Framing the Superheroine: Form and Character in Contemporary Comics and Manga

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Framing a Superheroine:
Form and Character in Contemporary Comics and Manga

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Languages and Literature
of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
May 2019
Acknowledgements

Thank you to Jeremy Coppola, Emma Fishback, and Chloë Spears, whose encouragement and support throughout completing this project has kept me sane. Thank you to Maria Cecire, who in our meetings helped me find new avenues and clarify my ideas at various stages. And thank you to Nate Shockey, my advisor, for his help at every stage of this project. I hope that in my final draft the individual parts have come together and, in his words, formed Voltron.
**Table of Contents**

Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 1

*Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* ...................................................................................................................... 19

*Cardcaptor Sakura* ...................................................................................................................................... 40

*Batwoman* .................................................................................................................................................. 47

Conclusion .................................................................................................................................................. 63
Introduction

In *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud poses the following relationship between content and form for a single page of a comic: "Comics panels *fracture* both *time* and *space*, offering a *jagged, staccato rhythm of unconnected moments*. But closure allows us to *connect* these moments and *mentally construct* a *continuous, unified reality*. If *visual iconography* is the *vocabulary* of comics, *closure* is its *grammar,*" (67). The analogy is clean, but inaccurate, and overlooks the role of page layout and design in the reader's interpretation.

The purpose of bringing this up isn't to critique McCloud for his phrasing of a single sentence; the section ("Chapter Three: Blood in the Gutter," pages 60 – 93) is, on the whole, informative and draws attention to closure as a vital-yet-hidden component of comics reading. As a whole the chapter delves into complexities in the reader-comic relationship and how comics create meaning, with emphasis on the relationship between and within individual panels, and including cultural and stylistic iconographic decisions. However, the frustration I have over the phrasing of this analogy is a good space to explain the importance of page layout in the comics reading experience, and describe the relationship of layout and iconography as I see it, before I delve into the more specific discussion and bulk of this project: how comics represent a character's subjective experience in the layout of a page.

Here, "layout" is primarily being used to mean the structural aspects of a comics page, such as the design of panels themselves but excluding the panels’ content. This is the scaffold behind the comic's illustrations that configures the reader's impression of an entire page. To look into my specific focus, the reader's impression of character, the body of this project is a close reading of *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon* by Naoko Takeuchi, *Cardcaptor Sakura* by CLAMP, and *Batwoman*
as done by Greg Rucka and J.H. Williams III. Each of these comics employ layout to affect the reader's understanding of their main character in ways they do not achieve with their illustrations alone and that are unique to comics as a medium.

The equation that McCloud draws by calling "closure" the "grammar" of comics is that the content of a comic — specifically, the content of narrative comics — consists of story moments translated into informative images (visual iconography), and it is simply the ordering of these images that conveys their full narrative meaning to the reader. That is, because iconography is the "vocabulary" of a comic, the analogy takes into account that changing the ordering of that iconography will alter the received meaning, the same way a sentence changes meaning when the words are in a different order. However, it ignores that in addition to the way panels are juxtaposed, the framework of that juxtaposition — the positioning of the panels in space, as well as their size, shape, aesthetic and other visual qualities, etc., that is, the overall construction and layout of a page — conveys information as well that the simple juxtaposition of images does not.

Much of the problem comes from McCloud's use of "closure" as terminology. McCloud defines closure as the "phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole," (63), but his use cases throughout the chapter mostly refer to direct temporal adjacency (determined in comics by locational adjacency). His description and verbal definition allow for the abstraction that the phrase "closure allows us to connect these [unconnected] moments and mentally construct a continuous, unified reality" relies on, but his language primarily uses closure to refer to how two adjacent images give rise to a third, imagined image which (in the viewer's mind) exists in the interstice between the two. Sometimes closure is an act by the viewer; on page 64 he describes the viewing a halftone image as a photograph rather than individual dots using the phrase "we commit closure." Other times, closure is passively occurring and without a clear agent. In one example he
raises film — more precisely, and with relevant distinction, the artistic medium called "film" as it is when contained on the pre-digital physical medium also called "film" — which is only a band of still frames but through the rapid presentation of those frames gives rise to the illusion of movement, itself due to the illusion of new, imaginary images in between the extant ones. He then explains closure in film as "tak[ing] place continuously — twenty-four times per second, in fact," (65).

Either use of closure isn't necessarily wrong, nor is closure absent from any of the chapter's given examples. That being said, his mixed use does muddy the analogy at hand. The first reading of the analogy with its wording as-is is that comics' grammar is an act by the viewer, as part of extrapolating broader interpretations from incomplete imagery (as in the half-tone example). The second reading is that comics' grammar is the function of direct adjacency between panels (as depicted in the film example). The issue in either case is these refer to the result of the presupposed grammar, and not a valid grammar in itself. Furthermore, this limits comics' grammar to the spaces between panels, ignoring the architecture that gives rise to the spaces in the first place.

McCloud does acknowledge a more complex role of layout in other places, but only through implicitly addressing it. The *Understanding Comics* chapter on the depiction and reception of diegetic time ("Chapter Four: Time Frames," pages 94 – 117) analyzes how the design of a panel's frame affects how the moment within the panel is received, specifically in the reader's interpretation of diegetic time. This includes the shape of the panel as well as its position and its interaction with other elements on the page. For example, McCloud describes the different temporal qualities of various panel shapes and ordering of panels, such as splitting a moment into several panels, using a large panel versus a small one, and whether or not the panel has a border. He then describes how "[w]hen 'bleeds' are used — i.e., when a panel runs off the edge of the page
— this effect [timelessness in a panel with no depiction of sound] is compounded. Time is no longer contained by the familiar icon of the closed panel, but instead hemorrhages and escapes into timeless space," (103). This is one facet of how the larger architecture, layout, comes into play. The "bleed" itself is dependent on that framework, given that "running off the edge of the page" necessitates a page to run off the edge of, a position on the page to do so, and the shape that makes it appear to expand beyond the hard boundary set by the paper. This particular temporal quality, "timelessness," is directly dependent on layout; McCloud describes a feature of "timelessness" as giving the sense that "[the panel's] presence may be felt in the panels which follow it," (102). That is, for a panel to have this feature, it must be set within a larger page amongst other panels, and within a specific range of positions so that other panels come after it. A timeless panel involves the entire page, both in how the page is formatted and in how it affects the reading of the rest of the page.

The failing of the analogy, then, is dependent on three things. First, in the way McCloud uses "closure" to speak about relationships between panels, it applies to only two sequentially adjacent panels at a time. However, we can see that the whole layout of a page is involved in the reading of a comic, in the scale of individual panels or in a holistic reading of the entire page (and even related pages). Second, "grammar" refers to an implicit architecture in language, that is, the set of rules a language adheres to, dependent on semantic intent. Following this, although the ordering of concepts is a part of grammar, the sequence of individual panels is not a grammar in itself. And third, terms like "vocabulary" and "grammar" refer to parts and their structure. This downplays that layout conveys information itself in tandem with panel content, and is more than just the scaffold for such information.

One lens for viewing the layout-panel-content relationship is visualizing comics as a mix
of explicitly and implicitly received information. Information primarily reaches the reader explicitly, through panel content and the deliberate ordering of events. However, a similarly large part of the whole is implicitly received, such as from visual qualities of a panel's form (like shape, position, the gutter between panels, the panel's border as well as the border's qualities, etc.) or from the impression of the page as a whole, removed from the particularities of panel content.¹

My proposed analogy, then, is that if the language of comics works similarly to the language of a conversation — in-person, between two people — then, in the analogy, a page's illustrations act as "vocal" communication, and its construction acts as "non-vocal" communication. The information communicated between people involves not only what is vocalized (that is, the words chosen and the way they are said), but also concepts not said in any phonemic way but instead telegraphed by movement, position or posture (body language) and other nonverbal channels. Therefore, in comics, the iconography of a comic is its words, with stylistic choices acting as prosody, while page layout — and the components thereof such as closure and the design of panels — is its body language. In interaction between people, it is not only words that carry meaning, but also the mode of transmission of those words, and, most relevant for the focus here, concepts transmitted outside of verbal language entirely.

This analogy involves that layout provides more to the reading of a page than simply structuring panel content, while granting that layout may not be the primary channel in transmitting information to the reader. In addition, it allows that layout is both the basis and byproduct of panel content; panels must be independently legible, but must fit within a larger page, and whether

¹ There are of course complexities to the reading process that make information variably "vocal" or "non-vocal," so if necessary the two terms can be thought of as ends on a spectrum, with some concepts (like speech balloons, which are formal structures but also a component of panel content) being located uncertainly somewhere between the two ends. However, the difference is still apparent enough that it can be said the two ends exist, whatever the ends may be called.
information is gleaned from iconographic content or from an aspect of the layout, that information comes from the same intent to create a certain meaning.

Further, the division in this analogy is unique to comics; what can be called "vocal" and "non-vocal" communication may exist in other forms, but this particular balance of and interaction between "vocal" and "non-vocal" modes is unique to comics (as it would be with any distinct medium). Out of the landscape of contemporary mediums, comics' specificity is most commonly compared to that of film, and especially when it comes to comic-like media that arise during film production such as the storyboard and animatic stages. Of note is that in these media, the comic-specific page form is greatly reduced (in the case of the storyboard) or entirely absent (in the case of film and animatic). These media may be considered to have more complex "vocal" modes of transmission, such as sound, music, and moving images, etc., to the point where comics have had to invent iconography to supplement their absence — such as, for example, the shapes bounding text that can indicate whether the words are spoken, shouted, thought, captions, narration, et cetera. However, they lack many "non-vocal" modes that are present in comics: for example, both film and comics use the concepts of camera angle, framing, montage, color, cuts, etc., (the use of "camera" and "cut" being metaphorical in the case of comics), but as for film's relative lack, commercially produced film has a fixed aspect ratio of 16:9 (at least since the disappearance of 4:3 for home editions), while in comics, the dimensions of panels may vary constantly, and codex-format comics volumes may be printed in a variety of sizes.

More skeptical views of comics raise that comics' similarity to film and animation lessens the comparative value of comics as a medium, because it lacks the benefit of moving images — as it's put by Dru Jeffries, "while comics can only suggest movement and the passage of time through a series of representative still images, the [film] shot gives us the event itself as it occurs in real
time. The film might therefore be read as improving upon the comic version [...]. According to this logic, comics become a mere precursor to or imitation of cinema rather than an autonomous medium that produces distinct aesthetic effects." That is, the interpretation of a scene done in comic form and a scene done in moving image form is necessarily different, even if the events and images of the scene are the same. Jeffries goes on, "[W]e should always consider how comics have transformed the [film] technique by subsuming it into its own formal structure and expressing it in a particular way." Because comics panels on a single page exist to the viewer all at once, "The co-presence of these panels is an effect that simply has no equivalent in the cinematic remediation thereof," (32). In adapting narratives between media, a film adaptation cannot represent a comic-source narrative with total equivalence to the comic version, nor can a comic represent a film-source narrative with total equivalent to the film version, due to form-inherent qualities of either medium. As stated, of particular interest here is comics' use of these medium-specific qualities in the depiction of a character's subjective experience.

Materials

To discuss this quality, this project is foremost analysis through close readings of the aforementioned texts: Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon by Naoko Takeuchi, Cardcaptor Sakura by the studio CLAMP, and Batwoman by Greg Rucka and J.H. Williams III (originally released as Detective Comics issues 845 – 863).

The first two of these are Japanese comics, and part of the shōjo genre. Shōjo is a genre targeted to young girls; the word "shōjo" literally means "young girl," and is the counterpart to shōnen, manga and anime targeted to young boys. Categorizing manga by genre involves more categories and more nuance than just shōjo and shōnen, but it's not uncommon for them to be used
Because of the young female target audience, the *shōjo* genre involves themes considered appropriate for young girls to be interested in. Main characters may act as role models for young readers, and are thus involved in what the audience is expected to be involved in; school or work, fashion and one's appearance, interpersonal drama and romance are all common to *shōjo*. In some contexts, "*shōjo*" is even used synonymously with "romance" as a genre. Fashion in particular is considered rather central; in *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics* by Frederick L. Schodt, Schodt comments on *shōjo*, "Characters become fashion models. The clothes they wear conform to the seasons in which the stories are drawn and, to please young readers, may be changed on every other page," (90).

