they also offer a vivid depiction of the contrast between the haughty and merciless Dream of the past and the more hesitant, distraught, and empathetic Dream that the events of the main storyline progressively bring to light.

Romero-Jodár notes that, to further emphasize this concrete relationship to time, the narrative is shot through with time markers suggesting that the fictional time in which the story takes place is simultaneous to the extradiegetic time of its serial publication.<sup>7</sup> The first issue of the series begins with Dream being imprisoned by occultists in an English mansion in 1916.<sup>8</sup> Then the main storyline runs from Dream's release (at the end of the first issue) and his wake at the end of the series. A panel in the first issue dates Dream's release to 1988 (Gaiman 2006, 35, panel 4), which happens to be the publication year of that issue. Later in the series, Dream, in his turn, sets Muse Calliope free. In a very disturbing story, she has been held prisoner (and repeatedly raped, this heinous act being a supernatural way of gaining literary inspiration) by two successive writers, from 1927 to 1986 and from 1986 to the protagonist's intervention. That intervention is dated from March 1990 in the story<sup>9</sup> and 1990 is the year of publication of the issue containing it. At some point during the first "chapter" of the narrative arc *Season of Mists*, Dream is getting ready to go to Hell, for the second time since the beginning of the series. One of his speech balloons contains the following words: "Two years ago I had cause to visit Hell."<sup>10</sup> This story was published in 1991 and the one alluded to in the aforementioned speech balloon (and entitled "A Hope in Hell") had indeed been published in 1989, that is, two years before. Finally, in "The Golden Boy" (one of the parts of the antepenultimate narrative arc *World's End*), a human character named Brant Tucker reveals that, in the fictional period depicted in the story, the president of the United States is Bill Clinton.<sup>11</sup> That story was published in 1993, after the actual election of Clinton in the extra-



diegetic world. So, in this series, periodical publication creates a chronotopic logic that is radically different from the type of chronotopic logic previously engendered by this mode of publication in the history of American comics. Gaiman and his collaborators were building a finite narrative (not the kind of endless accumulation of stories a comic book series is usually meant to be), and so they opted for the corresponding chronotope (accurately built around specific events that have irreversible consequences on one another). Those choices eventually changed what was initially conceived as a typical DC monthly series (with an abstract, timeless chronotope) into a cycle of serially pre-published graphic novels.

*Watchmen* and *The Dark Knight Returns* were devised from the very beginning as limited series. *Sandman*, on the contrary, was really meant to be periodical in nature, at least in the eyes of the DC executives who hired Gaiman to write it. Its publication did actually run for seven years. It is the growing importance of time, and the growing awareness that the story was progressing towards a tragic ending, that made it shift, in terms of reception and promotion, from one category (*Superman*-like comic book series) to the other (ten-volume graphic novel, or ten-graphic-novel cycle). This shift was summarized as follows by Stephen R. Bissette in his "Gaiman encyclopedia" *Prince of Stories*: "as Neil has noted, *Sandman* grew from a periodical to the multi-chapter graphic novel form over time" (Wagner, Golden, and Bissette 151). This relationship between *Sandman*'s own publishing history and the evolution of the comics market and aesthetic trends is probably the reason why Gaiman's comics series is often considered as the landmark work epitomizing the emergence of graphic novels, although several previous works can compete for this title. Stephen Bissette writes:

As Guy Delcourt said to me during a conversation in Copenhagen in September 1993, the windfall success of *Watchmen* and [*The*] *Dark Knight [Returns]*...wasn't followed by anything of equal substance....

