

Victorian Gender From Hell

*VICTORIAN GENDER ROLES IN ALAN MOORE'S
FROM HELL*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Jack the Ripper murders are one of the most well-known murder cases in history, where the perpetrator managed to escape justice, leaving behind not only smoke and mirrors but a changing society as well. Ever since the murders happened, no one has managed to get any closer to bringing any clarity to the mystery that ignited the public imagination of Londoners and people all over the world from the last two decades of the 19th century on. While this case seems to remain a shadow play forever, some have tried to uncover the man behind the panel. Ripperologists still aspire to untie the Ripper's Gordian knot. One of the most notable of these was Stephen Knight who attempted to offer the *Final Solution* in his eponymous book. While his work presented a conspiracy theory in a genuine way, the critics quickly pointed out the factual contradictions of his approach. Nonetheless, the Ripper mystery in general, and Knight's work in particular, inspired many adaptations, ranging from films on the big screen to comics and graphic novels. The adaptations all point out the two most important aspects of the Victorian era: changing gender roles and sexual domination. The most intriguing aspect of these is that when the murders occurred the whole Victorian society was in the midst of a change: shifting morals, secret mésalliances, and the visible hypocrisy of the British upper class. All this began before the turn of the century, decades before the First Great War would shake the whole of Europe. In the following, I intend to analyse a fairly recent fictionalisation of the Jack the Ripper story, Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's graphic novel *From Hell*, to argue that the medium of comics contributes significantly to exploring and critiquing the gendered stereotypes that are maybe still prevalent about the Victorian period. For the purpose of this research, I use an interdisciplinary background of cultural studies, gender studies and comics studies to provide a medium specific close reading analysis of the graphic novel. I combine theoretical sources such as Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather* and L. P. Curtis' *Jack the Ripper and the London Press* to map out how the dynamics between the public and private spheres of London society affect the social and gender changes and how contemporary mass media handles it.

Before exploring the media representations of 19th-century Victorian gender mechanics, first it is crucial to understand what the medium of comics is, how it revolutionizes storytelling and then to briefly introduce *From Hell*.

1. 1. Storytelling in comics form

Storytelling began with the simplest of elements: pictures. The prehistoric men expressed themselves in cave paintings, creating memories that have lasted for centuries.

However, the role and importance of pictorial narratives lessened with the introduction of the written word. For centuries, written works were preferable, even though the pictures were still present, like in the case of illuminated manuscripts. Many literary “prophets”, like William Blake or e.e. cummings, capitalized on the combination of words and pictures, revolutionizing this kind of literary approach. However, it was Rodolphe Töpffer who laid down the bedrock of what we know now as comics.

Töpffer’s satiric stories utilised the combination of the written word and pictures.¹ Despite the novelty of this innovation, the illustrated storytelling did not spread without criticism. “William Wordsworth penned a sonnet, ‘Illustrated Books and Newspapers,’ that inveigled against this vile abuse of pictured page” (Heer, vii). Even in the 20th century, this criticism lived on, although theorists and academic researchers have been trying to elevate the medium and to promote its broader acceptance by introducing theoretical approaches to it. In his book *Comics and Sequential Art*, Will Eisner elaborates on how the comic book is a part of literature and how it revolutionizes it: “The comic book format presents a montage of both word and image. [...] The regimens of art (e.g. perspective, symmetry, brush stroke) and the regimens of literature (e.g. grammar, plot, syntax) become superimposed upon each other.” While the combination of pictures and words is what makes comics what they are, it is important to note that sometimes these elements can exist independently within a comic book, inventing new ways of communicating the story. This way, it can provide mood, a narrative bridge, or an implication of sound. The lettering, for example, can support a story element, or create an effect of terror, and violence. Moreover, images can stand on their own without words, therefore having the audience immerse themselves within the story, requiring them to “fill in the blanks” of the narrative, therefore the reader is required to exercise both visual and verbal interpretive skills (10-24). However, what Eisner and Scott McCloud talk about is mainly focused on the comic book format.

Comics began to attract a wide range of audiences around the late 30s when the now-known superheroes came to be on the pages of *Detective Comics* and *Action Comics*. However, this did not mean that comics were considered serious. They were still regarded as disposable works of lesser art, printed on paper of bad quality sustained only by the growing and dedicated

¹ Interestingly enough, Töpffer considered this hobby of his as a literary work despite the critical remarks. In fact, he was the first to write comics studies theories (Töpffer 185-225).

fan base (Dunai 103). According to Paul Lope's periodization, this was the industrial age of comics, when profits outweighed quality (Lope 2).

This industrial attitude, which heavily contributed to the false notion that comics are nothing more than children's literature, caused the desire for change. Art Spiegelman was the first of many who advocated for a change in storytelling and new ways of presentation. Before his work, *Maus* would come to the picture, Will Eisner's *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories* (1978). Eisner was the first to publish a work under the label of 'graphic novel'.² The term was not new since it had been in use since the 1960s, but it was Eisner's graphic novel that established this subtype of the medium. This was followed by Spiegelman's *Maus* and later on, the work of many others as well. The appearance of alternative comics helped elevate the state of comics from popular culture to contemporary literary and artistic areas (Jenkins 5). This change in thematic and storytelling approach is now more visible than ever. The names of Alan Moore (*Watchmen*, *Promethea*, *V for Vendetta*, *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*), Neil Gaiman (the *Sandman* series, *Marvel 1602*), and Mike Carey (the *Lucifer* series) all contributed to the solidification of comics in contemporary literature.³ These alternative comics vary in themes and topics, ranging from autobiographical works to journalistic comic strips.⁴

The criticisms and attacks that comics suffered since the 50s (Maksa, 76), began to disappear, however, the need to prove the validity of both the medium and its academic research is still a problem. Nonetheless, the medium has been getting attention, both from the academic and the fan communities. Current trends in comics studies include approaches informed by cultural studies: minority representations, memory and identity, as well as research into the materiality of comics.

² Roger Sabin elaborates on how to classify comics and graphic novels. According to him, there are three graphic novel classes: single book comics, serialized and then collected edition graphic novels, and the self-standing narrative graphic novels. For more, I recommend Sabin, Roger. *Adult Comics: An Introduction*. London: Routledge (1993).

³ The only downside to this is that despite the alternative comics' success, a rift was created between the regular comic readers and the alternative comic readers. This "snobbism" is present in comics studies as well, for the alternative comics have more studies connected to them than the regular comics do (Dunai 104).

⁴ Joe Sacco's *On the Frontline* (or *Frontvonalban*, according to the Hungarian translation) is a good example for comic journalism; it is a collection of his comic journalistic works based on his experiences in the Middle-East war zones.