The fact that *Sailor Moon* and *Cardcaptor Sakura* are *shōjo* manga makes them strong aids to this study. *Shōjo*'s strong stylistic choices make it stand out from other comics genres, and help bring attention to formal decisions in a page's design. "*Shōjo* style" has a heavy emphasis on non-diegetic and symbolic iconography, and pays special attention elements of page design within and without panel content. It's common for *shōjo* to avoid the use of firm panel borders, instead opting for the use of collage-like "montage" (as Schodt calls it); what would conventionally be split into several panels instead appears with no hard boundary between drawn images. Schodt describes *shōjo* as having "a page layout that has become increasingly abstract," where "[p]ictures flow from one to another rather than progress with logical consistency from frame to frame. They may fuse into a medley of facial close-ups, free-floating prose attached to no particular character, rays of light, and abstract flowers and leaves that waft slowly across pages with no seeming relationship to the story. To the uninitiated this makes for confusing reading, but when the page is absorbed as a whole it evokes a mood," (*Manga! Manga!* 89). In other words, this montage effect leaves the
reader to intuit the events of the scene based on context (rather than iconographic depiction), but employs the resulting ambiguity to prioritize the "mood" of the scene and emphasize emotion. The abstract style lends itself to the depiction of abstract concepts — such as a character's feelings or bonds to other characters — and is ideal for the romantic stories found in *shōjo*.

The symbolic iconography he references, such as flower petals or sparkles of glitter, can also vary in their degree of relation to the diegesis. "Flowers and leaves that waft slowly across pages" may come from the scene's environment, but just as well may come from nowhere and only exist as an expression of mood. Even when *shōjo* is representing less dramatic moments, page design remains committed to particular imagery. Panels may be bordered with patterns evoking clothing designs, such as plaid, polka-dots, or lace, and backgrounds and margins often involve similar abstract or iconic patterns.

Altogether these layout choices emphasize the emotional core of a whole moment or page, and does so without being restrained to a concrete ordering of events or details that would draw away from the emotional focus. Therefore, at all points in the story the layout of a page will resonate with the emotional content, all lending to the reader's eventual interpretation. *Shōjo* has a developed iconography for representing emotional states that primarily operates in metaphor to describe the diegesis, with a polymorphic ruleset for structuring panels and relating them to one another. Within my analogy this is a strong and common use of comics "body language" to affect the reception of a page. In addition, as should now be apparent, in its focus on mood and emotion, *shōjo* style has a committed emphasis on character in particular. This includes special emphasis on the character's internal states, because their fluctuating feelings are typically the core of the story. So not only does *shōjo* style emphasize the depiction of character, it does so with particular attention to layout and symbolic iconography from outside the narrative content.
Both *Sailor Moon* and *Cardcaptor Sakura* are also both part of the "magical girl" (mahō shōjo) fantasy subgenre of shōjo. In the magical girl genre, the main character(s) are young women, typically middle or high school–age, who by some fantastic means are granted magical powers. A central feature of the genre is the "transformation sequence," wherein magical girls perform a ritual to magically change their appearance and access the full capacity of their powers.

It's thought to be common for magical girl manga to feature a large ensemble cast, in part attributable to their association with franchise merchandising in the vein of the Japanese-American animated series *Transformers. Sailor Moon* in particular is known for such advertising-via-cartoon, given that the initial release of *Sailor Moon* was coordinated ahead of time so that the manga, anime, and merchandising could follow synchronized and interdependent schedules in an effort to maximize profit through cross-promotion. However, as noted earlier, both works are centered on the experience of single characters. *Sailor Moon* does feature a large ensemble cast (namely, every character making up the Sailor Scouts, an ever-growing team), but the story is centered on Usagi's perspective, especially early on. And, unlike *Sailor Moon*, *Cardcaptor Sakura* has only Sakura as its one magical girl character. It is some indication, after all, that both stories are named after a single main character.

*Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon (Bishōjo Senshi Sērā Mūn)*, by Naoko Takeuchi, is a magical girl manga that originally ran from 1991 to 1997, serialized in the monthly manga magazine *Nakayoshi. Sailor Moon* is by far the most iconic Japanese magical girl series in the United States; in Japan *Sailor Moon* is similarly iconic but due to the greater availability of other magical girl franchises, the position could go to any of a few series, including competitors such as *Pretty Cure (Purikyua)*. Nonetheless it has received extreme popularity in Japan as well. In addition to the book-format volume collection typical for serialized comics, *Sailor Moon* has been republished a
few times since — for instance in 2003, the original volumes received a re-release as *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* with some modified art and dialogue because of an upcoming live-action adaptation of the original manga. The series has also received several animated adaptations, the first of which ran from 1992 to 1997, and was dubbed into English and first aired in the United States in 1995.

*Sailor Moon*, in regards to the story's themes and the comic's appearance, is very typical in terms of the given description of *shōjo* manga style. Stylistically, *Sailor Moon* is rife with glitter, decorative flowers, clothing-like designs such as lace and argyle patterns, and cutely dotted panel borders. Because of its emphasis on emotion, with only a few exceptions the characters in *Sailor Moon* are most easily distinguished by their hair and costume, including the main character, Usagi Tsukino, and her ensemble of allies, the Sailor Scouts. The style prioritizes facial features associated with femininity and expressiveness, such as large eyes with long eyelashes and gently sloping faces with small chins, in turn making male characters highly androgynous.

The main character of *Sailor Moon* is Usagi Tsukino, a 14-year-old middle school girl. She's set up early on as generally lazy; she's shown oversleeping, preferring to eat only sweets, failing her recent exams, and prone to crying. Despite that, she's shown to be naturally compassionate to others, and because of this, saves a cat from neighborhood bullies. The cat turns out to be a magical cat named Luna, who gives Usagi the "Transformation Brooch," a magical brooch that enables Usagi to change her appearance and turn into Sailor Moon, guardian of Earth. *Sailor Moon* is said to be Usagi's destiny from a past life; Usagi is in fact the reincarnation of Princess Serenity of the Moon Kingdom, leader of the Sailor Scouts and protector against the forces of evil.

Over the course of the story, Usagi re-assembles the Sailor Scouts, all of whom have been
The original serialization of *Sailor Moon* was overlapped by that of *Cardcaptor Sakura*,
which ran from 1996 to 2000, also in the *shōjo* magazine *Nakayoshi*. *Cardcaptor Sakura* was written and drawn by manga group CLAMP, a group hired by *Nakayoshi* but originally producers of *dōjinshi* (self-published fanworks). After its initial serialization, *Cardcaptor Sakura*, like *Sailor Moon*, has received multiple manga releases and anime adaptations over the years, including a currently ongoing sequel series begun in 2016. In the United States, both the *Cardcaptor Sakura* and *Sailor Moon* animated series were at some point dubbed into English and aired on American cartoon channels, although both were highly edited for content.

Like *Sailor Moon*, *Cardcaptor Sakura* draws heavily on the stylistic conventions of *shōjo*. Pages are filled with girlish and symbolic iconography, and give special attention to changes in costume and representations of romantic feelings. However, unlike *Sailor Moon* and more stylistically typical *shōjo* manga, *Cardcaptor Sakura* shows a rather strong commitment to strict panel borders. Panel content is not always bound within a single panel, but images do not flow together in the way of *shōjo*-style "montage". In *Sailor Moon*, drawings may be "incomplete," with overlapping and fading edges, as if the drawn object were given some translucency; in *Cardcaptor Sakura*, generally all visual content has a hard edge, whether or not that edge is a panel border or is contained within one.

The main character of *Cardcaptor Sakura* is Sakura Kinomoto, a ten-year-old middle school student. Sakura received her powers by agreeing to be a "Cardcaptor" in search of Clow Cards, tarot-like cards containing magical entities that will go rogue unless sufficiently sealed into their respective card. The cards had been created by a wizard named Clow, and are stored in a book guarded by the magical beast Keroberos (nicknamed Kero); Sakura finds the book in her basement, and accidentally releases all of the Clow Cards. This wakes Kero, now in a much cuter form that Sakura initially confuses for a plushie lion, who commands Sakura to become a
Cardcaptor and retrieve the cards she set free. In addition to the powers she gains in order to pursue the cards, sealing an entity back into its card lets her use its magical abilities.

Unlike other magical girl stories, and in particular unlike *Sailor Moon*, Sakura has no magical costume change and her abilities have no dependency on her outfit. However, her friend Tomoyo is aware of genre conventions and finds Sakura's new life exciting, and, intending to film her adventures, makes Sakura a costume for each new Clow Card encounter, in order to maximize their *shōjo*-esque dreaminess. Therefore while Sakura has no magical girl transformation sequence, her costume still changes frequently, and her homemade magical girl costumes as well as her outfits in general are given special attention in standard *shōjo* manner.

Therefore it can be said that like *Sailor Moon*, *Cardcaptor Sakura* includes formal and narrative elements that aid this analysis. It emphasizes costume and coming of age, and focuses on a single character and their particular experience. In addition, in the same way as *Sailor Moon*, *Cardcaptor Sakura* favors depicting the subjective feeling of narrative events rather than their objective reality, and allows panels any shape or orientation. However, while being similar to *Sailor Moon* and on the whole generally typical of a *shōjo* work, *Cardcaptor Sakura* has two aspects that make it dissimilar enough that it raises unique angles in this analysis. One is that Sakura's costume changes, being non-magical, serves as a counterpoint to the method of representation used in *Sailor Moon*. The two works are representing very similar moments, but because of their differing narrative contexts, the moments are necessarily represented in different ways. The second is that, unlike *Sailor Moon*, team behind *Cardcaptor Sakura* began as fanartists. One could say that because of their fanart origins, the members of CLAMP have a reader-first perspective on manga as a medium and how to construct a *shōjo* work. As in the case with *Sailor Moon*, the use *Cardcaptor Sakura* in this project focuses on the first five chapters, with the idea...
that early chapters pay closer attention to the depiction of the central character.

The third comic I use in this discussion is *Batwoman*, specifically *Detective Comics* #845 – 863. These nine issues, written by Greg Rucka and illustrated by J.H. Williams III, were first released serially from 2009 to 2010 and tell a self-contained story following the character Kate Kane and her alter ego Batwoman. Rucka and Williams' *Batwoman* is an American superhero comic set in the larger *Batman* universe. *Batman* and its spinoffs are published by DC, also known for *Superman, Wonder Woman, The Flash* and others. This collection of issues can serve as a standalone introduction to *Batwoman* if the reader is otherwise unfamiliar with the *Batwoman* canon; it depends on only a small amount of prior knowledge of the *Batman* universe.

In this series, Batwoman is the alter ego of Kate Kane. The modern Kate Kane has existed since 2006, but the 2009 *Detective Comics* #845 reintroduced Kate Kane and Batwoman to the DC universe at the time. The character Batwoman was originally created in 1956 as Kathy Kane, but has gone through several changes and re-introductions in the years since. In some versions of the DC universe, Katherine "Kathy" Kane and Katherine "Kate" Kane are two different, concurrently existing people, but in Rucka and Williams' *Batwoman* only Kate is relevant. It follows Kate as she fights and takes down her first big enemy, Alice, an *Alice In Wonderland*–themed and Joker-like villain character planning destruction to the city of Gotham. These issues also relay Kate's origins and path to becoming a hero through flashback. Unlike other superheroes and unlike Usagi and Sakura, Kate has no magical powers, and instead relies on super-soldier training and gadgetry.

*Batwoman* is, of course, drawing on different genre conventions and comics history than the Japanese *shōjo* manga titles. American superhero comics as a genre are historically dominated

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2 Because the pages are not numbered in collected edition, I'm using the numbering as it appears on comiXology, a website that publishes comics as digital editions. The difference is comiXology displays and counts spreads as single pages. In print, spreads are two pages, but content from one page bleeds across the center margin onto the next; therefore in comiXology's digital format, it's more legible to treat spreads as single pages.
by male protagonists, male authors and a male audience, although in recent years it has had responsive shifts to be more inclusive in all of these areas. Therefore, while American superhero comics have always had female fans, the genre as a whole has only more recently lessened audience targeting based on gender. That is, unlike shōjo — comics written for young girls — superhero comics anticipate no particular gender to their readership (except, perhaps, subconsciously), and superhero comics depicting female protagonists are not inherently beholden to any particular themes associated with femininity, such as romance. That being said, there is a disparity in writership that continues to influence the larger genre. For a basic impression, the DC Comics Database, a fan-wiki "DC Comics encyclopedia," lists 1,467 male writers but only 273 female, out of all of their documented writers for DC. Given that, the representations of female characters have a different kind of focus on body, which, at its worst, represents women's bodies as objects for male consumption. Characters also tend to be older than in shōjo, which contributes to this. This run of Batwoman does not have any distasteful use of the male gaze, but Kate's body and and her relationships are presented in a sexier and more mature way than would happen in shōjo manga for and about children, and this is in part due to historical conventions of DC superhero comics. In addition, while the larger genre does not treat romance as a necessary component, Rucka and Williams' Batwoman involves romance heavily. Kate's struggle to balance her romantic life with her life as a superhero plays an important role in the plot, from getting expelled from the army for being a lesbian, to managing break-ups, to flirting with new potential partners.

The American comics industry also took to using digital art tools much faster than the Japanese industry, (Schodt, Dreamland Japan 198). The latter has largely maintained a certain traditional pen-and-ink aesthetic up to today, even after having adopted digital tools. Sailor Moon
and *Cardcaptor Sakura* may have used digital tools, but on the whole both of them have no outstanding digital effects and maintain the appearance of being done traditionally. Meanwhile, the appearance of the art in Rucka and Williams' *Batwoman* is apparently digital, especially in its use of color. A different variety of page effects is possible when using digital tools — here implying a different nature to *Batwoman*'s formal "body language".

