Polyptych

Adaptation, Television, and Comics

Edited by

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Introduction: Continuous Backgrounds

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In the world of art history, a polyptych is a painting with more than one section – a diptych is a painting in two parts or sections, a triptych in three, and so on. Perhaps the most famous polyptych is the *Ghent Altarpiece* by the early Flemish painters Hubert and Jan van Eyck. Work on the altarpiece took nearly a decade and consists of twelve interior panels along two horizontal registers, each with a double set of hinged folding wings. The twelve panels function as individual images but, when taken together, tell a larger story of heavenly redemption. In its form, one can see the type of grid deployed as a central element of comics storytelling: one must move through a series of static images in sequence to compile a coherent narrative. In comics scholarship, the term has a slightly different meaning. A polyptych is, as defined by Scott McCloud in his foundational *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, a series of panels "where a moving figure or figures is imposed over a continuous background."[1] In other words, a polyptych is series of panels that illustrate movement through space. Television functions with a similar construction: a series of images with figures moving across stable backgrounds. Unlike comics, where the images remain static on the page, the quick succession of single images in television gives the illusion of movement.

This is an important way to reconfigure the relationship of television to comics. Critics such as Gérard Genette (in *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*) and Linda Hutcheon (in *A Theory of Adaptation*) use the image of the palimpsest to allegorize the work of adaptation as one of layered overwriting. Genette and Hutcheon's operating metaphor has served to productively frame and contextualize the work of adaptation for many scholars. It is, indeed, the dominant analogy in the field of adaptation studies. Each critic conceives the palimpsest of adaptation in distinct ways. For Hutcheon, adaptation is akin to translation: the adapted text is something new, but is inextricably connected to its source. Rather than an adapted text being a discrete object, it is an act of salvaging and appropriating not unlike how a palimpsest repurposes parchment to write anew upon the remains of a previous text. Hutcheon describes adaptation as both a product and a process; it is novelty – how a text is repurposed with new considerations of race, gender, sexuality, culture, temporality, geography, and politics – that gives an adaptation its value as a discrete object. Hutcheon explains that all adaptations are fundamentally intertextual, a perspective with which Genette agrees. Where Genette offers an alternative reading of the analogy of the palimpsest is in his categorization of narrative modes. Genette's concept of hyptertextuality offers a schema for reading intertextual relations: hypertextuality refers to the grafting of one text upon another without commentary, metatextuality describes when one text critically comments upon another, and intertextuality is a term to define the incidence of one text appearing directly inside another. An adaptation can take any of these forms. Within Genette's rigid categories, the possibilities for adaptation begin to expand: indeed, for both Genette and Hutcheon tracing the original, the ur-, text is an impossible and pointless task. To some degree, all texts are adaptations.

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[1] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 115.

The theory of adaptation studies and the image of the palimpsest have been well served by the careful work of critics such as Hutcheon and Genette. Their rigorous and insightful contributions have helped many scholars discuss adaptations with greater clarity and purpose. The palimpsest as an operating metaphor, however, by its very nature invites additional readings – additive frameworks placed atop the work that has gone before. Here, we may consider the inevitable limitations of allegory and the new theoretical avenues opened up by an additional operating metaphor for adaptation in the context of television and comics.

A polyptych is just such an alternative mode by which we may consider adaptation, particularly adaptation of comicbooks to television. Comicbook adaptations of television shows are notably acts of translation, to borrow Hutcheon's other operative metaphor, as they move a text to a new medium. However, an unmistakable component of television adaptation of comics is the transmedial relationship. Conceptually, this is not best described as an act of overwriting: no matter how much more popular CBS's television series *The Incredible Hulk* was to the comics being released at the time, the show was released in installments while the antecedent text was also being released in concurrent but distinct installments. In fact, with only a few brief interruptions, Marvel has published *The Incredible Hulk* in some form for an additional thirty years since the ending of the television series (with no signs of stopping). Furthermore, *The Incredible Hulk* is an unstable text, created by dozens of writers, artists, and editors. The Hulk himself has been gray and green; he has been sub-vocal and a genius; he has been solitary and he has been a happily married family man. He is already a palimpsest: a character appearing in comics for nearly sixty years whose past is continually overwritten and revised. How does one speak of translating the Hulk when he is already so polyphonic?

