Apocalypse Why? The Neutralisation of the Antichrist in Three Comics Adaptations

Maaheen Ahmed & Martin Lund

The Antichrist in Historical and Contemporary Imagination

While the Bible contains only a few scattered, somewhat ambiguous, references to antichrists (1 John 2:18, 22; 1 John 2 4:3; 2 John 1:7; cf. McGinn 1994:54-56), the fact that the Antichrist has been fleshed out by subsequent interpretation and transcontextualisation into a distinct figure shows how it has occupied and continues to occupy a prominent place in our cultural imagination, persisting across a variety of extra-Biblical discourses, including artistic, religious, and political ones. For close to two millennia now, billions of people have wrestled with notions of “antichrist,” conceived of in terms of either an internal force, an impulse in binary opposition to Christ, or as a personification of evil. In all cases, antichrists, inspired by eschatology or “teachings about the end,” have been regarded as embodiments of ultimate human evil (McGinn 1994).

The concept of an antichrist has roots dating back to Second Temple Judaism, and has developed in several directions over its long history; these developments have mainly taken place along two axes, or polarities: an internal-external polarity, and a dread-deception polarity (4-5). The former places antichrist(s) either within or without the group or even the self; the latter identifies the perceived enemy’s tactics and means of spreading its evil. There has also been great variety in beliefs about the identity of the Antichrist, as either an individual (e.g. Nero, Napoleon, Vladimir Putin, and Barack Obama) or as a collective (e.g. the Catholic Church in the eyes of Protestant polemics). Summarily put, the antichrist has been a being or a force, which beguiles believers into seeing it as Christ and heralds the final war between good and evil (Heaven and Hell).

Antichrist figures, even in their absolute sense, are no thing of the past. In 1994 McGinn noted, “[t]oo many people still believe in a literal and imminent Antichrist for skeptics to pronounce his epitaph with easy security.” (1) Seventeen years after the publication of his book, this remains very much the case. Antichrists have long appeared, and still frequently do, in Christian political rhetoric (Fuller 1995; Hart 2011, passim.; McElvaine 2008: e.g. 46-47, where the author both denies the existence of a personal Antichrist and calls his opponents antichrists). They are also a recurrent feature in so-called “Rapture Culture” - most notably the Left Behind franchise of bestselling novels (“Over 65 million copies sold!”), films, computer games etc. that tell the story of the end of days and the final struggle between good and evil - and Fundamentalist propaganda like the widely disseminated (over 750 million) Chick tracts, small black-and-white comics pamphlets that offer critiques on a variety of topics from a normative theological perspective. (Frykholm 2004; Bivins 2008).

From medieval mysteries to the present day, a host of antichrists have appeared in a variety of cultural products. Cinema, literature, and comics, among other media, supply us with a steady stream of characters which, while sometimes dropping the explicit Christ-Antichrist polarity common to the theological view, nonetheless retain - and to a certain degree have helped shift the meaning of - central aspects of antichrist legends. Among the most influential figures in shaping contemporary popular conceptions of the individual antichrist is the character Damien Thorn from the _Omen_ films (Donner 1976; Taylor 1978; Baker 1981; Moore 2006), whose very name has become a commonplace in the cultural vernacular in connection with the Antichrist. Damien is the son of Satan, portrayed in a deterministic way as born evil. The movie’s well-known story has been parodied several times, for example in episodes the satirical TV-shows _South Park_ and _American Dad_, and in Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman’s novel _Good Omens_ (1996), but only in the last case does the Antichrist figure’s evil nature significantly come into question (cf. Pratchett & Gaiman 1996: 324, 329, 336). Intradietegically, as well as extradiegetically, the pressure is on the antichrist to not only perform in his predestined role, but also to conform to a predetermined mould.

In this article, we will discuss three adaptations, and immediate neutralisations, in comics of the Antichrist motif - referred to herein with an uppercase “A” and definite article - which we take to refer to a servant or even child of the Devil or some similar demonic construct, “anointed” as a destroyer and born for the purpose of setting in motion the events of the End Times.

