



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## "Normal" Feelings in "Abnormal" Worlds: On the Political Uses of Emotion in Science Fiction Manga

Li, C.K.

### Citation

Li, C. K. (2015, June 30). "Normal" Feelings in "Abnormal" Worlds: On the Political Uses of Emotion in Science Fiction Manga. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/33236>

Version: Corrected Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/33236>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/33236> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation

**Author:** Li, Carl Ka-hei

**Title:** “Normal” feelings in “abnormal” worlds : on the political uses of emotion in science fiction manga

**Issue Date:** 2015-06-30

## CHAPTER 4: VISUAL EXPRESSION IN SCIENCE FICTION MANGA

This chapter arrives at a method for studying emotions in science fiction manga, working from the idea that a successful analysis of SF manga requires a thorough understanding of how manga conveys information as a visual form of narrative. Finding the right methodological tools for studying manga, however, requires navigating various visual theories, some of which are limited in their conceptions of how manga expresses information, emotional or otherwise. This chapter thus focuses on two important factors in order to arrive at a robust understanding of the visual portrayal of emotions in science fiction manga. First, it takes into account the importance of viewing manga in terms of page composition and panel layout. Second, it shows how these properties translate to the depiction of emotion. This provides a framework for studying how expressions of emotion can be scrutinized in relation to the science fictional narratives in which they exist, and thus makes it possible to see how emotions in SF manga can contribute to cognitive estrangement. This application of visual expression to emotion and then to science fiction is what separates this study of manga from the almost exclusively formalist explorations of Natsume Fusanosuke<sup>179</sup> and Itō Gō,<sup>180</sup> the industry studies of Frederik L. Schodt,<sup>181</sup> Sharon Kinsella,<sup>182</sup> and Jennifer S. Prough,<sup>183</sup> the sociological work of scholars such as Frenchy Lunning<sup>184</sup> and



179. Natsume Fusanosuke, "Where Has Tezuka Gone?," in *Tezuka: The Marvel of Manga*, ed. Philip Trophy (Melbourne: Council of Trustees of the National Gallery of Victoria, 2006), 31-37.

180. See for example Itō Gō, *Tezuka is Dead: Postmodernist and Modernist Approaches to Japanese Manga* (Tokyo: NTT Shuppan, 2005).

181. See for example: Frederik L. Schodt, *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics*, New Preface Edition (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1997).

182. See for example: Sharon Kinsella, *Adult Manga* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000).

183. See for example: Jennifer S. Prough, *Straight from the Heart: Gender, Intimacy, and the Cultural Production of Shōjo Manga* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011).

184. See for example: Frenchy Lunning, "Under the Ruffles: Shōjo and the Morphology of Power," *Mechademia* 6 (2011), Kindle Edition, accessed February 1, 2012, <http://www.amazon.com/>

Saitō Tamaki,<sup>185</sup> as well as purely “narrative” analyses that ignore the use of images in manga.

It is important to note that the meaning of “manga” varies tremendously depending on context. Manga is at once a cultural artifact, a “soft” export, a system of production, a collection of aesthetic elements, a national identity, a type of comics, a form of artistic expression, and even in some sense a way of thought derived from the types of narratives created in manga, among many other possibilities. Out of this plethora of potential definitions, I take manga primarily to be a form of “Japanese comics” (and comics a form of art) while well aware of the fact that the term is to some degree inherently inaccurate. As Morita Naoko writes, “The choice to use ‘comics’ as a generic term is a temporary measure, reflecting the status of English as an international language rather than the consensus of scholars.... Terms for comics in each language have their own meanings and modes of use within society.”<sup>186</sup> This issue is largely unaddressed in this dissertation, but is nevertheless still acknowledged, with the caveat that my usage of the term “comic” to describe manga is not meant to subordinate manga to American or English-language comics but to attribute it as one of many various forms of sequential, panel-based art.

In terms of the visual expression of emotion, the clearest places to observe emotion would be the physical expressions of characters, followed by the use of abstract backgrounds to represent the internal world of characters, both of which are common techniques in manga. However, to begin with physical expression is to risk focusing too prematurely on that aspect and to undervalue or ignore the fact that many more elements contribute to the expression of emotion than simply a character making a “happy” or “sad” face. Similarly, while abstract backgrounds do not quite have this problem, the exploration of this topic would also benefit from a greater understanding of the visual qualities of manga in general. For these reasons, I address the subjects of physical expres-

• • • • •

Mechademia-6-Enhanced-Frenchy-Lunning/dp/0816677344.

185. See for example: Saitō Tamaki, *Beautiful Fighting Girl*, trans. J. Keith Vincent and Dawn Lawson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

186. Morita Naoko, “Culture Recognition of Comics and Comic Studies: Comments on Thierry Groensteen’s Keynote Lecture,” in *Comics Worlds and the World of Comics: Towards Scholarship on a Global Scale*, ed. Jaqueline Berndt, Global Manga Studies, (Kyoto: International Manga Research Center, Kyoto Seika University, 2010), 28-29, accessed February 24, 2014, <http://imrc.jp/2010/09/26/20100924Comics%20Worlds%20and%20the%20World%20of%20Comics.pdf>.

sion and abstract backgrounds as means of portraying emotion much later in the chapter, after having established sufficient context.

#### 4.1. THE PROBLEMS WITH COMICS ESSENTIALISM AND “MANGA AS CINEMA”

The question that hangs over almost any visual study of manga is how to describe manga in the first place, not so much because it needs to be answered, but because attempts to do so tend to be laden with specific values and attempts to establish the legitimacy of manga. Dogged by a bias that regards it as an easily absorbed combination of words and pictures with narrow purpose and merit, supporters of manga as well as comics in general both inside and outside of academics have produced a variety of arguments against such wholesale dismissal. When Frederik L. Schodt introduces the word “manga” to unfamiliar readers in 1983’s *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics*, he begins with the sheer economics of the industry (manga at the time made up 27% of all printing in Japan)<sup>187</sup> and later compares it to art from Japan’s history, specifically the *Chōjūgiga* [Animal scrolls].<sup>188</sup> Through the close connection between anime and manga, Susan Napier asks by extension whether manga is worth studying as an art form, drawing connections between anime, manga, and older, more celebrated forms of Japanese art such as ukiyo-e.<sup>189</sup> This tendency to give manga scholarly legs persists,<sup>190</sup> as even more recent works begin with similar appeals to culture.<sup>191</sup>

• • • • •

187. Schodt, *Manga! Manga!*, 12-13.

188. Schodt, *Manga! Manga!*, 28.

189. Susan Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl’s Moving Castle* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 4-5.

190. Of course, underscoring this issue is the fact that in the past “manga” was not as ubiquitous a concept as it is today. Schodt once spoke of how his editor advised against naming his first book *Manga! Manga!* for the fear that it would be confused with the periodic element “manganese” or mangia, the Italian word for “to eat” (Frederik L. Schodt, “Third International Manga Award 2009,” JAI2, December 4, 2009, accessed May 1, 2012, <http://www.jai2.com/3rd%20International%20Manga%20Award.html>). The introduction of manga through convenient example or metaphor, while inevitably inaccurate to a certain degree, is therefore understandable.

191. See for example: Toni Johnson-Woods, Introduction to *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 1-13.

This behavior has not been exclusive to English-language scholarship of manga, either, as Japanese writers have also contended with the question of manga's legitimacy. As Kure Tomofusa points out, manga in Japan has often been seen as something which should be enjoyed only sparingly, a snack to accompany the more vital aspect of a child's upbringing that is education.<sup>192</sup> At worst, manga has been considered intellectually or morally damaging, whether in the past (in regards to social outcry over manga in the 1950s-1960s<sup>193</sup>) or in the present (as seen in the passing of the "Tokyo Metropolitan Ordinance Regarding the Healthy Development of Youth in Tokyo" in 2011<sup>194</sup>). In response, writers such as Ishiko Junzō and Kajii Jun historically worked to bring legitimacy to manga through areas such as art and film criticism.<sup>195</sup>

Out of the seeming need to define manga in terms of its "outstanding" qualities, two theories to explain manga as a visual art form are especially prominent. The first, more rooted in the study of comics in general, places enormous emphasis on there being something absolutely "unique" to the comics form, most often working from the idea that either the "panel" or the combination of text and image is the defining attribute of comics. The second, exhibiting a desire to have manga treated as seriously as other forms of media, argues that the primary visual trait of manga is its mimicry of cinematic techniques, which then ties into the idea that panels in manga are equivalent to "shots" in film. Therefore, before elaborating on my methodology for studying visual expression in manga in general, let alone in terms of emotions, it is necessary to show why these two ideas, while important, do not adequately cover the visual language of manga.

In *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, Scott McCloud remarks that comics have been unfairly defined as "crude, poorly-drawn, semiliterate, cheap,



192. Kure Tomofusa, *Gendai manga no zentaizō* [Overview of modern manga], (Tokyo: Futaba Bunshō, 1997), 19.

193. Maruyama Akira, interview by Marc Bernabé, *Akira Maruyama on "Harmful Manga,"* YouTube video, 5:07, posted September 14, 2010, accessed April 26, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0xQSlSx9Y4>.

194. A law that has put manga meant for minors in Japan under greater scrutiny in terms of representations of sex and relationships that have been deemed "immoral." See: "Tokyo Deems Incestuous Manga as First 'Unwholesome' for Minors," *The Asahi Shimbun*, May 13, 2014, accessed March 16, 2015. [http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind\\_news/social\\_affairs/AJ201405130049](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201405130049).