This textual instability suggests the need to examine adaptation in the context of comics and television with new sets of strategies. There are many considerations to account for. One need look no further than publication: the material method of delivery of comics and television does not always run in parallel, but the serial or episodic format typical to narrative in both media prevents either corpus from being a stable textual artifact that can reliably be considered in the terms Genette and Hutcheon describe. Considering the image of the polyptych as an operative metaphor is not an attempt to force a homogeneity upon two distinct media with their own technologies, structures of power, and material histories. Rather, the idea of the polyptych asks us to reconsider the nature of any comic-book adaptation on television as part of a polyvalent process that demands that we look at multiple parts and consider them together. At a basic level, the textual artifacts make sense individually but, as with the *Ghent Altarpiece*, they tell a different story when considered in light of a larger corpus and more distanced reading. To duly and carefully consider a show such as the CBS series *The Incredible Hulk*, for example, one should not merely consider the television program in isolation or even only in terms of its fidelity to its comic-book source material. Any number of readings of the Bill Bixby-starring series can be done productively, but a reading that accounts for the complex series of reciprocal relationships between the series and the comicbooks it adapted opens up readings of greater nuance.

The work of reading comicbook adaptations on television is akin to looking at several sections of a work of art and understanding their complicated connections. A polyptych, a series of distinct but related art objects, offers us a new metaphorical mode that invites a reconsideration of how we study the unique adaptive processes in the intersection of these two media. To put this conceptual allegory in practical terms, we can think about Archie and the Addams Family (as I'm sure most critics do all the time), the focus of the second and last chapters of this collection.

In 1978, ABC aired a follow-up to their 1976 made-for-TV special *Archie* that was burdened with the lugubrious title *The Archie Situation Comedy Musical Variety Show*. After the 1976 special failed to ignite interest in a narrative live-action adaptation of the misadventures of the Riverdale gang, and following another prior failed effort at adapting Archie in 1964, the change in format was something of an attempted correction. If a more straightforward adaptation couldn't capture the public's imagination, perhaps a different format could translate the enduring popularity of a then-thirty-plus-year-old franchise. Alas, it did not. A fourth attempt would be made in 1990: *Archie: To Riverdale and Back Again,* which aired on NBC and was a more serious look at the franchise in which the characters are all more than a decade removed from their high school milieu and in varying stages of crisis. This attempt at adaptation, too, would prove unsuccessful. It would not be until *Riverdale* premiered on the CW – the third broadcast network and the fifth attempt at an adapted Archie series – in 2017 that Archie Andrews would become a staple of prime-time television.

What the title of *The Archie Situation Comedy Musical Variety Show* lacked in concision and elegance it made up for in accuracy: the show is a mix of comedy routines, musical numbers, and sketches set in the high school, homes, and environs of Riverdale. The show, which is tucked away on YouTube, has achieved only a small following based mostly on the promise of catastrophic ineptitude suggested by the title. That the show isn't a disaster and that it hasn't been denounced or hidden by its creators, like George Lucas did with the *Star Wars Holiday Special*, is likely why it hasn't developed a reputation of any kind. In many respects, *The Archie Situation Comedy Musical Variety Show* is an exemplar of most comic-book adaptations on television: it is neither so good or lucky as to be popular, so inventive as to invite study, nor so bad as to be infamous.