Such a deterministically framed symbol of ultimate human evil, like the _Omen’s_ Damien, can be seen as typifying the Antichrist in contemporary imagination. The _Omen_ suite keeps the central motif more or less intact, showing that Damien Thorn is the Antichrist in the sense of the Final Enemy, evil incarnate. From the very first Damien is aloof and distant even in the face of deadly tragedies, long before he is aware of who he is, and despite occasional attempts to throw the audience off, there can be no doubt that he is treading a predetermined course (as for instance in Damien’s suggested telepathic communion with a hell-hound and the on-the-nose ending of the first _Omen_ film, where the child looks directly at the camera and cracks a wry and ominous smile at his adoptive parent’s funeral [Donner 1976]). Damien has, despite the dismissive treatment McGinn (1994: 272-273) gives the film (seemingly due to its lack of “authenticity”), in a sense been raised to the level of an “authentic” figure. Along with elements of the older traditions, much of the conventional and representational materials connected with this latter-day Antichrist have made their way into our comics. Accordingly, he will be considered as an “original” Antichrist on equal footing with the traditional, theological conceptions, against which the comics adaptations will be compared.
In all three comics discussed in this article, this common, if recent, understanding of the Antichrist, along with its underlying assumptions, is inverted. The comic book adaptations of the Antichrist motif subject it to the irreverent treatment characteristic of the medium. This inclination towards cheekiness or mockery can be traced on one hand to the visual legacy of caricatures, which persists in the drawing styles adopted by most comics artists (cf. for instance David Kunzle’s *History of the Comic Strip*, where he traces the roots of comics to broadsheets and caricatures). It can also be linked to what Hutcheon (2000) shows to be a recurrent feature of postmodern art, namely parody. While emphasizing how parody has changed with times and cultures, Hutcheon proposes parody involving “revisiting, replaying, inverting, and ‘trans-contextualizing’ previous works of art” as the recurrent characteristic of twentieth-century art (11). In her more recent book on adaptation, Hutcheon notes that “[l]ike parodies, adaptations have an overt and defining relationship to prior texts, usually revealingly called ‘sources.’ Unlike parodies, however, adaptations usually openly announce this relationship” (Hutcheon 2006: 3). Since the kind of adaptation we are concerned with in this paper involves the transposition of a motif to the medium of comics, often making implicit use of several earlier texts rather than explicitly outspoken sources, her notion of parody is a more useful analytical tool for our purposes. Further, according to Hutcheon, adaptation is “repetition with variation” (4, 6, 116) which “commits the heresy of showing that form (expression) can be separated from content (ideas) … The form changes with adaptation: … the content persists.” (9-10). In contrast, parody is conceived not in terms of a “ridiculing imitation” as in most standard dictionary definitions, but as “repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity” (6). Indeed, what is most notable about our Antichrist stories is precisely their marking of difference, their refusal to let the familiar form of the Antichrist uncritically repeat traditional content.

**Three Comics Antichrists**

For this study, we have chosen to work with three comics Antichrists. Arguably, we could have picked others; for instance, Todd McFarlane’s Spawn or Marvel’s Son of Satan, but they differ from the present texts in significant ways. While our Antichrists were born for their purposes, Spawn was re-created as a destroyer, though he was quick to abandon that role. Thus, he is at best a born-again Antichrist figure. Son of Satan, while also a rebellious son of the Devil, is at best a C-list character and it is easier to break conventions with supporting cast or minor characters than with protagonists. In the comics we will discuss - Mark Millar and Peter Gross’ *Chosen* (2005), Mike Mignola and John Byrne’s *Hellboy: Seed of Destruction* (1994), and Garth Ennis and Jacen Burrows’ *The Chronicles of Wormwood* (2007) - the Antichrist figures are the main characters of their respective stories, existing from the very beginning for the purpose of bringing about the end of the world. Being implicitly rooted in Biblical traditions and their offshoots, their reworking of the traditional motifs offers us a way of understanding the effects of transcontextualisation in the medium of comics.

*Chosen* tells the story of a young boy named Jodie Christianson, narrated by his adult self. While the story ends with a clear anchoring in the Antichrist tradition, it does so by presenting the preceding story in an even more familiar way. After surviving an accident unscathed, Jodie is told that his birth was foretold, and that his future is written in the Bible. He is encouraged to read Rev. 13-14: the book’s thirteenth chapter contains many of the passages traditionally interpreted in Antichrist-terms, to which the fourteenth, with its salvific tone, stands in sharp contrast; the former is about the Beast, the latter about the Son. In the second *Omen* film (Taylor 1978), Damien too is told to read Revelation because he is in it, but only chapter 13, eliminating the potential for confusion both within the diegesis and without which fuels *Chosen*.

