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Heroes and Villains in *Watchmen*

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Abstract

This dissertation aims to analyze one of the aspects of what is, almost unanimously, considered the best comic ever written: *Watchmen*, created by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons. This analysis will be focused on the main characters of this comic, from the perspective of how well they fit into different villain and hero archetypes. For this purpose, some of the most common heroic and villainous archetypes in the Western narrative will be analyzed, and those data will be used to analyze the main characters of the comic. The final objective of this analysis will be to prove how incredibly complex the characters of a Superhero comic (normally dismissed as a minor genre for teenagers) can be.

Key Words: Watchmen, Comic, Superhero, Archetype, Hero, Villain

Resumen

El objetivo de este Trabajo de fin de Grado es analizar una parte de la obra que es, casi universalmente considerada como el mejor comic que se ha escrito: *Watchmen*, creada por Alan Moore y Dave Gibbons. Este análisis se centrará en los personajes principales del comic, con el objetivo de examinar como encajan en los diferentes arquetipos tanto de villanos como de héroes. Para esto, se analizarán algunos de los arquetipos heroicos y de villanos más importantes de la literatura occidental, y esto se usará para analizar a los personajes del comic. El objetivo último de este análisis será probar que los personajes de un comic de superhéroes, normalmente considerado un género menor para adolescentes, también pueden ser increíblemente complejos.

Palabras clave: Watchmen, Comic, Superhéroe, Arquetipo, Héroe, Villano

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Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to analyse the complexity of the main characters of *Watchmen*, one of the most praised comics of all time, in order to see if they can just fit in a single literary archetype of hero or villain, or if they present characteristics of other hero or villain archetypes, making them too complex for such a simple classification. The growth of popularity and acceptance in the Academic field of comics is something that we can easily observe today. Nonetheless, like in most of the relatively recent narrative genres (sci-fi and fantasy novels were met with similar resistance in the past), there is still much resistance in both the critical and academic fields to accept comics as something more than a minor genre, and to make them part of the literary canon.

This dissertation will be divided into two parts: Part I will refer to the methodology. In this section some of the most popular archetypes of heroes or villains in the western literature will be presented, with the intention of extracting the main traits of each archetype and classify them in tables. Part II will deal with the analysis of the comic's characters; in this section the heroic or villainous attributes of these characters will be classified with the help of the tables previously described. After that, the result of those tables will be used to help in the writing of the analysis of each character according to their heroic or villainous traits.

After discussing some technical aspects of the dissertation, it is necessary to explain what *Watchmen* is and why it has been chosen as the subject of the analysis. *Watchmen* is, in short, a 12-issue limited comic book, published by the American company DC Comics between 1986 and 1987. It was created by the collaboration between the writer Alan Moore and the artist David Gibbons, and it is often regarded as the best comic ever made. But what makes this comic so special?

The first thing that must be pointed out is that this comic has an undoubtedly well-earned fame as a work of exceptional quality. We can see this with the unprecedented amount of awards it has earned, including both the Eisner and Hugo awards, as well as its appearance in the *Time Magazine*'s "list of the 100 best English-

language novels since 1923". This critical acclaim has also been met with incredible commercial success, having sold more than 2 million copies worldwide.

Watchmen is also considered as the first attempt to create a realistic superhero story. Due to many factors like the complexity of the plot, or the coral nature of its narrative it is difficult to provide a decent summary¹. That is why the following brief summary extracted from Grant Morrison's book *Supergods* has been chosen. *Watchmen* is the story of how Rorschach, a costumed hero, tries to solve the murder of the Comedian, a fellow costumed hero, in a world full of Cold War paranoia, in which the appearance of a single American Superhuman has deformed and destabilized the global politics, economics, and culture itself (Morrison 196).

Aside from the quality and the complexity of its plot *Watchmen* is a work that can be analyzed and interpreted in many alternative ways: some of these ways include the murder mystery, a formalist experiment in symmetrical narrative, a postmodern revisionism of the superhero genre, a political satire, etc. This was the objective of both authors, who did want that their creation could be seen through more than one filter (Bensan 5). Complementing the story, we can also observe a new and revolutionary graphism that is pushing the limits of visual storytelling in a way that no other comic has done before.

However, what settles *Watchmen* aside from the other comics is, undoubtedly, how influential it has become. The combination of the high quality of the work and the wide distribution that a publisher so important as DC comics gave it was the turning point that allowed the mainstream comic not only to get a total separation from the infamous Comic Code (a form of self-censorship caused by a study on the dangers of the comics in 1954), but also *Watchmen* would be the comic (alongside *Mauss* and *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*) that proved to the literary critics and the general public that comics were much more than a minor genre for teenagers.

¹ For a more detailed summary, consult the appendixes one and two that include, respectively, the timeline of the events that took place before the comic plot and a far more detailed summary.

1 Theoretical Framework: Heroes and Villains in Literature

1.1 Heroic Archetypes

Before explaining any characteristic of a heroic archetype, we should consider how the figure of the hero has been studied before. Thomas Carlyle describes in his 1841 book *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History* a variety of heroic archetypes. He also stated a definition of the hero who is basically a fascinating figure loved and praised by people; perhaps one of the main reasons for this fascination and praise that the heroes receive comes from how heroes can impose their own criteria or order over all the obstacles presented to them (Meyer 33-35). In this way, Campbell studied in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) the “Hero’s Journey” a circular journey of comprised Departure-Initiation-Return and how it could be applied to many heroic and mythical stories. He also defined a hero as “someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself” (Campbell 151).

For the following analysis of heroic archetypes, the main source is the book *Heroes: Champions of our Literary Imagination* (2007), written by Bruce Meyer. This book has been chosen because the way it explains the different heroic archetypes is very clear and the archetypes are very diverse. The archetypes analyzed are: the Common Hero, the Tragic Hero, the Ill-fated Hero, the Saint Hero, the Epic or Romantic Hero and the Supernatural Hero.

As it was mentioned in the introduction, the aim of this study is to examine and contrast the former heroic archetypes beginning with the **Common Hero** perhaps because, while it is still true that ordinary people had been represented through all the history of literature (in Greek tragedy they were known as Phaulos), they were never given proper attention. That is why most of them merely appeared as a foil to the protagonists of the literary piece (Meyer 74-76). This will not change until much later. The process that made ordinary people gain importance in literature culminated in the 20th Century. One of the most significant changes was that common people became the protagonists of the tragedy (Meyer 72). In this way the most important characteristic of

the common hero is that he does not belong to the aristocracy or any other similar privileged groups, he is simply one more of the crowd. Also we should mention here that the problems he faces are usually fairly mundane, which makes that anyone could end up facing them. It is also necessary to point out how most of the literary works dealing with a common hero are focused on the growth of him as a person. Nevertheless, the ubiquity characteristic of this kind of heroes makes them very accessible and popular because they are facing problems that the readers can easily identify with and relate to (Meyer 104). This relationship of the individual and the popular which distinguishes the common hero could easily make us understand why these heroes have an especial association with the outsiders in literature, since they do not want to be the actors of the society.

