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This thesis complicates the traditional associations between authorship and alphabetic composition within the comics medium and examines how the contributions of line artists and writers differ and may alter an audience's perceptions of the medium. As a fundamentally multimodal and collaborative work, the popular superhero comic muddies authorial claims and requires further investigations should we desire to describe authorship more accurately and equitably. How might our recognition of the visual author alter our understandings of the author construct within, and beyond, comics? In this pursuit, I argue that the terminology available to us determines how deeply we may understand a topic and examine instances in which scholars have attempted to develop on a discipline's body of terminology by borrowing from another. Although helpful at first, these efforts produce limited success, and discipline-specific terms become more necessary. To this end, I present the visual/alphabetic author distinction to recognize the possibility of authorial intent through the visual mode. This split explicitly recognizes the possibility of multimodal and collaborative authorships and forces us to re-examine our
beliefs about authorship more generally. Examining the editors' note, an instance of visual plagiarism, and the MLA citation for graphic narratives, I argue for recognition of alternative authorships in comics and forecast how our understandings may change based on the visual/alphabetic split. These observations find support in a series of comics panels that show how the intensity of the visual author's contributions may more easily alter an audience's perceptions of the comic book. I then explore how an acceptance of the visual author may encourage further engagement with multimodal composition and collaboration within the writing classroom, positing that a studio composition classroom facilitate such efforts.
Extending and Visualizing Authorship in Comics Studies

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Nicholas A. Brown, Author
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Extending and Visualizing Authorship in Comics Studies

Introduction

Comic books are experiencing a renaissance. Between high-quality, highly literary graphic novels that step far beyond the typical offerings of the medium and the barrage of comic book superhero-inspired blockbusters, it seems safe to say that never before has so much energy been exerted to understand what was once nothing more than kids' stuff and the bane of mothers everywhere. Interest in the comics medium is no longer limited to children and neck-bearded nerds in arrested development, and, although many people may have never actually picked up and read a comic book, being a fan carries with it a less negative stigma than it once did. Like many other topics in popular culture, some within academia seek to scholarize and examine comic books to understand more clearly how they function and why they are so popular. Comics author and scholar Scott McCloud offers that comics are composed of "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (9), and, because of this overtly narrative characteristic, comic books most often find a home within departments of English, or closely related fields.

Within this literary context, scholars have performed countless analyses of different comics offerings through many different literary lenses. While these studies are interesting and worthy of further exploration so that we may better understand our society and how it affects literature, and vice versa, I find myself wanting more. McCloud further elaborates on his definition of comics, stating "the artform—the medium—known as
comics is a vessel which can hold any number of ideas and images" and that "the trick is to never mistake the message for the messenger" (8). McCloud casts genre as the narrative content that fills comics, and medium as the representation of that content across different materials. How might we introduce comics into the classroom in a manner that does not reduce them to a genre and reflects their multimodal nature? I believe that pursuing a deeper understanding of comics through rhetoric and composition will help to allow scholars to define why a seemingly innocuous and frequently crudely produced form continues to captivate audiences. Additionally, it seems that further understanding of comics will allow us to implement them within the classroom better and provide students more intense exposure to multimodality. It is simply not enough to read comic books and analyze their contents; scholars should instead work toward more strenuous conversations regarding the form itself. In turn, I must ask how can we discuss comics more accurately?

In this pursuit, I see the threads of a rhetoric of comics studies that, with effort, I may begin drawing together to provide others greater opportunity to discuss the form. In *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud boldly states that "without [a unified vocabulary], comics will continue to limp along as the 'bastard child' of words and pictures" (47). There are features of comics that are not sufficiently addressed when using language designed for entirely visual or alphabetic texts. Instead, it is necessary that the language we use to discuss comics should reflect their multimodality, engaging both visually and alphabetically. Although I plan to pursue a developed and robust rhetoric of comics studies, for simplicity's sake I will begin the journey into clarity by offering terminology
that others may adopt and that will help to dispel some of the murkiness that seems to be present within popular comics. Once we allow the murkiness to disperse, it seems that we may be better able to discuss comics because we will possess a better view of it.

In chapter one, "Giant Size Comic Studies #1: Now with More Terms!", I argue for the importance of discipline-specific theoretical terminology in order to address the content of the discipline appropriately. Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen recognize that, although students will interact with visuals regularly, we do not have a body of terms appropriate for these interactions (21). My work in this thesis continues in the same spirit as Kress and van Leeuwen, but focuses specifically on comics. Although there have been many literary explorations of comics, much less scholarship exists on the complicated interactions between image and word. It seems that the line artists working on comics have the potential to alter the interpretation of a story as much, if not more than, the writer. However, why do we tend to associate stories with particular writers more often than specific line artists? How might our language limit our understanding, and how might we develop that language to a point that conversations reflect reality? There are instances where cross-disciplinary borrowing is appropriate and may help to clarify our understanding, but comics are fundamentally multimodal and possess their own affordances that require consideration and will, as recognized by Pascal Lefèvre, require medium-specific language. We will undoubtedly draw inspiration from other fields to develop comics studies' limited body of terminology, but we must rearticulate these terms to fit the needs of the discipline. A direct transfer is rare; we must avoid approximations as much as is possible. To this point, I offer comics studies-specific
terminology that may find use within other fields after appropriate adjustments. This language recognizes specific features of the comics form, allowing us to describe what we see more accurately.

I employ the terminology I present within the first chapter to problematize the author construct in popular comic books in chapter two, "Standing upon the Shoulders of Heroes: Authorships and the Popular Comic." I look to Roland Barthes' and Michel Foucault's texts that complicate and decenter the author figure in literature as a foundation for further inquiry and develop the intertextuality of writing. Introducing a split in authorship that recognizes both visual and alphabetic authorship provides greater nuance to our conception of the author figure and explicitly recognizes collaborative authorship in comics. Through this lens, I examine modern conceptions of collaboration in writing and Christy Mag Uidhir's model for minimal authorship. Although it appears that this distinction may only benefit comics studies, I explore the implications of this shift within the context of writing and look to uncover what we may already believe about visual authorship and visual plagiarism, as well as what might need to change to accommodate visual and collaborative authorships.

In chapter three, "Crossing Over: Recognizing Visual Authorship," I examine comics panels with attention paid explicitly to the potentiality of visual authorship and its functioning within the form. I attempt to come to a satisfactory conclusion about how we may discuss comics that recognizes the importance of the visual author within the collaboration. The first sets of panels, pulled from Marvel's X-Men: Second Coming, reveal what effects different artists may have on depicting the same scene, recognizing
the influence of line artists and encouraging acceptance of the visual author construct in comics. In the second set of panels, from Marvel's *Civil War*, we find further evidence for the visual author's influence on comic books and how the different intensities of the visual and alphabetic authors' content work in order to determine how each individual's agency may figure in the presentation of the material. Taken together, these panels seem to encourage an articulation of authorship that recognizes the visual mode, as in the visual author that I offer.

Finally, chapter four, "Meanwhile, in the Studio: Re-Authoring the Composition Classroom" moves from theory and analysis to practice within the classroom and argues for an articulation of the visual author within a studio-based composition classroom that more easily promotes student collaboration and multimodal composition. As they stand, typical composition classrooms seem to reflect linear and individualistic sensibilities that act to limit students. Drawing on the works of post-process theorists Thomas Kent and Lee-Ann M. Kastman Breuch, and multimodality and new media scholars Pamela Takayoshi and Cynthia Selfe and Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes, I synthesize an approach to composition instruction that recognizes collaborative efforts more completely and encourages further engagement with multimodality. To break down the association between composition and linear thought processes encouraged by the typical classroom, I posit the re-interpretation of composition classrooms as composition studios and argue for student-centered instruction spaces that more easily recognize collaborative and visual authorships. This shift, in turn, allows me to propose the student-
authored comic book, a substantial multimodal project that typical composition course structures discourage.

My work here serves as a starting point for further research into comic books and multimodal composition. I may offer only a small handful of terms, but each serves a function, adds to the terminology of comics studies, and has an impact outside of the comics form and comics studies. This work stands as my first step in developing a robust rhetoric of comics studies. Comic books have more to offer than simple entertainment, and it is my hope that this foray helps to extend a young discipline and legitimize comics more fully within the academy. By applying critical pressures to understand how comics come to exist and how we perceive the form, I believe we may find better ways of incorporating these fun and familiar texts in the classroom. Many teachers have already adopted, and have found success with using, comics within the English classroom, but we can do more. We can push comics harder and develop curriculums that help students develop stronger multimodal and visual literacies. To that end, it is my intention that my work prompts further exploration of comic books within the composition classroom.
Giant Size Comics Studies #1: Now with More Terms!

It is likely that most people have some type of internalized definition of comics that fits well within their world and that this conception is relatively similar to that of others. Although these definitions may work well informally, they prove problematic when we move these conversations into the university and attempt to discuss these texts in a sustained and scholarly manner. Instead of approaching the features of the texts, comics scholars, among others, find so engrossing, it is more likely that semantic arguments may occur in which the different voices in the conversation misunderstand each other because of idiosyncratic differences in understanding. We may find that these arguments are problematic in popular discourse, but they become terribly disruptive within an academic context because deficient terminology makes discussions more difficult. Therefore, to avoid these sorts of arguments, a handful of people may offer new terms that others take up and employ. These new terms allow for a deeper understanding of the subject matter, opening a greater number of potential avenues for discussion because of the terminology that develops naturally as needed.

If language determines how deeply we may understand a subject, then it seems to follow that a lacking set of terms in academic fields may further obscure complex and abstract concepts, hindering or preventing conversations needed to advance a field. It seems to be necessary to develop an appropriate body of terminology to use to discuss disciplinary content if we desire sustained, scholarly discussion on a subject. In this chapter, I will argue for the importance of discipline-specific terminology within the context of visual rhetoric more broadly and comics studies more narrowly, examining
attempts to broaden one field's terminology by borrowing from another seemingly related field. These explorations, in turn, lead me to address the uniqueness of comics that prompts comics specific terminology, offering the visual author as a new term that addresses the unique nature of comics. This new term opens up further discussions of the possibilities of non-alphabetic authorship limited by our current terminology within the wider context of rhetoric and composition.

**Developing a Need for Terminology**

In *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (1996), Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen attempt to provide a framework that those engaged in visual composition may use to describe their work more clearly. Kress and van Leeuwen first recognize that there does not exist a "theoretical framework within which visual forms of representation can be discussed" (21). Theoretical frameworks will include a body of common terminology and act as a center around which scholarship occurs, facilitating understanding amongst those engaged in a conversation. This absence of a framework, and by extension a glossary of terms, Kress and van Leeuwen believe, stems from the fact that it appears that literate cultures have successfully distanced themselves from visual communication in favor of word-based literacies (20-21). Kress and van Leeuwen's statement indicates that images tend to constitute a lower form of literacy and only serve to remind an otherwise advanced society of its quaint past. However, the images with which we interact are encoded with meaning and, as such, it is necessary to discuss them if we want to understand them (Kress and van Leeuwen 27). Without the ability to discuss them explicitly, images can become transparent (ibid. 27), creating a
system in which those individuals who are visually literate are more able to make use of their knowledge to exert greater influence over those less visually literate.

Although there have been strong contributions to the visual rhetorical glossary (Barthes, 1977; Kenney, 2002; Sandywell, 2011), theoretical work explaining how visual compositions work (Arnheim, 1969; Bolter and Grusin, 1996; Stroupe; 2000; Hill, 2003; Delagrange, 2009), and visual rhetoric more generally (Porter and Sullivan, 1994; Birdsell and Groark, 1996), these efforts have not yet resulted in a body of language appropriate for the needs of both visual rhetoric and comics studies, indicating that scholars must create new terms. In the course of attempting to define the genre titles for hybrid texts, Kress states in "Multimodality, Multimedia, and Genre" that "if we find we need labels, we will make them up" (44). There is not a governing body from whom all theoretical terminology is gifted. Instead, Kress' statement indicates that scholars have the right to craft the language necessary for their disciplines as it becomes needed. Kress and van Leeuwen originally make a similar claim in Reading Images, stating that "[t]here is no 'image act' for every 'linguistic act'. But this need not be so forever" (129). There exists language that refers to each exclusively, and this language seems to favor a more robust body of alphabetic terminology. Yet, as Kress and van Leeuwen reveal, this does not need to be the case. It then becomes the onus of scholars to determine what terminology we require to discuss our fields, visual rhetoric and comics studies in this instance, in a nuanced and articulate manner.
Recognizing the limitations of borrowing across disciplinary boundaries, I develop further the terminology that scholars may use in discussing comic books.¹ In the recent corpus of inquiry, much of the energy applied to comics scholarship has focused on ways in which comics may be approached through literary lenses (Tondro, 2011; Howard and Jackson, 2013; Darowski, 2014) or appear in the classroom setting (Carter, 2007; Jacobs, 2007; Kirtley, 2014). Notably limited are contributions offered from rhetoric and composition to the scholarly study of comics. Beyond the many collections that reproduce excerpts of McCloud's works (Visual Rhetoric in the Digital World and Readings for OSU Writers) and the recent graphic textbook for first-year composition, Understanding Rhetoric: a Graphic Guide to Writing (Losh and Alexander, 2014), examinations of comic books from the viewpoint of the rhetorician or compositionist are limited. Comics prove to be problematic to many because they are fundamentally multimodal texts that treat the contributions of both visual and alphabetic composition equally, as opposed to more familiar captioned pictures or illustrated texts. It is not enough to address the images or the words individually because both aspects affect each other. Instead, it is necessary to address each component as part of a whole in which various modes of transmission and interaction exist and in a manner specific to the comics.

