

## **Image quotation of past events to enforce storyworld continuity in John Byrne's *Fantastic Four***

Mark Hibbett

This paper will look at the way that the writer and artist John Byrne used ›image quotation‹, in the form of direct and indirect quotation of panels by other artists to disrupt existing storyworld continuity and enforce his own version during his lengthy run on Marvel's *Fantastic Four* series. This was done by embedding previous continuity into stories through image quotation, but also by introducing new elements of his own devising within these pre-existing panels, and then reinforcing the ›canonicity‹ of this revised history through further quotation.

First it will define what is meant by ›image quotation‹, before considering the idea of different types of authorship in corporate-owned texts. It will then use three examples from Byrne's run – *This Land Is Mine* in *Fantastic Four* #247 (Byrne 1982), *Interlude* in *Fantastic Four* #258 (Byrne 1983) and *True Lies* in *Fantastic Four* #278 (Byrne & Ordway 1985) – to show how he skilfully used the practice of image quotation to manipulate and add to the backstory of Doctor Doom and thus assert his own claim to ownership of the character.

### **Image Quotation**

The term ›image quotation‹ is used here to refer to the specific transtextual practice of drawing story panels in comics text so that they consciously echo panels from previous stories. For example, the image below (fig. 1) shows a panel from *Fantastic Four* #278 (Byrne & Ordway 1985) which consciously echoes a panel from *Fantastic Four Annual* #2 (Lee, Kirby & Stone 1964).

[Fig. 1: John Byrne (1985) quoting an image by Jack Kirby (1964)]

Here Byrne is using a specific image to tell the reader that he is referring directly to a key event in the larger continuity of the extended Marvel storyworld. In this way the image is ›transtextual‹, in that it operates across different texts which relate and refer to each other (Genette 1992, 83–84). Within this context it is both intertextual, as it features one work

referencing another, and hypertextual, in that the redrawn image makes a link to the earlier one, connecting them for the reader.

This practice was widely used in Marvel comics from the beginnings of the ›Marvel Universe‹ storyworld in the 1960s through to the emergence of the Direct Market in the 1990s as a way to remind or inform readers of previous events in continuity, with a panel, or sequence of panels, repeated as a ›clip‹ from an earlier issue, in the same way that a television show might insert a clip from a previous episode into a new one as a way to remind viewers of what had gone before. During this time the use of continuity between titles grew, so that readers would often need to have knowledge of a range of previous events to understand the story, but would not have had reliable access to the comics that the stories appeared in, nor any way to catch-up without finding the original publications (Tucker 2017, 134). Thus, image quotation was introduced as a straightforward means of reminding the reader of plotlines continuing from previous issues.

Re-drawing panels can be used for other purposes than image quotation. ›Swiping‹, for example, is the practice of tracing and then altering images by other artists without acknowledgement as a ›cheat‹ to avoid designing a new layout (Crucifix 2022, 315). This is essentially a time-saving exercise on the part of an artist who chooses to copy the work of another without credit. ›Swiping‹ itself differs from ›pastiche‹, whereby iconic images are knowingly re-staged in a way that allows readers to be in on the joke, sometimes explicitly stating that this is the case (Labarre 2022, 231). This practice is also transtextual, referring back to previous texts or styles, such as on the cover of *Giant-Size X-Statix* #1 (Milligan & Allred 2002) (fig. 2) which pastiches the cover of *Giant-Size X-Men* #1 (Wein & Cockrum 1975).

[Fig. 2: Milligan and Allred (2002) pastiche Wein and Cockrum (1975)]

Here the intention is to reward the reader's knowledge of comics history by reminding them of an old image (Groensteen 2016, 89). In this case the particular previous cover is used as a way to inform prospective purchasers of the comic that the story inside features the introduction of a new team, as was the case for its famous predecessor, but also that it is done with a knowing, transtextual, eye on previous continuity.

In none of these cases is there any suggestion that the image displayed is the exact same event as shown in the original, and this is where image quotation differs from these other practices. Image quotation is the re-use of a specific rendering of a previous event in order to make an explicit statement that the same event is being shown again, hence its frequent use for flashbacks.

Flashbacks within the stories themselves began to fall out of fashion during the 1990s, when the emergence of the Direct Market and growth in comic stores meant that fans could be sure of getting a regular supply of comics, without missing issues due to the vagaries of newsstand distribution, as well as the growing availability of reprints of popular stories as the market in trade paperback collections grew (Tucker 2017, 139). In the early 2000s the practice of including textual ›recap‹ pages at the start of each issue became common, too, beginning in Marvel's ›Ultimate Marvel‹ line of comics and then spreading across the industry (Marvel database). This was done with the intention of allowing new readers to catch up with everything that had happened previously, and further reduced the need for in-story recaps.

