The Abyss Gazes Also
A psychological analysis of Rorschach in Alan Moore’s
Watchmen

Vera Krapivner
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Supervisor: Adnan Mahmutovich
Abstract

There is a common assumption that graphic novels belong to the category of children’s literature, however that statement is no longer true. Indeed, the genre of the graphic novel has progressed and taken on a more serious approach, this due to largely one author, Alan Moore. Despite ever-increasing research on Moore’s famous graphic novel Watchmen, not many have touched upon Gothic influences on the novel and what effect this genre has on the characters, especially the character of Rorschach. Instead, Watchmen is often associated with such genres as political thriller, science fiction and postmodern literature. This essay will show the presence of Gothicism through an analysis of one of the main protagonists, Walter Kovacs, better known as Rorschach. I employ the well-known theories of psychoanalysis developed by Sigmund Freud. I discuss conceptual implications of the method called the Rorschach test developed by Herman Rorschach in order to deepen the psychoanalytic relevance for the Gothic elements. Furthermore, Freudian analysis of the uncanny proved to be especially useful in the analysis. Uncanny is the fearful recognition of unsettling thoughts that tell you to give in to the animalistic urge to kill, destroy and exact vengeance. The uncanny is largely the common ground between the Gothic genre and psychoanalysis, and is crucial for a deeper understanding of the novel and of Rorschach.
The horror is this: in the end, it is simply a picture of empty meaningless blackness.

-Dr Malcolm Long

Introduction

One genre often overlooked in literary studies is comic books, or so called graphic novels. The type of comics that is often seen as not only the archetypal comic, but also as particularly simple or childish, is that of super heroes. However, all of this has been changed and largely by one author: Alan Moore, the author of novels such as *V for Vendetta*, *From Hell* and *Watchmen*. He has added a new perspective to graphic novels, introducing them to the public as literary fiction. One of his most famous novels, *Watchmen*, is a winner of the Hugo Award as well as recognized as one of Time Magazine’s 100 best novels. The variety of characters, psychological subtext and the unexpected turn of events is what made *Watchmen* such a success. Although *Watchmen* is largely seen as a work of science fiction it has connections with other genres such as political thriller, psychological drama and postmodern literature. While the novel is shaped as a science fiction story it is clearly influenced by the realities of American society of the 1980s and its haunting issues, such as fear of nuclear war and the upset of the American dream. As the character of Rorschach says:

> Instead they followed the droppings of lechers and communists and didn’t realize that the trail led over a precipice until it was too late. Don’t tell me they didn’t have a choice. (I, 1)

The realism of the novel is compromised by the existence of a group of masked heroes, the so-called Watchmen. Although most of them are lacking supernatural powers the group is still seen as something out of the ordinary. The novel does not shun typical traits of superheroes, even though it adds new realism to the genre. Since
Watchmen deals with real issues that pertain to the time period in which the novel was written, it becomes psychologically heavy. Yet it is written in a way that allows the reader to connect with the protagonists.

In general, the genres of realism and science fiction seem to be dominant influences on the novel. I argue that Moore’s novel contains a Gothic subtext, which is essential not only to the plot, but most importantly to the understanding of the psychology of one of the protagonists, Rorschach. More specifically, since the concept of the Gothic can be rather broad, I focus on one branch of the Gothic genre: the Gothic psychology, which has hardly been applied to graphic novels. To connect Watchmen and Rorschach to Gothic psychology I employ Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis as well as relate to Herman Rorschach’s ink stain test. I furthermore tie these methods to an important term of Gothicism, the uncanny, which entails that the familiar and homely becomes something that is haunting and feared. Indeed, Freud believed that the Gothic was an important subtext of psychoanalysis, and that artistic creation could help to unleash the clogged sub consciousness. It is remarkable that Watchmen, being a relatively modern novel, is influenced by pre-romanticism.