While describing the theoretically similar nature of digital compositions and the implications for teaching such literacies, Craig Stroupe argues in "Visualizing English:

¹Although I focus specifically on terminology that will benefit comics studies immediately, my terminology may be rearticulated for other contexts, such as the composition classroom.
Recognizing the Hybrid Literacy of Visual and Verbal Authorship on the Web" that a lack of language may limit thought. For Stroupe, critical awareness and understanding of the potentials of hybrid texts do not occur naturally when the visual and alphabetic intermingle and is, instead, "the product of a degree of consciousness in reading and composing" (32). It is impossible for terms to appear without the efforts and awareness of scholars engaged in the field. Stroupe also recognizes that appropriate theoretical language must be paired with a critical tradition if we are to grasp fully the potentialities of hybrid visual/alphabetic compositions. There exists a strong tradition for discussions concerning alphabetic compositions, but, as Charles A. Hill indicates in "Reading the Visual in College Writing Classes", "the amount of time and effort [teachers and literacy researchers devote] to developing students' abilities to comprehend, analyze, and critique visual messages is relatively miniscule" (108). Because of this, it is unsurprising that our compositional terminology more easily discusses alphabetic compositions than visual compositions; Hill does not believe that words are more inherently worthy of discussion or that images may not be valid for scholarly discussion (109), but that we are more intimately familiar with words. Because rhetoric tends to exist within the university as part of the hybrid rhetoric/composition discipline, generally housed within either English or communication departments, scholars within the field typically focus on writing and writing instruction or speech and orality. Even in those moments where visual literacies are engaged, it is often in a manner that reflects linear essays (Alexander and Rhodes 82-83). There exists some possible transfer of terms, but these instances are limited and require unique terminology to address image and word. A relatively new concentration
within the discipline of rhetoric and composition, visual rhetoric will require a stronger instructional tradition to serve as a foundation on which scholars may build an appropriate cache of terms.

**Curating What We Have**

Although limited, there have been contributions to the scholarly glossary within comics studies. In *Understanding Comics: the Invisible Art*, Scott McCloud provides readers with an insider's look at comics that accounts for their historicity and format, and proposes a possible theoretical approach to the form. Although McCloud's work is not the only example of such a text, it is by far the most influential and widespread introduction to the scholarly study of comic books. In this text, McCloud introduces the reader to two terms that serve as a portion of the foundation upon which comics studies has been built: the structural *gutter*, the spaces separating individual panels (66), and *closure*, the mental process by which readers infer what events take place in the gutter and synthesize the actions (63). Although McCloud states that effective use of closure is in itself an art form (85), closure remains, primarily, a functional element of comics. Assuming "visual *iconography* [image] is the *vocabulary* of comics, *closure* is the *grammar* (McCloud 67, emphasis author's). That is, image provides the content of comics, whereas closure allows the audience to make sense of those images. Although each of these terms may seem to be only moderately important at first glance, a preponderance of future scholarly works evoke McCloud and reference both of these elements. Yet, these closely related ideas cannot constitute the entirety of comics studies' terminology if the field is to
proceed and evolve. They are simply not enough. Because of the hybrid nature of comics, it seems that terms drawn from visual rhetoric may help to inform comics studies.2

Currently, the field of comics studies, logically, draws its critical vocabulary from a range of theoretical frameworks, including literary theory, film studies, narratology, and even abstract photography (Baetens, 2011), but this borrowing has produced limited success for visual rhetoricians. The terminology, developed for specific non-comic texts, cannot transfer completely to comics studies because the texts scrutinized are simply different. This is not to say that the terminology is invalid or faulty, but that terms specific to a medium are required. Non-medium dependent terminology, such as in narratology or rhetoric, prove tantalizing because they may more easily cross medium boundaries. This independence may help to palliate the approximations necessary in transferring discipline-specific terms because they are not tied inherently to a specific medium. It is this indeterminate subject matter that proves interesting. Because these terms do not connect to a single medium, approximations are less problematic because the language itself is less specific. The assumptions and logical leaps are fewer and closer together.

Comics are attractive because, in many ways, we find it familiar; we see words, we see illustrations, we see characters we know, and many people associate the form with

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2Kress and van Leeuwen's conception of vectors and their function within images comes to mind immediately. Where words rely on action verbs for movement, images rely on vectors (Kress and van Leeuwen 44). Beyond vectors, their "offers" and "demands" are helpful in describing an image and determining potential purposes in visual compositions, with offer suggesting an indirect relationship and demand a more direct relationship (Kress and van Leeuwen 126).
childhood. It is logical to attempt to apply familiar terminology to comics because we can parse out the various modes that constitute the texts. However, comics are much more problematic than they first appear, and the features we find familiar features become more alien as we start to apply analytical pressure. Typically, we want to define comics by the juxtaposition of words and images, but what happens when we recognize that written words are, themselves, "non-pictorial icons"? (McCloud 28). Both image and word in comics require some degree of abstraction, and this requirement lessens the difference between both. We must add greater nuance to this original definition so that we do not limit comics to the nonsensical juxtaposition of image (picture) and image (word), should we accept McCloud's premise. Greater specification is needed and that specificity may arise only from within the confines of comics studies. Our familiar language has provided us an excellent starting point, but it is simply not able to meet the demands of comics.

These efforts to engage in cross-disciplinary conversation with the intent to develop a wider collection of terms from which to pull may take the form of studies that apply one field's theoretical language, where appropriate, to another's. This appropriation creates a situation in which one set of terms may be recontextualized and repurposed to varying degrees of effectiveness in an alternate medium. Keith Kenney attempts to forge a more robust theory of visual communication by drawing from classical rhetoric and in "Building Visual Communication by Borrowing from Rhetoric" asserts that "traditions cannot develop in total isolation from each other, but must engage each other in argument as their beliefs are compared or contrasted" (321). That is, interdisciplinary interactions
force fields to consider their own givens and determine the validity of their own beliefs as well as those of others in scholarly conversations. These interactions, in turn, create stronger, more nuanced conceptions of disciplines that better reflect a particular field's epistemology.

Similarly, Jan Baetens recognizes the potentials of interdisciplinary exploration in his "Abstraction in Comics" when he "make[s] a plea for the enrichment of narrative theory in general by investigating its relevance for a wide range of corpora, and to address questions and methodological issues thereby brought to light" (94). Instead of expanding the language of narratology, Baetens looks to examine narrative theory in underexplored venues in order to refine his discipline's language further should he encounter problems within new contexts—specifically comics studies. Baetens' plea supports Kenney's assertion that cross-disciplinary interaction is necessary if we seek to deepen understanding of a particular field. We may rightfully borrow as needed from other fields, or subdisciplines as in Kenney's case, but this borrowing may not be enough. Additionally, though we may borrow terminology to varying degrees of success from other fields, there may be instances in which we limit our own understanding. Writing on the connection between new media and textual literacies, Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes recognize that attempts to inform one literacy based on the affordances of another often result in "an illustration of a text, as opposed to a thinking-through of the rhetorical capabilities of the... medium" (15). Although Kenney works toward borrowing terminology where appropriate, and appears successful, we must recognize, as have Alexander and Rhodes, that the practice may result in self-imposed
limits. We may work within our own theoretical schemas, but it is necessary to expand these should we desire to expand a discipline and its common terminology.

Kenney's efforts show clearly how applying discipline-specific terminology to an alternative discipline may fail to reflect the original concept fully, or even faithfully. Kenney considers how the five canons of rhetoric, (invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery) may appear in visual compositions, and states that "the first three canons [are] easy to 'translate' into a new medium,"—the comic strip (323). When composing, cartoonists call upon a stock of commonplaces similar to Aristotle's *topoi* and arrange those elements as conventions dictate in a particular style fit for publication, representing invention, arrangement, and style, respectively (323). Delivery even exhibits a fair number of constants when one changes its focus from oral to visual communication. However, moving to memory, Kenney envisions that it "is primarily an art of evocation. The cartoonist attempts to compress into a single image the various streams of cultural consciousness from which he has drawn his idea" (323). In this rearticulation, memory does not concern how the rhetor remembers a speech and is, instead, how cartoons and comics strips work and create meaning for a particular audience. Memory causes readers to call upon the same cultural commonplaces as the creator of the comic strip and allows the reader to understand a particular piece. Similarities are present, but the transfer of concept is at most an approximation of the original concept. It then seems that we must instead craft the terminology we wish to use based upon our understandings if we are to advance the young field.
We find a similar attempt to appropriate terminology from classical rhetoric in Hanno H.J. Ehres' case study documenting the efforts of graphic design majors trying to employ visual representations of rhetorical figures in posters advertising a production of *Macbeth*. Drawing on classical figures of speech, including metaphor, oxymoron, and synecdoche, the students in the study were asked to create posters that synthesized elements of effective visual design, classical rhetoric, and Shakespearean studies to produce a poster that persuades an audience to attend the play. The posters, primarily visual constructs, come to exist through the juxtaposition of contrasting elements that rely on "culturally constructed meanings" through the process of signification (Ehres 169). One may intelligibly depict the selected rhetorical figures visually, not because there exists equal representations of each figure in both rhetoric and graphic design, but because the audience recognizes the connotations of the images on the poster as they belong to the culture in which the poster was created. The relationship is effectively enthymemematic. The audience understands the image without explicit recognition of all of the premises that allow it to exist. Although some of these rhetorical concepts transfer easily to considerations of visuals, others only provide approximations of the initial concept when transposed. Accepting approximations may result in prompting more fulfilling discussions, but we will view one discipline through a kaleidoscopic lens composed of pieces drawn from others, distorting and coloring our perceptions based on the epistemologies of the source disciplines.

If borrowing terminology from other disciplines produces only a modicum of success, it seems that the affordances of comics require specific language that addresses
their hybrid nature. Pascal Lefèvre addresses the possibility of medium-specific articulations with regard to narrative elements in "Some Medium-Specific Qualities of Graphic Sequences," and states that media may share narrative elements, but that they appear differently depending on the medium (14). Where Kenney and Ehses recognize that it is possible to transpose critical terminology across disciplinary boundaries, Lefèvre posits that, although possible, there are limits, and particular media possess unique qualities that require medium-specific articulations. It seems that elements may appear differently across media and there exists the possibility for some mediums to exhibit particular traits better than others. If we recognize that the narrative structures Lefèvre examines constitute a portion of narratology's terminology, it appears that although we may find examples of those terms in another discipline, comics studies in this case, the concept may not render accurately in the destination discipline. This unequal transfer of terms further indicates the need for a discipline-specific body of terms set apart from other disciplines. It seems that there then exists limited transmodal transference: some features will transfer to alternative modes, but others may fail to do so in the attempt. We may begin amassing terms through cross-disciplinary work, but it will become necessary to repurpose the material to work specifically within the context of comics studies and meet our demands.

Kress and van Leeuwen echo my concerns of limited transfer when they ask, "are there possibilities of [...] communication in the visual not available in the medium of writing?" (30). Logically, if there are capabilities available in visual communication not available in alphabetic communication, then we may assume that alphabetic
communication does not already have descriptors for those terms. Although this lack of transferability might not affect our ability to analyze entirely visual or alphabetic texts, problems arise when we attempt to analyze texts that exist because of the juxtaposition of image and word. What sort of terminology may scholars employ? Is it effective to rely on a combination of critical traditions, unchanged, that draw equally from literary studies, rhetoric, and visual art, among others, or should scholars attempt to synthesize a collection of terms that rearticulates the most cogent features of related disciplines?

To make clear my point that using a discipline's terminology within the context of another's results in limited implementation and approximations, consider the concepts of closure and the gutter in comics. McCloud explains that closure is the "phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole" (63). If we consider Ehses and Kenney's approach and attempt to find an equivalent of closure in classical rhetoric, McCloud's definition seems to act as a potential visual equivalent of synecdoche, that is, a part standing in for the whole (Lanham 97). Although seemingly logical, the two semiotic systems in which these concepts exist create a separation that is impossible to bridge entirely. Where synecdoche relies on contextual, and conceptual, relationships between signs and signifieds, closure asks that the reader infer the action based on prior knowledge and logic. The terms seem to function similarly, but they are fundamentally different. Each term, closure and synecdoche, serves a similar function, but the specifics required of each preclude the possibility of total transfer. Simply put, it is the difference between a noun, synecdoche, and a verb, closure.
Tied closely to the concept of closure, the gutter acts as the structural feature within comics that allows the audience to infer the action between different scenes (McCloud 66-67). Functionally, both gutter and closure act to define elements of comics that readers take for granted and that remain nearly invisible until the reader's expectations are broken. Readers only see a portion of the action; the framing of particular scenes allows the mental process of closure to occur with failure on the authors' part resulting in non sequitur. Although it seems odd to say, the classical rhetorical enthymeme relies on the same mental processes as closure. Enthymemes present an audience with syllogistic reasoning with at least one of the phrases unstated. The audience, because it is familiar with this construct, infers the unstated and accepts the original statement on the basis of the stated terms. Closure presents the reader with two, potentially unrelated scenes and asks her to connect the two, again, through past experiences with the form and commonsensical information. One may say that the process of closure is enthymematic, but most would be reluctant to declare it an example of formal enthymeme in the classical sense. Our performance of closure depends on the same mental processes, but the two panels are not a premise and a conclusion as we would expect of an enthymeme. Thus, while we may see that there exists a strong approximation of one field's critical language and conceptions within the confines of another field, that transfer is limited and incomplete.

