1. Though comic books and graphic novels are earning more serious academic consideration than ever, in relation to one of the foremost goals of twentieth century art and literature, comic books may be more important and innovative than even the most open-minded of scholars have yet to realize. Comics, graphic novels, and sequential art belong to a rich artistic and literary tradition due in no small part to their ability to utilize the techniques of cubism and futurism. This is not a new assertion. Will Eisner (Comics and Sequential Art; Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative) and Scott McCloud (Understanding Comics), among many others, have examined comic art's multiple influences from forms and movements considered "high" or fine art. What has hitherto been unexplored, however, is how purely sequential art forms utilize aspects of these movements to fulfill the elusive goals and ideals of many of cubism and futurism's most renowned creators via a unique relationship with the space-time continuum. Indeed, no media before or after the comic book, and more specifically, the graphic novel, has fully bridged the fourth dimension as well. Comics and graphic novels, we argue, constitute the 20th century culmination of the goals of these other pivotal modern and postmodern genres.

2. Before moving this argument forward, it is imperative to establish an understanding of what is meant herein by the term "fourth dimension." The term to us refers to a special relationship with space and time wherein the two conflate such that infinite multiple dimensionalities become simultaneously present. When the reader's interaction, his or her own space-time, is accounted for, this evocation of space-time becomes quite literal and expands exponentially. The fourth dimension is bridged by human experience and interaction. The spontaneous, real-time interplay of all these forces at once create an ethereal dimension of its own, also what we refer to as the fourth dimension. Therefore, the fourth dimension is defined as simultaneous, multitudinous dimensionality deeply entwined in and part of individual experience. There is special artistry in sequential art and narratives in the relationship of this metaphorical and literal space-time continuum. This artistry does not make the comic book or graphic novel superior to all art, but unique in its absolute expression of ideals that modernist writers and artists sought independently (and therefore less successfully) in their writings and sketches.
3. Concerns with the space-time continuum and fourth dimensionality are a reoccurring theme in the work of one of comics' most acclaimed and prolific writers, Alan Moore. He is the Picasso of his art when it comes to bridging the fourth dimension and therefore worth particular consideration. Examining samples of Moore's work from his seminal and groundbreaking graphic novels *Watchmen* and *From Hell* show how he is able to use the cubist and futurist tendencies of the comics medium to superbly explore notions of space and time.

4. Before examining Moore's works, we should consider first some of the basic principles of cubism and futurism. Edward F. Fry describes the cubist notions of Pablo Picasso that began to emerge at the turn of the twentieth century as a reaction against "one-point perspective" (14) and claims that Picasso's strongest cubist works strive to "[combine] multiple view points into a single form" (15). An observer of said works does not see an object from one side or one angle, but is subjected to simultaneous, multitudinous angles from which the object or objects (or persons, or ideas) could be viewed. The end result in terms of flat canvas is a meshing of "selfness" that is more truly the object than any one fixed perspective could provide. Indeed, Picasso can be said to be presenting a version of art more true to the "thing itself" in that he strives to express many states of being at once. When the viewer interacts with the work, time, space, and real-time experience meld. Hence, quite literally, dimensions cross: there is a concrete positioning of the viewer in his or her own space and time added into the already interdimensionality of the work itself. The object is in time, in space on flat canvas, yet simultaneously viewed and experienced via multiple depictions (/dimensions/dimensions) expressing the object within space-time.

5. For example, *Guernica* (1937), which can be seen as a sequential magnum opus in one frame, explores a large span of time within a relative small space and surveys the horrid destruction of the town not from any one literal angle, but not from one perspective as well. The horse, the bull, the disembodied people: all express elementally the totality of the subject being portrayed. When the viewer digests all of these perspectives, he or she completes the bridge, if the work is successful, by being with everyone and everything at once, both everywhere and engaged in the present simultaneously.