Introducing Watchmen

The plot of Watchmen takes place in an alternative universe, where Earth is close to complete nuclear destruction. The year is 1985 and the Soviet American conflict is on the verge of eruption. There are many different minor characters in the main storyline, however the plot circles around four main protagonists: Silk Specter II, Dr. Manhattan, Rorschach and Night Owl II. These characters are members of the previously existing, self-proclaimed costumed hero team, which went by the name of Watchmen, a team that struggled to prevent crime and defend the American dream. Forced to retire by the government, some members of the team try to adapt to normal life, while others embrace the change by working for the government. In true spirit of Rorschach he refuses to compromise and keeps his mask. The threat of nuclear destruction is more imminent in the alternative universe due to the presence of Dr. Manhattan who through a nuclear accident was transformed into a kind of “macro atomic god”, he is able to do anything he wants with matter, whether it is demolishing military equipment or blowing up people (Dietrich,121).
However, the deadly catalyst that sets the plot into motion is Rorschach, the first character the reader is introduced to. He is the protagonist and perhaps the single most important character that pushes the story into its climax. Rorschach is a ruthless killer who is suffering from psychological disturbance, despite all this, the reader keeps sympathizing with him and his actions. Although he might lack importance in the grand scheme of world politics, he is essential from the story perspective. Rorschach was a member of the costumed hero group, which is a noticeable group of society, albeit he is easily seen as an outsider because he is part of the group but not really belonging, depending only on himself. Rorschach is the one who starts investigating the murder of the Comedian, forcing the rest of the members to intervene. The investigation leads Rorschach and the remaining Watchmen to a discovery of a horrific plan and the all time “greatest practical joke” which involves deaths of millions civilians in search of utopia. This story, which is divided into twelve chapters, is full of subtext and symbolism, which is seen in the text and is highlighted by the pictures. The most recognized image is the smiley face, which is often stained with blood. It appears throughout the entire novel and is seen on the cover of some editions of Watchmen. The smiley face is the badge carried by the Comedian and is stained by his blood when he is killed. The symbolism of the badge is double: In one interpretation the blood stain resembles the hand of a clock which can be connected to the doomsday clock, the hand is close to midnight and close to world’s destruction. A more obvious interpretation is the superficial appearance of a face, which is stained with blood and yet it conveys joy. In the first page of the novel we see the badge lying in a pool of blood right after the Comedian was thrown out of his window. Towards the end of the novel (XI, 24) the image of a smiley appears behind a blood stain of what used to be Rorschach, and is in my opinion associated with the relief of society due to the achievement of reaching utopia, even despite those who died. This smiley symbol however came to the novel by mistake, while David Gibbons was trying to make the Comedian look less serious. Alan Moore found the badge to be useful in portraying some of the key themes of the novel, such as apocalypse (Dietrich, 140). The previously mentioned doomsday clock is a symbol in

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1 This might be interpreted differently if taking Moore’s political values into consideration. In an interview with John B. Cooke Moore talks about the inspiration for Rorschach being Steve Ditko’s The Question and Mr A. Ditko’s objectivist views being an important inspiration. He also discusses his anarchist views he mentions that he has trouble understanding compassion for such character.
itself and is also seen throughout the novel. The clock hands are set five minutes to midnight announcing the Armageddon being near. This symbol is based on a real doomsday clock, except in this parallel universe the world is on the verge of complete destruction.

The symbol of the smiley face, along with the reoccurring symbol of the Hiroshima lovers, which is a shadow of two people embracing each other, give a certain mood to the novel which creates an atmosphere of constant fear and death hanging over the world of the protagonists. This gives the novel a dark and horrifying character. The settings in the novel are also often dark, the plot progressing during nighttime, in dark rooms and alleys. All these small features come together to include Watchmen into the genre of Gothic fiction. At the same time, the complexity of a character such as Rorschach is a significant addition to the Gothic touch.