Theory into Practice

It is foolhardy to assume, though, that we possess the ability to create an entirely original body of terms. We may begin as Kenney and Ehses have and appropriate terms
from other fields, curating and modifying as we see fit, but we must rearticulate this language to fit its new context. Lefèvre's work shows that narrative elements appear differently across mediums, and his discussion of the temporality of comics further supports the need to recognize that media possess medium-specific features that a generalized body of terms may not effectively describe. It is often in discussing how comics depict time that we see connections drawn between comics and film, as both are constructs that relate a story through a combination of word and image. However, conceptions of time in comics and film do not match perfectly. Through the introduction of words, sound effects, and sequenced images, comics create a sense of time that depends as much on space as on time. This *concurrent temporality* allows the past, present, and future to intermingle in a single moment and medium conventions dictate reading order. As Hillary Chute recognizes, "[t]he form of comics always hinges on the way temporality can be traced in complex, often non-linear paths across the space of the page" (454). Although we may read the temporality against itself, starting from the end and moving to the beginning, and authors may play with our expectations, as we find in Skottie Young's *Rocket Raccoon* #2 where the reader is asked to read the center spread in reverse, there exists a typical expectation that readers will read from left to right and top to bottom in the American comic book.

Outside of comic books, one also finds representations of concurrent temporality in illustrated timelines, where "time does not progress linearly" (Kress and van Leeuwen 96) and multiple temporal points separated theoretically by millions of years may appear together in a single frame. Additionally, Umberto Eco argues for the uniqueness of the
conception of time in comics in "The Myth of Superman." Eco recognizes that comics degrade conceptions of time and remove considerations of temporality external to the narrative, creating a system in which the events of different issues may make sense as a whole without relying on direct causation (17). Again, although there is an intended order, time remains malleable; past events may be altered as needed in order to create new avenues for future stories.

Considering the aforementioned examples one sees that there typically exists an order meant to be followed in visual depictions of the progression of time, but tenses appear to shift capriciously. Film, however, cannot easily replicate this feature because of its linearity, even if one should look to the individual frames in succession as McCloud suggests. We may attempt to mimic film temporality in comics by showing a progression of movements of an individual in a single panel, but this does not fully replicate how film depicts time. It is an approximation of film in comics; it is similar but not the same. In film, dynamism comes from the movement on the screen, whereas in the still image dynamism comes from the layout of the page (Kress and Van Leeuwen 97). Similarities exist, but transmodal transference is limited, causing movement to appear necessarily differently across the media. The complex relationship of similarity and difference encourages, to a point, the use of interdisciplinary terminology, while simultaneously reminding the scholar that modifications or rearticulations may have to occur.

If it is possible that discipline-specific terminology possesses limited transference, what considerations might we have to make when examining those responsible for producing comics books? Are we able to declare authorship in comics the same way we
might in monomodal texts? Looking to the production of popular comic books, specifically the superhero comics of the largest companies like Marvel and DC, we find a litany of individuals responsible for the production of a particular issue. Although ten individuals may be listed on the title page, it is rare for an issue to be attributed to more than a writer and a line artist. Typically, however, unless the artist is particularly prolific, critically acclaimed, or universally reviled, the writer tends to receive most credit for a book. Common understandings of authorship seem to remove the possibility of non-alphabetic authorships, which in turn may redistribute agential power of a specific piece to the incorrect individual. This hypothetical situation illustrates the stakes of having deficient terminology; our models of authorship are limited to alphabetic authorships and individuals often find themselves excluded because scholars in comics studies have simply not yet considered them.

As I have mentioned, comics are hybrid texts that rely on the successful marriage of word and image, and it is this interaction that Henry Jenkins recognizes as a source of comics' energy (296). Comics cannot exist without word and image, therefore it is logical that one cannot immediately assume that the writer's words are more important than the artist's drawings. Instead of accepting that audiences believe universally that the writer's work description as scripter is inherently more important than those of the other collaborators, it seems that the disparity develops partly because of the language available for audiences to use when describing comics creators. In this instance, it

3“There is something energizing in the shift between text and images and in the larger-than-life stories so many comics tell” (Jenkins 296).
becomes clear that a greater variety of nuanced language is required. Because the term
"author" is most often applied to writers and very rarely, if ever, to visual artists, our
perceptions of who may be deemed an author are altered while we appear to remain
unaware. To assuage this disparity, I propose the terms visual author and alphabetic
author. First, we may understand the visual author as the individual responsible for
rendering the images offered in the script. Although it seems that visual authorship may
extend to inkers and colorists in some circumstances, for the sake of scope, I will limit
visual authorship to the line artist. The line artist is the individual responsible for drawing
a comic book and may be alternatively named as an artist or penciler. Although it appears
that the term visual author alone serves to provide the nuanced authorship required of
comics, I cannot offer it alone. Constituting the more familiar authorship, alphabetic
authorship refers specifically to the contributions of the writer.

This refinement offers a comics-specific conception of authorship that draws on
contributions made by other fields to authorship studies, but presents those features in a
manner reflecting the specific material practices of the production of comic books. I do
not seek the total dissolution of familiar authorship, and, instead, offer a context specific
articulation that may be appropriated and rearticulated by others for use in other contexts
as needed. In the following chapters, I focus on the mass-produced superhero comic
book, the most common example of the medium. These texts are necessarily
collaborative and, because of this, we may be more likely to find that an undifferentiated
model of authorship alters our interpretations. I choose to avoid individually authored
graphic narratives, such as Art Spiegelman's Maus or Marjane Satrapi's Persepolis, not
because they are less interesting or do not require greater attention paid to their visuals, but because the single producer cannot push against the boundaries of an undifferentiated authorship to the degree that I believe is necessary. Considering *Maus*, Spiegelman functions as both writer and illustrator for his own original story. He is one individual and because he acts as both the visual author and alphabetic author, we may simply use the generalized term author for the sake of simplicity. Simply put, the authorship of individually authored comics is less murky than the collaborative, multimodal contributions made by those individuals responsible for the standard comic book serial.

In this chapter, I have argued for the necessary of discipline and medium-specific articulations and terminology. Although, as indicated by Ehses and Kenney, we may find some success in borrowing language from another discipline, or subdiscipline, these efforts limit understanding within the destination field. Instead, it is necessary to develop language meant specifically for a discipline. Comics studies may draw from other fields to create its own body of terminology, but it we must contextualize these terms as they relate to comics. Because comics possess affordances different from monomodal media, the language we require to discuss it is necessarily unique. Although it seems that comics authorship may be similar to more typical texts, the collaborative and multimodal production of popular superhero comics requires comics-specific considerations of authorship that account for both visual and alphabetic modes. These new terms, visual author and alphabetic author, allow us to describe authorship more accurately and recognize the contributions of line artists more fairly. In the next chapter, I explore
authorship within comics, uncovering the implications of an extension to non-alphabetic
authorship within the contexts of comics studies and rhetoric and composition.
On the Shoulders of Heroes: Authorships and Popular Comics

At first glance, it may appear that extending authorship to non-alphabetic modes is an aesthetic change and that this move does not radically challenge traditionally conceived authorship. However, I do not intend to argue for the dissolution of the author, as this has already occurred in theoretical work, but instead offer a democratized rearticulation of authorship within comics. Although this extension may primarily benefit comics scholars and offer another term specific to the medium, the implications of visual authorship may extend beyond comics studies and into rhetoric and composition. In this chapter, I argue for a classification of the line artist as the visual author through an examination of the intertextual and passively collaborative elements of writing. These intertextual features allow me to draw parallels between academic authorship and comics authorship, supporting the argument for a more nuanced classification of authorship that accounts more completely for multimodal texts. Finally, although these changes do not seem to be a radical revision, I argue that we will need to modify our beliefs about plagiarism and reorder documentation practices to account for the visual/alphabetic author split that complicates multimodal collaboration.

Justifying Visual Authors

Returning to the concept of the visual author and alphabetic author introduced in chapter one, it is necessary to be sure that visual author is the most appropriate term available for image-focused authorship tied to image. While language may not be able to describe the relationship of the collaborating individuals perfectly, we can be more accurate and equitable. The commercial nature of the mass-produced superhero comic
dictates that a team of individuals must work together in creating a final product. It is possible to have series written and drawn by the same individual (Skottie Young's recent *Rocket Raccoon* stands as an excellent example of such occurrences), but it is rare for an individual to possess the required technical abilities to meet both the visual and alphabetic demands satisfactorily. As such, the definitions of authorship, and who may be considered an author, both primary and secondary, becomes increasingly murky as multiple individuals contribute across different semiotic channels.

Most people will consider the visual artist partly responsible for the creation of the story, but what about the colorist? the inker? the letterer? Can these contributors rightfully be labeled authors to the same degree as the writer or the artist? Avoiding the weightiness of the term "author", we may declare all contributors creators, a term that finds use within the mass-produced comic book. "Creator" seems to be able to account for agential control and maintain responsibility for the content of the work. However, I cannot, in good conscience, attempt to appropriate "creator" for this purpose. "Creator" applies almost exclusively to the individual(s) responsible for the creation of characters or titles, such as Stan Lee and Steve Ditko for Spider-man. Although this proprietorship reflects the father/son relationship Barthes dispels in "Death of the Author," that is the sense that a text is the progeny of one man, we should be reluctant to repurpose industry terminology in such a way that the new use runs counter to the normalized usage. This is not to say that other authors should not be allowed to depict Spider-Man, but that they cannot claim responsibility for creating Lee and Ditko's character. Additionally, the term "creator" lacks the work description that allows us to attribute a text accurately. Although
many may know that Lee wrote dialogue for Ditko's illustrations, the term creator does not signify for which portion of the text each creator is responsible and may leave the text's production underdefined because of the lack of specificity in terminology.

Like the term creator, author carries a host of connotations, and these notions tend to appear implicitly as an association between authorship and alphabetic composition, as though only alphabetic authorship is possible. It is necessary then to break down the connection of the author and the alphabetic so that we may pursue alternative authorships that encompass both visual and verbal composition equally. I argue that an author's role may extend beyond the alphabetic to encompass other modes of communication and that explicitly including the visual work description within "visual author" can aid in describing authorship more accurately. Although this qualification appears to alleviate many of the problems in redefining authorship to include the individuals responsible for rendering the images described in a script, it is simply not enough to qualify some authorial titles and not others. Indicating that one individual is an author and that others are visual authors or editorial authors reinforces the hierarchy that I seek to eliminate, encouraging the belief in the singular "author". If we make the mode description explicit in visual author, then it is necessary to reciprocate the action and declare the writer the alphabetic author for fear of propagating the current disparity. Therefore, in addition to proposing that artists may potentially claim authorial agency in the creation of a comic book, I recognize that the inclusion of "visual" in the visual author title serves only to elucidate the individual's work description and not a position in an artificial hierarchy.
As previously mentioned, it seems that an extension of authorship that includes the possibility of visual authorship may ask that we extend claims of authorship to letterers, inkers, colorists, and other positions less prominent than either the line artist or writer, but is this necessary? In his "Minimal Authorship (of Sorts)," Christy Mag Uidhir attempts to provide a practical definition of authorship applicable across media to the individuals responsible for a text. Mag Uidhir believes that "the author-relation must be in terms of causal-intentional agency and its substantive products"—what he terms "works" (374). Drawing on Mag Uidhir's example, an individual cannot be considered an author of a painting if her intentions did not, in a substantial way, contribute to the work in such a manner that allowed the work to be considered a painting (376). Although this description seems to prop up traditional notions of authorship, albeit with regard to collective production, this description may be helpful for determining who is not an author when multiple individuals contribute to a work, such as in appropriation (Mag Uidhir, "Comics and Collective", Appropriation Cases) and commission (Mag Uidhir, "Minimal" 379).4

Although the different positions associated with comics production may all contribute to the final text, the intentions of the different producers are not equal and all positions do not possess the same agency over the final work. Where the visual author and alphabetic authors collaborate to tell a story, colorists, letterers, and inkers work to

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4For Mag Uidhir, authorship is as follows: "A is an author of w as an F if and only if A is directly responsible, at least in part, for w's possession of the features in C." In this description of minimal authorship, A is the potential author, w the work, F the form of the work, and C the "set of all and only those features essential" for w to be an F (375-376).
highlight the contributions of others. This is not to say that their work is derivative, just that they are often subject to the structure of comics production and cannot affect the final text in the same way as visual and alphabetic authors. This model of authorship, although apparently founded on providing nuance to the base term "author," is actually predicated by the influence individual contributors exert over the form of the final text. This reinterpretation asks for a greater recognition of the possibility of visual agency in multimodal texts and the awareness that alphabetic compositions do not inherently exist at a higher level of literacy than visual compositions and that we may attribute authorial intents across modes. This model of comics authorship is more inclusive, allowing for more than one individual to exist as an author. The recognition of the visual author helps to challenge the primacy of the alphabetic, but it cannot sufficiently problematize the single author construct alone. Instead, we must consider the theoretical author and its acceptance of intertextuality to support the possibility of collaborative authorships.

**Rearticulating Authorship**

Despite the fact that the author figure has been extensively deconstructed and decentered by literary theorists (Barthes, 1967; Foucault, 1975; among others), scholars recognize that critics tend to uphold the author construct in practice while denouncing it in theory (Ede and Lunsford, 2001; Inge, 2001). This movement to remove the author from the text begins in Barthes' "Death of the Author" (1967) when he proclaims that myriad voices contribute to the creation of a text and no one individual may make a claim to such an object (2). There exists no genius who creates in a vacuum. Instead, the discourses in which the author has engaged and currently engages influence the work she
produces and elements appropriated from others appear in the resulting texts subconsciously. The author herself is not a natural figure always connected to texts, and has instead developed alongside copyright laws and discussions of intellectual property (Robbins 155-56) and the movement away from the patronage system in Europe (Howard, "Death Penalty" 790). The possibility for one to own a text and receive financial benefits from it seems to stand at the heart of the authorship construct.