6. Fry also discusses the cubist paintings of Cézanne, explaining that "In painting a motif Cézanne would [. . .] organize his subject according to the separate acts of perception he had experienced" (14). Basically, cubism strove to dissolve conventional notions of time, space, and the single, static image by showing an object observed and perceived from a multitude of viewpoints at different points in time. Even the most successful of these works, however, lack the power of graphic novels to bridge fully that fourth dimensional gap.
7. In her book *Futurism and its Place in the Development of Modern Poetry*, Zbigniew Folejewski claims, "Cubism, with its insistence on decomposing the shape of things and rearranging it into a new multidimensional vision, was one of the earliest manifestations of the tendencies which were developed into a coherent programme by Futurism" (5). Take, for example, Umberto Boccioni's *Unique Forms Of Continuity in Space* (1913) [Figure 1]. The anthropomorphic bronze cast appears to represent a figure in motion, a figure not here or there, but both and everywhere in between: simultaneous dimensionality. Dynamic curves fuse with twists and discombobulations to give the essence of speedy movement, yet Boccioni strives, just as Picasso so often does, to show the figure en masse from every angle by which it could be moving. This both creates the blur effect that many are familiar with via photography and displaces the form and the observer from one stationary perspective to one of many. Of course, within this being of many spaces at once, the figure and the observer are literally still in one station. Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912) [Figure 2] is perhaps a better example of art transcending time and space. In terms of the graphic novel, the painting appears to be a multitude of sequential panels overlapped to explore the full idea of a brief movement. The observer, in his or her own time and space, transcends placement by noticing the various different motions over time--frozen in oil on canvas--concerned with a simple action.
8. Cubism's occupation with multiple perspectives led to futurism and its examination of movement, growth, and time. The concepts behind these two movements are found in a literary incarnation through artists such as Gertrude Stein. According to Malcolm Bradbury, Stein wanted "to find [cubism's] equivalent in fiction" (240) and sought create a "new composition" with the written word that would be a product of the new space-time continuum with which the cubists and futurists were experimenting. One of the novels that emerged from Stein's experimentations, *Three Lives*, she claimed as "the first definite step away from the Nineteenth and into the Twentieth Century in literature" (250). In this novel, Stein uses her ideas on collective consciousness to create an original literature that breaks down common notices of time and place, just as Picasso, a friend of hers, and the other cubists were doing in the visual arts. An example of Stein's exploration of the space-time continuum is Melanchta, a character from *Three Lives*; Melanchta is supposed to live in the "continuous present," and Stein hoped that this concept would displace conventional past tense narrative by somehow making the past, present, and future into a continual state of always, already omnipresence, or, again, a sort of dimensional simultaneity.
9. While this novel and other works by Stein and the other literary cubists were great efforts, the written word, in and of itself, was too limited to offer an all-new exploration of the space-time continuum. What was needed was a genre with a unique interplay of words and images. A step into the literary fourth dimension couldn't truly take place without a return to where Stein originally drew her inspiration: the visual arts. Thus, the literary cubists and futurists could find an artistic successor in the most unlikely of places: sequential art, a dynamic combination of texts and visuals. While comic strips printed in book form had been around since the 1930s, the modern graphic novel evolved throughout the twentieth century and began to be recognized as a cogent genre (disputably) by the 1960s or 70s. The graphic novel is an art form that finally has the adequate tools to transcend written text and to create the appropriate medium necessary for entering the fourth dimension.

10. Will Eisner's *A Contract With God and Other Tenement Stories* from 1978 is one example where we see a successful bridge of the space-time continuum. Through Eisner's use of his characters' memories and flashbacks, the involved partaker is truly able to be at more than one place in time at one time. Take, for example, the account of the childhood of Frimme Hersh's adopted daughter in "A Contract With God." While the narrator's voice through the text keeps us grounded in the present, the past comes alive vividly through the drawings (placed side-by-side with the text) [Figure 3], and this combination allows for a true "continuous present." Just as
in Picasso's Guernica, this continuous present enables the audience to consider the totality of a thing; in this case, the "thing" in question is Frimme Hersh's intense love and devotion for his daughter, shown through various scenes from her childhood, presented all at once on one page. Eisner's technical mastery is apparent here, but what is also noteworthy is how Eisner is able to use joining of space and time to create an emotional resonance. By presenting the life of Hersh and his daughter in such a whirlwind, all-at-once manner, the reader is devastated when, on the very next page, an illness attacks his daughter "suddenly and fatally." Her death is the axis around which this whole tale revolves, and Eisner's use of sequential storytelling makes this tragic event jarring and memorable. What the narrator makes clear as an event in the past happens as he speaks it, forcing a new relationship with "now" and "then" in which the two not only coincide, but coexist.