He was born to a Sylvia Kovacs, who had to get into prostitution to provide for her and the child, while the father abandoned them. Due to this Kovacs was repeatedly exposed to different men taking sexual advantage of his mother. His mother loathed the child who condemned her to a life of sexual abuse, which pushed her to mentally and physically abuse him on a daily bases and in the end child services moved Kovacs to an orphanage. This might be the evidence of Walter Kovacs delusional splitting of psyche creating a new personality that is of a merciless self-proclaimed judge who lacks all kind of emotion and sympathy. His two personalities and the conflict of his views on the world can be directly associated with the Gothic term “the uncanny,” which I will discuss later in the analysis.

Watchmen and the Gothic Tradition

If reading this now, whether I am alive or dead, you will know the truth… (X. 22)

The Gothic genre is often associated with castles, graves and monsters. Although those features might be present in a Gothic novel they are not essential and are not the only elements which create a Gothic novel. When referring to Gothicism one is not necessarily talking about a singular genre of literature. Gothicism has influenced art, architecture and landscape gardening (Stevens, 8). All of this however did become

http://www.thebulletin.org/content/doomsday-clock/overview
important in forming a Gothic novel along with other elements. A Gothic novel consists of elements such as the sublime, supernatural, Gothic horror, Gothic psychology as well as plots with multiple narrators, exotic setting and stimulation of fear are examples that create the Gothic totality. Nevertheless, Stevens argues that lack of some of these elements does not necessarily cost a novel its Gothic character (Stevens, 46).

When it comes to the setting, as previously mentioned most of it is dark and depressing which creates a certain mood. The most obvious scene that reminds the reader of Gothic architecture takes place in a graveyard, while Edward “The Comedian” Blake is getting buried, Dr. Manhattan, Dan Dreiberg and Adrian Veidt are standing in the grey, depressive weather under pouring rain (II). This scene together with the constant presence of death, whether it is flashbacks of Blake’s murder, Moloch’s cancer, Rorschach’s vengeance on the child killer, the human float of the mariner or the hundreds of corpses lying on the streets of New York, creates a mood that reminds the reader of Gothicism. When it comes to exotic settings the setting that really stands out is Ozymandias’ Antarctica base, which is mentioned as “an impending world of exotica” (XI, 1). Even though it is located in the land of ice Ozymandias base remains an exotic jungle. At the first glance being an absolutely unbelievable phenomenon, it has a rational explanation such as a protective dome and facilities maintaining the jungle. This tendency of grounding events in realism is apparent throughout the novel, where the departures from reality are explained by a consistent logic instead of being marked as something unexplainable, supernatural. The supernatural is often defined as something ghostly, while actually meaning something out of the ordinary, beyond explainable (Stevens, 49). It can clearly be portrayed by Dr. Manhattan. His transformation has an explanation, although it is not completely realistic. In an outtake from Hollis Mason’s novel “From under the Hood”, Mason talks about the supernatural being that is Dr. Manhattan.

The idea of a being who could walk through walls, move from one place to another without covering the intervening distance and re-arrange thing completely with a single thought was flat-out impossible (V, 13).

This quote shows that the existence of Dr. Manhattan is unbelievably odd even to the character of the novel, meaning that although his transformation is explained it is not natural.
At the psychological level *Watchmen* successfully reaches different levels of Gothicism. The novel contains psychological insight such as stimulation of fear and feeling of horror throughout the constant possibility of nuclear war, as well as insights of sexuality, which will be discussed later in the analysis of Rorschach. All of this is present in the novel and can be classified as Gothic. Talking about Gothic psychology in general, Edmund Burke states in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*:

> Whilst we contemplate so vast an object, under the arm, as if it were, of almighty power, and invested on every side with omnipresence, we shrink into the minuteness of our own nature, and are, in a manner, annihilated before him. (cited in Stevens, 50)

This quote indicates Gothic appeals to the psyche as a “deep-seated need in an individual’s mind to experience something out of the ordinary and greater than normal greater than itself” (Stevens, 51). For this precession the sublime, supernatural and the horrific are the important terms. As a genre, the Gothic has been overlooked as something superficial without subtext, providing cheap thrills for the readers without any deeper thoughts. In her book *Love and Death in the American Novel*, Leslie Fielder goes on to argue:

> Some would say … that the whole tradition of the Gothic is a pathological symptom rather than a proper literary movement, a reversion to the childish game of scaring oneself in the dark, or a plunge into sadist fantasy, masturbatory horror. (cited in Stevens, 52)

What is important here is the distinction between horror and Gothic terror. As Ann Radcliffe, the author of early Gothic novels, pointed out, “[t]error expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life. Horror contracts, freezes and nearly annihilates them” (Radcliffe, 6). Thus terror is the feeling of suspense that takes over just before a dreadful happening, while horror is the realization that strikes after the event. This distinction can be seen in *Watchmen*, where the reader experiences terror while reading the first ten chapters, following the protagonists on their journey of revelation through darkness, death and painful realizations of true human nature. In *Watchmen*, horror strikes when Ozymandias plans are revealed and the protagonists together with the reader find out that the mass murder has already taken place.

> Do it? Dan, I’m not a republic serial villain. Do you seriously think I’d explain my masterstroke if there remained the slightest chance of you affecting its outcome? I did it thirty-five minutes ago. (XI. 27)

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3 Leslie Fielder is mentioned in *The Gothic Tradition*. 

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The pictures of thousands of corpses, people torn apart who died not knowing that they are being sacrificed, sets feelings of horror in the reader making the realization even harder to believe. Horror as well as the sublime and the supernatural are the important tools for one to experience something greater than normal (Stevens, 51).

In my view, it is Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis and the author of “The Uncanny,” who had a deep understanding of the Gothic connection to psychology, stating that artistic creations could reveal the unknown and hidden of a human psyche (Stevens, 51). Indeed, while Gothic psychology is not exceedingly well known, it is well established by Freud that art is a key to psychology. Freud stated that an iceberg is a fitting metaphor for a human psyche, which suggests that only a small part of a human psyche is on the surface and visible, while most of it is subconscious and hidden not only from the outsiders but in some cases even from the person. This hidden subconscious might come to light in abnormal behavior patterns and extremes of emotional intensity (Stevens, 102).

The Uncanny and the Rorschach test

All Kovacs ever was: man in a costume. Not Rorschach. Not Rorschach at all. (VI.15)

It was indeed Freud who showed how the subconscious mind affects an individual, whilst suppressed sexuality and disturbed relationships between parent and child is a common factor of troubled minds. The method of psychoanalysis applies mainly to children’s development. However it can be, and in some cases was, applied to adults. The main point of the method is to analyze the patient by taking dreams, fantasies and associations into account. The Rorschach test, although not developed by Freud but by Herman Rorschach, also deals with associations and puts a great emphasis on previous experience. The empiric explanation of this is based on visual interaction between the patient and the test, between illusion and movement. The requirements for a proper Rorschach test are that it is simple and rhythmic, and also that it has enough different possibilities for interpretation. If looking closely the same can be said about Walter Kovacs, he is simple in a way that he defines things only in black and white, and the interpretations of his character are multiple. A patient can be looking at a still ink stain that is the Rorschach test and connect what he sees to
previous events by association created by the symmetrical patterns and the contrast of black and white forms. Thus it can be argued that, in a way, the readers who feel a connection with Kovacs can see themselves in Rorschach. This is certain because the picture is only showing a static form, therefore the movement must be interpreted by the patient (Svanström, 116). Often the recognition of the pattern also evokes muscular response, which points to patient’s remembrance of motion. Herman Rorschach noticed a connection between the amount of muscular response and associations as well as fantasy. This points to the fact that an excess of muscular response in a patient must mean that they often are focused on their thoughts and fantasies, this has also been proven by clinical results (Svanström, 116). This in turn indicates that those people are often consumed by their own lives and are inadequate in the outside world.