The most internationally recognised comic research hub in Hungary is the Comics Studies Research Centre of the University of Pécs.⁵ Their research ranges from the exploration of bandes dessinées to Anglo-Saxon comic trends, but they also conduct substantial research on Hungarian autobiographical comics and adaptation trends which are relatively lesser known abroad.⁶

From Hell is one example for the alternative comic, or more accurately, graphic novel. Unlike its predecessors, these alternative comics have complex narrative structures. What makes the narrative structures complex here is the use of narrative elements that have been present in other narrative mediums, like television series or films. These elements include flashbacks, flashforwards, different point of views, breaking the fourth wall etc. (Dunai 187). Some of these can be found in *From Hell* but ultimately what really makes this graphic novel stand out from the rest is Moore's writing style.

1. 2. Moore's writing style

Alan Moore has undoubtedly earned his place in the pantheon of sequential art. He is known for his astounding stories that shaped Marvel and DC and created new stories, albeit with not entirely new characters. Such stories include *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, *Promethea*, *Watchmen*, and *From Hell*. This popularity is due to his special writing style and approach to narratives.

In his essay *Writing for Comics Volume 1*, Moore elaborates on different facets and layers of writing when it comes to this medium. He states that the medium itself, in general, struggles to develop stories that bear some significance, while failing to create relevant stories that would stand the test of time. Rather than focusing on social and environmental issues, such as pollution, race, or class problems, Moore implies that the idea should be grounded, connected to our everyday experiences, and teach us something meaningful (2).

Later on, he writes about how the characters should be built. There he details that it was Stan Lee who introduced a new approach to characterization by the use of two-dimensional characters. These characters could be summed up in 15 words. And while in the 60s (when Lee introduced this) it was enough, the majority of the medium stuck at this level and has barely

⁵ For example, the *Current Trends in Hungarian Comics Studies*, a collected and edited volume of Hungarian comics researches, is a good example for how flourishing comics studies is despite the medium's lack of attention in Hungary.

⁶ Gyula Maksa is one of the most prominent researchers of the Franco-Belgian comics, while Eszter Szép's works are focused on the Anglo-Saxon comic trends.

evolved ever since. Moore advocates for a more thorough approach, encouraging comic writers to establish a full background for their characters, to attempt to unlock the mysteries of their past by means of a flashback or something else entirely (20). During his time as a comic book writer (Moore generally defined himself specifically as a comics writer), he was known for his extensive scripts, detailing not only the dispositions of the panels, characters or objects but also the little minutiae of each and everything. In *The From Hell Companion*, Eddie Campbell details their elaborate work, revealing that Moore's script of the prologue, "this 2000-word opener, mostly describing the intimate details of a rotting seagull, plunged [him: Campbell] head first into the horrors of *FROM HELL*" (9)⁷.

1. 3. A Story From Hell

From Hell was first published in a serialised version in the anthology comic book *Taboo*, then evolved into its own series, between 1988 and 1996. Later, in 1999 it was published in its current book form, still retaining its signature black-and-white presentation, and 2018, it was published as a colorized collected edition, which serves as the primary source for this paper's inquiries. Because of this reason, I will refer to *From Hell* as a graphic novel.⁸

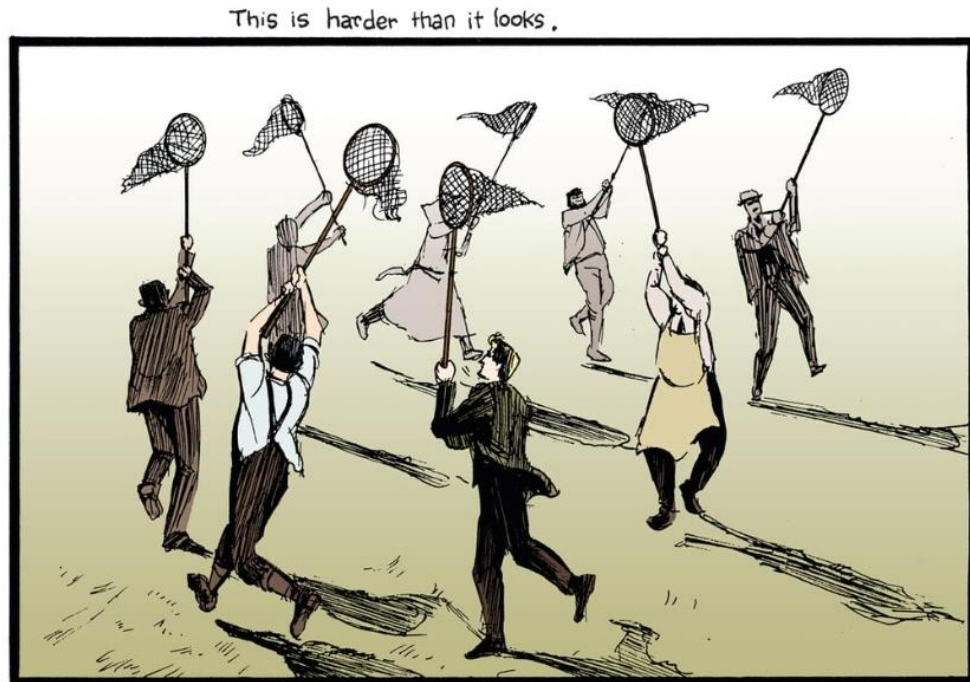
Alan Moore, in a 1997 interview about the work in question of this paper, said the following: "With *From Hell*, the main idea was that of murder, any murder. It had occurred to me that murder is a human event at the absolute extreme of the human experience" (Cerebus #217 (Aardvark-Vanaheim, April 1997). From this interview, it can be concluded that Moore's initial intention was to delve deep into the human psyche and present us with an animalistic event done by a human. In addition to this way of exploring the human psyche, Moore offers an insight into the lives of the 19th-century Londoners, the men and women of a city, which was the centre of industrialization back then. The graphic novel is further made special by the amount of research that went into it: the reconstruction of the different sites and the people's appearance. Furthermore, the research for this particular graphic novel is even more impressive with the size of the Appendix and the bibliography accompanying it. Case studies, autobiographical works, and historical studies contributed to the authentic representation of the

⁷ Moore and Campbell's dynamic can be seen in their product, however, when *From Hell* is mentioned it is attributed to Moore and Campbell is sidelined. This phenomena raises the question of who ultimately is the comic creator. For more, I recommend Ferenc Vince. "What is a Comic Creator: Notes on Comic Creator Configuration". Gyula Maksa and Ferenc Vincze, eds. *Current Trends in Hungarian Comics Studies*. Szépirodalmi Figyelő Alapítvány, Budapest (2019): 25-36. and Tamás Dunai. *A comics szerzői kora: Az észak amerikai képregény újraintézményesülése a 21. században*. Szépirodalmi Figyelő Alapítvány – SZTE Kommunikáció- és Médiatudományi Tanszék, Budapest-Szeged (2024): 144-159.

