*Perverting Suits:*

Superhero Costume in the Wildstorm Comics of Warren Ellis

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The title of this paper comes from Warren Ellis's dismissive term for costumes typical of the superhero genre: he first used it in a blog post in 2002 with specific reference to Batman whom he described as 'a man in a black leather pervert suit'. Ellis’s attitude towards traditional superhero costume is representative of his general contempt for the superhero genre, the power dynamics of which, he has claimed in the past, make him angry. Despite this, Ellis revitialised superhero comics in the late 1990s and the early 2000s with his work in the Wildstorm Universe on the titles *The Authority* and *Planetary*. Although not creator-owned books, these comics nevertheless contributed significantly to Ellis's growing status as a revisionary comic book *auteur* comparable to Alan Moore, Neil Gaiman or Grant Morrison. Tellingly, both titles prominently feature super-powered characters who wear 'civilian' and/or military clothing rather than costumes. Earlier this year, Ellis released a 'reimagining' of the Wildstorm universe with the series *The Wild Storm* which dispenses with traditional superhero costumes entirely.

In this paper I will discuss how Ellis's rejection of traditional superhero costume in his Wildstorm books expresses both his distaste and his ambitions for the genre, arguing that his use of civilian and military garb is part of his attempt to reposition superhero comics within other, existing genres such as crime, tech thriller and science fiction. In doing so I will draw on a range of sources, including Richard Reynolds classic structuralist reading of superhero comics *Superheroes: A Modern Mythology* (1992) and Geoff Klock's analysis of Ellis's Wildstorm work in *How To Read Superhero Comics and Why* (2002)*.*

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