195. Kure, *Gendai manga no zentaizō*, 24-25.

disposable kiddie fare.”<sup>196</sup> Working to convince a more general audience of the value of comics, McCloud focuses on how words and images in a panel-based format allow comics to be distinguished from both pure prose and pure imagery. Similarly, David Carrier in his book *The Aesthetics of Comics* writes, “To reduce the comic to mere words—or, conversely, to treat it as merely a sequence of images—leaves aside what defines this art form, the integration of words with picture,”<sup>197</sup> and that, “Almost unknown before being exploited by comics artists, the speech balloon defines comics as neither a purely verbal nor a strictly visual art form, but as something radically new.”<sup>198</sup> Along this line of thinking, it is also somewhat telling that one academic journal dedicated to the study of comics is titled *ImageText* even if one were to assume that this title was chosen simply to be catchy and memorable.<sup>199</sup> The basic idea found in the “image-text” concept, that comics are a highly developed form of artistic expression, is correct to a certain degree. However, one major problem is that this approach tends to assume a skeptical audience that is not yet aware of comics’ potential and therefore can only be convinced by making essentialist arguments, a common tactic for defending new or maligned art forms. However, for those who do not consider comics to be a lesser medium or one exclusive to children,<sup>200</sup> this sort of exaggerated position, with its picturesque story of the “harmony of image and text” (or some other essential property) in comics is unnecessary. Somewhat like an overly strict usage of “cognitive estrangement” when it comes to science fiction,<sup>201</sup> comics essentialism pushes the idea that uniqueness means validity for comics as if a form of expression can only find true value from some core inimitable element.

Instead, in approaching comics from a non-essentialist perspective while also arguing for SF manga’s ability as a form of mass culture to express (science fictional/political) change, I look to comics scholar Thierry Groensteen, who pro-



196. Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: Paradox Press, 1993), 3.

197. David Carrier, *The Aesthetics of Comics* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 38.

198. Carrier, *The Aesthetics of Comics*, 4.

199. It is important to note, however, that this title does not necessarily speak for the actual content of the articles in this journal.

200. Though that is not to say that comics for children, even purely educational ones, cannot be highly developed or sophisticated in their approaches and presentation.

201. See Chapter 2.1.

vides both a strong argument against comics essentialism and a generally useful starting point for conceptualizing how comics work. Groensteen writes that any comic “only actualizes certain potentialities of the medium, to the detriment of others that are reduced or excluded,”<sup>202</sup> and “what makes comics a language that cannot be confused with any other is, on the one hand, the *simultaneous* mobilization of the entirety of codes (visual and discursive) that constitute it, and, at the same time, the fact that none of these codes probably belongs purely to it, consequently specifying themselves when they apply to particular ‘subjects of expression,’ which is the drawing.”<sup>203</sup> In other words, what makes comics “unique” is not that there are specific elements exclusive to comics that must be prioritized and emphasized in order to surpass other forms of expression, but that various non-unique elements can work together to different degrees to affect how comics depict and represent things in particular ways. Comics are therefore better seen as a form of art that thrives on compromise. In this respect, although the idea that “comics = image + text” is itself a compromise in a certain sense, its supposed position as the lynchpin of comics further reveals itself to be problematic, or at least inadequate on its own for explaining comics, let alone manga. While it is certainly true that comics often use image and text together, there is a difference between showing that a relationship between image and text exists and arguing that it is the absolute basis of the comics form.

This misconception of the image-text relationship as two partners resonating to create “the comic” can be further broken down into two smaller related ideas, each of which have their own shortcomings: the necessity of a mutual existence between image and text, and that the two components are equal. In regards to the first idea, the most obvious counterargument is that comics (and manga) need not utilize text in any significant capacity at all.<sup>204</sup> Even if one were to argue that the text-less comic is more of an exception that proves the rule, a more fundamental problem is that the emphasis on image-text ends up minimizing the importance of other relationships within the comics form, such as the connection between panels, or how a depicted character is positioned relative to the entire page.

• • • • •

202. Thierry Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, trans. Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 12.

203. Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 7.

204. For a demonstration of this, see: Kio Shimoku, *Genshiken: The Society for the Study of Modern Visual Culture*, vol. 9 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2006), 119-142.



As for the second idea—the “equality” of image and text where the two elements purportedly resonate with each other in perfect harmony—the issue is not only that this relationship can vary tremendously, but also that in general cases the image is more important than the text. This is especially because the “text,” typically in the form of word balloons, can be viewed as images themselves, becoming a part of what Groensteen refers to as “rhythmic function,” or a way of controlling the pace of how a comic is viewed.<sup>205</sup> In describing the word balloon, Carrier correctly states that “Words in balloons are not elements within the picture; but neither are balloon words outside the picture.... The balloon words are both inside and outside the picture in the sense that thoughts, said to be ‘inside one’s head,’ do not have any position in space.”<sup>206</sup> In support of this view, Groensteen also states that the text of the word balloon, unlike the image, “frees itself from [the illusion of three-dimensionality], respecting and confirming the bi-dimensional materiality of the writing surface.”<sup>207</sup> However, while the word balloon is an accepted symbol of comics, whereby simply showing a word balloon outside of the context of an actual comic can communicate the concept of “comics” in multiple cultures (including Japan), there is a substantial difference between acknowledging its existence and arguing that word balloons legitimize comics. By focusing excessively on the word balloon, there is a failure to recognize that the way word balloons act as flat objects seemingly separate from the (assumed) three-dimensional space of the panel is not exclusive to the word balloon or its text. This flattening effect can also be achieved through the panels themselves, the lines which make up the panels, as well as more abstract and expressionistic backgrounds whose flatness cannot be ignored—a feature which is frequently found in *shōjo* manga<sup>208</sup> but is present in other forms of comics as well. This is not to say that text has no significance in terms of expression, but as will be explained further below, its role is generally more subordinate to the image.

The “manga as cinema” approach, although not aiming for essentialism, also tries to legitimize manga by associating it with a more established and celebrated art form. An idea that exists in both English and Japanese-language



205. Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 79-83

206. Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 40.

207. Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 69

208. Itō, *Tezuka is Dead*, 220-246.

scholarship on manga, it can be seen not only in Neil Cohn’s “Japanese Visual Language”<sup>209</sup> theory and its distinctions between panel types based on the distance of the “camera,”<sup>210</sup> but also both explicitly and implicitly in the words of prominent manga scholars and creators. Takeuchi Osamu applies film theory to manga,<sup>211</sup> while Ishinomori Shōtarō, creator of the classic *Cyborg 009* (1964–1981), spoke of a “film-like” approach to manga.<sup>212</sup> Abiko Motoo, one half of the “Fujiko Fujio” duo responsible for the manga *Doraemon*, famously wrote about the cinematic shock given to him by Tezuka’s art in *Shin takarajima* [New treasure island]:

I certainly heard the “vroom” of the roaring engine. I certainly inhaled the dust the sports car left behind and gagged. I’d never seen *manga* like this! On the first two pages all that happens is a car driving by. Why is it so exciting to see these pages? It’s just like watching a movie!”<sup>213</sup>

Similar to how “image-text” is only useful to a certain extent, however, so too does “cinematic manga” fail to fully explain the expressive potential of manga. This is not to say that film-like imagery has absolutely no effect on visual expression—one would be hard-pressed to claim that a particularly dynamic cinematic angle used in a panel would not convey any meaning, for example—but it fails to take into account other aspects of manga, most significantly the composition of the manga page. Cohn certainly tries to avoid this, as he creates his panel type distinctions in an attempt to not approach manga panels as isolated elements,<sup>214</sup> but it still inadvertently presents manga as a series of individual “film-like shots” arranged one after the other, ignoring the page and thus the more substantial

• • • • •

209. Neil Cohn, “Japanese Visual Language: The Structure of Manga,” in *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Toni Johnson-Woods (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 187–188. I choose not to use the term JVL as the phrasing “Japanese Visual Language” can be just as problematic as the cultural/stylistic conflation of the term manga, but the distinction is important and noted.

210. Cohn, “Japanese Visual Language, 197–198.

211. Itō, *Tezuka is Dead*, 191.

212. Itō, *Tezuka is Dead*, 192–193.

213. Quoted in: Natsume, “Where Has Tezuka Gone?,” 34.

214. Cohn, “Japanese Visual Language,” 197.

relationships between panels. Furthermore, as Itō points out, manga panels do not function the same way as montage,<sup>215</sup> which connects more largely to Groensteen's view that a comic cannot be made by simply placing images next to each other and calling it a comic.<sup>216</sup>

As Natsume argues, while Tezuka certainly derived his approach partly from film and animation, defining Tezuka's influence as merely "cinematic" is missing a more fundamental contribution to the direction manga has taken since his rise to prominence. In response to Abiko's description of the opening scene of *Shin takarajima*, Natsume goes against the idea that it introduced "movie-like" storytelling to manga, instead locating its innovation and influence in the "use of a whole double-spread page to depict only a speeding car.... After Tezuka manga language was transformed so that one scene would consist of many frames."<sup>217</sup> Similarly, in an interview, former editor-in-chief of *Shūkan shōnen Jump* [Weekly shōnen jump] Sasaki Hisashi talks about how manga creators and editors were hesitant to distribute their manga digitally for a long time due to a concern that digital devices would not allow the reader to view the double-page spread in its entirety (something which has changed since the advent of the iPad and other computer tablets).<sup>218</sup> The emphasis on the page as a whole, where the distribution of panels matters as much as, if not more than, the "cinematic" angles used to depict the car shows how important it is to consider manga-as-comics in terms of that two-dimensionality, and not simply concentrate on the three-dimensionality of "film technique." This difference, in turn, is what drives the concept of *komawari* [panel layout] in manga,<sup>219</sup> which is based more in how groups of panels relate to each other. *Komawari* is even a subject in Japanese "how to draw manga" guides,<sup>220</sup> and though such guides are often overly simplistic in their

• • • • •

215. Itō, *Tezuka is Dead*, 195.

216. Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 18.

217. Natsume, "Where Has Tezuka Gone?," 34.

218. Sasaki Hisashi, interview by Zach Logan, "Episode 300: 'Stand and JUMP' (Sasaki Hisashi)," *The Unofficial One Piece Podcast*, podcast audio, January 7, 2014, accessed January 10, 2014, <http://onepiecepodcast.com/podcast-episodes/2014/01/episode-300-stand-and-jump-sasaki-hisashi>.