⁸ Based on Sabin's categorization, *From Hell* belongs to the second category.

Jack the Ripper murders. Moore's adaptation stands out from the rest of the Ripper adaptations due to the presentation of the story, the victims, and the murderer. This approach, of which I shall later elaborate on, enables the reader to ask the important questions: what and who was truly responsible for the murders.

In the following, I intend to capitalize on an interdisciplinary toolkit to look at how the medium of comics can contribute to the gendered stereotypes that are maybe still prevalent about the Victorian period.



(Figure 1)

Appendix: *The Dance of the Gull Catchers* (Campbell)

2. VICTORIAN GENDER ROLES? VICTORIAN SOCIETY?

The 19th century brought about a myriad of changes including industrialisation, scientific discoveries, and the rise of imperialist aspirations, all of which allowed Britain to expand its borders becoming an increasingly influential empire both in geopolitical and diplomatic terms (Hopkins 5-8). While these changes were for the better in the long term, it cannot be said that they did not have their drawbacks. The aforementioned changes caused a certain social anxiety which not only resulted in the shift and the birth of social classes but also the popularization and acceptance of “old-new” public morals and the unavoidable change in gender roles. These changes, however, were happening during one of the most shadowy eras of London. *From Hell* is set during this shadowy time of London, shedding light on one of the first sexual murders of history: the Ripper murders.

The graphic novel is based on Stephen Knight’s *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution*, a Ripperologist manifesto that sought to provide a solution to the myth. However, its validity was short-lived, after experts discredited it, deeming it nothing more than a conspiracy theory. According to this theory, Prince Albert’s supposed *mésalliance* with a working-class girl resulted in an illegitimate Catholic child whose mere existence threatened the royal house. In order to avoid scandal, Queen Victoria orders the death of the five Whitechapel prostitutes who

dared blackmail the Crown with the information. The queen's orders are carried out by her Royal Physician, William Gull, who uses the murders to pursue his mystical, Freemason aspirations, using the women as sacrifices to strengthen the patriarchal hold on London and England itself. Unlike other adaptations of the murders, Moore makes no attempt to keep the killer in the shadow. Thus, by abandoning the whodunit mode, the graphic novel shifts the focus from the murderer's identity to his victims.

This murder case is one of the most well-known such crimes in history where the perpetrator managed to escape justice, leaving behind not only smoke and mirrors but a changing society as well. Undoubtedly, a crude and bloody chapter of London, it is of great fascination today still. Countless writers, investigators, and amateur sleuths tried to uncover the killer's identity but failed, leaving the Ripper's Gordian knot intact. In the second Appendix of *From Hell*, Moore refers to this as the *Dance of the Gull Catchers* (see Fig. 1). In this extra chapter of *From Hell*, Moore takes the reader through the decades, introducing the reader to the Ripperologists, and the different artists and writers that took advantage of the Ripper's criminal deeds. The nature of the murders was so new to the public of that time, given that the Ripper murders were the first ones of a sexual kind that they became fascinated rather than repulsed by it. This newfound appeal was exploited by contemporary newspapers and eventually gave way to the emergence of New Journalism.

2. 1. Sensational(ism and) journalism

Victorian journalism was sensational at its core. The British press' repertoire was notorious for its way of presenting news connected to vulgarity, the grotesque, and bloodshed (Burnham 79-80). Journalists, aiming to sell more papers, considered the public as nothing else than a hungry beast whose appetite they had to sate with news of theft, disaster, scandal, and murder. This shift in the quality of journalism marked the end of tender, respectful journalism that lasted until the 1880s; and so journalistic barbarism became the dominant mode of the press (Jones 136). It must be mentioned that since the goal was to generate great readership, the credibility of the press could be questioned. This can be attributed to the rising capitalist thinking of the century.

New Journalism sought to be unique among the many, which eventually led to murders on the front pages with extra spaces and every line filled with mystery and gore, showing graphic accounts of brutal murder cases. Examples of such occurrences are the autopsy reports that summarized or paraphrased police inquests. It must be noted, however, that these autopsy

reports did not include any photographs of the victim, so the journalists had to be as graphic in their depiction as possible (Curtis 68-9). Such autopsy reports were the ones about the gruesome murders of the Ripper. This is best recreated in the last panel of Chapter 6, which depicts the original Illustrated Police News of 8th September 1888, which was the very first tabloid that utilized people's hunger for the sensational and the melodramatic. Another instance of the barbarity and grotesqueness of New Journalism is shown in *From Hell* when Mr. Best and Mr. Gibbs write the infamous "*Dear Boss*" letter that gave the killer its trade name, implying that the press might have actively played part in creating the myth of the Ripper and sustaining the social crisis of it. Experts agree that this particular letter was just a fabrication, for after it arrived at the police, many others followed soon after. But there was one exception. A human kidney also accompanied one letter that stood in stark contrast with the others. This letter is the one that is referred to as "*From Hell*" letter, providing the title of Moore's graphic novel. Experts agree that of all the letters that the police received this one is the most genuine but it is of great debate today still. The press' efforts to sensationalise a crime even got so far as to have people in thrall with the story and resulting in them travelling to the murder sites searching for or buying souvenirs connected to the crime at hand (Curtis 68-9). This is best shown in Chapter 6 of the graphic novel, when the inhabitants of the East End and other people visit the murder scene (see Fig. 2). All these instances show that the press already had a huge influence in the 19th century. It played a part in popularizing the social norms and in denouncing the scourge of prostitution that the fallen women posed.

2. 2. The CD Acts and the Fallen Women

To get a better understanding of the gender roles of the age, it is important to approach the time of the murders by first analysing the immediate historical context, namely the time when the Contagious Diseases Acts (or CD Acts) were introduced in 1864. The purpose behind these acts was to prevent army soldiers from contracting any type of sexually transmitted diseases. The Acts allowed police officers to arrest any woman suspected of prostitution. The suspects had to undergo physical examinations and if they were deemed infected, they would be confined in locked hospitals until such time they recovered from their disease or finished their sentence (Holton 149-151). The catch behind the Acts was that there was no clear definition of what constitutes a prostitute, therefore police harassment and overreach were everyday occurrences. The mentioned suspects were none other than women of the middle-class who lived near military bases (Walkowitz 1). The introduction of the Acts did not go without social discontent. Josephine Butler and her supporters regarded the Acts as the acts of

“sadistic aristocratic villains who conspired to control women through state sanction and monopoly” (Walkowitz 246-7). Butler’s claim, which undoubtedly meant to start waves of outrage about the Acts, called out against the double standard between the sexes and between the upper- and lower-classes. “This claim that the male political elite used their power to



(Figure 2)

Chapter 6: September (Campbell)

promote the sexual exploitation of working-class women posed a serious threat to the legitimacy of the political elite” (Griffin 101). Interestingly enough, the debates concerning the Acts did not pertain to people who paid prostitutes for sex, meaning that the members of the Parliament did not consider male sexuality as part of the problem. The leadership believed that men found sexual satisfaction within the marital bounds, but this did not include the soldiers who sought satisfaction in the arms of prostitutes (Griffin 101). *From Hell*, although the graphic novel does not focus on the Acts themselves, does thematise how a policeman could just arrest any woman suspected of soliciting herself.