Like many medieval antichrist legends, *Chosen* parodies the life and works of Christ - the virgin birth is retold, but with significant and marked differences, as we will see; the scene where Jesus discusses the intricacies of religious teachings with the finest minds of Judea becomes Jodie answering any question his teachers can conceive of in the teacher’s lounge (preceded by a classroom scene in which Jodie is discovered to have knowledge beyond what could reasonably be expected of him, again connecting the comic and Bible with the second *Omen* film, here instead supporting the erroneous Christ-identification); Jodie’s turning water into wine with his friends travels via the “Jungle telegraph” so that by the time he gets home, “the story was that I’d also multiplied the loaves and the fishes and conjured up a thousand little Snickers bars” (Millar & Gross 2005: np). He even gets to resurrect a dead dog, overcompensating for the relative insignificance of the canine by trying to top the “Lazarus trick with showbiz pyrotechnics”.

But Jodie is also a modern teenager, which shines through quite clearly in, for instance, his relation to the unstoppable force of puberty (cf. Round 2010: 188-189). *Chosen* begins with Jodie and his friends looking for a discarded pornographic magazine, and later he is worried that, being the Son of God, he will have to stay chaste and never get to use the "equipment ... filling up [his] underpants." He is also a voracious reader of superhero comic books and describes the Bible in terms of Star Wars: *A New Hope* being the Old Testament, *The Empire Strikes Back* the New Testament where the "guy we actually like the best looking like he bites it in the end", and the current time, the last part of the trilogy ("We get a trailer for this called the Book of Revelation") is the "Return of the friggin' Jedi," though if he is Han Solo or Luke Skywalker in the analogy remains a little fuzzy. For most of its span, *Chosen* does feel like a trilogy-capping Testament set in a not-too-distant past, a sequel to the Bible where we’re promised a “proper end.” Jodie, then, is not only the Antichrist, but is also introduced as the Anti-Christ in a more explicit and traditional sense than the two figures presented below. It consequently falls under “the mirroring of hero and villain” which, as Julia Round backs up with examples, is a recurrent feature of comics (Round 2010: 189-190). Unlike the classic legends however, the mirroring of Christ here is not marked by intention or malice, but by genuine conviction.

Although promoting a kind of popular religion, the end of *Chosen* generates a crucial ambiguity by revealing the supposedly returning Christ as the Antichrist (and, incidentally, the U.S. President). Attentive readers can find any number of hints, but only at the very end is it revealed that the real father Jodie is about to meet is not God, but Satan. In the face of the revelation of a destiny foretold in the Bible, the young Jodie naturally chose to believe that his future was on the side of angels. When asked if the Devil laughed at his son’s mistakes, the adult Jodie answers...
with a clue as to what it takes to shape a traditional Antichrist: "Oh, he laughed all right. He took out his five cocks and he laughed and laughed and laughed as he raped me up there in that penthouse apartment for close to seven full years. His friends, too, ten thousand of his nearest and dearest, just like they'd fucked my mother frigid thirteen years before" (Millar & Gross 2005).

If Millar is reluctant to unmask his Antichrist, Garth Ennis relishes in having the Final Enemy as his protagonist: the very first panel of Chronicles of Wormwood is a close-up, clearly copied from The Omen (Donner 1976), of the Antichrist Danny Wormwood's scalp and the Mark of the Beast, the number 666. Twice in the first four pages we find unequivocal self-identification from the protagonist, once in introducing himself to his readers, once to excuse his "dickish" behaviour: "I am the Antichrist" (Ennis & Burrows 2007: np). In representing Wormwood, Ennis and Burrows rely as much on the Omen suite as they do on Revelation and its history of interpretation (from the name Wormwood taken from Rev. 8:10-11 to the beast rising out of the sea in Rev. 13, here named Nigel). They comfortably bring in the film's prophecy that the Antichrist will be born of a jackal, and having him recount a childhood very much like Damien's, in which people close to him or who know who he really is kept dying (Cf. Taylor 1978), although with a different attitude toward it; Wormwood states in obvious reference to cinematic Antichrist tales that "[t]his day I don't like crows, I don't like snakes and I don't like big black dogs" (Ennis & Burrows 2007). Beyond this identity, Wormwood is also a successful television producer, owner of a talking rabbit, and close friend of Jay - the returned Jesus. Both of them have "told [their] dads to fuck off": Danny refusing to trigger the end of the world as foretold in the Book of Revelation and Jay refusing to die anew for mankind's sins, only to once again see his message perverted.

