

A History of Comics

Part Two: The Big Three

Big Three

- Move away from standard superhero comics
- Comics as legit philosophy, literature
- 2 of the 3 are DC Comics - success created Vertigo



The (2nd?) British Invasion

- Influx of British creators during the 80's
- DC Comics at the forefront
- Alan Moore's "fault"
- Karen Berger and Vertigo



Karen Berger (1958-present)



- Helped create DC's Vertigo imprint in 1993
- Executive editor of Vertigo until 2013
- Helped publish Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* and Moore's *Swamp Thing*
- Vertigo published: *Fables*, *Hellblazer*, *The Invisibles*, *100 Bullets*, *Preacher*, *V for Vendetta*, and *Y: The Last Man*

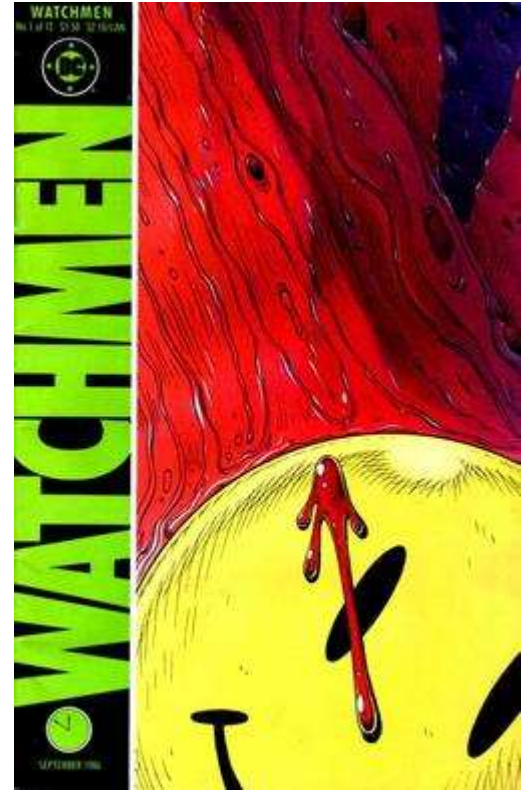
Vertigo

- Published company-owned and creator-owned properties
- Fed by the successes of *Dark Knight Returns* and *Watchmen*
- Adult themed, literary minded, and political