John Byrne's lengthy run as writer and artist on *The Fantastic Four* took place between 1981 and 1986, long before the inclusion of flashbacks fell out of use, so he would regularly employ this type of image quotation to bring readers up to speed with the story. However, as will be shown in the next section, he also used it in more complex ways to exert his own authority over Marvel continuity and thus to assert himself as a primary author of the characters and a successor to the creators, Stan Lee and especially Jack Kirby.

### **John Byrne and Authorship**

A useful way to understand ›authorship‹ in comics texts, particularly superhero comics texts, is to follow Matthew Freeman's suggestion of splitting it into two ›author-functions‹: that of a ›market author-function‹ and a ›textual author-function‹ (Freeman 2016, 37). The market author-function relates to Foucault's ›indicative function‹, focusing on the way that the presence of an author's name guides readers to what is inside and to what other texts exist (Foucault 1969, 324). During John Byrne's run on *Fantastic Four* the main market authors would include Marvel comics, whose corporate ownership is proclaimed on the cover, but also Stan Lee, who ›presented‹ almost every Marvel comic published during the 1970s and 1980s.

[Fig. 3: Example of »Stan Lee Presents« as Market Authorship in *Marvel Super Heroes Secret Wars #2* (Shooter, Zeck & Beatty 1984)]

In the example above (fig. 3) the phrase »Stan Lee Presents« is used to sell the contents of this comic as officially a Marvel story that exists within the same ›Marvel Universe‹ storyworld that Lee co-created. This, along with the words »Marvel Comics« on the cover, assures the potential purchaser that what they will find inside is a genuine, canonical, Marvel comic. This was especially important at this time, when Marvel comics as a whole were regarded by fans as more ›reak‹ and ›hip‹ than those of other superhero publishers (Reynolds 1994, 9). This practice is widespread in genre fiction that features recurring adventures by popular characters, for instance in the use of the name »Edgar Rice Burroughs« as part of the branding of Tarzan, »Ian Fleming« in James Bond movies or spin-off books, even when the actual stories told have nothing to do with the characters' original creators (Freeman 2015, 54).

John Byrne would occasionally attempt to assert himself as a market author of the *Fantastic Four* series, notably by placing himself on the cover of *Fantastic Four #238* (Byrne 1982) and as a main character within the story itself in *Fantastic Four #262* (Byrne 1984). In both of these cases he was proclaiming that this was not just the *Fantastic Four*, but *John Byrne's Fantastic Four*.

However, it is in his claims to textual authorship that image quotation is used most powerfully. The textual author-function relates to the power individual authors have over the storyworld they are in the act of creating (Freeman 2016, 37). In comics terms this would include not just the traditional writers and artists who fans might think of as ›creators‹, but all of the letterers, colourists and editorial staff who also appear in the credits. Traditionally, superhero comics are almost always created by a team of creators, with different individuals responsible for the writing and art (often split into pencillers and inkers) before being passed on to letterers, colourists and so on. Multiple writers, pencillers and inkers are also not uncommon.

This was not the case with John Byrne's run on *Fantastic Four*, which ran from issue 232 to 293, with the covers dated July 1981 to August 1986. He wrote all 62 issues, pencilled 61 – *Fantastic Four #266* (Byrne & Gammill 1984) was an unused inventory story drawn by Kerry

Gammill which Byrne repurposed, and inked, as a flashback story –, inked 42 and, in the case of *Fantastic Four* #273 (Byrne 1984), wrote, pencilled, inked and lettered it, too. In addition, he wrote three annuals (two of which he pencilled) and 22 issues of the spin-off series *The Thing* (GCD Project).

However, although Byrne did not directly collaborate on a monthly basis with as many other creators as might usually be expected, the nature of the ›Marvel Universe‹ as a transtextual storyworld, in which every story in every comic interacts with every other one, meant that Byrne was in effect still collaborating with all other creators of Marvel comics, past, present and even future. Therefore stories told by other creators could and did change the meaning of his own stories, and Byrne came to see this as a challenge to his own authority as the sole writer of *The Fantastic Four*. As will be shown, he would seek to assert that his stories were the primary sources of ›truth‹ within the storyworld by repurposing the work of other creators within his own. Image quotation would be used as a key tool in this process.

This will be demonstrated with three examples, each featuring the character Doctor Doom. Doctor Doom began as an antagonist for the *Fantastic Four* and, although that has been his primary position ever since, in comics and other media, he would also be used in other storylines throughout the Marvel universe. This meant that, unlike the *Fantastic Four* themselves, Doom could be borrowed by other creators for other series without necessarily discussing his use with Byrne or other members of the *Fantastic Four* series' editorial team. Thus, by examining the way Byrne sought to adapt and control other storylines featuring Doctor Doom, we can see plentiful examples of his use of image quotation to assert his own authorship.