As Rebecca Moore Howard recognizes in her "Plagiarisms, Authorships, and the Academic Death Penalty," in considering textual authorship there is a direct connection between concepts of "proprietorship, autonomy, originality, and a corollary morality to 'true' authorship" (789). Howard's words reveal that there is an ingrained, and paradoxical, belief that a single individual must be solely responsible for a text in its entirety. Yet, this belief is problematic; if the author seeks financial benefits from her work she needs to engage with a "collaborative network that brings [her] books to readers" (Inge 624). The traditionally defined author cannot be considered a solitary figure in either the production or dissemination of a text because both tasks necessarily draw on the contributions of others for either invention or distribution, respectively. Barthes' author is not the traditional author who "maintains with his work the same relation of antecedence a father maintains with his child (Barthes, "Death" 4) and is arguably more collaborative. Instead, Barthes draws from linguistics and posits that the author may only exist collaboratively, stating that "to write can no longer designate an operation of recording, of observing, of representing, of 'painting'," and that writing is "a performative, a rare verbal form... in which utterance has no other content than the act by
which it is uttered" (Barthes, "Death" 4). In essence, Barthes declares that no spark of
genius drives the author to write and it is the collaboration between language and
producer that allow both the text and author to exist. The text does not depend on the
author for its existence, and instead both exist because of mutual interaction.

As we decenter the author, the text itself appears as "a tissue of citations, resulting
from the thousand sources of culture" (Barthes, "Death" 4). Texts exist in intertextual
webs in which they respond to other works, prompt the creation of new texts, and create
author figures who draw upon elements of the web in order to create. These interactions
are, in turn, a form of collaboration, albeit exceedingly passive, that show we may only
mimic and rearticulate those forms with which we have interacted. This is not to say that
there exists no chance of originality, but that originality must be viewed within the
context that nothing entirely new and separate from other works may exist. All texts draw
implicitly, and in many cases explicitly, from older works. This recognition of the
impossibility of true originality seems to encourage scholars to explore the myriad
collaborations possible in writing that reposition older texts in new contexts.

Although the tension that exists within academic work complicates our definitions
and conceptions of authorship on a wider scale, it remains most apparent within the
university setting. The belief that texts exist in intertextual webs is by no means limited to
Barthes and is taken up by Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford and others in rhetoric and
composition (Bloom and Egan-Robertson, 1993; Bazerman, 2004; D'Angelo, 2010). In
"Collaboration and Concepts of Authorship," Ede and Lunsford examine the existence of
academic texts as responses to other works in order to argue for greater acceptance of
explicitly collaborative work in academia. Barthes' assertion of the existence of interconnected texts repeats in Ede and Lunsford's analysis of collaborative authorship, revealing that it is impractical, if not impossible, to expect one individual to carry out all the research required to produce scholarship alone (361). Fundamentally, texts rely on the contributions of those that came before, even if only for conventions and language. However, much like the popular publishing industry, the structure of the university system obscures collaborative effort in favor of presenting the individual's work as "represent[ing] an original contribution to a discipline" (Ede and Lunsford 357). The work of the scholar appears to be a result of the efforts of the singular individual, despite the very apparent actuality that texts in production, at all stages in the writing process, are subject to external feedback that may affect the final product. If there can be no originality, work unconnected to other texts, then the belief that academic work should come from one individual appears foolhardy and opens up the possibility of explicit collaboration further.

This is a problem because both students and faculty must produce original scholarship so that they may find success, both professionally and financially, but those contributions must engage with the critical conversation of the field and address the work of others. In essence, although our work must exist as part of an intertextual web composed of others' work, we must maintain that the work is unique and attributable only to ourselves, creating a system in which we obscure intertextual connections in favor of a fiction of original, autonomous scholarship. Howard relates a metaphor in which the scholar is a dwarf standing on the shoulders of giants who may then see further because
of this elevated position, revealing that there is value in allowing another's work to serve as a starting point, but that the scholar is indebted to the work of those on whom she stands (Howard, "Death Penalty" 789). In academia, this metaphor creates a system in which the younger scholar draws from the works of her predecessors in order to synthesize and extend the reaches of a particular discipline. However, this stands in stark contrast to the belief that the scholar's work must constitute entirely original work. It seems then that the originality of the academy is really a rearticulation of older material with new results, methods, or implications.

Texts do not result from a singular author, and although a text may have a writer, it does not necessarily have an author if nothing inhabits the author function (Foucault 124-5). Instead of referring to a person, "the function of the author is to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society" (Foucault 124). That is, the "author function" results from social relations between discourses. Foucault's statement seems to reflect Barthes' argument that the author is not autonomous and exists only as the result of the production of a text, but that also posits that production does not immediately gift authorship. The author's name does not help to inform the interpretation of a text as Formalists would suggest, but to indicate in which discourses we may locate a text. The meaning of the text, instead, comes from the text itself and its intertextual relationships, not the individual responsible for its production. Foucault seeks to reconsider, not eliminate, the subject, so that "the subject (or its substitute) [may] be

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5These scholars rely on examinations of a text's forms and structures for its interpretation and "not from extrinsic elements such as the author's life or historical context" (Bressler 307).
stripped of its creative role and analysed as a complex and variable function of discourse" (138). That is, the author should be examined in a manner that recognizes her position within cultural and textual production practices and allow meaning to develop in the text, valuing intertextual relationships.

If we recognize that the invention and distribution of texts relies on collaborative efforts, we need only transfer that acceptance of the possibility to encompass multiple individuals writing together. Foucault's author function is not limited to the individual producing a book, because "a person can be the author of much more than a book" (131); these individuals are what he terms "initiators of discursive practice" (131). Here, the author function is not tied to the production of a specific mode and its creation need not be physical. Foucault seems to believe we should re-examine "the privileges of the subject" and "the manner in which discourse is articulated on the basis of social relationships" (137). Applying this line of reason to comics, we should question the default primacy of the alphabetic author and seek a deeper understanding of how the text functions and exists within society so that we may more accurately describe what we read.

I maintain the term "author" within both visual and alphabetic author terminology so that I may provide an understandable nuance to a familiar concept and term. In theory, both visual and alphabetic authors may inhabit the author function for comic books. Visual/alphabetic authors draw influence from external sources and then present that material within a particular social context, and fundamentally their work is no different. However, as Foucault states, we must re-examine the relationships between author and
text and look to recognize contributors more equitably. "Author" is a useful term and, although it carries a tradition of association with lone individuals writing composed texts, qualifying it recognizes the possibility of multiple authors working across modes in the production of a single work. It is clear that the visual author is responsible for rendering the images that the alphabetic author writes in a script. Although I recognize two types of author here, these are not the only possibilities and more will undoubtedly develop as they become necessary.

Citation in Comics

Looking to the cover of a standard offering of the superhero genre, we find evidence of the collaborative efforts required to produce the texts (Inge 629). In *Uncanny X-Men* #522, we find four individuals listed as being responsible for the main story: (Matt) Fraction; (Whilce) Portacio; (Ed) Tadeo; and (Justin) Ponsor, and two more for the extra content contained within the issue, Fraction and (Phil) Jimenez. Upon opening to the title page, however, we encounter no less than sixteen individuals involved in the release of the title. These individuals are not all authors in the traditional sense. Instead, these producers collectively inhabit the author function for *Uncanny X-Men* #522, and we may discern individual visual and alphabetic authors within the longer list of contributors. Although we are able to pick out different authors within this list, Fraction's position at the top the list seems to support that his words are the most valuable contribution to the issue. However, as Howard recognizes, conceptions of authorship are arbitrary and connected to the societies in which they appear (Howard, "Death Penalty" 791). The tradition we see in the list of contributors to *Uncanny X-Men* #22 represents a
history of the dominance of textual literacies. We will need to reevaluate these traditions as we become more aware of visual literacies and communication and recognize the possibility of alternative authorships.

Although we widely recognize the intertextuality of all writing in the academic setting and provide extensive documentation of these connections in those texts, the presence of these connections tend to appear less defined in popular texts. There exist continuities within academic fields, lists of canonical texts from which the major conversations of a discipline develop that respond to and prompt other work. These continuities act as textual pedigrees from which we may trace our critical ancestry, but are not the same sort of continuity or serialization we find in comic books, television programs, or movie sequels. Removing issues of content and purpose, both types of texts possess serial natures that create continuities. These continuities rely on previous work upon which modern authors build their contributions. Typically, in both academic works and comics, it is not enough to relate only what has come before. Instead, authors in both positions must engage in contemporary conversations that will recognize the past in some manner and add new material upon which future authors may draw.

These parallels extend further when we consider that a defining feature of academic genres, the in-text citation or footnote referencing external sources, has an equivalent structure in the editor's notes common to the superhero comic, indicating similar views of intertextuality between the texts. Both structures allow the author to indicate what has influenced her work and direct readers quickly to those sources should they desire to find them. The citations also serve to indicate that, although the text may
seem disjointed and separate from a particular context, it exists within a specific context and is part of the continuity. For example, in the recent *Captain Marvel*, volume 7, issue 12 (2013), Captain Marvel, Carol Danvers, finds herself engaged in a battle with a villain she fought many years prior, well beyond the memory of many readers. To recognize that Carol had encountered the extraterrestrial Deathbird previously, a dialogue box indicating that these events occurred "way back in *Ms. Marvel* #9" (*Captain Marvel* #12, 3) directs the reader back to the September 1977 issue of *Ms. Marvel* in which Carol Danvers, then Ms. Marvel, squares off against Deathbird.

![Figure 2.1 From *Captain Marvel* #12](image)

Additionally, these references may remain solitary or may be accompanied by recreations of the original scenes within the context of the new issue. As such, these recreations may be comics' instantiation of alphabetic paraphrasing (despite my hesitation to apply such terminology across mediums). This sort of paraphrasing, for lack of comic-specific language, appears clearly in *Captain Marvel*, volume 7, issue 13, where the
audience finds recreations of much older panels to help clarify Carol's references to her own past, or in *X-Men*, volume 2, issue 2, in which a similar recreation refers the reader to *X-Men* #108 and illustrates the point that the self-styled Master of Mutants, Magneto, makes. Academics use quotation and paraphrasing primarily to provide further support for their claims, and we may see the same sort of action in comic works. This similarity becomes more compelling when we consider that the motivations for citing external work are the same. In both instances, authors use citations to develop their ethos within the community and to indicate that they are able to discuss a topic knowledgeably and that they understand the continuity of a field.

Figure 2.2 From *Ms. Marvel* #9
Much like in academic writing, these notes allow the audience a foothold into a "conversation" that has been happening for many years and are evidence of intertextuality. It is unrealistic in most cases to expect a reader to have a complete understanding of the entirety of a line of work at hand should she desire to read an article or a comic book. Instead, these references reveal previous events and indicate to which texts a particular offering connects. The documentation employed in the notes in superhero comics prove less exact at times than in academic texts (there are three different series titled *Ms. Marvel* already), but the context in which the notations appear serves to clear up the confusion. The aforementioned dialogue box from *Captain Marvel* #12 attributes the note to the character Sana's mom. This attribution acts as a cheeky reference that the character is old enough to remember the 1970's and that she refers to the original series, instead of the *Ms. Marvel* run cancelled in 2010 or to the concurrently running *Ms. Marvel*. This reference serves to indicate that, as it is within academic intertextuality, more than one individual is responsible for the content of the text even if only one, or a small handful, produces it. Although the external influences may remain passive in their offerings, *Captain Marvel* alphabetic author Kelly Sue Deconnick draws influence, consciously and subconsciously, from lived experiences and the works of others that precede her, providing further support for intertextuality and the re-evaluation of authorship models to account more fully for collaborative and multimodal efforts.

**Implications of Extensions**

It is often the case that a system remains invisible until it no longer functions, and it is comics that reveal the weaknesses of undifferentiated authorship and textual
ownership. Typically, the topic of authorship in composition focuses on the issue of plagiarism in the classroom. If we have a system of authorship in which only an alphabetic author may claim authorship, then plagiarism should not be possible in non-authorship positions, such as with the line artist. However, there are examples within comics that highlight where older models of authorship break down and indicate the need for new articulations. In these moments, those in non-author positions may find themselves more easily exploited because there exists little conception of non-alphabetic plagiarism. However, theory supports an extension of authorship and the comics form additionally encourages a greater awareness of non-alphabetic and collaborative authorships, requiring greater attention paid to visual plagiarism. If visual and alphabetic authors stand on even ground, it is logical to assume that matters of plagiarism should plague the visual author in much the same way as they do the alphabetic author. Howard defines plagiarism as "representing the words of another as one's own" (Howard, "Forget"). Although Howard later recognizes that this institutional-sounding definition is underdeveloped, it functions well enough in many instances. However, I will qualify this definition to include representing another's art as one's own, as well. Viewed through this lens, it seems that visual plagiarism may be limited to tracing because it seems more difficult to recreate another individual's artistic style than to copy a string of words without citation. Yet, this does not mean we cannot discuss visual plagiarism and that it does not exist.

One potential case of visual plagiarism from comics finds Pat Lee, a polarizing figure within the community, claiming authorship for commissioned pages of comic art.
Although much of the documentation of the events surrounding Lee's suspect business practices appears in rumor columns and less-than-official forums, the circumstantial evidence has accumulated and makes it worthwhile to discuss the claims and the concept of visual plagiarism. Claims of Lee's use of "ghostartists", similar to the alphabetic author's "ghostwriter", seem to coincide with Dreamwave Productions' acquisition of the *Transformers* brand and the increased workload that the notoriety of the licensed title brought with it ("Pat Lee"). Splitting his time between public appearances and personal engagements (Johnston 1:115), Lee drew the robot characters in the *Transformers* series Dreamwave produced and left the backgrounds to credited artists. Although we may note the disparity in the attention the different visual authors received, it is difficult to classify this work as plagiarism because the background artists received proper credit. Although not plagiarism, this collaboration seems to predict that Lee could not maintain the workload required of him, providing potential motive for future plagiarism.