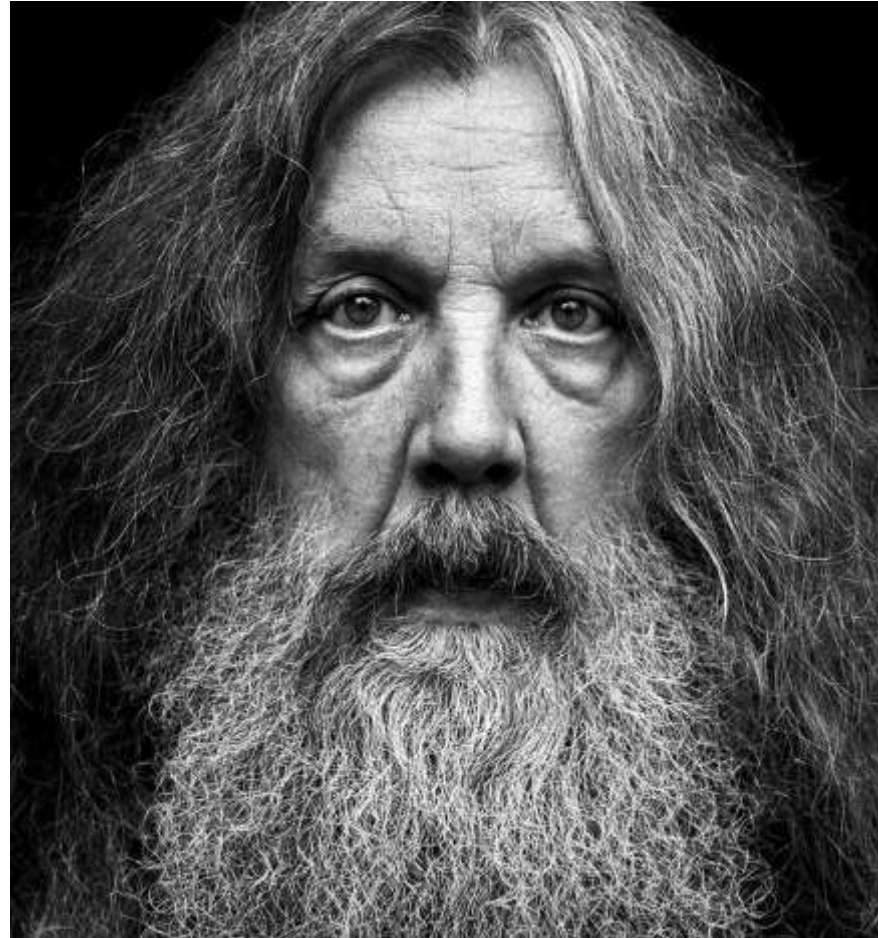
Watchmen

- Published monthly between 86-87
- Collected into trade paperback in 1987
- Writer Alan Moore
- Artist Dave Gibbons
- Colorist John Higgins



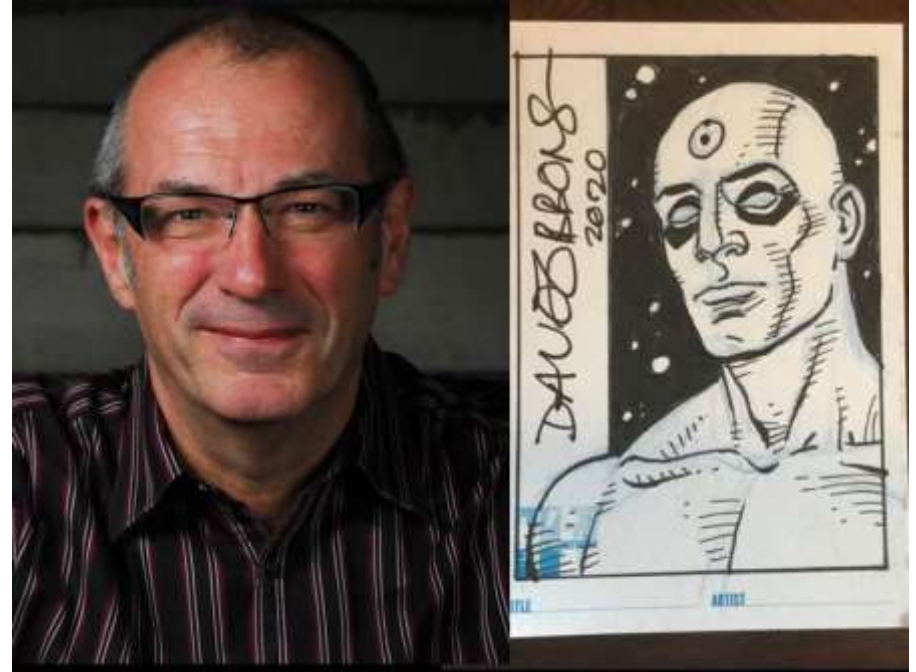
Alan Moore (1953-present)

- *Batman: The Killing Joke, From Hell, The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, Marvelman, Swamp Thing, V for Vendetta*
- Winner of too many awards to mention



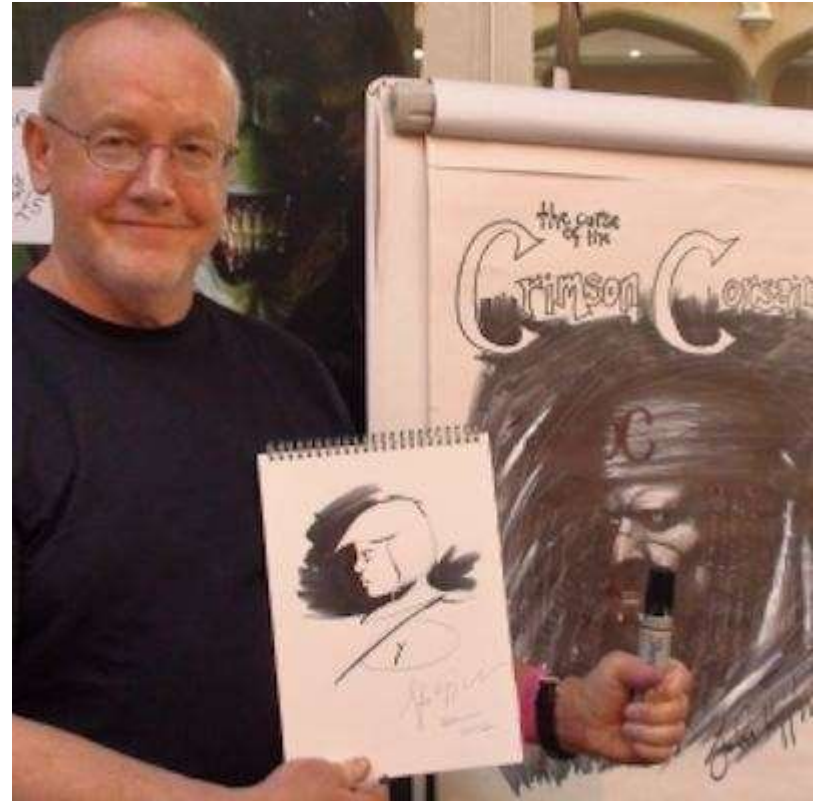
Dave Gibbons (1949-present)