### **This Land Is Mine**

The first example comes from *This Land Is Mine*, a story first published in *Fantastic Four* #247 (Byrne 1982). In this story Doom has summoned the *Fantastic Four* to his home country of Latveria, a small, fictional, Eastern European nation which was first introduced in *Fantastic Four Annual* #2 (Lee, Kirby & Stone 1964), with Doom already installed as its tyrannical ruler. Since then he had been deposed in a revolution aided by the *Fantastic Four* which climaxed in *Fantastic Four* #200 (Wolfman, Pollard & Sinnott 1978). This story ended with hereditary ruler Prince Zorba installed as temporary ruler until democratic elections could be held to elect a new government.

Normally in a superhero story it is an unequivocal good to take power away from a supervillain, but here we discover that this has not been the case. As Doom informs the team, the revolution has been a disaster. Prince Zorba has refused to cede control or hold elections and Latveria has become a failed state under his rulership, as dictatorial as Doom's but significantly less efficient. While he is explaining this, a young boy called Kristoff runs out into the street and collides with Doom. His mother runs out to beg for mercy, as one might expect, but when she realises it is Doom rather than Prince Zorba's secret police she falls to her knees in relief and says »Oh master, how we have prayed you might return to us!« (Byrne 1982, 5). »I smell a set-up« (Byrne 1982, 5) says The Thing, and he'd be right to think so, as Doom has a long history of forcing his subjects into public displays of affection. Any reader familiar with Doctor Doom's history would also expect that this is a fake, and so Byrne attempts to demonstrate that she is telling the truth by using image quotation, having Kristoff's mother explain how Latveria used to be a »happy kingdom« (Byrne 1982, 6) over a flashback image which directly quotes one from the very first appearance of Latveria in *Fantastic Four Annual #2* (Lee, Kirby & Stone 1964).

The original image (fig. 4) shows Doom walking the streets of Latveria with ordinary citizens bowing happily to him. Obviously this could be an expression born out of fear, but the image includes a thought bubble with one citizen thinking, approvingly, »Ours has been a prosperous land since he has ruled us!« (Lee, Kirby & Stone 1964, 12).

[Fig. 4: Doctor Doom and his people in *Fantastic Four Annual #2* (Lee, Kirby & Stone 1964)]

The message of the original story was that Doom was genuinely loved by his people and, by quoting this image, Byrne reminds the reader of this. Byrne's panel layout (fig. 5) is very similar, with a policeman, bowing citizen, mother and child and even similar buildings, but he has chosen to alter the angle from which the scene is viewed. Redrawing the image in this way must have been a deliberate decision, used to suggest that this version of Doom's relationship to Latveria is the same, but literally seen from a different angle.

[Fig. 5: Byrne quotes Kirby in *Fantastic Four #247* (Byrne 1982)]

The image is drawn from a slightly different position, too, which suggests that Byrne is placing his own viewpoint next to, and possibly even in front of, that of the original artist Jack Kirby. Byrne had long acknowledged his debt to Kirby, and stated his intention that his version of the Fantastic Four should be in the spirit of the original run of the series.

Therefore, it could be argued that, as well as fulfilling the usual functions of image quotation to provide context for readers, this positioning is a way for Byrne to imply that he believes he ›stands beside‹ Jack Kirby as an artistic equal (Gandolfo 2019, 772).

Byrne uses further image quotation in the story, notably an image of the Latverian state's army of ›Killer Robots‹, which quotes a similar image from their previous appearance in *Fantastic Four* #85 (Lee, Kirby & Sinnott 1969). This re-appearance of aspects of previous continuity not only reinforces the idea that it is part of the same cohesive storyworld, and therefore as valid as Kirby and Lee's stories, but also services the story by demonstrating how evil Zorba has become, using Doom's own weapons against the people.

The story ends with Doctor Doom murdering Prince Zorba – he is, after all, still Doctor Doom – and retaking control of Latveria. At the conclusion he orders the Fantastic Four to leave his country, threatening them with death if they return. This, however, is not the end for Byrne's examination of Doctor Doom and Latveria, with the series returning to the country a year later in *Fantastic Four* #258 (Byrne 1983).

### **Interlude**

Described on the first page as »Stan Lee presents perhaps the strangest issue ever of the Fantastic Four!«, this issue does not feature the title characters at all. Instead, it is John Byrne's attempt to weave together almost every recent appearance of Doom into a single narrative, which he alone is in control of.

The story begins with a double splash page (fig. 6) detailing the repairs which have been undertaken since the last story set in Latveria. This image is a quotation of the splash page from *This Land Is Mine* in *Fantastic Four* #247 (Byrne 1982) featuring the same fountain, houses, statuary and clock tower, now being rebuilt under Doom's guidance. This is a direct transtextual link back to the previous story, informing the reader that it is a continuation.