It was Neil's *Sandman*-collected trades that saved the day. Despite the episodic nature of the first issues collected..., Neil's *Sandman* was a coherent work of great merit, substance, and growing popularity. The first trade collections hit just in time, at the beginning of the 1990s. *Sandman*'s invented mythos, the adult quality of the work itself, the sophistication of Neil's scripts and collaborative artists, Dave McKean's then-innovative covers and book design work, and the satisfying reading experience the *Sandman* collections offered...were instrumental in expanding the graphic novel market. (151)

These remarks are about the way publishing practices evolved, and therefore the economic aspect of the phenomenon (even though there are a few aesthetic points made in this passage). Romero-Jodár's analysis of *Sandman* begins with a sentence that expresses similar views, but derives them directly from his aesthetic reflection about chronotopes in English-speaking comics: "The graphic novel trend/genre can be said to have reached its full definition

with Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman*... , a long work published inside the 'Vertigo' imprint of DC Comics for graphic novels" (106). Incidentally, the position of *Sandman* in Vertigo's history gives grist to Bissette's mill, since Vertigo did not exist yet when the first issues of the periodical *Sandman* were published. This imprint is usually described as the space dedicated to mature, sophisticated stories in the catalog of DC Comics, which is otherwise supposedly made mostly of comic books for teenagers. Vertigo was created in 1993, just after the publication of the first trade paperback collections of *Sandman* issues. Only then was *Sandman* retroactively made part of Vertigo's catalog.

Finally, although he is not as prone to laudatory hyperboles as Bissette and Romero-Jodár, Jean-Paul Gabilliet also considers *Sandman* as one of the main early-nineties publications that contributed to changing the publishing experiment begun with Moore's and Miller's works (as well as *Maus* outside mainstream comics) into the previously evoked "deep-set trend":

As was noted above, things fell into place in 1986–87, when *The Dark Knight Returns* and *Watchmen* were met with high sales, which came in the wake of the very good reception of the first volume of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*.... These commercial successes launched a process that first rebounded in 1991–2, when *Maus II* was published and the DC series *Sandman* became increasingly visible... thanks to its distribution in mainstream bookstores.... (Gabilliet §20, translation mine)

To conclude, whatever the chosen terminology, whatever the narrative features one chooses to study, the comic book/graphic novel dichotomy really makes sense only if this opposition is considered, first and foremost, as an opposition between stories devised to fit into a periodical and potentially endless publishing schedule and stories built and organized around a clearly identified beginning, middle, and ending. Those two ways of understanding fiction's purpose can have consequences on many different characteristics of a given story, including how time is dealt with—the one Romero-Jodár's article particularly focused on. At any rate, *Sandman* is a work whose publication contributed to changing many things in the aesthetic horizon of English-speaking comics. Studies of Gaiman's series focusing on typical features of comic books and graphic novels will doubtless always prove fruitful and illuminating regarding those two types of comics stories, their similarities, and the discrepancies between them. As *Sandman* is also metafiction, it often contains thoughts about its own status, and studying them is likewise a good way to gain insights on the comic book/graphic novel dichotomy. For example, in one of *Sandman*'s issues, a caption describes the narrative approach adopted by a secondary character, a waitress who wants to become a novelist. Just the way a comic book writer would, she chooses to shrug off time and mortality. As the reader is told about that, the phrasing proleptically alludes to the way the series will, on the contrary, reintroduce these problems, highlight them,

and make them the essential issues of Dream's story: "All Bette's stories have happy endings. That's because she knows where to stop. She's realized the real problem with stories—if you keep them going long enough, they always end in death."<sup>12</sup>

This metatextual allusion is all the more interesting as it appears towards the beginning of the series, in a story published in 1989, and yet it foreshadows what is to happen at the end of the series, in stories published in 1996. It is the kind of proleptic pyrotechnics only authors of pre-published graphic novels can typically afford, because they know how their story is going to end. On the contrary, comic book authors cannot afford it because, theoretically, their narrative is not supposed to even have an end (at least unless sales plummet).

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This statement is based on Gérard Genette's definition of literature: "Thus these essays attempt to spell out the conditions under which a text, oral or written, can be perceived as a 'literary work', or more broadly, as a (*verbal*) object with an aesthetic function..." (Genette vii, emphasis mine).