Despite all of their contextual differences, *Batwoman* still feels like an appropriate addition to this discussion for its similarities to the other works. In the first place, magical girl comics share a lot of narrative commonalities with American superhero comics. Central to both are the hero's costume and identity. The hero, typically, wants to keep their heroic shenanigans separate from their daily life and a secret to everyone but their trusted friends, which all three of Usagi, Sakura, and Kate follow. In addition, the hero changes into a special costume when fighting evil, which, again, all three of these protagonists do. Because of this connection, while costume is treated far differently in *Batwoman* (namely, it isn't treated as a cute fashion item and there is no extended dress-up game), it still takes a central role in the narrative and in the artistic decisions of the comic. Second, as was mentioned, romance is a central theme in *Batwoman*. This gives it another point of comparison to the two manga. It also makes the associated internal feelings surrounding romance a central component of the story, which is reflected in the composition of the comic. Third, *Batwoman* is extremely deliberate with its use of layout, in an obvious, visual way. Different aspects of Kate's life are organized into different stylistic rule sets, what I refer to as "motifs". These motifs are representative of different personas, including Kate's enemy Alice, Kate in her daily life, Kate as Batwoman, and several other characters. As I discuss later, these motifs are also symbolic of different states of mind and unverbalized energies within the scene. This is the most vital component of the justification to make *Batwoman* part of this project. Fourth and finally,
because *Batwoman* is American, from a different genre, and using different comics-making tools, it broadens the horizon of this analysis, and because of its connection to *Sailor Moon* and *Cardcaptor Sakura*, does so without losing the consequence of the intended frame.

This analysis will first look into the more genre-typical and well-known *Sailor Moon*, specifically how it handles (1) Usagi's transformations into Sailor Moon and (2) Usagi's ongoing romance with Mamoru Chiba. After that, the analysis will involve a brief look at *Cardcaptor Sakura* as a counterpoint, specifically (3) Sakura's costume changes, which are non-magical, in contrast to the transformation sequence in *Sailor Moon*.

Following them will be analysis of *Batwoman*: *Batwoman* shares narrative commonalities with *Sailor Moon* and *Cardcaptor Sakura*, but is writing under different expectations due to its genre, source culture, and artistic tools, and thus serves as a point of comparison from a different perspective than the two manga. This will go through (5) Kate's changes into Batwoman (and Batwoman's back into Kate), (6) Kate's flashbacks to her life before becoming Batwoman, and finally (7) a romantic moment between Kate and Maggie Sawyer, a captain in the Gotham City Police.
**Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon**

**Costume Changes: The Transformation Sequence**

To be a magical girl story, one of the necessary central components is the transformation sequence, the trope wherein the main character and/or her allies experiences a magical change of appearance, in some way related to using the full range of her abilities and saving the day. In *Sailor Moon*, the main character, Usagi, cannot use her full magical power unless she's transformed into Sailor Moon. The physical result of the transformation is her emblematic main costume, an abstracted costume version of a sērā fuku or "sailor clothes," a grade school uniform for girls adapted from styles of Western navy costume. The *Sailor Moon* transformation sequence (especially as it appears in the original anime adaptation, where it appeared identically every week), is in all likelihood the best-known version of the transformation sequence trope. In the United States, it has had a visible impact on media coming after it, especially if the artist was growing up during the 1990s or 2000s when *Sailor Moon* was airing on children's cartoon channels and was at its most popular more generally. One example of this impact is the American animated series *She-Ra*. The series features the main character Adora, who finds a magical sword that lets her transform into She-Ra, which, along with changing her appearance and costume, grants her greater strength and some magical abilities — the series thus bears all the trademarks of being a magical girl narrative. In the original series, *She-Ra: The Princess of Power*, which aired 1985 – 1986, the transformation sequence happens all at once, wherein Adora holds up her sword, is circled by a snake-like shower of sparks, and in the next shot has taken on the costume of She-Ra. However, the series was recently rebooted in 2018 as *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, and in this version of the transformation sequence, Adora goes through a much longer process that details individual steps of her transformation. Adora becomes a glowing silhouette and as the camera
moves, each part of her outfit is shown changing into She-Ra's costume, all the while Adora floats in a purple space disconnected from the scenery and setting of the rest of the show\(^3\). This second transformation is incredibly similar to the transformation sequence in the original *Sailor Moon* anime, which aired in the United States ten years after the original She-Ra series.

By now it should be apparent how central the transformation sequence is to *Sailor Moon* as a whole. Not only is the sequence a convention of the magical girl genre, the sequence is intrinsic to the representation of Usagi as a main character. Foremost, it relates her combat ability directly to her physical appearance. The transformation itself is largely a costume change, but Usagi can only access the full extent of her powers when she has transformed into Sailor Moon. In addition, her powers themselves are closely tied to aspects of her appearance, specifically clothing. The power to transform itself comes from a brooch (called the Transformation Brooch), and her repeated change into Sailor Moon comes with the appearance-centric catchphrase "Moon Prism Power, make up!"\(^4\). In fact, Usagi has to declare this catchphrase in order to transform. Included in Sailor Moon's emblematic costume is magical tiara that doubles as a boomerang weapon. In addition, whether or not she has transformed into Sailor Moon, Usagi has the ability to generate any costume, not only her emblematic *sēra fuku*, which she typically uses to blend into her environment while chasing after the enemy. This connects Usagi's strength to her appearance, thereby linking conflict resolution to her costume and accessories.

Second, because Usagi is a reincarnation of another hero who could transform into Sailor Moon, the transformation sequence of *Sailor Moon* in particular connects Usagi's appearance to invisible qualities such as her heroic personality and inadvertent commitment to her destiny.

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\(^3\) Images cited appear in the appendix.

\(^4\) This catchphrase is the same in the Japanese version, just written in Japanese characters (*mūn purizumu pawā meiku appu*).
Overall, Usagi's transformations represent forays into adulthood. This begins with the role Usagi is expected to play as Sailor Moon, who is given the position of leader among the Sailor Scouts, and is tasked with protecting the whole of the Moon and Earth. Usagi, out of costume, maintains her childish qualities as a sweet-toothed slacker, but when the time calls for it, she undergoes the transformation, and with it gains the capability to resolve the situation at hand. While Usagi's destiny is more mystical and severe than other children, Usagi's destined path essentially outlines the inevitability of a child aging into an adult. Thus with the transformation sequence we are being shown not only a hero donning a costume, but a child experiencing responsibility and, in spurts of necessity, gaining the mindset for handling it. This is more obvious in Usagi's changes to costumes besides her main one; Usagi can use her transformation to generate any kind of outfit, not only Sailor Moon's sērā fuku. These outfits are typically drawn from Usagi's present setting, and function in the scene as a useful disguise. This is also meant to be an exciting moment for dress-up and role-play — the young Usagi taking on the persona of an adult woman — which the girlish reader can experience vicariously. In both cases, as well as addressing her appearance, the transformation must also represent some facet of her internal experience as she deals with the change and what it represents.

Also importantly, a large percentage of Usagi's appearances in the comic is made up of the transformation sequence; it appears in almost every chapter, especially in the early chapters addressed here. Given all this, the transformation sequence is a core component of Usagi's representation in the comic, in relation to both her physical and internal states. Because it is so frequently repeated, the transformation sequence is also a good place to look for distinctive characteristics in the form, present from having made certain decisions about how to represent the given moment. In Takeuchi's choices as a writer and illustrator, there may exist some concepts that
translate into art in consistent ways, which would imply relationship in how the concept and form are perceived semantically. That is to say, there may be a formal signature of the repeated sequence, if some choices are made every time the transformation takes place. This would make them, firstly, more apparent, and secondly, examples of correlation in the form and content.

Unlike the animated version, the transformation sequence in the *Sailor Moon* manga does appear identically in every chapter. Possibly this is why the manga sequence has been given less attention; it's harder to be iconic when the shape of the icon keeps changing. However, the function of the sequence is the same in both versions, and hits the same essential marks. This is especially true in the early comic, where the sequence is a novelty and the reader needs to be familiarized to its rules (or, because such a sequence is critical to the magical girl genre, familiarized to the *Sailor Moon* version of the sequence). The transformation sequence as it appears in *Sailor Moon* functions much like a costume change for a superhero in American comics; upon identifying a villain, Usagi (along with her allies, if present) transforms into her heroic secret identity, and uses the combat prowess of Sailor Moon to defeat the villain. As stated, Usagi is also able to transform into other costumes, which I refer to as "dress-up" costumes. Examples of dress-up costumes include a nurse's uniform (67–68), a stewardess' uniform (107–108), a princess' gown (138–139), and a handsome tuxedo-clad boy (185). However, if the scene results in an encounter with the main villain or requires combat, Usagi will eventually transform into the *sērā fuku* costume (as on 112–113, 185). The complete sequence, which is only occasionally drawn in full, first shows Usagi in plainclothes as she announces "Moon Prism Power," second, shows her indistinct shape amidst a field of light, in a standing pose with a particular crossed-arms hand position, then third, shows her full body and the new costume she's changed into. If it isn't the main *sēra fuku* costume, Usagi will add "Change me into [role, e.g., a nurse/a stewardess/a princess]!" while striking a pose
for the audience's benefit to show her new outfit. Otherwise, the scene's action continues immediately after her change, but still includes a frame that shows her full costume. While all of these marks are important to the transformation, components of the full transformation can be cut for various reasons, for instance, to deemphasize the moment in context, for dramatic effect, or because of lack of room in the month's installment. However, the transformation never misses Usagi's initial call to transform, and always includes the shot of her body in full directly after transforming. As an example of the full standard transformation see pages 29 – 31, Usagi's first transformation into Sailor Moon (and thereby the introduction to its function in the text).

One signature of the transformation sequence is the shapes of the panels used. Because it has to include Usagi's whole body, which is a vertically aligned object (that is, taller than it is wide), the transformation sequence typically uses tall and thin panels that can include her entire shape. This is in contrast to using square or wide-but-short panels, the relative shape of which would be better for framing transitions between details of the scene. However, rather than seeing individual aspects of Usagi's transformation in wider and/or shorter panels, each panel depicts the whole body at once, in tall frames. This way the transformation is broken into lenses on various temporal stages, instead of various physical components.

Note the panels used on page 30, during Usagi's first transformation. The page consists of three horizontally adjacent panels, which each extend the full length of the page. The first panel shows Usagi's sparkling Transformation Brooch, the second shows Usagi's hands in a pose as she finishes the call to transform, and the third shows Usagi indistinctly outlined amidst densely arranged sparkles, her hair and the skirt of her school uniform appearing to be blown by some wind. The transition between panel one and two is what Scott McCloud would call a "subject-to-subject" transition: a "type that takes us from subject-to-subject while staying within a scene or
idea," (71). He comments, "Note the degree of reader involvement necessary to render these transitions meaningful." Because the transition takes us from the Transformation Brooch to Usagi's hands, the reader must draw the conclusion themself that the Brooch is having some effect on Usagi. The level of meaning relying on the reader's interpretation goes deeper here, as well: because Usagi's actions in panel two appear to be deliberate — her commanding "make up!" and making a specific intentional hand pose — not only is the Brooch affecting Usagi, but she is drawing forth its effect intentionally. The transition between the next two panels is what McCloud would call "action-to-action": "transitions featuring a single subject in distinct action-to-action progressions," (70)\textsuperscript{5}. The focus moves from Usagi's hands to her whole body, and the sparkles that had been present in panels one and two now cover Usagi whole shape. This, in addition to the removal of certain details such as her eyes and a spotty, indistinct quality to the lines, obscures Usagi's exact form. The reader can infer that the transformation begins in this panel, and Usagi's original shape has become indistinct as she grows closer to her changed appearance. Altogether, then, the perception given from this particular arrangement of panels and their shapes is that Usagi is participating in the transformation sequence, if not controlling it entirely. This is supported by Usagi's reactions once she's more used to the transformation. In such transformations, Usagi moves directly from transforming into a pose or into continuing the scene's action; were she only a passive receiver of the change, one would expect her to have more of a recovery between transforming and moving into her next deliberate actions.