The Archie Situation Comedy Musical Variety Show is also a productive gateway into considering how the study of adaptation can be applied to television shows based upon comicbooks. It is something of a polyptych itself: to understand the show is to consider it as a response to a previous failed pilot episode, itself a response to a previous failed pilot episode, and an attempt to extend a successful transmedial brand that had already proven a hit in comics, animation, and – to some degree – pop music. *The Archie Situation Comedy Musical Variety Show* is not part of a deliberate polyptych – the analogy can only stretch so far – in that it was constructed as one part of a unified and intentional multi-part sequence. But it is part of a larger whole, a part of the transmedial brand of Archie Comics and the various adaptations featuring their characters. To read it, one must consider it in relation to more texts than simply a particular volume of *Archie Comics*.

Similarly, the 1998-199 television series *The New Addams Family* makes sense when considered beside other texts. The series is strictly an adaptation of the comic strips by cartoonist Charles Addams. As Neale Barnholden observes in his chapter "The Family Plot: the 1964 Filmways Contract and *The Addams Family* as Transmedia Brand," Addams' comics were decidedly non-narrative. As such, the TV series is most clearly an adaptation of the 1964 television series. This not merely true at the level of inspiration: many episodes of *The New Addams Family* were adapted from the earlier show. Glenn Taranto modelled his performance on John Astin's acting decisions from the earlier series. In a winking bit of meta-fictional casting, Astin himself plays the recurring role of Grandpapa Addams, Gomez's father and a new character to the Family. Taranto's Gomez, the show suggests, is quite literally born from Astin's Addams.

However, the show is not merely an adaptation of a comic strip by way of a television adaptation. It is also an adaptation of a film of a comic strip by way of a television adaptation. The popularity and success of Barry Sonnenfeld's 1991 film adaptation *The Addams Family* and, to a lesser degree, its 1993 sequel *Addams Family Values*, can be credited for the series as much as the sitcom from the 1960s. The prominence of the Addams children Wednesday and Pugsley in *The New Addams Family* is a result of their prominence in the films. The series itself is also something of a spin-off of the movies: after the financial disappointment of *Addams Family Values* and the death of Raúl Juliá, who played Gomez Addams in both of Sonnenfeld's films, a direct to video movie titled *Addams Family Reunion* with a new cast was produced as a quasi sequel/reboot. Nicole Fugere would play Wednesday Addams in both *Reunion* and *The New Addams Family*. For such a small and distinct body of work, much less than the tens of thousands of pages of comics featuring Archie Andrews, the comic strips by Charles Addams have generated a complicated series of adaptations that make the most sense when considered next to each other.

For this reason, adaptation studies must consider multivalent strategies when examining the network of textual affinities of comicbook adaptations on television. The media have an interconnected history. In fact, television is a medium that has long been home to comicbook adaptations, inheriting genre, narrative format, and even series from comicbooks and comic strips. As a popular mass medium, television has many similarities to comicbooks: most series are episodic in nature, feature characters in replicable status quos, and are designed to have recognizable visual iconography. As Brittany Reid deftly illustrates in her chapter "The Haunting of *Riverdale:* Reimagining *Archie* as Gothic Melodrama," the nature of these adaptations varies greatly – both historically and generically. And, as Reid points out in the context of *Archie* adaptation *Riverdale*, much of the volume of comicbook adaptations on television are given little scholarly interrogation. Quoting Bart Beaty, Reid points out that Archie comics are often considered self-evident.[2] The same can certainly be said about the vast majority of television shows.