Eventually, as Dreamwave pulled in more work, it appears that Lee increasingly relied on other individuals to meet the deadlines for specific projects. In 2007, Lee asked visual author Alex Milne to complete pages for Top Cow's *Cyberforce* series ("Pat Lee"). At first glance, Lee's commissioned work from Milne appears to be a commission case, albeit unbalanced and with unethical compensation (Johnston 2:69), Lee was unable to complete the work required of him and hired a credited individual to perform the task and ensure its completion. The nature of the recognition Milne receives, however, is problematic because he is credited as a breakdown artist ("Lying in the Gutters" 2:69), a position that requires the artist to lay out a scene without providing finishing details.
Although Milne's contributions and position are qualified, Lee's were not, making it seem as though his contributions were greater than they appeared showing that qualifications of positions are necessary. Eventually, Milne's title page credits disappear and Milne loses his credit as the breakdown artist while Lee retains his own position as artist. In a fan interview hosted on the website DeviantArt, Milne reveals that after providing line art for three issues of *Cyberforce*, and receiving proper credit, his name mysteriously dropped from the credits in the fourth issue and did not reappear as promised in the fifth ("Interviews"). Additionally, as proof of his story, Milne claims to possess the unedited versions of the final pages, an undoubtedly curious possession if he had not drawn them himself ("Interviews"). Matt Moylan, a former Dreamwave employee, provides further support for these claims and offers instances of plagiarism in a 2012 blog post where he provides a list of promotional artwork and comics covers attributed to Pat Lee, but produced by uncredited individuals (Dreamslaves #2: Artists in Disguise).

Dreamwave Productions has since disbanded, and many former Dreamwave contributors, both visual and alphabetic authors, state that they intend to never again work with Lee. Fans and comics authors alike now accept that Lee's actions were not only unethical, but that they were also an act of plagiarism. Howard recognizes that there exists a connection between immorality and plagiarism, and that institutions often see the matter as grounds for immediate punishment (Howard, "Death Penalty" 789). If it is possible for these beliefs about plagiarism to transfer to another mode, as seems to have happened with Lee, then I argue that tacit conceptions of authorship may not be limited to the alphabetic mode. It seems that we already accept the possibility of visual authorship if
We can informally declare Lee a plagiarist. Fans recognized Lee's actions as unethical and applied a familiar model of textual ownership to describe the situation, despite traditional associations between plagiarism and academic writing. As artists, Lee and Milne were skilled craftsmen working to render the writer's vision on the page. Their work is interchangeable because they are subject to the writer's intentions. An extension of authorship, however, allows for a greater recognition of authorial intent across modes and help to prevent the exploitation of non-alphabetic, non-authorial positions.

If our acceptance of visual authorship brings with it the possibility of misappropriation and misattribution of visual material, then we also require adequate citation standards that reflect this shift. Looking at the guide on how to cite a graphic narrative in MLA formatting, one finds a peculiar note regarding graphic narratives: "[b]egin the entry for such a work with the name of the person whose contribution is most relevant to your research" (Gibaldi 166). Instantly this statement asks that the writer make a judgment call about which author of the text will be most important to her research. Often, graphic fiction finds a home within literature departments and because most individuals using MLA conventions work within literary studies, it is logical that we may assume the writer is the most important. However, it is unlikely that image and word will be entirely divorced in any analysis. Comics are, again, fundamentally multimodal and any consideration of words seems to need to address image, as well. If we cannot fully discuss one mode without engaging the other, declarations of what is most important appear futile. It seems that it would be more appropriate to record those individuals responsible for a work that recognizes individual contributions to a
collaboration, but that does not arbitrarily value one mode over the others. One possible, and more fair, solution may be to list the individual contributors alphabetically by last name. In this system, no one individual is more valuable than another and the organizational hierarchy is readily apparent. However, this also brings with it potential problems that obscure the agency of those individuals most responsible for the production of the work. It seems unfair that, although playing an important role in producing the final product, a letterer may appear before a line artist or writer.

After unpacking these considerations, the implications of a shift to recognize both visual and alphabetic authorship become clear. While listing the most pertinent individual first in an entry may be the easiest way to address the team responsible for the words or images in a comic book, this judgment call is problematic when positioned alongside the belief that citations and attributions must be accurate. The entry itself is variable, indicating that there is uncertainty in how we conceive of comics, and a list of contributors does not help us to determine what agency the writer, line artist, inker, colorist, letterer, or editor(s) each possess in relation to each other. Typically, in comic books, the writer's name appears before the line artist's, seemingly indicating that the writer inhabits a more important position in comics hierarchy. After listing the most important individual(s), the MLA conventions state that the additional contributors are to be listed in the order that they appear on the title page (Gibaldi 166). Although this removes some of the uncertainty about how to order the entry, we are left questioning if it is necessary to list all of the names attached to the work. Must we list all sixteen individuals associated with the production of *Uncanny X-Men #522*? Obviously, as a
matter of layout, it is necessary that an order must be chosen to display the names, but any choice seems to support a false hierarchy that puts contributors at odds.

I see no easy solution to this variability in documenting comics produced by more than one individual. The rearticulated authorships I have presented here may complicate the tenuous documentation already in place, but they also provide greater nuance for our understanding of authorship within comics. Any linear documentation system, such as we see in MLA, will carry with it internal bias and hierarchy because we cannot physically include all of the different components of an entry in one position. I find intriguing the possibility of a radial citation in which the text stands central with the other components arrayed about it, but it is also terribly impractical in terms of formatting and out-of-place within our current conventions. In this new system, intentions determine placement within the citation, with those closer to the center figuring more prominently. Yet, this might be the most satisfying because it functions in the same manner as concurrent temporality does within comics; there may exist a desirable, and linear path, through the material, but the system in which the information exists does not limit how we logically understand it to that single path.
Figure 2.3 Radial Citation Diagram: The center ring is reserved for publication information. The surrounding ring contains the visual and alphabetic authors of a text. The support positions (inker, colorist, letterer) are then connected to either the visual or alphabetic author, but on a separate ring and further away, indicating their lesser influence over the final product. These relationships are recognized for the three chapters contained within *Dazzler* #1. The editors appear on their own ring, connected to the publishing information, but are not connected to the author ring.

Although the theoretical work presented here indicates that, beyond work-descriptions, there exists very little difference in multimodal visual/alphabetic collaborative authorship and monomodal visual/visual or alphabetic/alphabetic collaboration, it is important to recognize that comics provide further evidence of the visual author's agency in the creation of a text. Although some verbal authors are famous for their control of the final product—*Watchmen's* Alan Moore the definitive example (Mag Uidhir "Comics", Illustrating Robust Comics Authorship)—I argue in chapter three
that the visual author's contributions may more easily affect the tone of the story than the contributions of the alphabetic author. The contributions of the visual author are more intense within a composition than those of the alphabetic author, and differences in artistic style become more easily recognized because of that greater intensity. In defining new media, Alexander and Rhodes argue that the excessiveness that characterizes new media is not available in composed texts and that images elicit a stronger response from an audience because of how they play with their excess (109). Intensity and excessiveness are tied together, and it seems logical that these features figure into the contributions of the visual author and may act to obscure the more nuanced offering of the alphabetic author. In effect, the alphabetic author becomes veiled; we see the general outline of the contribution, but the finest details are lost without closer examination.

If an audience finds itself presented with two different depictions of a character or scene, such as in the previously supplied example of visual paraphrasing drawn from *Captain Marvel*, they may more easily notice the choices made by each visual author. Although far from unnoticeable, alphabetic authors' work appears to be less intense when positioned next to visual authors'. In the following chapter, I explore this possibility further and examine two scenes drawn from popular superhero comic books to reveal how the visual author's impact in the final text may be more intense than that of the alphabetic author. One set of offerings, from *Civil War*, represents a more typical form of comics collaboration and we find writer Mark Millar and artist Steve McNiven responsible for the entirety of the text and the tone of both image and word remains similar between two images of Thor. The others, taken from *X-Men: Second Coming*, are
unique in that one of four different creative teams authored each chapter of the twelve-issue arc. Where the alphabetic authors' work across issues remains consistent, the contributions of the visual authors encourage very different reactions from the audience. Taken together, it becomes very clear that the visual author may affect narrative as much as the alphabetic author, if not more.
Crossing Over: Recognizing Visual Authorship

Based on my argument for the recognition of visual and alphabetic authorships in the previous chapter and the benefit that nuanced and comics-specific language provides to comics studies in chapter one, it seems necessary to look at examples in which the intensity of the contributions of visual and alphabetic authors vary and alter perceptions of a narrative. Theoretically, visual and alphabetic authors possess the same capability to assert influence over a text, and images are not immediately subservient to words. There is more at work in the relationship between image and word in comics than simple illustration or caption, and both image and word may potentially play an equal role in driving a story forward. Although it is the alphabetic author's role to script a story and determine the events within it, it is the visual author's role to take those scant scene directions and determine they could be visualized. In this chapter, I look to examine the visual author's ability to alter a storyline and argue that the visual components of comics display greater intensity than the alphabetic. Additionally, it is because of this imbalance that the visual author's contributions possess greater potential for altering the perceptions of a story, supporting further an extension of authorship to include visuals.

Because comic books are typically serial and span long periods of time, it is necessary to limit the scope this investigation so that I may engage a reasonable amount of material. To achieve this scope, I look to a crossover event for textual evidence. Crossover events are a common occurrence in comic books and they contain storylines in which characters from different series interact directly with each other in ways typically, impossible within a company's ongoing titles. For instance, although it is not impossible
for Captain America to appear alongside the Fantastic Four, it is more complicated to realign production deadlines and plot lines; Captain America needs to continue his fight for the American Dream, while Marvel's First Family pursue understanding through science, and these paths rarely intersect. However, the crossover allows characters who do not generally interact the opportunity to do so in a fashion that does not tamper with continuity and canonicity. These events are defined by large-scale conflicts that alter the landscape of individual titles after they conclude. Thus, although Captain America and Mister Fantastic, of the Fantastic Four, rarely appear together in the same book, it is possible in the limited series Civil War (2006-2007) because the crossover's structure allows for total permeability of titular boundaries. These story arcs are then collected together in one volume and later rereleased, binding the characters involved together more permanently. While crossovers may appear little more than wide-reaching story arcs that allow fan fantasies to materialize, they are also, typically self-limited. Although the series may reference events that have happened long before, as noted of the newest incarnation of Captain Marvel in chapter two, the reader does not need an encyclopedic knowledge of hundreds of back issues to understand what she reads, and it is possible to analyze a serial work with minimal external references. It is not that crossovers ignore other materials, but that they curate material for a specific, targeted purpose.

The new millennium of Marvel Comics has come to be defined by the continuity-altering crossover events that, at the moment they are released, appear to change the
landscape of the Universe. Although the most visible crossovers engage with the near entirety of Marvel's stable of characters, like *House of M* (2005), *Civil War*, and *Secret Invasion* (2008) among others, crossovers may also tie more closely to specific networks of characters. Mimicking their marginalized position in-continuity, the X-Men, a band of mutant heroes of whom humanity remains distrustful, are directly involved in two crossover events that address the aftermath of the *House of M* story arc in which the world's mutant population of nearly six million drops to 192, signaling the extinction of what may be humankind's next evolutionary step. Separated from the Marvel Universe in general, *X-Men Messiah Complex* and *X-Men: Second Coming* tell the story of the destruction caused by the birth of the Mutant Messiah, Hope, and the events surrounding her return from the future, respectively. In the next section, I examine sets of panels from *X-Men: Second Coming* and examine how the intensity of the visual authors' contributions alters interpretations of the scenes.

**Fallen Heroes, Exposed Authors**

*X-Men: Second Coming* presents itself as a unique crossover in that the individual creative teams responsible for each of the four monthly X-Men titles (*New Mutants, Uncanny X-Men, X-Force, and X-Men Legacy*) continued to work in their individual teams throughout the event. Each month, a different creative team from a different title offered up the next installment of *Second Coming*. Typically, the crossover event stands

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6The individual continuities in which superhero comics occur are termed "universes". *Civil War* and *Second Coming* come from Marvel's default Earth-616 universe. In addition to Earth-616, we find Marvel's Cinematic Universe, Ultimate Universe, and Zombie Universe, among others.
alone as its own series with its own team of visual and alphabetic authors, and a relatively consistent stable of inkers, colorists, and letterers. While the characters may be drawn from different titles, the crossover event is often authored by a single team, such as the pairing of Mark Millar and Steve McNiven's work on Civil War. Therefore, X-Men: Second Coming presents a unique opportunity for study because the differing interpretations of the story provided by the authors are apparent within the collected edition because of the proximity in which the work produced by different teams appears. The proximity not only highlights the possible choices different visual authors make, but also serves to remind the reader of the rotating authors. This rapid-fire change of creative teams illuminates that the visual authors' work may prove more intense and noticeable than the alphabetic authors' and that image may veil word. This in turn indicates that line artists possess greater agency within comics and that further exploration of the possibility of visual authors is necessary.

In X-Force #26, the reader finds the different X-Teams sorely outgunned in their fight to avoid extinction. Nightcrawler, the teleporting trickster of the X-Men, finds himself travelling desperately across the country alongside Hope and fellow team member Rogue. The use of his powers fatigues Nightcrawler and this fatigue worsens when he travels with passengers. Exhausted, Nightcrawler pushes through countless teleportations and fights to return to Utopia, the man-made island off the coast of San Diego that the X-Men have claimed as the mutant nation, when he finds himself trapped in an alleyway with one of the crossover's villains, the evil cyborg Bastion. Bastion easily bests the winded Nightcrawler in combat, forcing Rogue to use her own mutant abilities
that allow her to steal the powers of other mutants for her own use and manifest the powers of her teammates. Locked in battle with the cyborg from the future, Rogue's best effort is not enough and Bastion gains the upper hand, causing Hope to intervene foolishly in the combat. Seeing the danger in which Hope has placed herself, Nightcrawler makes a jump and places himself between the young woman and the cyborg. However Bastion's internal computer systems detect the imminent use of mutant abilities and he reacts, reaching a mechanical hand toward Hope. The robotic limb pierces Nightcrawler's heart as he rematerializes. Nightcrawler, mortally wounded, makes a final plea for strength, grabs Hope, and teleports to the shores of Utopia, where he gasps, "I...I believe in you" (X-Force #26) and dies, his mission completed.