Another arrangement of panels could represent Usagi as a passive or unwitting subject,

\textsuperscript{5} Arguably, this transition could be called subject-to-subject as well, if the subject is considered to be Usagi's hands and then Usagi's whole body, or if the action is considered to start in panel two and only continue in panel three (rather than beginning in panel three). However, because the movement is between a single character, and the framing of panel two obscures whether the action begins in panel two or panel three, I consider action-to-action to be the more descriptive label. Either way, an illustration that McCloud's categories are, as he calls them, "an inexact science at best," (74).
with the transformation sequence being something done to her rather than a willing and intentional act. For instance, if we kept the same panel content, but reshaped and rearranged the panels so that they were horizontally wide and stacked into three rows (instead of three columns), the reading could be much different. The Brooch and Usagi's hand pose might remain the same, albeit with the surrounding sparkles and speech balloons reoriented to fit. But the third panel, of Usagi's full body, would have to frame Usagi's body much differently, either shrinking her to the point of her being completely indistinct, or cropping out most of her body and focusing on a single section, most likely her face and some of her chest and hands. The first case, where Usagi is shrunk, would appear to put Usagi into the distance and surround her with more of the sparkling void. This would create an equivalent distancing of the reader from Usagi's experience, as if watching from far away. The transformation would feel like a non-participatory event for the reader, which would eliminate the intimacy of the scene due to the close cropping in the panel as it is now. In the latter case, where Usagi's body is cropped differently, the effect on Usagi's whole body would not be as clear. Its temporal qualities would change; the single panel would imply the start of a sequence that affects Usagi's body in stages rather than all at once, and the transition to page 31 would imply that the sequence shown is an abbreviated version of a longer sequence that ultimately doesn't exist. Either case would lose the impression that the transformation is drawn forward by Usagi herself and affects her whole body.

The use of tall panels also obscures the spatial aspects of the scene. The background is entirely abstract, here replaced with screentones of sparkles and beams of light but with no other indication of the setting. This is true of the transformation on pages 29 – 31 as well as the transformation more typically; once Usagi calls for the transformation to begin, the background becomes the sparkling and glowing patterns shown, rather than any depiction of her setting just
before. In addition, while the vertically tall panels are able to show Usagi's whole body, horizontal space is limited. This closes off a clear sense of how Usagi fits into the established setting, or a broader surrounding space in general. Usagi is removed from diegetic space and enters into a void, isolating her for the duration of her transformation until she acknowledges the world outside of herself.

The fantastical nature of the event means that this exclusion of context also obscures how diegetic time passes through these panels. A reader has no sense of how long it takes to transform, having no reference from within the scene itself and having never experienced it or witnessed it in real life. Nonetheless, the reader still has some sense of how time flows in this scene. Depending on the reader, clues to the nature of time may come from (1), the length of time it takes to read the sequence, (2), similarity to similar comics media within relevant genres, (3) similarity to film and animation within relevant genres, and most importantly (4), the shape of the involved panels. These four qualities and their effect on time impact the reader's understanding of the scene as a whole.

(1) *The length of time it takes to read the sequence.* Typically, panels involved in a transformation sequence (and true in general of the style of *Sailor Moon* overall) are clearly focused, stylistically abstract drawings. Because of the abstract stylization of *shōjo* manga, paired with the high speed of production required for manga magazines such as the one *Sailor Moon* was published in, the panels of *Sailor Moon* are very efficient with presenting the most relevant information per panel — thus, on a typical page, important information can be gleaned quickly when approaching a new panel. Because of these factors, it takes very little time for a reader to scan over one panel, figure out its meaning, and move onto the next panel; the speed with which a reader can fully understand the narrative meaning of a page is increased. Following this, there is a sense while reading that the speed of interpreting the panels is correlated with a rapid diegetic
speed of the transformation itself.

(2) Similarity to other comics media within relevant genres. Since the transformation in *Sailor Moon* has an unclear flow of time, the reader may instead be able to extrapolate from other manga that depict a similar sequence, but where the flow of time is more clear. It's also safe to say that when drawing and writing *Sailor Moon*, Takeuchi consciously and subconsciously references a library of other media, and her familiarity with similar sequences in other media has affected how she chose to depict the transformation sequence in *Sailor Moon*. Because of that, and that the target audience is *shōjo* readers, reader familiarity with other similar media is likely the expectation. *Shōjo* in particular already relies on iconography, visual metaphors, and page layouts that other genres don't typically use, so to be an adept *shōjo* reader, one must have read a range of *shōjo*. Recall Schodt's description that "to the uninitiated it [*shōjo* style] makes for confusing reading," (Manga! Manga! 88). As a point of analogy, consider English-speaking readers of manga. When manga was first being adapted for English-speaking audiences, common practice was to reverse the art horizontally, so that rather than flowing from right to left like in the original Japanese, the page would flow from left to right as is natural for English. In the American market now, common practice is to leave the art as-is and only change the typesetting; English-speaking manga readers are expected to be familiar enough with manga that they can read panels right to left without discomfort. However, English-language manga publishers still include a page at the back of the book (what would be the front in English-language books) to warn the reader about the intended reading direction, in case a reader is unfamiliar with manga's particular rules — they cannot expect that all of their potential readers are familiar with how to read manga. *Shōjo* magazine *Nakayoshi*, however, which sells *shōjo* to *shōjo* readers, can safely presume that their audience is familiar with how to read *shōjo*. This also extends into a presumed familiarity with the
kinds of stories common to shōjo; in the case of Sailor Moon, the target audience is probably familiar with other magical girl or fantasy shōjo manga. This familiarity would color their reading of this page, and anticipation of such familiarity could have been involved in its design.

(3) Similarity to film and animation within relevant genres. Similarly to (2), the reader may get a sense of the flow of time by relying on a familiarity with animation or film, especially animation or film from genres relating to Sailor Moon. This would mean interpreting panels as illustrative of what in an animated setting would be a zoom, pan, or other function of a moving camera. For a less fantastical scene, one could rely on experience of how time flows in the real world. But because the transformation sequence is entirely fictional and sectioned off from the more realistic aspects of the narrative, the only experience one can draw on is moving image depictions of such events. This kind of need for experience outside of Sailor Moon is unlike point (2) in that it requires familiarity with moving images specifically. It also imposes camera movements onto drawings, still images for which no camera was present. In this way, it’s possible for comics to take advantage of a reader’s familiarity with filmic technique in order to achieve a certain effect in the comic.

(4) The shape of the involved panels. The panels depicting the transformation sequence are thin horizontally, and typically take up the full height of the page. When the panels are all the same width (and contain the same amount of visual detail), the flow of time reads as rhythmic in the same way that the shapes of the panels create a rhythmic visual pattern. The size of a panel relative to other panels is also an indication of the flow of time in that panel (relative to other panels). When there is no other indication, a reader may interpret similarly sized panels to have a similar diegetic duration, and smaller or larger panels to have correlative shorter or longer durations. As McCloud puts it, "Even though [a] [wide] panel has the same basic 'meaning' as its [thinner]
versions, it still has the feeling of greater [duration]," (101).

This pairs with how the transformation sequences use words, as well. Words spoken aloud are a reliable indicator of the approximate diegetic duration of a panel, because words take diegetic time to utter. On page 30, the first two panels each have a speech balloon containing two words each ("Prism Power" and "make up!"), while the third panel lacks words entirely. Because panel three is a similar size to panels one and two but slightly thinner, the reader might take the impression that the third panel has a similar but slightly shorter duration than the phrases "Prism Power" and "make up". Similarly, panel two is wider than panels one and three, which could imply a longer duration in panel two, giving greater emphasis to the inciting declaration.

There is no "true" way to tell how long the transformation sequence takes, at least, if one were to try and write an equation for panel design to indicated diegetic time. The duration of the sequence is determined by whatever the reader feels like the duration should be, based on their impression when reading of the page. As shown, the reader's impression is affected by each reader's unique internal library of real-life and media-only experiences, and thus will be unique to each reader. However, each reader will nonetheless have an approximately equal estimate to all other readers. Despite the haziness and variability involved in describing the nature of diegetic time in these panels, it remains true that the given images framed and positioned in the given way creates a surprisingly consistent impression across all readers.

After considering diegetic time, next is how the transformation sequence interacts with the diegesis on either side. Because the event has no elements from the surrounding context (nothing

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6 McCloud's original phrasing was ambiguous in this context, so I replaced the words "long," "shorter," and "length" to better delineate the difference between visual space and diegetic time. The meaning of the quote has not been changed.

7 While the transformation sequence is quite different in the anime adaptation, it shares the same key phrases with the benefit of voice acting. Of note is that there, while "Moon Prism Power" is said as a single phrase, "make up" is announced with a pause for emphasis ("Make... up!").
of the setting, characters, props, etc., except Usagi and whatever relates to depicting her). Usagi is able to transform and pose for the audience without being interrupted by a villain, but it's not made known whether Usagi's transformation takes place in a separate space — some sort of glowing void dedicated to magical girl transformations — or whether it can be witnessed or interacted with by other characters at all. Usagi goes from being held by Tuxedo Mask on page 226 directly into a transformation sequence on page 227, then on 229 is standing away from him, with no indication of how she moved, or that Tuxedo Mask was in any way physically affected.

The transformation sequence as done in the original anime adaptation is almost too different to be comparable to the sequence in the manga. In the first place, the transformation sequence in the anime is not only repeated but identical every time. In animation, repeating sequences is an effective cost-saving measure, because it results in less manual work to complete the episode. In manga, the sequence is comparatively quick and easy to complete, and copying art between chapters wouldn't provide enough benefit to make it worthwhile. Nonetheless, the two versions both hit a few key marks. To begin with, the result of the transformation is the same: Usagi transforms from her present outfit to her せりふく\(^8\). Usagi also does a similar hand movement in both versions, and ends on a pose with her full height in view; in both the anime and the manga, this pose is clearly for the audience's benefit and does not involve the rest of the scene, essentially breaking the fourth wall to acknowledge the audience observing. There is less in common in the intervening moments, however. Much of the transformation presented in the anime version is entirely unique to the anime. Usagi becomes a glowing silhouette, and the camera frames single portions of her body in close-up — her chest, her feet, her hands, her forehead — which are

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\(^8\) In the anime, Usagi can still change her costume for a "dress-up" change, but the actual transformation sequence is reserved for changing into the Sailor Moon costume. Similarly, in the manga, other characters can transform into Sailor Scouts, but their change could pass without being given the same formal attention as Usagi's; in the anime, other Sailor Scout characters are given similar transformation sequences of their own.
then wrapped in magical ribbons that glow and transform into the components of her iconic sēra fuku. Because of the ordering of events in the anime, discrete parts of her body change at different times in an ordered sequence. Conversely, the impression from the manga is that the transformation happens to Usagi's entire body all at once.

With these changes, the transformation in the anime has a much different sensation to it than the transformation in the manga. The manga gives the sense that Usagi is completely by herself for the duration of the sequence, while in contrast, the impression from the same sequence in the anime is that the transformation is a performance by Usagi for the sake of the audience. However, the anime adaptation does retain the sense that Usagi is participating in her transformation, rather than it being something happening to her. Even though Usagi seems to have no control over the ribbons that cloak her various body parts and turn into clothes, Usagi's movements are deliberate and choreographed, and expectant of the ribbons' response to her. Overall, the transformation behaves like a dance, that alternates between Usagi's and the ribbons' contributions. As opposed to the manga, however, this impression of participation and consent comes from Usagi's behavior, and not particularly from the formal construction of the scene.

Despite occasionally referring to it as an "adaptation," the original Sailor Moon anime ran concurrently to the manga, and, while the two versions follow the same story, the anime was not intended to be a recreation of the manga. Instead, Nakayoshi intended for a "media mix strategy" that would coordinate the manga, anime, and merchandise cycles to improve sales, meaning that the anime and manga were being written and produced simultaneously. "Traditionally, [...] a manga story would be animated for television quite a while after it appeared in a magazine, and then merchandise would be created based on the characters. For Sailor Moon, however, the basic story was determined in editorial meetings nearly a year before publication, and a coordinated
media offensive was developed. The animated series started up after the second episode of the written story. [...] The television animation show, furthermore, lagged the magazine story by only a month or two, and care was taken to make sure it did not overtake it," (Schodt, *Dreamland Japan* 92 – 93). While the manga was always a chapter or two ahead of the anime, because the two were being produced simultaneously — with the anime threatening to "overtake" the story in the manga — the anime can be considered just as much the "original" version as the manga. In large part, the two versions are independent depictions of a single story with agreed-upon designs. There is still room within this dynamic for one to follow the lead of the other and try to replicate certain choices, but it was not the intended role of the anime to be an adaptation of the manga⁹.

Because of this, the anime version of the transformation sequence is otherwise not very available to comparison with the manga version, at least in this context. In trying to compare the two works' use of form, it would be useful to look at how the two construct identical diegetic moments with the same intended reading, because the two will necessarily have to employ different means to achieve the same effect (being of two different media). Unfortunately, the transformations here do not share enough diegetic moments or intended reading for me to draw additional commentary from a comparison of their means.