219. Itō explores the commonality of this concept extensively in *Tezuka is Dead*, 150-160.

220. See the following two examples: "Lesson 9: The Basics of Komawari," *Manga Training*, accessed April 27, 2014, <http://www.manga-training.com/how-to-draw-manga/the-basics-of-komawari.html>. Tsukamoto Hiroyoshi, *Manga Bible no.5: komawari eiga gihō* [Manga Bible no.5: panel layout and cinematic techniques] (Tokyo: Mārusha, 2007), 58-78.

attempts to boil down manga to a few easy steps, it is notable that often the guides to comics and manga created originally for English-speaking audiences (which tend to be even more deeply flawed) focus on aspects such as character design or the individual panel, rather than panel layout.<sup>221</sup>

The supposed harmony of image and text, excessive focus on the panel, and the use of panels as film shots are all limited by their denial of the page. An important step to arriving at a fuller understanding of the visuality of manga is thus to acknowledge these aspects as contributing to manga, but at the same time realizing that they cannot account for everything. In particular, it is the focus on groups of panels (what Groensteen calls the panel sequence,<sup>222</sup> and which can often take up the entire page) that connects these visual aspects of manga together into a cohesive whole. With manga, it is necessary to not just consider the relationship of elements within a panel (the *intra-panel*), but also the relationship between groups of panels (the *inter-panel*).

Before continuing, however, I will address a couple of potential arguments. The first is that I have simply supplanted other definitions of manga for one that more closely aligns with my own goals and biases. The second is that I risk using the page or the panel sequence as my own tool for either pushing a different form of essentialism or attempting to “legitimize” manga by arguing that panel layout and similar concepts are responsible for the interaction between emotion and the novum in SF manga. With respect to the first criticism, it is not my intention to strictly define manga (or story manga), and there are plenty of works that do not necessarily emphasize the panel sequence but can nevertheless be called manga. Single-panel manga, for example, are not disqualified simply because they do not utilize a progression of panels, nor are four-panel manga invalid as manga just because their panel progressions from top to bottom are generally simplistic.

In regards to the second criticism, my argument is neither that manga is the only possible source of comics where the panel sequence is important, nor that manga must utilize panel sequences primarily to visually convey complex ideas. Comics that are not made in Japan can still utilize the visual language of manga or something similar (Yomota Inuhiko for example mentions Windsor

• • • • •

221. See for example: “How to Draw Manga,” *Manga University*, accessed April 27, 2014, <http://www.howtodrawmanga.com/pages/tutorials>.

222. Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 103-143.

McCay's *Little Nemo* as having a manga-like approach to panels even though it predates modern manga<sup>223</sup>) while comics by Japanese artists, including story manga, do not necessarily have to adhere to the panel sequence. This is especially evident in the case of the manga version of *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (hereafter *Nausicaä*), a robust SF narrative with intriguing political ideas about humankind's relationship with both the environment and the actions of past generations, where creator Miyazaki Hayao (of Studio Ghibli fame) adapts his skills as a filmmaker and animator to drawing manga.<sup>224</sup> The storyboard-like approach to panels and the prominent focus on three-dimensional space in the *Nausicaä* manga results in a hybrid style such that Cohn's categorization of panels fits Miyazaki's manga work especially well. Instead, I base my focus on the panel sequence and the page on artistic tendencies that are ubiquitous in manga and have been developed extensively to convey ideas in particular ways, not on the notion that the panel sequence must be absolutely important for something to be called manga. The idea that manga is a form of comics that emphasizes inter-panel relationships is less a strict definition and more a description of what is already present, something which, while not wholly unique to manga, has been developed extensively over its history and therefore should not be ignored when studying visual expression in (SF) manga.

#### 4.2. THE "FLOW" OF MANGA

Panel layout and page composition have a substantial effect on the appearance of manga and how information is conveyed. This section looks at one of the most important concepts in manga for creating panel sequences that encourages readers to focus on panel layout. This is the idea of *nagare* [flow], a term used in the manga industry to describe the emphasis on a flowing, river-like structure for visually presenting information in manga.<sup>225</sup> By exploring how "flow"

• • • • •

223. Yomota Inuhiko, *Manga genron* [Manga theory] (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1999), 35-36.

224. Much more widely known for his animated films, the early volumes of the *Nausicaä* manga acted as the basis for the film of the same name also directed by Miyazaki. See: Kumi Kaoru, "Boku wa motomoto mangaka shibō datta": mangaban Nausicaä kaidoku sono 1" [At first I wanted to be a manga creator': First analysis of the Nausicaä manga], in *Miyazaki Hayao no jidai: 1941-2008* [The age of Miyazaki Hayao: 1941-2008] (Tokyo: Choeisha, 2008), 354-367.

225. Ed Chavez (former manga editor) in discussion with the author, July 11, 2011. A former manga editor for Kodansha who worked on the magazines *Morning*, *Morning 2*, and *Manga Box*

is generated by using intra-panel relationships to emphasize inter-panel relationships, it becomes possible to see how manga encourages readers to look at panels in relation to each other and to view it in terms of page and panel sequence composition.

When it comes to the differences between manga and American comics, the word “decompression” has occasionally been used to describe a more “manga-like” approach to paneling.<sup>226</sup> The term stems from the idea that, in traditional American comics, there is a prioritization of economical usage of space for narrative purposes, which can be loosely summarized as packing more information into less space, whereas “decompressed” comics are those which progress at a slower, more deliberate pace and spread information out across several pages. It is also characterized typically in terms of manga and its influence on American comics, most notably on Frank Miller, who was inspired by Koike Kazuo and Kojima Goseki’s *Lone Wolf and Cub*.<sup>227</sup> While “decompression” is inadequate as a way of describing the visual language of manga because the term positions manga as a deviation from the traditionally more “compressed” style of American comics, removing that veneer of cultural specificity and avoiding the generality that comes with the term renders “decompression” a useful starting point for exploring the greater significance that a multiplicity of panels generally has over the individual panel when it comes to manga.

Much of the idea of decompression involves emphasis on how much information is conveyed on average in each individual panel, which in the case of

• • • • •

from 2007 to 2009 who would go on to work as marketing director for the American manga publisher Vertical. Inc., Chavez stated that flow is not only a common term in the industry but also that understanding flow is considered an important skill for both artists and editors (though this does not mean that a creator has to be a master of flow in order to be published). While the role of the editor in making creative decisions greatly increased starting in the 1990s (Kinsella, *Adult Manga*, 162-163), which could in turn bias an editor towards certain methods, the fact that “flow” plays a significant factor even in the decades well before the 1990s makes it clear that, even if the idea is simply shorthand to summarize page and panel composition in manga at the expense of full accuracy, the basis of the idea has persisted long enough to exert an influence on the visual art and visual language of manga.

226. Keith Giffen, “As If I Care,” *Wizarduniverse.com*, June 19, 2007, accessed November 5, 2012, <http://web.archive.org/web/20070725134117/http://www.wizarduniverse.com/magazine/wizard/004888595.cfm>.

227. Jason Thompson, “Lone Wolf and Cub - Jason Thompson’s House of 1000 Manga,” *Anime News Network*, July 14, 2011, accessed October 27, 2011, <http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/house-of-1000-manga/2011-07-14>.

manga appears to be relatively little. Groensteen, though not using the word “decompression,” writes the following (bolded emphasis mine):

. . . I will insist on the fact that the progression of the story is not constant and linear. It is not true that each panel has as its mission progressing toward a resolution. In particular, certain *mangas* [sic] are signaled by a massive use of panels that are superfluous from a strictly narrative point of view, their precise function is elsewhere: decorative, documentary, rhythmic, or poetic, whatever the case. These panels respect the general principle of co-reference, but their contribution cannot be evaluated in terms of information. More than the panel, it is therefore the page or the sequence that, under this relationship, constitutes a pertinent unit.<sup>228</sup>

While Groensteen fails to see is that it is not only for “certain” manga that the page or at the very least the sequence is the “pertinent unit” but for the vast majority of manga, he is able to notice to a certain degree the diminished importance of the individual panel in manga, and thus where the root of the contention over decompression lies. This is of course not to deny the similarities that manga shares with other forms of comics, as the composition of both pages and panels can be important factors for any comic, but it is clear that these aspects are often vital for expression in manga.

Another prominent attempt to explain inter-panel relationships in manga comes from Scott McCloud, who argues that the power of comics derives from the human mind’s ability to bring closure, writing that “Comics asks the mind to work as a sort of in-between—filling the gaps between panels [the “gutter”<sup>229</sup>] as an animator might.”<sup>230</sup> He then relates that time-based closure to what he calls an “aspect-to-aspect” transition between panels, which gives closure to a sense of physical space by providing a “wandering eye”<sup>231</sup> that allows the reader

• • • • •

228. Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 116.

229. McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 60-93.

230. McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 88.

231. McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 72.

to take in an environment. However, similar to Cohn, this somewhat ironically leads to an over-fixation on the panels themselves. More fundamentally, the problem with both “time closure” and “space closure” is that they do not take into sufficient account the space and plane of the page itself, and the ability for the “gaps” to be unified not by a scene which exists only in the imagination of the reader but by the cues which allow the reader to cross those gutters, for example when a character’s arm overlaps multiple panels.