Figure 3.1 From X-Force #26
One of the final panels of *X-Force* #26 confronts the reader with an approximately half page depiction of Nightcrawler lying dead on the rocky shores of Utopia, Hope kneeling at his side (Figure 3.1). Visually and thematically, this scene is dark. Line artist Mike Choi and colorist Sonia Oback's work distances itself from Nightcrawler's swashbuckling personality, desaturating the panel's colors and positioning him as another casualty in a hopeless conflict. Cast in greys and browns, the scene presents little variation, and the little color the audience sees is the red in Nightcrawler's costume, which acts as a vector and draws attention to the robotic limb protruding from his chest. The choices made by the visual authors contribute only partially to the gravity of the scene, and one finds that the subject matter presented in previous offerings of this *X-Force* helps to inform the aesthetic offered by this creative team.

The team chronicled in the issue of *X-Force* depicting Nightcrawler's death is the third incarnation of the team responsible for missions deemed too extreme for the standard X-Men rosters. Characterized by high levels of violence and a militant tone, *X-Force*, volume 3 steps away from the brightly colored and fantastic adventures commonly associated with superheroes in favor of clandestine stealth missions kept hidden from the other members of the X-Men. These expectations for a less-stylized approach to superheroic combat became standard to the series in two years' time and carry over into the catastrophic events depicted in *Second Coming*. Jumping forward to the next chapter, *Uncanny X-Men* #524, the reader finds that Nightcrawler's death has taken a much different tone, incongruous with what Choi and Oback set up the month before. Instead of the bleak images concluding the previous issue, Terry Dodson
(penciler), Rachel Dodson (inker), and Justin Ponsor's (colorist) half page panel reintroduces many of the visual elements typically associated with the superhero comic. In Figure 3.2, we find stylized and heavy outlines that replace the fine outlines found in the first version. Additionally, although the colors have not returned to their typical brightness, there is a marked change from the beiges and greys one finds in *X-Force* #26. The entire scene takes on a less grave tone. Death seems a little less serious when we find Nightcrawler's face crooked into a grin, contrasting the empty expression in the first panel.

Figure 3.2 From *Uncanny X-Men* #524
The death of the hero is not uncommon in comic books, and it is rare that a character will remain dead, but, it is not the demise of Nightcrawler that marks these scenes as important. Instead, because of the nature of the rotating creative teams working to create *X-Men: Second Coming*, the reader receives two interpretations of the death from two different visual authors in vastly different artistic styles. Choi and Oback's gritty comic book realism, that lent so much gravity to the death, stands in stark contrast to Terry Dodson's cartoon style that takes up the scene again in *Uncanny X-Men* #522. Beyond the obvious continuity issues that tend to be forgotten in the course of the month between releases (as the ground on which Nightcrawler lies changes from bare earth to what appears to be concrete and the ocean disappears), the visual authors of these works present entirely different scenes. The content and the context remain the same, but the differing executions portray tragedy differently. We must also note that the lack of dialogue within the death scenes seems to accentuate these differences. The alphabetic authors have scripted the scene, but their contributions remain veiled and less easily recognized. Character Piotr "Colossus" Rasputin's anxious argument with a teammate concerning his missing sister blends seamlessly into Alison "Dazzler" Blaire's plea that Hope revives her fallen teammate. These words are not less important than the images that they bookend, but their presence is less intense. The tired and saddened body language we find in *X-Force* #26 becomes surprise in *Uncanny X-Men* #524 and further veils word in favor of image. This is not to say that one is more appropriate than the other is, but that there are noticeable differences that deeply impact meaning.
We find further proof of the disparity in visual representations that affects the audience's understanding of the scene in the character Wolverine. Much like Nightcrawler, Wolverine appears courtesy of different visual authors between the issues. Choi and Oback's depictions of the mutant reveal his humanity and pain at discovering the loss of one of his closest friends. Walking up to the corpse, Wolverine removes his mask revealing a tired expression. With a "SNIKT," Wolverine's characteristic claws erupt through the back of his right hand and he voices a single "Elf" (*X-Force* #26). Readers familiar with the character may infer the cold rage seething below the surface and understand that destruction and death will soon replace mourning, but we do not find this within either of Choi and Oback's panels in Figure 3.3. The humanization of Wolverine's anger, however, does not clearly carry over into *Uncanny X-Men* #524 seen in Figure 3.4. Instead, Dodson's Wolverine is masked and his rage remains unchecked. In this depiction we see the "berserker" qualities that have defined the character for many years, but that Choi's Wolverine hides. The anger that will drive Wolverine's hunt for vengeance is clear to see and much more exaggerated.
Figure 3.3 From *X-Force* #26

Figure 3.4 From *Uncanny X-Men* #524
Again, I am not arguing that one version of the scene works better than the other, however, the work of the visual author appears more capable of affecting the tone of a graphic narrative more readily than that of the alphabetic author. It is also necessary to qualify my inclusion of colorists and inkers in describing the visuals in the aforementioned scenes. While I work primarily to develop the concept of the visual author and provide comics studies-specific terminology, I do not forbid the possibility of other possible authorships. Instead, I offer a tempered expansion of authorship that addresses the more immediate inequality while propping the door open for future authorial considerations. *X-Men: Second Coming* very clearly reveals the tonal shifts possible between different individuals representing the same scene visually. However, is it also possible to claim that, within a consistent team of authors, the visual author's contributions may be more impactful on the tone of a scene than the alphabetic author's? Looking to a more typical crossover offering, we can see how the visual author's contribution can overshadow that of the alphabetic author, which suggests it is necessary to re-evaluate the collaborative, multimodal authorship in the popular comic book.

**What is Bad-ass?**

Where *X-Men: Second Coming* focuses on the X-Men, Marvel's *Civil War* involves the entirety of the Marvel universe. The event relates the fallout over a mishap in which a team of young superheroes, the New Warriors, corner a group of low-level villains and kill over six hundred civilians, including sixty schoolchildren. Demanding protection, the American government proposes the Superhuman Registration Act that deputizes superhumans to maintain greater control and to avoid further tragedy. In
continuity, this series marks a shift in the Marvel landscape and pits hero against hero as each side of the registration debate attempts to seize victory, concluding with Captain America's surrender, arrest, and death. Although the storyline is important, the text is a common example of the crossover event in American comics: there is a single creative team responsible that presents the material as a limited series. Therefore, it follows that the tone of the series should remain more consistent than in *Second Coming* because *Civil War* does not have different, rotating teams of authors. This is not to say that *Second Coming* is a less complex title than *Civil War*, but that changes in the visual tones become clearer because of the juxtaposition of the work of different visual authors. This realization indicates that concepts of authorship should more equitably describe non-verbal contributions to the composition.

Although not quite the same situation, one finds an analogue for Nightcrawler's death in *Civil War* when the pro-registration Iron Man and Mister Fantastic, fearing that the balance of power will soon shift to favor Captain America's anti-registration forces, release a cloned cyborg created from strands of Thor's hair collected before the god of thunder's death. Possessing all of the power and none of the compassion of the original, the cloned Thor, codenamed Ragnarok, joins the battle at the end of *Civil War* #3. Steve McNiven is the visual author for the entire series and there is a seamless transition from the first appearance of Ragnarok in the final panel of *Civil War* #3 to his appearance in the first panel of the next issue. The continuity issues found within Nightcrawler's death scene are absent from Ragnarok's appearance. The framing of Ragnarok jumps from what Kress and van Leeuwen term the frontal plane, a head on view of a scene (141-142), seen
in Figure 3.5 in the establishing shot to the oblique, near profile, composition picked up in the next issue seen in Figure 3.6. This transition serves to connect two images of the same character and to introduce movement into an otherwise static medium and the visual tone remains consistent between the two images. These depictions of Ragnarok exude power and an elemental fury without the possibility of whimsy. They show how Iron Man and Mister Fantastic have made a tactical move from which there is no return.

Although we may work to overcome the veiling caused by the visual author, it is helpful to examine the published panels in relation to what the alphabetic author scripted. Contained within the hardcover edition of the collected Civil War are the scripts for the entire series along with commentary from the authors. Millar's script provides little direction for McNiven, allowing the line artist greater agency and flexibility in depicting the scene as he sees fit for the published product. Millar scripts that the final panel of Civil War #3 should be a, "[h]uge, full-page image and a shot of the classic Thor standing here in all his glory, the rain hammering down and the lightning sparkling behind him. He's back and he looks more bad-ass than ever, his hammer held above his head and a very mean expression on his face" (Civil War #3 Script). In this description, we find a handful of instructions for McNiven; classic Thor will be standing in a full-page panel with pouring rain and lightning, hammer hefted overhead, and angry faced. While these descriptions act to ensure that Millar relates his vision to his collaborator, it is clear that he leaves much of the visual decision-making to McNiven. Although Millar's script does address some elements of the panel's visual composition, much is left unstated and subject to the visual author's agential intentions.
Figure 3.5 From *Civil War* #3
Two phrases stand out in Millar's script that seem to act as a jumping off point for McNiven. First, Millar asks that classic Thor is present "in all his glory" (Civil War #3 Script). This description provides a sense that the final composition should reflect Thor's regal nature, but little else. How does one represent the intangible glory? Auras and religious iconography have worked in the past, such as in myriad medieval paintings, but these abstractions would distract from the realism that McNiven has crafted. Instead, one finds glory and majesty in Ragnarok's corded muscles, his gleaming belt, billowing cape, and his indifference to the lashing rain. It is the entirety of the visual composition itself that creates the sense of glory; McNiven has not offered flowery words or visual abstractions of glory, visual features that McCloud recognizes as departures from attempts at realistic representation (49). There is no discrete visual element that bestows glory on this scene, it exists within the entirety of the composition.

The other phrase that stands out in Millar's script is the request that the character "looks more bad-ass than ever" (Civil War #3 Script). If it is problematic to represent glory visually without reverting to medieval iconography or abstractions, how then can a visual author possibly attempt to portray "bad-ass" without leather jackets, sunglasses, and beard stubble? One may assume that appearance plays an important role in the development of bad-ass because Millar removes himself from the creation of the bad-ass scene, which in turn allows McNiven to shoulder fully the responsibility of crafting an appropriate panel. Seemingly straightforward, this task is still troublesome, even if one disregards the blatantly non-bad-ass portions of classic Thor's appearances. Clad in a winged helm, bright blue trousers, and speaking in mock-Shakespearean English, classic
Thor is a product of the time in which he was created, and is does not resonate as bad-ass. Millar does not explicitly state how this interpretation of classic Thor will be bad-ass. He simply suggests a setting, a posture, and a facial expression within the context of the narrative, allowing McNiven to interpret each as he sees fit. In this instant, the artist is most responsible for cultivating the desired scene, indicating that the artist's work in the creation of comic books rivals that of the writer's. The strength of McNiven's Ragnarok does not come from clarifications provided by the writer, but from what the image provokes in the audience.

Although it is the dominance of the visual that makes this composition effective in portraying a turning point in the narrative, it would be wrong to assume this success comes because of the lack of words in the panel. Instead, because the words in comics become a matter of visual design and formatting, their absence is not a loss from the page, but the inclusion of much needed negative space. Leading up to this moment, both sides of the superhero civil war conflict were engaged in violent combat, and the dialogue grimly reflects this fact. The violent, oppressive atmosphere dictates that it is necessary to permit some relief from the melee so as to avoid overpowering the audience. Therefore, the lack of dialogue on the final page of Civil War #3 acts to silence the conflict momentarily and foreshadow that what has happened will figure profoundly in the next issue. Many visual artists claim the negative space in a composition will be more interesting than the positive and that it is necessary so that the audience does not become

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7Hercules' bellow of "Out of my way, you filthy traitors! [Iron Man's] killing [Captain America] in there!" (Civil War #3) perfectly sums up the maelstrom.
overwhelmed by an overly busy composition (Showker, 2009; "Use Negative Space"). McNiven and Millar work to provide this brief respite and the image crackles with energy because of it.

The scene continues in the first full-page panel in Civil War #4 (Figure 3.6). In this panel, a sense of movement develops because of how McNiven has framed Thor in the panel. At the top and bottom of the page, one finds black bars reminiscent of those one finds on letterbox-framed films, bringing with it connotations of movement and films. Additionally, switching from a frontal view to an oblique angle adds further movement as we move around the stationary figure. Although it is possible to achieve the same effect with two artists, it will undoubtedly be more difficult for two individuals to match styles and create the smooth continuity we see here. McNiven, working alone, is able to easily develop one tone and emotion in one scene and carry those same feelings over to the next issue. In this instant, the artist's role in developing the rhetoric of a scene remains translucent: there is little to no dissonance in representation between Civil War #3 and Civil War #4 and the audience takes the composition's unity for granted. However, as mentioned previously, we find this unity disrupted by the switch between artists in X-Force #26 and Uncanny X-Men #524. The final product does not necessarily constitute a fractured offering of the comic book, but there is a difference in how we perceive similar images, or a continuation of the same scene, and it changes because of how visual authors choose to translate alphabetic author's words.
In this small selection of panels, it becomes apparent that there exist nuances in visual representation that require more robust terminology and extensions of authorship to interpret more fully. In some cases, the effects of visuals on narrative only appear as a
result of disruption and remain unvoiced in other moments. I do not believe that this situation occurs because of the inherent strength of the alphabetic over the visual, but because we lack the language necessary for us to speak about these matters satisfactorily. A reader will likely be able to notice the differences between Mike Choi and Terry Dodson's interpretations of Nightcrawler's death, but it seems that we are less able to discuss what we see without comics-specific language that recognizes the subtleties of collaborative, multimodal authorship. Theoretically, the contributions of the visual author and the alphabetic author differ only in their modes of articulation, image and word, respectively, but a cultural acceptance of an undifferentiated author seems to permit the writer greater agency. However, as we see in the examples offered in this chapter, the visual author's contributions to the composition have the potential to be more intense than the alphabetic author's. The intensity of the images may then act to veil the words and allow the visual elements to alter an audience's perception of the narrative.