- Artist for *Watchmen*, *Green Lantern*, *Kingsman*
- Winner of many awards, too
- In 2014 he became Britain's first ever Comics Laureate


























































John Higgins (1949-present)

- *Batman: the Killing Joke*, *Watchmen*, *Judge Dredd*, *Before Watchmen*, etc
- Color is under appreciated aspect of the comic



Watchmen's Color Palette

Independence #4D516D		Mulberry #C64B8C		Forest #0B6623		Redwood #A45A52	
Prussian #003151		Byzantine #702963		Jungle #29AB87		Light Persian #CA3433	
Yale #0E4C92		Thulian #FDE6FA1		Moss #8A9A5B		Imperial #ED2939	
Steel #4682B4		French Rose #F64A8A		Sage #8A9A5B		Honey #EB9605	
Pearl River #D9DDDC		Brick #FB607F		Olive #708238		Tangerine #CF9812A	
Rhino #B9BBB6		Persian #CA3433		Sage #9DC183		Pumpkin #FF7417	
Ash #544C4A		Taffy #F987C5		Olive #708238		Sepia #E3B778	
Very light blue		Carnation #FFA6C9		Flaxen #D5B85A		Tuscany #FC12A	
Cornflower #6693F5		Thistle #D7BFDC		Tea #D0F0C0		Flax #EEDC82	
Pigeon #7285A5		Cream #FFFDD0		Pineapple #FEE12B		Mustard #FEDC56	
White Sky #95C8D8		African #B284BE		Flaxen #D5B85A		Laguna #F8E473	
Amethyst #9966CB		Indian Red #CD5C5C		Tea #D0F0C0		Bumblebee #FCE285	
		Peach #FFE5B4		Pineapple #FEE12B		Egg Nog #F9E29C	
						Abalone #D6C0C7	
						Light Salmon #FFFA07A	

Watchmen



- Thematic realism reflecting social anxieties, such as nuclear war
- Flawed heroes and meta commentary
- Experimental in form and with established characters
- Aimed at adult audiences



Dr. Manhattan

- Born as Jon Osterman (1929)
- Becomes a physicist at Gila Flats Research Base (1958)
- Transformed in an “intrinsic field separator” in 1959
- Becomes Dr. Manhattan in 1960





IT'S NOVEMBER WITH NOW
SURE IS A CIRCULATORY
SYSTEM WALKING THROUGH
THE KITCHEN...



NOVEMBER WITH A PARTIALLY
NUCLEO SKELETON FINISH
BY THE PERIMETER FENCE
AND SCREAMS FOR THREE
SECONDS BEFORE RAMMING.



REALLY, IT'S JUST A QUESTION
OF REARRANGING THE
COMPONENTS IN THE
CORRECT SEQUENCE...



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?



Rorschach's Colors and Shoes



Watchmen as Literature



Framework-Story

The wife of Bath's romance makes up the *framework-story*, or *inner narrative*.



The *framework* is the pilgrimage to Canterbury.



RORSCHACH'S JOURNAL.
OCTOBER 12TH, 1985.:

DOG CARCASS IN ALLEY
THIS MORNING, TIRE TREAD
ON BURST STOMACH. THIS
CITY IS AFRAID OF ME.
I HAVE SEEN ITS
TRUE FACE.



I LEAVE
IT ENTIRELY
IN YOUR
HANDS.



"BUT... IF ME, MY BIRTH, IF
THAT'S A THERMODYNAMIC
MIRACLE... I MEAN, YOU
COULD SAY THAT ABOUT
ANYBODY IN THE WORLD!"