Somewhat contrary to Groensteen, however, who believes that “the gutter in and of itself ... does not merit fetishization,”<sup>232</sup> I argue that the gutter does play an important role, just not in the sense that it is the site of some form of invisible magic. When it comes to manga, Groensteen’s idea that “the semantic relations between the images are the same”<sup>233</sup> whether it is a space or a simple line dividing two panels is simply untrue, as varying the size and prominence of the gutters on a page can certainly affect how the panels (or lack thereof) visually affect each other. For example, thinner gutters can group panels together on a page, while larger gutters can separate them, and consistent gutters can give a certain sense of structure to a comic. There is no absolute rubric for the exact meanings of specific gutter types, but in the context of manga their importance can be seen in the tendency for different categories of manga to approach the gutter differently. *Seinen* manga,<sup>234</sup> particularly in the vein of what Kinsella calls “realist manga,”<sup>235</sup> tend to violate the gutter only rarely and instead clearly demarcate each and every panel as separate from the previous one. *Shōjo* manga,<sup>236</sup> on the other hand, will cross the gutter more frequently or in some cases even eliminate it. As Thomas Lamarre states, “It is not surprising then that, at moments of great affective importance, some *shōjo* manga tend to dispense with panels altogether, in favor of sparkling collages and temporal whirlpools.”<sup>237</sup> As can be seen in figure 4.1, the respective approaches to gutters promote certain ideas broadly associated with those categorizations: *seinen* manga as “realistic,” “colder,” and more “adult,” and *shōjo* as “personal,” “softer,” and more “roman-

• • • • •

232. Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 112.

233. Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 112.

234. Manga officially categorized as being for adult men.

235. Kinsella, *Adult Manga*, 179.

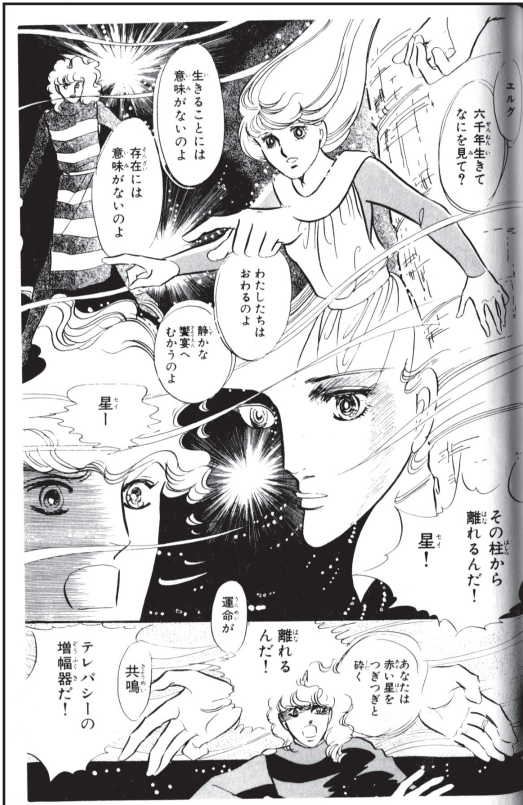
236. Manga officially categorized as being for young to adolescent girls.

237. Thomas Lamarre, “Anime Eyes Manga,” in *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).



tic.”<sup>238</sup> The gutter, while not contributing quite in the way that McCloud claims, retains its function as an inter-panel pacing mechanism.

Figure 4.1. A comparison between manga pages with different gutters. Sources: Urasawa Naoki and Nagasaki Takashi, *Pluto*, vol.4 (San Francisco: VIZ Media, 2009), 172 (right). Hagio Moto, *Star Red*, Shogakukan Bunshō Edition (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1995) 431 (left).



[Star Red]

Panel 1: “Erg.” “What have you seen in your 6000 years?” “Life is meaningless.” “Our existences are meaningless.” “It’s over for us.” “We’re headed towards a quiet banquet.” “Sei.” “Let go of that pillar, Sei!”

Panel 2: “You’re destroying this red planet little by little.” “Let go of it!” “Fate is... crying out.” “It’s a telepathy amplifier!”

The relevance of the page or panel sequence to manga lies in the relationships created by “panel progression,” or the ways in which panels are arranged to follow one another across the page. Comics can generally be described as being linear texts, whereby “linear” refers to works “where the viewers have no choice

• • • • •

238. For another example, see: Itō, *Tezuka is Dead*, 234.



ture a scene from *Coppelion* and a version modified to show the order in which the visual elements are supposed to be viewed. Within any given panel, a character's speech is divided into two or more smaller balloons, instead of combining the entirety of their spoken dialogue into one larger balloon. Two effects are achieved as a result. First, by dividing the words up, the manga actively avoids inundating the reader with a large amount of text, which would slow down the reading process. The panel borders then further communicate the point at which a reader should move onto the next panel. Second, by placing the smaller word balloons on opposite ends in each panel and sandwiching the characters between them (or in some panels a traffic sign), the arrangement of elements makes it so that visual information is introduced in many of the panels as the following:

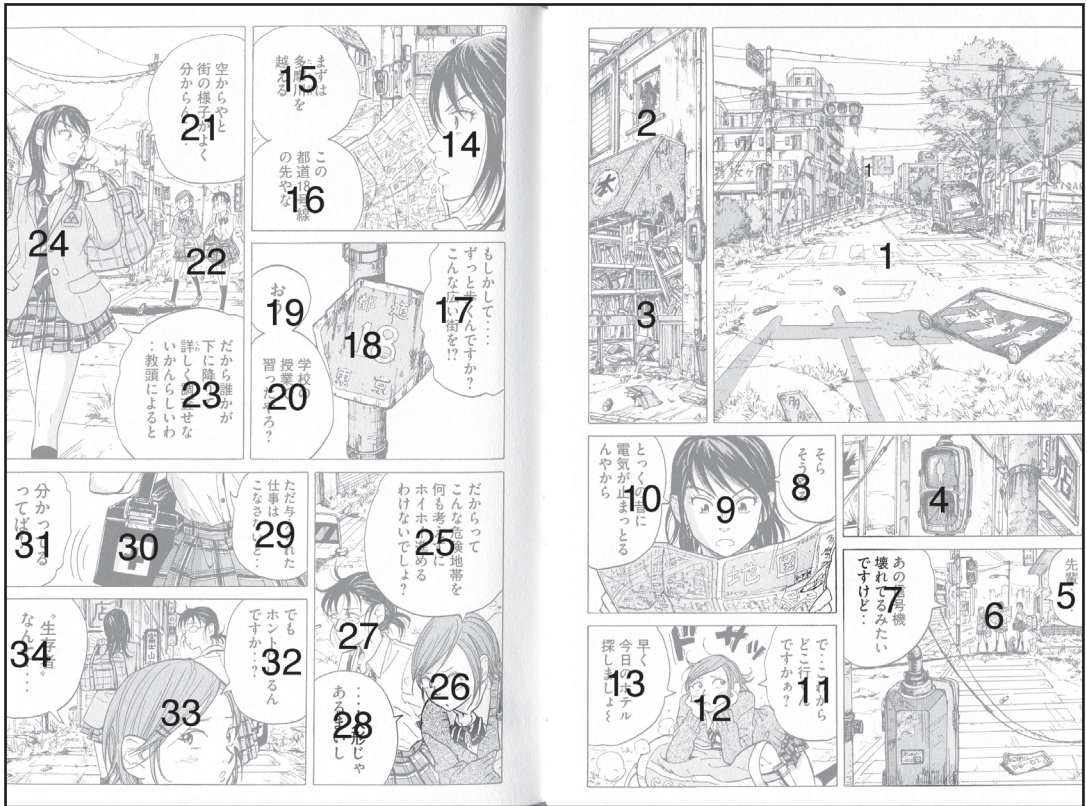
first balloon -> character's expression and pose -> second balloon

Figure 4.2. A sense of flow draws the eyes smoothly throughout the page. Source: Inoue Tomonori, "Coppelion #1," in *Coppelion*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2009).



(see figure 7.2 for translation)

Figure 4.3. The visual elements dictate a specific reading order. Source: Modified from Inoue Tomonori, “Coppelion #1,” in *Coppelion*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2009).



In each of the pertaining panels, the character is given attention and importance by being placed in the center of the intra-panel composition. In addition, the lines created by two word balloons and the character between them also prompts the eyes to the next panel such that the order of the panels and the overall order are further emphasized by the content within them. In the case of the upper left-hand panel (panel 9), the order goes:

first balloon -> background characters -> second balloon ->  
foreground character

The visual elements within that panel tend downwards, and yet while it would be reasonable to assume that the foreground character's legs would lead to the panel right below it, the proper order is reinforced by the way that the page is rearranged into four "columns." By being at the same height as the column next to it but thinner than the column directly below it, the panel is distinguished as a column



Figures 4.2 through 4.4 also show the function of text and the word balloon in greater detail. While text in manga may not be an inherently equal partner with image, it is also a source of expression at least on some level. Text firstly acts as a “clarifier,” using its existence as a written language to provide additional information, though this does not necessarily mean that text in manga is explanatory in nature. *Coppelion* in figure 4.2 for example uses text to hint at the subject of nuclear disaster in some panels, while providing additional insight into the characters’ personalities when accompanying their physical behavior. Text secondly becomes a “connector,” as explained above, working in the form of the word balloon as a visual element that contributes to both intra-panel and inter-panel relationships.

This is not to argue that flow is non-existent in other forms of comics, as McCloud devotes a part of his book *Making Comics* to the concept. However, while McCloud states that “confusion occurs when panel arrangements are obscured by too many ‘fourth wall’ breaks and borderless images,”<sup>244</sup> *shōjo* or *josei* manga<sup>245</sup>-style panel progression such as in *Star Red* (figure 4.1) is often composed primarily of these “mistakes,” and is still both a strong purveyor of flow with a clear sense of direction for the reader.