Given the transformation sequence's isolation from the surrounding space, time, and narrative, the transformation in the manga is depicted as a wholly safe and intimate process for Usagi. During the sequence, Usagi cannot be touched by or effect exterior elements, to the point that no exterior elements are depicted at all, including the regular sense of time and space. If one takes this a step further and assumes that absolutely no elements (spacial, temporal, props, elements of setting, characters, etc.) can enter in from outside the transformation sequence or Usagi

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⁹ It could be more accurate, in a way, to call both versions adaptations, if one considers the *Nakayoshi* team's original "basic story" to be "source material".
herself, then one could also say that the sparkling background is also an abstract element of Usagi. This is not necessarily the intended reading, but follows reasonably from the described focus on Usagi at the removal of everything else during the transformation. In this case, in addition to acting as a backdrop for the change, the background would represent an internal element of Usagi during her transformation. It already gives a sense of magical energy to the scene when functioning as a background, but when considered to be an abstract component of Usagi's experience, it could be said to represent her own personal excitement about her fantastical change. The rays of light center on Usagi, indicating that along with Usagi's isolation from the outside world, her perception of the transformation is similarly isolated to her perception of herself. It also furthers the idea that Usagi is an active participant in her transformation, and that the transformation symbolizes maturity. Usagi's focus on herself is a kind of self-awareness, and Usagi doesn't reach for outside intervention until the transformation ends — a sign that Usagi perceives herself as safe and self-sufficient while within the transformation sequence.

**Romance**

A central subplot of *Sailor Moon* is Usagi's romance with the character Tuxedo Mask. At first, Tuxedo Mask is an unknown man\(^\text{10}\) in a tuxedo, who often shows up in the nick of time to help Usagi win her fight. Eventually, Usagi finds out he's in fact an older student named Mamoru Chiba, with similar powers to her own. Much later, it's made clear that Princess Serenity had a husband, Endymion, and just like how Usagi is the reincarnation of Serenity, Mamoru is the reincarnation of Endymion. Because of this, the thematic returns to Usagi's destiny include falling

\(^{10}\) In the narrative, age is treated somewhat fluidly, which lends to the story's ability to switch between treating Usagi as a young girl and treating her as an adult woman. The same goes for Tuxedo Mask, who is generally framed as if in his early twenties, when at the start of the story he's in fact sixteen.
in love with and eventually marrying Mamoru. Each of the arcs in the first six chapters includes a moment between Usagi and Tuxedo Mask, each time more in love but complicated by the mystery surrounding Tuxedo Mask's identity. Nonetheless, the two kiss for the first time in chapter four, and by the end of chapter six have come to put a great deal of trust in one another.

Any scene depicting the romance involves two kinds of attraction between Usagi and Mamoru: romantic (Mamoru is magnetic because Usagi finds him appealing) and predetermined (Mamoru is magnetic because fate is drawing them together). Similarly, depictions of Mamoru as attractive reflect Usagi's perspective, thereby manifesting her perspective in the form of the page. While the focus of the scene is Mamoru (or Usagi's bond with Mamoru), it in equal part involves Usagi's view and response, and those components of her interiority.

Usagi's gaze is an important aspect of defining her attraction to Tuxedo Mask. Throughout the story there are instances where the narrative ostensibly pauses after Tuxedo Mask appears, in order for Usagi to stare at him\(^{11}\). Moments like these consist of three or four regular parts: (1) Tuxedo Mask appears, holding a pose; (2) Usagi responds in her facial expressions; (3) the iconography shifts toward a more romantic aesthetic, that is, includes girlish patterns through appliqué or screentone and/or the imagery favors the picturesque instead of the real; (4) Usagi verbalizes her feelings, in a speech balloon (spoken aloud) or in freestanding text (thought to herself).

(1) *Tuxedo Mask appears, holding a pose.* Because comics are composed of static images, in some respect, all characters depicted in a comic could be described as "holding a pose". Here, a "holding a pose" means that the character's position is presented as having a longer diegetic duration, compared to a separate still position indicated to take only a short time or to be read as a

\(^{11}\) Examples on pages 17, 41, 42, 75, 101, 142, 143, 144, and 182.
still frame of a more kinetic movement. Mamoru's "pose" in a panel where he "holds a pose" is typically a relaxed position or gentle movement that could be held for a longer stretch of time, such as standing still (17), gliding (41), or holding Usagi during a dance (142 – 143). This is compared to a more kinetic pose, such as during running, tripping, punching or kicking, etc., which can only be drawn as a snapshot of an interstitial moment of the full action. Thus, kinetic poses indicate diegetic brevity. For example, compare panels one and two of page 75: panel one depicts Mamoru catching Usagi as she drops from above, and panel two depicts the two looking into each other's eyes in the moment after. Despite panel one being larger and containing more text (aspects associated with a longer diegetic duration), panel two is interpreted as taking a longer amount of time than panel one. This is because the characters' actions in panel two (staring) can be carried on indefinitely, and there is no indication of when the action will stop, except for the continuation of the scene in the panel directly following. Essentially, panel one indicates its own temporal end because the characters' kinetic poses within it can only exist briefly, while the temporal end of panel two is only indicated outside of panel two, by the content of panel three.

In addition, panels where Tuxedo Mask is "holding a pose" tend to take up a significant portion of the given page. On pages 17, 41, and 101, the panels depicting the still "pose" moment takes up more than half its respective page; the panel for pages 142 – 143 spans the entire width and top half of the two pages. As described previously, larger panels are associated with a longer diegetic duration. Here, the use of larger panels enhances the sense that the depicted "pose" lasts for a longer amount of time than the actions of the panels nearby. The panel's larger size also draws more attention to it, which emphasizes it amidst the other content of the page, and gives it the secondary impression of being the center of attention.

The slowing of time also contributes to a greater impression of romance. No matter how
long the moments are diegetically, they nevertheless feel longer to the reader, and with Usagi as the viewpoint character of the moment, implicitly this is also Usagi's impression. The "slow" feeling gives the sense that Usagi's full attention is on Tuxedo Mask — in accordance with romantic adages, "time stands still" while Tuxedo Mask is around.

(2) *Usagi responds in her facial expressions.* In these moments, large part of the page is devoted to Usagi’s face, typically in an expression of wonder at Tuxedo Mask (one moment even includes hearts drawn in her eyes in place of pupils (43). The most obvious role of the expression is that "[c]lose-ups of faces — so important in girls' comics — allow artists to stress the sadness or joy of a moment," (Schodt, *Manga! Manga!* 89), that is, her expression conveys the emotional content of the scene. Her expression is also foregrounded by the design of the page, by depicting it large either depicted in a panel of its own, or drawn overlapping Mamoru's pose (as on 17, 101, and 142). As Schodt puts it in his description of *shōjo* page layout, "Pictures flow from one to another rather than [...] from frame to frame" and "fuse into a medley of facial close-ups," (*Manga! Manga!* 89). In fact, *Sailor Moon* reserves this "flow from one to another" for these romantic moments; pages typically use discrete panels ("frame to frame"), but will make use of the more *shōjo*-typical style at the emotional peak of romantic interactions. This involves both the functional and thematic aspects of *shōjo* style to spotlight the moment's romantic core: *shōjo*-style page layouts emphasize emotion, while *shōjo* as a genre connotes youth, femininity and romance.

In addition, other characters are entirely absent for the moment, even if they had been there before. Moreover, drawings of Usagi and Mamoru are given close proximity on the page, no matter how distant the two are in reality. These decisions in conjunction give the impression that Usagi and Mamoru are seemingly alone together in each other's company, no matter how crowded the environment or physically distant the two really are. This also comes with a symbolic sense of
emotional closeness. In the later depictions of romantic moments in volume one, the two begin share moments where they come in increasingly close contact — on 41, Usagi observes him at a distance; on 75 Tuxedo Mask catches Sailor Moon in his arms; on 142, 143 and 144, they dance together; on 159 and 160 Tuxedo Mask carries an exhausted Usagi and kisses her. However, the figures' proximity on the page only slightly increases with each encounter. The artistic and non-diegetic proximity eventually becomes diegetic physical contact between the characters. Therefore, the emotional bond between them is established from the start, and their advancing romance is communicated as a series of natural conclusions to their inherent emotional connection.

(3) *The iconography shifts toward a more romantic aesthetic.* Here I use ”romantic aesthetic” to refer to the artistic quality of the page and the use of visuals that connote love. One these pages, the manga turns to a preference for symbolic imagery to evoke the emotional effect of a scene, rather than depicting the scene's objective reality. In the simpler mode of doing so, the comic involves certain patterns that convey the romantic energy, such as designs with feminine connotations such as lace (17, 101, 142 – 143), flowers (159), and soft lights (42, 75, 101, 144). Again, the comic turns to the more *shōjo*-typical style to evoke romance.

The most striking use of this turn is on page 41. Here, Tuxedo Mask is shown gliding above Usagi, as she looks up in wonder. In the depiction of Tuxedo Mask, his cape forms a border between the sky above him and the city below him, with the two faces of the fabric blending into the color of the sky on either side. Drawn below Tuxedo Mask is the city, the buildings depicted in silhouette against the sky behind them. The buildings' bright white lights are in stark contrast to the surrounding darkness, but evoke the same sensation as the stars dotting the sky above. Usagi's face, which follows this image directly, gives an impression of the wonder Usagi is feeling while

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12 Coincidentally, this is in line with certain characteristics of Romanticism.
13 The lace also involves designs resembling or using flower shapes.
watching. The use of non-literal imagery (in particular, drawing Tuxedo Mask's cape as the sky) evokes for the reader the same sense of wonder as Usagi is experiencing.

(4) *Usagi verbalizes her feelings.* Not only do Usagi's words give insight into her thoughts, they also perform a subtler function in the reading of the page. As explained during discussion of the transformation sequence, words contribute to the reader's interpretation of diegetic time. By adding words to the page, the page takes longer to read than if no words were present, which causes the reader to perceive diegetic time as slower. This extension, like with Tuxedo Mask's posing, reflects and enhances the romantic nature of the scene.

Another, simpler function is that the words cement the that Usagi's is lending the primary viewpoint for the scene. That is, because Usagi's thoughts can be "heard" by the reader, the reader is implicitly aware that the scene as shown is from Usagi's perspective, rather than the perspective of another character. By nature, comics, like film, utilize the view of an implied observer (e.g., to depict a character, there's an implied "camera" viewing that character), but this does not mean that the diegesis of a comic or film is shown from an objective standpoint. As in film, the perspective of a viewpoint character colors how the diegesis is shown to the viewer. Allowing Usagi's thoughts to be "heard" reinforces that the comic is allowing itself a subjective lens in its depiction of the diegesis, colored by and representative of Usagi's experience of the scene. Making the reader aware of this subjectivity (even if implicitly) informs the reader to interpret the iconography of the page as less "literal" than that of a page without such romantic content. This also plays to the reader's familiarity with the common visual iconography of *shōjo*, especially given that pages depicting romance utilize a more typical *shōjo* style than in other scenes. Highlighting the page's subjectivity conveys that these visual metaphors, such as the girlish patterns, etc., involved in the "romantic aesthetic" in (3), are part of Usagi's particular perspective. That is, not only do the girlish patterns
evoke the romantic nature of the scene and the relationship between Usagi and Mamoru, they symbolize Usagi's feelings in particular — even though both Usagi and Mamoru are shown, the iconography symbolizes only Usagi's interior state, and cannot be said to symbolize Mamoru's.¹⁴

¹⁴ This is also made clear from context. In early scenes, Tuxedo Mask's identity is unknown and Mamoru is a stranger, and either the reader does not have enough information on him as a character to intuit his feelings in response to Usagi, or the scene explicitly questions what he might be feeling through Usagi's internal monologue. Thus, reader can intuit that the romantic iconography only applies to Usagi's perspective, because Mamoru's is unknown. The comic makes use of this uneven application when questioning what Mamoru's feelings might be, to emphasize the mystery.
Cardcaptor Sakura

Costume Changes: Set Dressing and Dressing Up

One of Cardcaptor Sakura's unique breaks from typical magical girl narrative signatures, and the use of them in Sailor Moon in particular, is that rather than Sakura's powers conveying a combat costume that she magically transforms into, Sakura's friend Tomoyo sews a new costume for Sakura to wear each time she fights a new Clow Card. Tomoyo's stated justification in the text is that she wants to capture Sakura's adventures on film, and, being genre-savvy and aware of other magical girl stories, wants to dress the scene up as appropriately as possible, including Sakura. Because her costumes are non-magical, Sakura doesn't have a transformation sequence; instead, when she goes hunting for Clow Cards, she appears on the scene having already changed into in a new costume (the average way).

However, this does take a similar form to how Sailor Moon represents the end result of Usagi's transformation. While Sakura doesn't have a magical sequence when she changes costume, CLAMP is obligated to depict each of her new costumes as they occur, much how like Takeuchi draws Usagi's changed form at the end of every transformation sequence. Furthermore, the obligation is made more complex than in Sailor Moon, given the fact that Sakura dons a different costume for each new encounter, whereas Sailor Moon has a set, reoccurring combat outfit, and she uses her power of disguise only less frequently.