Apart from this Act that targeted prostitutes, which eventually was not successful, these women faced numerous dangers ranging from criminal gangs and everyday harassment. Then why would any woman choose this life? There is no simple answer to this question. According to the general consensus, one only takes to such extreme professions when driven by social and financial forces. On the one hand, in Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and London Poor*, we can find examples of prostitutes who chose this profession willingly, in a gradual and voluntary way. On the other hand, however, Judith Walkowitz emphasises that this was not general⁹. Prostitutes were the few women who, by fate or circumstance, lived their lives on their own, making them self-possessed (1982 13-14). Despite their seemingly fragile appearance, these women were able to tend to themselves without the aid of a man. But besides posing a threat to male superiority and the subordination of women, they also had something even more threatening to the patriarchy. This threat lay in their sexuality. These “fallen women”, as they were labelled, lived their sexuality openly. However, such activities were considered as contagious not only in the physical sense, regulated by the CD Acts, but in terms of sexual deviancies infecting others with dangerous thoughts, encouraging other women to explore their own sexuality as well.

By the end of the 18th century, clear distinctions of gender roles and characteristics were not clearly defined. This “clarification” was a reaction to the increasing social changes, which started in the 18th century, and the ever-increasing social gap between the upper and lower classes, because by the 19th century, the lower class was present in the urban areas. “Within this social context, the idea of the morally superior woman contributed an ideological prop to the

⁹ This is made clear in *From Hell*, as well, when the prostitutes elaborate on their backstories in Chapter 2. Although, in the case of Annie Chapman and Kate Eddowes, we can see that they do other things as well to earn money. For example, in Chapter 7, Chapman “takes care” of the Pensioner, and Eddowes goes “hop-picking” with her partner John. Because of this, they can be considered clandestine prostitutes, as well.

family seen as a means of social consolidation in an increasingly class-conscious society” (LeGates 26). Thus, the idea of the domestic Madonna was born, an angelic creature of the Victorian male imagination who was supposed to be the other half of man, the light opposed to the carnal and evil form of the prostitutes (Gilbert and Gubar 28-44 qtd. in Bényei 31). These women were expected to be obedient, chaste, and sexually passive. This phenomenon was partly remedied by the separation of spheres as ideology, resulting in the limitation of the role of women within society.

This, however, only fuelled women’s desire to break out of the constrained role and have more agency over their lives. Women’s need were slowly heard, which can be seen in the late Victorian legislations, which allowed unmarried women to own property, make contracts, or have the right of custody over their children if they were unmarried mothers (Griffin 50). Besides these rights that the unmarried women had, they could also apply for jobs, allowing them to make a living on their own. These small footsteps slowly paved the road ahead for the New Woman.

In 1885, following the events of the Acts, rumours about aristocrats preying on working-class girls began to spread (Taylor 26-9). The articles of *Pall Mall Gazette*, edited by W. T. Stead, only reinforced these rumours, which resulted in the extension of police authority, which allowed them to prosecute brothel owners and to outlaw homosexual acts by men. Although the CD Acts aimed at working-class male sexuality, in the end, it only resulted in the scrutiny of the governing classes. Numerous scandals regarding upper-class sexuality came to light, ranging from homosexual activities to sex scandals within the ranks of the parliamentary elite (Cocks 135-54). Even the murder of the five women by Jack the Ripper included some of the most interesting accusations, namely that the killer must have been a gentleman (Walkowitz 126).

British gender roles drastically changed by the end of the 18th century. Due to the industrial revolution London society transformed via which it changed the way British people thought about gender roles. The evangelic movement’s discourse, which introduced the separate spheres, confined women to the home, robbing them of any agency, with the exception being unmarried women. This female subjugation transformed women into “angels in the houses” with their sole purpose being their husbands’ happiness and ensuring the household harmony. However, the 19th century domestic and gender ideology was challenged by a series of scandals, social problems, and murders, which not only questioned the leading role of the upper-class but also planted the seeds of doubt in society about masculinity. All this was

possible due to the Jack the Ripper murders and the CD Acts, which ultimately presented male sexuality as a threat to women. In the following chapter, I shall elaborate on how Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's *From Hell* portrays this, placing the graphic novel at the intersection of this historical context in the close reading analysis.

3. CLOSE READING ANALYSIS

3. 1. A neo-Victorian retrospect

The seed idea for the story of *From Hell* was already in Moore's head but he could not find an interesting murder case to frame it into. Originally, he considered the Ripper mystery overused but eventually, when so much attention focused on it again, he came to the realization that there is a way through which he could approach this case which is "set during fascinating and explosive times in a city rich with legend, history and association" (Moore 2004; 11). In the second Appendix of the collected edition of the novel, Moore references Koch's Snowflake, which consists of an equilateral triangle enclosed within a circle slowly increasing in size but never expanding over its boundaries, as a metaphor for the many approaches connected to the murders. He elaborates on that although many seek to uncover something new that might bring us closer to the truth, none of them cross the circle and grasp the aspects of other characters, such as that of the Whitechapel women's. However, Moore's historical fiction¹⁰ highlights the futile nature of Ripperology, to tackle the shadow of 1888, an entity that "might as well not have been there at all" (Moore: Appendix II, 23). His re-visioning of the Ripper murders, while recreates the Ripper myth, approaches the subject focusing more on the less mentioned: the women.

According to Adrienne Rich, re-vision is „the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" (Rich 18). However, re-visioning is also possible when it comes to certain values, like in the case of Margaret Thatcher who used the term "Victorian values" as a rallying cry (Samuel 12) in her politics, using some of the ideals and social values of the 19th century England. Nevertheless, Thatcher's re-visioning of the Victorian times was loose, and was often deemed to be "an inadequate compensatory for a bleak present (Ho 105)" and was heavily criticized by her political opponents for she neglected the darker aspects of the era: the poverty, along with the class and gender differences. Unlike Thatcher's approach to Victorian times, neo-Victorian novels focus on the darker aspects, as well, offering a new and critical approach.

¹⁰ Tamás Dunai lists four strategies to differentiate between the several types of presenting historical events in comics (2017, 46). I argue that *From Hell* belongs into the third category, which consists of comics and graphic novels that are made with an educational purpose. The educational purpose behind Moore's work is a moral one, for he does not finish *From Hell* without adding a backstory about Ripperology to his story, which bears a moral message.