Television adaptations of comicbook series are similarly mass-market cultural objects designed to be popular with wide audiences. The one-season adaptation of Archie Comics' *Katy Keene* (2019-2020) was considered enough of a failure to warrant cancellation with average viewership of fewer than 500,000 people per episode.[3] By contrast, the highest-selling comic published by Archie Comics in 2019 was *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* Vol. 3 #1, which sold an estimated 27,000 units in the direct market.[4] Distribution channels for most comics are relatively contained to digital vendors, book stores, and the specialty stores of the direct market but it can be very difficult to trace the readership of any particular comicbook. The direct market, the name given to that collection of specialty stores, records only sales of comics to the retailers themselves and not to readers. The Amazon-owned digital vendor ComiXology does not even release sales data. According to comics research site ComicChron, the best-selling single issues of 2018 and 2019 sold more than 500,000 units but the regular market of readers in Canada and the United States of monthly comics hovers somewhere in the range of 200,000 people.[5] When the best-selling issue in the entire marketplace barely attains the ratings of an infamously un-watched television show, it speaks to the relative scale of comicbooks in terms of mass-market popular culture. It is not at all surprising that a marketplace as small as periodical comics would seek to expand the reach of their transmedial brands into the more lucrative and popular medium of television. When one considers that the vast majority of the comics sold in North America are part of long-running franchises (the characters of Marvel, DC, Disney, and Archie), owned by large corporations (Marvel, like Lucasfilm and Pixar, is owned by Disney; DC is owned by AT&T), the extension of valuable intellectual property into an additional – and more lucrative – marketplace can be understood as part of ongoing business strategies at least as much as artistic endeavours.

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[2] Bart Beaty, *Twelve-Cent Archie*, 4.

[3] "Katy Keene: Season One Ratings."

The popular reach of comics and television used to be reversed. By the 1950s, high-selling comics such as *Superman* or *Captain Marvel* (the one powered by the wizard Shazam, not Marvel's cosmic Avenger) would sell more than 1,000,000 copies per issue.[6] This presence in the market did not last. In 1960, Dell/Disney's *Uncle Scrooge* and *Walt Disney's Comics & Stories* averaged sales of over 1,000,000 copies per issue; that was the last year any comic averaged those numbers.[7] By contrast, in 1950 only an estimated 10,000,000 Americans even owned TV sets.[8] Ten years later, that number would be nearly five times as big with the most popular show on broadcast, *Gunsmoke*, averaging more than 17,000,000 viewers a week.[9] As the popularity of television rose, the popularity of comics fell; nevertheless, the two media have been and continue to be intertwined.

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[4] John Jackson Miller, "2019 Comic Book Sales to Comic Shops."

[5] Miller, "2019."

[6] John Jackson Miller, "Superman Sales Figures."

[7] John Jackson Miller, "Comic Book Sales Figures for 1960."

[8] "TV Ratings: 1950-1951."

[9] "TV Ratings: 1960-1961."

The parallels between the development of comicbooks and television are too plentiful to fully enumerate. The origins of both media begin in the early 20th century, with the late 1930s being particularly momentous: Superman first appeared in April of 1938 and the television was introduced to the American public at the RCA Pavilion in April of 1939 at the New York City World's Fair. Both media have "Golden Ages" that existed in the mid-20th century, both have long been dismissed as idle entertainment, and both are currently experiencing a deeper critical interest than ever before. Both media have often been ephemeral, which has led to collector and fan cultures around particular properties. Both underwent seismic distribution changes in the 1970s and 1980s: the mass adoption of cable and satellite television and the abandonment of the newsstand for the comicbook direct market. Both tend toward episodic narrative forms but are presently reconfiguring how digital technology – streaming and subscription services, in particular – will affect narrative modes as well as business models. Both have complex histories of self-censorship and ratings classifications, just as both have been seen as causes of juvenile delinquency.

There have been comicbook adaptations on television almost as long as there has been television. This follows the approach by radio broadcasters to adapt comicbooks and comic strips to leverage known properties into audience numbers in a different medium. The radio waves were saturated with adaptations such as *Little Orphan Annie, Flash Gordon, Terry and the Pirates,* and *The Adventures of Superman*, among others. Television, which inherited much of its narrative and programming innovations from radio, followed suit. Early broadcast shows based on comicbooks and comic strips abounded. Television stations broadcast such adaptations as *Sheena, Queen of the Jungle; Steve Canyon; Dennis the Menace; Blondie; Dick Tracy; Flash Gordon;* and *The Addams Family*. Some of the most popular and iconic TV series of their times were adapted from comics: *The Adventures of Superman* in the 1950s, Adam West's *Batman* in the 1960s, Lynda Carter's *Wonder Woman* in the 1970s, Bill Bixby's *The Incredible Hulk* in the 1980s, the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* of the 1990s, the 21st century's *The Walking Dead*. The line of Archie comics in particular has yielded hundreds of episodes for nearly a dozen different (mostly animated) shows. In fact, there has been a near constant televised presence of Archie Andrews or Sabrina (the Teenage Witch) Spellman since the mid-1960s.[10]