There are some similarities between the two manga in how the full final costumes are presented. In Cardcaptor Sakura, the moment, like in Sailor Moon, is depicted by having a full-body drawing of Sakura in her new costume. Sometimes this is given a panel of its own, like on page 78, but more often only part of Sakura will be contained in a panel, while the rest will extend past and overlap the panel border, sometimes obfuscating areas of other panels as well (113, 172).
Border-crossing occlusion of an adjacent panel is a common stylistic choice throughout *Cardcaptor Sakura*, but done most boldly for full-body drawings of Sakura in a new outfit. On 94, 132, and 144, Sakura isn't donning a combat outfit, but the same stylistic decisions are used to depict her change in clothing (and in all three of these examples, she at least partially occludes at least one other panel). Such moments typically devote approximately a quarter of the page to depicting the one still moment of Sakura.

All of these depictions, like in *Sailor Moon*, are affected by the shape of Sakura's body, a vertically oriented and tall shape relative to the shape of the page. Where there is occlusion, she necessarily extends vertically into a panel above or below her, and less often horizontally into one on either side of her. This is sometimes at odds with the otherwise legible grid of panels, but doesn't necessarily diminish the legibility of the page overall. On page 94, Sakura goes to a swimming class and, at the start of the scene, is shown standing in her swimsuit, adjusting her hair before getting in the water. This is done with a full-body illustration of Sakura, superimposed over the rest of the page, partially occluding the top right, middle, and bottom right panels. This Sakura also doesn't seem to "belong" to any existing panel. Based on context, she could fit into ("be from") the first panel where the students wait around to swim, but based on shape and positioning she can be considered removed from any other panel, making her a Sakura-shaped panel of her own.

This raises interesting questions around the reading order and progression of time on this page. Sakura and the top right panel behind her act as description of the scene, giving an impression of the new setting and Sakura's mood at the start of the sequence. Present here is a certain technique for scene-setting that that *Cardcaptor Sakura* uses frequently, which I referenced in the introduction as observed by Scott McCloud: "When the content of a silent panel offers no clues as to its duration, it can also produce a sense of timelessness. Because of its unresolved nature, such
a panel may *linger* in the reader's mind. And its presence may be felt in the panels which *follow* it. When *bleeds* are used — i.e., when a panel runs off the edge of the *page* — this effect is *compounded*. Time is no longer contained by the familiar icon of the *closed panel*, but instead *hemorrhages* and escapes into *timeless space*. Such images can *set the mood* or a *sense of place* for *whole scenes* through their *lingering timeless presence,*" (102 – 103). Here we find that *Cardcaptor Sakura* uses such page construction to exactly the effect observed by McCloud. The top right panel is not entirely silent, but nonetheless depicts an event without "clues as to its duration" and with an "unresolved nature". In addition it bleeds off the edge of the page both upward and to the side — there is a false border created by the upper edge of the wall as drawn, but the room still carries upward, and a flower-shaped stamp has been added to reinforce the presence of a bleed.

The page emphasizes this effect using a depiction of costume that occludes multiple adjacent panels, as if the "top layer" of the page. The large Sakura is necessarily read first because of, in addition to her location on the top right of the page, the visual contrast of her shape compared to the remaining square panels of the page. The preliminary descriptive qualities and the placement of the art make it clear that reading her first was the intention. Therefore from here on, the panels will be numbered as (1) Sakura, (2) the top right rectangle, (3) top left, (4), the full middle row, (5) bottom right, (6) bottom left. This means, then, that panel one has adjacency with panels two, four, and five. Observing that art in full draws the eyes to panels out of order, until the reader backtracks to read the panels as directed by their placement.

The resultant effect on perceived diegetic time is a furthering of the "lingering timeless presence" described by McCloud. As McCloud puts it, they "set the mood [and] a sense of place"

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15 McCloud adds directly after, "[...]his is a technique used most often in Japan and only recently [as of 1994] adopted here in the West," (103).
by taking an indeterminable amount of time, but these effects are further carried out by giving panel one visual adjacency to temporally distant panels. Juxtaposing these panels gives panel one associative effects on panels two, four, and five, both in mood and description of diegetic time (and vice versa, but more strongly in this direction; panel one has already been read when arriving at the next panels, forming a preemptive influence on the perception of them that they cannot, from their position, reciprocate). The characteristics of panel two, that is, the general imagery and behavior of the pool area, exist as the background information of the remaining panels of the page, as if in the remaining panels the "camera" could be moved to look around at the setting and find exactly what had been established in panel two. Meanwhile panel one establishes Sakura's costume and energy, and although Sakura herself moves from that pose and position in space, her costume remains the same throughout the scene, and her energy establishes a baseline expectation for the remainder of the scene. *Cardcaptor Sakura* continues to use this pair of techniques to establish scene, that is, the bleed technique observed by McCloud paired with drawings that occlude other panels, in this case, of Sakura in a new costume.

On page 113, Sakura prepares for the capture of a new Clow Card, and sits in a tree on-scene near the pool. She sits on the branch in panel two, but extends into three panels total, with the tails of her hat and leotard springing into panel one, and her legs dangling into panel three. Panels one, two, and three portray new information to help establish the scene — like on page 94, the setting, Sakura, and her energy and new costume, and unlike page 94, her new cellphone. Consistent to page 94, all three of these panels bleed to the edge of the page, which, as discussed, helps to establish that qualities of these panels will continue into panels that follow. However, the addition of occlusion changes the nature of the "hemorrhaging" of temporal information between panels.
In panel three is the heretofore unseen (and very nineties) cell phone held with the button side held up toward the reader, of which the antenna and bottom right corner extend into and occlude panels two and five respectively. The occlusion is comparatively slight compared to the depiction of Sakura in panel two — if you were to recede the cellphone into the frame, so that there were no overlap with other panels and it were cut off by the borders of panel three, the information lost would be the shape of the antenna and receiver (that is, the full shape of the phone). By contrast, cutting off any part of Sakura would remove a larger facet of the information transmitted to the reader. The panel indicates Sakura's pose and expression (enthusiastic and determined, but momentarily idle), place in the setting (hidden in a tree, indicating a degree of preparatory stealth), and the full design of her outfit. Removing anything extending into panel one or three would obscure her position and pose — it would no longer be clear that she's sitting, or in a tree — and would reduce the details on the shape of her costume down to just her top and an imprecise shape of her hat, none of which includes the sprite-like theme of her costume one can garner from the sprite-like pom poms and gravity-defying resting position. Both panels succeed in providing the relevant details of the new costume and gadget by using occlusion, but the emphasis on Sakura — created by occluding other panels and using her silhouette to contrast the rest of the comparatively regular borders of the other panels on the page — places Sakura and her qualities as the core of the new scene.

The moments that demonstrate new costumes in Cardcaptor Sakura vary more between costumes than in Sailor Moon. Sakura's post–costume change pose is always how she would be acting in the scene regardless of the costume change. Usagi's costume changes are shown with dramatic poses that have ambiguity about whom she is posing for and how diegetic time and space are behaving for the duration of the pose. For Sakura's poses, other characters' understanding of
the moment match closely with how the reader understands it, but it's harder to extrapolate the perception of characters surrounding Usagi's. Sakura's poses are also used to convey more establishing information about the scene than Usagi's; in part this is because Usagi's transformations tend to happen in the middle of a sequence, where Sakura's are typically at the top of a new scene and thus paired with other scene-setting information from other panels. However, both Sakura and Usagi both have their full body drawn to present the costume.

In addition, the temporal impression of Sakura's costume changes is that the scene is continuing as it would without a costume change (unless attention is drawn to the costume in the fiction), while for Usagi's costume changes, even just for the moment where she poses, the sense of time for the reader is that the scene has stopped momentarily, that is, Usagi's pose occurs during a pause of the scene. However, while the nature of the progression of time is more clear to the reader in Sakura's "transformations," the formal construction of the page does not constrict moments to single panels; that is, time transitions between panels in an unclear way, although differently from the unclear nature of time in Sailor Moon. Put simply, in a transformation in Sailor Moon, while the duration of diegetic time is unclear, temporal "beats" are still contained within single panels, while in Cardcaptor Sakura, using occlusion, these beats are able to bleed between them.

The reader's interpretation of Sakura's subjective experience, then, is unhinged from time. Because these changes are depictions of a change in scene, the new moment must establish itself as a continuation of the same narrative as the scene before, but is leading to something new and as of yet unclear. The fact that Sakura is the figure connecting the various individual panels on the page gives the sense that Sakura's awareness is similarly removed from the exact present. Therefore, this temporal looseness surrounding and in direct connection with Sakura's visual form,
in addition to narrative context and Sakura's pose and expression in these panels, evokes in the reader a heightened awareness about the future, as a mirror of Sakura's same preparatory mindset.
Batwoman

Costume Changes: Alter Egos

Rucka and Williams' *Batwoman*, like *Sailor Moon* and *Cardcaptor Sakura*, has to solve the problem of how to represent a character in and out of costume. Like Sakura's, Kate's Batwoman costume has no magical properties — in fact, Kate has no superpowers at all. One would assume this makes Kate's experience closer to Batwoman's than if she did have powers to delineate her plainclothes and costumed experiences. However, the comic makes it clear, through the structural elements of pages, that transitioning from being Kate to being Batwoman is a shift between two different experiences not so easily reconciled by simply changing clothes.

Throughout Rucka and Williams' *Batwoman*, there are a series of stylistic motifs that represents different components of the story. Here, the word "motif" is being used to mean a set of rules for the construction of pages, involving art style (line quality, color palette, shading, texture, etc.), panels (shape, structure, color, placement, relation to other panels, etc.), and organization (timing and rhythm, symmetry, a presence or lack of occlusive components, etc.). Fitting one general definition of "motif," motifs here act as a recurring pattern with thematic associations. In general, these motifs are correlated with the appearance of different central characters and facets of the story that are related to them.

For example, Alice, the main villain, has her own motif that is used during all of her appearances. Alice's motif first appears in full on page 36, when Alice drugs Kate and used to represent Kate's mental state as she hallucinates, but appears in subsequent moments related to Alice, for example her entrance on page 70. The main feature of Alice's motif is a curling, branching, vine-line pattern. The pattern appears in panels as well as without, and often makes up the borders of panels related to her (ones she appears in, or ones with some other connection to
her). There are also changes to the style of the art within panels: outlines of people are in color, shadows are softer, there's a watercolor effect, and panels include more splashes of color.

However, rather than having one motif for all of Kate's appearances, there is one motif for Kate in her day-to-day civilian life, and one for Kate as Batwoman. Kate's daily life motif, for example as used on pages 19 and 54 – 55, is characterized mainly by bright colors and rigidly rectangular panels. The panels all have black borders with white gutters, and page margins are either white or a light, warm color such as beige. All of the panels are rectangles with right angles, set parallel to the outer edge of the page. Panels are also set into aligned rows; the bottom and top edge of the panels in a row are all against the same lines, and vertical divisions between panels are all parallel to one another. As a former soldier herself and with a family history of military service, Kate's daily life has always followed certain regimented cycles; she refers to her father as Colonel, who on page 19 chastises her for getting up "long past reveille" despite knowing of her nightly activities as Batwoman that might make it hard to wake so early in the morning. One interprets from this organization of panels that Kate considers her daily life orderly, possibly even simplistic. There is very little kineticism in the layout, indicating a low-energy calm throughout. Outside of panel design (or rather, inside), the color palette of the daily life motif is bright and typically warm, giving the sensation of daytime throughout pages. Drawings use bold black lines and hard shadows, a more abstracted and flat "comic book" style that conveys a further simplicity about Kate's day-to-day. It's also not a coincidence that such a style plays on the artistic conventions of older comic books, especially the style of early superhero comics (including Batman). Such comics were characterized by rectangular panel shapes, with black outlines and white margins and gutters, similar to the designs used in Kate's motif. As such, not only is the motif an indication of the return to the familiar for Kate, it's a return to the familiar for comics readers as well, especially readers
of the DC superhero comics canon that Batwoman is contributing to.

Meanwhile, Batwoman's motif (such as on pages 13 – 14, 91, and 134) is characterized by darkness and dynamism. A strict rule of Kate's motif is the N-shaped panel borders, much like lightning bolts or heartbeats — dramatic analogies intentional — which show up in some form on all such pages. These pages feature Batwoman's signature colors, black and red, a volatile match described as "the colors of war" on page 132. The rules for panel alignment are much freer than Kate's daily life motif; as long as panels feature the N-shaped borders, panels can appear in any arrangement on the page without regard for the parallel or perpendicular. However, it's common for these pages to feature tall, thin panels. These panel shapes give the contained moments a kinetic "snapshot" feel; information within the panels is limited due to their slimness, and the N-shaped borders adds a sense of movement between moments that wouldn't be there were the panel borders straight lines. For a further sense of movement, content within the panels is often visibly canted; for instance, on page 134, panel four (not including the illustrative Batwoman in the top half) sets the horizontal lines of a window at almost 45 degrees. As for illustrations, the style is much more detailed than in the daily life motif, and uses thin lineart, soft shadows, subtle color shifts, and more variety of color within single objects. These changes give the impression of more depth within a page, both visually and emotionally. One can connect this to various things: the routine of Batwoman is more complicated than Kate's during the day; the choices that Batwoman makes are more difficult than the choices she makes as Kate; the persona of Batwoman is more mysterious and limitless than the persona of Kate. All together, the pages convey the vital, dramatic feeling of being Batwoman (fighting crime, solving mysteries, hiding one's identity, etc.) through their formal construction, regardless of the particular content in each panel, using similarly dramatic shapes and interactions of panels.
Given these tools, the comic is then forced to make creative decisions when multiple sources for motifs appear on a page. Here we have the connection to the magical girl manga: like when Usagi transforms into Sailor Moon, or Sakura has changed into one of Tomoyo's costumes, when Kate dons the Batwoman persona, or Batwoman rests and returns to being Kate, along with the change in role there is a formal change in the depiction of the character.