[Fig. 6: Byrne quotes himself in *Fantastic Four* #258 (Byrne 1983)]

Interestingly, the only significant change from the previous image is to the design of Castle Doom in the background, which here has been altered to match the design seen in *Fantastic Four* #87 (Lee, Kirby & Sinnott 1969) (fig. 7). Again, Byrne is reinforcing the idea that this is the same storyworld as Kirby's.

[Fig. 7: Castle Doom as seen in *Fantastic Four* #87 (Lee/Kirby/Sinnott 1969)]

Byrne then goes on to integrate various recent Doctor Doom stories into his own narrative, firstly by repeating a conversation which had previously been seen in *Doctor Strange* #57 (Stern, Nowlan & Austin 1983). The dialogue in each instance is identical, but again Byrne shows events from a slightly different angle (Fig. 8), and then continues Doom's side of the conversation, implying that Byrne's telling of the encounter is more complete, and thus more definitive.

[Fig. 8: Dialogue and imagery from *Doctor Strange* #57 (Stern, Nowlan & Austin 1983) (left) quoted in *Fantastic Four* #258 (Byrne 1983) (right)]

He does this again on the following page by integrating – and re-writing – another appearance by Doom, this time from *Uncanny X-Men* #146 (Claremont, Cockrum & Rubinstein 1981). This issue, written by Byrne's former regular collaborator Chris Claremont, featured Doom teaming up with the super-villain Arcade to fight the X-Men. Byrne was unhappy with Claremont using a character which he felt belonged to him. Therefore, he retrospectively rewrote the story so that it was a Doombot – one of Doom's robot replicas – rather than Doom himself who was featured in the issue (Shooter 2011). This Doombot is found to be defective and destroyed for not acting correctly, an occurrence which could be interpreted as an in-continuity way for Byrne, as the character's 'owner', to declare that Claremont's depiction of Doom was not up to standard.

Doom takes young Kristoff – now his ward – on a tour through the castle, during which further image quotation occurs, including another from the Silver Surfer's first meeting with Doom in *Fantastic Four* #57 (Lee, Kirby & Sinnott 1966). Once again Byrne chooses to draw events from a slightly different angle (fig. 9), this time to indicate that this new version comes from Doctor Doom's point of view, not the Silver Surfer's.



[Fig. 9: Quoting *Fantastic Four* #57 (Lee, Kirby & Sinnott 1966). (left) quoted in *Fantastic Four* #258 (Byrne 1983) (right)]

Two further stories are then added, both featuring the Hauptmann brothers. In *Fantastic Four* #87 (Lee, Kirby & Sinnott 1969) Doom murdered the elder Hauptmann brother, who was endangering Doom's art collection while attempting to kill Reed Richards with a flame thrower. Some years later, in *Fantastic Four Annual* #15 (Moench & Sutton 1980), the younger brother was forced to go to work for Doom in his laboratories. Byrne reveals that the surviving brother has been plotting his revenge ever since and has devised a cosmic ray device that will kill his employer. Unfortunately for him, Doom instantly sees through the ruse and uses the device to murder Hauptmann himself instead.

Following this, Byrne brings in yet another piece of recent continuity, sending two robots to kidnap a prisoner from a hospital recently featured in *Marvel Two-In-One* #96 (DeFalco, Wilson & Esposito 1983). Doom had a very minor cameo in this issue, appearing in an image quotation that referred, like the story itself, to *Fantastic Four Annual* #3 (Lee, Kirby & Colletta 1965).

All of this image quotation and continuity grappling is designed to bring together the character's various recent appearances into a single cohesive whole, demonstrating to readers (and possibly fellow creators) that Byrne's version of Doctor Doom is the definitive one.

This assurance becomes highly relevant two issues later, in *Fantastic Four* #260 (Byrne 1983), when Doctor Doom is killed in battle in a story entitled *When Titans Clash!*, the title itself a reference to a story of the same name published five years earlier in the aforementioned *Fantastic Four* #200 (Wolfman, Pollard & Sinnott 1978). Doom has been killed, or rather has appeared to be killed, many times before, with the character always escaping certain death, often by turning out to be a Doombot or other doppelganger. Here, by constantly reassuring the reader that this is the one true Doctor Doom, Byrne is building the case for his death being »real«, rather than a trick.

Of course, Doom would eventually return, but that would not be until some years later, in *Fantastic Four* #287 (Byrne & Sinnott 1986), where it is revealed that he used yet another piece of continuity to escape, in this case the body-swapping powers he received from a race of aliens called the Ovoids in *Fantastic Four* #10 (Lee, Kirby & Ayers 1963). In the

meantime, the ›Marvel Universe‹ and all of the stories within it would continue as if he had truly died, and the final text examined here will look at what that meant for Latveria, and for Kristoff.