The adaptations have been reciprocal, as well. This dynamic relationship is unique in terms of adaptation and in need of greater study. Comicbooks, particularly before the advent of the VCR and home video, were a vital thread in extending the reach of television programming. Everything from *Bonanza* to

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[10] For a more expansive list of adaptations, see Neale Barnholden's Appendix: Notable Comicbook Television Adaptations in this volume.

Star Trek, *Flipper* to *Sea Hunt, Maverick* to *the Man from UNCLE*, *I Spy* to *12 O'Clock High, The Aquanauts* to *Zorro* had a comicbook tie-in. There have even been comics adapted from TV series that were themselves adapted from comics (including *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, DuckTales, Smallville, Batman '66* and *Arrow*)! One can further trace the role television has played in comics by seeing the ways in which adaptation decisions on the shows have made their way into the comics. In the comics, Bruce Banner was revealed simply never to have used his given name Robert after the television adaptation of *The Incredible Hulk* changed the main character's first name. *Wonder Woman*'s television series caused the comicbook to change settings to match the era in which the various seasons were set. New characters from television have been integrated into their comics: Inspector Henderson from *The Adventures of Superman*, the Wonder Twins from *The Super Friends*, BeBop and Rocksteady from the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles,* Firestar from *Spider-Man and his Amazing Friends*, and Harley Quinn from *Batman: The Animated Series*. The two media have even coordinated for major promotional events, most notably the marriage of Superman/Clark Kent and Lois Lane on ABC's *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* and in the pages of DC comics during the week of October 6, 1996.

Unlike typical adaptations of existing intellectual property from a novel, short story, or play the preponderance of adapted comics are ongoing and heavily serialized. This generates new considerations for how to approach the critical framing of an adapted series. It seems unlikely that any viewer would truly consider the grim *Gotham* a prequel to the silly *Super Friends,* Adam West's campy *Batman*, or *Batman: The Animated Series*, though all shows feature the same characters at distinct and consecutive chronological points in their lives. Producing a show such as *The Walking Dead* involves a measure of fidelity to the source material and a concomitant divergence from it. New installments of both the comicbook series and the television show (and its spin-offs) were being produced simultaneously. For years, the show and the comic were created in concert – creator Robert Kirkman wrote the comicbook series even as he continues to hold a producer credit on the various television series and has a hand in writing episodes – on interconnected narrative paths that are not always parallel. The creators of the show did not wish to merely provide a contemporaneous live action staging of comics material, nor did Kirkman wish the comicbook series to be storyboards for eventual episodes. Even with all these complex considerations, *The Walking Dead* is based on a single series by a small handful of creators. Many comicbook adaptations on television wrestle with decades of multiple creators, publishing trends, and creative reboots. This holds true for shows such as *Riverdale,* the CW's stable of DC superhero adaptations, and even Marvel's shifting stable of live-action shows (including the suite of shows produced for Netflix, those produced for Hulu, *Agents of*

SHIELD which aired on Disney-owned ABC, and a slew of shows developed for the Disney+ streaming service). The relationship between any of these television shows and the comicbooks from which they are derived, to be duly considered, needs to engage with a host of factors.