In their similarities, Wormwood and Jay become vehicles for a largely humanist social ethos summed up in the phrase "first do no harm," though the social dimensions of Jesus' teachings (perverted, it seems, by organized religion) are also explicitly lauded. They refuse to do the bidding of supernatural beings, even in the face of the "sheer, miserable meanness of the human race." That is not to say that Wormwood is a nice guy, however. He takes advantage of his "eldritch powers" to switch places between a bartender's penis and nose when the man insults Jay, fills a competitor's pool with whale semen as the latest blow in a heated rivalry, and cheats on his girlfriend. These ills however, are small and marked by a thoroughly human pettiness, compared to the larger cosmic ones he continuously opposes.

In crafting the story, Ennis has produced an irreverent tour de force where few traditional notions of good and evil are left untouched, climaxing in a scene of salvation through Antichrist: the head of the Catholic Church is the hard-drinking and over-sexed Australian Pope Jacko (elected on dubious merits because, as one Cardinal reminds another, "You might recall it was this or the nigger") who is in cahoots with the Devil, a Muslim suicide bomber gets to Heaven only to find his 72 virgins in diapers; famous dead wander the earth, such as Joan of Arc who occasionally calls upon Wormwood, who was born in London and thus is an "engleeshe peeg," to sexually punish her; and so on. In the end, Danny impales his father and God on the spear that pierced Jesus's side on the cross, averting Armageddon and leaving humanity to determine its own future.

In Wormwood, the absoluteness of evil is explicitly questioned; this is done, however, by enlisting and taking for granted some of the same traditions which the story critiques, namely those related to the Antichrist. This is underscored throughout the story, most explicitly on a two page splash where the Devil - surrounded by images of "eldritch powers" to switch places between a bartender's penis and nose when the man insults Jay, fills a competitor's pool with whale semen as the latest blow in a heated rivalry, and cheats on his girlfriend. These ills however, are small and marked by a thoroughly human pettiness, compared to the larger cosmic ones he continuously opposes.

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Byrne 1984). The reply is emphatically punctuated with a bullet from Hellboy's oversized gun delivered into one of his insistent interlocutors' eyes. With this, Hellboy shows that he is no slave to determinism or prophesied destiny. On the contrary, the protagonists in all three comics end up questioning prophecies in one way or another. In *Wormwood*, Armageddon comes close to fruition, forced by God and Satan as the "one way they can still matter", but is eventually neutralised through self-reflexivity (Ennis & Burrows 2007). The destined harbinger of the event, Danny, refuses to follow the path supposedly ordained for him. Besides thematising the problem of free will (which is especially contentious in religious discourses), *Wormwood* ultimately comes across as a questioning of the Bible's narrative, especially its interpretation and representation. Already in the first chapter when Wormwood introduces Jay, he muses that the readers of the Bible "never seem to think about who's doing the telling". "The Bible's a book that men wrote, like the Koran or The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. It's just guesswork, with some stuff churches and kings threw in to frighten peasants", Wormwood later explains to his rabbit who is surprised that no one is guarding the gate to Heaven. Such self-reflexivity, which is sceptical of absolute narratives, is possibly one of the most recurrent features of artistic since the 20th century. Moreover, for Hutcheon, it is parody that "is one of the major forms in modern self-reflexivity" (Hutcheon 2000: 2).