11. Eisner's pioneering work in the graphic novel led the way for other comic book writers and artists to exploit more fully the fourth dimensional possibilities of the graphic novel, but he was far from the only influence. In the early twentieth century, Winsor McCay's (*Little Nemo in Slumberland*, etc.) dynamic panel work broke up the "beat-by-beat segmentation of time and space of earlier comics, reminiscent of a slide show of successive still images"(Carey). As well, throughout his long career, Harvey Kurtzman (perhaps most known for helping to create *Mad*) created comic works that express a skillful, precise manipulation of narrative time, for example. However, Alan Moore, a disciple of Kurtzman's style, who emerged from Britain in the early 1980s, would be the figure to refine the space-time exceptionality of comics to an overtly intentional creative force rarely paralleled. Like Eisner, Moore's comic work also makes use of sequential art's ability to create a continuous present. What makes Moore's work so interesting, however, is that he not only expertly uses sequential art's ability to simulate the fourth dimension in the telling of his stories, but he is also preoccupied with the space-time continuum as a theme. Moore is deliberate in his utilization of techniques unique to sequential art that deal with space-time, and his calculated interplay provides his own commentary on the possibility of a fourth dimension. Further, he strives to express how the discovery of this dimension affects human existence. As he explains it:

> I try to see things in four dimensions. I feel that if we regard Time as a fourth dimension, then in order to have any sense of what we as individuals mean, what our lives mean, we really have to know where those lives came from, how we got to this current position whether as personally or in terms of cultures, nations, you know, entire histories running back to the Paleaeolithic. All these things seem fascinating to me [...]." (Millidge 111-12)

As artists and writers before him saw objects from multiple posits, Moore sees people as simultaneous beings and grants them the possibility of consciousness thereof. When those "simultaneous beings" are readers of his deliberate comic
narratives, their experiences further conflate the simultaneous, multitudinal
dimensionality that he sees as omnipresent.

12. A good place to begin a discussion of Moore and the fourth dimension is with his
graphic novel from 1986-87 *Watchmen*, a collaboration with artist Dave Gibbons
and a major touchstone of comic book storytelling. Much has been made of Moore
and Gibbons' skillful use of such literary devices as flashback and foreshadowing in
*Watchmen*, but what is perhaps more interesting is how the usage of these
techniques allows Moore and Gibbons to create a text in which the present and the
past merge together with enough fluidity to make even the best cubists and futurists
envious. From the very opening pages of *Watchmen*, it is clear that the reader is in
for a virtuoso bridging of space and time, made all the more complete by his or her
own role.

13. For example, while two detectives investigate the apartment where the Comedian, a
costumed adventurer, has been murdered, we are able both to hear about the murder
through their dialogue and to see it through Gibbons' graphic illustrations of the
crime that are spliced in-between the detectives' examination of the murder scene.
Through the combination of texts and visuals, we, the readers, are truly in both
places at the same time as well as in our own space; this amazing bridge of the
space-time continuum is, we argue, particular to sequential art, certainly the
culmination of major goals of twentieth century art, and perfectly expressed by
Moore. Also, just as with Eisner, this yoking together of space and time is much
more than just a neat technical trick. Discussing the relationship between past and
present, Moore explains, "I think that if we are to value the present and to really get
as much as we can out of each present moment, it would help if we understood how
this moment has arisen, if we understood how incredibly rich and savage and
beautiful our history can be" (Millidge 112). In this opening scene, Moore and
Gibbons are not only able to show the present moment juxtaposed beside the
violence that created it, but they also "get as much as they can out of each present
moment" by conveying how violence and "savagery" from the past can continue
both to rupture the present (notice how, in one panel, the elevator operator
announces "Ground floor comin' up" in the present as the panel shows the
Comedian being thrown out of the window of his high-rise apartment in the past
*[Figure 4]*) and to reverberate throughout the space-time continuum.
14. Moore and Gibbons continue to explore the potentials of comic book storytelling in the second chapter of *Watchmen*. The main focus of this chapter is the funeral of the Comedian, a gathering attended by most of the main characters. The reader learns about the Comedian's life through the flashbacks of these characters. For example, as Dr. Manhattan, an atomic and quantum powered superhero, stands by the Comedian's graveside, Gibbons' panels pull in tighter on him [Figure 5], and we notice a man holding a bouquet of flowers standing just over his shoulder. In the next panel, the bouquet transforms into a blast of fireworks, and we are suddenly in Vietnam right after the war, experiencing Dr. Manhattan's disturbing memory of the Comedian's murder of his pregnant Vietnamese girlfriend. Just as in the opening scene with the detectives, Moore and Gibbons show how the historic is able to manifest itself with facility in the present, and no other medium beside the comics page, where images are presented simultaneously on a grid, could present this dilemma with such ease and precision. The reader is engaged in simultaneous, multitudinous placement: the funeral, various events from Vietnam, and in his or
her own real space. In *Watchmen*, Moore and Gibbons create what Stein longed for: a "continuous present."