This is vital and timely work. The ubiquity of comicbook adaptations on television is startling: in the 2018-2019 broadcast season (this term here includes new episodes of shows on streaming services such as CW Seed, DCUniverse, Hulu, and Netflix), there were more than 50 unique television series that were direct adaptations of comicbooks. The digital market and the mass adoption of streaming services have kept, or reintroduced, shows into circulation so that multiple versions coexist. This is a substantial archive ready to be examined. Understanding how television series adapt comicbooks and vice versa is essential to understanding how these texts work. Linda Hutcheon describes adaptation as a multi-layered system involving the original text (and its own antecedents), the process of adaptation, and the reception of the text. Repetition, variation, and memory are always already at work when we engage with a text. Adaptation theory helps us navigate a world of transmedia properties and media conglomerates, giving cultural theory a discourse to better understand the absence of an idealized author and single, stable text. Adaptation is an ideal lens through which to view the relationship between television and comicbooks. It enables a broad range of discussions of this critically neglected area of study even as it pushes those discussions into new and important territory.

The chapters in this collection run through a wide variety of material – from *The Incredible Hulk* to the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*, from *Tintin* to *iZombie* – on the subject of television adaptations of comics. The intersection of comics and television is a massive field, but it is also one that has historically been serviced mainly by concerted focus on the most notable series and their outsized impact. Part of the purpose of this collection is to deepen and broaden the sites of inquiry in this field, to provide an avenue for under-considered, or even unconsidered, texts that can contribute significantly to the critical discussion. Comics have been adapted on television so many times that it can be difficult to even tabulate (again, see the Appendix!). But in considering only the outliers – the *Batman*s and the *Walking Dead*s – as we have done so often, we focus on what makes them unique at the cost of what else we can learn. In pushing our focus away from the exceptions, we can examine other ways that adaptation studies and comics studies can meet. Each chapter in this collection brings a unique reading, even to well-trod fields of study.

Fernando Pagnoni Berns provides a close reading of the iconic *The Incredible Hulk*, tracing its generic provenance away from the comicbook series from which it is adapted. Considering the series in terms of translation, Berns articulates a unique reading of the series interrogating the nature of its adaptation. As Berns argues, *The Incredible Hulk* on television owes as much to the genres of TV as it does to its comicbook origins. In fact, Berns makes the compelling case that to consider the series apart from the history of television is to prevent a fulsome reading of the text. Though iconic, *The Incredible Hulk* is an overlooked corpus for study, and Berns locates the American travel narrative as central to the work of the series. This is as much an act of translation of the source material as it is an application of an existing and, at the time, popular genre of television. Berns builds upon the work of Eduardo Grüner and Linda Hutcheon to write back to a specific cultural moment, practicing a strategy of hermeneutic invention to provide a compelling and political reading of the TV series. Among Berns' considerable insights is this act of locating *The Incredible Hulk* in a web of precedence rather than simply a dyad of source-adaptation. Rather than try to tame an unruly (possibly enraged and gamma-irradiated) text, Berns offers a distanced reading of the series and its network of influences.

Brittany Reid's contribution on the CW's *Riverdale* turns a critical eye to the surprising collision of two sets of generically rigid forms: the Gothic melodrama and the "Archie Code." Reid examines the tropes of the two genres to offer a polyvalent reading of *Riverdale* as always already in conversation with multiple antecedent texts. Following Hutcheon, Reid invites consideration of the novelty of *Riverdale* and its intertextual composition. Other than Bart Beaty's *Twelve-Cent Archie*, scant critical work has been done on one of the most iconic transmedial texts in North America. This work necessitates engagement with adaptation studies precisely because *Archie* is a transmedial brand. As Reid argues, the fact that *Rivderale* is overtly framed as a novel adaptation and one that generates meaning through the ways in which it translates its source material requires study of the show's antecedents and precedents. Reid's contribution here provides a theoretically grounded reading of considerable value to scholars in the field of comics studies insisting that the popularity of *Archie* as a transmedial brand is a reason for consideration rather than a reason for dismissal.