"YES."

"ANYBODY
IN THE
WORLD."



Watchmen (2019) - the show



Dark Knight Returns

- Published 86 as four issue series
- Written by Frank Miller
- Art by Klaus Janson
- Color by Lynn Varley
- Thematic realism for a big name character



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Frank Miller (1957-present)

- *Daredevil, Batman: Year Zero, Dark Knight Returns, Sin City, 300, Ronin*
- Tries to fuse noir and manga
- Politics are ... complicated



Klaus Janson (1952-present)

- German-born American
- *Dark Knight Returns*, *Daredevil*, *Superman*, and many others





THE NOSE DIGS UP A CHUNK OF MACADAM. I LOOK AT IT--



-- THEN STRAIGHT INTO THE EYE OF THE SUN.



THIS WOULD BE A GOOD DEATH...



... BUT NOT GOOD ENOUGH.



...SPECTACULAR FINISH TO THE NEUMAN ELIMINATION, AS THE FERRIS BOOD PINWHEELED ACROSS THE FINISH LINE, A FLAMING COFFIN FOR BRUCE WAYNE...



... OR SO EVERYONE THOUGHT. TURNS OUT THE MILLIONAIRE BAILED OUT AT THE LAST SECOND. SUFFERED ONLY SUPERFICIAL BURNS. LOLA?



THANKS, BILL. I'M SURPRISED ANYONE CAN EVEN THINK OF SPORTS IN THIS WEATHER. RIGHT, DAVE?



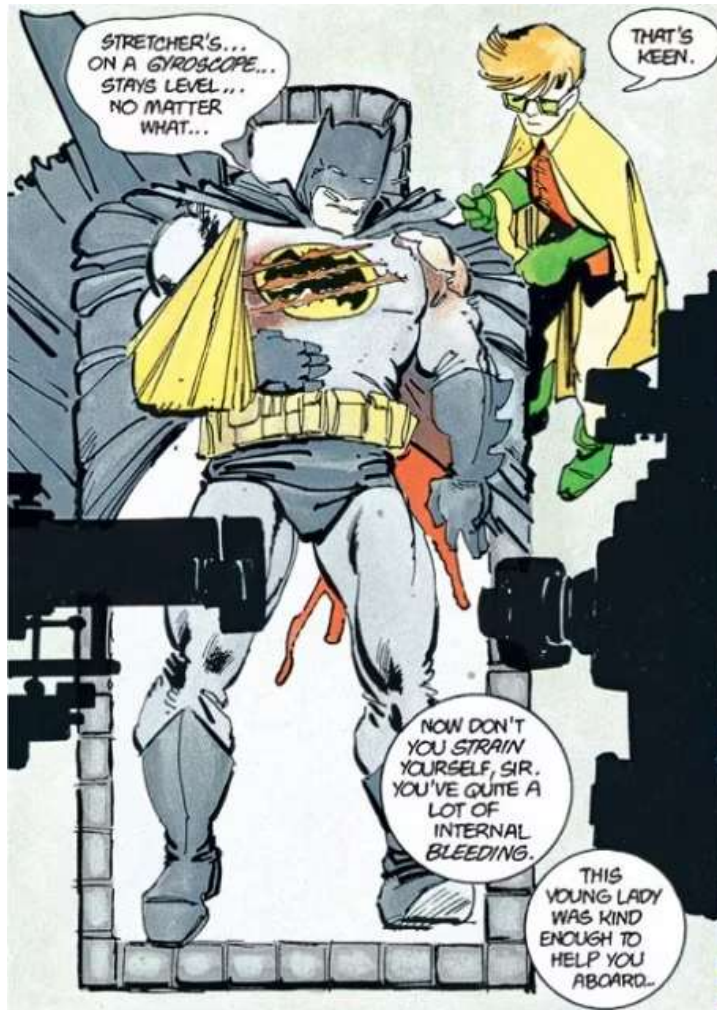
Batman's Chest



Carrie Kelley

- First full-time female Robin
- Saves Batman's life (multiple times)
- Tech whiz
- Slightshot expert





STRETCHER'S...
ON A GYROSCOPE...
STAYS LEVEL...
NO MATTER
WHAT...

THAT'S
KEEN.

NOW DON'T
YOU STRAIN
YOURSELF, SIR.
YOU'VE QUITE A
LOT OF
INTERNAL
BLEEDING.