Neo-Victorian fictions tend to explore the 19th century, and contrary to what the name implies, it does not strictly focus on Queen Victoria's reign, nor the British colonization. They aim to re-vision the 19th century not only to evoke a sense of nostalgia but also to approach the era from a critical point of view, exploring 19th-century social marginalization, the conflict of the individual and society, or the sexuality and gender politics of the age (Kirchknopf 427-429), which include the social and domestic shackle women were trapped in. A way of exploring the 19th-century woman's predicament, as defined by Kohlke and Gutleben, is giving "historical non-subjects a future by restoring their traumatic pasts to cultural memory" (31). The re-visioning of the Victorian time and the continued research of it is connected to the tension between the notions about the strict sexual codes and female roles of the age, such as the Angel in the House and the figure of the New Woman (MacDonald 2-3). Moore's attempt at a neo-Victorian revisiting is visible in his way of centering the story around the victims of the Ripper, which goes against how most Ripper adaptations focus more on the identity of the killer, instead of the victims.

His neo-Victorian approach is not only reinforced by the fact that *From Hell* was published during the Thatcher era but also by intertextual references not only to Thatcher's enterprise culture (Ho 100) but throughout the graphic novel Gull's character experiences visions that show 20th-century architecture and situations involving people and technology not akin to his time. Therefore, Moore's neo-Victorian adaptation of the Jack the Ripper story might offer a critique of the gender roles and morale advocated by the Conservative era of Thatcher (1979-1990) as well. The use of the Ripperature strikes "a delicate balance between heritage" and a recollection of hypocrisy, misogyny, violence, poverty, and prurience, all of which are often, if not always, erased from the past (Ho 29). However, this approach is not without its drawbacks. Miettien argues that while Moore's text focuses on the victims, his effort of humanizing them is undermined because it is overshadowed by the focus on Gull's search for his misogynistic transcendence and the detective chasing him, resulting in a male-dominated retelling that mythicizes masculine violence (91).

Violence, in fact, was a determining factor in the lives of Victorian Londoners. All sorts of crimes were happening every day, street gangs, like the Old Nichol gang mentioned in the graphic novel, would dominate the streets of Whitechapel, and outside the district, police officers could easily arrest any women suspected of prostitution. But it does not mean that violence was only outside of home, on the contrary, it was present in the domestic sphere, as

well, no matter the social surrounding, showing that women from all social standing were victims of violence.

3. 2. Women From Hell

Throughout *From Hell*, the reader encounters women from all social classes of London. The first time a woman appears is in the Prologue sequence, which takes place in 1923, thirty-five years after Jack the Ripper, when Abberline and Lees see a prostitute with one of her clients on the shoreline. When the couple gets seen, Abberline bursts out in anger, making the reader wonder what made him that angry at such a woman (see Fig. 3). The grey colours and darker shades serve as the backbone of the graphic novel, resulting in the story being more grounded and realistic.



(Figure 3) Prologue: *The Old Men on the Shore* (Campbell)

The graphic novel offers a glimpse at the lowly women of Whitechapel right at the beginning of *Hell* in the personage of Annie Crook and the five prostitutes (Polly, Mary, “Dark” Annie, Liz, and Kate) who later become the victims of the infamous killer. Crook’s relationship with Prince Albert is short-lived since Queen Victoria gets news of it, which eventually forces Crook to be left alone with her child. Ultimately, she’s taken away and gets locked away in a lock house where Doctor Gull eventually drives her mad. This madness is encountered when

Walter Sickert sees the mad Anne on the street, muttering and later shouting about Alice, the illegitimate daughter, and the Queen who wishes for her demise (see Fig. 4). By showing only the silhouettes of the two characters Campbell manages to emphasize the not only physical but



(Figure 4) Chapter 3: "The Queen said, "Off with her head!" (Campbell)

also the psychological trauma Annie was put through and the hopelessness of not only her but also the other women's situation who were condemned to madhouses under false pretences.

Since the story revolves around the murder of the five prostitutes their significance must not be overlooked. Although Marie Jane Kelly is introduced at the beginning of the novel, we meet the ring of prostitutes in Chapter 3. These women stand in stark contrast with the women of the upper classes. Despite the fact that they are not confined indoors and that they frequent pubs, they too are like those other upper-class women: (ab)used, ignored, and threatened. As opposed to the previously mentioned women, however, Marie Jane Kelly is the only woman who openly fights with a man, that being Joe Barnett. Another important element to point out is that in the graphic novel open and visible sexual acts are all attributed to the lower classes.¹¹

The visual portrayal of the prostitutes is unique in this graphic novel, which makes *From Hell* stand out from all other Jack the Ripper fiction. Instead of presenting the victims of the Ripper as beautiful female creatures, Moore and Campbell decided to depict them as they probably really were in real life: disease-ridden and sometimes even repulsive. In the Appendix, Moore clarifies that these "were ordinary women, who, despite their deprived and unhealthy situation, were trying to look attractive for the only job that society had seen fit to offer them"

¹¹ This can be interpreted as a way of obtaining agency within an unequal environment; however, it does not mean that women are truly in control.

(Appendix 1, 8). It is an important detail that in terms of looks the prostitutes are barely distinguishable from each other. Their facial features, their details are not clearly defined, in many cases; they are only identifiable due to their headpieces or clothing (see Fig. 5.). However, even these are unreliable at times because on the shadowy streets or in the barely lit rooms



(Figure 5) Chapter 3: The Blackmail (Campbell)

women seem to be very similar to each other. This loss of individuality, which eventually happens due to Gull's actions, is enhanced via this artistic depiction (Di Liddo 81).

As opposed to the open sexuality of the prostitutes, upper-class women show no sexual desire. Emma Abberline, Gull's wife, and Queen Victoria are the three most significant female characters that need to be mentioned here.

Emma Abberline and Susan Gull are the ones who present the Victorian domestic ideology. Both of them are "angels in the houses" (Peterson, 677-708). They are rarely seen throughout the story and when they appear on the panels their role bears little to no significance. They are shown to be caring, obedient and most of the time silent. If they are to engage in conversations with their partners, they are more the enablers than active participants of the conversations. This shows that they are both shy, mostly silent, knowing their places, and supporting their husbands, without confronting them, no matter what. And above all, they are angelic in that they are asexual: neither desirable, nor trying to be. The Victorian women's perceived and expected lack of sexual knowledge is most visible in the case of Susan Gull.