### **True Lies**

*True Lies* was published in *Fantastic Four* #278 (Byrne & Ordway 1985). It reveals that Doom had not adopted Kristoff out of the goodness of his heart, but rather to be an available body who could host Doom's mind in the event of his death. With Doom now officially dead, this plan comes into effect: Doombots strap Kristoff into a contraption which wipes his own mind and then begins to fill it up with Doom's memories instead.

This process gives Byrne an opportunity to re-tell Doom's origin, as the information is fed into Kristoff's brain in the form of an ongoing narrative. The re-telling of an origin story is often used by creative teams as a way to stamp their mark on characters (Reynolds 1994, 48). Usually this occurs at the start of a run on a series, and Byrne had indeed carried out a similar exercise with the Fantastic Four themselves in his fifth issue, *Fantastic Four* #236 (Byrne 1981). This comic used direct image quotation of the origin story in *Fantastic Four* #1 (Lee, Kirby, Klein & Rule 1961) throughout, in order to highlight the fact that it was referring to the very first origin story. Byrne's intention here was to ally himself with the Stan Lee and Jack Kirby version of the series, implying that his version was a continuation of theirs – an idea that had already been suggested by the title of his first issue, *Back To Basics* in *Fantastic Four* #232 (Byrne 1981).

In *True Lies*, however, Byrne is doing something very different. After building up his own authorship of the character in the previous issues examined here, he now uses his authority to make radical changes, while still being at pains to ground the character in what has gone before. For this he combines aspects of the original full version of Doom's origin in *Fantastic Four Annual* #2 (Lee, Kirby & Stone 1964) and the first major revision to it from *Marvel Superheroes* #20 (Lieber, Thomas, Giacoia & Colletta 1969), using these texts as the foundations for the radical alterations which occur in his own new interpretation.

All three versions of the origin story begin with the death of Doom's father. The original 1964 version is directly quoted in 1969, and then again from a different angle in 1985 (fig. 10).

[Fig. 10: Different versions of the death of Doom's father from (top to bottom) 1964, 1969 and 1985]

Similarly, all three versions follow this with young Victor von Doom's discovery of his mother's potions, which reveal her to be a witch (fig. 11).

[Fig. 11: Different versions of Doom's discovery of his mother's potions from (clockwise from top left) 1964, 1969 and 1985]

The 1969 version adds new information to the original by introducing Valeria, his childhood sweetheart and showing her to have been at Victor's side throughout the incident. The artist, Frank Giacoia, highlights the fact that this is the same story but carrying different information by showing it from a slightly different angle, in much the same way that Byrne does. Byrne keeps the addition of Valeria in his version, and is careful to copy aspects such as the design of the trunk in order to illustrate continuity, even though he changes the dialogue slightly.

The biggest change, however, comes at the crucial point in Doctor Doom's origin story when his face is horribly scarred, forcing him to flee society and eventually become a supervillain. This was first shown in Doom's very first appearance in *Fantastic Four* #5 (Lee, Kirby & Sinnott 1962), and then repeated almost exactly in *Fantastic Four Annual* #2 (Lee, Kirby & Stone 1964) with Jack Kirby using image quotation to refer back to his own original story. This is a famous sequence of layouts (at least amongst fans and creators of superhero comics) and has been quoted in this way many times. Byrne follows this tradition by very deliberately illustrating the sequence using exactly the same layouts (fig. 12), demonstrating to the reader that this is the same story that they are familiar with from other re-tellings.

[Fig. 12: Different versions of Doom's accident from (top to bottom) 1962, 1964 and 1985]

The sequence usually continues with an image first seen in *Fantastic Four Annual* #2 (Lee, Kirby & Stone 1964) of Doom smashing a mirror in horror at his new face, but here Byrne inserts an entirely new panel which, for the first time ever, reveals Doom's face immediately after the accident (fig. 13).

[Fig. 13: The next two panels in Byrne's version of the sequence]

Nesting this additional panel within the traditional sequence is Byrne's way of telling the reader that this is exactly the same story that they have seen before, just with additional information. This is reinforced by the fact that the viewpoint used in the quoted panels is exactly the same as in previous versions. The message is that this is explicitly not a re-interpretation, but rather a straight retelling that happens to show a panel that has not been seen before.