There are two additional pieces of evidence for the existence of flow. The first is that the historical influence of flow and inter-panel relationships can be seen not only in the work of artists who have debuted well after Tezuka, when the visual language of manga had already developed in a certain direction, but also in manga by Tezuka’s contemporaries, such as Yokoyama Mitsuteru. Beginning his career around the same time as Tezuka, there is a markedly increased presence of flow in Yokoyama’s works over time. Putting aside the idea that an additional decade’s worth of experience would likely improve an artist’s drawing ability on some level, it is important to note the difference in how the panels are laid out between the three examples seen in figure 4.5. The ambiguity of the panels in the older *Tetsujin 28-gō* [*Tetsujin 28*] (1956-1966, also known in English as *Gigantor*), which at first makes it unclear whether one should read the six panels as “two three-panel-tall columns” or “three two-panel-wide rows” (the latter is correct), contrasts heavily with the increasingly fluid and comprehensible sense of panel progression in his later manga. *Comet-san* (1967) and then *Sangokushi* [*Romance of the three kingdoms*] (1971-1986) vary the sizes of panels and the

• • • • •

244. Scott McCloud, *Making Comics* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 33.

245. Manga officially categorized as being for adult women.

positions of gutters to guide the reader along in the proper order with increasing sophistication. Whether or not Tezuka directly influenced this change (though Yokoyama began to draw manga in middle school, it was Tezuka’s *Metropolis* which prompted him to look for publication opportunities<sup>246</sup>), there is a clear development of flow in Yokoyama’s work. It should also be noted that, even in the older *Tetsujin 28-gō* with its confusing sense of flow, the importance of the inter-panel relationship is still evident. The two characters, clearly antagonistic towards each other, contrast in terms of their positions on the page (right vs. left), emphasizing the idea that the page is to be viewed both as a whole entity and as a progression of panels.

Figure 4.5. The evolution of flow in the works of Yokoyama Mitsuteru shows its importance in manga’s development. Sources: Yokoyama Mitsuteru, *Zoku tetsujin 28-gō*, vol. 8 (Tokyo: Kōbunsha, 1997), 145 (right). Yokoyama Mitsuteru, *Comet-san*, Gensaku Kanzenban Edition (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2005), 7 (middle). Yokoyama Mitsuteru, *Sangokushi*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Ushio Manga Bunshō, 1997), 45 (left).



[*Zoku tetsujin 28-gō*]

Panel 1: “What do you plan to do this time?”

Panel 2: “What indeed? In the meantime I’ll be taking that remote control.”

• • • • •

1. 246 “Purofiru” [Profile], *Yokoyama Mitsuteru Official Web*, accessed May 1, 2012, <http://www.yokoyama-mitsuteru.com/profile.html>.

Panel 3: "Grrr..."

Panel 4: "Now, hand it over and you won't get hurt."

Panel 5: "Damn it-"

Panel 6: "Once enough time has passed I'll hand it back."

[Comet-san]

Panel 1: "Good afternoon."

Panel 2: "Whaaaa?" "This is terrible!"

Panels 3: "Listen to me, okay? Don't move!"

Panel 4: Kōji, what are you staring at! Go call the police!" "Roger!"

Panel 5: "You two don't have to worry."

Panel 6: "Don't move! Don't m-"

Panel 7: "Ahhh..."

[Sangokushi]

Panel 2: "Hey, youngin, what are you staring at the sky for?"

Panel 3: "Well in any case, sit here."

Panel 4: "For some reason I feel like that gaze of yours shows promise, so I'm inviting you to be my ally."

The second piece of evidence for flow is that the readability of a manga can be compromised when flow is disrupted excessively. The English-language release of *Japan Inc.* (Ishinomori Shōtarō, 1986) is one notable failure in this regard. Adapted in 1988 to read left-to-right for English-reading audiences (as was common practice at the time), many of the panels involve either English or Japanese text in the original version, so in some cases the panel order was rearranged such that the direction in which one was supposed to read certain panels was also modified. Although the basic idea of promoting the Japanese economic system comes through, the visual result is a messy hodge-podge of flipped and re-ordered panels resulting in its visual flow constantly being redirected and interrupted.

In *Japan Inc.*, this significantly affects the cohesiveness of its panel sequences and thus the pace at which the reader is supposed to take in its contents. In figure 4.6, which is meant to be read left to right, the word balloons, rather than guiding the reader smoothly through the page, force the reader's view to dart about in an attempt to even begin to understand the



order in which the page should be perceived, as the “right to left” flow from the “un-flipped” original is still present. Panels 3 and 4 have also clearly been switched due to the awkward inclines on the left and right sides. Because of these changes, the flow of the page does not function properly, removing the smooth and continuous sense of panel progression. It is clear from this loss of cohesion that the people responsible for reformatting *Japan Inc.* were aware of the importance of the panel in comics but not the inter-panel relationships that come out of the idea of panel sequence as a fundamental component. In short, the way in which flow becomes compromised in this example shows how a significant part of visual expression in manga disappears in its absence.

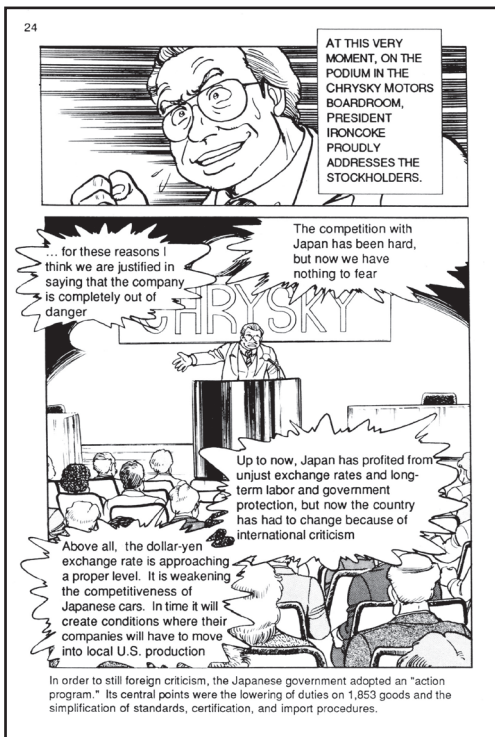


Figure 4.6. An example of incongruous flow.  
Source: Ishinomori Shōtarō, *Japan Inc.*,  
(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988),  
4. Read left to right.

Before moving on, it should be noted that, as much as flow is meant to provide an easily comprehensible and efficient visual experience, it is not necessarily intuitive, which explains some of the difficulty stated by Johnson-Woods above about reading manga. Suzuki “CJ” Shige writes:

... [T]o “be able to read manga” or to “understand manga” indicates that the reader has already

learned the reading protocol of manga that has been historically constructed, accumulated, and shared. This also suggests that manga, as a socially shared medium, continuously produces and updates the reading subject who has a high literacy of reading manga;

and as a shared reality, manga as a social medium also constitutes a reading community.... If such “transparency” of meaning is only guaranteed by a convention, it is neither natural nor self-evident for other communities that do not share that convention.... No matter how clear a typical manga expression seems to well-trained readers of Japanese manga, it can be very opaque and uncertain to the reader who has no shared reading protocol of Japanese manga.<sup>247</sup>

Nevertheless, what I have shown through the examples above is that, even if the reading of manga is a skill which needs to be “learned” on some level, there are clear attempts by manga to utilize flow to convey complete ideas using groups of panels or even the entire page so as to make these ideas easily understandable. Returning to the concept of “decompression,” the term can be thought of as attempting to describe “flow,” albeit only somewhat successfully. Given the importance of groups of panels in manga, it can be said that visual information, as described by Natsume, is typically described over the course of many panels, and in some cases pages, which influences how a narrative is visually paced. The same applies to the expression of physical environments (also often a prominent factor in SF manga), such as in *Coppelion* in figure 4.2, where the depiction of Tokyo over multiple panels forms a cohesive whole. While this does show some of the validity of McCloud’s idea of “aspect-to-aspect transitions,” the invisible magic of the gutters is less important than the actual panels themselves. Flow can thus also be described as the tendency for manga to connect intra-panel relationships to inter-panel relationships with a greater emphasis on the latter over the former, which prioritizes the panel sequence and the page. In order to understand how emotions (or most any other visual information) are conveyed and utilized in science fiction manga, it is important to take flow into account.

• • • • •

247. Suzuki (CJ) Shige, “Manga/Comics Studies from the Perspective of Science Fiction Research: Genre, Transmedia, and Transnationalism,” in *Comics Worlds and the World of Comics: Towards Scholarship on a Global Scale*, ed. Jaqueline Berndt, Global Manga Studies, (Kyoto: International Manga Research Center, Kyoto Seika University, 2010), 77, accessed February 24, 2014, <http://imrc.jp/2010/09/26/20100924Comics%20Worlds%20and%20the%20World%20of%20Comics.pdf>.

### 4.3. FLOW IN OTHER VISUAL ASPECTS OF MANGA

Flow and panel layout are important concepts, but they alone do not provide all of the visual or narrative information found in manga. At the same time, flow and panel layout also permeate the visual language of manga to such a degree that other visual aspects end up being utilized in ways that emphasize these qualities. This section examines three particularly significant areas which have their own expressive traits while also contributing to the page as a whole: the rare circumstance in which the single panel has greater significance, the tendency for manga to be published in black and white as opposed to color, and the use of context-sensitive visual motifs in addition to ones that are universally understood within manga.

*The panel:* While I have argued thus far that the individual panel is generally less important in manga compared to other forms of comics, it is important to give the panel its due for a couple of reasons. First, the significance of the panel sequence over the panel is not entirely steadfast, and there are cases where a panel will act as a “pertinent unit” and give complete information. Second, even when it is not in a position of great power in manga, the panel still carries some influence. This is especially noticeable when a manga blurs the distinction between treating panels as fragments and utilizing an individual panel as significant in and of itself.

Figures 4.7 and 4.8 feature a scene from *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, in which Shinji hesitates before killing another character, Kaworu. The death is portrayed symbolically, depicting Shinji strangling Kaworu in a field (instead of Shinji crushing him within the giant palm of his EVA<sup>248</sup>), by using a single image that takes up the entire double-page spread and effectively functions as one large “panel.” In addition to the narrative and thematic context, where the image references a scene from a previous chapter in which Kaworu performs a “mercy killing” of a stray kitten,<sup>249</sup> the image of Shinji taking Kaworu’s life in figure 4.8 functions both as a “pertinent unit” and as a culmination of the panels in figure 4.7.