It seems to me that they are just the opposite to **Tragic Heroes** who were very often the main characters of tragedies (despite their heroic name, they can perfectly be villains or mad men) and, as such, they are almost always complex and powerful characters. And their most important characteristic, which all tragic heroes share, is that they are doomed to a tragic end, and it seems that since they fall from great heights, they suffer much more than the common man (Meyer 141). This tragic end is often a consequence of a fatal flaw that will push them toward the faults that will cause their destruction and ruin (Meyer 138). What it is even more paradoxical is the fact that this error will not be caused by madness or by their evil nature; they are forced into that situation by either their own flawed perception of good and evil or because someone else will push them down to this path (Meyer 118). This turns the tragic hero into a victim of the circumstances that he will not be able to change no matter how hard he tries. As said before, these heroes can commit wicked and utterly horrifying acts, but they will always have redeeming qualities that will make them sympathetic. And finally, despite being doomed to fail, these heroes will never surrender to their fate and they will continue fighting with a complete and unyielding determination. This struggle is futile and doomed to fail, but when they finally do so, they will accept their ultimate fate with an immense sense of dignity (Meyer 140). This struggle with the impossible is what makes us love these characters so much.

The most interesting aspect of our next kind of heroes, the so-called “**ill-fated hero**” is that they share the same destiny of death and disgrace as the “**tragic heroes.**” But, unlike them, they dig their own grave on their own volition. These heroes are much more volatile than the tragic ones, and their main motivation is simply to satiate their thirst for satisfaction caused by an immense ego (Meyer 153). This last factor makes them be quite different from **common heroes** who, as we have stated, do not wish to be actors of any society. An ill-fated hero will continuously cross the lines between vice and virtue good and evil; this volatility is what makes them interesting figures. Because even if they can be despicable, it is fascinating to see how they defy all the conventions and taboos of society to live mysterious and exciting lives (Meyer 156). They are usually very popular.

In literature, there are two main representatives of this type of hero, and both share an immense ego and a fickle attitude: The first one is the seducer. These figures are synonymous with the libido, and their objective is to seduce someone (in most cases they are not guided by love, but for the thrill of the hunt) for this purpose. They will not care if they have broken all the taboos and social boundaries in the pursuit of their objective. These seducers usually have a great sex appeal and a certain shady charm that helps them in their pursuits (Meyer 152). The other main type of ill-fated hero is the Machiavellian figure. These heroes can twist any situation or circumstance for their own personal gain, and they do this without thinking for a moment of the consequences that their attitude can have to those around them. They are immoral, selfish, and their adventures are completely focused on their success or failure, with no regard for morals (Meyer 165). The final characteristic of these heroes is that, in most cases, their ultimate fate is not only death but also perdition, and in many cases, they end up literally doomed to hell (Meyer 179).

Then comes the **Saint Heroes** whose behavior goes beyond any reasonable human mind because they have a special relationship with God or gods. The main characteristic of these heroes is that their actions are not confined to the physical world, their ideals resonate within the more spiritual aspects of our beings, and they act like the nexus of union between divinity and reality (Meyer 200). Saints are typically classified in four categories: mythical (Saint George), legendary (Saint Nicholas), historical (Saint

Thomas) and contemporary (Saint Kolbe). Mythical and legendary saints never existed, or they are based on popular legends; that is why their stories have much more in common with myths or fairy tales than reality, whereas historical and contemporary saints stories are much more realistic because the people in which they are based were actually real (Meyer 202-211). The most important personality trait of the saint is the combination of a generosity that goes beyond any reasonable expectations, and the boundless love that not only inspires and impulse their actions, but also gives them the power to act that way. It is also very important for people who believe in miracles or religions, understood as the power of transforming and fixing reality with a power that goes beyond any logic and that comes from God (or another supernatural source) (Meyer 223). Finally, it should be noted that these characters present an important paradox in the martyrdom associated with the saints. This is because martyrs triumph over evil with their beliefs intact despite facing death, but even if the death of the saint should make him a tragic figure, the martyr achieves his success due to his disposition for dying for a good cause (Meyer 213). The paradox is that thanks to death he becomes a hero.

At this point, having dealt with these four heroes, -common, tragic, ill-fated and saint-, it is time to look carefully at one who has perhaps been the most legendary in literature: **the Epic or Romantic heroes**. They possess superhuman attributes, like their strength, and they are always expressed in hyperbole. These heroes need them to face tests that are extremely difficult to achieve, including fighting against the forces of nature or even evil deities. However, despite these difficulties and the suffering these proofs cause them, they are never broken by them (Meyer 246). To face these difficulties they usually have some kind of supernatural help (the most common are the gods and goddesses) that may save them in their darkest hour (Meyer 247). Another characteristic that differentiates them from other hero archetypes is the importance of their lineage, and how the achievements of their ancestors help them to define their own character, that is why most of the epic heroes belong to either the aristocracy or the royalty (Meyer 249). Many of these heroes undertake one big journey in which they will fight against impossible odds. The last characteristic of these heroes is that their objective is usually to avoid chaos in the world or to protect people, and the conflict is most often representing good against evil and order opposed to chaos.

Finally, we should mention the **supernatural hero**, and how one of the main characteristics of these heroes is their enormous inner power. What we mean is that they possess some qualities that, on the one hand, allow them to go beyond the power of the epic heroes. And, on the other hand, makes them be considered divine. The source of these powers is not set in stone, they can either be born with that power or acquire it later, but these powers come at a very high cost and, in many cases, they set the hero away from the rest of humanity forever (Meyer 283). Seeing how these heroes are capable of growing beyond any biological or physical limitations, this makes them very moving figures, because the message that these stories usually have is how, even if it is only in the imagination, a human being is capable of achieving anything he wants (Meyer 289). Finally, another power they have is how they are capable of defeating Death either by gaining immortality, or because they will be able of ascending after death to, in many cases, become gods themselves (Meyer 302).

At this point, after the analysis, with the purpose of identifying more plainly the different characteristics of each heroic archetype to the reader, we provide a table with the main features of each category (see table 1 below)

COMMON HERO	TRAGIC HERO	ILL-FATED HERO	SAINT HERO	EPIC HERO	SUPERNATURAL HERO
Not aristocracy	Doomed to a tragic end	Motivated is self-satisfaction	Nexus between divinity and reality	Superhuman capabilities	Almost divine capabilities
Faces mundane problems	Fatal flaw	Immense ego	Boundless generosity	Faces immensely difficult trials	Power at a high cost
Growth as a person	Flawed perception of good and evil	Interesting lives defying society conventions	Immense love	Supernatural help	Loss of a place among mortals
Easy to identify with (ubiquity)	Never surrender to their fate	Seducers	Presence of miracles	Their lineage defines them	Defeat dead
Associated with the outsider	Accept their fate with dignity	Machiavellian	Martyrdom as victory	Central part in the conflict between great forces	Can achieve divinity
		twist situations for their personal gain Stories on success or failure			
		Usually end up condemned to hell			

Table 1: Hero Archetypes.

1.2 Villainous Archetypes

After analyzing the heroic archetypes, it is indispensable to do the same with the villainous archetypes. It cannot be denied that villains have always been a crucial part in the hero-narrative. This is because a hero cannot exist without the opposition that a villain represents, and the conflict that this opposition creates is the force that moves the story forward. Having said that, there are more academic works analyzing the heroes than the ones analyzing villains, and in most cases these works are collections of essays that deal very exhaustively with either a specific type of villain or the type of villain present in literary work or a period, but not a study of different types of villain archetypes. The main reason why the book *Villainy in Western Culture Historical Archetypes of Danger Disorder and Death*, written by M Gregory Kendrick, was selected as the main source for this task is that it is one of the few books that I could find which explains fully the characteristics of many of the most important villain archetypes present in our contemporary narrative. These archetypes are nature as a villain, the barbarian, the tyrant, the traitor, the femme fatale, the sociopath and the psychopath.