The idea that Doom was only mildly scarred beneath his mask was first suggested by Jack Kirby, although there is some dispute as to whether this was the original intent for the character, or if it was an idea Kirby had some years later (Cronin 2013). Either way, here it is Byrne, asserting himself as Kirby's equal, who is placing it into continuity, using the power of his own authorship over the character to do so. By demonstrating his own knowledge and mastery of the character over the previous two years Byrne is able to carry out this act of redefinition as a way of establishing himself as one of the primary authors of Doctor Doom. The story continues with Byrne re-affirming the importance of past events to the identity of the character by having Kristoff-Doom order the Doombots to stop the memory-upload process, declaring »I have no need for further memories«. Byrne here is giving space to a counter-argument which states that past events are not actually that important to a character, and then uses the rest of the story to demonstrate that this is incorrect. Without the full knowledge of what has happened in the past Kristoff-Doom is easily defeated by the Fantastic Four, who have changed and developed since their earliest meetings with Doom. This shows that, although Kristoff-Doom does have many of Doctor Doom's characteristics – the name Doctor Doom, ways of speaking and behaving, his castle in Latveria, the Doombots and so on –, without full access to the character's history and continuity, he cannot be the true character. Furthermore, it is Byrne, and Byrne alone, who is the sole arbiter of these vital character components.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout each of these stories John Byrne uses image quotation as a way to inform readers that he is referring to pre-existing storylines and to indicate, through a manipulation

of viewing angles, where he is either repeating or re-interpreting events. In this way he attempts to simultaneously reinforce what has gone before and also subtly change it, and by doing this also reinforce his own position as a pre-eminent author of this particular character. The success or failure of this attempt can be assessed by looking at how the character has changed in the several decades since John Byrne left the series.

Many aspects of Doctor Doom's character have been altered by subsequent authors.

Doom's facial scarring, for instance, has been healed several times, notably in *Marvel Superheroes Secret Wars* (Shooter, Zeck, Layton, Beatty, Abel & Esposito 1984-1985) and its spiritual successor *Secret Wars* (Hickman & Ribić 2015-2016), while he has also lost control of Latveria on many occasions, too. However, these changes have always reverted back to the model created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, and subsequently reinforced by Byrne.

Similarly, Doom's nature as a noble, almost heroic character has fluctuated. Mark Waid, during his own notable run on the title with Mike Weirigo from 2002 to 2005, described him as someone who would »tear the head off a newborn baby and eat it like an apple while his mother watched if it would somehow prove he were smarter than Reed« (Terjesen 2009, 83). Other versions have similarly varied, but it is most often the noble but flawed Doctor Doom, with his own code of ethics, which tends to be portrayed, especially when he is given his own series or is seen in other media, such as cartoons, films and games. This is very much Byrne's version of the character, even more so than that of Lee and Kirby themselves, who would often portray him as a maniacal tyrant towards the end of their run together on *Fantastic Four*.

In more general terms, Byrne's run on *Fantastic Four* is held to be one of the most important in the series' long history, often placed second only to Lee and Kirby's in terms of quality and importance for the formation of the characters (Avila 2020; Buxton 2015; Van As 2015). Later creators have often challenged or re-used aspects of Byrne's run, with Walt Simonson, for example, suggesting in *Fantastic Four* #350 (Simonson & Milgrom 1991) that the Doom seen in all of Byrne's stories was actually a Doombot. Many years later, in *Loki: Agent Of Asgard* #6 (Ewing & Coelho 2014), Al Ewing and Jorge Coelho would include a brief piece of dialogue, re-writing Byrne's revision of Claremont's story, stating that it was Doom himself after all, and that he had allowed Arcade to strike a match against his armour in order to »maintain confusion« (Ewing & Coelho 2014, 15) about his true identity (fig. 14).

[Fig. 14: Byrne's version of Doom's origin from 1985 (top) quoted by Ewing and Coelho in 2014 (bottom)]

In general, though, these nods to Byrne's run have been playful tributes to the original rather than ›corrections‹, in much the same way that Byrne's own additions were in the spirit of Lee and Kirby before him. Indeed, Ewing and Coelho's version even uses image quotation of Byrne's version of Doom's origin story from *Fantastic Four* #278 (Byrne & Ordway 1985).

What this demonstrates is that, in an ongoing storyworld like the ›Marvel Universe‹, it is impossible for anyone, even a creator like John Byrne, who would write, pencil, ink and sometimes even letter his own stories, to maintain full control of any character. As the technique of image quotation demonstrates, any image used can be re-used, re-assessed and re-interpreted by future creators, thus making all creative work in this area collaborative in the end.

### **Bibliography**

Avila, Mike: Back To Basics. How King Of Comic Book Rehabilitation John Byrne Saved The Fantastic Four. In: SyFy. <<https://www.syfy.com/syfy-wire/fantastic-four-john-byrne-back-to-basics>>. 10 Jul. 2020. Accessed 18 Apr. 2022.

Buxton, Marc: The Fantastic Four Comics. Where Do You Start? In: Den Of Geek. <<https://www.denofgeek.com/comics/the-fantastic-four-comics-where-do-you-start/>>. 9 Aug. 2015. Accessed 12 Feb. 2022.

Byrne, John (W/A): Back To The Basics! (Fantastic Four 232). New York: Marvel Comics, 1981.