• • • • •

248. EVAs are the biomechanical giants piloted by the main characters of *Evangelion*.

249. Sadamoto Yoshiyuki, *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, vol. 3, 3-in-1 Edition (San Francisco: VIZ Media, 2013), 392-404.

Figure 4.7. The panel sequence builds up to a single image in order to highlight its emotional impact on its characters (part 1). Source: Sadamoto Yoshiyuki, Neon Genesis Evangelion, vol. 4, 3-in-1 Edition (San Francisco: VIZ Media, 2013), 282-283.

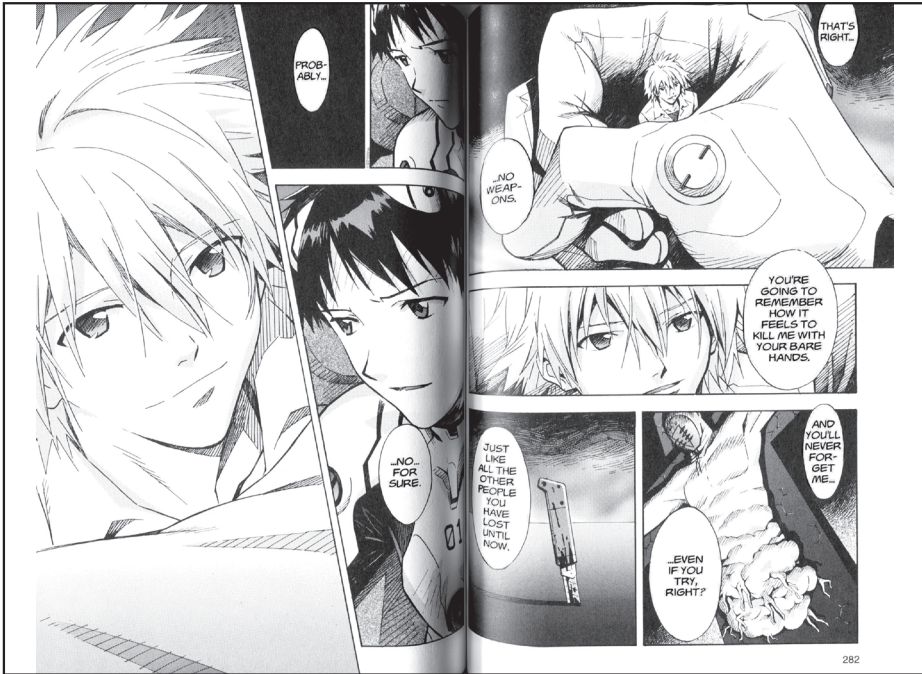


Figure 4.8. The panel sequence builds up to a single image in order to highlight its emotional impact on its characters (part 2). Source: Sadamoto Yoshiyuki, Neon Genesis Evangelion, vol. 4, 3-in-1 Edition (San Francisco: VIZ Media, 2013), 286-287.



This can also be seen in figures 4.9 and 4.10, from *Zettai Karen Children*, where figure 4.10 utilizes the panel as a complete source of information. Though the second panel of figure 4.10 also connects to it through the close-up on the male character’s face, that first panel can be read by itself with relatively little need to see what came before it. However, the panel sequence on the previous page (figure 4.9) also builds up the characters’ emotions such that it leads into figure 4.10. In relation to this, the first panel in figure 4.10 acts as a counterpoint or an abrupt shift from figure 4.9. Whether it is a true single panel or a “technical” one whereby the entire page (or double-page spread) is a single image, the relative rarity of the “complete” panel draws attention to itself in a way that also encourages a look at the panels which have led up to it.

Figure 4.9. A single panel deflates the tension of the previous page (part 1). Source: Shīna Takashi, *Zettai Karen Children*, vol. 2. (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 2005), 166-167.



(See figure 6.9 for translation)



Figure 4.10. A single panel deflates the tension of the previous page (part 2). Source: Shīna Takashi, *Zettai Karen Children*, vol. 2. (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 2005), 168.

(See figure 6.10 for translation)

*Black and white:* Although manga is not devoid of full color pages, whether in the form of very early color manga before black and white became an industry-wide standard, covers for collected volumes, a few color pages in select chapters of a title, the increase of digitally-published manga, the work of artists such as Terasawa Buichi (creator of *Space Adventure Cobra*) who actively seek to work in color,<sup>250</sup> or anime adaptations of manga which “colorize” scenes from the original material, the

vast majority of manga that has been published has been printed primarily in black and white.<sup>251</sup> An economic choice to a strong degree (printing in black and white is much less expensive than printing in color), its adoption has encouraged manga creators to explore the potential of monochrome extensively. This is not to argue that manga is defined by the absence of color, as if to say that manga with color are lacking in “manga-ness,” but given the importance of knowing how to work in black and white in this environment, it would be difficult for black and white printing to not have a role in establishing or influencing the visual aesthetics of manga and the conveyance of visual information.

For McCloud, “In black and white, the ideas behind the art are communicated more directly. Meaning transcends form. Art approaches language.”<sup>252</sup>

• • • • •

250. “Profile,” *Buichi Terasawa Official Site*, accessed April 26, 2014, [http://www.buichi.com/E/profile/index\\_bt.html](http://www.buichi.com/E/profile/index_bt.html).

251. It should be noted here that often manga magazines will use colored paper, such that the “white” is not truly white, although even the newsprint typical to these magazines is not a “true” white either. “Black and white” can thus also mean “solid tone and lack of tone.”

252. McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 192.

On the other hand, colors (especially flat colors) “objectify their subjects”<sup>253</sup> and make “forms themselves take on more significance.”<sup>254</sup> However, his description of the role of black and white in comics has more to do with attempting to convince readers that color is not automatically superior to black and white due to being closer to reality, as opposed to explaining the visual results of forcibly limiting the color palette. For instance, an important aspect of manga publishing to consider is that “black and white printing” is about as strict as the term can be, as not even solid grays can be used in conventional manga publishing. This has resulted in the widespread adoption of screentones, thin sheets used to create patterns by mixing black dots with white space in close proximity to create the illusion of “grays,” to provide shades beyond the two monochrome extremes. They are considered to be such an important part of the manga creation process that the popular digital manga software “Manga Studio” (“Comic Studio” and “Clip Studio Paint” in Japan<sup>255</sup>) touts the ease of use of its digital screentones as a prominent feature of the program.<sup>256</sup> Although occasionally used to shade figures and objects, screentones are most often used as solid fills, providing a decorative pattern to a piece of clothing, for example, or “coloring” a character’s hair (see figure 4.6 or nearly any other image in this chapter). In the instances where screentones act as shading, they tend to be used either in larger swathes or to provide a sharp contrast between light and shadow.

This solid-block approach to the use of tones in manga (as opposed to employing a “gradient” of screentones to give the illusion of softer shadows) also applies to the use of pure black and white in many cases, and is often used to unify elements in terms of page composition. It is certainly not the only way to connect panels together through similar elements (repeating the same character can have a comparable effect), nor is it necessarily the most prominent, and the degree to which this association is encouraged by the artwork can vary widely depending on individual artists. However, when taking into account the double-linear narrative style of most manga, the relationship between black and white (or more generally the use of flat swathes of tone) becomes another way

• • • • •

253. McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 189.

254. McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 192.

255. “Manga seisaku Soft no saikōhō. Clip Studio Paint EX” [The peak of manga creation software. Clip Studio Paint EX], *Sōsaku katsudō ōen Site CLIP* [Creation activity support site CLIP], accessed April 28, 2014, [http://www.clip-studio.com/clip\\_site/tool/items/cspe\\_plan?net\\_top\\_ex](http://www.clip-studio.com/clip_site/tool/items/cspe_plan?net_top_ex).

256. *Manga Studio*, accessed April 28, 2014, <http://manga.smithmicro.com>.

manga fosters a flowing sense of panel progression. In figure 4.11, the predominance of black in the characters' uniforms and hair in *Mysterious Girlfriend X* (Ueshiba Riichi, 2006-present) creates a contrasting balance with the white of their surroundings. As a result, the page presents a number of inter-panel relationships through the utilization of black—such as the long vertical column of “black” on the left side of page 7—by using the characters' physical figures as visually important markers in conjunction with the size and positions of the panels to drive the visual narrative along. A similar approach can be seen in *7 Billion Needles* in figure 4.12, where the prominent use of white against a dark background positions the protagonist Hikaru's figure as a repeating element to move the eyes along in order to emphasize her sense of unhappiness (see Chapter 5.1 for further details). Both of these examples demonstrate how the inherent contrast between black and white encourages the eye to make visual connections.

Figure 4.11. Black and white figures prominently into the page composition. Source: Ueshiba Riichi, “Chapter 9: Mysterious Sign,” in *Mysterious Girlfriend X*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2007), 7-8, accessed February 1, 2014, [http://www.crunchyroll.com/comics\\_read/manga?volume\\_id=231](http://www.crunchyroll.com/comics_read/manga?volume_id=231).







Figure 4.12. The contrast between light and dark draws attention to the character. Source: Tadano Nobuaki, *7 Billion Needles*, vol. 1 (New York: Vertical, Inc., 2010), 4-5.