![Image](image1.jpg)

**Figure 5.** Moore and Gibbons, *Watchmen*

15. One of Moore and Gibbons' most powerful and innovative bridgings of the space-time continuum takes place at the end of this chapter. As Rorschach, an obsessive hero bent on solving the Comedian's murder, meditates on the bitter ironies and the cruelty of human existence, the reader is privy both to his narrative in the captions and to spliced-together memories of the Comedian's life taken from all the flashbacks from the chapter in the panels. While Rorschach's words keep the audience grounded in the present, they can see different brutal scenes from the Comedian's life, disparate images taken from different points in time that now occupy the same space on a grid. In her book, *The Futurist Moment*, Marjorie Perloff claims that one of the mediums in which futurism has found its most
powerful means of expression is the collage, an artistic form that "incorporates directly into the work an actual fragment of the referent, thus forcing the reader or viewer to consider the interplay between preexisting message or material and the new artistic composition that results from the graft" (viii), and this collage of the Comedian's life, coupled with Rorschach's text, creates an intimate, horrifying, and poignantly sad portrait of the Comedian's life in a way that only sequential art is able. The reader absorbs images of the Comedian raping the Silk Spectre, the Comedian fearlessly brandishing a riot gun amidst a cloud of tear gas, the Comedian being attacked and disfigured by his Vietnamese girlfriend, the Comedian weeping and clutching a bottle of liquor, and the Comedian being humiliated, beaten, and murdered by Ozymandias. The interplay between these images forces the reader to consider the Comedian in his horrifying totality (i.e Guernica [Figure 6]) and to notice how the Comedian's choices have created shockwaves that ripple throughout his entirety. In order to achieve this effect, Moore and Gibbons have truly made time a tangible dimension on this comic page. Hence, we see that neither Stein nor Picasso nor Boccioni had it exactly right: neither art nor literature could successfully bridge the fourth dimensions on its own, but a medium utilizing both in tandem accomplishes their goals with an astonishing ease worthy of respectful, critical attention.

Figure 6. Picasso, Pablo. *Guernica*. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid.

16. No discussion of the space-time continuum in *Watchmen* would be complete without emphasis given to Dr. Manhattan, a superhero granted God-like powers by an atomic accident. Dr. Manhattan can transform the molecular structure of any object, teleport to anywhere in the universe, and is slowing becoming omnipotent. Throughout the graphic novel, Manhattan struggles with his humanity; he seems to be losing touch with human experience as we know it due to his amazing ability to never age and to be aware always of the past, present, and the future. Again, Moore and Gibbons are able to allow the reader to see the world through Dr. Manhattan's eyes as only sequential art can by exploiting fully its fourth dimensional powers. Chapter Four of *Watchmen*, in which Dr. Manhattan exiles himself to Mars and
considers his origin, is a tour-de-force in comics storytelling. In the first panel on the first page of the chapter, the reader sees Dr. Manhattan's hand holding a photograph of him and his ex-girlfriend. Manhattan's captions read, "The photograph is in my hand. It is the photograph of a man and a woman. They are at an amusement park, in 1959" [Figure 7]. In the next panel, the reader sees the photograph lying on the red Martian terrain, surrounded by footprints that signify that Manhattan has dropped the photo and wondered off. Manhattan states, "In twelve seconds time, I drop the photograph to the sand at my feet, walking away. It's already lying there, twelve seconds into the future." The reader finds the photo back in Manhattan's hand in the next panel as Manhattan reveals that he "found it in a derelict bar at the Gila Flats test base, twenty-seven hours ago." The reader is at the bar with Manhattan in the next panel, looking at the photo as he duly notes, "It's still there [. . .]. I'm still there looking at it."