Byrne, John (W/A): Fathers And Others (Fantastic Four 273). New York: Marvel Comics, 1984.

Byrne, John (W/A): Interlude (Fantastic Four 258). New York: Marvel Comics, 1983.

Byrne, John (W/A): Terror In A Tiny Town! (Fantastic Four 236). New York: Marvel Comics, 1981.

Byrne, John (W/A): *The Lady Is For Burning!* (Fantastic Four 238). New York: Marvel Comics, 1982.

Byrne, John (W/A): *The Trial Of Reed Richards!* (Fantastic Four 262). New York: Marvel Comics, 1984.

Byrne, John (W/A): *This Land Is Mine!* (Fantastic Four 247). New York: Marvel Comics, 1982.

Byrne, John (W/A): *When Titans Clash!* (Fantastic Four 260). New York: Marvel Comics, 1983.

Byrne, John (W/P), Jerry Ordway (I): *True Lies* (Fantastic Four 278). New York: Marvel Comics, 1985.

Byrne, John (W/P), Joe Sinnott (I): *Prisoner of the Flesh* (Fantastic Four 287). New York: Marvel Comics, 1986.

Byrne, John (W/P/I), Kerry Gammill (P): *Call Her... Karisma!* (Fantastic Four 266). New York: Marvel Comics, 1984.

Claremont, Chris (W), Dave Cockrum (P), Josef Rubinstein (I): *Murderworld!* (Uncanny X-Men 146). New York: Marvel Comics, 1981.

Cronin, Brian: *Comic Book Legends Revealed #433*. In: CBR.com.

<<https://www.cbr.com/comic-book-legends-revealed-433/>>. 23 Aug. 2013. Accessed 11 Mar. 2022.

Crucifix, Benoit: *Swiping*. In: *Key Terms In Comics Studies*. Ed. Erin La Cour, Simon Grennan & Rik Spanjers. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, p. 315-316.

DeFalco, Tom (W), Ron Wilson (P), Mike Esposito (I): *Visiting Hours!* (Marvel Two-In-One 96), New York: Marvel Comics, 1983.

Ewing, Al (W), Jorge Coelho (A): *Degree Absolute* (Loki: Agent of Asgard 6) . New York: Marvel Comics, 2014.

Foucault, Michel: *What is an author?* In: *The art of art history. A critical anthology*. Ed. Donald Preziosi. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 321–334.

Freeman, Matthew: *Author-as-Franchise-Product. Edgar Rice Burroughs Inc and Tarzan as Historical Branded Entertainment*. In: *Engaging Consumers through Branded Entertainment and Convergent Media*. Ed. José Marti-Parreño, Carla Ruiz & L.L. Scribner. Pennsylvania: IGI Global, 2015, p. 53-73.

Freeman, Matthew: *Historicising Transmedia Storytelling*. London: Routledge, 2016.

GCD Project. Grand Comics Database. <<https://www.comics.org/>>. 1994-present. Accessed 17 April 2022.

Gandolfo, Amadeo: The Kirby »Krackle«. A Graphic Lexicon For Cosmic Superheroes. In: *Abstraction And Comics (Volume II)*. Ed. Aarnoud Rommens. Liège, Belgium: Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2019, p. 763-776.

Genette, Gérard: *The architext. An introduction*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

Groensteen, Thierry: The Art of Braiding. A Clarification. In: *European Comic Art*, 9.1 (2016), p. 88-98.

Hickman, Jonathan (W), Esad Ribić (A): *Secret Wars*. New York: Marvel Comics, 2015-2016.

Labarre, Nicolas: Pastiche. In: *Key Terms In Comics Studies*. Ed. Erin La Cour, Simon Grennan & Rik Spanjers. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, p. 231.

Lee, Stan (W), Jack Kirby (P), Chic Stone (I): *The Fantastic Origin of Doctor Doom! (Fantastic Four Annual 2)*. New York: Marvel Comics, 1964.

Lee, Stan (W), Jack Kirby (P), Dick Ayers (I): *The Return of Doctor Doom! (Fantastic Four 10)*. New York: Marvel Comics, 1963.

Lee, Stan (W), Jack Kirby (P), George Klein (I), Christopher Rule (I): *The Fantastic Four (Fantastic Four 1)*. New York: Marvel Comics, 1961.

Lee, Stan (W), Jack Kirby (P), Joe Sinnott (I): *Enter... Dr Doom! (Fantastic Four 57)*. New York: Marvel Comics, 1966.

Lee, Stan (W), Jack Kirby (P), Joe Sinnott (I): *Prisoners Of Doctor Doom! (Fantastic Four 5)*. New York: Marvel Comics, 1962.

Lee, Stan (W), Jack Kirby (P), Joe Sinnott (I): *The Power And The Pride! (Fantastic Four 87)*. New York: Marvel Comics, 1969.