Jessica Camargo Molano and Alfonso Amendola consider the case of the CW's procedural *iZombie*. Despite the significant changes made from the comicbook to the show – including the setting, the names of every character including the protagonist, the mythology, and the nature of the plot, to name a few – Molano and Amendola argue that the series' fidelity should be considered in terms of narrative modes. As Molano and Amendola argue, *iZombie*'s television adaptation is so distinct from the DC/Vertigo series *iZombie* that it does not easily fit the model of transmedial brand in the way that fellow CW comicbook adaptation *Riverdale* does. The reading Molano and Amendola offer is a materialist one: *iZombie* can best be understood as an extension of the CW's own brand, and an adaptation designed to reinforce its demographic strategies, rather than as a faithful reproduction of its source material. *iZombie* offers an intriguing case study, as the comics series originator is relatively short – its entire run is 28 issues, published from 2010-2012 – and completed by a small and consistent group of creators. The television show ran for five seasons, from 2015-2019, and 71 episodes producing significantly more material from a broader array of creators than its source material. Molano and Amendola offer a unique contribution to adaptation studies in their approach to adaptation not in terms of fidelity but of material conditions that are a necessary consideration in popular culture made for mass-market media.

Reginald Wiebe makes the case that *The Adventures of Tintin* should be considered an adaptation of Hergé's comics insofar as those comics were themselves adaptations. The recursive nature of the Tintin stories demands that we read the cartoon series not as a corresponding body of separate texts but as part of the ongoing history of revisions of the stories upon which the animated series is based. Wiebe traces the discontinuous material production of Tintin's serialized stories and reads the 1990s cartoon series as part of that chain of production. In complement to Molano and Amendola's insight about the continuities of adaptation to source text when fidelity is eschewed, Wiebe argues that it is in its fidelity to Hergé's *bandes dessinées* that *The Adventures of Tintin* offers a unique avenue to the study of adaptation. Tintin, like Archie, is an enduring and widely popular character. Like Archie, Tintin stories are guided by a particular style, though not one that has quite as articulated a code as Reid discusses in her chapter. Unlike Archie, however, Tintin is mostly the product of a single creator. Wiebe traces the influences that helped shape the Tintin stories, articulating a web of adaptation that generates meaning even when novelty is not present in an adaptation. Close-reading two contrasting examples of *The Adventures of Tintin* offers the opportunity to examine what is at stake beyond fidelity when adapting texts that have been revised multiple times.

Iris Haist provides a compelling reading of the oft-studied *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* that considers the text in terms of both its antecedents and inheritors. Haist asks that we consider the series as an adaptation of many previous texts – particularly Chris Claremont's *X-Men* and the character of Kitty Pryde, as well as the corpus of horror movies which *Buffy* subverts – that include itself. The television series is, after all, an adaptation of a film. Haist asks us to consider the comicbook spin-offs of the iconic television series as part of that complex network of adaptation, revision, and canonicity. Haist reads the so-called Buffyverse from a distance, accounting for the various iterations of the transmedial franchise across film, comicbooks, books, and television (and sometimes in that order). An oft-studied corpus, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is rarely considered as an adaptation. Haist contributes a distanced reading that incorporates the massive array of the Buffyverse, one that permits an examination of the franchise's complicated nature and investments as an adaptation.

Lauren Chochinov offers a careful reading of *The Legend of Korra* in both its form as a television series and in its later form as a comicbook sequel. Chochinov pays special attention to the nature of each media, as well as the particular relationship each media has with fans. It is the inclusion of fandom and the web of influence that fandom can wield over a transmedial property that drives Chochinov's reading, and this provides a productive lens with which to interrogate the relationship of the spin-off comicbook series to the show that generated it. Adding to the complexity of reading *The Legend of Korra* comicbook sequel is that *The Legend of Korra* television series is itself an adaptation: a spin-off/sequel of *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. As an iteration of a transmedial narrative, Chochinov argues, the *Legend of Korra* presents a site of multiple unstable readings. As an extension of the television series, the comicbook creates new readings of its originating text, including queering the previously heteronormative space of the franchise. Following Adrienne Rich, the series presents sites of resistance to compulsory heterosexuality. Chochinov grounds her reading in the material context of *The Legend of Korra*: its interrupted broadcast history, the relationship of various audiences to the text, the evolving media engagement with queer properties, and fandom's role in shaping the comicbook sequel series. Following Haist's engagement with *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in the previous chapter, Chochinov examines how an expanding canon with a complex series of adaptive relationships can be read and re-read from multiple vantage points.