Notably comics are accorded a prominent position in all three diegeses. Occasionally, self-reflexivity unfolds on the level of the medium as in the case of the comics bookstore owner who goes to Heaven (Ennis & Burrows 2007) and Jodie's keen interest in comics (Millar & Gross 2005). This interest is grounded in the power of comics to entertain and also unleash the imagination. The angel who comes for the comic bookstore owner (after doing his own share of browsing through the inventory) explains the reasons for the comic bookstore owner's going to Heaven as follows: "You turned people on to cool comics. You made them happy, you made their lives a little bit better" (Ennis & Burrows 2007). As Jodie puts it: "Comic books were my own substitute for a sex life back in those days... It's all so much better than you might expect" (Millar & Gross 2005). *Hellboy*, in contrast, is more absorbed in the comics world. The superhero Torch of Liberty is called in to support the Allies at what is later labelled the "Hellboy incident", seemingly appearing only to show the respect the creators have for Jack Kirby (to whom, along with H.P. Lovecraft whose influence is much more visible, the volume is dedicated) and to key our reading of the story as a superhero yarn as opposed to a horror story. However, by incorporating fragments of myth, religion, and history, the comic involves a constant interaction between several worlds (including the supposedly real and fictional ones), which also forms part of the story's issues (i.e. the impossibility for Hellboy and his companions to exist in the real world). The incorporation of comics signals the self-reflexivity present within the diegesis, both from a meta-perspective (as we've seen with the use of comics within the medium of comics) and from a character-perspective: all three Antichrists in our comics not only refuse to play the roles ascribed to them but also question the validity of the prophecies by emphasizing the fact that they are stories, narratives. Not only do they question the accepted truth of their destinies, but they rebel against, and succeed in transforming, them and the preconceptions attached to themselves.

**Playing with the End of the World**

Antichrists have for most of their history been represented as one-dimensional symbols of pure evil. Perhaps the first time an Antichrist's inner motivation was discussed was in a work of fiction by Vladimir Solovyev published in 1900, where the author argues for evil as a real power in the world and probes "the psychological and theological meanings of total malice" (McGinn 1994: 267). Any complex representation is rare both among contemporary writers of confessional Antichrist fiction and those who point accusingly at living people. Conversely, our three Antichrists are all somewhat fleshed-out characters. At the very least, we know why they do what they do and - significantly - don't do. The attentive reader will no doubt have noticed that only one of them even entertains the notion of fulfilling his "destiny" and end the world; we would contend that this is only to be expected.

When Mark Millar announced that *Chosen* would be made into a feature film, titled *American Jesus* (the name also given to a re-issue of the series), he noted:

I've always wondered what it would be like if Jesus came back to the present day. But he only discovers he's Christ when he talks to his mum after the accident and she says 'I have something to tell you - you are the Son of God' as she had got pregnant Virgin Mary-style. The first part of the movie starts in America, but he disappears to Scotland in the hope his enemies won't find him before battling the anti-Christ, Armageddon, the whole bit. As a practising Catholic I will treat it reverentially. (Bendoris 2011)

If this is not simply Millar being coy, playing with expectations among fans and future theatre-goers (and Millar himself is certainly not known for his strict adherence to convention), this quote points to a difference between comics and cinema, and their adherence to conventions. All forms of narrative media make significant use of conventions. Cinema, in light of its wide availability and marketing, perhaps appeals to such shared understandings more than many other media (Cf. Williams 2000: 210-211). Comics have always had a harder time keeping to conventions - social, narrative, or other. This much is evident not least from the moral panics of the 1950s and the Comics Code that followed, which devoted much space to keeping the medium from questioning norms and authority (cf. Hajdu 2008; Comics Code reprinted in Nyberg 1998).

Round's observation that "Chosen offers a postmodern religious allegory that acknowledges its contradictions ..." (2010: 188) also applies to the other two works discussed here. One could safely stretch this observation further to claim that *Chosen* not only acknowledges but also celebrates the contradictions, not least in the hints dropped about the identity of the protagonist and the delight with which Millar and Gross discuss them in the discussion added to the trade paperback. As Round points out, these contradictions are reflected in the comic itself on several levels, including...
those of contrasts between the narrating words and images, as well as the contrasting narratorial voices of Jodie at ages twelve and thirty-three. Although the other two comics are created with overtly less religious intentions, their similarity is surprising and it could have something to do with the very medium of comics and the traditions that it has incorporated, with the most prominent being the very undoing of tradition by mocking the accepted or all that is extraneous to comics.