Lee, Stan (W), Jack Kirby (P), Joe Sinnott (I): *Within This Tortured Land! (Fantastic Four 85)*. New York: Marvel Comics, 1969.

Lee, Stan (W), Jack Kirby (P), Vince Colletta (I): *Bedlam At The Baxter Building! (Fantastic Four Annual 3)*. New York: Marvel Comics, 1965.

Lieber, Larry (W), Roy Thomas (W), Frank Giacoia (P), Vince Colletta (I): *This Man...This Demon! (Marvel Super-Heroes 20)*. New York: Marvel Comics, 1969.



Marvel database: Glossary. recap page. In: Marvel database.  
<[https://marvel.fandom.com/wiki/Glossary:Recap\\_Page](https://marvel.fandom.com/wiki/Glossary:Recap_Page)>. 17 Apr. 2021. Accessed 13 Apr. 2022.

Milligan, Peter (W), Mike Allred (A): Good Omens (Giant-Size X-Statix 1). New York: Marvel Comics, 2002.

Moench, Doug (W), Tom Sutton (A): The Power of the People! (Fantastic Four Annual 15), New York: Marvel Comics, 1980.

Reynolds, Richard: Super Heroes. A Modern Mythology. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994.

Shooter, Jim (W), Michael Zeck (P), John Beatty (I): Prisoners of War! (Marvel Super-Heroes Secret Wars 2). New York: Marvel Comics, 1984.

Shooter, Jim (W), Mike Zeck (P), Bob Layton (P), John Beatty (I), Jack Abel (I), Mike Esposito (I): Marvel Super Heroes Secret Wars. New York: Marvel Comics, 1984-1985.

Shooter, Jim: Secrets Of The Secret Wars. In: Jim Shooter.com.  
<<http://jimshooter.com/2011/04/secrets-of-secret-wars.html/>>. 4 Apr. 2011. Accessed 18 Jan. 2022.

Simonson, Walt (W/P), Al Milgrom (I): »The More Things Change...!« or »It's the Real Thing...« (Fantastic Four 350). New York: Marvel Comics, 1991.

Stern, Roger (W), Kevin Nowlan (P), Terry Austin (I): Gather My Disciples Before Me! (Doctor Strange 57). New York: Marvel Comics, 1983.

Terjesen, Andrew: Why Doctor Doom Is Better Than The Authority. In: Supervillains and Philosophy. Ed. Ben Dyer. Chicago: Open Court, 2009, p. 81-90.

Tucker, Reed: Slugfest. Inside the epic battle between Marvel and DC. London: Sphere, 2017.

Van As, Trevor. 4 Fantastic Four Creative Runs You Should Read. In: How To Love Comics.  
<<https://www.howtolovecomics.com/2015/08/08/best-fantastic-four-runs/>>. 8 Aug. 2015. Accessed 18 Apr. 2022.

Wein, Len (W), Dave Cockrum (A): Deadly Genesis! (Giant-Size X-Men 1). New York: Marvel Comics, 1975.

Wolfman, Marv (W), Keith Pollard (P), Joe Sinnott (I): When Titans Clash! (Fantastic Four 200). New York: Marvel Comics, 1978.

## Figures

- 1: John Byrne (1985) quoting an image by Jack Kirby (1964)
- 2: Milligan and Allred (2002) pastiche Wein and Cockrum (1975)
- 3: Example of »Stan Lee Presents« as Market Authorship in *Marvel Super Heroes Secret Wars* #2 (Shooter, Zeck & Beatty 1984)
- 4: Doctor Doom and his people in *Fantastic Four Annual* #2 (Lee, Kirby & Stone 1964)
- 5: Byrne quotes Kirby in *Fantastic Four* #247 (Byrne 1982)
- 6: Byrne quotes himself in *Fantastic Four* #258 (Byrne 1983)
- 7: Castle Doom as seen in *Fantastic Four* #87 (Lee/Kirby/Sinnott 1969)
- 8: Dialogue and imagery from *Doctor Strange* #57 (Stern, Nowlan & Austin 1983) (left) quoted in *Fantastic Four* #258 (Byrne 1983) (right)
- 9: Quoting *Fantastic Four* #57 (Lee, Kirby & Sinnott 1966). (left) quoted in *Fantastic Four* #258 (Byrne 1983) (right)
- 10: Different versions of the death of Doom's father from (top to bottom) 1964, 1969 and 1985
- 11: Different versions of Doom's discovery of his mother's potions from (clockwise from top left) 1964, 1969 and 1985
- 12: Different versions of Doom's accident from (top to bottom) 1962, 1964 and 1985
- 13: The next two panels in Byrne's version of the sequence
- 14: Byrne's version of Doom's origin from 1985 (top) quoted by Ewing and Coelho in 2014 (bottom)