She appears in Chapter 2 and is already presented as an innocent creature, dressed all in white (see left-hand picture of Fig. 6.). And although it is her wedding gown, later on in Chapter 2 she also appears in a yellow gown, which can imply the naïveté in which most women are

portrayed by neo-Victorian novels. This shows the true innocence the Victorian women lived in. For upper- and middle-class women being innocent meant the purity of both body and mind, namely that any knowledge of sexuality was consciously withheld from them. This meant that a truly innocent woman did not know anything about neither the love-making part of



Figure 6. Susan Gull, the Angel in the House (Campbell)

consummation and nor about the biological part of the process (Mendus, 7). From this, it can be deduced that any sexual knowledge was the privilege of men, therefore they held the power, further enforcing the patriarchy and the subjection of women. However, in the graphic novel, this enforcement goes beyond that of psychological control, becoming a violent and forceful subjugation. Lacking the knowledge of what comes with the wedding night, Victorian women's first experience of intimacy was a forceful encounter, where male sexuality appeared as a menacing and alien thing. Following this, in the graphic novel, in the case of the "ideal Victorian marriage" of Susan, intimacy is depicted as a necessarily transgressive human experience. Contrary to how *Hell* depicts Victorian women, there are instances of Victorian women having some knowledge of sexuality. McClintock elaborates on this in *Imperial Leather*, that although men had more understanding of sex, women still had desires and sexual thoughts¹² (139-141).

Emma's character has a physical resemblance to Marie Jane Kelly (see Fig. 7). An aspect of this resemblance means that even in middle-class women there is a want, a desire for

¹² Even Queen Victoria herself, in her diary, goes into the minute details of her sexual life with Prince Albert.



(Figure 7) The two "Emmas" (Campbell)

freedom, yet for all this desire, they cannot escape the domestic and gender conventions the patriarchy set them into.

Another important female character is Queen Victoria herself. She does not appear very frequently on the panels of the novel, yet her presence can be felt throughout, for, according to the *Final Solution* and *From Hell*, she was the one who permitted the murders and allowed Gull to commit his atrocities. Most of the time, she is shown as a stern, motionless, and powerful woman, embodying the monarchy itself (Miettinen 91). Although she is a woman and presents a source of power, in truth, she is nothing more than an enabler of the patriarchy. This can be said because she lacks the female seductive power that Gull fears in the case of prostitutes.

Elizabeth Ho, in her analysis of the graphic novel, points out the obvious parallels between the character of Queen Victoria and Margaret Thatcher: “both women occupied multiple and conflicting positions on the scales of femininity and political power. Both possessed the masculine attributes of military power and the authority of the state and simultaneously embodied the maternal and fulfilled the demands of domesticity” (34). However, there is also a clear reference for this in Chapter 1 of *From Hell*, when the Prince meets with Annie Crook, the sweetshop girl. The Prince consistently says that the girl resembles her mother (“She rather RESEMBLES mother doesn’t she? [...] No, but seriously, Sickert... she DOES look like mother, doesn’t she? She has mother’s eyes.” (1, 2). Thatcher herself came from lower middle-class origins as a shopkeeper’s daughter, thus the graphic novel may allude to Thatcher’s humble beginnings before she rose to a position of power and the falseness of the family values for which Thatcher advocated. After all, it was the Queen who took locked up

Annie Crook under false pretences and destroyed a family in the process. It also shows that the picturesque family idea that the Queen posed to the public did not really exist.

3. 3. Men From Hell

Throughout *Hell*, the graphic novel presents the reader with numerous men from all social classes of London but three important male characters are shaping the story: Prince Albert, Frederick Abberline, and Sir William Gull.

Prince Albert and Abberline are introduced right at the beginning of the graphic novel, but it is the latter's whose actions start the tide of tragedies that come afterwards. The prince embodies the hypocrisy that surrounds the aristocracy in the late 19th century. His secret mésalliance with Annie Crook, a lowly sweetshop girl, results in a child, but also participates in homosexual affairs.¹³ Another case of such a scandal is in Chapter 13 when Abberline and other members of the police spy on a brothel for suspected homosexual activity. This is another instance of the scandals connected to the British aristocracy of the time, which the press tried to uncover. The police know that Prince Albert frequents the place, yet they remain silent about it and do not apprehend him. This shows how the Crown tried to create the perfect family image under the Victorian domestic ideology.

Frederick Abberline is the detective charged with apprehending the killer but at the same time he is also another victim of the killer. His marriage with his wife Emma, is also a part of the plot. His is the ideal Victorian marriage, however, he does not find comfort within it. Theirs is a cold and distant marriage, which shows when Abberline is willing to find comfort outside the marital bounds with Mary Kelly (under the pseudonym, Emma) ("I dunno. I thought... well, I dunno what I thought. I thought we could p'raps, y'know, find a room somewhere nice." (9, 45). He is well aware that 'Emma' is a prostitute and he is one of the few in power who tolerates prostitutes. However, this changes by the end of the by the end of the novel after the murder of Mary Kelly. Thinking he was abandoned, his character changes and when he encounters another prostitute on the streets of London, he bursts out in anger, using phrases like "this dirty little scrubber" or "filthy fuckin' whore", eventually achieving the arrest of said prostitute. In the

¹³ It must be mentioned that Prince Albert's storyline is a work of fiction but it is heavily based on factual elements that suggest Prince Albert's bisexuality.

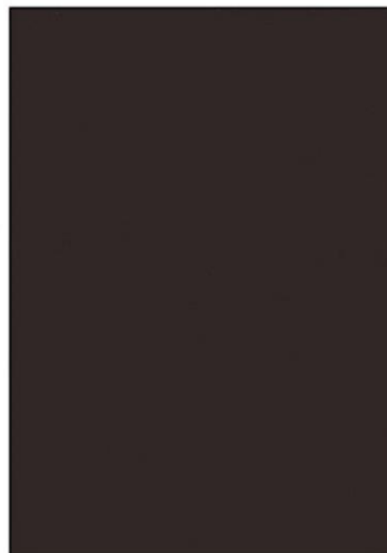
story, both Abberline and the Prince exhibit certain social tendencies that were not uncommon in real life Victorian society.

Anne McClintock's, in her work *Imperial Leather*, elaborates on how female sexuality was so distinctly categorized along the class lines; the images of the Madonna and the whore were constructed in a class structure connected to the household (86-87). The late 19th century men of London exhibited instances in which upper- or middle-class men were drawn to working-class women, seen in the example of the Prince and Abberline, fetishizing the filth, the lower-class life, eventually resulting in cross-class relationships (77).

Dr. William Gull is one of the few most complex ones in the novel. He moves the narrative forward with his unquenchable desire to reassert male dominance over femininity. In Chapter 2, we get a deeper insight into his psyche and his view of women. Even in his childhood, he wanted to have a greater purpose than that of an ordinary man ("Though I should have a task most difficult, most necessary and severe, I should not care if none save I did hear of my achievement" (2, 3). His murderous persona is foreshadowed when he butchers a rat, staring at its innards and its dripping blood as if he were a priest.