One particular example is on page 16 (technically a two-page spread). The particular events of the page are that Batwoman ends her encounter with Batman, speeds home on her motorcycle, then removes her costume and puts a towel around her neck in order to relax. However, these pages can add qualitative information to the moments by involving qualities of the page's construction, that is, using the qualities of the motifs associated with Kate and Batwoman.

For all but the last panel of the page, the content exists in the Batwoman motif. All of these panels have wide, black, N-shaped borders. Additionally, all of them are especially tall and thin; each of the first four reach from the very top of the page to the very bottom, with the art printed full bleed, and only vertical divisions between adjacent panels. For an increased kinetic feel, while all of the divisions extend the full height of the page, each is oriented at an angle outside of the pure vertical.

The pattern changes slightly after panel four. Here there is an illustration of Batwoman on her motorcycle that partially occludes all the other panels. Based on position and story context, this illustration will be treated as panel five\textsuperscript{16}. First, panel five itself, breaks the pattern set by panels one through four and is not contained by any borders other than the edges of the illustration. However, panel five still conveys the same dynamism consistent to Batwoman's motif; the color

\textsuperscript{16} It can be presumed to be happening between the panels on either side of the biking Batwoman's shoulder, and is in approximately that location, but the exact sequence is up for interpretation. It may occur between panels three and four, or may even be simultaneous to panel four.
palette and style of illustration is drawn from that motif, and the extreme motion blur drawn behind
the figure is in keeping with the kinetic, cinematic imagery. Then, panels six and seven have
another, different break from the pattern. Their shapes resemble panels one through four, but with
distinct changes — they have a similar width and keep the N-shaped borders, but do not extend
the full height of the page, nor do they have shared borders or edges that touch directly. The panels
are adjacent and their borders are mostly parallel, but there is a gap between the outer edges of
panels four, six and seven. Finally, panel eight is drawn entirely in Kate's motif: the art style uses
black lineart, hard shadows, and doesn't texturize surfaces; the panel itself is completely
rectangular, with a thin black border and white margins; the sun is rising in the background, giving
characteristic warmth to the moment.

The effect of the two motifs combined effectively conveys Kate's relaxation as she removes
the Batwoman costume and settles into her home. This can be gained from the content of the panels
— Kate changes into civilian clothes and is visibly relaxed, and the art shifts to a softer texture as
well — but use of the motifs adds information that would not have been present in more traditional
page design. The gaps between panels four, six, and seven are analogous to Batwoman's persona
breaking open; there is a literal and figurative overlap between Kate and Batwoman in the moments
where Kate is only partially in costume, with space for Kate to be seen through Batwoman before
being herself completely. The progressively smaller size of those panels, compared to the regular
size of panels one to three, evokes a shrinking of the Batwoman mindset as Kate relaxes;
Batwoman is literally becoming more compartmentalized as the present moment approaches and
taking up less space on the page, in Kate's mind, and in the reader's perception. The thinness of the
panels in panels six and seven frames Kate in a small and private moment, distant from the reader.
Conversely in panel three the length of the panel enhances the low camera angle, and frames her
as tall, being looked up at, and therefore more powerful. The change from panel three to panels six and seven is devoted to a sense of peeking in on Kate's life through the sliver of the panel frames, a secret window into her world as she enters the privacy of her home and unmask (possibly the most vulnerable moment of a superhero's life). Finally, there is the sudden largeness and comparative simplicity of panel eight. The page relaxes all volatility, just as Kate does; reading the final panel after the rapid, crooked shapes of the panels before feels like taking a deep breath and exhaling.

**Memory**

Most of the latter half of Rucka and Williams' *Batwoman* details Kate's backstory through flashback. This section of the story begins in Kate's childhood, progresses through the death of her sister and mother, Kate joining the army, her subsequent dismissal from West Point for being gay, and ends through the process of Kate inventing and training to be Batwoman. A good example of the typical appearance of flashbacks can be seen on pages 106 – 107. The flashbacks are presented in a different layout and motif than any other up to that point. Where Alice's, Kate's daily life, and Batwoman's motifs had been done with a consistent line quality, the lineart in flashbacks is done with the stylistic impression of a brush pen. This lineart stands out as unique; for flashbacks, there is far more variation in the weight of a single line than in other motifs, and had the art of the previous motifs been reduced to linework, only the lineart of the flashback motif would be differentiable at a glance. The variability in lineweight in this style of lineart allows for shadow to be described by the lineart rather than by color: here, light cast on a surface is depicted as a tint of the surface's object color, while areas in shadow retain the object color but are drawn with heavier lines or inked over completely. The high-contrast tints and expanses of black result in a cinematic
or dream-like quality, fitting of the subjectivity of memory the extended viewing of the past from
the present.

Panel shapes in this motif are strictly rectangular. They have no explicitly drawn border, rather, all of the panels are separated by regularly-sized white gutters. All panel-exterior content (gutters, margins, etc.) is white. Similar to Kate's daily life motif and unlike Batwoman's motif, as a rule all panels are set with their borders parallel or horizontal to the perpendicular. However there is a lot of freedom within those rules; while panels never overlap other panels, they may be whatever size, may take up partial or multiple rows, and may bleed to the edge of the page. For examples, note on page 106 how panel five takes up the same height as panels one and two combined, panel four takes up almost the same height as panel five and six combined and is set next to them, and panels two and six bleed to the edge of the page.

With this motif we find some of the ways in which motifs more generally are used to represent interiority along with the energy and visual nature of different aspects of the story. This motif has a resemblance to the motif used in Kate's daily life: the rules governing the shape and arrangement of panels, in addition to those governing the coloring of panel content are very similar. The difference in designs draws a distinction between Kate of the past and Kate at present, but the similarities connect that one Kate came from the expectations and events of the past. Because Kate has changed as a person but retained aspects of her old self, the motif representing her mode of being has changed as well, but retained aspects of the motif representing how she was before. Just like Kate changes into Batwoman, young Kate also changes into older Kate; both changes are associated with a shift in mindset, represented by a change in page design. That is, motif is used as a formal representation of a character's interior states.

Another point of evidence comes later into Kate's flashbacks. On page 115, Kate is attacked
by a man in an alley. She protects herself, having the military training to do so, but trips and hits the ground when Batman appears. The man starts running, but Batman takes a moment, holds out a hand, and helps Kate to her feet (116) before using a grappling hook and ascending away, leaving Kate staring up at his insignia projected onto the clouds (117).

Panels with only Kate or the man who attacked her in them are borderless, as is typical for panels during Kate's flashbacks, but any panel depicting Batman has a thick black border. Because of the connection to the borders of panels depicting Batwoman, we can draw the conclusion that black borders of this sort symbolize something intrinsic to the "Bat-"mantle. It is hard to verbalize what the pattern is meant to indicate, but from the impression of the bold black borders on the page, we can gather an imposing energy and related thematic darkness.

The development goes a step further on 117, where the last two panels use the N-shape of Batwoman's motif in the outer edge. Not only is the N-shape included, but the outer edges of Kate's panels align with those of Batman's; on the page before, the edges of Batman's panels were out of line to Kate's. This shift from unaligned to aligned further indicates an initial disconnect between the two characters, which on the next page becomes a match rather than a point of contrast. Additionally, one can see that the N-shape of Batwoman's motif is something unique to Kate, as it has been made separate from the black borders of Batman's appearances. From context one could say that it is a manifestation of Kate channeling her need to serve, since it appears in her first moments realizing that the yet-conceptualized Batwoman could give her that fulfillment.

Following this, through page design alone we can see Kate's first inklings of becoming Batwoman. It's been made clear in the narrative that she still considers herself a soldier — she refers to herself as one on page 115, despite having been dismissed some time ago — and continues to want to protect others, but hasn't found a way to do so. That is, until she sees how Batman
operates as a hero, and realizes she could do the same — with her realization extending into the shapes of the panels she inhabits. Kate's interior states are rendered in clear, non-verbal detail by formal aspects of the comic.

The progression towards fully becoming Batwoman continues, and has another striking moment just before the end. Kate reveals to her father that she's been taking on dangerous tasks in pursuit of being a hero, and he, understanding her desire to save others, uses a military connection to give her advanced training courses that would serve her as a superhero — including fighting blindfolded and with her arms tied, SCUBA diving, combat with knives, back-alley parkour, balance beam gymnastics, attending lectures and performing scientific study. All of Kate's training is depicted as a montage in a spread on page 129.

The central component of the page is Kate mid backbend/flip on a balance beam; like the signature artistic flairs of pages concerning Batwoman (such as the bike on page 16), the backbend occludes other panels. Additionally of note, the panels behind this occlusive Kate are of strong resemblance to the pure Batwoman design. They use the N-shaped borders and involve the strong vertical component of the motif, however, leave the panels as having white borders rather than black.

In this spread we see Kate developing into Batwoman represented above all through the formal symbology established earlier in the comic. What one gathers from a holistic view of the page is an additional lens for understanding this moment of the story, that is, the framing of these moments as decisive but inarticulable steps towards becoming the unadulterated Batwoman. Elements of Batwoman are there both in story content and in page construction, but decisively lessened to emphasize a transitory state into the future. Here, Kate has the image of becoming a Batman-like hero in her mind, enduring the training that Batwoman will have internalized, but has
yet to describe herself in the terms of "Batwoman," don any of Batwoman's costume or iconography, or fully understand the cohesive experience of being Batwoman. As with occlusion in *Cardcaptor Sakura*, having Kate's body occlude multiple panels orients her outside of time; this brings in an awareness of both Kate's past as a driving force and future as a rapidly approaching inevitability. Similarly, the page design uses the N-shaped panel divisions, used for the first time to depict Kate's earliest conception of Batwoman, but subtracts components like the black panel borders which themselves were used as imagery of Batman or "Bat"-ness. Both describe Kate as not yet Batwoman, but discovering the fundamental component parts of getting there.

**Romance**

*Batwoman* is also able to depict variability in Kate's interior states even within single motifs. This makes sense for certain experiences, for example the romantic encounter I intend to discuss here. While romantic moments only happen while Kate is in her non-Batwoman daily life persona, they are not attached to her routine, and in all likelihood are considered out-of-the-ordinary moments. The baseline, everyday energy of the daily life motif would lessen the outstanding impression of the event. This is mainly the impression for the reader, but alters their perception of Kate's impression as well.

Kate has multiple brief romances in the comic, but the most outstanding interaction is between Kate and police captain Maggie Sawyer (the irony of Batwoman flirting with a captain is not lost on Kate). Kate meets Maggie at charity ball held by the Gotham City Police Department; this is a formal event for Gotham's upper classes, held in a fittingly decorated ballroom. The scene is first set on page 57. Along with establishing the setting, the imagery on this spread also establishes the formal construction of pages that will continue for the remaining pages of the scene.
Because Kate is out of costume and attending as herself, the art for the entirety of this scene is in the "daily life" style and construction — therefore, a "bright" atmosphere, hard-edged color and shadow, hard black lineart, rectangular panel borders, a roughly gridded pattern of panels, and illustrative visual components outside of story-central panels. In this case, the only outstanding additional pattern in the page design is the staves of sheet music added to either the top or bottom of every page. This functions both to add page-balancing margin space and to add information on the diegesis, namely, that music is playing throughout the scene.

The regularity of this pattern is broken by page 60; Kate and Maggie perform introductions on page 59, and then spend the page 60 spread dancing together. The outstanding aspect of this page's design is that contrary to the typical construction of Kate's motif, temporal moments on this page are allowed to overlap rather than be divided by discretely bounded panels. This occurs in other places in the comic — namely, in the middle of combat, as Batwoman — but rarely in the design of "daily life" pages. The Kate and Maggie of one moment are overlapped by the Kate and Maggie of the following moment. This is more absolute than a character breaching a panel border; while the setting is described by panels in the background, the characters seem disconnected from them, even as far as having the characters' shadows fall on the blue-grey of the lower margin as if they've stepped out of the panels completely.

The regular shapes of the panels before is also almost entirely shirked; but for the panels beginning and ending the moment, the background panels mentioned before give up the rigid rectangular shape typical to this motif. Instead the top borders form an arch, and the borders between panels lean from vertical to diagonal to accommodate. The staves of music also break from their pattern: instead of remaining flat, the staves take on a wave-like pattern, and instead of being strictly in the margins, flow between the characters and their surroundings. Additionally four
large notes, each approximately half the page in height, are laid on top of the page and form four additional panels in their oval-shaped heads.