In many cultural products containing the Antichrist, like the Left Behind series, we see an example of what Pierre Wiktorin (2011) has termed "popular culture in the service of religion." Left Behind, according to Wiktorin, "can be described as a fictionalization of the eschatology of the Bible" (49). With The Omen and our Antichrist comics, however, we have examples of the inverse, of "religion in the service of popular culture," where it is not "as apparent that a religious message is being conveyed." After listing a few examples of this practice, Wiktorin writes:

> These have all been considered to be based upon Christian values although they are not usually perceived as promoting the views of a particular group. Like lay people, who in their individual project appropriate the religious expression which suits them best, creators in this category play with religious props to mystify the product and thus play with our interest in the supernatural. ... [T]here are a number of pragmatic reasons to spice up the story with religious elements or creeds. (50, our/ Martin’s translation)

In all our comics, the motif is used not to warn about the end but, as a common element of three occasionally very different narratives, to entertain. Sometimes, the Antichrist is just a familiar figure to play with, or to direct to different ends than it has been enlisted for before: Ennis and Burrows (like Pratchett and Gaiman), for example, produce a satiric parody of contemporary culture with their Antichrist. As we will elaborate below Wormwood also, along with Hellboy and Chosen, uses the mystical allure and cultural cachet of the Antichrist to demystify evil. Wiktorin’s last remark also ties up well with two other observations which can account for the function and relevance of the comics discussed here. On one hand there is Jean François Lyotard’s elucidation of the postmodern condition, where he pointed out that "(e)clecticicism is the degree zero of contemporary general culture" (76). On the other hand, heterogeneity has been a dominant feature of folk and popular culture as exemplified by the carnivalesque and the grotesque (Bakhtin 1984: passim.). Not only can the caricatural tendencies of comics in general be linked to the ‘grotesque realism’, which according to Bakhtin is exemplified by carnival practices and Rabelais’ Gargantua and Pantagruel books, but the emphasis on ‘lower’, bodily elements that he goes on to elaborate, such as "anatomizing" or "carnival dismemberment" (202), are comparable to the explicit renditions in the comics we are concerned with, especially Wormwood and Hellboy.

Lastly, the blunt political jibes of our comics share many aspects with the carnivalesque, which refers to a folk cultural phenomenon hinged on the aesthetics of grotesque realism. The carnivalesque is diverse in its undoing of homogeneity and hegemony, multifaceted in its incorporation of ambiguity and, through ignoring all officialised or canonized rules - such as those of propriety or the classical rules of clear form and structure - subversive (Bakhtin 1984: 30-31). Notably, ambiguity is inherent in the very word ‘Antichrist’, which "implicitly acknowledges a resemblance between accuser and accused, so that even when directed at a group wholly repugnant to the truly faithful, the accusation itself confesses a secret affinity - the profound affinity between 'true faith' and the bastardized, mimetic equivalent without which the chosen could not discern their election." (Parker 2007: 46). For Parker this ambiguity is located in the very prefix of ‘anti’-, which not only indicates opposition but also “a principle of representation and exchange whereby one thing must answer for another as its pseudo-equivalent” (155). The exploitation of this ambiguity within the antichrist term is ideal for creating gripping narratives (as evidenced, for example, in the success of the Left Behind franchise). In the comics analysed here this ambiguity is extended to the very role played by the protagonists. While Christ may have been "our cultural hero" in the past (Jung 1959: 36), the three Antichrists present evil on a cosmic scale (while relishing in several roguish pranks) and actually put things right, reflect a tendency towards more sophisticated, and also more relatable, characterization in lieu of stereotypes of good and evil. Instead of black and white divisions, these stories emphasize the greyness connecting good and evil. Antichrists who do good highlight the superficiality and danger of labels (something, which ironically enough, is rooted in the very name itself) and invite critical re-thinking.

Our comics repeat a binary deeply ingrained and highly familiar in Western culture - the dichotomy between absolute good and absolute evil represented by the forces of Heaven and Hell, commonly signified by the Antichrist. In all cases, however, this repetition is permeated with Hutcheon’s "critical distance", an emphasis not on their similarities with traditional uses of the motif, but on the difference between the old and the new. Frahm extends Hutcheon’s notion of parody to comics, noting that comics parody the very notion of an original, the referentiality of signs, and the presumed relation between signs and objects (Frahm 2000: 179). Signs do not reproduce a reality that precedes them; good and evil do not exist as objective and predetermined realities, and the Antichrist motif is afforded no special status in this regard. Indeed, the Antichrist is no stranger to parody; throughout the motif’s long and storied history, the birth and works of the Antichrist have often been cast in quite obvious parody of the birth and deeds of Jesus. (E.g. McGinn 1994: e.g. 75, 131-132, 144)