One of the most important archetypes is **Nature as a Villain** has been incredibly common in the history of humanity to represent Nature (understood as everything outside of human civilization) as an adversary or even as an enemy. This negative perception can be tracked down to the Neolithic, almost surely caused by the inherent problems that the new sedentary settlements had to face on an everyday basis. Nature's negative perception remained constant through most part of human history in all Western cultures and civilizations (Sumerian, Greco Roman, Celtic, Germanic and Christian) in their storytelling traditions (written, oral, sacred and secular) (Kendrick 16-18). This will change with the Romanticism in the 19th Century, in which the qualities that were once considered as negative will be perceived as positive (Kendrick 27). The main characteristic is that Nature is represented as a particular type of settings that is always mysterious, chaotic and dangerous, which includes menacing forests, turbulent oceans, high mountains, and desert wastelands (Kendrick 13). These places are portrayed as full of tests, torments, and danger (in many cases represented as monsters) that will destroy any unlucky souls who enter there. In most cases, and

despite the danger, these places are often portrayed as not actively malevolent; the animals, monsters, and diseases present in these places may be an active danger to even those who do not abandon the civilization, but there is not an intelligence directing their actions meaning that there is not any malice behind their actions (Kendrick 31)

Our second villain is **the Barbarian**, a type of man who was always represented as a villain until the 18th century (some barbarian heroes appear after that date). This is because up until that point barbarians were always considered outsiders; and that caused that writers never identified themselves or their culture as barbarians. One of the main characteristics of the barbarian is that despite their technological and cultural level (that ranges from primitive to very advanced, depending on the setting), their moral character is portrayed as incredibly low, being often described as violent and evil (Kendrick 34). Being portrayed as outsiders, they are usually foreigners, with a different culture, customs, religion and language than the heroes (Kendrick 38). In Western culture there are two main types of barbarians. The first one is the barbarians as sybarites; they are normally characterized as decadent cultures governed by tyrants in which the hedonism runs rampant. They are extremely fond of luxury and are often portrayed as effeminate and soft in contrast with the good, simple and tough heroes (Kendrick 42-44). The other category is the barbarian as savage. In this case, the barbarians are portrayed as wild men, often living in a semi-nomadic fashion, and being illiterate and very warlike. That makes them very dangerous because they will often attack their neighbors. This cruel, destructive and inhuman behavior combined with their strength and being practically unconquerable, made them a terrible threat to the civilized world (Kendrick 46-48).

Then, we have **the Tyrant**. The word tyrant comes from the Greek tyrannos, and it described an illegitimate ruler of a polis, but with no consideration of how just or unjust their government was (in fact many of the most celebrated Greek kings and politicians were tyrants). The word lost its ambiguity very soon and became a completely negative term. The most common definition of a tyrant nowadays is someone who governs only to satisfy his selfish desires, and the two most common types are the tyrant as despot and as dictator (Kendrick 76). In the case of the tyrant as a despot he usurps an authoritarian or absolutist government. These tyrants have virtually no checks to their power and govern in an authoritarian and abusive manner. They are

also characterized by their immense ambition, their love for power and their willingness to use violence or terror to achieve their ends. However, and despite all this, as time passes, they can be regarded as heroic figures due to their achievements (Kendrick 78-86). In the case of tyrants as dictators the govern they usurp is a democratic one, the oppression is directed towards their political opponents, they create massive public and societal works program, and treat the people under their control as raw materials, all in the name of some twisted ideal (Kendrick 90-94). It is necessary to mark that despite how despicable tyrants can be many of these figures are still fascinating (Kendrick 67).

Our next villain is **the Traitor**. In Western culture, treachery is almost always portrayed as the worst crime a person can commit (Kendrick 102) (it is very significant that in Dante's *Divine Comedy* the last and worst circle of hell is reserved for the traitors). This is caused because the actions of a traitor destroy the trust and loyalty that are not only the basis of all human personal relationship, but they are also the basis for society, and without them, any functional society would be impossible (Kendrick 103-105). The traitor is someone who betrays a group he belongs to (family, friends, country, etc.). The most common reasons for treason were summarized by the journalist Chapman Pincher in money, ideology, compromise, and ego (MICE) (Kendrick 110). The motivation of the traitor is very important and there is a general perception that someone who becomes a traitor motivated by money (or any kind of personal profit) is much worse than someone who does it motivated by his ego (their perception of how their many services are met with gross ingratitude) his ideology (their belief of what is right and wrong) or compromise (they are forced or blackmailed into becoming one) (Kendrick 114).

It should be noted that the **Femme Fatale** is one of the oldest villain archetypes in history, as we can see examples of this villain in the Sumerian, Greek and Jewish mythologies (Kendrick 144-152) and it is still a very popular archetype. An accepted definition of this archetype is a female character who uses her beauty, and sexual allure to entice, entrap, and lead men to their downfall (and even to their deaths) (Kendrick 110). However, there is a deeper meaning to it because this archetype is a reflection of the contempt which society had for women who operated outside of male control and were proud of their own femininity. There have always been examples of heroic and

independent female characters even in ancient times, but most of these characters achieved success by denying their own femininity and sexuality (what is called the Athena Woman) (Kendrick 147). There are three main characteristics that these characters usually share. The first one is that these women exercise political authority in their own right, and they act with independence and freedom, without male interference (Kendrick 154-159). The second one is to use sex to ensnare and entrap men, to further their own ambitions (generally related to power) and act remorselessly, without caring for the consequences of those actions (Kendrick 164-165). Finally, a woman who lives in an independent and unsupervised manner and takes traditional male roles as a way of liberating their womanhood (Kendrick 171-172).

Finally, our last two villains are in some way modern ones, although their background is not at all new. We will discuss **the Sociopath** first [The technical term for sociopathy is antisocial personality disorder, but for simplicity sake, we will use the term sociopath]. It is important to highlight that not all the sociopaths are criminals, and that most of the criminals are not sociopaths. However, there is something that usually differentiates the sociopaths from other types of criminals, and this is that, in many cases, sociopath's antisocial behavior is less motivated by economic deprivation, political oppression, ideology or social class struggles than for another kind of criminals, and more by the enjoyment that they extract from their crimes (Kendrick 184). A sociopath has very particular behavioral attributes: they are usually arrogant, callous, dominant, superficial, and manipulative; they also have short tempers, they tend to lack empathy for anyone, and they have difficulties forming emotional bonds with others. The last characteristic is that they appear to be perfectly normal and can be incredibly charming (Kendrick 185). There are two distinctive types of sociopaths often represented in literature. The first one is the gangster, that expresses their powerful antisocial tendencies by rejecting societal rules, and creating a new set of rules that will rule him and the other member of his organization, in a dark counterpart of legitimate laws, and they will uphold these rules in an incredibly violent manner (Kendrick 194-199). The other type are the grifters. They are apparently normal and charismatic individuals that gain the confidence of vulnerable individuals and exploit them, and even if they prefer a subtler approach to crime, they are still capable of bloody violence (Kendrick 200-201).