<sup>2</sup> For Will Eisner, "Sequential Art [is] a means of creative expression, a distinct discipline, an art and literary form that deals with the arrangement of pictures or images and words to narrate a story or dramatize an idea" (Eisner 5). In this definition, "literature" seems to be used as a mere synonym of "creation of fiction," and some other theoreticians have argued for considering comics and literature as two distinct media and for downplaying the importance of words in the former. Scott McCloud, for example, suggests defining comics as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (McCloud 9).

<sup>3</sup> Genette's word again: about the question "What is literature?", he wrote:

It can be understood, it seems to me, in two rather different ways. The first consists in taking the literariness of certain texts for granted, as it were, viewing it as definitive and universally perceptible, and then investigating the objective reasons for it, the reasons that are immanent or inherent in the text itself and that accompany the text under all circumstances....I shall refer to theories that implicitly subtend such an interpretation as *constitutivist* or *essentialist* theories of literariness. The other interpretation takes the question to mean something like: 'Under what conditions, or under what circumstances, can a text, with no internal modifications, *become* a work of art?'...I shall call the theory that subtends this second interpretation the *conditionalist* theory of literariness. (Genette 4-5)

<sup>4</sup> "Rather than seizing upon the superficial similarities between comics and films or comics and books in the hope that some of the respectability of those media will rub off upon us, wouldn't it be more constructive to focus our attention upon those ideas where comics are special and unique?" (Moore 4).

<sup>5</sup> For example, during an interview, he said about his own work *The Killing Joke*:

I think that the fact that it was being taken as a graphic novel also got on my nerves....I mean there's never been such a thing as a 48-page graphic novel....The word graphic novel had just been thought of by somebody at DC's marketing department and they

wanted to cash in on it by calling everything a ‘graphic novel.’ I think my point was, ‘To call *The Killing Joke* a graphic novel is meaningless because it’s just like a big Batman story; it’s like a *Batman Annual*.’ ...It was just an oversized Batman story, and I didn’t like the idea of the word ‘novel’ being made completely meaningless. (Khoury 122)

<sup>6</sup> The first issue was published in 1976. It was then published yearly until 1993, and then irregularly until 2008. There never was any “end” to the “story,” though, since the unchronological story of *American Splendor* is made of the myriad of anecdotes that constituted the late Harvey Pekar’s daily life.

<sup>7</sup> “Furthermore, the time of publication equates the time of the narration. That is, the series was released over seven years, and the story narrates how time over the same seven years affects and changes its characters” (Romero-Jodár 106).

<sup>8</sup> Neil Gaiman (w), Sam Keith and Mike Dringenberg (a), Daniel Vozzo (c) et al., “Sleep of the Just,” *Sandman #1*, DC Comics, 1988 (Gaiman 2006, 11).

<sup>9</sup> Neil Gaiman (w), Kelley Jones (p), Malcolm Jones III (i), Daniel Vozzo (c) et al., “Calliope,” *Sandman #17*, DC Comics, 1990 (Gaiman 2006, 458, panel 6).

<sup>10</sup> Neil Gaiman (w), Kelley Jones (p), Malcolm Jones III (i), Steve Oliff (c) et al., “Season of Mists, Chapter 1,” *Sandman #22*, DC Comics, 1991 (Gaiman 2007, 41, panel 4).

<sup>11</sup> Neil Gaiman (w), Michael Allred and Bryan Talbot (p), Michael Allred and Mark Buckingham (i), Daniel Vozzo (c) et al., “The Golden Boy,” *Sandman #54*, DC Comics, 1993 (Gaiman 2008, 435, 6).

<sup>12</sup> Neil Gaiman (w), Mike Dringenberg (p), Malcolm Jones III (i), Daniel Vozzo (c) et al., “24 Hours,” *Sandman #6*, DC Comics, 1989 (Gaiman 2006, 156, panel 1).

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