Chosen obviously works with such a model, parodying the tweenhood and calling of the young Christian Messiah, but it doesn’t stop there. Jodie’s childhood is not presented as some intentional grotesque distortion of Gospel narrative. He seems sincerely to believe that he is the Second Coming. Only in its sensationalist “carnival dismemberment” (202), are comparable to the explicit renditions in the comics we are concerned with, especially Wormwood and Hellboy.
(somewhat) well-adjusted force for good, despite the circumstance of his emergence into the world, his physical appearance, and his name; character traits like these are often used in narrative fiction to affirm characterization (Rimmon-Kenan 2002: 57-71). In Hellboy however, even as they are made even more prominent by the addition of a visual dimension, they serve their characterizing function by reversing common understandings of the traits and their meanings.

Likewise, visual parodic repetition involves the insertion of iconographical images with several twists in both Chosen and Wormwood. The collected Chosen, for instance, has a cover showing Jodie nailed to a cross-like telephone pole. The covers of the individual issues of the original series are more direct caricatures of Jesus portraits, showing a crucified Jesus wearing a "Frankie Say Relax" tee, a modernised Jesus in t-shirt and jeans in the sacred heart pose, and having his last supper of pizza with Jodie’s friends gathered around him, respectively. Caricature acquires more irreverent dimensions in Wormwood, where Satan is depicted as a super villain whereas God is a frail, insane, and chronically masturbating old man.

Implications of Neutralising Adaptations

McGinn (1994) notes that the issue raised by belief in the Antichrist "is that of the relation between human agency and evil, especially the possibility of a completely evil human being." (2) The idea of such a person is, of course, largely inconceivable by today’s psychology- and sociology-influenced understanding of human nature and evil but, he goes on to contend, "[t]he Antichrist legend challenges these modern assumptions, because it is based on the conviction that total evil can be realized in an individual human and even in a human collectivity" (2-3).

What, then, are we to make of the Antichrists presented and discussed above? As McGinn sees it:

[r]eappropriating apocalyptic symbols independently of their original literal understandings but in line with their fundamental power to reveal meaning is a delicate and controversial procedure, especially because the symbols were designed more to portray good and evil than to decide what is really good and bad. (278)

However, the latter is exactly what our comic books are doing; two of the protagonists are introduced as sons of the Devil born for the purpose of ending the world and the third - of uncertain lineage, to be sure, but his appearance and common knowledge both dictate that he is not of this earth and likely not related to the higher realms of good as traditionally conceived - is brought into our world for the same purpose. None, however, serves to uncritically portray evil. They all decide, in their own way, what is good and bad and, even more significantly, in what way. All three comics are careful in noting that it is not the nature of the Antichrist that makes him a destroyer: Hellboy renounces his destiny by the pull of a trigger, Jodie at first sees himself as the Second Coming, and Danny Wormwood fully accepts the fact that he is the Devil’s son but does not buy into the received notions about what that’s supposed to entail. Thus, his repetition of the phrase "I am the Antichrist" only serves to underscore his agency and refusal to play his preordained role, or his difference from the "original".

According to McCutcheon (2003: 155-158) theodicies, interrogations of divine justice most often connected to the problem of evil, are evidence of "cognitive queasiness". Human beings have wrestled with the question of evil for centuries because experience has seldom accorded with expectations of how the world works. Explanations of evil have been needed to support the totalizing story of an all-good God and just order; today, as McGinn also notes, our explanatory models are different, and this shines through in our comics. Notions about "evil" exists but these do not, as McCutcheon notes (2003: 161) and our comics agree, describe some independent "anomaly in an essentially good, meaningful, and ordered world". In making this point, Wormwood is more explicit than the other two series. During an "afterlife road-trip", Danny explains to his rabbit what is needed to get into Heaven: "That's decided by your actions while you're alive. No one's judging you. You're the one who determines what happens to you..." (Ennis & Burrows 2007). In their clear marking of agency, Hellboy and Jodie support a similar interpretation of evil. Evil is taken out of the realm of dogma and story, and is put in a constructivist perspective as something human; this is done by enlisting and taking for granted the same traditions which the stories critique, consequently recalling the notion of parody as sanctioned transgression and the related practice of medieval carnivals.