Finally we will examine the **Psychopath**. It is also necessary to clarify that not all the psychopaths are murderers and most of the murderers are not psychopaths. In addition to that, psychopathy is a documented and complex medical condition that responds to anomalies in the structure of the brain. However, to keep things simple we will associate the psychopath with the figure of the serial killer or rapist, similarly to what was done in the previous section. One thing that must be clarified is that sociopaths and psychopaths share many personality and behavior traits, but there is a clear difference between them. This difference is that unlike sociopaths, psychopaths do not exercise violence for occupational reasons or as a means to an end; they do it because of a compulsive need to exercise power and dominance over vulnerable strangers (Kendrick 213). Some characteristics of these criminals are that they do not manifest any serious mental disorders, and in many cases, they behave like model citizens, and that they do not usually have any previous relationship with the people whom they rape or kill. There are two main ways of classifying them. The first one is related to the place in which the crimes are committed; they are either sedentary or migratory murderers. The second one is according to the motive of the murderer, they are classified into four types: the visionary (they act following the orders of some vision or voice), the mission-oriented (they act on what they perceive as human trash), the Power/control (they get pleasure from dominating a helpless individual), and the hedonistic (they extract sexual pleasure from the suffering of their victims) (Kendrick 217).

After the analysis, and with the objective of making easier to identify the different characteristics of each villainous archetype to the reader, a table with the main traits of each category will be provided (see table 2 below).

NATURE AS A VILLAIN	THE BARBARIAN	THE TYRANT	THE TRAITOR	THE FEMME FATALE	THE SOCIOPATH	THE PSYCHOPATH
Inhospitable and wild settings	Outsiders	Govern to satisfy selfish desires	The worst kind of criminal	Female character	Antisocial behavior	Similar personality and behavior to the sociopaths
Great danger if you enter	Low Moral character (violent and evil)	Despots: Usurp an authoritarian government Authoritarian and abusive behavior Ambitious, no checks on their power	Betrays a group that he belongs to	They exercise political authority in their own right	Arrogant, callous, dominant, superficial, and manipulative	Compulsive need to exercise power and dominance over others
Not actively malevolent	Sybarites: Luxury and hedonistic	Dictators Usurp a democratic government Oppression directed to political rivals Use people as resources for a twisted ideal	Common motivations: money, ideology, compromise, and ego	Use sex to manipulate men, to further their own ambitions	Short tempers, lack empathy and have difficulties forming bonds	No mental disorders, and normal behavior
	Savages: Wild men, illiterate and nomadic Very Warlike					
			Reasons for the betrayal are always important	Lives independently and takes traditional male roles	The gangster:	No previous relation with the victim
			The betrayal for money is the worst kind		The grifter	Place
					Gains the confidence and exploit vulnerable individuals	Sedentary
						Migratory
						Motive
						Visionary
						Mission-oriented
						Power oriented
						Hedonistic

Table 2: Villain Archetypes.

2. Heroes and Villains in *Watchmen*

As it was stated previously, this section will be used to analyze the main characters from *Watchmen*. The traits present in each one of the characters will be justified with either a quotation from the comic, or with details from the plot that support those traits. Aside from that, if the character has some essential elements for his characterization, not directly related to the heroic and villainous archetypal traits, they will also be included in the analysis. There are also two aspects of the comic that should be clarified before the start of the analysis. At the end of the the analysis tables presented in the previous section will appear completed with the traits of each character, with the objective to help the readers to have a global vision of *Watchmen*'s characters.

First of all, *Watchmen* characters, even the minor ones that appear only in a few panels, are round characters that have their time to shine through the comic, but this analysis will only focus on the main characters. This classification includes the new generation of superheroes that appeared in the 1960s: Rorschach, Ozymandias, Dr. Manhattan, Nite Owl II, and Silk Spectre II and the only one still active from the previous generation, and whose death starts the plot, the Comedian. These characters will be exclusively analysed as they appear in the original comic, this analysis will not take into account how these characters are portrayed neither in the Spin-Offs *Before Watchmen* (that serves as a prequel to the original story) and *Doomsday Watch* (that serves as its continuation) or the movie adaptation directed by Zack Snyder.

Second, if we are talking about the characters of *Watchmen*, Charlton Comics must also be mentioned. Charlton Comics was a small comic publisher. Who, despite having moderate success in the 1960s, was never able to compete with Giants like DC or Marvel comics. After going bankrupt, DC bought in 1984 the rights of their original characters. Initially, *Watchmen* was supposed to feature a cast of superhero characters from Charlton Comics. The problem was that DC wanted to integrate them in their own comic universe, and Moore's proposed story would have left many of the characters unusable for future storylines. So they ended up changing those characters (Dr. Atom, The Question, Blue Beetle, Thunderbolt, Nightshade and the Pacemaker) for original ones that were heavily inspired by Charlton's characters. This was done on purpose so that the readers could recognize these characters and see how the life of these characters would have been in a more realistic setting.

2.1 Rorschach

The first character analyzed is **Rorschach (Walter Kovacks)** who is undoubtedly one of the most iconic and popular characters of the main cast. Rorschach is based on Charlton's superhero The Question. This is crucial for the building of this character, because whereas the rest of the characters are merely parodying or criticizing a particular kind of Superhero, Rorschach serves as a targeted attack to the philosophy of his creator Steve Ditko. This is due to how the political affiliation of Alan Moore, a vocal anarchist, clashed with the conservatism and objectivism that filled most of Ditko's stories, especially in the case of his character The Question. So, he portrayed him as an unsympathetic and violent psychotic. Nevertheless, Rorschach has always been the most popular character of the novel, very much for the surprise of his creator

I originally intended Rorschach to be a warning about the possible outcome of vigilante thinking. But an awful lot of comics readers felt his remorseless, frightening, psychotic toughness was his most appealing characteristic — not quite what I was going for. (Jensen 44)

His outfit consists of a pair of gloves, a fedora and a gabardine and a white mask with constantly shifting inkblots.

If we analyze Rorschach, we can see how this character is incredibly complex. He has the features of many heroic archetypes, but from all these archetypes, he fits the best with the **Tragic Hero**. Rorschach has **two major fatal flaws** that derive from his immense integrity: He can only see the world in terms of black and white (without any shade of grey), and he is utterly unable of accepting to compromise his morals. This is best expressed by himself in the following quotation: "Because there is good and there is evil, and evil must be punished. Even in the face of Armageddon I shall not compromise in this" (Moore 32). His actions are also based on a **flawed perception of good and evil**, as his Manichaeian perception of good and evil makes him incapable of seeing, in many cases, the big picture. This is best shown when he faces the dilemma of letting Veidt go or reveal to the world what he did. If Veidt's plot is discovered, there is a fair chance that the nuclear war reignites and all the people who died in New York would have died in vain, so everyone else agrees to keep the secret but Rorschach, who only can see Veidt's crimes, refuses to stay silent. He also **never surrenders even in the face of impossible odds**. When he and Daniel discover the truth and fly to confront

Veidt in his fortress in Antarctica, he knows that he will probably die without accomplishing anything, but he goes without regrets to do what he thinks it is right.

Veidt. Cannot imagine more dangerous opponent. He could kill us both. There in the snow, nobody would ever know. Veidt is faster than Dreiberg. Perhaps faster than me. Return from mission seems unlikely (...). For my own part, regret nothing. Have lived life, free from compromise... and step into the shadow now without complaint. (Moore 336)

Finally, **he meets his fate with immense dignity**. Dr. Manhattan, a god in all but in name, confronts him and demands him to back down, but Rorschach does not back down for a moment and chooses to die rather than renouncing to his ideals.