Altogether, these changes give an enormous sense of closeness and excitement between Kate and Maggie. The stereotypical/classic descriptions of a romantic encounter typically include such things to the extent of "I felt like we were the only two people in the room," "my surroundings fell away," "it was as if time froze"; the page (intentionally or not) uses these sentiments as foundations of the page design.

(1) I felt like we were the only two people in the room. This spread begins and ends with a rectangular panel of the "baseline" design established in the scene-setting pages before. In the first panel, Kate looks aside and comments "We're offending my stepmother." Maggie replies, "Is that a problem?"; Kate responds "You kidding? I live for it." Lo, in the panel below — a small panel within the head of the first of the large floating musical notes — Maggie's stepmother looks on with disdain. Then, immediately to the right of the center of this small panel, the spread begins its divergence from the baseline design. Thus, panel one that Kate and Maggie are aware of eyes on them, panel two (the first musical note) establishes that Kate and Maggie are being observed, the dialogue in panel one concludes that neither Kate nor Maggie are concerned about being watched — for their own sakes or for the comfort of their partner — and then in the continuation of the page (but for the end), there are no further visible references to outside parties. Furthermore, even though the ballroom had been shown with a large crowd in its establishing shots, and unfamiliar people had been drawn into the backgrounds of most panels on page 59, after panels one and two of page 60 — those setting up that Kate and Maggie are comfortable ignoring the crowd — there are no other people drawn in the backgrounds of any panels following. Only when they are intruded upon in the final panel is another figure included, and with that the building momentum of their
dance comes to a halt.

Offsetting the isolation of being the only two characters depicted, the remainder of the page focuses on the intimacy between the pair, using literal closeness to depict the figurative. As they dance, the characters increasingly overlap one another, so that their faces as drawn almost touch. To expand on their growing flirtation, the remaining three musical note panels depict more intimate details in Maggie's hand on Kate's back, their two hands clasped together, and finally their grinning faces, looking at one another. The musical notes even imply the phantom of a kiss, by establishing a pattern of contact in the second and third of the notes, and then in the fourth showing their faces — not in contact, but expected to be.

(2) My surroundings fell away. In addition to forming the false sense of privacy between them, removing the larger group of people surrounding Kate and Maggie also removes landmarks with which to understand their place within the setting. The panels in the background of the page depict the walls of the ballroom, giving a general sense of their location but few particular details. Even then, approximately the lower third of these panels is pure color, and mostly obscured by Kate and Maggie anyway. In the first drawing of their full bodies, their feet are touching the panel behind them, but as they dance, they move further down, into the foreground, dancing on the void-like lower margin. The visual implication of this is that the couple has danced out of their surroundings into the non-diegetic space of the page; the narrative implications are that Kate and Maggie are comfortably forgetting the environment around them in favor of each other's company. Furthermore, the panels in the musical notes — which includes the last panel on the page before their dance is interrupted — closes off any depiction of the setting, both by closely framing the depicted details and by describing the background as only color. The background returns in normal detail in the final panel, along with the baseline panel construction, evoking a sudden return from
daydream to reality.

(3) *It was as if time froze.* Indicators of the passage of time typical to the baseline panel organization are absent from this spread, not only because of the break from baseline, but also because of the construction of the page itself. The most reliable indicator of time on this page is dialogue; as Scott McCloud puts it in *Understanding Comics*, "Just as pictures and the intervals between them create the illusion of time through closure, words introduce time by representing that which can only exist in time — sound" (95). A general gauge for the elapsed diegetic time is the length of time it takes to read the dialogue in full.

Another minor gauge of time passing is to use the change in position between a character and their next appearance, that is, the time taken for Kate and Maggie to advance to the next drawn step of their dance. However, while one can intuit motion from a change in pose, because the nature of the dance is less emphasized in these illustrations, and the typical reader lacks a familiarity with dance that could fill in for the missing information, the sense of time from reading the motions of the characters can be a general estimate but lacks precision.

Other than these gauges, the sense of the passage of time is very uncertain. Typical anchors for the passage of time that had been present in the baseline page design are removed or obscured on this page. In the daily life motif, the rhythm of a page can be felt in the transitions from panel to panel. This is especially true for the earlier pages during the gala, where almost all panels were of identical dimensions and set into repetitive grids. But here, the panels that exist are of no regular shape, making it difficult to create a mental rhythm for the flow of the page. Not only that, but because Kate and Maggie dance in the panel margins and separate themselves from their surroundings, their relationship to the background panels is dubious; if one were able to garner a reliable sense of pacing from the panels behind them, connecting Kate and Maggie to a place
within that timing is an extra step of difficulty. About the relationship between time and panel shape, McCloud adds, "Most of us are so used to the standard rectangular format that a 'borderless' panel such as this can take on a timeless quality," (102). Here Batwoman has set up a "rectangular format" for the reader to become "used to," then changes the format. While the panels are not "borderless," the figures that correlate to them are not contained within their borders and appear unrelated, creating essentially the same effect. And here, too, we see a timeless quality to the change in format from rectangular bordered panels to bordered panels of less regular shapes.

The use of the musical staves on this spread only further the irregularity of time. Because music, like sound and speech, "can only exist in time," we can apply some of McCloud's sentiment to the reading of the musical staves and analogize the notation of music to written language. In baseline pages, the staves had been flatly horizontal without deviation. To a person reading the music, this would represent a roughly linear relationship between the use of space on the page and the flow of time in the represented events. Even if the consistency of this relationship between time and visual space is limited to the realm of musical sound, it can act as a metaphorical sentiment for the scene as a whole. However, uniquely in the spread of Kate and Maggie dancing, the musical staves freely curve in space, forming arcs much like the shape of a flag in wind; whatever relationship between time and music had been established before is now warped in Kate and Maggie's interaction.

We return again to McCloud's description of bleeds: "When 'bleeds' are used, — i.e., when a panel runs off the edge of the page — this [timeless] effect is compounded. Time is no longer contained by the familiar icon of the closed panel, but instead hemorrhages and escapes into timeless space," (103). Bleeds are used on other pages during the gala scene, for instance, during scene-setting moments, such on page 57 — McCloud describes them as useful for scene-setting in
particular: "Such images can set the mood or a sense of place for whole scenes through their lingering timeless presence," (103). However, the spread on page 60 does not use a bleed, but instead it gives the appearance that, were the interaction between Kate and Maggie not suddenly halted by the interruption in the final panel ("Mind if I cut in?"), the background panels and perhaps the dancing itself may have continued beyond the edge of the page. We can see that the musical notes in the upper right continue beyond the page, the last background panel that does exist touches the edge of the page but does not extend beyond it, and room is left on the right behind the last panel for an additional background panel that would extend the background into a bleed. Here again the the design of the page has built momentum towards the continuation of this moment, then contradicts it with the interruption in the last panel, emphasizing the sudden halting of the otherwise burgeoning relationship.

With all this, it is easy to see how Kate's interiority is displayed in full on a page, not only through how she herself is drawn, but through the formal construction of the pages as well.
Conclusion

I hope that by now I have demonstrated what I set out to show, that is, how comics depict characters' subjective experiences through the layout of a page itself.

In *Sailor Moon*, the holistic sensation of Usagi's transformation sequence is built not only by the illustrations, but by the shape and ordering of the panels involved; this translated into a deeper reading of her coming-of-age story, wherein the transformation sequence represents attaining the state of mind required for her adult responsibilities. In part, this state of mind is conveyed to the reader by the ways the transformation sequence is isolated from other parts of the story, with this isolation, again, evolving from the pages' layout. Furthermore, the depiction of romance and Usagi's feelings thereof is managed in a similar way; the manga turns to a more traditional *shōjo* style page layout, reduces its use of hard panel borders, and orients the page around expressions of mood.

In *Cardcaptor Sakura*, changes in costume are used as a way of setting the scene, by involving them into moments meant to establish the upcoming setting and narrative events. Here, the manga makes use of occlusion, and positions Sakura's new costumes in front of the rest of the page. In doing so, it connects Sakura's interiority to multiple temporal moments, thus giving the reader insight into her mental state.

Finally, *Batwoman* directly involved layout in the depiction of character, by devoting a unique motif to each of Kate's discrete states of mind. This gave us special insight into Kate's understanding of herself as opposed to Batwoman, and how she views her past as the sequence of events leading up to her present. Following this, the comic gave us a moment between Kate and Maggie Sawyer, and depicted their budding attraction to one another and their ease and enjoyment in one another's company; again this was done through a its particular use of layout, and the
creation of additional and robust meaning outside of the illustrations themselves.

Were I to continue this work, I would like to look at a greater connection between the works themselves, that is, a more direct comparison between similar moments, as opposed to the discrete analysis of the works, as I've done here. *Cardcaptor Sakura* has its own depictions of romance that time did not allow the inclusion of, and all three comics involve scenes of action that could contribute an interesting counterpoint to this project's emphasis on interior states. Similarly, a more in-depth analysis of time and its depiction could function as a similarly involved project. However, with the project as it is here, I feel I've adequately examined these works within the intended scope. The ideal result of this analysis is that interpretation of layout will not go overlooked in future such analyses.
Works Cited


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Scanlation. Reference images in appendix taken from this source.

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Scanlation. Reference images in appendix taken from this source.
Appendix: Images
**Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon**

*Costume Changes: The Transformation Sequence*

Adora’s transformation sequence in *She-Ra: The Princess of Power* (1985)

Left: Adora's transformation sequence in *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* (2018)

Right: Usagi's transformation sequence in *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon* (1992)
WHOOSH

I received an emergency call
I've got to go in right away!

dash

CRYSTAL SEMINAR

Change into a doctor!
Now I'm an employee of the university hospital.

grrrr

A-Ami?! Usagi, hurry!

Hang in there! Just remember, "mind over matter", or in this case sickness!

OH NO! She's been brainwashed!

Pat pat
Make Up!!

Prism Power
Whaaat?! No way!!

What is all this?!
Romance
Page 17

He's a snobby little jerk!

What's his deal, wearing a tuxedo in the middle of the day like that?

WOW, what a huge jewelry store.

If any place has it, I bet it's there.

The 'Silver Crystal'...
Looks like you’ve solved the case of the shoplifters

My name is Tuxedo Mask

Sailor Moon, I’ll remember you 😊
Tuxedo Mask?! The enemy has appeared just before your eyes! Take care!

Now go and help your friends, quickly!

There you are!

No way we meet again?!
When I see this guy's face in profile

He looks just like that guy I have a crush on, Tuxedo Mask...

I have. And it's supposed to be this route. So many weird things have been happening lately...

Why is my heart beating so fast?! Ack!

thump thump

sleep

shake shake
You know.
I was just thinking about you, and how much I wanted to see you...
So was I.
AND ONE
FOR KERO-
CHAN TOO!

YAY!

WILL YOU
BE OK
SAKURA?

YOU MIGHT
NOT BE
ABLE TO
CAPTURE
THE FLY
CARD WITH
THE 3
CARDS
YOU HAVE.

I USED
WING
IMAGERY
IN THE
CLOTHES
FOR
CAPTURING
A BIRD.

I’LL
GIVE
IT A
TRY!

I KNOW
A LOT
BUT...

YES!
AH AND I WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS SO MUCH. I HATE KONNYAKU & SCARY STORIES!

ITS OK RIGHT?

WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO SAKURA-CHAMP?

YEAH!

IT...

AHH THIS FEELS NICE!

TOMOYO -CHANI COME IN!
LEAVE IT TO ME!

WHAZ DAT?

IS THIS REALLY OK?

TOMOYO -CHAN GAVE IT TO ME.

THE COMPANY TOMOYO -CHANS MOM RUNS MADE IT

IT'S A CELLULAR PHONE.

NOTE: SORRY IM MAKING YEGO SOUND LIKE A GHETTO BOY BUT IM TRYING TO SHOW HE HAS AN OSKIA ACCENT.
Okay, that was just nasty.

...Hiding a razor blade in...in your mouth...

Indeed, I did.

Shhhkk!

Was poisoned?

No... you're crazy.
IN THE BEGINNING, THE RAGE AND THE RED ROCK.

PLEASE TO HIM WHO UNRVAES ALL THINGS.
AND TO HIS HIGH MANNHE WHO USES US FOR HIS PLEASURE.

WHAT HAVE YOU GOT TO SAY FOR YOURSELF?
WE WERE WAITING FOR THE CANISTERS, YOUR HOUNSES. SHALL WE BEGIN LOADING?

INSIDE, OLD MAN.

I’LL START THE PREFLIGHT.

WAIT, WHAT ARE YOU--

YES, PLEASE DO.

WILL YOU BE GOOD ENOUGH TO STOP A MINUTE...

JUST TO GET ONE’S BREATH AGAIN?

KRAK