Walter Kovacs’s behavior is the complete opposite to the most regular responses. While taking the test he sits still, his tone of voice does not change and he does not blink. This behavior is seen throughout most of the novel. “He’s very withdrawn, with no expression in either face or voice. Getting a response is often difficult” (VI. 1). At the same time, it is obvious that instead of interpreting the test by analyzing the ink stain, Kovacs is able to associate with previous happenings and although he is not showing muscular response we can assume that he is indeed consumed by his own life. In addition, many incidents also point the reader to draw a conclusion that he is socially inadequate. At one point when a masochistic person pretended to be a super villain just to get beaten up by the members of Watchmen, Rorschach dropped him down an elevator shaft while other members merely sent him away (I. 26). The reason for this is that Rorschach does not believe in compromise, and trusts that everything is either needed or disposable, making no exceptions for people. While the Rorschach test focuses on both associations and physical response psychoanalysis only focuses on the hidden psyche. Freud sought to bring to light the lost memories and feelings of a person. This could be everything from sexual confusion to suppressed desire to kill, combined with the uncanny feelings of confusion of the familiar.

As mentioned above, although psychoanalysis is the most important achievement of Freud, his essay on The Uncanny brought a new concept to psychology as well as becoming an important element of Gothic literature. The word uncanny comes from a German word ‘unheimlich’ which is something unfamiliar and
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The opposite of homely. Oxford Dictionary defines the word uncanny being something that is weird. In Gothic literature the term is used by Freud to distinguish something frightening and disturbing, that arouses horror. According to Schelling “Unheimlich is the name for everything that ought to have remained…secret and hidden but has come to light” (cited in Freud. Part I, 2). One of the key factors for uncanny feelings is the thought of uncertainly towards inanimate objects such as dolls, puppets, dead body parts coming to life, moving by themselves. This fear is aroused when a doll for example is too lifelike, an infantile belief, it drives one mad not knowing what to expect from the horrifying object. Or towards the smiley face that keeps suddenly appearing, following the characters around reminding the reader of mankind’s duplicity.

The fact that it is possible to relate to Rorschach leaves us with very uncomfortable, varied feelings of horror and admiration. Rorschach kills murderers, rapists and kidnappers, however we seem to fail to judge him for this. He reminds us of the animalistic drive for vengeance, killing to punish those who deserve it. However this leads us to the question, how to know who deserves it? It is uncanny to be able to relate to a murderer, we recognize his feelings but we cannot accept them. Rorschach himself shares uncanny feelings for the USA, the country he loves and admires but which has failed him. Now when he walks the streets of New York, they are filled with prostitutes and other vile crime. “Was offered Swedish love and French love…but not American love. American love-, like coke in green glass bottles…They don’t make it anymore” (II. 25). He is the ultimate patriot yet he hates that his country has become haunting and unhomely, that is, uncanny (unhemlich). This left him in a state in which he cannot relate to it or its people anymore. Rorschach experiences uncanny feelings in that he is out of place in his own home. His home (America) is the most unhomely place. The readers too can experience such uncanny feelings vis-à-vis Kovacs, and even see him as the expression of the uncanny itself.

The importance of the Rorschach test and the psychoanalytic method lies in the fact that they help a patient reveal truths that have been suppressed. While the thoughts and experiences are hidden in the subconscious they are still reachable and fully existing. By getting in touch with those unwanted feelings and memories, a patient is often introduced to the feeling of the uncanny by being repulsed and shocked by the subconscious that has been out of sight. By means of revealing the
unfamiliar, and pushing the patient towards acceptance of the thoughts as its own is the uncanny. The familiar becomes confused and feared.