Aside from that heroic archetype, he has also characteristics of other ones. Like the **Common Hero** he has a **mundane origin**: he is the son of a whore, he was institutionalized and ended up becoming a non-qualified textile worker, and his physical appearance is reasonably mundane: a short, skinny and ugly man, with no superpowers. Despite this, he also has the **superhuman capabilities** of the **epic hero**, as we can observe in how he has managed to terrify the criminal world for many years while hiding from the police. Besides, despite not having any formal education he is intelligent and resourceful as we can see when he investigates the murder of the Comedian, Rorschach acquired these capabilities as a direct consequence of the traumatic experiences that he suffered since his infancy and those experiences were what pushed Kovacs to become the dreaded vigilante Rorschach. However, even if it is true that a traumatic event is a typical catalyst for the creation of a superhero, in his case it is much less a reaction to a traumatic incident as it is a reaction to the accumulation of traumatic experiences, followed by an especially heinous incident that ends up being the straw that broke the camel's back. Two traumatic experiences became the inflection points for this character. The first one was the murder of Kitty Genovese (based on real events) that caused him to start fighting crime, but it was the brutal kidnapping and murder of a little girl that completed his transformation into Rorschach.

He also possesses characteristics of the villain archetype of **the sociopath**, and this is a direct consequence of his life full of trauma, which made him more and more deranged as time passed, as Nite Owl explains: "He was normal once. Sure he was quiet. He was grim, but he still had all the buttons on his overcoat (...) Tactically, Rorschach was brilliant. He was so unpredictable. What I'm saying is, he was rational then. Over the years, that mask's eaten his brains." (Moore 221). At the point in which

the story starts, Rorschach presents an **apparent antisocial** behavior, has a noticeable **quick temper** and it is **almost impossible for him to form meaningful bonds** with anyone (his only real friend is Nite Owl II). Mixed with these Rorschach also has an incredibly dysfunctional view of sexuality, caused by her prostitute mother.

2.2 Ozymandias

The next character, **Ozymandias (Adrian Veidt)** is without a doubt the most morally ambiguous of the cast. He is also, psychologically speaking, an incredibly complex character. Ozymandias is based on the superhero Thunderbolt, and takes the place of the self-made man superhero. Adrian is without a doubt the most beloved and popular main character in the setting, thanks, in a good measure, to how he decided to retire before costumed heroes became unpopular. This character is incredibly paradoxical as he is at the same time a wealthy philanthropist, a vegetarian, a well-known superhero, and the man who killed half of New York (plus all the people who can be considered loose ends) using a giant telepathic squid. That would make him the villain in most of the settings. But unlike most comic villains, his actions are done exclusively to prevent a nuclear war and the destruction of the world. And what is most surprising is that he succeeds. For all this, the comic book writer Pacheco says: "One of the most difficult questions in *Watchmen* is to decide, in simple terms, if Ozymandias is good or evil" (Marin 82). His costume is a golden and purple tunic with a gold circle around his head and a little mask.

One thing that must be noticed is that Rorschach and Ozymandias are not just very different from one another, they are the opposite from one another, but that opposition between the characters goes so far that they end up touching on the other side. An even better analogy would be that they are the reflection of each other in a mirror. Like in a mirror, the image is the same as in real life, but it appears in reverse. We can see this in many aspects: Rorschach lived a life of poverty and abuse, whereas Veidt was born wealthy and privileged; Veidt is famous and wealthy and Rorschach a fugitive vagabond; Veidt became a costumed hero as the culmination of a journey of self-enlightenment and Rorschach became a costumed hero as a consequence of his traumatic past, etc. However, the core of their minds are pretty similar, as they both

present sociopathic behavior, one as a consequence of his traumatic life and the other due to arrogance.

Veidt is easily identifiable as an **Epic Hero**. Even if it is true that most of the costumed heroes in the comic have **incredible capabilities** despite their lack of superpowers, Veidt is on another whole new level. He is literally the peak of humanity in all its aspects; he is not only the strongest and fastest man alive, but he is also the smartest and most beautiful human being to ever live. **His lineage** is also significant because he considers himself an heir to both Alexander the Great and the Egyptian Pharaohs; and for this, he decides that it is his responsibility **to face the impossible task** of avoiding the nuclear war by any means necessary: “Adopting Ramses the Second's Greek name and Alexander's free-booting style, I resolved to apply antiquity's teachings to today's world. Thus began my path to conquest ...conquest not of men. But of the evils that beset them” (Moore 359). This makes him also a **central part in the conflict between powerful forces** (in this case war vs. peace or even salvation vs. destruction). He also has a very brief moment of **supernatural help** at the end of the comic, when Dr. Manhattan stops Rorschach from leaving and revealing his plot to the world.

Veidt also presents certain characteristics of two other heroic archetypes. The first one is the **Tragic hero**, with the **tragic flaw** of arrogance, and how his actions are caused by a **flawed perception of good and evil** because even though his actions are guided by undoubtedly altruistic intentions, his focus on the big picture over the small one causes untold amounts of death and destruction. The other one is the **ill-fated hero**, especially the **Machiavellian** variety, because it is evident that Veidt has a **tremendous ego**, exceptionally well exemplified in these lines from his monologue. “The only human being with whom I felt any kinship died three hundred years before the birth of Christ. Alexander of Macedonia” (Moore 359). This is also supported by how he can **twist the situation for his personal gain**; this is best exemplified in how he plays with Rorschach and his theory of a Masque-Killer. Veidt killed Blake simply because he discovered his masterplan, but once Rorschach visits Veidt he starts feeding Rorschach theory of the “mask killer” with fake clues, that not only helps Veidt to avoid Rorschach’s suspicion on him and his real plan, but also to set a trap for taking Rorschach out of the picture. It must also be noted that his narrative is **mainly focused on his success or failure**, and he ultimately succeeds to reach his goal despite the

horrible cost. It is also important to take into account how these characters **ended up condemned to hell**, and even if it is only a possibility, if the journal of Rorschach is discovered, it may very well destroy all his carefully crafted plans, and it could turn all the sacrifices made for that plan will mean nothing.

He also presents clear signs of **sociopathy**. In this case, it is due to his intelligence as he himself said: “My intellect set me apart. Faced with difficult choices, I knew nobody whose advice might prove useful” (Moore 356). His superior intellect is something that separates him from the rest of the world, making many aspects of his behavior **clearly antisocial**. His intelligence has also kept him from **forming meaningful bonds** with other people, and it is his arrogance what makes him start his plan, because he thinks that being the smartest man in the world automatically, means that his plan (in this case killing half of New York) will always be the best one.

2.3 Dr. Manhattan

Contending the position of the most complex character with Rorschach and Ozymandias we have **Dr. Manhattan (Jonatan Osterman)** the character whose birth in 1959 is the most significant point of divergence in the timelines of our world and the one of the comic. Dr. Manhattan is based on the Superhero Captain Atom, and it acts as the only real superhero in the story since he is the only one who actually has superpowers.

One thing that must be noticed is that whereas the rest of the heroes have an alter ego or secret identity Jon never has one, and Jonatan Osterman and Doctor Manhattan are two different entities. Jon Osterman was a young and promising researcher working in a government base, and he was completely normal: he had friends, a girlfriend, and dreams of the future. However, all of this ended in 1959, when he was vaporized in an accident during an experiment; despite this, he managed somehow to reassemble himself after his disintegration and, in the process, gained incredible powers. However, even if the idea of gaining superpowers due to a failed experiment is an incredibly common theme in the superhero genre, this is not exactly what happened here. Jon Osterman died in that chamber, and the thing that reassembled itself was less a resurrected Jon with powers and more that Jon mind and body became the blueprints of an immensely powerful new entity. It must be noted that he is not so much a superhero as he is a strategic military and scientific asset of America during the Cold War. His

superhero name and his career as a crime fighter were nothing more than marketing decisions by the US government, so he was not affected at all by the prohibition of costumed heroes. His aspect is a blue and glowing man, and in most of the comic, he is entirely naked.