Figure 7. Moore and Gibbons, Watchmen.

17. This sequence would be of little note if it were played out in a novel or film; after all, most everyone is familiar with stream of consciousness in prose and crosscutting (moving back and forth between two or more scenes) in film. When sequential art is used as the medium, however, this sequence is an exceptional
experience. As the audience ingests the comics page as a whole, they are with Dr. Manhattan every step of the way. When the setting turns back to Manhattan at the derelict bar, the reader is there with him, just as the reader is, at the same time, back on Mars with him. After all, while observing the panel that shows Manhattan in the bar, the panel showing Manhattan on Mars is still within eyeshot. This all combines with the reader's actual space to bridge dimensional relations. It could be argued that a novel could achieve similar results (after all, all the words on a page are observable all at the same time), and by this same token, one could claim this same feat could be performed in film through the usage of split-screen. What gives comics advantage over these other mediums, however, is that while literature and film must use obtrusive techniques (ruptures in the text, split screen) to create a tangible fourth dimension, this manipulation of the space-time continuum is so much part and parcel with the very nature of sequential art that this bridging of space and time is virtually seamless. The only way a film can achieve the same fourth dimensional effects that a comic can is through the usage of split screen, an effect that takes the audience out of the film and is very distracting and self-aware. Even in movies that try to use split screen techniques derivative of comics panels (Ang Lee's Hulk, for example), it is extremely disconcerting and ostentatious simply because it is not what viewers are used to experiencing. In comics, there is none of this tension. It is natural, seamless, and it is a huge theoretical (and space/time) leap that the reader can take with relative ease. In comics, even when panels separate actions, seemingly creating a "fracture of both time and space" the reader's experience forces a sort of closure that "allows us to connect these moments and mentally construct a continuous, unified reality" (McCloud 67). That continuous reality, though, is saturated in interdimensionality, multiple realities, moments, and experiences.

18. This situation recalls Slavoj Zizek's location of a break between modernism and postmodernism, a break that "affects the very status of interpretation" (1). Zizek explains, "A modernist work is by definition 'incomprehensible': it functions as a shock, as the irruption of a trauma which undermines the complacency of our daily routine and resists being integrated into the symbolic universe of the prevailing ideology" (1). Whenever the cubists and futurists ruptured or fragmented a text, the reader or observer's attention is almost always called to its initial complexity, if not preliminary incomprehensibility. Likewise, whenever split screen is used in film, the audience cannot help but take note and immediately began to speculate on the filmmaker's reasons for utilizing this technique. On the other hand, Zizek claims that "What postmodernism does, however, is the very opposite: its objects par excellence are products with a distinctive mass appeal [. . .] - it is for the interpreter to detect in them an exemplification of the most esoteric theoretical finesses of Lacan, Derrida or Foucault. [. . .] [T]he aim of the postmodernist treatment is to estrange its very initial homeliness" (1-2). Considering that comics have long been viewed as children's literature or books for adults not intelligent enough to read "real" books, few art forms have a more "distinctive mass appeal" than comics, and since this bridging of space and time is so imbedded in sequential art's basic language system, causing little to no noticeable "irruption" in the text, comics may very well be, by Zizek's definition, the epitome of postmodern art.
19. And the power and essence of this postmodernity is embodied perfectly in Dr. Manhattan. Indeed, the true genius of Dr. Manhattan is that he seems to be a metaphor for the art of the graphic novel in and of itself as well as for the graphic novel experience. He is everywhere all the time as well as where he is presently. He is not most like any other character in the book, but most like the reader himself in that he transcends transience, simple being, via not displacement, but multiplacement, of being many places at once, mentally and, in the storyline, physically as well. His character is the fullest, most essential fourth dimensional relationship in the genre to date. It is fitting that at the conclusion of *Watchmen*, Manhattan decides to leave the galaxy of Watchmen for another, where he hopes to create some human life of his own, just as the reader always has the power to leave the *Watchmen* galaxy by simply closing the book. In addition, both Manhattan and the reader also have the power to forge life elsewhere: Manhattan, through his molecular powers, and the reader, by picking up another book or graphic novel of his or her choosing and thus beginning the interaction between reader and text all over again. Manhattan leaves Ozymandias (and the galaxy) behind with the ominous proclamation that "Nothing ever ends," and with *Watchmen*, Moore and Gibbons prove his final words to be true both by creating a fourth dimension in which the reader can witness the reoccurring ripples of history and by embodying sequential art's relationship with the reader, a relationship that can be repeated *ad infinitum*.