Katie Turcotte engages directly with the concept of a canon in her rigorous discussion of the transmedial modalities of *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*. Turcotte's work gives the type of careful research and insight that a series such as *Power Rangers* rarely receives and, as such, offers a unique contribution to adaptation studies. By focusing her attention on narrative modes and the transmedial concept of a "storyworld," Turcotte examines the nature of canonicity in popular culture. By focusing on the adaptive storyworld feature, Turcotte is able to read across various Power Rangers series. The show itself is an adaptation, a Japanese-American co-production involving the repurposing of footage from *Kyoryu Sentai Zyuranger* by adding new footage of American actors. Subsequent series have been spin-offs and reboots, and the current comicbook from Boom! Studios functions as both a reboot of the original television series that ran from 1993-1996 and as part of a larger adaptive storyworld. Comics have medium-specific strategies that differ from television, and the narrative lens of the storyworld feature enables reading strategies that account for those differences. Turcotte provides a guide through a complex tangle of transmedial narratives with a clear theoretical emphasis, discovering within an oft-disregarded popular series a valuable site of inquiry. By focusing so carefully on a single property, Turcotte's work provides a model for reading with, rather than against, complex transmedial narrative entanglements.

Neale Barnholden concludes the volume with a truly unique reading of Charles Addams' iconic creations. Barnholden directs us to consider the Addams Family as a transmedial brand, and to consider their origin as distinctively non-narrative. Unlike most comicbook adaptations of iconic material – and Barnholden makes a very compelling case for how iconic Charles Addams' creations are – the Addams family comes into focus as a brand rather than as a narrative. The Filmways contract for the famous 1960s television sitcom featuring the Addams Family is the site where Barnholden locates the genesis of the Family – not only as a narrative to be adapted into many forms but also as a brand created from single-panel comic strips. Reading the contract provides Barnholden with the vantage to survey the inchoate origins of the Addams Family, Addams' own creative influences, and the increasingly rigid characters that would be retroactively defined. The contract, Barnholden points out, is the site of Addams' own condensation of his visual designs into characters: the contract is itself an adaptation of his non-narrative gag strips. The Addams Family is unique in that adaptations have not typically "adapted" any particular story, plot, or narrative. The Addams Family, Barnholden argues, is coherent even without a narrative. Barnholden does, indeed, provide an ample reading of *The Addams Family* as more than an example of the American Gothic or a contemporary trend of the sitcoms of the 1960s but locates his argument most firmly in the show's status as an adaptation. This persuasive reading does not foreclose examination of the various Addams Family's appearances in individual narratives. What it enables, rather, is a method by which to identify what is at stake in any adaptation of the Addams Family in particular and other non-narrative comic strips in general.

The final contribution to this book, also by Neale Barnholden, is in the form of an appendix: a list of notable comicbook television adaptations. In researching this subject, it is clear that there is much fertile ground to be tilled. Such a list – not an exhaustive list but, as Barnholden suggests, a thorough list that will prompt further study – is still missing from the corpus of adaptation studies. In the absence of a definitive index, Barnholden offers the first draft of such a document. The appendix, as designed, will serve as a site for new discoveries as well as a partial record of an ephemeral medium.

When placed alongside each other, these chapters form a polyptych of their own: a plurality of considerations of various theoretical modes and approaches that can be considered both individually or as a whole. The modest goal of this collection is to broaden the subjects of inquiry in the fields of comics studies and adaptation studies and to serve as prompts for further research. When we move beyond the dyad of source-adaptation, scholars can cast their nets much wider. On top of the continuous background of adaptation studies, we are invited to follow the roving steps of comic-book shows on television.

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