Dr. Manhattan fits perfectly in the category of the **supernatural hero**. We can see this in his first action as Manhattan, as it is to reassemble himself after being vaporized, clearly showing how **he has defeated death**. He is also without a doubt the most powerful being in the known universe. To put into perspective how powerful he is these are just some of the powers he displays: telekinesis, teleportation, full control of matter at the subatomic level, duplication and full perception of time (perceiving past, present and future simultaneously); this immense power combined with an almost complete omniscience **makes him basically a god**. However, **this power comes at a terrible price**, and this is shown very clearly in how this power affected his senses. He does not see things the way any person would; he is capable of seeing the atoms that form everything and their structure. This makes him very disconnected from life in general, as his girlfriend explains: “The way he looks at things, like he can’t remember what they are and doesn’t particularly care ... This world the real world, to him it’s like walking through mist, and all the people are like shadows ... just shadows in the fog” (Moore 85). And as he himself explains to Rorschach: “A live body and a dead body contain the same number of particles. Structurally, there's no discernible difference. Life and death are unquantifiable abstracts. Why should I be concerned?” (Moore 29). This is complemented with how he perceives time. Unlike humans who perceive time as a line, he perceives it as a sphere, the present is just a point in the sphere and he perceives past, present and future in a simultaneous way. Nevertheless, this absolute knowledge of his own future comes with the terrible prize of not being able to change it as he explains “We're all puppets, Laurie. I’m just a puppet who can see the strings” (Moore 285). This causes that, despite having immense powers, he does not really do much with them: he is immensely apathetic for almost anything or anyone (his absence is much more influential than any of his actions). His particular perception of reality was also what caused him to lose progressively his connection with humanity. He is still capable of feeling some kind of emotion, like love for his girlfriend and fury and confusion when he is accused of causing cancer, but it is impossible for him to truly connect with any common person. This is what ultimately **causes his loss of a place among mortals** and

the beginning of a self-imposed exile. This also causes his ultimate **ascension to godhood**, but, in this particular case, it is not so much of him gaining the powers of a god as it is accepting his divinity. This is clearly shown when he decides to create life: “But you’d regained interest in human life (...) Yes, I have. I think perhaps I’ll create some” (Moore 409). There is a lot of beauty and sadness in this character, He is a god that tries to fit with humanity, but eventually leaves us behind because he sees no reason to keep trying.

In this case, Dr. Manhattan does not present any characteristics of the villainous archetypes.

2.4 Nite Owl II

After these immensely interesting characters, we have **Nite Owl II (Daniel Dreiberg)**, who despite being an undoubtedly round character is far less complex than the previous ones. This can be easily explained because, unlike the others, Dan is one of the few sane and all around good characters of the comic. Nite Owl is based on Charlton’s superhero Blue Beetle. And, like his Charlton counterpart, he is also the second person using that name. He became the second Nite Owl after the original one, Hollis Mason, (they are still very close to one another, and they act more like family than friends) retired, and he acts like the gadgeteer hero. His reason to become a superhero is that he simply wanted to fulfill his childhood dream. However, he has been retired since the masked heroes’ activities were declared illegal. His outfit consists of a brown suit with an owl-shaped mask and cape. He also wears night vision goggles and uses a lot of owl-based gadgets (even his own airship “Archie”) created by himself.

Daniel is clearly a **Common Hero**, as he is by **no means related to any aristocratic background**, he is just a regular man who idolized the costumed heroes of the 40s especially the first Nite Owl, wanted to have adventures and was looking for a place to belong and a higher meaning in life: “It would have been like joining the Knights of the Round Table; being part of a fellowship of legendary beings” (Moore 220). But then he was forced to abandon his dreams of youth and now it is stuck in a dull and pointless life, those are **relatively mundane problems**. This forced retirement has taken its toll on him, and when the story begins, he is in the middle of a profound

existential crisis; he has also gotten fat and impotent (as we can see how he is unable to have sex with Laurie). All this makes **very easy to identify with him** because these problems can happen to anyone who enters the middle age crisis. He also, as a retired superhero trying to fit back into the society, fits the figure of the **outsider** almost perfectly. To fit back into society, he is forced to wear the mask of a mild-mannered man, and this suppression of his real self is killing him little by little. He is also trying to rationalize that all his career as a superhero was nothing more than an adolescent fantasy, and how his retirement is actually a great thing, but he is only lying to himself. All of this changes, however, when Laurie convinces him to return to his old life, and when they rescue the people trapped in a building. He recovers his old drive, and he is capable of having a satisfactory sexual relationship with Laurie (some experts interpret this as fetishism, but it can also be interpreted as how being capable of saving people restores his self-esteem and self-confidence). Then they proceed to rescue Rorschach and helps him to uncover the truth. This process marks the culmination of his **growth as a person**. As a final note, he is one of the few characters who manage to get a happy ending.

Daniel does not present any characteristics belonging to the villain archetypes. However, he also has the **superhuman capabilities** of the **epic hero**, as we can see how great he is at engineering, or how it is still a great fighter despite all those years retired.

2.5 Silk Spectre II

As her partner Nite Owl, **Silk Spectre II (Laurie Juspezyk)** is far less complex than others like Rorschach or Manhattan. This is due to her being, alongside Daniel, the only character that can be considered a good and still sane person (arguably the sanest one). Silk Spectre II is based on Charlton's superheroine Nightshade, and she is the only female among the main characters. She inherits his name from her mother, who was the first Silk Spectre in the 1940s. Unlike the other characters, she became a superheroine because her mother pushed her into that world, which is why she is one of the few characters who actually enjoys her retirement. Laurie has been in a romantic relationship with Dr. Manhattan for the last 20 years. Her costume is quite revealing, a dress with a short skirt, plenty of transparencies and a neckline that reached her navel.

Laurie fits pretty well in the figure of the **Common Hero** as she is merely a **normal girl** whose mother wanted to revive the dreams from her youth through her, without caring about his opinion in all of that. Also, the problems that she faces, like the strained relationship with his mother, and **her problems** with Jon. They had been very happy together, but now they have grown distant from one another (this is mainly caused by Jon's growing disconnection with humanity) that will eventually cause the end of their relationship, **are quite common**. Through the comic, we can see her leaving the past behind, especially when she leaves Manhattan and starting a new and much healthier relationship with Dan. This is a prevalent feature of the stories describing the **growth of someone as a person**. She is never presented as **an outsider** though. Even if she is clearly a common hero, Laurie is very well adjusted, that explains why **she is never presented as an outsider**. Laurie is sometimes considered a passive character, whose primary purpose is to show the perspective of an ordinary person in the middle of the madness, as it is shown in her interaction with some of the other main characters. However, this is not true, Laurie's actions have an immense impact on the world. Her actions are the main reasons why Jon abandoned the Earth, but she also was the one who convinced him to return. She also convinced Dan to put his old costume back, which led to their rescue of Rorschach and the discovery of Veidt's ploy. At the end of the comic, she is one of the few characters with a happy ending.