20. It is clear that Moore's work with the fourth dimension and the space-time continuum is stimulating and empowering for his audience, but Moore can also use this aspect of sequential storytelling to shock and frighten his readers in new and unique ways. When Moore deals with the horrifying ramifications of the possible existence of a fourth dimension, his place in a rich artistic tradition again becomes apparent as he falls in line with some of the darker, more cynical futurist ideologies. Zbigniew Folejewski sees futurism largely as "a reaction, in which cynicism and nihilism alternated with the desire to seek new beliefs and forge new values" (5), and Moore (who is, interestingly enough, a self-proclaimed anarchist) often displays this same ambivalent attitude as he creates and explores fourth dimensional time and the architecture of history, most notably in another of his major works, *From Hell*. In this graphic novel, a mammoth collaboration with artist Eddie Campbell that took around eight years (1988-96) to complete, the two presuppose that Jack the Ripper was Sir William Gull, one of Queen Elizabeth's surgeons on a mission to destroy those who attempted to blackmail the royal family, and the graphic novel is a harrowing chronicle of the cultural and historical aftershocks of the Ripper murders and Gull's descent into madness, an insanity abetted by his growing ability to experience the fourth dimension. At its very heart, *From Hell* is a horror story (it began its publishing history in Stephen Bissette's *Taboo*, an anthology that was, at least, intended to be a horror anthology), and it is all the more unnerving since the reader is able to partake fully of Gull's fourth dimensional hallucinations via the power of sequential art.

21. Gull's eventual madness is foreshadowed early in the novel in Chapter Two, "A State of Darkness." The first page of this chapter consists of eight panels, all of
which are solid black and contain only word balloons [Figure 8]. The caption in the first panel establishes the setting as "The Limehouse Cut. July 1827," but the dialogue in the subsequent panels makes no narrative sense. The only continuing thread throughout the page is a question that is repeated three times: "What is the fourth dimension?" The reader is, quite literally, left "in the dark" as to how all these bits of dialogue supposedly fit together, and the question of the fourth dimension goes unanswered. As the chapter progresses, however, the reader learns that the narrative begins in July 1827 with Gull as a young child, and the rest of the chapter recounts Gull's life and experiences. Perhaps when the reader is about half through reading the chapter, he will realize that all those bits of dialogue that appear on the first page of the chapter are actually bits of conversation that arise at different points of Gull's life. Therefore, it is clear that the mysterious first page of the chapter was, in fact, a spliced together collage of snippets from Gull's life presented on a grid, and the audience, by slowing orienting themselves with how space and time are being manipulated here, is an absolute essential ingredient in bridging the gap between space and time. The reader moves from a state of darkness in which the fourth dimension is present all around them but is elusive and invisible to a point where he is slowing becoming aware of this fourth dimension, just as Gull does. For this very reason, it is important that a majority of this chapter is told from Gull's perspective, the panels revealing to the reader Gull's point of view. As he moves in and out of the darkness and light, the reader moves along with him, and the readers' experience is nearly as subjective as Gull's.
22. At one point in this chapter, Gull has a conversation with his friend, James Hinton, who discusses some of the ideas of his mathematician son, Howard Hinton. James tells Gull of his son's theories on time and space, explaining that Howard's ideas "suggest time is a human illusion . . . that all times co-exist in the stupendous whole of eternity. [. . .] Fourth dimensional patterns within Eternity's monolith would, he suggests, seems merely random events to third dimensional percipients . . . events rising towards inevitable convergence like an archway's lines." Gull reacts to these ideas by asking, "Can history then be said to have an architecture? This notion is most glorious and most horrible."