THIS
YOUNG LADY
WAS KIND
ENOUGH TO
HELP YOU
ABOARD...



I... KNOW
WHAT SHE
DID, ALFRED.

WHERE... DID
YOU LEARN TO
SET AN ARM...
MAKE A SPLINT...?

GIRL
SCOUTS.



WHAT'S...
YOUR
NAME...



CARRIE.
CARRIE
KELLEY.



ROBIN.



...WE HAVE YEARS--
AS MANY AS WE
NEED...

FIRST WE GET A
STEADY SUPPLY OF
WATER. THERE'S
A SPRING RIGHT
BENEATH--

--ROBIN!
SIT UP
STRAIGHT.

YES,
SIR.

YEARS-- TO
TRAIN AND
STUDY AND
PLAN...

... HERE, IN THE ENDLESS
CAVE, FAR PAST THE
BURNT REMAINS OF A
CRIMEFIGHTER WHOSE
TIME HAS PASSED...

IT BEGINS HERE-- AN
ARMY-- TO BRING
SENSE TO A WORLD
PLAGUED BY WARS
THAN THIEVES AND
MURDERERS...

THIS WILL
BE A
GOOD
LIFE...



...GOOD
ENOUGH.

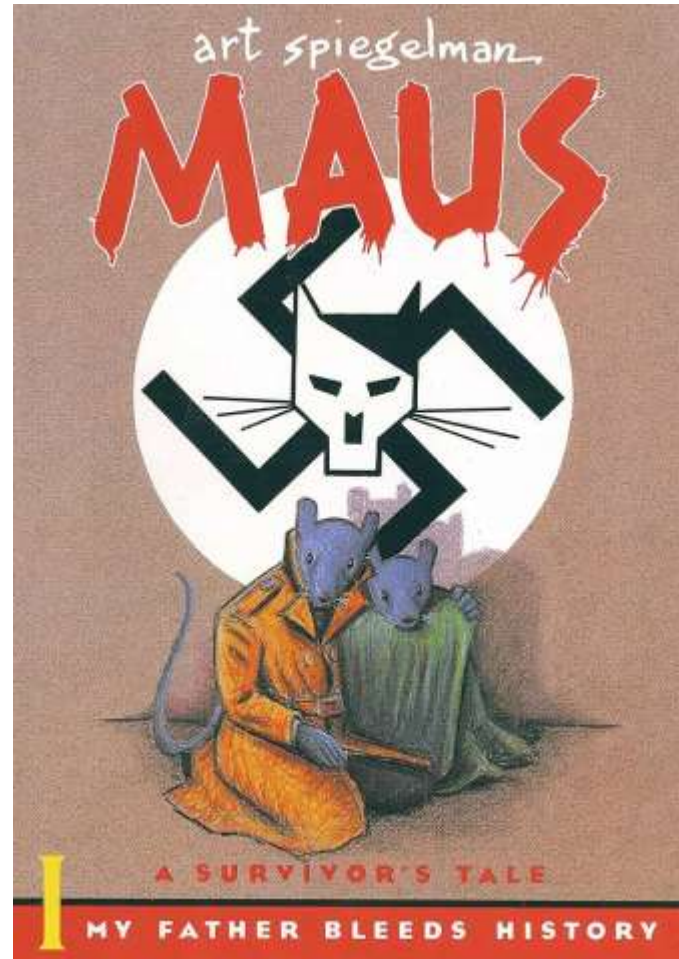
Art Spiegelman (1948-present)

- Writer and artist
- Second generation Holocaust survivor
- *Maus*, *Metamaus*, *Garbage Pail Kids*, *Arcade*, *Raw*, *In the Shadow of No Towers*



Maus (86-87)

- Gritty historical or (auto)biographical realism, but stylized
- Comics' image-text form creates opportunities for bearing witness
- Biography, memoir, photography



Maus

- Witnessing
- Black and white
- Cross hatching





ANJA AND I DIDN'T HAVE WHERE TO GO.