Despite being undoubtedly an honest person, Laurie presents certain characteristics that are prevalent in the villain archetype of the **femme fatale**. The first one is obvious because **she is an independent woman** that takes the role of a costumed hero, in **a world dominated by men**. She is the only superheroine of the current generation, and in the 40s there were only two female costumed heroes in a group of eight. The second one is much trickier, because her actions when she abandons Jon and finds a new love with Daniel are entirely justifiable, and she is not motivated in any way by ambition or personal profit. That does not change the fact that the **break up with her is one of the main reasons why Jon decides to abandon the Earth, making her a direct cause of the subsequent escalation of the conflict between America and Russia, which almost causes a nuclear war**. She, like most of the other characters present the superhuman capabilities of the **Epic hero**, as we can see her and Daniel fighting against a whole band of criminals barehanded and winning.

2.6 The Comedian

Finally we are going to analyze the character of **The Comedian (Edward Blake)**, which is very difficult, because unlike the other characters, he is dead from the beginning of the story, and we never have any scene told from his point of view, meaning that all we know about him comes in the form of flashbacks and memories from other characters.

The Comedian is based on Charlton's hero Pacemaker, and it takes the place of the patriotic superhero. He is the only masked hero from the 40s team that is still active in the 80s. Since the 40s, Blake has almost completely left aside his career as a masked hero, and he has become primarily an intelligence agent or mercenary working for the USA government, and that made him exempt of the forced retirement that his colleagues had to suffer. Despite being dead, his importance in the plot is very significant as it is his murder on the first page of the first issue what sets the plot of *Watchmen* in motion. His costume consists of a black leather armor with stripes and stars decorations on the shoulders; he also wears a smiley pin and always goes heavily armed.

He is a pretty complicated character to analyze because he is the most amoral character of the story and he has done truly horrible things that put him very close to the villains. However since he is working for the USA, who technically are the good guys, that makes him a hero, even if it is only by association. The closest approximation probably is that he is an **ill-fated** hero with prevalent villain traits, as most of the heinous acts he does, including the attempted rape of the first Silk Spectre, are merely done **to satisfy his own impulses**. He also had, morality aside, an **incredibly exciting life**: he has been a war hero in both World War 2 and Vietnam, he rescued the hostages from America's embassy in Iran, and it is implied that he was the one who killed Kennedy. He also has **an immense ego**, as it is shown in his choice of a name: "When you understand that the whole world is a bad joke, the only thing you can do is become a comedian" (Moore 51). He is the only one who understands that the world is a bad joke. He has none of the characteristics of the **seducer or the Machiavellian** though

He also presents signs of the villain archetype of the **sociopath**, as he seems to have had an apparent **antisocial behavior**, as he is, together with Rorschach, one of the most violent and unstable masked heroes. He is also a war criminal that had shoot kids

in Vietnam, and he has also shown an **extremely short temper** like when he shot a woman who stabbed him, even though the woman was pregnant. Despite all this, he is not entirely amoral and after uncovering, entirely by chance, the plans that Veidt had he becomes a nervous wreck after he discovers the scale of the massacre that planned.

Like most of the other heroes in *Watchmen* he also has the **superhuman abilities** of the **Epic hero**, as he is not only an incredibly competent soldier, but he is the only known man who has beaten Ozymandias on a hand to hand combat. He is also a brilliant man (even Veidt admits it) with far more profound insights than most of his colleagues. And it is in these insights in which his nickname of the Comedian takes a new meaning. One of the most used techniques of a comedian is to take something, whether big or small, and exaggerate it so we can see it better through the lens of absurdity. And that is what he does: he amplifies the insanity of life so to show it how absurd life really is. This attitude made him leave a mark on most of the characters of the comic, among whom the most important is without a doubt Adrian Veidt. Because thanks to his words during the first reunion of the Crimebusters: “It don't matter squat because inside thirty years the nukes are gonna be flyin' like maybugs...and then Ozzy here is gonna be the smartest man on the cinder” (Moore 53). This is what makes him realize that if he wanted to save the world, he would need to abandon any conventional means and be ready to get his hands dirty.

Having concluded the analysis of the main characters, now we will focus on the tables that we have used as help in the previous section. There will be one table for each one of the different villainous and heroic archetypes (tables 3 and 4 respectively), and each table will be divided between the characters (columns) and the different traits of each archetype (rows). An x will mean that the character present that trait, and a blank space will mean that the character does not present that trait.

	Rorschach	Ozymandias	Manhattan	Nite Owl II	Silk Specter II	Comedian
	THE COMMON HERO					
Not aristocracy	x			x	x	
Faces mundane problems				x	x	
Growth as a person				x	x	
Easy to identify with (ubiquity)				x	x	
Associated with the outsider				x		
	THE TRAGIC HERO					
Doomed to a tragic end	x					
Fatal flaw	x	x				
Flawed perception of good and evil	x	x				
Never surrender to their fate	x					
Accept their fate with dignity	x					
	THE ILL-FATED HERO					
Motivated self-satisfaction						x
Immense ego		x				x
Interesting lives defying society conventions						x
Seducers	Not for love, but for the thrill of the hunt					
	Great sex appeal and shady charm					
Machiavellian	Twist situations for their personal gain	x				
	Stories focus on their success or failure	x				
Usually end up condemned to hell		x				

	Rorschach	Ozymandias	Manhattan	Nite Owl II	Silk Spectre II	Comedian
	THE SAINT HERO					
Nexus between divinity and reality						
Boundless generosity immense love						
Presence of miracles						
Martyrdom as victory						
	THE EPIC OR ROMANTIC HERO					
Superhuman capabilities	x	x		x	x	x
Faces immensely difficult trials		x				
Supernatural help		x				
Their lineage defines them		x				
Central part in the conflict between great forces		x				
	THE SUPERNATURAL HERO					
Almost divine capabilities			x			
Power at a high cost			x			
Loss of a place among mortals			x			
Defeat death			x			
Can achieve divinity			x			

Table 3: Heroic Archetypes in *Watchmen*

	Rorschach	Ozymandias	Manhattan	Nite Owl II	Silk Spectre II	Comedian
	NATURE AS VILLAIN					
Inhospitable and wild settings						
Great danger if you enter						
Not actively malevolent						
	THE BARBARIAN					
Outsiders						
Low Moral character (violent and evil)						
Sybarites:	Luxury and hedonistic					
	Effeminate and soft					
Savages:	Wild men, illiterate and nomadic					
	Very warlike					
	THE TYRANT					
Govern to satisfy selfish desires						
Despots:	Usurp an authoritarian government					
	Authoritarian and abusive behavior					
	Ambitious, no checks on their power					
Dictators	Usurp a democratic government					
	Oppression directed to political rivals					
	Use people as resources for a twisted ideal					

	Rorschach	Ozymandias	Manhattan	Nite Owl II	Silk Specter II	Comedian
THE TRAITOR						
The worst kind of criminal						
Betrays a group that he belongs to						
Common motivations: money, ideology, compromise and ego						
Reasons for the betrayal are always important						
The betrayal for money is the worst kind						
THE FEMME FATALE						
Female character					x	
They exercise political authority in their own right						
Use sex manipulate men, to further their own ambitions					x	
Lives independently and takes traditional male roles					x	
THE SOCIOPATH						
Antisocial behavior	x	x				x
Arrogant, callous, dominant, superficial, and manipulative	x	x				
Short tempers, lack empathy and have difficulties forming bonds	x	x				x
The gangster: Creates organization with a new set of society rules						
The grifter: Gains the confidence and exploit vulnerable individuals						
THE PSYCHOPATH						
Very similar personality and behavior traits with the sociopaths						