One location in which it seems possible to develop a greater awareness of visual authorships is within the composition classroom. Although seemingly an odd setting for developing visual authorship, because of composition's connection to the teaching of writing, it is the acceptance of multimodal composition within composition studies that encourages this path. Although theory seems to support the recognition of the visual author, such claims are less valid if there are no practical applications. Therefore, articulating the potential relationships between visual and alphabetic authors within the context of the composition classroom could promote a greater understanding of collaborative composition in multimodal and multimedia texts and encourage students to
view themselves as authors across various modes of composition. In the next chapter, I argue for reinterpreting the composition classroom as a studio space in which collaborative composition is more salient. This studio space can also encourage further meaningful engagement with multimodal composition and visual authorship.
Meanwhile, in the Studio: Re-Authoring Composition

My proposed shift to recognize visual and alphabetic authorships may benefit comics studies most immediately, but it also has implications should we rearticulate the concept to make sense within the college composition classroom. This reinterpretation, in turn, encourages further engagement with multimodal literacies and assignments that more explicitly engage visual composition. Composition scholars have argued for, and have generally accepted, the role and importance of multimodality in the composition classroom (Selfe, 1999; Yancey, 2004; Shipka, 2009; Alexander and Rhodes, 2014, among others), but we remain concerned primarily with alphabetic composition and the teaching of writing. Alexander and Rhodes further claim that even in those instances where multimodality, multimedia, or new media composition do appear in the composition course it is often in service of the aims of writing "composed texts" (24). Shifting our terminology to describe non-alphabetic authorships more accurately opens up further possibilities for the composition classroom that recognize that students are able to author both alphabetic and visual texts. Primarily, we may reinforce the necessary social connections that post-process theorists believe writing requires (Breuch 214) by encouraging students to recognize explicit collaboration across different modes. Additionally, recognition of non-alphabetic authorships and more explicitly social writing processes will be best served in non-linear classrooms that encourage new assignments. In this chapter, I posit that a reinterpretation of the composition classroom as a studio will help to promote multimodal and collaborative authorships and allow for the introduction of student-authored comic book assignments.
It is often assumed that visual artists possess innate talents that allow them to create in their chosen media. Although it is not uncommon for visual artists to have more natural ability than others, such beliefs cast artistic endeavors as purely creative acts without active critical engagement. Although some individuals may be able to produce work naturally and without reflection, the majority will require training and struggle to hone skills to a masterful level. The process movement in writing removes such observations from writing and encourages the belief that writing is necessarily a process. I believe that, by recognizing the visual author, we will promote greater awareness of the critical and reflective behaviors required for successful composition in the visual mode. By casting the individual as a visual author, it seems that we may be able to transfer the associations between the authoring of a text and writing-as-a-process to visual composition. This extension encourages further acceptance of the visual artist's ability to exert influence over a final text without reducing the actions to artistic instinct. Opening up the composition classroom to visual authorship will further cement the connection between process, and in my view post-process, pedagogy and composition more generally, revealing that images may be composed in much the same way as alphabetic texts and that students are capable of authoring both visual and alphabetic texts.

**Multiple Processes, Multiple Authorships**

In the typical university classroom, regimented rows of forward facing desks seek a single point, one individual, be it human or technological, from whom all of the course material needed to pass the final exam will come. This classroom design encourages the
pursuit of a single answer and the belief that there exists a linear path to that destination. But is this an appropriate setting for courses where responses are more subjective, such as the writing course? Thomas Kent asserts that most post-process composition theorists hold three tenets of writing true: "(1) writing is public; (2) writing is interpretive; and (3) writing is situated" (Kent 1), and, although we may meet these requirements within the typical classroom, writing teachers and students may find greater success in a different setting. Distilled, these three statements indicate that writing relies on social connections that allow the writer to compose and interpret, invoking the sense of intertextuality Barthes examines in "Death of the Author." Scholarship cannot occur within a vacuum because language itself is socially constructed and meaning develops only when context exists (Kent 1). A course with subjective material will need to be carried out in a space that recognizes that subjectivity.

A more inclusive view of authorship in which alternative authorships exist appears to break down perceptions of a solitary and individualistic writing process. Instead of an ordeal through which one must drudge alone, composition becomes a collaborative exercise in which the author attempts to predict what a reader may believe and align her words to those beliefs, demanding that we "react on the spot to our partners" (Kent 5). This variable and contextual "hermeneutic dance" (Kent 5) allows writers to call upon past experiences when making decisions, but one-for-one transfer is not always possible. Lee-Ann M. Kastman Breuch characterizes this interpretation of writing as "push[ing] past process and toward a dialogic understanding of meaning-
making" (124). We cannot rely on a stable writing process, even for ourselves, and the mental processes in which we engage require that we consider others before we write.

Breuch voices her support for post-process theory's dissolution of the belief that we may master writing, recognizing that mastery narratives may encourage content-based writing instruction instead of activity-based instruction (129-130). There exists no unimpeachable composition process that produces fountains of flawless prose that we may learn or teach. Instead, it is necessary for individuals to experiment with their own composition processes and uncover what works best individually, altering these processes when they fail. As Kent argues, we may allow past experience to inform our writing process, but "knowing these shortcuts does not mean that we hold a Big Theory, nor does it mean that we know a repeatable process that can be employed successfully during every writing situation" (2). We may extract common features of successful writers and encourage students to attend to revision and manage their time more effectively, but these elements remain general and do not constitute a grand process theory that encompasses all writing at all moments. No one process reigns dominant, and processes change often. Processes determine products, which in turn determine success, and we may only teach what we have seen to work well in the past. In this, our experiences are limited to what we perceive of our students and ourselves. However, in much the same way that social interactions alter what we write, we may find that students alter their actions based on their perceptions of classmates and their success. It then seems that writing not only requires collaboration, but that collaborative exercises may help students to uncover more effective processes for themselves as they interact with other successful writers.
As we saw in chapter two, all writing exists intertextually (Barthes, "Death" 4) and the author function acts as a focus where different textual threads converge to create meaning (Foucault 130-1). That is, writing responds to and prompts the production of texts, and even writing alone constitutes a form of passive collaboration. Logically, it follows that composition instruction should reflect this understanding. The near ubiquitous presence of peer-review workshops in writing classes indicates that there is a perceived value in students sharing their writing with peers. Yet, these attempts to highlight collaboration have "failed to challenge traditional concepts of radical individualism" and students continue to produce "individual" texts (Lunsford and Ede 695) in spaces that further discourage social interaction and collaboration. It then seems logical that we should attempt to alter our instruction spaces in order to demonstrate the intertextual and social needs of writing. Typical writing classrooms appear to reinforce the belief that authoring a text is a solitary endeavor and exemplify the epistemology of current-traditional rhetorical instruction. This method of writing instruction focuses on students' pursuit of a single truth, obtained through induction, and limited invention on the students' parts because the answer need only be discovered (Berlin 769-770). In this system, although texts still exist intertextually, social interactions are ignored because truth is final and we may reach it through reason alone.

Although compositionists believe we have moved beyond this system (Berlin 770; Fulkerson, 2005), the spaces in which we teach still reflect a belief in a single answer and single process in writing. Composition classrooms, no matter their employ, typically reflect linear sensibilities, and one individual stands at the front of a group of students.
The students themselves face forward seated neatly in even rows that will allow them uninhibited access to a fountain of knowledge and might unintentionally suggest to students "that there is one right way to design texts: from beginning to end or start to finish" (Carpenter 72). In this structure, students may only interact with other students obliquely and the social interaction compositionists believe is beneficial for writing is discouraged. I believe Lunsford and Ede's claim that classrooms are one factor that "militate against a pedagogy of collaboration" ("Collaborative" 700) resonates with my observations of the shortcomings of the typical writing classroom. It seems that we often struggle against the spaces in which we teach. We may actively disrupt this arrangement by asking our students to create a circle or break into smaller groups, but classrooms are typically ill-suited to such requests, and we find ourselves constrained by our environments. Rows effectively remain the default order of the classroom, and these structures encourage a sense of autonomy and linear thought.

My argument for an extension of authorship that recognizes collaborative visual and alphabetic authorships immediately questions many values regarding student and teacher expectations and textual ownership within the typical writing classroom. Logically, we may expect that these beliefs about the possibility of singular authorship, with little recognition of intertextuality, may trickle down into the classroom. However, collaborative interactions within the classroom seem to help students develop critical production abilities in unfamiliar media. In "Growing Smarter Over Time: An Emergence Model for Administrating a New Media Writing Studio," Carrie S. Leverenz argues that a "non-hierarchical sharing of work along with a focus on extensive
communication led naturally to frequent collaboration" and that these interactions taught the participants more (56). Although Leverenz focuses on teacher training, it seems that the collaboration experienced by the various individuals involved in Texas Christian University's New Media Writing Studio may prove beneficial to students in much the same way. Leverenz recognizes that she and her colleagues never know "everything and that what is most important is having a strategy for learning" (58). Those involved early in the project were not new media specialists and learned alongside each other through interaction and dialogue, encouraging the pursuit for more explicit collaboration within the composition classroom.

Introducing more opportunities for collaboration within the composition classroom will alter how students author texts but will not blur distinctions about which student is responsible for what work. In much the same way that Leverenz values the interactions between participants in her study, Kay Brocato characterizes learning as being "maximized by the creation of communities of participants who develop into increasingly unique, diverse, yet complementary individuals" (141). Students will be able to develop uniquely but also in a manner that functions within the classroom ecology. If a course allows for collaboration, students may provide the feedback and critique necessary for success that was once limited to the teacher. Taken together, Brocato's claim that regular collaboration creates unique students and Leverenz' observation that collaboration occurs naturally within proper settings, further encouraging collaboration within the composition classroom. Although we may want to view students as novices, they often possess resources that indicate they are anything but, and we may harness this knowledge
within the classroom so that students may help each other learn. If students can provide feedback to each other on some elements of composition, instructors may be free to spend greater time with individual students, providing immersive feedback and instruction without fearing that they may be ignoring other students.

In addition to challenging singular student authorship, explicit recognition of visual authorship further presses against disciplinary boundaries extended by the acceptance of multimodality within composition. By extending authorship to include non-alphabetic modes of composition more fully, we find further support for the possibility of composition courses that engage primarily with multimodality. Kress and van Leeuwen recognize that, although multimodal texts may become less numerous in a curriculum, students will continue to encounter visual texts with great frequency (15). Today, nearly twenty years after Kress and van Leeuwen write, students interact with visual texts more regularly because of advances in digital media and Internet technology, but it is often the case that they still do not receive explicit instruction in producing these media. Alexander and Rhodes take up this thread in their arguments for a greater awareness of new and multimedia, claiming that although composition instructors may teach students to be critically aware of non-print texts, it is rare that we find critical production of non-alphabetic texts in a composition course (108). The texts with which students engage may be equal parts visual and alphabetic, or favor the visual, and we may provide interpretive frameworks, but it is also necessary to teach the various affordances available multimodally so that our students may be successful inside and outside of the classroom.
In "Thinking about Multimodality," Pamela Takayoshi and Cynthia Selfe address the need for understanding multimodal composition and claim that students will be expected to "communicate on multiple semiotic channels, using all available means of creating and conveying meaning" (3). Students need to be aware of multimodality because, increasingly, others will expect that they are able to manipulate and produce hybrid texts that engage both visually and alphabetically. Echoing Aristotle's definition of rhetoric, Takayoshi and Selfe argue that students will be more successful in presenting a point when they are aware of, and able to employ, a greater number of means of persuasion (3), bringing with it greater power for the student. Instead of considering a single path through which they may demonstrate understanding and argue an opinion, as is available within the rigid confines of a constructed genre like the term paper, students have to negotiate a variety of channels successfully to meet the rhetorical situation properly when composing multimodal texts.

Although it is clear that Kress and van Leeuwen and Alexander and Rhodes advocate that students receive formal instruction in multimodal texts, issues of disciplinarity appear when composition teachers, who traditionally teach writing, ask their students to produce assignments that are not primarily alphabetic. Students may be given alphabetic tasks to accompany multimodal assignments, such as Jody Shipka's statement of goals and choices (353) or the writer's memo (Sommers, 1989), but the piece that the student submits does not have to contain any writing. Theoretically, compositionists agree on the importance of teaching alternative modes, yet many teachers find it difficult to include multimodality explicitly in otherwise standard composition
courses for fear they lack the expertise required or that they may deprive their students of a proper writing education. Although this is a reasonable and understandable reservation, we do not need to limit composition to writing. Many students possess the expertise required to perform multimodally, and many more bring with them an awareness of new and multimedia that will prove beneficial within composition courses. We may have to instruct those students who are unfamiliar with such tasks how to compose within a new mode, but mostly we must "be cognizant of the particular rhetorical capabilities of multimodal texts and what different composers might be able to do with ... multimodal spaces" (Alexander and Rhodes 139). Production instruction may be necessary, but we can pair it with critical instruction that offers students the opportunity to think critically of how and why they compose in a particular media or mode. Composition courses are historically founded on rhetorical theory, (Takayoshi and Selfe 8) and this quality encourages writing teachers to teach critical production in addition to analysis. Accepting alternative authorships more clearly recognizes the intentions behind actions not traditionally associated with authorship and bolsters what theory asserts of multimodality, encouraging further engagement with multimodal texts.