*Iconic visual motifs:* Cohn, working from Natsume's idea of *keiyu* [metaphorical shapes, also known as *manpu*], presents two forms of visual motifs (what he calls "graphic emblems") in manga. First, there are the emotive icons such as the "bulging vein" to indicate anger or "super-deformation"<sup>257</sup> to indicate levity. Second, there are the visual elements, which exist "apart" from characters, such as "subjective motion lines" where the background, instead of the characters, appears to move in order to create a

sense of speed.<sup>258</sup> Owing to the commonality of such expressions in manga, Cohn argues that these motifs are indicative of manga as a visual language, but while Cohn is accurate in that *keiyu* are generally understood by readers of manga to have recurring meanings across different works, there is also a significant limitation in viewing these visual motifs as "universal" in manga. This is because Cohn's presentation of recurring icons as visual language, intentional or not, becomes a denial of manga as a form of artistic expression, as he argues that, because manga uses these recurring icons, "focus shifts from how their drawings look to what they say with their drawings."<sup>259</sup> The problem here is that, even if some manga artists consider themselves to be inferior draftsmen in comparison to their counterparts in other countries,<sup>260</sup>

• • • • •

257. When characters gain squat proportions, usually for comedic effect. I would argue that this aspect of anime and manga tends to be overstated due to its relative ubiquity in titles from the 1990s in particular.

258. Cohn, "Japanese Visual Language," 192-194.

259. Cohn, "Japanese Visual Language," 190.

260. Frederik L. Schodt, *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1996), 24-25.

asserting that the “how” does not matter in manga inadvertently reinforces the idea that manga creators are less artistically refined and that, therefore, the visual language of manga is a “workaround,” an inferior product on a formal level. Although Cohn references Natsume’s idea that overemphasis on images detracts from the story,<sup>261</sup> and this is accurate in that it ties to the importance of the panel sequence/page over the individual panel, there is a significant difference between placing too much importance in images and denying that images as visual art matter at all. Rather than the idea that “creators each find their ‘visual voice’ within the confines of the system they share,”<sup>262</sup> manga creators are able to manipulate the system itself to a fair degree.

“Manga as visual language” does not negate “manga as art,” and while I am in general agreement with Cohn in the idea that there is a visual language of manga, I also consider the visual language of manga as a method for creating art. On this specific topic, when icons are thought of solely in terms of their universality, it denies the ability for manga creators to artistically utilize visual motifs that gain meaning through repeated use in the context of the individual work. The “context-sensitive” recurring icon acts as another means through which information, including emotion, is potentially conveyed in manga. This is evident, for instance, in the exaggerated expression of anger used in *Zettai Karen Children*. Indeed, the almost monstrous images of rage in that manga are similar to Cohn’s visual depictions of the anger *keiyu*,<sup>263</sup> but they function as more than simply universal shortcuts. As will be seen in Chapter 6, the fact that these displays of anger appear comedic acts as an on-going visual motif to convey a sense of trust and comfort between characters compared to more serious and dramatic displays of anger through psychological pain and indignation.

As for the use of visual motifs that are “detached” from characters, these too can be contextualized. Placing a character against a black background for instance can have a number of meanings—an emphasis on the internal world of a character, a visual representation of fear, or even simply a portrayal of absence of light. However, the black background itself, by virtue of its simplic-

• • • • •

261. Cohn, “Japanese Visual Language,” 190.

262. Cohn, “Japanese Visual Language,” 190.

263. For Cohn’s visual representations of anger, see: Cohn, “Japanese Visual Language,” 193.

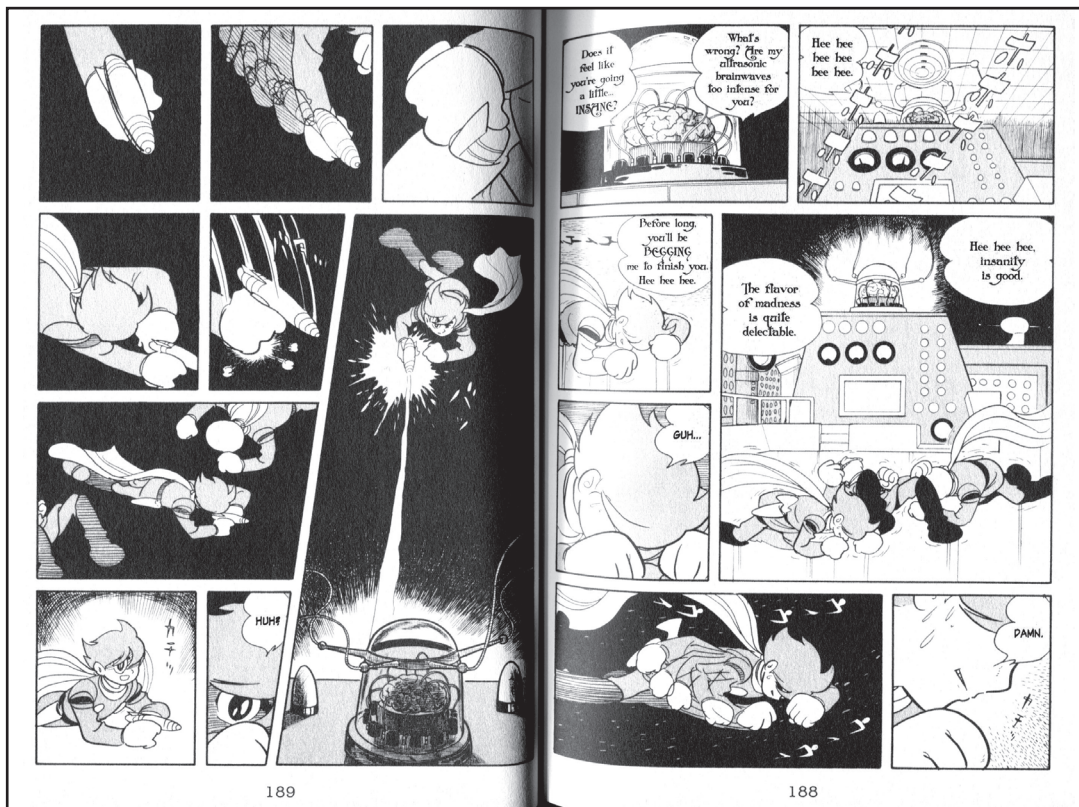
ity, cannot automatically carry a meaning outside of the fact that it is generally not the default for blank backgrounds, a role typically reserved for white. Figure 4.13 from *Cyborg 009* features a sequence of panels, starting from the bottom of page 188 through page 189, with a character against a black background that requires context to fully explain its meanings. The first meaning is quite apparent based on the immediate content: the hero, Shimamura Joe, receives an attack from a disembodied brain, the black background signifying that Joe is slowly losing consciousness. The second meaning, however, utilizes context that has been built up through the story itself. In *Cyborg 009*, Joe has the ability to move at speeds beyond human perception by activating a switch inside of his mouth, and the use of that ability is represented throughout the manga by black backgrounds. In order to give the panels this context, the lowest right panel (panel 6) shows the activation of the switch in his mouth. As a result, the black panels take on an additional meaning, a brief instant of time as experienced by someone capable of moving at superhuman speed. Thus, manga is shown as being able to utilize not only a more general visual language of manga but also more specific, context-reliant symbols and meanings that can play out over groups of panels.

Figure 4.13. The use of pure black carries multiple meanings. Source: Ishinomori Shotaro, *Cyborg 009*, vol. 2 (Los Angeles: TOKYOPOP, 2003), 188-189.

The significant panel, the use of black and white, and the context-sensitive visual motif can all contribute to flow and emphasis of the page in a variety of ways. The rarity of the panel as pertinent unit is used as a method of punctuation, the ubiquity of black and white is often an integral part of page composition, and visual motifs, context-sensitive or otherwise, act as connective tissue throughout a manga.

#### 4.4. PHYSICAL AND ABSTRACT EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIONS

At this point, I return to the subjects I left aside at the beginning of the chapter, which are the actual “physical expression” of emotion by characters, as well as the use of “abstract backgrounds” to externalize the internal world of charac-



ters. As stated previously, I did not address these subjects immediately because it would be all too easy to not only focus only on these most prominent and obvious depictions of emotion at the expense of other areas, but also because character emotions are expressed within the context of the greater visual language of manga. With the concepts of flow, page composition, and panel layout established, however, it becomes possible to give these subjects a proper look.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, one of manga’s common features is its emphasis on emotion. Re-quoting Kinsella, she writes, “Manga characters tend to embody aspects of caricature, they have exaggerated facial expressions, they swoon, they sweat, they cry, they bleed, they are visibly excited, shocked, distraught, embarrassed, and annoyed.”<sup>264</sup> Often characters, even when “speaking,” will have word balloons that ambiguously convey emotions—such as “...” and “!”—similar to the writings of early 20th century Japanese female novelist Yoshiya



264. Kinsella, *Adult Manga*, 6-7

Nobuko.<sup>265</sup> Schodt points to the tendency for characters in manga (especially *shōjo* manga) to have especially large eyes, which plays into the idea that “The human eye, and particularly the pupil of the eye, is a window on the soul, and one of the first places emotions are physically manifested,”<sup>266</sup> but this has trouble with characters who do not have large eyes (or do not show their eyes at all), and speaks nothing of using the rest of the body to portray emotion. In other words, depictions of characters themselves across manga are extremely varied, which Schodt also points out.<sup>267</sup>

Another possible method for understanding the depiction of emotion via physical expression comes from Miyamoto Hirohito, who writes about how it is that manga characters “stand out.” He describes the six elements of memorable characters as:

Individuality [distinguishing and unique features] ...  
 Autonomy or para-existence [has a background larger than what is immediately apparent, which somewhat resembles Itō’s idea of *kyara*<sup>268</sup>] . . . Variability [capacity for change, which is closer to the idea of “character” in contrast to *kyara*] . . . Multifaceted quality or complexity [possesses an unexpected side] ...  
 Non-transparency [possesses an inner side not visible to others] . . . Internally Multilayered Quality [self-consciousness and awareness].<sup>269</sup>

However, Miyamoto’s approach is limited by two factors. First, it applies only to those characters who have turned out to be “memorable,” leaving behind

• • • • •

265. Hiromi Tsuchimiya Dollase, “Early Twentieth Century Japanese Girls’ Magazine Stories: Examining Shōjo Voice in *Hanamonogatari* (Flower Tales),” *Journal of Popular Culture* 36, no. 4 (2003): 731, accessed March 15, 2015, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1540-5931.00043/pdf>.