**Analysis of Rorschach**

Battle not with monsters, lest ye become a monster, and if you gaze into the abyss, the abyss gazes also into you (XI. 28)

As the character of Dr. Malcolm Long states, “no problem is beyond the grasp of a good psychoanalyst” (VI. 1). He is determined that he can help, or at least analyze Walter Kovacs, and he is most certain that Kovacs’ psyche is no match for him. Dr. Long finds Kovacs fascinating, because of his intensity and physical ugliness, and is deeply bothered that Kovacs stares back at him and does not seem to blink. Chapter VI of the novel is completely dedicated to Walter Kovacs and the story behind Rorschach. The end of the chapter contains extracts from Kovacs personal files from New York’s police department and New York state psychiatric hospital, which serve as perfect analytical material for the analysis of Rorschach. If Rorschach was a recreation of an existing person it could be said that that patient showed symptoms of not only a sociopath, but also of autism and even borderline personality disorder (www.nimh.nih.gov).

When Kovacs finally was free from his mother and living at the orphanage he was described as intelligent, doing well in school and while “shy especially with women, Kovacs was capable of long and well reasoned conversations […] who struck most people as a serious but likable child who was merely a bit withdrawn”. While hating his mother Kovacs admired and longed for the father who left him a bastard, in delusion blaming this on Sylvia. In an essay describing his parents he writes:

> I have never met my dad and I would sure like to. He had to leave our house when I wasn’t even born, I guess because he couldn’t get along with my mother. I would of done the same if I was him. (VI, epilogue)

This quote shows positive outcome in a way that Kovacs does not seem to have any attempt to blame himself for the abandonment, the essay goes on to discuss his

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4 Borderline personality disorder is a condition where a person suffers from instability often combined with anxiety and depression. It is common for people with this condition to characterize everything in black or white, to idolize or loathe others.
father’s admiration for president Truman, and his own rejoice of the bombs falling over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which is a clear negative and a violent association.

However, this is not the first act of violence the reader sees. Earlier in the chapter, Kovacs attacks two boys who provoke him by calling him names and threatening to sleep with his mother. Like an animal feeling trapped Kovacs attacks, partially blinding one of the boys with a cigarette and biting the other boy in the face. This is the first act of violence that is documented, and is what leads Kovacs being taken into care by an orphanage. His life at the orphanage had a positive influence, he was able to successfully communicate with people and live more or less a normal life, apart from this he was still tormented by his early life. This can clearly be seen in a transcription of his verbal recounting of a nightmare. In the nightmare “[a] man was in my old house”, while they were eating Kovacs mother choked and the man tried to save her by getting his hand into her mouth while Kovacs ran to find a doctor. He noticed that the house was all different and that there were no people there. When returning to the room “I saw what looked like my mom and this guy dancing, old fashioned dancing at the other end of the room”. Unfortunately, he soon realized that they were not dancing at all, they were squashed together naked, their faces gone only ears sticking out at the sides, their hands were growing into each other but the legs were free and walking a crabwalk towards him. “I woke up. I had feeling when I woke up. Dirty feelings. […] The dream it sort of upset me, physically. I couldn’t help it.” (VI, epilogue). In psychoanalytic terms, this dream means that Kovacs was obviously deeply scarred by his mother’s prostitution habits, probably often being exposed to watching the act. Analyzing this nightmare, it is safe to speculate that Kovacs had perceptibly suppressed sexual feelings toward Sylvia, when he states that he felt upset physically, it is an indication that he got sexually aroused by the dream. However, being aware of the social norms he knew that this was unacceptable, which upset him deeply since he just wanted to be normal. This is a great example of Freud’s theories of the unconscious mind and the mental mechanism of repression.

This analysis leads us to look closer at the results of Kovacs Rorschach test. In the second test picture he sees a pattern that reminds him of a shadow of two people embracing one another. This picture reminds the reader of the Hiroshima lovers, which I earlier pointed out as the symbol of Gothic horror. In the previous chapter Rorschach sees an imprinted shadow of two people and makes a statement that “picture in doorway, man and woman, possibly indulging in sexual foreplay. Didn’t
like it. Doorway look haunted.” (V, 11) The shadow that he sees from the test picture reminds him of movement in turn reminding him of an event when he walked in on his mother indulging sexual relations with a client. “You little shit! You know what you just cost me, you ugly little bastard?” She yells while grabbing her son slapping him. “I shoulda listened to everybody else! I shoulda had the abortion!” Kovacs remembers her beating him, him being a little child crying and yelling for his mommy to stop. This memory ends with the similar figure of two people embracing each other, however not lovingly, now being Sylvia beating Kovacs. The Hiroshima lovers figure seems to be following Rorschach reminding him not only of his childhood abuse but also of the sexual tension he had with his mother. The Hiroshima lovers are here the inanimate object that causes uncanny feelings, confusing the viewer to believe that they are something alive and awakening animate associations, the “source of uncanny feelings would not, therefore, be an infantile fear in this case, but rather an infantile wish or even merely an infantile belief” (Freud I, 6). This once again proves the disturbed relationship between Kovacs and his mother.

