

From the Editor

Special Issue: Comics, Multimodality, and Composition

Dale Jacobs, Guest Editor

About ten years ago, I was teaching a second-year writing course at the University of Windsor. Several of the students in that class were avid comics readers and, over the course of the semester, began encouraging me to come back to reading comics, a pursuit I had all but abandoned fifteen years earlier. The comics they loaned to me—*Sandman*, *Blankets*, and Brubaker's run on *Daredevil*, among others—pulled me into the narrative in ways that were both familiar from my adolescence and novel in the way they were using the medium. As I read, I began to think about how I had made meaning from comics texts in the past and how I was doing so now, a line of thinking that led to my scholarly interest in comics studies and its intersection with composition and rhetoric.

Over the next several years, I read the occasional article that was published in one of the journals in the field and attended any panels I could on comics at 4Cs. I read the comics studies journals and attended conferences, searching for others who were using the lenses of composition studies to think about comics. As the years went on, I began to see more and more people in composition interested in comics and especially in their potential uses in the classroom. Still, though, those efforts were scattered here and there in journals, in essay collections, in conference presentations, and in informal talk and email exchanges. So when Laura Micciche asked me if I would be interested in guest editing a special issue of *Composition Studies* on comics and composition, I leapt at the chance to bring together composition scholars who are interested in comics and their potential for our field.

I had high hopes for the issue from the start, but I was overwhelmed to receive 24 essay submissions, in addition to all of the other material that I received. Of those excellent articles, four are included here. Gabriel Sealy-Morris's "The Rhetoric of the Paneled Page: Comics and Composition Pedagogy" provides an excellent overview of how comics might be used in the practice of composition instruction, especially as articulated in the WPA *Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition*. In "Beyond Talking Heads: Sourced Comics and the Affordances of Multimodality," Hannah Dickinson and Maggie M. Werner argue for composing comics in the classroom as a way to help students "expand and demystify the strategies students might use to engage scholarly sources." Kate Comer, in "Illustrating Praxis: Comic Composition, Narrative

Rhetoric, and Critical Multiliteracies,” also argues for comics as a medium in our classes, focusing on how narrative and comics theory can combine to offer students a set of heuristics for composition. Molly Scanlon examines the issues and implications of collaborative multimodal composition in her article, “The Work of Comics Collaborations: Considerations of Multimodal Composition for Writing Scholarship and Pedagogy,” and, in doing so, pushes the ways that we need to think about collaboration as a field. Taken together, these essays provide a spectrum of possible engagements between comics and composition.

The Course Design section includes two pieces: Leah Misemer’s literature and popular culture course on “The Graphic Novel” and Aaron Kashtan’s literature and composition course centered on “Handwriting and Typography.” Both of these pieces show specific, though very different, ways that comics can be incorporated into the classroom. In our first Composing With piece, Gary Weissman explains how he created the cover of this issue; in the second, Frannie Howes details her own practices as both an academic and comics creator during her time in graduate school. For the “Where We Are” section, I asked three authors whose essays I could not include to contribute a much-abbreviated version of their arguments as a means to show the multiple ways that comics and composition can intersect with each other and with other fields. Susan Kirtley in “The Underdog Disciplines: Comics Studies and Composition and Rhetoric” directly addresses the possible connections between the two fields, while Shannon Walters, in “Graphic Disruptions: Comics, Disability, and De-Canonizing Composition,” examines the ways in which comics and disability studies can help to critique normative assumptions about multimodality in Composition. In “Comics and Scholarship: Sketching the Possibilities,” Erin Kathleen Bahl traces the possibilities and current state of scholarly publishing in comics form. Finally, Aaron Scott Humphrey offers a fascinating comic (inked by John Carvajal) entitled “Visual and Spatial Language: The Silent Voice of Woodstock” in which he challenges us to consider how comics can help us to think about multimodality in new ways.

I want to thank Laura Micciche for inviting me to edit this issue and for all the support throughout the process. Working on this special issue has been a pleasure. I hope that you find it reading it as exciting and productive as I have.

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