Describing the Composition Studio

If it is true that the typical classroom discourages students from engaging in the social interactions that benefit and strengthen writing, how then might we introduce more collaborative authorships into the writing classroom in a way that might also encourage multimodality? One possible approach recasts the composition classroom as a studio space in which a network of students pursues similar goals in composition through
unique and self-determined means. In the studio space, students have the opportunity to modify their surroundings to reflect their own needs, rigid structures set aside for in favor of fluidity and social interaction. Geoffrey Sirc hypothesizes on the path that composition did not take in English Composition as a Happening and observes that the avant-garde artists and musicians of the fifties and sixties realized that the conventional space in which they composed, "resulted in [a] conventional product" (5), revealing, in turn, a strong connection between space and composition. Students may be better served viewing the classroom as a creative place where there exists no single, linear path to a pre-determined answer and that the winding path is as important as the destination to the experienced writer. We find a similar statement in Russell Carpenter's "Negotiating the Spaces of Design in Multimodal Composition" when he claims of the classroom that "the space might be workable but not ideal" (70). Like Sirc's observation of avant-garde artists, Carpenter realizes that the spaces in which we teach may functionally work, but they limit students' potentials. A studio model classroom that actively works against current-traditional instruction and encourages multimodality presents itself as one solution to these limitations. Our instruction spaces will become more dynamic and we may naturally step beyond predominantly alphabetic composition to engage multimodal literacies.

To be successful, the composition studio must remain flexible so that students may manipulate it as they see fit while they compose. Carpenter observes of a particular new media studio that "[t]he space is designed to facilitate a fluid, nonlinear process for student composers, suggesting that there are multiple entry points as they envision, draft,
and refine their projects" (70). It is necessary to teach students that linear sensibilities do not always function well in the texts that they create and that it might be necessary to find alternatives. If the spaces in which we teach composition subconsciously encourage a linear view of composition, as Carpenter and Sirc assert, then it seems that we might actively disrupt those associations. Brocato recognizes that the strength of studio-based learning is that it allows for a "propose-critique-iterate" progression in student work (139-40). That is, students may offer early versions of their work, receive feedback from a variety of individuals, and use that experience to improve their initial attempts. Although this seems a commonplace within composition instruction, studios amplify these opportunities and move them past peer-review and comments on drafts. In this system, teachers work one-on-one with students to perform the formative feedback, as encouraged by proponents of multimodality in composition, and "encourage self and peer critique" (Brocato 141-42). Students will be able to receive the instruction that they need, but we may also provide the tools that they need to solve their own, and their peers', problems in the future.
In the studio classroom as compared to the typical classroom (see figures 4.1 and 4.2), it is easier to model intertextuality so that students may make connections between successful writing practices and collaborative interactions. Groups of students will be asked to pursue similar goals, but with fewer restrictions than those found in the typical classroom, allowing individuals to converse and interact in the hope that these behaviors help students become more critical and intentional visual and alphabetic authors. The resulting structure will undoubtedly be more messy and chaotic, but it will also more accurately reflect the composition process and its many false starts and detours. Students will be able to craft a space for themselves in which they will find greater success. Although the discrete units may seem unrelated in the studio classroom, it is the consideration of the whole, similar to how a reader might observe a page of comic book panels, that indicates that, within the disarray, there is still a goal to pursue, the route is simply more circuitous.

The rearticulation of the comics-specific visual/alphabetic authorship relationship influences the studio classroom I propose and may help to de-stigmatize collaborative
authorship and promote multimodality. As I recognize in chapter two, both Foucault and Mag Uidhir argue that production does not immediately bestow authorship on an individual. Instead, one must act as the agent through whom, from recognizable contributions, a text comes to exist. This proposed model may seem to encourage undifferentiated and undocumented collaborations between students, however it actually calls attention to intertextuality. Collaboration may help open up classrooms to include more than multiple individuals working together to craft a final product and may also encompass the conversations, suggestions, and musings that occur naturally within the studio environment. We do not lose a sense of responsibility for production because, although the student may be influenced by the thoughts and contributions of others, she must still exert the agential control required to produce a piece that makes sense of external contributions and realizes her internal visions. This new collaboration pulls back the curtain shrouding intertextuality and reveals that we may declare a piece collaborative, even if only one student can claim authorship.

In addition to making intertextuality more explicit within the classroom setting, the collaborative potentials available within the studio classroom may help to provide some of the structure multimodal projects require. In "Yes, a T-Shirt!: Assessing Visual Composition in the 'Writing' Class," Lee Odell and Susan M. Katz argue that, to be successful, students will need guidance as they compose in an entirely new medium (Odell and Katz 200). Without mentorship, the student will be left to puzzle out how best to present her message, offering an opportunity for failure and further disenchantment with composition. In a similar spirit, Sonya Borton and Brian Huot propose in "Reading
and Responding," that a writing instructor should use informal formative feedback throughout the course of a project in order to help a student find success in multimodal composition (5-6). Instead of allowing formative feedback to supplement a final high-stakes assessment, they argue that the instructor should closely monitor her students' processes and progress to provide guidance and to redirect as needed. The instructor acts as mentor and aids the student's foray into what is a potentially foreign endeavor. Finally, we may also redistribute the formative feedback encouraged by Borton and Huot to students within the classroom, creating a system in which students may offer advice and criticism. In this communal atmosphere, collaboration is naturalized and encouraged to overcome difficulty.

Comics in the Classroom

In considering the potential of shifting our construction of the composition classroom to embrace both visual and alphabetic authorships within a studio space, innovative avenues open for exploration. Among these potential innovations stands the possibility of incorporating multimodality more substantially, including assignments inspired by comic books, into writing courses. Although some within the academy may still consider comics a pet project for those within the literature department, many courses across the country have adopted graphic narratives as part of their reading lists, revealing that these texts deserve more than the simple juvenile description so often applied. It is necessary, when reading a comic book, to pay greater attention to different modes at work if we wish to decipher these complicated texts. I believe that comic book assignments provide a unique chance for students to compose texts that require attention
to visual elements often beyond consideration in common educational formats and in a form that exists outside of the university. Paired with alternative authorships that recognize the potentials of visual authorship and carried out in a studio classroom space, comic book-inspired assignments appear as an alternative to written composition that encourage students to pull a draught from untapped inspiration previously forbidden.

I propose the use of student-created comic book assignments and studio-based classrooms not only based on theory or my own love of comic book superheroes. Instead, I proffer the suggestion based on an eye-opening experience in an undergraduate course that addressed both the literary nature and composition of graphic narrative. In ENGL 2215, hereafter referred to as Graphic Fiction, two instructors pushed my classmates and me to complete our contributions to the final anthology of student-authored work. The class was split between a literature section in which we read and interpreted graphic texts and an art section where we honed our abilities in the class' studio setting. At the core of the composition aspect of this class stood the fact that our individual messages could only be transmitted through the successful marriage of image and word. Our professors instructed us on how we may encourage successful collaboration between our words and images, but, out of necessity, we had to navigate through different systems of meaning making to create an intelligible whole.

Much of the success my classmates and I found in Graphic Fiction resulted from the informal feedback received during our studio time. The regular studio sessions served as both instructional time during which we developed our artistic abilities and in-class workshop time devoted to industriously producing the final project. We were free to
consult with each other, in the manner that Brocato and Carpenter recognize that studios allow, and offer suggestions on how best to proceed. We engaged constantly in passive collaboration and achieved greater success because of it. This portion of the class provided an ideal opportunity for informal critique and guidance, varieties of the aforementioned formative feedback so important to multimodality, because the instructors were able to interact with students individually and participate in dialogues concerning the effectiveness of rhetorical choices, visual and alphabetic, in person. In addition to these exceedingly informal work sessions, the instructors also included formal assessments at points throughout the semester to ensure that the class stayed on schedule to complete the project on time. These assessments helped to reinforce the collaborative nature of writing through individualized feedback without creating an anxiety-tinged atmosphere.

Although the possibilities of student-authored comic books are exciting, there exist practical limitations that impede the implementation of such an assignment. The disciplinary requirements for instructors are possibly the most troublesome, because the majority of composition instructors are not trained in both composition and fine arts pedagogy. Instead of having one instructor qualified to address both visual and verbal composition, most institutions would have to devote two individuals, one from the art department and one from composition, to address each component appropriately. Although this arrangement brought great success to my Graphic Fiction class, allocating two instructors to a single, low-capacity class is cost prohibitive and most institutions will be reluctant to fund this arrangement. But, considering Alexander and Rhodes' argument
that we must learn new media composition alongside our students (109) and Leverenz' discussion of her own experiences learning new media alongside her students (56-7), it is less necessary to devote two instructors. Instructors and students do not have to be masters of the material with which they work they just need to be willing to work to improve their skills and develop the ability to communicate effectively within the target medium, comics in this instance. One will find, within the aforementioned anthology of student-created work, a wide range of styles employed when crafting the narratives that, although tending toward traditional illustrations, represent a gamut of artistic skills. The course listing explicitly indicated the fine arts portion of the course, but it is not necessary to provide art instruction. Instead, we should simply remain open to alternatives and be ready to ask students to question their work.

Although some may believe that comic books have no proper place within academia, they have nonetheless found a home and will only become more visible as more classes adopt them as a part of their reading lists. Because students will be expected to compose collaborative and multimodal texts outside of the university, they will require some instruction on how to compose mixed and/or non-alphabetic texts thoughtfully. However, as Kress and van Leeuwen and Alexander and Rhodes reveal, our efforts so far have been limited. I do not argue for the abandonment of what has come before, but for an opening up and extension of what we can accomplish. Compositionists, theoretically, support the assertions I have made, but this is not enough. We must actively struggle against the familiar and question our own beliefs so that we may expand the discipline of rhetoric and composition. Drawing from my addition to comics studies-specific
terminology, we may help our students to view themselves as authors and that authorship
does not have to be limited to alphabetic texts.
Conclusion

An exciting energy surrounds comics, and we may tap into this quality within the academy. Either through the development of comics-specific terminology that allows for more nuanced discussion, such as the visual/alphabetic author distinction, or through classroom interactions inspired by and engaging the form, comics presents an excellent opportunity for the university and composition, specifically. Far from new, comic books have potential for both teaching and composing that remains unrealized because we are often not quite sure how to introduce the texts to students. We have made a valiant first step by introducing the best examples of the comics into the classroom alongside canonical texts in a variety of disciplines, but more is needed. As Alexander and Rhodes argue, we must learn to compose in a medium if we are to understand it fully (69). We cannot limit our engagement with comics to adding Neil Gaiman's "A Midsummer's Night Dream" to a class alongside Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Night Dream*. Instead we should encourage students to compose comics and treat these as a legitimate platform for responding to the two offerings of this story.

In the most recent first-year composition course I taught, I asked my students to create a graphic writing narrative. In this assignment, I did not request much from my students, and required that their final assignment contain at least three panels. Although I hoped that they would seize the opportunity and produce more, and many did, three panels provided enough space to represent the beginning, middle, and end of their individual stories. As I addressed in chapter four, my students could compose their work in whatever manner they were most comfortable, and many employed the online comics
strip creator BitStrips. Like many assignments, the work I received was of different levels of quality. However, the majority of the class bunched together near the top of the assessment scale. I could see the effort and excitement that the students put into the project and it reflected positively in their grades. Although my students performed well on this assignment, they surprised me in their evaluations of the course. When asked to rank which assignments helped them to improve their rhetorical awareness and writing abilities, my students consistently ranked the graphic writing narrative in the top half. It seems odd, but my students believed that this multimodal assignment benefitted their writing. As indicated by the previous anecdote, comics may be a powerful learning tool if presented properly. Framed as a legitimate medium through which my students could tell about their histories as writers, comics forced my students to synthesize their knowledge of genres, media, writing, among other elements, with their visual literacy and technical literacies to produce the story they wished to share. This assignment immediately required that my students envision and present themselves, explicitly, as writers. However, it also helped them to assert their agency within a relatively familiar form and claim authorship as both visual authors and alphabetic authors.

My efforts offer only a small contribution to comics studies and composition, in the form of terminology and alternative models of authorship, but this is only a humble beginning. Further exploration is necessary. My future work will continue to build a body of terminology useful to comics studies, which, with rearticulation, may also impact multimodal composition and visual rhetoric as well. Although comics are fundamentally multimodal, and rely on the juxtaposition of image and word for its existence, much of
the effort that has been put into comics studies focuses on the literary potentials of the medium with only cursory references to images. Comics possess a potential for composition instruction matched by few other media. Comics exist primarily outside of the university, and many students have interacted with the texts informally. However, this potential may only be recognized by developing our understanding of image and its relation to word within the texts. Images do not have to constitute a lower literacy, and they deserve greater attention. It is not enough to be functionally literate we must instead strive to be more critical with regard to the visual mode so that we may deepen our understanding.

Finally, and most importantly of all, comic books offer one quality that many often feel is lacking within academia: they are fun. Although scholars and some students may find their academic work rewarding and entertaining in its own right, many students do not and may become apathetic to their studies in favor of finding diversion. Comics may provide that spark of interest necessary to kindle a roaring fire in the minds of students as they explore how it is that Spider-man and Batman may be more than costumed vigilantes fighting for justice. Comics address possibilities of visual communication so often excluded unintentionally from writing curricula, encouraging students to become more aware of multimodal forms of communication. Further exploration is necessary so that we may know how to discuss and incorporate these familiar, but complicated, texts within the university setting in order to harness their energy. Now, we must push onward and seek out a deeper understanding of comics. By offering comics-specific terminology that impacts our understanding of authorship, I
have attempted a step in this direction. We have much left to discover, but the energy and excitement and potentials surrounding the form seem fuel enough to sustain us throughout the journey.
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