His misogyny surfaces in Chapter 2 as well when he is with his wife on their wedding night. Although the whole act is happening in darkness, we can still hear the sounds the two make during it. Gull's attitude is forceful. Neglecting his shouting wife, he continues the act, making it an act of rape (see Fig. 8.). Although much of the wedding night is invisible to the reader, we can still "hear" the noises, and the shrieks Mrs. Gull gives out: "Oh NO! William, it's too BIG! William, stop it, you're hurting me! Take it out! Take it OUT!" (2, 12).

His forceful behaviour is also shown before the wedding night, when Gull and his close friend, Hinton, are at the insane asylum where Gull works. There, even though he addresses the poor disease-stricken women of the institute as "my beauty", he forcibly enters the vagina of the mad patient with his hand. This shows not only his lack of empathy towards women, but his misogyny buried deep within. This forcefulness only shows his violence buried deep within, which later manifests at night, as he changes into a fiend, a monster, a butcher.



(Figure 8) Chapter 2: Susan Gull's wedding night (Campbell)

3. 4. Misogyny unleashed and love in blood

Throughout the story, Gull experiences several visions that not only shape his character arc, but they also influence the killings as well. These visions slowly take over his mind as the story progresses. At first, even the reader is not entirely aware of the visions' presence. In Chapter 5, when Gull mutilates Polly's body, he hallucinates that Polly's body is full of light (see Fig. 9).



(Figure 9) *The first vision (Campbell)*

The reader, in Chapter 5, is not yet a full participant in what Gull experiences and only sees that something is glowing but has no clear view of it (Miettien 95). Meanwhile, in Chapter 8, the reader can see Gull's visions in their entirety, namely a glimpse of the future: a giant skyscraper. This drastic change is also visible in the change of the panels' size. In Chapter 5, it takes several panels to illustrate Gull's visions, whereas in Chapter 8, the vision scene takes an entire page up and only one panel, making the visions appear more focused and concrete (see Fig. 10). Via Gull's visions the interpretation of murders becomes transcendental, making the prostitutes the embodiments of the diseased sexuality of 19th-century women (Gilman 264). This makes Gull's actions appear as attempts at curing a corrupt society, wiping it clean of the Whitechapel women, the causes of the rot inside society, according to Gull. With the murders, he seeks to reassert male hegemony.

The Victorian male hegemony deemed any sexual acts, done by women, outside the marital bounds as deviant (Hurley 72). Therefore the sexual availability of the prostitutes and their lost innocence makes them not only deviants but also threats to the system of male hegemony (Walkowitz 183). In Gull's interpretation, the female threat, as a result, must be destroyed or sacrificed to preserve this system. This ritualistic behaviour is most visible when Gull mutilates the body of Mary Kelly. He tears out and burns her heart to ashes, only for the

winds to take it away. This represents the ritualistic side of serial killings. However, there is also a sexual aspect to this.



(Figure 10) Chapter 8: A phallic vision from the future

According to Klaus Theweleit, when a murder occurs, there are two distinct desires within the murderer: the desire for proximity and distance. The penetration of the victim with the weapon satisfies these needs, creating an amorous relationship between the killer and victim which is both abstract and dehumanizing. Yet, in the end, this love destroys the female body (196). This is most visible in Gull's character. Throughout the story, we can see him as the embodiment of the Victorian male hegemony. His only "normal" sexual encounter is with his wife. Other than that we see nothing of the sort from him. This is why Gull's character can represent the repressed sexual desires of the Victorian male that resurface like a raging beast on the women of Whitechapel. During the murders, Gull not only slashes the throats of the women but also violates their reproductive organs as well. By penetrating the uterus of the victims, Gull not only destroys their bodies but also takes their agency away.

3. 5. Phallic dominance

When it comes to *From Hell*, the first thing that instantly strikes the reader is the overwhelming and accurate representation of London's architecture. Moore and Campbell used numerous photo references to recreate the 19th century city of London. Chapter 4 is the most prominent when it comes to the representation of London's architecture. The architecture of London is vital because it supports the argument Gull delivers throughout the chapter, almost as if it were a soliloquy, emphasizing the patriarchal control throughout the city (Ali 611).

Interestingly enough, these buildings that stand as symbols of phallic control are mostly the churches connected to Nicholas Hawksmoor and obelisks that originate from ancient Egypt, prizes of the British imperialism. From this, the reader can deduce that this phallic control spans throughout history, meaning that it has been the case for centuries, throughout the world. These phallic shapes tower over the citizens of London, especially the women of Whitechapel. Every time Hawksmoor's Christchurch appears on the panels, it towers over the prostitutes, expressing how insignificant they are to the system. But not to Gull.

The nature of the city itself and its architecture is of great interest to Gull. However, the reader could ask themselves the question: why is it important? In *Imperial Leather*, McClintock argues that "if the woman's body is the child's first space for knowledge and self-discovery, later the city, as the first space of modern self-knowledge, was mapped as a feminine space" (82). During the chapter, Gull gives a tour that spans through the history of London, moreover, dissects the city as if it were a human, what is more, feminine body, draws on the map with straight lines that eventually form the menacing pentagram, the sign of Gull's devilish plan.

There is therefore a clear parallel between the city and Gull's victims. For Gull, London is a city of mysteries and battles that formed his glorified system of male hegemony. Through the myths and historical facts that Gull tells Netley, his accomplice, the city becomes a real and tangible body, a mystical and allegorical entity. Via these stories and places the city seems to



(Figure 11) Chapter 4: "What doth the Lord require of thee?" (Campbell)

be something that can be controlled, whereas the prostitutes are unpredictable and wild creatures in Gull's eyes (Di Liddo, 79). Through the whole of the chapter, Gull's monologue dominates the panels, almost spanning from one page to the next, almost like a spider's web. Annalisa Di Liddo argues that it is depicted this way because Gull's misogynistic narrative, represented by his speech-bubbles, is embedded into buildings, thus becoming part of the city landscape. In spite of this, I argue that if the city is originally a feminine space, then Gull's

narrative, instead of being embedded into the buildings, entangles the city, thus the misogynistic narrative of Gull and the cityscape are to be considered to be separate, moreover, as separate entities (see Fig. 11).

In the novel, Gull maps out all the mystic places where the ancients worshipped the Moon and the matriarchy. London was built upon those very places, maintaining the feminine power, which still make the city a feminine entity, and that is why Gull emphasizes the importance of binding places like Hawksmore's architecture or the obelisks and all the phallic architecture that dominate the city. Another argument for the city being interpreted as a feminine space can be found in Gull's wording: "Do you begin to grasp how truly great a work is London? A veritable textbook we may draw upon in formulating great works of our own! We'll penetrate its metaphors, lay bare its structure and thus come at last upon its meaning. As befits great work, we'll read it carefully and with respect." His phrasing describes London as a body, thus the city can be interpreted as the female body mutilated through the centuries. Besides this, the city can be considered an allegory for the final victim of Gull. His lecturing hallucination in Chapter 10 is reminiscent of Chapter 4's tour of London.