	Rorschach	Ozymandias	Manhattan	Nite Owl II	Silk Spectre II	Comedian
Compulsive need to exercise power and dominance over others						
No previous relation with the victim						
Place						
Motive	Sedentary					
	Migratory					
	Visionary					
	Mission-oriented					
	Power oriented					
	Hedonistic					

Table 3: Heroic Archetypes in *Watchmen*

3. Conclusions

After having extracted the main features from the different heroic and villainous archetypes in Part I and having analyzed the different characters from *Watchmen* in Part II, we conclude that it seems obvious that these characters break the boundaries of the classic archetypes. This allows us to say that even a Superhero Comic, a genre that critics had dismissed as mindless entertainment for children and teenagers with no real literary value, could present complexity and quality that have nothing to envy to many of the Classics on the literary canon. Moreover, this means that, by extension, comics should have a more substantial amount of attention from both the Academic and Critic fields. This is especially important in this age in which the boundaries of the classical arts seem more diffuse than ever.

We would like to conclude by highlighting some of the main ideas of our dissertation, alongside some of the future lines of study that would be interesting for future research:

The first thing that must be pointed out is that even if all *Watchmen*'s characters fit in a heroic archetype, most of the characters present singular features that belong to other heroic archetypes outside his own, and the same happens with the villain features. There are four out of six characters presenting some villainous traits despite being also considered heroes (the only two exceptions are Nite Owl II and Dr. Manhattan).

Aside from that, there are two clear ways of expanding the scope of this paper, the first one would be to use a larger corpus, that can be done by either analysing other awarded superhero comics (*Kingdom Come*, *Daredevil Born Again*, *The Dark Knight Returns...*) or including in the analysis of *Watchmen*'s additional materials like the Spin-Offs *Before Watchmen* and *Doomsday Watch* and its different adaptations to other genres (Most notably Zack Snyder's film adaptation).

Finally one last way of expanding the scope of this paper would be using other academic classifications of the heroic archetypes, like the ones made by Carlyle or Campbell, or using an approach more in the lines of comparing literature, and

comparing these characters with other ones, either from other comics or from a more classical literary canon.

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5. Appendixes

5.1. Appendix 1: Timeline

1938

The first issue of Action Comics is released. The first masked hero, Hooded Justice appears (first "point of divergence")

1939

The Minutemen are assembled: the members were Captain Metropolis (Nelson Gardner), The Comedian (Edward Blake), Hooded Justice (unknown), Silhouette (Ursula Zandt), Nite Owl (Hollis Mason), Silk Spectre (Sally Juspeczyk), Dollar Bill (William Brady) and Mothman (Byron Lewis).

1949

The Minutemen are disbanded.

August 1959

Dr. Osterman is vaporized

November 22, 1959

Dr. Manhattan is born (second point of divergence)

1960

Because of the existence of Dr. Manhattan, eugenics, quantum physics, transports and other sciences, start to leap forward from that year on.

November 22, 1963

The assassination of JFK.

1965

Captain Metropolis tries to form a new group of heroes, the Crimebusters, Rorschach, Nite Owl II, Silk Spectre II, Ozymandias, the Comedian and Dr. Manhattan. This reunion fails.

1971

The U.S. wins the Vietnam War thanks to Dr. Manhattan intervention

1972

Nixon is elected for a second term

Two reporters, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, found dead in a garage while investigating the Watergate scandal.

1976

Nixon is elected for a third term

1977

The Keene Act is passed outlawing the Costume heroes

1980

Nixon Elected Fourth Term

1984

Nixon Elected Fifth Term

October 12, 1985

The Comedian is murdered; start of the story

5.2. Appendix 2: Summary

The comic starts with the murder of Edward Blake, AKA the Comedian, one of the last costume heroes still legally active, due to his ties with USA government. Rorschach, the only vigilante who is still active despite being outlawed by law, decides to investigate it. Rorschach suspects that Blake was targeted for being a Costumed Hero, and this "Mask Killer" is still out what means that anyone could be the next target, so he visits his former masked colleagues to warn them. This group includes: Dr. Manhattan, (the only real Superhero) who is now a fundamental part of USA military strategy; Laurie Juspecky, also known as Silk Spectre II, girlfriend of Dr. Manhattan; Dan Dreiberg or Nite Owl II, one of the few friends Rorschach ever had and Adrian Veidt or Ozymandias, widely regarded as "the smartest man in the world," who retired in 1975 and build an economic Empire from scratch.

Afterward, some events take place that seems to confirm Rorschach's theory: Dr Manhattan exiles himself to Mars after his girlfriend had dumped him, being then accused of unwittingly provoking cancer to some of his loved ones. Ozymandias is almost killed by a thug, and Rorschach falls into a trap and is captured by the police. Dr. Manhattan abandoning Earth causes a power vacuum which Russia uses to invade Afghanistan, which causes a situation that could worsen into a Nuclear War at any minute

Nite Owl II and Silk Specter II (who have now become lovers) decide to rescue Rorschach from prison while returning to their vigilante's identities. Dr. Manhattan appears and takes Laurie to Mars with him where, after a lengthy discussion, she convinces him to help them to avoid Nuclear Annihilation. Meanwhile, on Earth, Rorschach and Nite Owl searching information of Veidt's assassin discovers a clue that connects him to a company owned by Veidt himself. After breaking into his office, they discover that the man behind all this is Ozymandias himself. Both of them take the Owl Ship and travel to his Antarctic Fortress where they will try to stop his plans.

When they arrive at the fortress, after being defeated by Ozymandias, he reveals himself as the mastermind behind everything that has happened until now. He was the one who killed the Comedian when he discovered his plan, he poisoned Dr. Manhattan friends

and associates with radioactive materials, he set up the trap where Rorschach was captured, and he prepared his own attempted murder so he would be clear of suspicion. He reveals that the reason for all this is to prevent an inevitable Nuclear War that will destroy the Earth. For this purpose, he will give both Russia and USA common enemy so terrible that they will not have any other choice but to join forces; a genetically engineered creature, designed to resemble an alien. He plans to teleport this creature to New York, where it will die while emitting a psychic shockwave that will kill half of the city. This will cause the war between USSR and the USA to end even before it has the chance to start, and join together against this new threat.

In a dark turn of events, Ozymandias reveals that they had no way to stop it since he had already done it before they arrived at the fortress. Dr. Manhattan and Silk Spectre II teleport first to New York where they are witness to that massacre, and then to , teleport to Veidt's fortress to make him pay for what he has done. However, after seeing that Veidt was right and the "Alien" has stopped the war and that revealing this truth may destroy the new found peace, making the death of three million people utterly vain, Nite Owl, Dr. Manhattan, and Silk Spectre agree to keep silent about Ozymandias plan. Rorschach does not agree, however, but Dr. Manhattan kills him before he can return to return to civilization. Afterwards Manhattan leaves Earth forever.

The ending show images of peace and cooperation between the USA and the USSR, and Veidt's ruse seem to have worked, but there is a twist on the last page of the comic. Rorschach has sent his journal where the details of all that had happened until he parted to Antarctica to a newspaper. Ironically, we do not know if they are going to publish it, or if the readers will believe him, but the chance of the world discovering Veidt's deception is still there.