266. Schodt, *Manga! Manga!*, 92.

267. Schodt, *Manga! Manga!*, 92.

268. Itō, *Tezuka is Dead*, 263.

269. Miyamoto Hirohito, “How Characters Stand Out: The Importance of Characters for Manga,” *Mechademia* 6 (2011): “What Makes Characters ‘Stand Out,’” trans. Thomas Lamarre, Kindle Edition, accessed February 1, 2012, <http://www.amazon.com/Mechademia-6-Enhanced-Frenchy-Lunning/dp/0816677344>.

those who arguably are not. Second, the idea that characters should have all six elements in order to truly “stand out” is too stringent a requirement, and there are many examples of characters who only possess some of those traits who are still very prominent. In this sense, particularly in the frame of the expression of emotions, it is better to think about Miyamoto’s six elements as various methods by which manga creators may attempt to establish identities and psychologies for their characters, and that these elements are conveyed through the visual stylizations of manga.

While there are indeed stylistic tendencies both in terms of character design and frequent uses of recurring “universal” visual motifs to express emotion, what can be seen from the focus on inter-panel relationships is that the visual language of manga, although generally placing on a certain fundamental level an emphasis on characters, is less reliant on the characters’ appearances in and of themselves than it is their physical placement in terms of page composition, as is shown in *Mysterious Girlfriend X* (figure 4.11). Another example can be seen in figure 4.14, taken from *11-nin iru!* [They were 11!] The image features two characters, Tada, who is being mentally and emotionally overwhelmed with a flood of information, and Frol, who sees Tada in pain and rushes to help him. These expressions are exaggerated, even melodramatic, but it is just as significant to the page that the facial expressions and physical actions do not operate independently. Instead, they connect to the overall panel layout and the sense of flow created by their expressions, relying on both the lack of specificity of individual expressions and the subtle differences from one expression to the next to convey emotionally-charged situations that rely on a lack of precise and clear detail as to what exactly is being felt by its characters unless the full context is taken into account. In panel 4, the close-up on Tada’s face against the black background connects to the similar, larger panel next to it featuring Tada’s face against a white background, while its position relative to the word balloons which emanate from that same panel also lead the eye downwards, towards the image of Tada clutching his head. The ubiquitous black backgrounds and the emphasis on the face point towards the character’s mind, as does the continued use of black. When combined with the previously established context where the character is shown to have the ability of telepathic intuition, figure 4.14 shows not only the importance of the mind (and as is revealed shortly after, memory), but that the character’s powerful reaction has something to do with his ability. A similar use of physical expressions can be seen in *7 Billion Needles* (figure

4.15), where the alien Horizon speaks to Hikaru for the first time. Hikaru’s facial expressions combine with the irregular shapes of the panels to convey the idea that she feels her internal world being violated by an alien presence (this idea will be elaborated upon in Chapter 5.2).

Figure 4.14. The character Tada is shown to be slowly overwhelmed by his own psychic empathy, as expressed through multiple panels. Source: Hagio Moto, *11-nin iru!* [They were 11!], Shogakukan Bunshō Edition (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1994), 82-83.



Panels 1, 2, and 3: “To maintain a constant heat level and as an immune response to protect the skin, white crystals form in order to provide insulation. These crystals were discovered by Dell, hence the name “Dell’s Red Spot Disease. The virus grows rapidly.”

Panel 4: “High fever. Red spots. Vomiting. A prophylactic medicine, and a vaccine made from the weakened virus. We’re out of supply. We don’t have any more mice.” “Tada!”

Figure 4.15. Faces and abstract backgrounds communicate emotion together. Source: Tadano Nobuaki, *7 Billion Needles* vol. 1 (New York: Vertical, Inc., 2010), 28-29.



In terms of abstract backgrounds being used to express emotion, both *11-nin iru!* and *7 Billion Needles* show how this concept is better viewed in terms of its relation to panel layout and flow. While abstract backgrounds imply a portrayal of the “internal” in contrast to the more “external” depiction of physical actions, they can also be used in conjunction and then made more complex through the manga page. Figures 4.14 and 4.15 both use flat, non-realistic backgrounds to focus on the characters’ emotions, but it is their persistence across multiple panels that cause their respective depictions of emotion to build up continuously. A heavy use of black can be seen in figure 4.14, with specks of white varying in size according to Tada’s mental pain, and the panel before Tada clutches his head gains context both in terms of his expression and the fact that it is *not* a black panel, further emphasizing that sudden sense of shock. Similarly, in figure 4.15 the backgrounds vary between white, pure black, and creative uses of screen-tones to convey a sense of tension between Hikaru and the alien. At the same



time that the backgrounds focus on the characters' faces, they also link to the panels surrounding them, drawing attention to both inter-panel and intra-panel relationships.

In summarizing the influence of flow on the depiction of emotion in science fiction manga, I draw upon Thomas Lamarre's description of anime as an art that presents audiences with visual and narrative spaces where the geometric/perspectival and the flat can co-exist.<sup>270</sup> Here, I argue that this quality is even more prominent when it comes to Japanese comics. As demonstrated throughout this chapter, when it comes to manga, sequences of panels often consist of both three-dimensional and flat elements in a continuous stream where those very same elements are also simultaneously juxtaposed against each other on the page.

The depictions of character emotions, whether they are expressed outwardly towards others, or come from accessing a character's inner psychology, are presented together through the use of panels as fragments of a greater whole. The flattening effect created by various visual elements even when three-dimensional space is emphasized in the artwork such that a character's emotions are conveyed across multiple panels. In figures 4.14 and 4.15 (as well as in most of the images thus far) the bodies of the characters, the content of the backgrounds, placement of the word balloons, and the arrangement of panels all serve to emphasize the pages as a whole, while also encouraging the reader to look at the characters' emotions in terms of the flowing progression.

While this applies not merely to science fiction manga, it is within the context of SF, where environment is generally important, that depictions of emotion can connect to the surrounding (perspectival) world and project themselves into the inner workings of an alternative world. Through flow and panel layout, the frequent association of the flat and abstract with "emotion" and the perspectival and realistic with "the physical world" directly confronts the reader with the idea that the two exist in the same space, and within the same narrative. The interactions between the psychological and physical spaces of characters, rather than being controlled by a distinction between the internal and external, break that division down through visual presentation. When looking back at figure 4.7, for example, the background appears to be an abstract space similar to

• • • • •

270. Thomas Lamarre, "Structures of Depth," in *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

the ones used in *shōjo* manga, but it is in fact the actual physical environment that the two characters Shinji and Kaworu occupy. Its perspectival qualities are hinted at only in panel 4, which features an embedded knife and a thin line indicating a floor. The continued presence of both the characters as their eyes meet and the ambiguous nature of the background draws out Shinji's inner conflict over his feelings towards Kaworu as both a friend and an enemy, and thus his turmoil as an individual who is both powerful (as the pilot of an EVA) and powerless (his position and his society force him to harm those closest to him, thus harming himself on a psychological level).

By showing how emotions in manga are not contained to singular panels, I have demonstrated why studying the ability for science fiction manga to convey and influence political ideas through emotion is best served by paying attention to the portrayal of emotions through multiple panels and pages. Therefore, whether panels are used as pieces of a greater whole or whether a particular depiction of emotion in a single panel is given greater context by the visual information surrounding it, the page, its inter-panel and intra-panel relationships, and the concept of flow are all essential to my visual study of emotion in science fiction manga.

#### 4.5. CONCLUSION: THE PROGRESSION OF VISUAL EMOTIONS

In order to more effectively view the expression of emotion in manga, it is necessary to understand the visual relationship between many different elements of the manga page when compared to other forms of comics. While various creators and scholars have argued in favor of some unique aspect of comics or manga, whether that is the "balance" between image and text, or that the expressive qualities of manga derive from either the use of "film-like" angles or a "universal" system of icons, it is actually the relative insignificance of the individual panel, as pointed out by Itō Gō and Natsume Fusanosuke, that drives expression in manga. Along these lines, I have shown that, by utilizing a double-linear approach to expressing information (including emotions and narrative) the panel sequence and by extension the page become, in the words of Thierry Groensteen, the "pertinent units" of manga.

Manga uses both *inter-panel* and *intra-panel* content together to drive a specific viewing order and to control narrative pace. It is both the intra-panel

relationship of framed contents and the inter-panel relationship occupying the page that dictates how emotion is visually expressed. Panels cannot be thought of merely as recomposed film shots arranged onto pages, and instead are utilized based on the idea that panel layout and page composition, elements which emphasize the two-dimensionality of the page, are especially important to manga as a visual language and art form. This in turn conveys a strong sense of “flow,” or the sense that a manga creates a smooth and continuous reading experience from one visual element to the next, a process that further emphasizes groups of panels instead of individual ones. This can even be seen in how manga utilizes other visual techniques: the rare “pertinent” panel that acts as the culmination of what has come before it, the use of black and white in considering page composition, and iconic visual motifs, especially ones created in the contexts of the works themselves, all work to place focus on the panel sequence. Thus, when looking at the most prominent sources of emotion in manga, the physical expressions of characters and the use of abstract backgrounds to portray their internal psychological worlds, these elements are best understood in terms of how manga conveys information across multiple panels and even the entire page.

In the previous chapter, I presented two important elements to consider when studying the effects of emotion in science fiction: *the effects of the science fictional world on emotions* and *the effects of emotions on the science fictional world*. This chapter has thoroughly explored how manga conveys information visually, thereby forming a basis for understanding how to study these two intertwined concepts in terms of science fiction manga. In the next chapter, I begin my more detailed analyses of specific works of SF manga to see how the visual portrayal of emotion in SF manga conveys political and science fictional ideas.