The resulting neutralisation of the Antichrist figures can be seen as an outcome of self-reflexive scepticism against belief systems (in Round’s words redefining "religious content as subjectives rather than objectives" [Round 2010: 200]) as well as a simultaneous acceptance of these stories as almost necessary alternatives for transforming the banalities of life. Their tone is therefore not all that different from the smiling, pregnant hags Bakhtin mentioned as illustrations of the ambiguous facet of folk humour, who mock, fascinate and entertain by transforming official (political and religious) givens by combining, as it were, "a senile, decaying and deformed flesh with the flesh of new life" (Bakhtin 1984: 25-26). The particular zeal with which Antichrist figures in comics have rebelled against the prototype established over centuries owes something to the current tendency towards self-reflexivity as well as the very medium of comics, which in comparison to other media, enjoys considerable freedom to ridicule (but must put up with an accompanying degree of infamy).

References


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Three or four people have shared revelations claiming Obama is only a forerunner to the antichrist. I believe all of them are correct because in his current assignment, Obama is acting as a forerunner, preparing the way for the coming beast. He is not yet what he shall be, but I believe the beast which comes up out of the sea will encounter him, overtake him, and change him into what he must be to complete his next assignment. Part two of this series will explain the transformation of the antichrist as revealed in the scriptures and confirmed by prophetic dreams and visions. Stay tuned! Author From the former lands of Russia where petty warlords battle for control of the torched steppes, to the once mighty Reich, where various factions threaten to tear the nation apart into civil war. No matter what happens, the world is in perhaps its most turbulent phase, with the Reich and Japan on the brink of war, and the threat of nuclear destruction looming over all, will the world survive into the 70's?Â It is unfair to the development team to post leaked contents of the mod, violations of this rule will result in an instant ban. Naturally, this does not apply to the "official" TNO leaks. 11: Moderators have the final say. Apocalypse why? The neutralisation of the Antichrist in three comics adaptations. Article. Jan 2012.Â The primary purpose of the Left Behind series is to promote evangelism. Readers feel convicted by the books of the need to tell their loved ones about Christ and to seek the conversion of others. In addition, the story of rapture and tribulation provides a lens through which readers can interpret the chaotic and sometimes disconcerting events of the world. The popularity of the Left Behind series and its diffusion into mainstream culture leads the book to conclude with the suggestion that evangelicalism is wrongly understood as a "subculture" and instead needs to be conceived as a broad and fl American Horror Story: Apocalypse will come to an end on Wednesday and with so many questions remaining as the FX series heads into the finale, there are a number of theories about exactly how things will wrap up. Among those theories is one that everyone's favorite Antichrist, Michael Langdon, might not be the real evil after all. Over on Reddit, a fan found what is believed to be a spoiler-filled breakdown for "Apocalypse Then," Wednesday night's finale. While thereâ€™s not a lot of surprises in the breakdown -- and to be fair, no one is sure if it's real or not -- it's the last lines that hav
Why can’t anyone today tell us who are enemies are that Paul the Apostle was referring to? Why should this be the case when 1 Corinthians 14:33 states: For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. There had to be a way to determine what these End Times prophecies actually meant.Â For the calculation of the anti-Christ and the Mark of the Beast, we use only English Gematria. For Bible Prophecy, we use all three ciphers (Jewish, English and Simple Gematria) for our three witnesses.Â I have used three witnesses or three different forms of Holy Gematria, namely Hebrew, English and Simple Holy Gematria to establish the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob’s truth. I Hate the Antichrist refers to a series of memes, including image macros and Rage Comics, referring to the United Nations (UN) as “the antichrist,” a belief perpetuated by certain conspiracy theorists. The memes often depict ways to troll the UN, baiting them by telling them “I hate the antichrist,” and first appeared in late 2020 but was popularized throughout early 2021.Â Over the course of the month leading into March, new memes using the phrase and referencing the UN as the antichrist greatly increased, posted across social media on subreddits like /r/he_comes and /r/True_reddit, iFunny, and Twitter, often crossing over into absurd territory and "schizo posting" (further examples shown below). In Christian eschatology, the Antichrist, or anti-Christ, is a person prophesied by the Bible to oppose Christ and substitute himself in Christ's place before the Second Coming. The term (including one plural form) is found five times in the New Testament, solely in the First and Second Epistle of John. The Antichrist is announced as the one "who denies the Father and the Son."