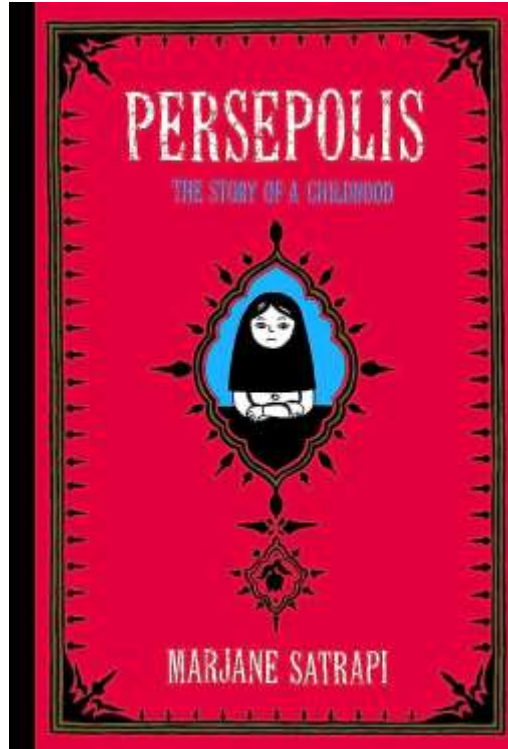


Maus – witnessing, documentary



- Draws attention to history and to the “real” world
- Levels of iconicity or realism
- Iconic – bears some relatively unambiguous relationship to reality
- Investigates the boundaries of what comics can do

Persepolis (2000)



THE KEY TO PARADISE WAS FOR POOR PEOPLE. THOUSANDS OF YOUNG KIDS, PROMISED A BETTER LIFE, EXPLODED ON THE MINEFIELDS WITH THEIR KEYS AROUND THEIR NECKS.



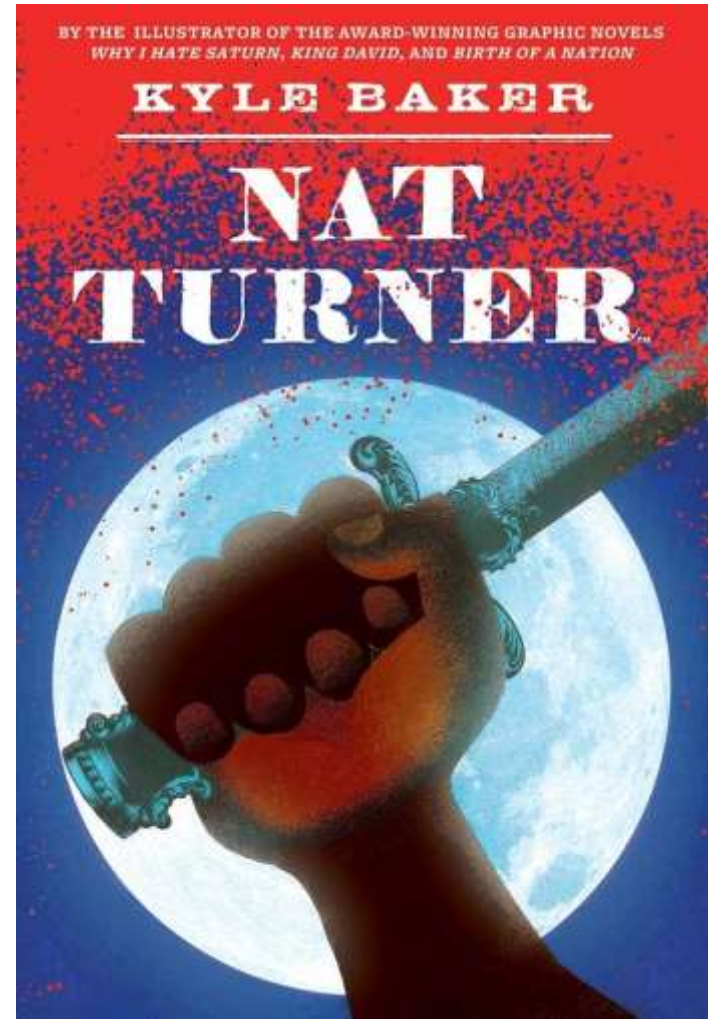
MRS. NASHINE'S SON MANAGED TO AVOID THAT FATE, BUT LOTS OF OTHER KIDS FROM HIS NEIGHBORHOOD DIDN'T.

MEANWHILE, I GOT TO GO TO MY FIRST PARTY, NOT ONLY DID MY MOM LET ME GO, SHE ALSO KNITTED ME A SWEATER FULL OF HOLES AND MADE ME A NECKLACE WITH CHAINS AND NAILS. PUNK ROCK WAS IN.



I WAS LOOKING SHARP.