Furthermore, another element of the uncanny is the phenomenon of the double, which Freud points out as rather essential, and which I mentioned in the introduction (Freud. II, 1). This phenomenon appears when the subject identifies himself with someone else or in Rorschach’s case creates a whole new personality refusing to identify himself with his past. Freud refers to another psychoanalyst, Otto Rank, who made a connection between double and mirror reflection stating that it was possible to assume that the image in the mirror was some kind of connection to the soul. “The double was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an ‘energetic’ denial of the power of death […] probably the ‘immortal’ soul was the first ‘double’ of the body” (cited in Freud. II, 1). Characters that fit this description are considered identical because of their similar looks or because a subject identifies himself with someone else (and is in doubt which is the true self). When it comes to Rorschach, he seems to be another case of the double that Freud did not encounter. Rorschach is a new personality that Walter Kovacs created. However, he is well aware of his past as Kovacs and does not deny it at any point. Although he does reject the Kovacs personality at the present stage, telling Dr. Long “[y]ou keep calling me Walter. I don’t like you” (VI, 9). Kovacs’ transformation into Rorschach was triggered by the rape and murder of a client he had on his first job as a manual worker at a garment industry.
Then I knew what people were, then, behind all the evasions all the self deception. Ashamed for humanity I went home. I took the remains of her unwanted dress…And made a face I could bare to look at in the mirror (XI, 10)

However, that is not when he became Rorschach “[t]hen I just was Kovacs. Kovacs pretending to be Rorschach. […] Very naive. Very young. Very soft.” (XI, 14). Rorschach seems to be very certain in who he is, he is Rorschach and not Walter Kovacs, however four different personality stages can be seen in his language. When he is a young child, Kovacs language has a natural flow with well formed grammatical sentences “I use to ask my mom about my dad, but she doesn’t talk much about him. His name was [sic]charlie, which is short for Charles although it has the same number of letters.” (VI, epilogue). The same fluent expression is then later seen in young Rorschach at the meeting with Captain Metropolis “[o]bviously, I agree---But a group this size seems more like a publicity exercise somehow. It’s too big and unwieldy”. Here Kovacs has not yet lost his interest for elaborate communication (II, 10). Rorschach’s language is fairly different and goes hand in hand with the change of character. He sees everything either black or white and is unwilling to compromise, “[l]ying. Do it again, broken arm, not joking” (II, 21). He has removed all the factors that would make a sentence fluent, speaking only the necessary facts, sounding almost robotic. Another aspect of his language is shown in written form in his journal, there the language is more descriptive however the tone of the narrative is changed from constructive to bitter from when he was younger, the “accumulated filth of all their sex and murder will foam up about their waist and all the whores and politicians will look up and shout ‘save us!’… and I’ll look down and whisper ‘no’.” (I, 1). This pattern is broken when Rorschach talks with Nite Owl in chapter X, he starts off with “[e]xactly. So trace killers. Squeeze people. Been lazing around a long time. Maybe you’ve forgotten how we do things.” When this makes Nite Owl angry Rorschach switches to “Daniel…you are a good friend. I know that. I am sorry. … That it is sometimes difficult”, he switches to full sentences, the way he spoke before Rorschach (X, 10). It seems that Rorschach’s language changes dramatically not only with his personality but also with his mood and depending on whom he speaks to. This is an indication of personality disorder. Kovacs is convinced that he is Rorschach, but his social behavior points to the cleaving of his identity. One scene