23. The "glorious and horrible" architecture of time continues to reveal itself slowly as the story unfolds and Gull commences on his murderous missions. During his various murders, he begins to receive brilliant flashes of the future, but it isn't until Chapter 10, "The Best of All Tailors," which details Gull's ritualistic and horrific butchering of prostitute Mary Kelly, his last murder, that Gull plunges headlong into fourth dimensional awareness. As the mutilation of Kelly's body becomes more
and more severe, Gull travels back into the past (briefly becoming a Babylonian alchemist) and sees into his immediate future and beyond. In his appendix notes for this chapter, Moore discusses some of his influences when composing this bizarre and disturbing chapter, explaining:

In his splendid book of essays, Mortal Lessons, Dr. Richard Seltzer (from whom many of Gull's detailed medical pronouncements in this episode were lifted) talks about the view of life that doctors have, almost that they alone have been elected to that priesthood that may look upon the mysteries inside us. It is a similar state of God-like disassociation from the obvious horror of the flesh that I hoped to create within the reader's mind by the portrayal of events here. (Appendix 35)

Sequential art allows Moore and Campbell to conceive a true "God-like disassociation" in this chapter by giving the reader a perspective (Gull's warped perspective) that flirts with total omnipotence. Just as with Dr. Manhattan in Watchmen, when Gull travels into the future, the reader travels with him, whilst still remaining with Gull in that blood soaked room in the surrounding panels. Near the conclusion of this massacre, Gull cuts Kelly's heart from her carcass and places it in a kettle over the fire. As the heart burns, a blinding light explodes from the fireplace, and Gull and the reader, who had both begun this narrative of From Hell in darkness and ignorance of the fourth dimension, are moving closer to omnipotence. (Curiously, in the first printing of this chapter by Kitchen Sink Press in 1995, when Gull stares into the blinding light emanating from the fireplace, he whispers "God?" In the first collected edition of From Hell [published in 1999], however, this line has been omitted.)
24. The final chapter of *From Hell*, entitled "Gull, Ascending," takes place eight years after the Ripper murders and finds Gull, now a near comatose lunatic, locked up in an insane asylum. In the last moments of his life, Gull's consciousness travels back and forth through time and manifests itself in various time periods until he ascends to godhood in the heavens [*Figure 10*]. Just as with Chapter Two, a great deal of
this final chapter is told directly from Gull's point of view, so Gull and the reader complete their rise from darkness into the light of omnipotence here. As Gull finally reaches the climax of his journey, everything unravels, the panels of the grid dissolve away, and the only thing remaining is a completely white, blank page with the tiny words, "God and then I . . ." (14.24). Moore and Campbell lead the reader to a catharsis so great, an omnipotence so overwhelming, that their artistic medium breaks down. The upswing is that the catharsis of being so intertwined within the process of bridging the fourth dimension - it is the reader's consciousness that makes all this possible, after all - need not affect readers in the same manners of intensity as expressed by Moore's characters. Yet it can not be underscored that the fourth dimensional play can and does not fully culminate without the reader interacting with the texts, visual and literal, in much the same way as a Gull or Dr. Manhattan.

Figure 10. Moore and Campbell. *From Hell* Ch. 4, pg. 19
This study is by no means exhaustive. We have only briefly mentioned some of Moore's influential space-time savvy predecessors, and there are many other examples of how Moore explores the space-time continuum in his own oeuvre. For instance, in *Batman: The Killing Joke*, a collaboration with Brian Bolland from 1988, Moore uses many of the same techniques used in *Watchmen* to fuse together the past and the present. Also, in his work on *Supreme* and the unfinished 1963 mini-series (both published during the 90s by Image Comics), Moore further considers the mystery and danger surrounding the possible existence of a fourth dimension, at which he has only hinted. When discussing the nature of comic art in an essay written in 1985, Moore asked:

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? Rather than dwelling upon film techniques that comics can duplicate, shouldn't we perhaps consider comic techniques that films can't duplicate? (4)

However, this study, we hope, will help bridge the gap in our current space-time exigency: one where comics and sequential art are still struggling to garner the respect they deserve. Considering Moore's groundbreaking work in using comics to bridge the gap between space and time and, as a result, finally succeeding, it is obvious that he has helped set apart sequential art as a unique and viable art form deserving of more critical respect than is currently attributed to it in relation to the whole of twentieth century accomplishment. His work illustrates how sequential art is the most precise culmination of ideas and forms that more established and recognized artistic and literary genres of the twentieth century strove to realize. Though he recently announced his retirement from comics, it is hard to conceive of any future works of his not creating the "continuous present," as comics and graphic novels so perfectly do, proving their unmitigated success as the one unmitigated twentieth century art form to bridge the fourth dimension.

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