Just as he elaborates on how and why the different historical places are related to each other in Chapter 4, he also elaborates on the disposition of the bodily organs mixed with the mythological context of antiquity. However, London is something Gull can easily understand; a tangible with its great history "engraved in stone" (4, 39), unlike the Whitechapel women who present an alien force, which Gull fears and wants to understand at the same time. In this sense, the prostitutes can be considered as forerunners of the New Woman. After all, these women, as the graphic novel also shows, were independent, earning their wages on their own. *From Hell* makes the "death" of Marie Kelly, the final victim, ambiguous. Before the supposed demise of hers, Marie frequently allowed her "co-workers" to stay at her place to rest. But when Gull strikes in the dark, we do not see clearly the face of the victim, we only perceive her silhouette. And this is shown in the end of *From Hell*, in the form of a vision. In Chapter 14, Gull experiences his final vision, which can be interpreted as a failed ascending because the final panels show, presumably, Marie Kelly in the Irish countryside along with three of her daughters, whose faces are, again, not that detailed, except for their mother's. In the vision, Marie Kelly seems to see Gull's spirit and banishes it ("And as for you, ye auld divil, I know that ye're there, and ye're not havin' these. Clear off now wit' ye. Clear off back to Hell and leave us BE!" (14, 23). This means that Gull's place is not in the countryside but in the urban landscape, therefore Jack the Ripper/Gull "and his male power is constrained into the urban

landscape of London, and the light (and feminine) countryside renders him and his masculine control powerless” (Mietten 92). This gives way to the idea that although the city was originally a feminine space, through the centuries of misogyny it was rendered male and phallic. And so, by the end of *Hell*, the rural countryside became associated with the feminine, a change which was not unfamiliar, for as the graphic novel depicts, the last two decades of the 19th century London is defined by social mobility, the loosening of the established morals and domestic spheres.

3. 6. The focalised prison of the panel

London has been interpreted and illustrated by many in literature. Ackroyd’s *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*¹⁴ describes the London streets as ‘a prison for those who walk them’ (Ackroyd 93) and *From Hell* bears the same atmosphere (Sulmicki 31-34), however, in the graphic novel, London, especially Whitechapel, also has a maze-like quality to it, with dark alleyways and streets; a maze, which only the Whitechapel prostitutes can navigate¹⁵ This sense of space is only made more claustrophobic by the narrow panels. In the center of this maze is Gull, the monster who skulks in the shadows, striking down the prostitutes.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the graphic novel introduces a story that has been interpreted in many different ways. Since a full historical reconstruction of these murders is impossible, it is inevitable to approach the story from a distorted, focalized viewpoint. According to Mieke Bal, every narration is focalized because the description or presentation of certain events is from a specific point of view. Bal differentiates two kinds of focalization, that being character focalization and outer focalization, whose agent remains unknown and is not present within the narrative. If the narrative is accompanied by visual elements, then focalization is extended onto them as well, for they too present the narrative from a certain point of view (Bal 142-161). This can be seen in the case of how Moore presents the veracity of the story and how Campbell conveys the social and gender differences of the characters. Another interesting element of the graphic novel is how it comments on the truthfulness of the story. Although in the Appendix, it is made clear that it is an adaptation of Stephen Knight’s *Final Solution*, the credibility of which had been debunked, the novel itself

¹⁴ Ackroyd’s novel is a frequently cited neo-Victorian Jack the Ripper adaptation, published around the same time as *From Hell* was; that is partially the reason why Sulmicki compared their depiction and description of London.

¹⁵ Best example for this is when, in Chapter 3, Marry Kelly leads her client to abandoned place, saying “I think I know how you might get to that place for thruppence. Follow me up this way.” This implies that Marry Kelly and other prostitutes know the area well, maybe better than men do.

never indicates this at all. However, there are clues hidden in the panels that can indicate the haziness of the whole Ripper myth and Knight's work. The best example for this is also in



(Figure 13) Fiction or Reality (Campbell)

Chapter 4. The chapter begins with one big panel, with clear panel borders, and below it, we can see six smaller ones with no panel borders and even more shady and sketchy (see Fig. 13). This is one way how Moore and Campbell indicates that the story is distinctly fictionalized.

Another instance of the lack of panels can be found in Chapter 5, where there is a parallel made between Gull and the first victim. Gull's panels are in a watercolour style,¹⁶ light contours, whereas the prostitute's has clear contours and panel borders (see Fig. 14). While this parallel

¹⁶ According to Eszter Szép, Campbell is able to convey different feelings with different techniques, just like here in the case of watercolour. He also employed this technique in his autobiographical work, *Alec, The Years Have Pants (A Life-Sized Omnibus)* (Szép 107).

can indicate the social differences between Whitechapel and the upper-class of the West End, it can also point at how constrained the women became due to the oppressive male rule that had been lasting for centuries. On one hand, Gull's panels are boundless and ethereal, on the other hand, Polly's panels are more contoured as if she was trapped within the borders of her own panel and the harsh reality she was confined into.



(Figure 14) *Parallel universes* (Campbell)

4. CONCLUSION

The Jack the Ripper murders were the culmination of different factors affecting the British society in the 19th century, one of which was the development of strict gender roles and the separate social spheres attributed to them. Moore and Campbell's neo-Victorian graphic novel provides an opportunity to analyse these roles from the perspective of the murders, moreover, from the perspective of the perpetrator. By breaking with the whodunit mode and focusing on the five canonical victims of the Ripper, Moore provides a picture about the 19th-century women that stands in stark contrast to the gendered stereotypes advocated by late different mediums throughout the post-Victorian centuries.

The novel displays women from all social classes showcasing how they were invariably trapped in a system established by the patriarchy: the women of the upper-classes were ensnared in the domestic sphere, best shown in the graphic novel in the personages of Susan Gull and Emma Abberline, whereas women of the lower-class, although enjoyed a limited amount of freedom, were victims of physical (ab)use and violence.

The graphic novel's villain, Gull, whose misogynistic quest for transcendence almost eclipses that of the prostitutes, which also demonstrates the male dominance of the age. Since the story of *From Hell* is also followed through his perspective, numerous panels are dedicated to him and his patriarchal ideology, which seeks to justify the domestic entrapment of women, that is made visible through his Masonic visions. These visions not only grow in number, as the he mutilates the women, but also in size, by the end taking a whole page and an entire chapter, whereas the prostitutes are never presented on an entire page. They are trapped afar in the distance, beneath the towering phallic buildings of London.

From Hell demonstrates how the representation of Victorian gender roles is filtered through both post-Thatcherian sensibilities and the medium of the graphic novel. Through its focalized, graphic storytelling, it interrogates and exposes the class-based and gendered fractures within the Victorian society, with the lasting impact of their unresolved legacy.

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