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5 Walter Joseph Kovacs age 11 from the essay he wrote on his parents
6 http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/personality-disorders/DS00562/DSECTION=symptoms
especially shows this. In the end of chapter XII, Rorschach has a choice to keep the mass murder a secret or be killed by Dr. Manhattan, in other words staying faithful to Rorschach or becoming Kovacs once again. “No. Not even in the face of Armageddon. Never compromise”(XII, 20). When this is said it becomes clear to the reader what choice he made, the choice of staying Rorschach is obvious yet later comes the twist. Facing Dr. Manhattan Rorschach takes of his face revealing his true face to Dr. Manhattan. Rorschach’s identity is cast aside and Kovacs dies as the redhead, neglected boy he was born.

Conclusion

I have argued that the Gothic influence on Alan Moore’s *Watchmen* can be seen in the setting, the mood, and characters of the novel, in particular Rorschach. The main Gothic influence on the novel is related to the notion of the uncanny which is a part of Gothic psychology. The uncanny was analyzed by the well known Austrian psychologist Sigmund Freud, who believed that arts could give an insight into the human psyche. Trusting this proclamation, I applied it to the character of Walter Kovacs, a.k.a. Rorschach making a thorough analysis of his character. With the help of the psychological analysis it soon became clear how and why Kovacs turned into Rorschach. It feels safe to assume that Moore used not only Mr. A as inspiration for the character but also real facts and background information of people with doubling of personality and other psychological disturbances. Rorschach is almost a typical Freudian case, an individual whose childhood played a crucial role in his psychological development. He was harassed, physically and probably sexually abused on an everyday bases, which left him a traumatized individual.

I have also argued that Rorschach himself is an uncanny character. Rorschach is the unleashed version of a person that Kovacs wanted to be and while he is certain that he is in fact only Rorschach, glimpses of Kovacs personality keep coming through. This is an indication of a doubling of his personality and an element of the uncanny. As mentioned previously, the uncanny is connected with the psychoanalytic method and the Rorschach test to which Kovacs is exposed during his stay in the prison. When he is introduced to his previous memories of unsettling experiences through more or less enforcement by the character of Dr. Long, his whole existence becomes uncanny because everything that what used to be home has turned into
something unrecognizable and haunting. His home (America) and even his own selfhood have become unfamiliar, haunting, and uncanny. What is important to understand is that the process of revealing a subconscious mind is in itself uncanny because the individual often finds out something unsettling which leads to a feeling of being uncomfortable in his own skin. As Fielder argues some may think of the Gothic as something childish and ridiculous. My research shows many new levels to Gothic fiction. All this indicates that although *Watchmen* is not entirely Gothic, the Gothic subtext is a crucial element of the novel. Analyzing the Gothic and the uncanny in Alan Moore’s a graphic novel *Watchmen* proved fruitful, especially due to the fact that text is combined with pictures. Instead of assuming characters’ physical reaction it was possible to experience it visually as well. This helped to achieve a much more detailed analysis compared to the possibilities provided by an ordinary novel. For instance, several frames with Rorschach’s unmoving face during the test made the very familiar psychological analysis appear uncanny to the doctor.

The Gothic influence, whether or not intended by the author, provides the novel with intensity and complexity both of plot and of character. For instance, the mix of realism and science fiction highlights the way the American society has developed, the way the nuclear race is a reality but at the same time almost a fiction. Whilst the Gothic features create an atmosphere where the reader can experience and focus on the emotions of the characters, participating in their reality. Some might say that the mixture of genres point out the postmodern condition of the world Moore is portraying, a world in which the superhero myth is indeed a reality despite its fiction. The theme of reality and social significance is in a way portrayed by the Gothic due to presence of horror and terror. The uncanny is essential because it makes the reader identify with Rorschach and rethink social norms and rules.
Works Cited