Nat Turner (2005)



R. H. Cashins
THE *Heathville*

CONFESSIONS

E. W. Miller or *J. S. W. Lee*

NAT TURNER,

THE LEADER OF THE LATE

INSURRECTION IN SOUTHAMPTON, VA.

As fully and voluntarily made to

THOMAS R. GRAY,

in the prison where he was confined, and acknowledged by him to be such when read before the Court of Southampton, with the certificate, under seal of the Court convened at Jerusalem, Nov. 2, 1831, for his trial.

ALSO, AS AUTHENTIC

ACCOUNT OF THE WHOLE INSURRECTION,

WITH LISTS OF THE WHITES WHO WERE MURDERED,

AND OF THE NEGROES BROUGHT BEFORE THE COURT OF SOUTHAMPTON, AND THERE SENTENCED, &c.

Baltimore:

PUBLISHED BY THOMAS R. GRAY,

Lucas & Deacer, print.

1831.

FROM THE CONFESSIONS OF NAT TURNER

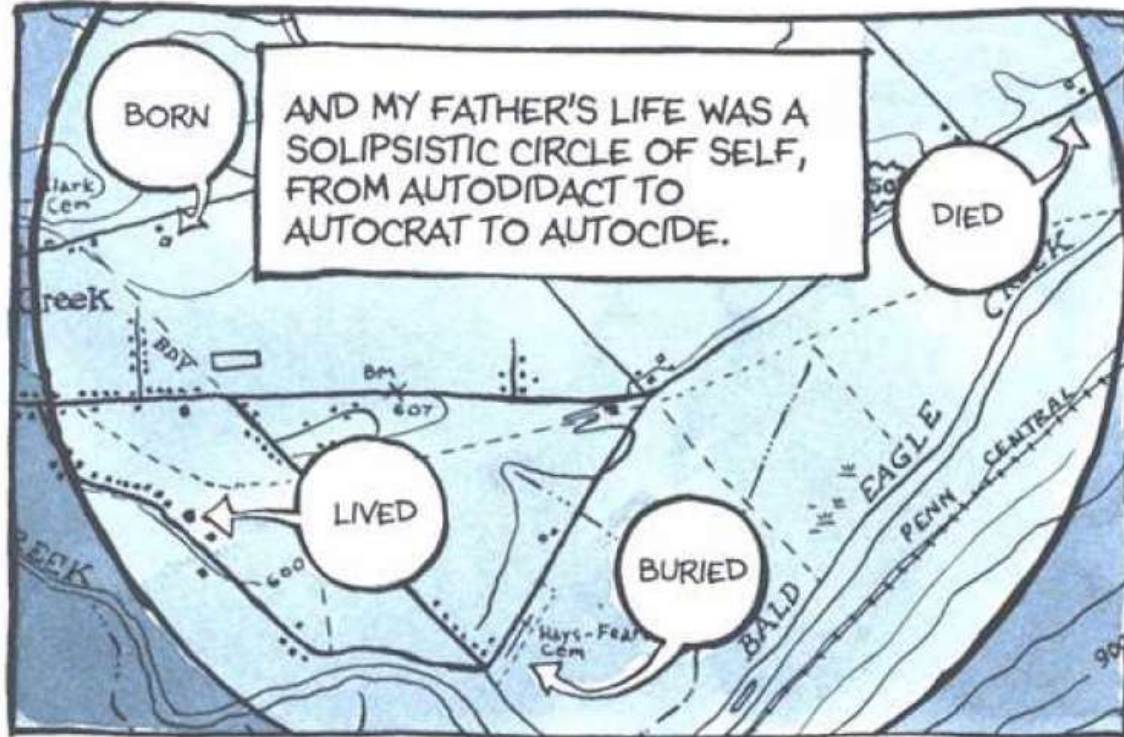
"My father and mother strengthened me in this, my first impression, saying in my presence I was intended for some great purpose, which they had always thought from certain marks on my head and breast... My grandmother, who was very religious, and to whom I was much attached—my master, who belonged to the church, and other religious persons who visited the house, and whom I often saw at prayers, noticing the singularity of my manners, I suppose, and my uncommon intelligence for a child, remarked I had too much sense to be raised, and if I was, I would never be of any service to any one as a slave..."



Fun Home (2006)



Fun Home (2006)



Displacement (2020)



Gender Queer (2019)



Sandman

- Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* should also be considered alongside the Big Three
- Overtly literary, mythopoetic, and experimental with form and panels
- Recent Audible adaptation



